Muslim Lives Matter

By Monica Moorehead

The heinous, senseless murders of Deah Shaddy Barakat, 23, of Syrian descent; his spouse, Yusor Mohammad Abu-Salha, 21; and her sister, Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha, 19, of Palestinian descent and all Muslim, near the campus of the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill on Feb. 10, has evoked shock, sadness and outrage worldwide. Protests and vigils have been held in the U.S. and throughout the world, including Occupied Gaza, to expose the root cause — Islamophobia — of the execution-style murders of these young people.

The local police attempted to downplay the motives of the admitted murderer, Craig Hicks, a white neighbor, as a parking dispute. But the family of the two sisters and others dispelled that notion by pointing out that on more than one occasion, Hicks targeted them specifically by coming to their apartment and brandishing a gun in his belt. The families are demanding a federal investigation of the murders as a hate crime against Muslims.

These murders have also helped to expose the callousness and indifference of the big-business media. Following the murders, there were no breaking news announcements in the electronic press, online or on TV. These murders were treated like any news story.

Compare that to the Paris killings at the Charlie Hebdo office on Jan. 7, in response to the magazine’s satirical Islamophobic cartoons. Unlike the North Carolina incident, non-stop for hours upon hours, days upon days, all news was relegated to the back burner except for Paris. The mainstream media, the mouthpiece for the ruling class and Western governments, had a virtual field day using the killings as a political pretext for spewing anti-Muslim rhetoric and racism. This propaganda is itself an act of terrorism at home and abroad.

In response to this blatant slap in the face by the powers that be, the people made Twitter the social media center for sharing criticism against the local police, the government and the media for downplaying the North Carolina murders. #ChapelHillshootings and #MuslimLivesMatter became two of the top trends worldwide. That’s what every interested person was following.

When we consider these recent murders...
Same-sex marriage wins

Martha Grevatt

The number of states that deny couples of the same sex the most basic human right to marry continues to shrink. Only 23 states are left, by federal court order, on Feb. 12, Alabama became the 37th state to begin issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

On Jan. 23, U.S. District Judge Callie Granade struck down Alabama’s marriage ban, which voters passed in 2006. State officials then asked the U.S. Supreme Court to stay Judge Granade’s ruling and prohibit county courts from issuing licenses until the high court rules on marriage rights for couples from other states later this year. The Supreme Court denied the stay on Feb. 9.

After some county courts began granting marriage licenses in January, Chief Justice Roy Moore of the Alabama Supreme Court ordered all probate courts to deny licenses to same-sex couples. In true Confederate fashion, Judge Moore raised the banner of “states’ rights.”

Moore gained notoriety in 2003 for refusing to obey a federal court order to remove a huge monument to the Ten Commandments from the grounds of his court house. The Ku Klux Klan of Mississippi has issued a “call to arms” to “white Christians” to rally behind Judge Moore for “resisting [the] Imperialist Communist Homosexual agenda,” reported the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Hateswatch blog, on Feb. 10.

On Feb. 12, Judge Granade ruled against Moore, stating that all probate courts must issue same-sex marriage licenses. At last count, all but 17 of Alabama’s 67 counties were honoring Granade’s order. This includes Mobile County, where Kim Gebauer and Regina Gebauer stayed all day for four days at the probate court until the clerk opened the window and gave them a license. The window had been closed for same-sex couples, making it also impossible for heterosexual couples to wed.

Despite the latest federal ruling, the state Supreme Court agreed 7-2 to hear petitions from two right-wing Alabama groups seeking to retain the marriage ban.

Given how much bigotry against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people still lingers in the Bible Belt South, couples such as the Gebauers are showing tremendous courage when they make their commitments in public. In April, the U.S. Supreme Court will hear marriage rights’ cases from Ohio, Michigan, Kentucky and Tennessee, with a ruling expected in June. The Alabama win, the latest in a string of victories, has the LGBTQ movement even more convinced that same-sex marriage will soon be legal throughout the country. That may well be the case, but the movement and its allies should be prepared to rise up if a court decision comes down otherwise.

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Black History Month matters: Support WW

The Black Lives Matter movement, which started in response to the killing of unarmed Michael Brown by a racist cop in Ferguson, Mo., is the latest heroic chapter in the country’s long struggle to end the vile saga of white supremacy and national oppression, including slavery, that permeates the history and everyday reality of life in the United States.

Black History Month, founded in 1926, is in essence Black Liberation Month. As part of our commemoration, Workers World has been writing about some of the many sacrifices and struggles carried out by black patriots to throw off their chains and end institutionalized racism.

But WW doesn’t just cover the Black struggle in February. We write about the struggle against racism in depth all year, every year. WW has had continual coverage of the ongoing protests in Ferguson and the national movement that exploded after grand juries failed to indict the racist cops who killed Brown and unarmed Eric Garner in Staten Island, N.Y.

Our coverage of the Black struggle here and around the world is based on the principle of supporting national self-determination. Oppressed people have the right to fight to end all forms of inequality and injustice. —By any means necessary.

These words were first spoken by the great Malcolm X, assassinated 50 years ago on Feb. 21, 1965.

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Striking oil workers win support in Texas

By Gloria Rubac

Houston

As you enter the United Steelworkers Local 13-227 union hall in Pasadena, Texas, just outside Houston, signs announce that oil workers are on strike. Entering strike central, a large room with a big table in the middle, you soon forget the low-level but constant buzz of organizing activity. Union Vice President Jeff Lewis is signing in workers who come in for their picket shift. Another union worker is on the phone reminding workers when their shift is. Of 41 facilities involved in the national oil strike, five of them are in the Houston area, where the union represents 5,000 oil workers.

As plant gates are assigned, a few workers eat a meal of spicy boudin, a Cajun sausage that someone has prepared for the strikers. The shuttle driver comes in to find out who needs a ride to the Shell plant gate. A community activist supporting the strike brings in a $25 donation for the strike fund before he volunteers to walk a picket line. One striker told Workers World that he has been forced to work 36 hours straight. “I work on the control board with buttons, and after 24 hours the buttons started to blur into each other. I was so sleepy I literally couldn’t see.”

Tensions heated up this week at the Shell Deer Park refinery when officials ordered strikers off the picket line with fabricated stories of workers blocking entrances.

Community supports strikers

The union together with the community has held several protests, a major one at Shell headquarters in downtown Houston led by U.S. Rep. Gene Green and Al Green. Over 300 workers, their families and community leaders and activists surrounded the square block occupied by the major oil company, chanting, singing and carrying picket signs.

The Oil Workers Strike Solidarity Committee was formed in Houston to organize support and build community solidarity by walking the picket lines at the refineries. One young activist, Marie Brignac, grew up with a father who worked for Shell. As she walked the picket line to honor him, she recalled worrying as a child if her father, a refinery worker, would come home safely from work or be injured in an explosion. After putting in 35 years with Shell, her father was fired for trying to enforce safety on the job.

In the Houston area, workers who are not on strike are showing solidarity by cooking food, barbecuing, getting food donated to the strikers and even baking cookies. Others are finding temporary jobs for strikers. Texas has never had a high rate of union membership. Politicians often brag that the low rate of unionization is one of the state’s biggest assets in attracting new business. Lately, however, union membership has been slowly increasing, going from 518,000 in 2013 to 543,000 last year, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The oil industry is the richest industry in the world, but the owners’ greed and their bad faith bargaining have prevented efforts to improve health and safety challenges in work places. This endangers not only the workers but people living in proximity to facilities.

