

## Defying anti-strike law

# Workers shut down West Virginia schools

By Otis Grotewohl  
Charleston, W.Va.

Feb. 26 — Tens of thousands of teachers and education service personnel in West Virginia braved rainy weather and carried out what is the first successful statewide teachers' strike there in U.S. labor history on Feb. 22 and 23. Education employees in all 55 counties forced superintendents of education to close schools on those days.

The strike continued throughout the state on Monday, Feb. 26, with thousands rallying at the state Capitol in Charleston, and reports indicate that a fourth day of the walkout will happen on Feb. 27.

This action followed a union rally on Feb. 17 and a directive from state leaders of the American Federation of Teachers-West Virginia, West Virginia Education Association and the West Virginia School Service Personnel Association. ("Statewide education strike looms in West Virginia," Workers World, Feb. 20)

Striking educators and school support staff packed the hallways of the state Capitol in Charleston on Thursday and Friday, uniting on such chants as "Fired up, fed up!" and "What's disgusting? Union busting!" Others set up picket lines at their schools throughout the whole state.

Both AFT National President Randi Weingarten and NEA Secretary-Treasurer Princess Moss came to Charleston on Feb. 22 and walked picket lines throughout Kanawha County. The next day, state leaders of the three unions issued a joint statement at a press conference in Charleston where they declared their members would continue to stay out on Monday, Feb. 26, since there was little movement by the Republican-led legislature.

In response to the educators' strong mobilization, state Attorney General Patrick Morrisey has publicly announced that a state injunction would be sent to union leaders. Strikes and work stoppages are illegal for education and state employees in West Virginia. This reveals the action as even more defiant when compared to other legal teacher strikes. Eyewitnesses reported to Workers World on Feb. 22: "Morrisey's staff placed a mounted, stuffed bear in front of his office to avoid the angry crowd."

### What is at stake

West Virginia teachers rank 48th in pay in the U.S. Additionally, all public and state employees, including teachers and service personnel, are now facing out-of-pocket increased costs in health insurance coverage through the Public Employee Insurance Agency. Unfortunately for education and state workers, PEIA has not been fully funded since 2011, which has led to higher premiums and deductibles for re-

*Continued on page 6*

## Subscribe to Workers World

☐ 4 weeks trial \$4 ☐ 1 year subscription \$30

☐ Sign me up for the WWP Supporter Program:  
workers.org/donate/

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_ City / State / Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Workers World Weekly Newspaper workers.org  
147 W. 24th St., 2nd Fl, NY, NY 10011 212.627.2994



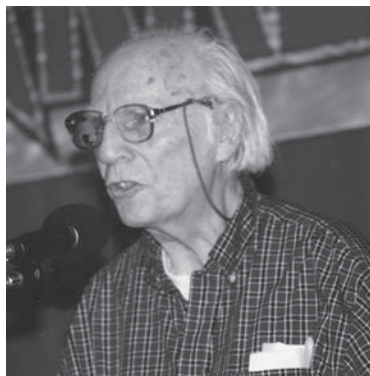
Charleston, West Virginia, Feb. 26.

WW PHOTO

## REMEMBERING A FIGHTER 4

Milt Neidenberg, September 2002.

WW PHOTO



Columbia University workers, Jan. 27.

PHOTO: SEIU 1199

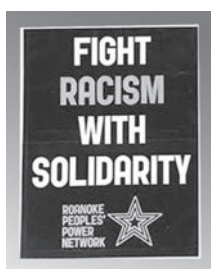
## 'No union busting!' 5

## Working People's Day of Action 6-7



Columbus, Ohio, Feb. 24.

PHOTO: MARK ESPY



## Black Liberation Month 7, 8

## Parkland students do it right 10

## Imperialists in Syria 9 Ukraine & Donbass 11



# Alaska ends subminimum wage

By Mary Kaessinger

Feb. 23 — Alaska became the third state to eliminate subminimum wage for disabled workers. The law in Alaska takes effect immediately.

“Workers who experience disabilities are valued members of Alaska’s workforce,” Greg Cashen, acting commissioner of Labor and Workplace Development said. “They deserve minimum wage protection as much as any other Alaskan worker.” (alaska-native-news.com, Feb. 19)

Paying subminimum wages to disabled workers has been standard practice in the United States since 1938. Although the Fair Labor Standards Act has been amended many times, its provision that allows employers to pay subminimum wages to people with disabilities, as well as to prisoners, immigrants and domestic workers, to name a few categories, has never been changed.

Meantime, Goodwill Industries continues to profit from low-paid labor. Goodwill’s profits have funded CEO salaries totaling \$30 million.

The National Federation for the Blind and the Autistic Self Advocacy Network have long advocated changing the subminimum wage provision.

“The Fair Labor Standards Act fails to provide training or employment.” They quote data that shows that fewer than 5 percent of workers in sheltered workshops will transition to competitive integrated work. That means 95 percent of the people working in subminimum wage work will spend their entire working life in these facilities.

New Hampshire was the first state to eliminate a subminimum wage. The bill was signed by Gov. Maggie Hassan in May 2015 and took 60 days to go into effect. Maryland was the second state to eliminate a subminimum wage. The law there will phase out subminimum wages, ending them totally by 2020.

In 2014, President Barack Obama issued an executive order stating that federal workers had to be paid at least \$10.15 an hour, including people with disabilities. The order did not, however, prohibit employers from paying workers with disabilities less than other workers, as long as it was at least \$10.15 an hour.

Workers World Party has consistently supported demands to eliminate subminimum wages.

*Kaessinger is a wheelchair user and disability rights activist.*

## Fight for women’s liberation with Workers World

Marxists strive not just to honor history, but to help make it — to promote major changes needed to put the workers and the oppressed first instead of last. Workers World always commemorates the socialist holiday of International Working Women’s Day, March 8, with a roundup of women’s protests for freedom, justice and equality the world over.

While all issues are women’s issues, WW focuses in 2018 on women in the U.S. who bear the brunt of Trump’s racist, sexist, bigoted, xenophobic agenda — working-class immigrant women who are being detained and deported for the “crime” of crossing borders to find work so they can provide for their families, and the “Dreamers,” whose Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals status is still in limbo as both parties in Congress ignore their demands.

Struggle is the only way to bring about change. The Black Lives Matter movement, started by women and transgender activists, boldly countered racism and demanded redress for centuries of oppression. Women are

powering the fight for \$15 an hour and a union. Two-thirds of low-wage workers are women, often women of color and mothers solely responsible for their families. Inspired by the #MeToo and #TimesUp movement, women are speaking up on the job against harassment and for respect.

If you appreciate WW’s year-round coverage of struggles that advance the rights of women, it’s time to join the Workers World Supporter Program and help build the newspaper.

For a donation of at least \$75 a year — and much more if you’re able — members receive a year’s subscription to Workers World, a monthly letter about timely issues and five free subscriptions to give to friends. Write checks (either monthly or once a year) to Workers World and mail them, with your name and address, to 147 W. 24th St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10011. Or sign up to donate online at workers.org/donate/; it’s easy to set up monthly deductions. And thank you for your help in building Workers World. □



Workers World Party is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a multinational, multigenerational and multigendered organization that not only aims to abolish capitalism, but to build a socialist society because it’s the only way forward!

Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the never-ending quest for ever-greater profits. Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, joblessness and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism.

The U.S. is the richest country in the world, yet no one has a guaranteed right to shelter, food, water, health care, education or anything else — unless they can pay for it.

### Contact a Workers World Party branch near you:

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

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

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

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

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

**Buffalo, N.Y.**  
335 Richmond Ave.  
Buffalo, NY 14222  
716.883.2534  
buffalo@Workers.org

**Chicago**  
312.630.2305  
chicago@workers.org

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

**Denver**  
denver@workers.org

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

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

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

**Indiana**  
Indiana@workers.org

**Madison**  
Madison@Workers.org

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

**Milwaukee**  
milwaukee@workers.org

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

**Pittsburgh**  
pittsburgh@workers.org

**Portland, Ore.**  
portland@workers.org

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

**Rockford, Ill.**  
rockford@workers.org

**Salt Lake City**  
801.750.0248  
SLC@Workers.org

**San Antonio, Texas**  
SanAntonioWWP@workers.org

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

**Tucson, Ariz.**  
tucson@workers.org

**Virginia**  
Virginia@workers.org

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

## WORKERS WORLD this week

### ★ In the U.S.

Workers shut down West Virginia schools .....	1
Alaska ends subminimum wage .....	2
Philadelphia: ‘Keep up the pressure to free Mumia’ .....	3
Bay Area: Outrage as BART cops kill again.....	3
On the picket line .....	3
Milt Neidenberg .....	4
No union busting at Columbia University.....	5
Hospital union rallies vs cutbacks.....	5
Working People’s Day of Action .....	6
Liberation history empowers new generation .....	7
Virginia meeting features freedom fighter.....	7
Monica Moorehead to Black students, Part 3.....	8
No pledge of allegiance to racism .....	10
Parkland students do the right thing .....	10