While I walked the picket line, one of the pointers pointed out the irony that Shell and the other companies where workers are striking could afford to pay for extra security at each of the plant gates for 24 hours a day, yet they couldn’t pay for more workers to cut the forced overtime in their plants.

The five largest oil companies—BP, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, Exxon Mobil and Shell—made a combined total profits of $89.3 billion in 2013, or $177.7 million per minute, according to America Progress. But the biggest five’s profits declined by 27 percent in 2014, so they’ll probably use this decline to pressure Congress to retain their $8.4 billion-per-year tax breaks, opines American Progress.

As one of the strikers said, “Yes, we do make good wages, but the profits of the oil industry are so astronomical that the refusal to cut forced overtime and consider worker safety as well as the safety of the community is criminal.”

5,000 oil workers out on strike

Continued from page 1

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The Steelworkers’ master oil contract covers 30,000 oil workers at 230 refineries and the strike fund before he volunteers to walk a picket line. One striker told Workers World that he has been forced to work 36 hours straight. “I work on the control board with buttons, and after 24 hours the buttons started to blur into each other. I was so sleepy I literally couldn’t see.”

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Indiana woman criminalized after miscarriage

By Sue Davis

An outrageous miscarriage of justice occurred Feb. 3 in Indiana based on a real miscarriage. Purvi Patel, a 33-year-old, unmarried woman of South Asian-American descent, was found guilty of two criminal offenses: feticide and neglect of a child. Patel could be sentenced to 70 years in prison.

On July 13, 2013, Patel went to the emergency room at St. Joseph Hospital in Mishawaka, Ind., with heavy bleeding after delivering a stillborn fetus and depositing the remains in a bag in a dumpster.

After questioning by medical personnel, police homicide detectives interrogated Patel and found, after searching her home and mobile phone, that she had obtained drugs from Hong Kong which she took in an attempt to abort the fetus. That led to the charge of feticide, even though blood tests revealed no such drugs in her system.

The charge of neglect of a child was based on what can only be called “junk science.” The court pathologist used a “whole lung float test” to determine that the baby was born alive. But, according to RH Reality Check senior legal analysts Jessica Mason Pieklo and Imani Gandy, who discussed the case in a Feb. 9 podcast, that “test has been discredited since the 1980s.” Besides, Patel testified that the fetus was not breathing when it was expelled from her body.

Yet a jury took only five hours to deliver a guilty verdict on both counts. That means the jury discounted testimony ab- solving Patel of both charges and believed she was criminally liable for wanting to self-abort an unexpected pregnancy.

Criminalizing pregnant women

How could this happen in the U.S. in 2015? How could a fetal homicide law intended to protect an unborn child be turned upside-down to apply to a pregnant woman? According to Indiana attorney Katherine Jack, the feticide law, initially used to prosecute illegal abortion provid- ers, was later expanded to cover men who were violent with pregnant partners. It was never “intended to apply to pregnant women. ... To use feticide charges in this way is bad for public health. Women will become afraid to go to their doctors for fear of arrest.” (Guardian, U.K., Aug. 26)

This criminalization of pregnancy could be repeated in 38 states that currently have fetal homicide laws. Alabama, Mississippi and South Carolina have al- ready used the law — mostly for drug-related criminal charges.

A peer-reviewed study published in 2013 by the National Advocates for Pregnancy Justice documents that along with work related to getting to the hospital or whose workplaces are closed due to blizzards are often forced to dip into their sick days or vacation time — if they’re fortunate enough to have paid time-off. When schools are closed, workers with children are often faced with either hiring a sitter or taking time off to care for their children, both of which are unaffordable for many.

A study by the American Highway Users Alliance estimated that the delays and closures in late January and halfway into February have cost the city of Boston $265 million per day, two-thirds of which is lost wages for hourly workers. With more snow forecasts expected, hourly workers need to be able to continue to be unfailingly penalized through no fault of their own.

Daycare workers still waiting for pay, benefits

After workers at Square One child care facilities in Massachusetts were misclas- sified as temporary employees and denied fair wages, benefits and the protection of their co-workers’ United Auto Workers contract for four years, they took to the courts to resolve the issue. On March 21, 2013, Administrative Law Judge Michael A. Rosas agreed with the workers and ordered Square One management to grant back pay and benefits to the misclassified workers. But the employer filed for an exemption. Two years later, the workers are still waiting for what is rightfully theirs.

UAW Local 2322 has circulated a petition demanding that the National Labor Relations Board enforce the judge’s ruling and hold Square One management responsible for its blatant and ongoing violations of the National Labor Relations Act. Sign the petition online at tinyurl.com/UAW2322.

Staples will fire workers to dodge health mandate

A recently leaked internal memo from Staples management threatens part-time workers with disciplinary action and even termination if they are caught working more than 25 hours a week at a big-box office supply store. The start of the new hardline policy coincides with the provision of the Affordable Care Act, effective Jan. 1, 2015, which requires employers to offer health care to employees who work at least 30 hours per week — or incur a $3,000 penalty per employee. It seems Staples, which pulled in more than $23 billion in sales in 2013 and employed 46,361 full-time and 1,201,201,500 part-time associates as of Feb. 1, 2014, would sooner cut hours and fire workers rather than provide basic health coverage.

One Staples worker, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said, “Before January, it was a smash on the wrist if anyone went over 25 hours — they got an email scold- ing them, saying, ‘You went over, try not to do that.’ But now it’s become really serious.” According to a report released by polli.st/ThirtyEight, several hundred thousand workers are scheduled for fewer hours as employers like Staples try to dodge the health care mandate. (buzzfeed.com, Feb. 9)

$15 minimum wage wouldn’t cause layoffs

Amid a growing movement coast to coast calling for a raise in the federal minimum wage to $15 an hour, researchers Robert Pollin and Jeanette Wicks-Lim of the Pol- itical Economy Research Institute examined the real consequences if the fast food industry would be required to double the minimum wage. Their report, released in January, demolishes the age-old argument that higher wages would cause mass layoffs and reduced revenue. According to the report, the industry could easily absorb the cost of a $15 minimum wage. Higher wages would result in higher productivity and lower employee turnover, which together would allow retailers to pay over 20 percent more in wages than currently do. That, along with modest price increases of 3 percent a year and an already-projected 2.5 percent a year sales growth, would fully cover a $15 minimum wage for the fast food industry. Opponents of raising the minimum wage need to revise their anti-worker scare tactics in light of the study’s findings. (pbs.org, Jan. 28, peri. umass.edu)
Wisconsin students, workers resist Gov. Walker's austerity axe

By Bryan G. Pfeifer


Walker wants to cut a minimum of $300 million from the 26-campus University of Wisconsin system — attacking faculty, staff, students and their communities.

Walker’s aggressive campaign against unions, the public sector and communities of color — has skyrocketed. As a result, membership in public sector unions, such as AFSCME and the American Federation of Teachers, on UW campuses, along with hundreds of millions of dollars in budget cuts, privatization of administrative services, the new hires receive as little as $8 an hour, with inferior and more cost- benefits. As private sector employees, they are no longer in the state health and retirement systems. (wsuw.org)

As of July 1, all two-year colleges in the UW system and one four-year college led privatized all the formerly campus-owned bookstores.