### ★ Around the world

Return Guantánamo to Cuba.....	9
Imperialists unite to escalate war on Syria.....	9
Ukraine and Donbass: Four years of solidarity, struggle ...	11

### ★ Editorial

Don’t trust Mueller to depose Trump.....	10
--	----

### ★ Noticias en Español

Contracción económica y expansión militar .....	12
---	----

Workers World  
147 W. 24th St., 2nd Fl.  
New York, NY 10011  
Phone: 212.627.2994  
E-mail: ww@workers.org  
Web: www.workers.org  
Vol. 60, No. 9 • March. 1, 2018  
Closing date: Feb. 27, 2018

Editor: Deirdre Griswold

Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, LeiLani Dowell,  
Kris Balderas Hamel, Monica Moorehead,  
Minnie Bruce Pratt; Web Editor Gary Wilson

Production & Design Editors: Coordinator Lal Roohk;  
Andy Katz, Cheryl LaBash

Copyediting and Proofreading: Sue Davis,  
Bob McCubbin, Jeff Sorel

Contributing Editors: Abayomi Azikiwe,  
Greg Butterfield, G. Dunkel, K. Durkin,  
Fred Goldstein, Martha Grevatt, Teresa Gutierrez,  
Berta Joubert-Ceci, Terri Kay, Cheryl LaBash,  
Milt Neidenberg, John Parker, Bryan G. Pfeifer,  
Betsey Piette, Gloria Rubac

Mundo Obrero: Redactora Berta Joubert-Ceci;  
Andrea Bañuelos, Alberto García, Teresa Gutierrez,  
Carlos Vargas

Supporter Program: Coordinator Sue Davis

Copyright © 2018 Workers World. Verbatim copying and distribution of articles is permitted in any medium without royalty provided this notice is preserved.

Workers World (ISSN-1070-4205) is published weekly except the first week of January by WW Publishers, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl., New York, NY 10011. Phone: 212.627.2994. Subscriptions: One year: \$30; institutions: \$35. Letters to the editor may be condensed and edited. Articles can be freely reprinted, with credit to Workers World, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl., New York, NY 10011. Back issues and individual articles are available on microfilm and/or photocopy from NA Publishing, Inc, P.O. Box 998, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-0998. A searchable archive is available on the Web at www.workers.org.

A headline digest is available via e-mail subscription. Subscription information is at workers.org/email.php.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to

Workers World, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl.  
New York, N.Y. 10011.





## Philadelphia

# ‘Keep up the pressure to free Mumia’

By **Betsey Piette**  
Philadelphia

Dozens of activists once again filled the courtroom and demonstrated outside the Criminal Justice Center during a Feb. 26 status hearing in the ongoing appeals case for political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

The hearing before Judge Leon Tucker was supposed to be a report on progress made by the Philadelphia district attorney's office in locating a March 27, 1990, memo from former Deputy DA Gayle McLaughlin Barthold to former DA Ronald Castille regarding the status of Philadelphia death penalty cases.

However, Tracey Cavanaugh from the DA's office requested yet another extension, this time for 90 days.

Cavanaugh claimed the DA's office had been unable to locate Barthold's memo among hundreds of boxes of records from the 16 death penalty cases similar to Abu-Jamal's up for appeals based on *Williams v. Pennsylvania*, a case in which the U.S. Supreme Court held that a judge was constitutionally required to recuse himself where he was previously involved in the case as prosecutor. The extension, she said, would provide time to search through the files of all 70



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Supporters gather after court hearing for Mumia in Philadelphia, Feb. 26.

capital cases when Castille was district attorney.

Judge Tucker questioned the request for an extension, noting that he was the one to point out the existence of Barthold's memo from his in-camera review of boxes of files in Abu-Jamal's case last September. Tucker scheduled another status report for March 27, with a hearing on April 30.

Attorneys for Abu-Jamal, Judith Ritter and Sam Spital of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, agreed to the extension on the ground that the district attorney's office, now under new DA Larry Krasner, has indicated that it will be reconsidering its position on all the Williams-based appeals.

Gathered outside the court after the hearing, Abu-Jamal's supporters promised to be back in court in March and April, vowing to keep up the pressure on Krasner to do the right thing — free Mumia Abu-Jamal! □

# On the picket line

By **Alex Bolchi and Sue Davis**

## NYC Teamsters train to be ‘sanctuary union’

Teamsters in New York City's Joint Council 16 voted Sept. 13 to become a “sanctuary union.” A third of its 120,000 members are immigrants. Now, staff and workers are being schooled on their rights under U.S. law. Applying the principle, “Union solidarity first, immigration status second,” the Consortium for Worker Education walked a class through the difference between an administrative warrant and a judicial one. Under the Fourth Amendment, only a judicial warrant allows authorities to search a home or business or make an arrest.

A key part of the training is how to bargain future contracts that contain clauses forcing employers to follow proper procedures before granting federal authorities access to a worksite. The training also includes information on what workers should do if stopped while driving or approached at home.

The Teamsters' decision to openly challenge Trump's draconian deportation practices came after the loss of one of its members. Eber García Vásquez, 54, a married father of three U.S.-born children, was detained on Aug. 24 when he showed up for a routine appointment. Despite no criminal record and two pending green card applications, García was whisked back to Guatemala on Oct. 6. (OTPL, Workers World, Oct. 12)

Teamsters JC16 posted Jan. 23 on @sanctuaryunion: “We are getting letters from all over the country cheering our decision to become a sanctuary union. Thanks for all the support!” Union solidarity forever!

## Restaurant workers: End sexual harassment and fight for ‘One Fair Wage’

Chapters of Restaurant Opportunities Centers United held #NotOnTheMenu rallies and actions Feb. 13 demanding an end to sexual harassment in the restaurant industry. ROC's slogan for its National Day of Action was “Restaurant workers face the worst sexual harassment of any industry — and we've had enough!”

To reinforce their demands, ROC issued a booklet on Feb. 12 titled “Better Wages, Better Tips: Restaurants Flourish with One Fair Wage.” Of 6 million tipped workers in the U.S., ROC reports that “the vast majority [are] women and disproportionately workers of color.” Under an antiquated, unjust federal law, workers in 43 states can be paid as little as \$2.13 an hour. “As a result, tipped workers live in poverty and depend on food stamps at rates twice that of the general population.”

Statistics show that in seven states that have adopted OFW, sexual harassment is lower, as are poverty rates, especially for workers of color, while wages are higher, and employment rates and industry growth are equal or higher.

## Atlanta paratransit drivers strike for safety and respect

Chants of “We move this city!” and “No justice! No peace!” rocked Atlanta on Feb. 14 as more than 70 mostly African-American Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority paratransit drivers staged a one-day strike. Members of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 732 were protesting MARTA's outsourcing and the increasing neglect of the buses, which hurt riders with disabilities, elderly riders and the drivers.

Stanley Smalls, ATU executive board member, told the Feb. 14 Atlanta Journal Constitution that MARTA does nothing to upgrade its aging fleet: a wheel fell off one of the decrepit buses during a recent trip and exhaust fumes sicken passengers.

MARTA outsourced the paratransit services to MV Transportation in 2016. “The goal of these private transportation companies is not to improve transit service [but] boost their profits,” said Local 732 President Michael Majette in an ATU statement. “They do that by gutting transit service for seniors and people with disabilities, cutting corners on safety, and beating down the working people who provide this important service. This is about the civil right of all residents and visitors of Atlanta to safe, reliable and affordable public transit without regard for their age or disability.”

## SF Labor Council echoes global call: Free Mumia!

A mighty U.S. labor network — the San Francisco Labor Council, chartered in 1893, with over 150 unions representing more than 100,000 union families — is the latest to call for freedom for political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. In a resolution passed unanimously on Feb. 12, the SFLC demanded Philadelphia's District Attorney Larry Krasner, as well as Gov. Tom Wolfe, release all police and prosecutorial files related to Mumia's case.

This resolution, noteworthy since it is from a major U.S. labor organization, also documents international labor's longtime support for Mumia: from Britain's largest union, UNITE, the International Dockworkers Union; and Doro-Chiba, the Japanese railway union; to the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa, the largest union in South Africa, among others. Read the full SFLC statement at [tinyurl.com/sflcmumia/](http://tinyurl.com/sflcmumia/). □

## Bay Area

# Outrage as BART cops kill again

By **Terri Kay**  
Oakland, Calif.

The family of Shaleem Tindle and other members of the community packed a board meeting of the Bay Area Rapid Transit on Feb. 22. They went to show their outrage after seeing a newly released body-camera video of a BART officer killing Tindle, a 28-year-old Black man.

BART had been forced to release the full video after it was partially leaked. The video clearly shows Tindle unarmed and rolling over with his hands up while taking three bullets in the back.

Tindle was killed by BART officer Joseph Mateu on Jan. 3, right across the street from the West Oakland BART station. The cop was back on duty only two weeks after the shooting. The family and community made their demands clear at the board meeting: Take Mateu off duty, fire him, charge and prosecute him for murder, and disarm BART police!

Family attorney John Burris said: “It's pretty clear when I saw the video that Mr. Tindle was shot multiple times in the back at a time it was not apparent that he had a weapon of any kind.” Tindle had been in a fight with another man when Mateu ran up and fired, although he was in no physical danger himself and was not able to see any weapon in play. He never identified himself as a police officer.

KQED News reported that “Marcella Banks, grandmother to Tindle's two children, described him as a family man. ‘I have a quiet rage,’ Banks said. ‘He's walking down the street minding his own damn business, protecting my other daughter who had her hijab on and



WW PHOTO: TERRI KAY

Family of Shaleem Tindle outside BART meeting, Feb. 22.

protecting his wife and his two children while some strange man is doing something to them.”

Over an hour of angry and emotional testimony at the BART Board meeting by family and community included that of Cephus “Uncle Bobby” Johnson, uncle of Oscar Grant, a young Black man shot down by BART officer Johannes Mehserle in 2009. BART Board President Robert Raburn announced they would make no decisions that day. The room erupted in anger, with the family lining up in front and locking arms and everyone else chanting, “No justice! No peace!” The crowd eventually marched out and Raburn adjourned the meeting to continue in a private session.

Cat Brooks of the Anti Police-Terror Project (APTP) stated after the video was finally released: “For a month BART used the corporate media to lie to you about the murder of Shaleem Tindle. Many of you ignored the case because you thought the brother had a gun. Some of us stood up anyway, because even if he did have a gun, we are clear that all violence is state violence and losing a Black life — any Black life — matters. Even now, with the video, the state is so insidious and conniving that they are trying to convince you that you are not seeing what you are seeing in this video. Be clear — the BART PD saw this video and then cleared Joseph Mateu to go back to work.”

APTP had ended their annual Martin Luther King Day march at West Oakland BART, where Tindle was killed, to honor his memory and protest the murder. □



# MILT NEIDENBERG

## ‘fought for the liberation of the workers and oppressed’

By Deirdre Griswold

When Milt Neidenberg joined the group of revolutionaries in Buffalo, N.Y., who would later found Workers World Party, it was the beginning of the anti-communist witch-hunt period that changed everything after World War II.

Milt was a veteran. He had been a sailor in the Pacific during the war, with lingering bouts of malaria to show for it, and he had spent a few years at the City College of New York on the GI Bill. At the urging of his cousin, Dorothy Ballan, and her comrade, Sam Marcy, Milt visited Buffalo.

Milt was looking for something that could make more meaning in his life. With his signature Navy peacoat, his penetrating but warm gaze, and his Brooklyn Jewish humor and charm, he was exotic in depressed, repressed Buffalo — where it seemed that every intersection in the impoverished working-class neighborhoods sported three bars and a church.

What he found was a political outlook that would inform his actions and his ideas for the rest of his life, until he died on Feb. 4, at the age of 96, at home in Brooklyn with his beloved comrade, Rosemary Neidenberg, at his side.

Milt accumulated experiences in the class struggle as a steelworker in Buffalo and later as a unionized worker in New York City. This and his great interest in and study of U.S. labor history and Marxism eventually made him into one of the Party’s leading dispensers of both practical and theoretical advice to a new generation eager to fight the bosses.

In Buffalo, Milt followed in the footsteps of another Party founder, Vince Copeland, and got a job at Bethlehem Steel — a plant with 16,000 workers at the time. In 1950, at the height of McCarthyism, Copeland had been fired for leading a wildcat strike there. In response, all the workers walked off their jobs. They stayed out for three days as the company and top bureaucrats in the Steelworkers Union frantically tried to end the strike.

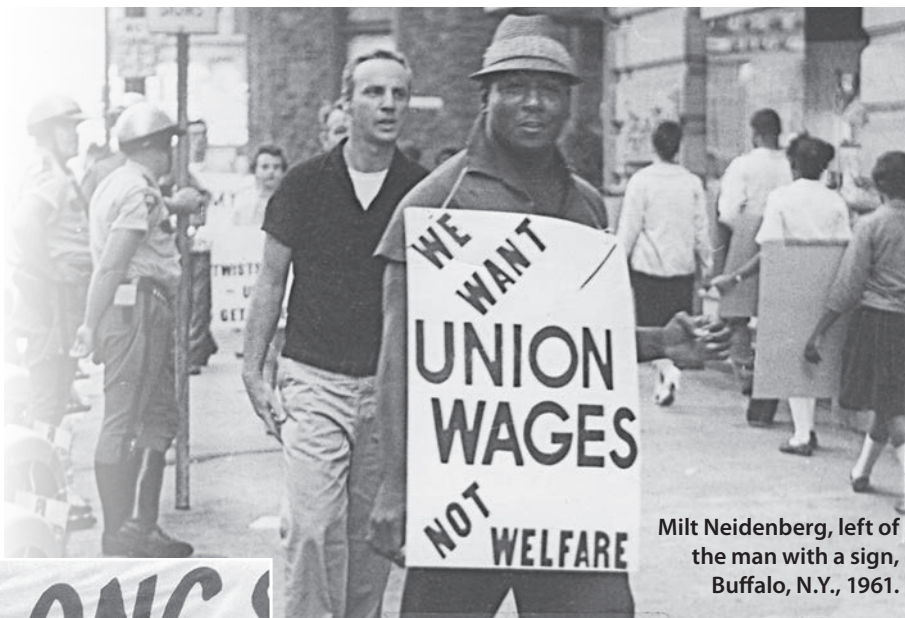
Milt became a steelworker when the union militancy of earlier periods — the great organizing battles of the 1930s and the powerful strike wave of 1946 — was at an ebb. The Korean War was on. An orgy of anti-communism led to the widespread firing of radicals and the execution of the Rosenbergs — and union leaders were going along with the bosses. He stuck it out in the plant and learned the hard lessons of how to fight for the workers in a period of extreme reaction.

He would much later give a series of classes for members of Workers World Party that discussed the political problems facing the working class after the tremendous struggles and gains of the 1930s. (Most are available on YouTube) As Milt explained, the bitterness that existed because of a deep split in the world communist movement had a chilling effect on labor’s struggles.

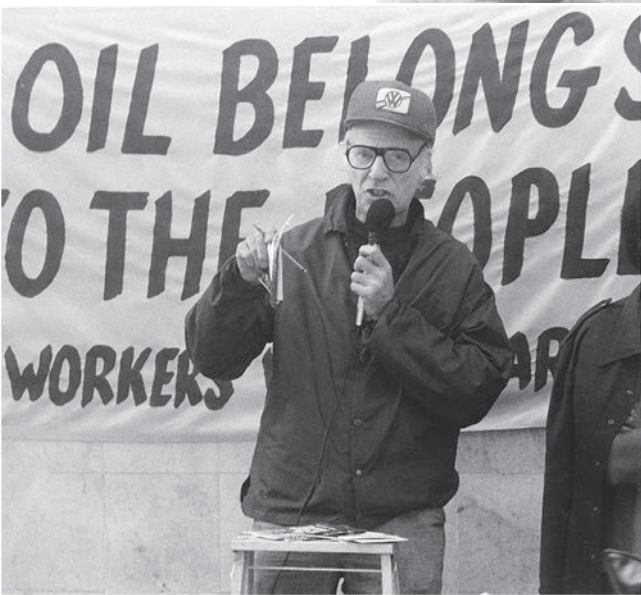
The Communist Party, which had led very heroic organizing struggles during the Depression, endorsed the Roosevelt government, especially when the U.S. and the USSR became allies in World War II. The CP supported a wage freeze and a no-strike pledge during the war. Profits were also supposedly frozen, but in fact, the corporations made out like bandits on war contracts. A major reason for the big strike wave in 1946 was that wages were still at Depression levels.



Neidenberg on picket line in 1968 supporting community control of schools.



Milt Neidenberg, left of the man with a sign, Buffalo, N.Y., 1961.



Speaking at a street rally in 1979.

The Socialist Workers Party, which had also been involved in important labor struggles in the 1930s, most notably the Minneapolis general strike, opposed the war-time restrictions on labor. Eighteen of its leaders were jailed during the war for violating the Smith Act. (Later, the same act would be used against the CP.)

The Buffalo comrades comprised a branch of the SWP when Milt arrived in the city. But by that time, the Cold War was on and it was the CP, not the SWP, which was being repressed by the U.S. government.

Eventually, the comrades in Buffalo; Youngstown, Ohio (another steel city); and a group in New York City, known collectively as the Marcy tendency, left the SWP in 1958 after more than a decade of deep differences over that party’s accommodation to anti-Sovietism.

Milt and Rosie were among the stalwarts who then founded Workers World Party on Jan 1, 1959. It stood out for its support of all the socialist countries against imperialism and internal counterrevolution — as well as its position on the Black struggle in the U.S. WWP went beyond supporting Civil Rights and an end to segregation to upholding the right of oppressed nations to self-determination.