Many union manufactur- ing jobs in Wisconsin were decimated by a combination of the North American Free Trade Agreement, multiph- forms of outsourcing and replacing workers with technology in this era of outsourcing. Black workers have taken home the brunt of the unrelated capitalist austerity, with the highest per- centages of incarceration, the highest infant mortality rates and thousands of home foreclosures in Milwaukee.

Clasified staff jobs in the UW system are often the only living-wage opportu- nities available — with such benefits as state health insurance and a pension — for women and workers of color in urban, rural and semi-rural areas. Many campus administrators who are either capitalists themselves or sympathetic to running universities like banks and corpora- tions have expressed will- ingness to go along with the “restructuring” of the UW system.

But outrage and resis- tance are building state- wide.

“They say cut back. We say fight back!”

On Feb. 4, the day af- ter Walker’s gubernatorial address, hundreds of stu- dents from UW-Milwaukee protested his proposed cuts to the uni- versity system. With community, staff and faculty support, protesters marched through the student union and rallied at Spaight Plaza to demand, “No ifs, no buts, no education cuts!”

Members of the Progressive Students of Milwaukee unveiled a banner over a third-floor railing that read: “They say cut back. We say fight back! No cuts to UW!”

In the evening, hundreds more pro- tested. The administration responded by calling out campus and Milwaukee po- lice. (fightbacknews.org). Another mass protest took place at UWM on Feb. 7.

On Feb. 6, students, faculty, labor and community members met at the following signs reading, “No cuts, no layoffs, no privat- ization” and chanting, “Hey, hey, ho, ho! Walker’s cuts have got to go!” — gathered outside the UW Board of Regents’ meet- ing in Madison. Board members, most of whom come from banking and corporate interests, barred them from the public meeting.

The same day, the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association held a community strategy session that drew over 400 pub- lic educators and their supporters.

Protests have also taken place at UW- East Claire and other locations.

On Feb. 14, in subzero temperatures, hundreds protested at the state Capitol in Madison. Speakers included faculty, staff, students and community members, including “Young, Gifted and Black” Coa- lition leader Brandi Grayson, who linked the struggles of the “Black Lives Mat- ters” movement to the fight to fully fund public education.

“The Wisconsin Bail Out the People Movement put out a statement titled “Fight austerity! Fight the banks and corporations! Education is a human right! Build a global people’s movement!” (http://tinyurl.com/oswweqgk).

For more information and updates, see at facebook.com/OccupyRiverwest, or facebook.com/psmuwm. Twitter: #stwbailoutpeople.org.

Bryan G. Pfeifer is a UW-Milwaukee alumnus. He was editor-in-chief of the UW-Milwaukee student newspaper, the “Black Seat Belt.” He was editor of the UW-Milwaukee student newspaper, the “Black Seat Belt.” He was editor of the "Wisconsin Bail Out the People Movement." He was editor of the "Wisconsin Bail Out the People Movement." He was editor of the "Wisconsin Bail Out the People Movement." He was editor of the "Wisconsin Bail Out the People Movement."
African-American jockeys face racism

By Dolores Cox

The Saratoga Race Course in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2013. It opened in 1863, and became a favorite betting retreat for tourists and wealthy socialites like the Vanderbilts and Rockefellers.

In Long Island, N.Y., horse racing dates back to 1665, and was the country's initial pastime. During the Civil War, race tracks were closed down in the South, but the sport had been quite popular. However, the sport was revived in the North; New York became the racing center.

Enslaved Africans on Southern plantations who worked in horse stables often trained horses and rode in informal races. In the early 1800s, horse racing became an organized sport. Black jockeys, the first professional athletes, soon came to dominate horse racing for two centuries. The earliest known Black jockey star in the 1800s was only known as “Simon.”

Black jockey Isaac Burns was born on a Kentucky farm in 1861. His father was a sharecropper and bricklayer, who joined the Union Army and died in a Confederate prisoner-of-war camp during the Civil War. His mother, a freed slave, then moved to New York with her grandfather, George Burns, who changed his name to Murphy when he started training horses.

America Burns, Murphy's mother, worked at a stable in Lexington, Ky. There, Eli Jordan, a Black trainer, prepared him for his first race in 1875. By the end of 1876, he had won 11 races. In the first Kentucky Derby, held in 1875 at Churchill Downs in Lexington, 13 of the 15 jockeys were African Americans. From then until 1902, more than half the winning horses at the Derby were ridden by African-American jockeys.

Murphy's win in 1879 at the Kentucky Derby brought him national attention. In 1884, he won first place in the Kentucky Derby. Subsequently, he won the American Derby four times in Chicago. In 1890, after winning a race against a white jockey, racial hatred caused his popularity to fall, and he was forced to retire in 1895.

Murphy was the first jockey to win the Kentucky Derby three times. He had the best winning average in history. In 1955, he became the first Black jockey to be inducted into the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame in Saratoga Springs. The second Black jockey to be so recognized posthumously was Willie Simms in 1977. He had won the Kentucky Derby in 1896 and 1898.

By Abayomi Azikiwe

The Book of Negroes

“THE BOOK OF NEGROES” TV miniseries tackles historical myths

By Abayomi Azikiwe

Editor, Pan-African News Wire

The Book of Negroes” miniseries by Larry Hill, photographed by Richard LaGravenese and executive producer Damon Oliva.

The cast includes Aunjanue Ellis, Cuba Gooding Jr., Lyrig Bent and Louis Gossett Jr.

This six-part, historical fiction, television series recently concluded its premiere over the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation network. It is an African-American story of resolute survival.

The actual history of those captured into slavery on the West Coast of Africa, continuing through their journey to the Americas, New York, Nova Scotia in Canada, until 1850, is largely unknown. The historical document of the same name kept by the British, in their colonial history, has to get into the book before she gets out.

The book notes, “Sometimes [the white jockeys] pocketed, or surrounded, a black jockey until they could drive him into and over the rail. Their whips found the thighs, hands, and face of the colored boy next to them more often than the horse they were riding. Every day a black rider ended up in the dirt; and every day racing officials looked the other way.” (William Morrow/HarperCollins, 2006)

From the early 1900s through the late 1940s, Black jockeys were excluded from major tracks in the Jim Crow South. Beginning in 1908, anti-gambling legislative bills led to shutdowns of race tracks. In New York, the tracks were closed in 1911. But when they reopened in 1913, notable African-American jockeys did not return. Black jockeys, in general, began to disappear.

Racial prejudice drove nearly every Black jockey out of the profession.

Arthur Ashe, the late African-American tennis player, said: “The sport of horse racing is the only instance where the participation of Blacks stopped almost completely while the sport itself continued — a sad commentary on American life.”

Isaac Murphy, so highly admired during his time, might have been ashamed of his sport.” (Edward Hotaling, “They’re Off! Horse Racing at Saratoga.” Syracuse University Press, 1993)

In 1941, following Germany’s invasion of France, Winkfield returned to the U.S., where he became a trainer. In 1953, he returned to France and opened a jockey training school.