The Neidenbergs moved to New York in the 1960s and from then on were engaged in the many struggles led by the Party across the country. At this point, let’s hear from some of the scores of activists who worked with and learned from Milt over the years.

### Decades of revolutionary advice to workers

At the membership meeting of United Steelworkers Local 8751, Boston School Bus Drivers Union, held on Feb. 15, **President Andre Francois** and **Vice President Stevan Kirschbaum** led a tribute to Brother Milt Neidenberg: “For 44 years, from the time of the union’s three-strike founding struggle in the 1970s, through subsequent contract battles, strikes, rallies, political campaigns and daily skirmishes with the companies and their state, up to only weeks before his death, comrade Milt was the mentor, teacher and adviser to the leaders of this militant, fighting, majority Black, Brown and immigrant local.

“Guided by decades of collective ‘on the line’ experience of the Party and his ‘Marxism is as Marxism does’ philosophy, Milt provided invaluable political analysis, relationship-of-forces assessments, brilliant and creative tactical advice, and ever-present passionate solidarity. He exemplified revolutionary Bolshevik unionism and, until his last breath, fought for the liberation of the workers and oppressed.” At the close of the tribute, the membership voted unanimously for an honoring resolution and a contribution of \$1,000 to continue his life’s work.

**Bill Doares** first met Milt in May 1968: “The burning issue in the city was the racist teachers’ strike against Black community control. Milt spoke about how he, a lifelong unionist, had crossed a Federation of Teachers’

picket line to teach in Ocean-Hill Brownsville (in Brooklyn) and support the Black community. Here was this middle-aged white unionist with a classic Brooklyn accent, a WWII Navy veteran, Teamster and former steelworker who was standing with the Black community against racism. He also organized delegations of comrades to go to New Jersey to support the United Black Brothers, Black autoworkers fighting racism at the Linden and Mahwah auto plants.

“Milt organized interventions and disruptions against utility, rent and transit fare hikes at City Council and public service commission hearings. He helped to set up the Center for United Labor Action, whose slogan was: ‘If you don’t have a union, fight to get one. If you have a union, fight to make it fight.’ Our intervention in a major telephone workers’ strike promoted solidarity between the mostly male craft workers and the unorganized, mostly women Black and Latinx operators. It led to a successful organizing campaign among the operators, led by comrades Sue Steinman and Gavrielle Gemma.”

**Donna Lazarus:** “Milt was our stalwart champion in the face of greedy, vicious bosses. We learned how to never stop fighting for our rights as workers, Black and white, all nationalities, women and men, together. Milt was always willing to try to help us in our struggles on the job. He gave us his time and his vast experience.”

**David Sole and Joyce Sole:** “It is doubtful that our generation would have been able to find our way to revolutionary Marxism-Leninism without Milt and the other Party founders. Or we would have made so many avoidable mistakes. The invaluable guidance I [David] personally got from Milt, especially in the early years when I went into General Motors’ Fleetwood Plant, was critical. I can’t count how many letters and especially phone calls went between us as a young communist tried to navigate in a plant of over 5,000 workers.

“Figuring out how to fight the company and maneuver around inadequate (at best) union leaders was always Milt’s forte. This was especially true when GM fired the ‘Fleetwood 10’ after we took leadership of a two-day wildcat strike. Then over two years of struggle followed to first defeat union officials who betrayed us and then defeat the company when our grievances were reinstated by the Constitutional Convention Appeals Committee. Through it all Milt was only a phone call away.”

**Martha Grevatt:** “Many times over the years, as a Party labor activist, I sought Milt’s wise advice. His thinking on the crisis of leadership in the current U.S. labor movement as well as his ability to apply classic Marxist economics to the contemporary crisis of capitalist overproduction — both of which have had a devastating impact on autoworkers like myself — informed many articles that I wrote for this newspaper. His comments on the regular conference calls that we had as a fraction to support the fired Boston school bus drivers were a tre-



Organizing campaign to free NYC subways.

WW PHOTOS





WW PHOTO: MINNIE BRUCE PRATT

Rosie Neidenberg, Milt Neidenberg and Leslie Feinberg, 2008.

mendous contribution to our discussions, both theoretically and tactically.”

**Fred Goldstein:** “Comrade Milt was a truly class-conscious worker who was part of the Marcy tendency in Buffalo during the formative years of Workers World Party. He was a highly political steelworker, steeped in Marxism and Leninism, who used his political knowledge to promote the class struggle in the unions. Milt tutored several generations of labor unionists to fight against the reactionary bureaucratic tide within the U.S. labor movement, while at the same time doing everything to strengthen the unions against the bosses. He was an exemplary revolutionary who promoted proletarian internationalism, anti-imperialism, anti-racism, immigrants’ rights and women’s and LGBTQ rights within the unions.”

**Bob McCubbin:** “Milt had a way of always bringing the conversation around to politics, always offering a class-conscious, Marxist analysis, which, I had to admit, made sense to me, the son of a widowed mother, a poor, low-wage worker with four children who was always scrambling to make ends meet. Rosemary and Milt’s self-sacrificing dedication to human liberation through communist revolution moved this young idealist to develop a deep love for them and, ultimately, to join them.”

**Minnie Bruce Pratt:** “For almost three months in the spring of 2002, when I was out of work, Milt taught me Marxist economics. Every week I would come to him with questions like ‘A McDonald’s worker cooks a hamburger that gets eaten. Not like a car! Where’s the surplus value?’ He said: ‘The current socialization of labor is marked by subdivision of tasks into smaller and smaller units of production, and into more and more geographically distant or isolated units of production. The challenge is to make visible the hidden creation of value.’ My first ‘homework assignment’ from him was to make visible that value in a flier for the Stop Workfare campaign. People on public assistance, the majority women of color, were being forced to do city maintenance jobs for no pay. Later I wrote poems making visible the worth and connection between workers’ lives.”

**Edward Yudelovich:** “In September 1972, a group of Palestinians took Israeli athletes hostage to exchange them for 200 Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners in Israeli jails. Both Palestinians and Israelis were murdered by West German police and military forces, resulting in a wave of worldwide anger against the Palestinians. Sam Marcy asked me to write a leaflet explaining to workers this complicated issue and to consult with Milt. Milt understood the importance for Jewish revolutionaries and communists to support the Palestinian people and refute the Big Lie of Zionism — that the state of Israel is the antidote to the bigotry of anti-Semitism — when instead Israel has been one of history’s worst bigots and aggressors in its 70-year-old racist occupation of Palestine.”

*A memorial meeting will be held on March 31 in New York City, place and time to be announced.*

Columbia University workers and allies, Jan. 27



PHOTO: SEIU 1199

# NO UNION BUSTING at Columbia University

By John Steffin  
New York City

Unions and allies at Columbia University are gearing up for a militant protest against “right-to-work-for-less” right-winger Mark Mix, scheduled to speak on campus Feb. 27. That’s the day after the U.S. Supreme Court hears the union-busting Janus v. AFSCME case. University union organizers are calling on all union workers in New York City to join them — not just because the Janus ruling will impact a large segment of workers — but because when workers fight together, they win.

Mix is president of the National Right to Work Foundation, largely responsible for pushing anti-union legislation across the U.S. in the last decade. While the foundation may not be mounting a campaign to terrorize oppressed people in the streets, like the Nazis and Klan are trying to do, “right to work” is merely a different way of creating hell for working and oppressed people in the U.S.

In fall 2017, students, workers and community members from Columbia University and across New York City marched to protest the College Republicans’ decision to invite white supremacists to speak on campus. This is the determined opposition planned for Feb. 27 to “right-to-work-for-less” Mix.

“Right-to-work” law is not just a cleverly named policy created by the right wing to bust unions and erode the power of working-class people. “Right to work” was originally a racist attempt to drive a wedge between Black and white workers. The policy was developed by Texas businessman and Ku Klux Klan sympathizer Vance Muse, at the height of the 1930s U.S. labor struggles. Rabid white supremacists like Muse were worried about the equality between Black and white workers promoted by unions like the Congress of Industrial Organizations. Other capitalists saw that dividing workers could lower wages and eliminate benefits, and began adopting Muse’s program.

Today, the National Right to Work Foundation continues that racist legacy, especially in relation to the Janus case, which Mix was invited to speak on. The Feb. 26 Supreme Court hearing will feature legal arguments as to whether “right-to-work” legislation applies to the public sector, which is composed primarily of workers of color and women.

If the Supreme Court sides with the right wing — and, with Trump’s recent appointment of Chief Justice Neil Gorsuch, it seems likely — this could be a huge blow to one of the last bastions of working-class power in the U.S. Currently, barely 11 percent of all workers are unionized, with a majority of them in the public sector.

The legislation allows workers to opt out of union dues

while still requiring the union to support these workers. With this loss of funding, a union becomes less able to fight off attacks by the bosses.

And the attacks won’t stop. In each contract negotiation, the bosses will fight to lower wages, roll back benefits and chip away at the union’s membership base. New workers, without understanding the importance of unions, will only experience the weakened unions and assume it’s not worthwhile to pay dues, further eroding union power and reducing union numbers.