In 1961, Winkfield returned to the U.S. to watch the Kentucky Derby. Here, when he and his daughter, Liliane Casey, arrived at the race course, they were told they could not enter through the front door. Once inside, nobody spoke to them.

Winkfield died in France in 1974. In 2004, he was posthumously inducted into the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame.

Joe Drape stated in “Black Maestro: The Epic Life of an American Legend,” his biography of Winkfield, that the jockey’s skill was secondary to his skin color: “An Anti-Colored Union was in place, with the goal of running black riders off the race track. It had been established earlier in 1884 at the Queens County track when the white jockeys … put the word out that if owners wanted to take first-place purses, they had to use the colored jockeys.”

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New report reveals extent of racist lynchings

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

The Equal Justice Initiative published a report entitled “Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror” on Feb. 26, 2015, which the need to re-examine a somber period in U.S. history, which has never been officially acknowledged.

Although this horrendous practice originated during slavery, after the Civil War and the Reconstruction began, extrajudicial killings of African Americans became integral to the exploitation and racial containment of formerly enslaved people. The Ku Klux Klan mobilized, the Ku Klux Klan originated during slavery, after the Civil War and the Reconstruction period.

African-American journalist Ida B. Wells started an international campaign after the war between Britain and the colonists. After the Civil War and the Reconstruction period.

African Americans became integral to the modern era. By the 18th century to the present.

A 2002 PBS documentary, “The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow,” tells of Moss, Mc Dowell and Stewart who were lynched for defending themselves against a attack on Moss’ grocery store. Moss was a highly respected figure in the black community. A white competitor, enraged that Moss had drawn away his black customers, hired some off-duty deputy sheriffs to destroy Moss’ store. The two black friends, not knowing the men were deputies, resisted. A gun battle broke out and several deputies were wounded. Moss, his two friends, and one hundred other black supporters were arrested. Several nights later, masked vigilantes dragged Moss and his two friends from their cells, and shot them in a deserted railroad yard.

A few months later, Wells’ Memphis newspaper offices were firebombed by a white mob empowered by a local magistrate. She was driven out of the city for exposing the false pretexts under which many lynchings were justified. In Chicago, Wells continued her work.

However, the terrible events in Mem phis led thousands of African Americans to leave the city and migrate to Oklahoma.

In 1893, Wells toured Britain to lecture on lynching and to highlight the plight of African Americans. Two years later, she wrote an important pamphlet entitled “The Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynching in the United States.” It was a comprehensive study of racist mob killings of African Americans.

Wells founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909, which was arrested for campaigning for decades against lynching and pushed unsuccessfully for federal legislation to outlaw it.

According to the Civil Rights Congress, attorney William L. Patterson, Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois and cultural worker and activist Paul Robeson published “We Charge Genocide” in 1943. This historic petition, which was submitted to the United Nations, documented years of racial terror against African Americans, carried out with impunity in full view of white officials, law-enforcement agencies and the courts.

During the height of the Civil Rights Movement from 1955 to 1968, white police officers and racist mobs murdered African Americans and their allies.

Study reports nearly 4,000 lynchings

The EJI blog notes, “Researchers documented 3,930 racial terror lynchings of African Americans” in 12 Southern states “between 1877 and 1950 — at least 700 more lynchings of black people in these states than previously reported in the most comprehensive work done on lynching to date.” This work asserts that “lynching of African Americans was terror diplomacy widely used to reinforce racial subordination and segregation.”

In compiling information on the newly revealed lynchings, the report’s authors acknowledged the works of academic Stewart E. Tolnay and Tuskegee University. They also examined additional cases written about in the African-American press.

Legal lynching today: death penalty, police terror

During World War I, the Great Migration of African Americans began — from the south to urbanized Northern and Western U.S. regions. Public Lynchings declined then, but these acts of racial terror continued through other means, including state-sanctioned executions.

The EJI reports, “By 1915, court-ordered executions outsized lynchings in the former slave states for the first time. Two-thirds of those executed in the 1920s were black, and the trend continued. As African Americans fell to just 22 percent of the South’s population between 1910 and 1930, they constituted 75 percent of those executed in the South during that period.” (p. 21)

This study documents how this vile practice continued into the modern era: “In the 1987 case of McCleskey v. Kemp, the Supreme Court considered statistical evidence demonstrating that Georgia death sentences are as likely to impose death for the killing of a white person than a black person. ... [T]he Court described racial bias in sentencing as ‘an inevitable part of our criminal justice system’ and upheld Warren McCleskey’s death sentence because he failed to identify a ‘constitutionally significant risk of racial bias’ in his case.”

The EJI report reaffirms that today’s wave of police killings and other racist attacks are part of the system of national oppression and social control used by the ruling class to exploit and control African people since the 19th century. Despite Civil Rights legislation passed in the 1950s and 1960s and the ascendency of African-American elected officials, including the president, justice is still denied to many.

Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Aiyana Stanley-Jones, Tamir Rice and countless others have been killed by police officers who remain unscathed by prosecutors and the courts. The Justice Department has not brought charges against these officers after local authorities failed to indict and arrest the perpetrators.

It will take a revolution to overthrow this legacy of racist terrorism in the U.S. African-American and other oppressed peoples must be totally liberated from national oppression before they can expect any real justice that protects and values their lives from the ravages of state-supported repression and violence.
COMMUNITY DEMANDS JUSTICE FOR FARM WORKER

PROTESTERS ASK, ‘Who killed Brandon Tate-Brown?’

By Betsy Piette

Organizers of a “Philly after Ferguson” town hall meeting at the Catalyst for Change Church on Feb. 11 were billed as an opportunity for dialogue on community-police relations “in the post-Ferguson era.” Dozens of protesters in the largely African-American audience used the event to demand police officials on the panel release the name of the officer who fatally shot Brandon Tate-Brown.

On Dec. 15, Tate-Brown, 26, was head- ed home around 3 a.m. when police in Philadelphia's Mayfair district pulled him over for allegedly driving without his headlights on. Police claim they saw a handgun in the center console of his car and asked him to get out.

According to police accounts, Tate-Brown complied but struggled with the of- ficers before running back toward his car. Claiming they felt threatened, the officers shot Tate-Brown in the back of his head.

To date, police have refused to release the name of the officers involved or sur- veillance video from a gun shop that may have caught the encounter.

Repeatedly chanting, “Who killed Brandon Tate-Brown?” people at the meeting, including Tanya Dickerson, his mother, and even some communi- ty-based panel members demanded that police release the officer’s name as well as the video.

Deputy Police Commissioner Kevin Bethel and Thomas Nestel III, chief of police for Philadelphia’s transit police, were both on the panel, along with Kel- vyn Anderson, head of the city’s civilian police oversight board; Daily News Kor- mor-in-Chief Michael Dudy; activists from Philadelphia’s Black Lives Matter move- ment; and others.

Bethel was repeatedly challenged as members of the audience demanded transparency from the police. Dition green welcomed her statement that the department could not release the officer’s name out of “concern over cop safety.”

Nestel was denounced for posting racist remarks on Twitter in support of a pro-police rally held at the site where Tate-Brown was killed.

Dickerson, given an opportunity to address the gathering, spoke of her pain on first learning that her son had been killed from the morning news on her way to work. “He condemned the police for not having the courtesy to notify her.”

“Brandon was tried, judged and con- demned by police, not a judge. So who judges the police, who holds them ac- countable?” Dickerson asked the panel.

“Right to know” requests to obtain sur- veillance footage that might show the incident were de- nied by police on Feb. 6. Greg Brinkley, a private in- vestigator hired by Brown’s family, said they plan to reveal more information on the case soon: “Circum- stances surrounding Bran- don Tate-Brown’s death are not consistent with the po- lice account.”

Dickerson also suspects that if video exists to support the police version, they would have released it to shut her up.

Surveillance video that did lead to indictment

Surveillance video contradicting the police version of a case surfaced in Feb- ruary when a grand jury arraigned two Philadelphia policemen for the May 2013 beating of Najee Rivera, a Latino.

The assault fractured an orbital bone in Rivera’s face and left him with nu- merous lacerations on his head. He was charged with assaulting the officers and resisting arrest. (Theн ten officers who lied to cover up their at- tack on Rivera might have gotten away with it, except that Rivera’s companion canvassed the neighborhood where the incident took place and discovered secu- rity camera video that dis- puted the officers’ accounts. Charges against Rivera were dismissed.

Dickerson and her family made it clear they are not giving up. “The police have the power of finance behind them. I have the power of strangers, coming together and organizing for change. The activists and organizations made it quite clear that we are serious; it is not going away.”

On Saturday, Feb. 21, the 50th anniver- sary of Malcolm X’s assassination, a major march calling for “Justice by Any Means Necessary” will take place in the Mayfair area, starting at 6600 Frankford Ave. at 2 p.m. For more information, contact PhilyforREALJustice@gmail.com.

FOOTNOTE

40 or 50 times. He sold the car, hoping to avoid further trouble but was again pulled over by the Denver police on Jan. 9. He gave them his ID. He used his rights and refused to exit the vehicle and put his hands up for the police not to shoot.

The police opened the door of the car when they pulled him off the brake, the car rolled. Then the police shot him four times. He was seriously wounded and rapidly removed from the hospital ICU and sent back to jail. He now awaits trial.

The shouts of the demonstrators reached the crowd in the jail and caused great excitement as he called out to thank everyone.

Lastly, two brothers, Joel Jurado, age 26, and Carlos Jurado, age 20, were shot and wounded as Denver police surround- ed their car while they had their hands up to surrender. Carlos was released, but Joel remains in jail.

All the victims were young people of color. All the incidents involved police shooting into cars and all appear to in- volve one police officer, Jeffrey R. Man- na, who currently remains on the job.

A study in 2010 showed that the Den- ver police force used greater amounts of excessive force as compared with other U.S. cities.

PHOTO: VIVIANA WEINSTEN

From Denver to Ferguson

Fight for victims of police violence

By Viviana Weinstein

Denver

In the last seven months since July, the Denver police have fired four times into moving cars, killing two youth of color and injuring two more.

A demonstration of over 400 young people took to the streets of Denver on Feb. 14. They blacked the downtown streets and intersections, stopping at the detention center, the court build- ings and the Denver Police Department to shout out their anger and to demand justice for the dead and the two survivors who remain in jail.

The crisis point came when, on Jan. 9, Jessie Hernandez, a 17-year-old gen- der-nonconforming Latina, was shot to death. This was the fourth shooting by Denver police into a moving car, an action which the city called regular police policy.

The surviving occupants of the car said that Jessie was shot, and only then did the car go out of control. Jessie’s family has asked for a federal investigation due to their mistrust of the Denver police and prosecutors. Jessie’s mother broke down as she spoke to the crowd about raising money to bury her child. The community distrusts the Denver Police Department’s many differing versions of the story and feels that Jessie was shot for being Latina and gender nonconforming.

In July 2014, Ryan Ronguillo, 20 years old, was shot twice by Denver po- lice while in his car in a fe- neral home where services for his best friend were taking place. Denver police cars sped into the lot, crashing into his car. Then the police jumped out and shot Ryan to death.

In January 2015, Sharod Kindell had been working to buy a new car. He was continually stopped and harassed by the police while driving the car, a total of 14 times. They sold the car, hoping to avoid further trouble but was again pulled over by the Denver police on Jan. 9. He gave them his ID. He used his rights and refused to exit the vehicle and put his hands up for the police not to shoot.

The police opened the door of the car when they pulled him off the brake, the car rolled. Then the police shot him four times. He was seriously wounded and rapidly removed from the hospital ICU and sent back to jail. He now awaits trial.

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U.S.-backed coup attempt stopped

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Ever since Comandante Hugo Chavez became president of Venezuela in 1998 and the process of the Bolivarian Revolution started, there has been no time that the opposition — supported and, to a large extent, led by the United States — has stopped trying to overturn the revolutionary process. It is a story repeated many times in Latin America — so much so that there’s a joke that “the only country where there are no coup because there is no Yankee embassy.”

The latest attempted coup aimed at Venezuela was revealed this Feb. 12, when Youth Day is commemorated, just a year after the start of violent street demonstrations known as guarimbas. The right-wing opposition used these street actions in an attempt to overthrow the government of President Nicolás Maduro. This coup attempt killed two and injured hundreds. This Feb. 12 Maduro told the people his government had dismantled another attack. He released details about recently discovered plans and the role of the U.S. government.

According to President Maduro, the coup was to unfold in three phases: The first was to be the public withdrawal of the U.S. embassy. The second phase was the stationing of Telesur, the Bolivarian media outlet, in the presidential Miraflores Palace and more than a dozen other places, including government departments and the central station of Telesur, the Bolivarian media organization. The third phase would be the publication of a video of a general who had come in and been convicted of a coup last year, who would report that a military force had revolted against President Nicolás Maduro and had overthrown him.” (Telesur, Feb. 12)

Diligent work by Bolivarian government intelligence officials, combined with the loyalty of young army officers, succeeded in dismantling the planned coup. The evidence obtained, including guns, computers, etc., along with confessions of some detained officers, gave no doubt about the details of the plan, its authors and its financing. Some of those involved, including military aviation officers, are in the hands of the courts, which continue the investigation. Involvement in the coup attempt are such right-wing assembly members as Julio Borges, a deputy to the National Assembly from the right-wing party Primero Justicia; 17 active military officers who had already been fired from the U.S. State Department; plus retired officers such as Major General Maximiliano Hernández, who is now incarcerated; businessman Patrick Rolo; Maria Corina Machado, a known oppositionist who receives funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development; Leopoldo Lopez, in prison now for promoting violent guarimbas in 2014; and others.

The latter two people, together with political opponents of the pro-American and anti-Venezuelan politician of Caracas, Antonio Ledezma, signed on Feb. 11 the “Call for the Bolivarian National Agreement for the Transition,” a program aimed at ensuring the continuity of the Bolivarian Revolution and restoring neoliberalism to Venezuela, including the “readiness of the country in international organizations like the International Monetary Fund.

U.S. role in attempted coup

On Feb. 14, President Maduro announced on Telesur: “We’re just about to present the public the previous brother — the counselor of the Embassy of the United States edited.” Maduro assured the people that all those captured have admitted their role, and so far the authorities already “know how much money was paid in dollars and where the money came from.”