## Fighting ‘right to work’ at Columbia

At Columbia University, a private employer, a negative Janus ruling would not apply to most employees. However, the National Right to Work Foundation has still played a role in helping the Columbia administration to weaken working-class power on campus.

The foundation submitted an amicus brief in support of the Columbia administration in its negotiations with graduate workers who voted to unionize in 2014. Recently, the university officially refused to recognize the graduate workers’ union. Graduate students are a major source of labor in the academy, both in teaching classes and in conducting research that gains grants and funding for the university. They are workers, but the university as well as the foundation refuse to acknowledge this.

Columbia welcomed the National Right to Work Foundation support because, for the last several decades, the university has been waging a war on its workers. While Columbia has a facade of progressivism, it behaves no differently than a typical capitalist firm, which means busting unions, lowering wages and rolling back benefits. While replacing full-time faculty with precarious adjunct professors, Columbia has also filled its board of trustees with bankers, CEOs of investment firms and real estate moguls.

On the afternoon of Feb. 27 there will be a press conference to give a working-class perspective on “right-to-work” legislation and the need to protest Mix’s appearance at Columbia. See [facebook.com/events/1372466682859407/](https://facebook.com/events/1372466682859407/)

On the evening of Feb. 27, join with union members and allies on campus in protesting “right-to-work-for-less” Mix — including 1199SEIU, United Auto Workers Local 2110, Barnard College Contingent Faculty and the Graduate Workers Union, as well as student groups like Student Worker Solidarity and the Liberation Coalition.

More info at [facebook.com/events/755569144634545/](https://facebook.com/events/755569144634545/)

After decades of attacks on unions, workers are forging solidarity to reverse the tide, and communities that benefit from strong working-class organizations are joining in support.

Come out to Columbia University on Feb. 27 to say: Unions, yes! When we fight together, we win! □

# Hospital union rallies vs cutbacks

More than 1,000 members of 1199SEIU union came out to an emergency morning rally at Madison Square Garden in New York on Feb. 21. Their aim was to begin to mobilize against the crisis facing health care due to lack of adequate funding. Following talks by a multinational cross section of members, including union President George Gresham, home care workers, drivers, dietary workers and others vowed to defend patient care and their own union benefits. “We will unite to save Medicaid! Our health care is in trouble ... we are here to stand up and fight!” Maurice, a lab technician, told Workers World.

The union distributed a statement pointing out that for-profit insurers reap windfall profits, even as health care providers have struggled without reimbursement increases for years. The shortfall in funding leaves hun-

dreds of thousands of low-wage and poor people in New York at risk of losing coverage. Those institutions that provide the safety net of medical care for low-income communities have the greatest risk of closing, 1199SEIU workers explained.

The NY State Nurses Association statement pointed out that during the last year there was a real struggle to maintain funds needed to keep hospitals open and to maintain quality health care. Along with 1199SEIU and other health care unions, the NYSNA is organizing to take demands for adequate funding and no cuts to Albany, the capital, on March 14. They call the upcoming action, “Code Blue Healthcare.” And they will fight for what they called for on Feb 21: “Health care is a right!”

— Story and photo by Anne Pruden, 1199SEIU retiree





# WORKING PEOPLE'S DAY

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

The Working People's Day of Action was held coast-to-coast on Feb. 24, with actions in dozens of U.S. cities calling out thousands of workers. The day was initiated by the workers' rights organization, Jobs with Justice.

The protests were timed to defy the reactionary Janus vs. American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Council 31 case due to be heard by the U.S. Supreme Court on Feb. 26. The case threatens the right of public sector unions to collect fees from non-members to cover the negotiating and grievance costs of representing them.

A ruling against AFSCME Council 31, representing workers in Illinois, would be a vicious attack on all public sector unions in the U.S. The outcome could affect more than 5 million government workers in 24 states and the District of Columbia.

The Janus attack is part of an ongoing attempt by billionaire owners to break public sector unions, which now have the majority of U.S. union members. These unions fight for increasing the minimum wage, improved workplace safety, better health care benefits, protection of retirement funds and many other issues.

Public sector unions hold a strong bottom line for better benefits for all workers. Women are 57 percent of public sector union members. (National Women's Law Center, 2012) One in 5 African Americans work in a public sector job. (New York Times, May 24, 2015)

The Feb. 24 date also commemorates a turning point in the historic 1968 Memphis, Tenn., sanitation strike by Black and other nationally oppressed workers to be represented by a union, which began Feb. 22. That's when over 1,300 African-American men, represented by AFSCME Local 1733, walked out on strike. The men were then making 65 cents an hour under life-threatening work conditions.

On Feb. 24, Black leaders and ministers formed a citywide organization to support the strike, but the city obtained a court injunction to keep the union from picketing. Black ministers called out their congregations to march, beginning daily on Feb. 26. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who first visited Memphis to show solidarity with the workers and the community on March 18, was assassinated there on April 4. AFSCME signed a contract ending the strike on April 16.

Gregory Floyd of Teamsters Local 37 in New York City said in an interview with the Feb. 23 Chief-Leader: "Workers' rights and civil rights are one, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. knew this and ultimately died in the fight for



New York City

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

equality and dignity in the workplace. The fight must continue. The Janus case is a grave reminder of this."

## Coast-to-coast coordinated actions

Workers turned out in cities across the country Feb. 24 to say "No right to work for less laws."

The biggest demonstration was the continuing strike of public school teachers in **WEST VIRGINIA**. Teachers in all 55 counties walked out Feb. 22-23 in an historic action to fight against poverty-level wages and accelerating health care costs. (See coverage at workers.org.)

Workers World Party members in **BUFFALO, N.Y.**, and **Washington, D.C.**, raised the West Virginia teachers' struggle in those cities. Union members from the Civil Service Employees Association, Communications Workers, AFSCME and other unions were there, as well as community supporters.

In **CHICAGO**, about 3,000 people from a broad array of unions rallied in Daley Plaza, while in **NEW YORK CITY** thousands more gathered in Foley Square in front of the Federal Building. It was a day, as one speaker put it, to tell "the Agent Orange head in the White House" that workers were preparing to resist.

There was an air of excitement in the crowd. People were taking group photos to remember the day by, along with T-shirts, caps, buttons, placards and other paraphernalia from their unions.

Workers showed an interest in socialist literature, with hundreds of copies of this paper distributed, along with thousands of related leaflets. At least one unionist took a Workers World placard with "No right to work for less" and put it up in a tent where union material was distributed.

Estela Vazquez, executive vice president of 1199SEIU, told cheering union sisters and brother: "Our future is not really in danger because labor is standing up, labor is organizing, labor is uniting and labor is resisting. We are ready to resist and we will win." She ended her speech with the slogan from the Chilean resistance: "Workers united will never be defeated."

When New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo spoke, his elec-



Buffalo, N.Y.



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

toral platitudes were greeted with boos. The speakers with the most critical and sharpest talks were received warmly, like Baxter Leach, long-time AFSCME member and a sanitation worker who participated in the historic 1968 Memphis strike.

Several thousand union activists and community members rallied in **PHILADELPHIA**. Many elected officials and labor leaders, including AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka and SEIU President Mary Kay Henry, ad-

## Workers shut down

*Continued from page 1*

cipients since that time.

As one 21-year veteran junior high teacher told Workers World, "I didn't become a teacher in this state for the money, but at one time, the insurance seemed like an incentive to stay here and teach." The state's legislature was majority Democrat in 2011, with Republicans taking control of the House and Senate in 2014. But state workers view both capitalist parties as being negligent when it comes to fixing PEIA.

The right-wing-led legislature introduced bills advocated by the billionaire Koch brothers, such as "a payroll deception bill," misnamed "payroll protection," which would stop union dues from being deducted from members' checks. The bill was introduced in deliberate retaliation for the first round of teacher walkouts on Feb. 2. The Koch Family Foundation funds a number of anti-worker initiatives throughout the U.S.

Another bill that has shaken people up would eliminate seniority rights, which would allow blatant discrimination and favoritism practices by the state. Seniority was won through previous historic union battles.

Since 2009, the West Virginia Legislature has been pushing for-profit charter schools. The education unions have been successful in defeating the charter school bills each year, but new charter school bills have reared their ugly heads in this session as well. On Feb. 22, the legislature took education off their agenda, which was a victory, since that delays moving forward on the anti-worker seniority bill and the charter school bill.

For the last several years, working-class and oppressed people in West Virginia have faced an onslaught of reactionary bills, from passage of the "right to work



Washington, D.C.

WW PHOTO



# Y OF ACTION



WW PHOTO: ELLIE DORRITIE

MADISON, WIS. WW PHOTO: SAM OLSON; COLUMBUS, OHIO PHOTO: MARK ESTEY

dressed the rally. One of the high points came when a feeder march of several hundred workers from various SEIU locals joined the rally at Thomas Paine Plaza. Their lead banner read in part, “No Court Case Will Hold Us Back.”

Workers gave an overwhelmingly positive response to leaflets raising the connection between growing U.S. war threats, including against the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, and the increased attacks here on unions and on working and poor people generally. Many in the crowd remarked that the record Pentagon budget should be used to fund people’s needs.

Over 1,000 people in **COLUMBUS, OHIO**, ignored the driving rain and marched to the center of state government. The vast majority were from the Ohio Education Association. Teachers and students demanded safe schools as well as fighting against newly introduced “Right to work for less” laws in the state legislature. There was much enthusiastic discussion among participants about the statewide teachers’ strike in neighboring West Virginia.

In **MADISON, WIS.**, Workers World Party stood in soli-

darity with public sector unions against austerity, with the slogan, “Stop the attacks on unions and build people’s power!” Wisconsin was ground zero for workers’ struggles in 2015, when anti-labor Gov. Scott Walker and the right-wing legislature rammed through a “Right to work for less” law.

Workers fought back with tremendous community support. By the hundreds of thousands, they occupied the state Capitol building here during February and March. The 2015 “Right to work for less” attack in Wisconsin continued the bosses’ 2011 campaign that has virtually eliminated collective bargaining for public sector workers and imposed wage cuts on state workers.

The Janus vs. AFSCME case is one part of an organized, coordinated campaign of class war funded by capitalist billionaires. In Wisconsin, the attack has been bankrolled by the Bradley Foundation, the Koch brothers and other bosses. In other states, big business, Wall Street and Pentagon interests lead the assault.

*Contributing to this report were Ben Carroll, Ellie Dorritie, G. Dunkel, Sam Olson, Susan Schnur and Jeff Sorel.*

## own West Virginia schools

for less” bill in 2016 to racist voter ID laws to many anti-choice bills further restricting access to abortion.

At the beginning of the West Virginia legislative session in mid-January, a bill was introduced to require all schools to provide an elective course on the Bible. Fortunately, that bill is not currently moving ahead.

### Racist governor and Big Oil

In addition to the reactionary legislature, the workers in motion are taking aim at the major oil and gas companies that have been fracking in the state for several years and stealing from citizens long before that.

Earlier this month, Lissa Lucas, a Democratic House of Delegates candidate, was physically removed from the Capitol building for the “crime” of listing the oil and gas companies that donate money to legislators. Lucas’ courageous action was in response to a bill, sponsored by Big Oil, that would allow companies to drill on landowners’ property without their consent. (Newsweek, Feb. 11)

While Lucas is a candidate for the capitalist Democratic Party, even she was not immune from being dragged out of the House chambers for voicing criticism of Big Oil and its puppet politicians.

Gov. Jim Justice is the richest person in West Virginia. He owns several non-union mines and has ties to Big Oil and Big Coal. Justice prides himself on being a personal friend of Trump and, like the bigot in chief, is not shy about openly expressing white supremacist views.

At a Town Hall meeting in early February, teachers raised the idea of increasing a severance tax on oil and gas to help pay for a salary increase for education workers. The racist billionaire governor responded by saying, “There’s not a Chinaman’s chance.” (wowktv.com, Feb. 6)

The banking industry is also ripping off the workers in

West Virginia. Research from the state’s 2018 Executive Budget Report states: “The percentage of each citizen’s income allocated to payment of state debt to the banks and financial institutions is 2.8% or \$1,020 per citizen.”

Jerry Goldberg, an anti-foreclosure organizer with the Moratorium NOW! Coalition in Detroit and a veteran activist who has stood up to the banks throughout the country, commented to Workers World: “The debt owed by the average worker in West Virginia is much higher than that in most of the other states. Therefore, there are huge profits being made.” What is more concerning is the average salary in West Virginia is \$23,000, which is poverty level. Meanwhile, the average teacher’s salary is only \$44,701. (pbsnewshour, Feb. 23)

### Struggle spills over to other sectors

Inspired by the militant fight waged by education workers, state and public employees staged a rally at the Capitol building in Charleston on Feb. 19, organized by United Electrical Workers Local 170. On Feb. 23, nurses and hospital workers in Welch conducted a walk-in. These workers also have PEIA coverage and receive low pay. Pittsburgh, in Pennsylvania only 40 miles from the northern panhandle of West Virginia, also seems to be on the verge of a teachers’ strike.

While education and state workers initially directed their anger at the racist, billionaire governor and the arch-reactionary legislature, they are now taking aim at Big Oil and the banks.

It is becoming clearer by the day that capitalism has nothing to offer workers and oppressed people throughout the world. Only a socialist system can guarantee a society that provides basic necessities for human survival. □

## Liberation history empowers new generation



WW PHOTO: GLORIA VERDIEU

Bree Davis, Deforest R. Hancock, Monica Moorehead, Dominic De Los Reyes and John Parker

By Bob McCubbin

The meeting room of the Brown Building in San Diego’s Azalea Park neighborhood was filled to capacity. The featured speaker at the Feb. 18 Workers World Party forum was longtime leader Monica Moorehead, Secretariat member of the party and its presidential candidate in 2016.

Preceding Moorehead at the podium were Deforest R. Hancock, representing the Ordinary People Power organization and, as a formerly homeless person herself, speaking on the homeless crisis in San Diego and nationally; Dominic De Los Reyes, representing Anakbayan-San Diego and offering a detailed analysis of the struggle in the Philippines; Bree Davis, a key organizer of the 2017 San Diego Women’s March, speaking on the personal identity struggle she faced as one of thousands of Korean babies adopted by U.S. couples; and John Parker, Workers World Party leader and candidate for the U.S. Senate on the Peace & Freedom Party ticket, speaking on the revolutionary use of bourgeois election campaigns.

Moorehead’s presentation was a comprehensive and riveting overview of the history of Black struggle in the U.S., followed by a discussion with participation by audience members of some of the issues raised in the speeches. The meeting ended with everyone forming a circle, holding hands and reciting the Assata Shakur chant that begins, “It is our duty to fight for our freedom.”

The meeting was organized and chaired by San Diego WWP branch leader and longtime activist Gloria Verdieu. □

## Meeting features freedom fighter



WW PHOTO

Freedom fighter Takiyah Thompson from Durham, N.C., shown top center, spoke to a packed house at the Gainsboro Library in Roanoke, Va., on Feb. 24. Thompson faced charges for taking down a Confederate statue in Durham last summer, but the charges she and other defendants were on trial for were dismissed by the prosecutor Feb. 20 for lack of evidence.

The Black Liberation Month event was sponsored by the Roanoke Peoples’ Power Network. Other participants included people’s fighters from Lexington and Charlottesville, Va., and other locations.

— WW staff



# Monica Moorehead to Black students: ‘Become an activist’

*This is part 3 of an edited talk given by WWP national leader Monica Moorehead at “A gala celebrating Black activism,” sponsored by the Pace University Black Student Union in New York City on Feb. 1.*

When I was a teenager, the Vietnam War was a stimulus for the economy, providing a certain level of prosperity for white workers but not for Black workers. In fact, if not for the rebellions during the mid-1960s in Watts, Detroit, Newark and elsewhere, industrial unions like the autoworkers and the steelworkers would not have opened their doors to Black workers. That is the truth.

But the technological revolution in the mid-1980s — the computer age bringing in high-tech and low pay — has reversed these gains in terms of wages and benefits. This revolution ushered in the period of deindustrialization, and the loss of good-paying union jobs in the auto and steel plants that helped elevate the living standards of millions of Black workers in the North and Midwest.

As industrial manufacturing shut down, millions of workers have been forced to work two or three jobs in fast food, retail or health care industries to keep a roof over their heads and food on the table. These working conditions have caused a deep pauperization among people of color and women.

This struggle by workers to survive has also given rise to the “\$15 an hour and a union” struggle led by Black and Latinx women. And it’s not just workers of color who have become victimized by the impact of the high-tech era, but young whites as well. This reality was expressed in the 2011 Occupy Wall Street movement, where we first heard the phrase “the 1% vs. the 99%.” Though those numbers are not really accurate, the overall sentiment was clear.

Privileged whites graduating with degrees from some of the most prominent universities were getting a rude awakening as the job market was closing to them when they expected to have a better life than their parents. The Occupy movement was short-lived when the local police brutally repressed the occupations, city by city. But it was a very important wake-up call for young white people, giving them just a glimpse of what people of color have been up against for decades and centuries.

To their credit, many of them joined the Black Lives Matter movement to show solidarity with Black and Latinx people, who are the constant targets of terrorism — a police war claiming more and more lives, especially of youth of color, every year.

## Misogynist Trump and globalization

Now, we have just experienced dealing with one year under Trump — an open white supremacist who is misogynist and xenophobic. But as horrible and offensive as he is, are his policies really any different from other, previous presidents, including the Democratic ones?

For instance, under President Obama’s two terms, there were more deportations of immigrants than under any previous Republican administration. Recently, it was revealed that, during her presidential bid, Hillary Rodham Clinton protected a sexual abuser on her campaign

The #MeToo and #TimesUp campaigns are exposing all forms of sexual violence, mainly aimed at girls and women, in every aspect of society, from the workplace to schools to Hollywood. But these are not isolated incidents that came out of nowhere. They are interconnected with current material conditions on a global scale.

staff. Wasn’t she portrayed as a champion of women to counter Trump winning the presidency?