An article published Feb. 14 on aporeas.org, headlined “Blackwater USA appears to own the Tucano aircraft that was to be used to bomb Caracas and overthrow Maduro,” reports that the plane “would be provided by a private U.S. security contractor that obtained the contract in order to train Caracas security forces. Besides granting visas to the coup officers, the U.S. showed its role in Venezuela with the White House statement about its “National Security Strategy” of February 2015, which leaves no doubt of the U.S. government’s position: “We are with the citizens where democracy is at risk, as in Venezuela.”

The Bolivarian people respond

This latest attempted coup and U.S. intervention have sparked a wave of indignation and solidarity throughout the world. Governments of the countries that are members of the progressive regional organizations ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America), UNASUR (Union of South American Nations), CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) and MERCOSUR (Common Market of the South), and popular movements worldwide have spoken out in support of the Venezuelan government and the Bolivarian people. Many organizations have simply sent photos showing signs that read: “Je suis Telesur.” (I am Telesur).

But it is in Venezuela itself where support for the government has been crucial. The Bolivarian youth, leftist political parties such as the United Socialist Party of Venezuela, the Communist Party of Venezuela, Patria Para Todos, the Movement of Rural Women, the Social Movement of African Descendants and others have taken to the streets and have made public statements opposing the government and opposing U.S. intervention.

On Feb. 15, Workers World spoke with Juan Contreras, the deputy to the National Assembly for the Simón Bolivar Coordination (CSB). Based in the historic January 23 neighborhood in Caracas, CSB represents the aspirations of Venezuelan poor people.

Contreras mentioned three factors that are strangling Venezuela’s economy: low oil prices, food smuggling from Venezuela to neighboring countries, and the economic war by merchants who try to hide food in the distribution chain to cause the most among the people, together with those who have aroused a great mobilization of the people. Contreras said, “The only way to curb the pretensions of the unipartisan sector is to give a break to all the unipartisan groups that follow a script provided from the North has been the mobilization.”

So far, despite U.S. support, the bourgeois media are unable to present two important keys of the Bolivarian process, Contreras continued. “One is readiness of the people for change, and second, the civil-military unity that at this time has put the brakes on those who want to take power by the easy route through a coup d’état. Any attempt to destabilize sectors of the Venezuelan bourgeoisie and the U.S. empire have attempted these attempts.”

Contreras ended with a call for solidarity. To the people of the U.S., he requested that “they know the reality of the Venezuelan people, to support and, to a large extent, to help another world, another society that we have said is the Bolivarian Revolution, the Bolivarian socialism. And we are here for the same reasons, to put in time building it in peace. Do not be deceived by your government nor by these large international corporations that blatantly work against it.”

The Venezuelan Bolivarian process is a living process, and as such it is dialectical. This is a continuous struggle that needs the solidarity of all peoples. The public declaration by the Simón Bolivar Coordination about the coup attempt must be supported by all. We must continue to support the Bolivarian people.

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By Donna Lazarus

Mexico City

Some 10,000 teachers converged on Mexico City on Feb. 9, and immediately set up hundreds of tents in the intersection of the city’s main avenues: Insurgentes, Paseo de la Reforma and Bucareli. The teachers, who have been demanding higher salaries and payment of wages owed, government funding for public education and an end to state terror, gathered in the center of Mexico City’s largest work meeting in Oaxaca, organized this demonstration. The largest contingent was from Oaxaca, but teachers from all over the country, including a delegation from the Yaqui Indigenous group in Sonora, also came.

As chartered buses dropped the teachers off close to Mexico City’s landmark Monument to the Revolution, 2,700 union halls throughout the city, including the national union of telephone workers.

Struggle won salary hikes and back pay

The union leadership announced on the evening of Feb. 10 that it had reached an agreement with the federal and state governments for a raise in teachers’ salaries and a settlement of back pay owed to teachers from Oaxaca for the last year up to and including January 2015.

As the teachers packed up tents and loaded buses on Feb. 11, Section 22 of the CNTE was already planning a mass meeting in Oaxaca for Feb. 14 to pursue their demands for better schooling and an end to the Education Reform Act of 2013. This act includes compulsory performance-based tests for students and could result in mass layoffs due to the drastic cut of many rural Indigenous schools.

According to the Feb. 10 issue of Excepción, the leading Mexican newspaper, 48 percent of Indigenous primary schools in the state of Puebla have no bathrooms; 31 percent have no clean drinking water; and 46 percent lack drainage.

Although leading headlines in the daily press blamed teachers for abandoning their classes for three days during the sit-in, all evidence shows that the Mexican government has abandoned the education of poor and working-class children and youth. It is these courageous teachers who are leading the struggle for this basic right for all children.
Stop U.S. arms to Ukraine

The International Action Center held a protest Feb. 17 before CNN headquarters near Columbus Circle in New York to demand that the U.S. desist from providing weapons to the Kiev coup government of Ukraine.

Baltimore's young people enjoy history

Feb. 14 — The Baltimore Peacemakers Pool Assembly held a special event for children and youth to commemorate Black History Month. It was an opportunity for youth and children to open up about issues that affect their communities, such as police brutality, homelessness and joblessness. The group showed a film on Black history with excerpts about Malcolm X and many other highlights, told stories and participated in arts and crafts.

Kira Lykae helped to lead the storyline, along with IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) members. UNITE HERE Local 7 members and organizers of the Baltimore Interfaith Women’s Day march donated refreshments; and Angel Disquippe helped edit and put together the film shown by the group. Supplies were donated by the local Maryland Institute College of Art.

Sara Benjamin, a FPA organizer and mother of 5-year-old Imani Rucker, asserted, “Today’s event has been a big success. Children and youth need the information — they need empowerment and hope.”

— Report and photos by Sharon Black

Quebec protest rejects govt’ austerity

By G. Dunkel

Around a thousand people protested the Quebec government’s austerity programs in front of the Quebec National Assembly on Feb. 12, the day the parliament opened its 2015 session.

The situation, “Let’s Refuse Austerity,” is also planning major, province-wide but region-based protests on International Women’s Day, Earth Day and May 1.

In November launching economic had organized major protests involving tens of thousands of people in Montreal and other Quebec cities. And on Feb. 6, when Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard went to Abitibi-Témiscamingue, a small city in the western part of the province, over 1,000 protesters showed up in snowy, harsh cold to say that he shouldn’t cut jobs, health and other social services and education.

The Democrats have long been associated with starting wars, especially wars with “humanitarian” pretext. Republi- can find other pretexts, isolationist rhetorical abuse. House Speaker John Boehner’s invitation to Israel’s Netanyahu made clear that Republicans want war against Iran. And Sen. John McCain, who got shot down during the Vietnam War and built his political career on being caught, called for direct U.S. intervention in Ukraine.

What can stop this grim trajectory?

Making resistance to militarism part of every social struggle. Jobs and justice, not racism and war.

The president of the Federation of Quebec Workers (FTQ) and the president of the CSN, the two largest labor feder- ations in Quebec, both spoke at the Feb. 12 protest.

Daniel Boyer of the FTQ said the govern- ment has chosen the wrong strategy. “If they go for austerity, it should look to increase revenue.”

He said, “The richest of our society should pay more taxes, businesses should pay their fair share.”

Since its inception, the Quebec government has been attacking the poorest members of Quebec society and cutting social pro- grams built up over decades. (Radio Can- ada, Feb. 12)

Jacques Létournel, president of the CSN, claimed that Premier Couillard was “playing with words” when he claimed that Quebec’s government will work out a plan for economic growth in the next few weeks.

“A government which is cutting emp- loyment, which is shutting down ser- vices, in our opinion, is not a government which is pushing forward this idea of regional economic activity,” Létournel concluded.

The fall of oil prices has caused major economic difficulties in Canada, espe- cially in the Western provinces. Canada’s currency has slipped by 20 percent in re- lation to the U.S. dollar. However, while Quebec has to pay more for its imports, its exports are more valuable.

Quebec in many ways is a distinct soci- ety inside Canada. A majority of Quebec’s residents speak French. The immigrants it attracts are mainly from places like Haiti and North Africa, where French is a common second language. It has a his- torical trajectory that is unique in Cana- da, going from a conquered province to a recognized part of Canada.

Its union movement grew up and struggled hard not just in the major cities of Montreal and Quebec, but also in the woods and in small isolated settlements, where unions provided the only protec- tion available.

Relying on deep traditions of solidar- ity, the union movement and progressives in Quebec are trying hard to build a movement to defeat austerity.
Feb. 16 — The eyes of both world financial capital and the European workers and revolutionaries have been on Greece in its struggle against austerity. The central focus of that struggle has been in Brussels this past week, with tense negotiations between Greece’s so- cial-democratic Syriza government and representatives of the other 16 eurozone countries, its bankers and finance ministers.

Greeks Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis has been under intense pressure from the Troika — the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank and the European Commission — to request an extension of Greece’s bail- out program, which carries with it harsh conditions of austerity. This same bailout program has brought about 26 percent unemploy- ment and 44 percent poverty level, while aggravating a 25 percent drop in Greece’s production over the last five years.

The Greek government has said it cannot and will not submit to this kind of extension. “Final” negotiations were supposed to take place on Feb. 16. It was expected that the negotiations would last into the night. Instead, the talks broke up after three and a half hours, when Varoufakis denounced the proposal put forward by the bankers. The two sides could not even agree on some perfec- tory statement to paper over differences.

Predatory lenders

The bankers of Greece are true pred- atory lenders. They loaned money to the Greek government because the govern- ment owed money to the banks. So the bankers really made the loans primarily to bail themselves out. Furthermore, Greece owes 323 billion euros, equiva- lent to 175 percent of its gross domestic product. So the actual cost of the Greek loan is to pay this debt. But the bankers want their money — especially the interest pay- ment.

The debt was magnified by previous Greek governments whose dealings with Goldman Sachs and other banks were se- cret deals. They hid government- debt by using credit default swaps and other financial sleight of hand. The Greek government was able to keep the borrowing off the books, thereby making its official debt appear within the limits allowed by the eurozone. But when the financial crisis hit in 2008, the debt collapsed. The Greek government debt turned out to be twice as large as was previously reported. The same thing happened in Ireland, where the debt was cooked up by J.P. Morgan in Italy; other banks concocted similar fraudulent lend- ing schemes across Europe.

This did not stop the European banks and the IMF from forcing austerity measures on the Greek government in re- turn for loans Greece desperately need- ed, partly because of bank fraud.

By Fred Goldstein

Now the new Greek government is in negotiations with these same finan- cial predators, trying to get them to al- low Greece to reverse the devastation wrought by the austerity measures dic- tated under the terms of the loans. Syriza took early bold steps by defying the Troi- ka, putting forward a program of restor- ing the minimum wage, hiring 300,000 new workers, and giving food, health care and housing to the homeless and the poor. The Syriza government also announced that it would end the privat- ization of national assets and other mea- sures that were conditions for receiving the so-called “bailouts.”

Syriza declared it would not apply for the last 7 billion euro due the government under the bailout because of the attached austerity conditions.

Syriza has backed down from its orig- inal demand that the debt be reduced by 50 percent, as happened on other con- ts. It has tried to appear reasonable by pledging its loyalty to “Europe,” which means the eu- ropean run by the bankers. But the Ger- man bankers and their allies in the eu- ropean have been adamant. At best they have offered cosmetic modifications, but have not given an inch in their demands that Greece apply for a continuation of the bailout agreement, which is sched- uled to terminate on Feb. 28.

Failure to renew would leave Greece in default to the bankers. No one knows how that would ripple through the finan- cial system in Europe and beyond.

Mass mobilization needs to be sharply escalated

No sooner was the breakdown in nego- tiations announced than a new set of nego- tiations was scheduled; nevertheless, there may be a compromise. But regard- less of the outcome of these negotiations, there are a number of problems that will ultimately have to be resolved if the out- come is to be favorable for the masses in Greece.

One problem is that, given the rela- tionship of forces between the Greek government and the other European impe- rialists, negotiations with the bankers by themselves cannot have a favorable re- sult to the structural demands of Syriza.

The election of Syriza, its legal stand- ing, its popular support and the justice of its claims are hardly sufficient to move the Troika and the bankers of Europe. What is needed is a sharp escalation of the mass struggle in Greece in order to let the powers know that they are not deal- ing with government officials alone but with an aroused population.

In the past week there have been sev- eeral mass demonstrations in Athens, Thessaloniki and other Greek cities. The demonstrations — 20,000 in Athens and 10,000 in Thessaloniki — have been a good start. But there has a population of 665,000 in the city proper and 3.75 million in the metropolitan area.

The size of the demonstrations so far, relative to the population and relative to previous demonstrations in 2014 and before, shows insufficient mass mobil- ization. It is the revolutionary left and regular forces. For example, the trade unions have had many general strikes in the past and years against austerity. If there was ever a time for a general strike to push back the bankers, the time is now. Such a strike would be greeted enthusiasti- cally by the people — it would push the struggle forward and send a sharp mes- sage to Brussels and Berlin.

Patiently explain limitations of Syriza’s demands

Right now the masses are very much in support of the Syriza government. They must understand that so long as Syriza accepts the framework established by European finance capital, and is commit- ted to abide by its fundamental regula- tions, there can be no break with the debt slavery the masses are suffering under. There can, at best, be a loosening of the chains of that slavery.

What Syriza is aiming at is a “new deal.” Its struggle to push back austerity must be strongly supported in the street and the office.

But what is needed is to break the chains of debt slavery altogether. Slogans must be raised denouncing the debt, declar- ing that the debt shall not pay up; that the debt is illegitimate and is legalized robbery. Demands must be raised for cancellation of the debt or a lengthy moratorium and, of course, for dramatically raising the standard of living of the population as a whole in every way.

What is needed is that the masses rely on negoti- ations to bring an end to austerity, they will be operating under illusions. It is the independent action of the workers, the students, the youth, the communi- ties that can play the decisive role. The revolutionary left, while being alongside the Syriza government, must patiently explain the class truth to them about breaking with the European capitalist establishment.

Prepare to combat economic sabotage

Finally, breaking with European cap- ital, with the euro and the European Union is easier said than done. It cannot be done without a monumental struggle. Preparations for such a struggle must be thought through now.