The #MeToo and #TimesUp campaigns are exposing all forms of sexual violence, mainly aimed at girls and women, in every aspect of society, from the workplace to schools to Hollywood. But these are not isolated incidents that came out of nowhere. They are interconnected with current material conditions on a global scale.

This gets to the heart of what capitalism is, the effect it has on so many people, and why it can’t be reformed. Capitalism is an economic system that has to expand or it will die. It must expand its markets in order to sell its goods, or it will face collapse on a global scale. And the ultimate impact of the process of capitalism cannot be controlled by any individual or by any policy under capitalist so-called democracy.

The rich have to get richer, and so the poor wind up getting poorer. Consider the Jan. 22 report from Oxfam, which stated that approximately 82 percent of the wealth generated in 2017 went to the richest 1 percent of the global population, while the poorest half saw no increase at all. Oxfam said billionaires would have seen an uptick of \$762 billion in 2017 — enough to end extreme poverty seven times over. The U.S. leads the exploitation with the widest gap between rich and poor compared to any other rich, capitalist country. ([tinyurl.com/ybkmx07j](http://tinyurl.com/ybkmx07j))

We are currently entering year 11 of a capitalist crisis, which is part of overall capitalist globalization. More profits are being made with fewer and fewer jobs for millions of unemployed and part-time workers on a global scale. Global internal changes in the capitalist system render larger and larger sections of the oppressed working class “expendable” as far as capitalism is concerned.

To the extent that capitalism no longer needs the labor of youth of color, they are subject to murder, prison, in effect, to a war that threatens the very survival of Black and Brown people. I was able to go to Ferguson, Mo., just a few months after the 2014 youth rebellion against the police murder of Michael Brown. There, Black youth told me directly that what they wanted was to join a union, in order to get a decent-paying job to help support their families, not to be targeted by police.

There is an economic and social basis for the increase in police repression and

murder in Black and Brown communities, and in the increase in mass incarceration. And there is an economic and social basis for the increase in resistance to this oppression.

Workers World Party believes that the Black Lives Matter movement represents more than a continuation of the centuries-old struggle by African-American people against racist state terror. We believe that the Black Lives Matter uprising, which is international in scope, reflects the awakening of a section of the working class being transformed into anti-capitalist consciousness by capitalist globalization and technology.

This section of the working class is fighting the internalization of oppression through all forms of resistance against their oppressors, including — as they put it — “shutting shit down” and not waiting for some politicians to carry out empty promises.

When some of our youth members in Durham, N.C., took down a Confederate soldier statue just two days after the KKK and Nazis murdered an anti-fascist fighter in Charlottesville, Va., they declared that the people, directly, had the right to take down this symbol of racism and bigotry.

## What hasn’t changed

So, sisters and brothers, much has changed over the many decades since I was your age. Especially in terms of how we communicate with others on a global scale, which has made the world so much smaller, with Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, texting. When I was younger, we had to depend on printed word, snail mail, regular phones. This global change in communications has meant the younger generations are even more informed than 40-plus years ago.

But what hasn’t changed fundamentally is white supremacy, and oppression against women, LGBTQ people, those with disabilities, as well as other forms of inequality. Only the forms have changed, based on the ebbs and flows of the capitalist economy, which is always in crisis.

All of these inequalities are rooted in class society. This keeps us divided, making it very difficult to unite to fight a common enemy — the handful of billionaires who control close to 50 percent of



WW PHOTO: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

the world’s wealth. Trump is a reflection of the capitalist system in crisis, not an isolated incident.

To stop this oppression means being an activist, not just for a week or a month, but for as long as it takes to help liberate humanity from such a horrific system. So many potential revolutionaries have been tragically lost, not only to repression but to internal oppression, being made to feel that every injustice that they have experienced is their fault. Think of how many women have committed suicide or are dealing with post-traumatic depression after being sexually assaulted.

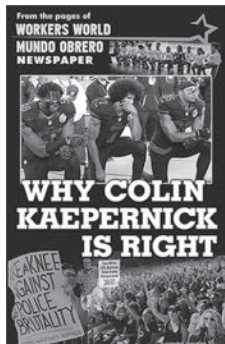
We see this being played out with what is happening with Michigan State University. These women were forced to keep silent for so many years because they were being blamed for what happened to them. But what is happening at MSU is just the tip of the iceberg. It’s not an isolated incident but a systemic one, rooted in centuries of women’s oppression.

Being an activist, being an organizer, affords you the opportunity to understand the systemic nature of all the injustices we face, the opportunity to fight for a better life, not only for one but for all.

The backbone of any progressive movement has been activists and revolutionaries, no matter the differences in ideas, as long as you can unite for a common cause. And it is becoming much easier to become an activist due to Trump! Trump is radicalizing whole new layers of the population who understand the importance of being in the streets, not to be silenced any longer, especially women.

While you are pursuing your dream of a college degree, make social activism a part of your reality. Because your future will depend on that, along with the future of millions of others.

Don’t we all deserve a future that guarantees a right to a job, housing, food, education, health care and full equality, without having to sacrifice one of those rights for the other? As the great abolitionist Frederick Douglass said, “Without struggle, there can be no progress.” □



Learn more. Available online at: [www.workers.org/books](http://www.workers.org/books)

## WHY COLIN KAEPERNICK IS RIGHT

Articles from Workers World/Mundo Obrero

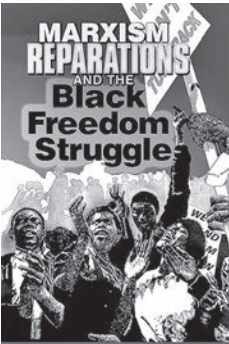
**Excerpt:** ‘Last October, Colin Kaepernick, the African-American former quarterback for National Football League’s San Francisco 49ers, was asked after a game why he was wearing a Muhammad Ali t-shirt. He said, “To pay homage. [Ali] fought a very similar fight and was trying to do what’s right for the people.”’

## MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper.

Edited by Monica Moorehead. Includes:

**Racism, National Oppression & Self-Determination • Black Labor from Chattel Slavery to Wage Slavery • Black Youth: Repression & Resistance • The Struggle for Socialism Is Key • Domestic Workers Demand a Bill of Rights • Black & Brown Unity • Harriet Tubman, Woman Warrior • Alabama’s Black Belt: • The 1965 Watts Rebellion**  
Available at major online booksellers.



COVER GRAPHIC: SAHU BARRON



# Imperialists unite to escalate war on Syria

By Joe Mshahwar

At the end of 2017, millions around the world celebrated the near defeat of Daesh (ISIS/ISIL/IS) by the Syrian Arab Army and its allies as heralding the end of the genocidal U.S.-led war against Syria. It certainly was a turning point in the war, but many feared that the imperialist powers and their allies couldn't afford to lose the linchpin of their strategy to destabilize West Asia.

At that time obvious dangers still remained, including thousands of U.S. soldiers occupying parts of Syria, a Turkish presence in northern Aleppo, pockets of other contra groups, and ceaseless Israeli aggression. Developments in 2018 have proved these fears well founded, with a new shift, imposed by escalations on the part of the imperialists, taking place.

On Jan. 19 Turkey announced Operation Olive Branch, expanding its invasion of Syria from northern Aleppo into Afrin using mercenaries and contras backed by auxiliary support from the Turkish army and airforce. Turkey's stated goal is to destroy the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), who they claim pose an existential threat to Turkey. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated that Olive Branch may encompass all of northern Syria. "From Manbij, we will continue our struggle up to the border with Iraq, until no terrorist is left." (trtworld.com, Jan. 26)

Many analysts insist that this brings Turkey into direct conflict with its NATO ally the United States. However, there is no evidence to suggest that the U.S. didn't coordinate this aggression with Turkey, and the U.S. has done nothing to put real pressure on Turkey. It appears the U.S. was simply using the SDF to keep former Daesh land out of Syrian hands. Now that Daesh is marginalized and the rest of the contra groups are on the ropes, the U.S. is handing the SDF over to Turkey so that more contras can flood into Syria.