During the run-up to the election on Jan. 25, when Syriza won 36 percent of the vote, the right wing was putting pictures of food lines in Venezuela and threatening voters with the prospect that if Syriza left the euro it would bring about economic disaster.

This brings up the need for the people to be prepared to defend against econom- ic aggression, not only from the Europe- an bankers at large, but from their own capitalist class and their own bankers.

One of the things the European banks did to both Ireland and Cyprus during their financial crises was to threaten to close their banking systems. Both countries gave in and signed structural adjustment austerity programs.

Under eurozone rules, the ECB can stop loans to private banks and central banks if they cannot ensure repayment.

Right now the ECB has extended loans to hard-pressed Greek banks in the present crisis. But eventually the ECB could turn the spit off overnight.

If the Greek government tries to regain some of its assets and currency, it will face the drachma, and if economic aggres- sion is launched by the euro bankers and Greek capitalists, strong defensive mea- sures have to be in place. For example, right now it is estimated that 2 billion euro a week are fleeing from Greek banks. Under these conditions it would be perfectly legitimate, as a defen- sive measure, to nationalize the banks. In fact, nationalization of the banks is in Syriza’s 40-point program. Instead of let- ting this demand die dormant, it should be enforced in order to prevent the finan- cial resources of the country from being drained out and sold off to the bankers.

There are many other measures that can be taken as a way of preparing to de- fend against economic aggression. Syri- za has said it will make the notoriously tax-evading Greek corporations and the rich pay up. Untold millions of euros of tax evasion are being demanded from the Greek treasury if delegations of work- ers, accompanied by accountants and financial experts, examined the books of the banks, the investors, the builders, the tourist industry and so on to collect the taxes owed.

Securing the proper production and distribution of food, the delivery of health care and social services, etc., must be prepared if there is going to be a bat- tle against the euro bankers and the Greek capitalists.

The most important aspect of any de- fensive strategy against economic sabo- tage would be to involve the workers in the process of enforcement. As the struggle strengthens, the organization of the independent action of the workers, accompanied by accountants and the police and the military — the repres- sive arms of the capitalist state that will no doubt be called upon to protect capital- ists’ interests against the intervention of the workers.

To be sure, Syriza shows no signs of being anywhere near such measures. Nor are the masses prepared for this right now. But this struggle is not going to be concluded just because negotiations end in Brussels. The hard question of austeri- ty still has to be fought from below, no matter what happens at the top. And the question of leadership will be decisive.

As the independent action of the workers grows, the potential of conflict in the struggle against austerity. It could easily mushroom from being at a stalemate in negotiations to become a struggle in the streets. Should such a struggle break out in Greece, this could be a clarion call to the long-suffering workers and middle classes of Portugal, Spain, Italy and other European countries. By the same token, it would stimulate crucial international solidarity, already begun in Spain — as shown through the protests, occupations and demos — and recently seen in Paris, Lon- don and Lisbon.

So be sure the water the euro bankers wor- ried, even though they will never admit it. But everything must be done to make their worst nightmares come true.
Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

Hay mucho desconocimiento a nivel internacional, de la lucha por la independencia de Puerto Rico. Esto mucha veces es lleva a nociones y críticas simplistas y a la vez al mito de que, hacía la pasada boricua sin tratar de entender la gran complejidad de una lucha que por más de un siglo se ha librado dentro de lo que es visto en el mundo globalizado.

Una lucha que ha costado muchas vidas en masacres y asesinatos por los EEU, largos esfuerzos de resistencia en pósitos del imperio, casos fabricados, señalamientos y carpetazos (recopilación de información sobre personas vinculadas a organizaciones políticas relacionadas al Independiente), constante seguimiento por agencias represoras federales y locales, aparte del constante hostigamiento de independentistas.

La imposición del estado colonial ha sido un crimen de lesa humanidad por parte del imperio estamental, robando no solo su fuerza trabajadora, sus recursos y su soberanía, sino intentando despojarle de su propia historia e identidad afro-taino, a pesar de que Puerto Rico ha sido y sigue siendo una batalla cuesta arriba.

Incluso en la CELAC (Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños), organismo que intenta unir en acción a todos los países del continente americano alejándose de la influencia de los Estados Unidos y Canadá, no fue hasta esta reciente Cumbre la 3ra desde que la CELAC fue creada en el 2011 por iniciativa del FOCODEGU (Consejo de Jefes de Estado de Centroamérica), que habría presencia activa de independentistas puertorriqueños. Recordemos que en la Cumbre del 2011 en Caracas, el grupo musical puertorriqueño Calle 13, junto al afamado director de orquesta venezolana, Gustavo Dudamel, ofrecieron una conferencia con la canción ‘Latinoamérica’ de los puertorriqueños, sin embargo, no había una silla para esa nación.

El regreso de EEU ha sido la de aunar a PR y sus luchas, de sus veinte. Por décadas, PR fue visto como el apéndice de EU, fuera del contexto de los acontecimientos, pasado lo ocurrido este pasado 28 de enero durante el primer día de la reunión de Jefes y Jefas del estado total gran importa.

La Cumbre, celebrada en Costa Rica tenía por tema ‘América Latina, libre de pobreza extrema’. Durante su discurso, el presidente de Nicaragua Daniel Ortega, en el contexto de la crisis financiera y la quiebra definitiva, la CEY fue creada en el 2011 por iniciativa a la OEA, el instrumento de colonia de los puertorriqueños, a la América Latina de soberanía para Puerto Rico.

Fue la nación más pequeña (PR).

La realidad de la gran crisis social, financiera y económica por la que atraviesan el Continente Americano es una realidad que se va a intensificar en los próximos años. En el año 2015, se puede esperar una gran crisis debido a los recortes a los servicios sociales, al mismo tiempo que rescataban a los mismos banqueños y corporaciones que crearon el colapso financiero y el gran desempleo masivo y los desalojos por la quiebra definitiva, de la Gran Depresión de la década de 1930. Aproximadamente, se eliminaron 750.000 puestos de trabajo, principal por esta pérdida masiva de empleos des -frió su mayor pérdida de empleos des-

La estrategia de EUA siempre ha sido el estado de Michigan se enfrenta a un estado de crisis financiera y la quiebra definitiva, de la Gran Depresión de la década de 1930. Aproximadamente, se eliminaron 750.000 puestos de trabajo, principal por esta pérdida masiva de empleos des-

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Detroit – Los capitalistas no tienen vergüenza cuando se trata de tomar de las/os más pobres para dárselo a ricos.

Por décadas, Michigan ha sido devastada de comercios, desempleo masivo y pobreza creciente. Al igual que los Estados Unidos y Canadá, se utilizó la crisis económica del 2008 y años siguientes como excusa para aumentar los recortes a los servicios sociales, especialmente a las/os trabajadores, a los servicios básicos.

Desde el 2000 al 2010, Michigan sufró su mayor pérdida de empleos desde la Gran Depresión de la década de 1930. En el año 2014, se eliminaron 45,000 puestos de trabajo, principalmente empleos industriales con salarios dignos. Las/os trabajadores de esta última década, debido al aplanamiento masivo y desalojos a las/os trabajadores y los servicios básicos.

Sin embargo, las corporaciones que causaron estos recortes de empleos y pérdida de empleos aumentaron con masivos recortes de impuestos.

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Por Kris Hamel

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