Turkey was a primary supporter of Daesh and likely still fulfills that role. Syria's President Bashar Al-Assad rejected the concept that Turkey's role has

changed in an official statement. "The brutal Turkish aggression on the Syrian town of Afrin cannot be separated from the Turkish regime's policy from the first day of Syria's crisis, which was essentially built on supporting terrorism and terrorist organizations, whatever their names." (presstv.com, Jan. 21)

### Where the oil is

U.S.-led coalition jets bombed pro-government forces near Deir ez-Zor in Eastern Syria on Feb. 7. Reports vary widely on the number of casualties, from a few dozen to hundreds. Corporate media openly bragged about claims that Russian private military contractors were killed in this attack, but according to Russian foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova it was not hundreds but just five Russian nationals. (24-may.info, Feb. 15)

The U.S. was quick to blame Russia and Syria for deaths caused by the bombardment, claiming that the SDF was being attacked and the U.S. was acting in self-defense. (cnn.com, Feb. 8) Even if the SDF were under direct threat by Syrian forces, the U.S. has no right to strike Syrian soldiers. In fact, according to international law the U.S. has no right to be in Syria. Suspiciously, this attack occurred in the same region where U.S. airstrikes on the besieged Syrian Arab Army killed over 100 soldiers and laid the basis for a Daesh offensive in 2016, which exposed the U.S. role as the de facto airforce of Daesh. (foxnews.com, Sept. 17, 2016)

The attack by coalition jets on Feb. 7 near Deir ez-Zor marks the most serious direct aggression against Syria by the U.S. since Tomahawk cruise missiles were launched at Syrian airfields last April. In this most recent aggression, the U.S. used the SDF, which it is allowing Turkey to attack in Afrin, as a hollow pretext for the massacre.

This part of Syria holds most of its oil resources. The Pentagon's willingness to maintain an aggressive occupation of this area exposes part of the reason the U.S. is in Syria in the first place. The Rus-

sian Foreign Ministry, often reluctant to level accusations, could not help but point this out in the aftermath of the airstrikes. "The true aim of the illegal presence of American forces on Syrian territory is not the fight against the Islamic State," but the "capture and retention of economic assets." (nytimes.com, Feb. 8)

### Israeli jet shot down

In a completely unprecedented move, Syria shot down an Israeli military jet targeting its territory on Feb. 7. Israel has violated Syrian airspace throughout the entire war, bombing wherever it pleases without military retaliation. It has also directly supported contra groups from the occupied Golan Heights in southern Syria. This is the first time Syria has shot down an Israeli jet since the 1982 war on Lebanon. In doing so, Syria has exposed Israeli vulnerability.

One of Syria's most important allies, the Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah, declared the downing of the Israeli jet the "start of a new strategic phase." (english.almanar.com, Feb. 10) This defensive action by the Syrian state must also be put in the context of increased Israeli aggression toward Lebanon. Israel has been building fortifications inside south Lebanon and has been challenging Lebanese airspace on a routine basis.

Hezbollah has grown exponentially more powerful in the years since Israel suffered defeat at its hands in 2006. While Israel may feel it must confront Hezbollah sooner rather than later to prevent Hezbollah from becoming too strong to defeat, Israel is extremely timid in confronting this challenge to its occupation of Arab lands. Syria's willingness to challenge Israeli air superiority at this decisive moment poses huge risks to Israel's plans in the Levant.

### Syria fights imperialist escalation

Despite these escalations, Syria and its allies are continuing to push for liberation and the territorial integrity of Syria. Syria sent 2,000 volunteer soldiers from the National Defense Forces (NDF) militia into

Afrin on Feb. 19 to fight Turkey alongside the SDF. As the convoy of volunteers entered Afrin it was immediately shelled by Turkey. (english.alarabiya.net, Feb. 20)

Subsequent convoys into Afrin have also been shelled following the deployment of the pro-government NDF. (reuters.com, Feb. 23) Turkey's president has promised to lay siege to Afrin: "Preparations in the field take some time. In the coming days we will lay siege to Afrin city. It's very important that everywhere we go remains secure." (rt.com, Feb. 20)

In the midst of confrontation between Syria and Turkey, the U.S. led the charge against Syria with claims that the Syrian government was creating a humanitarian disaster in the Damascus suburb of eastern Ghouta.

The offensive in eastern Ghouta led by the Syrian government is an effort to stabilize the area around Syria's capital. Death squad groups use Ghouta as a base for attacks against Damascus, killing hundreds of civilians with indiscriminate shelling. Jaish al-Islam, the biggest contra group in the region, has been holding hundreds of thousands of civilians hostage for a number of years.

The U.S. is using this offensive to distract the corporate media from U.S. abandonment of the SDF in Afrin and Syria's stepping up to defend it. The diplomatic pressure on Syria also consistently serves as an attempt to justify imperialist occupation.

The imperialists are in a massive struggle to shift the correlation of forces back in their favor. The war against Syria is potentially in its most dangerous phase, with powers that once fought only through proxies now increasing their direct aggression against Syria and its allies. □


WAR  
WITHOUT VICTORY

by Sara Flounders

*"By revealing the underbelly of the empire, Flounders sheds insight on how to stand up to the imperialist war machine and, in so doing, save ourselves and humanity."*

– Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,  
President, U.N. General Assembly, 2008-2009;  
Foreign Minister of Nicaragua's Sandinista government.

Available at all major online booksellers.  
PentagonAchillesHeel.com



# Return Guantánamo to Cuba

By Cheryl LaBash

Since 1959, Cuba has called for the return of the 45 acres occupied by the U.S. in Cuba's eastern Guantánamo province. Co-ordinated international actions amplified Cuba's demand by marking the Feb. 23 anniversary of the 1903 "lease." The 1903 agreement allowed the U.S. to use the land and harbor, first for a U.S. military coaling station. It has been a major U.S. naval base in the Caribbean, and since the aftermath of the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan has been the site of a notorious prison where alleged terrorists are tortured.

The Coalition to Close U.S. Foreign Bases (noforeignbases.org) initiated the coordinated activities with a unanimous resolution at its January conference. The call was welcomed and supported by the Cuban Movement for Peace and Sovereignty of the Peoples (MovPaz) and the National Network on Cuba. Actions took place in Berlin, Germany; Vancouver, Canada; and in Chicago; New York City; Baltimore; Boston; Hartford, Conn.; Tucson, Ariz.; and Albany, N.Y., in the U.S.

Meetings, educational street actions, plus a national teleconference organized by Black Alliance for Peace and a twitter storm initiated by the U.S. arm of the



Workers World Party activists in Baltimore, Feb. 23.

International Committee for Peace, Justice and Dignity marked the date. Many activities used the 37-minute video, "All Guantánamo Is Ours," to bring the voice of the Cuban people affected by the U.S. occupation into the gatherings.

Josefina Vidal, lead Cuban negotiator with the U.S. during the period leading to the re-establishment of diplomatic relations and now ambassador to Canada, tweeted: "#Guantánamo Is Ours:

According to the Cuban Constitution, the Republic of #Cuba repudiates and considers illegal and null treaties, pacts or concessions concluded in conditions of inequality that ignore or diminish its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

"Therefore, the 1903 treaty that led to the occupation of a portion of the territory of #Cuba by the #USNavalBase in Guantánamo is illegal and void. That's why we say: #USOutOfGuantanamo." □

## Expanding Empire

The global war drive of big business and the forces that will stop it

Copeland's "Expanding Empire" tells the story of U.S. imperialism from its beginnings in 1898 up to the Vietnam War. The pamphlet was written in 1969 during the Vietnam War and became one of Workers World's most popular titles. It went through several printings.

The purpose of the pamphlet was to show that the war was not caused by any particular politician. Rather it was a product of the capitalist system.

The same is true today. In the end, it all comes down to profits. "Expanding Empire" explains how the capitalists' insatiable greed for increased profit inevitably produces war. And it shows how the only way to prevent future wars is to destroy capitalism at its roots.

Learn more. Find it at:  
[www.workers.org/books](http://www.workers.org/books)





# Don't trust Mueller to depose Trump

Special Counsel Robert Mueller indicted 13 Russian citizens and three companies on Feb. 16, allegedly for conducting a long-running scheme to criminally interfere with the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Four days later Mueller forced a guilty plea from a Dutch lawyer working with Trump campaign managers Paul Manafort and Rick Gates for lying to investigators. Then Mueller added new charges against Manafort and Gates, including fraud and money laundering. This forced Gates to enter a guilty plea on Feb. 23 for making false statements.

The corporate media outlets that oppose Donald Trump and the Democratic Party leadership have used these developments to busily proclaim that Trump is bound to be ousted by some set of criminal charges.

But should workers and oppressed people be satisfied that the FBI and Mueller are taking steps against the racist, misogynist, anti-immigrant and pro-rich Trump gang by attacking the alleged Russia connection?

No. That would be retreating to the role of spectator. It would imply that we could trust racist Attorney General Jeff Sessions' Department of Justice to fight racism. And it would imply that we could trust the same FBI that spies on workers' parties and assaults Black Liberation organizations to eliminate bigotry. It also would scapegoat the Russian government for Trump's electoral win, when the undemocratic Electoral College did it, the laws

stopping poor and Black people and ex-prisoners from voting did it, and the failure of the Democratic Party to fight for workers' rights did it.

By ignoring Trump and the right wing's agenda and looking instead to the special prosecutor, the Democrats and pundits aim to disarm our class's ability to fight back and form an independent mass movement. We can mobilize to stop the outrageous Immigration and Customs Enforcement roundups. We can protest the handover of wilderness and Native land to mining and oil companies. We can expose the "whites-only" immigration policy. And we can and should organize to stop U.S. drone wars, stop the attempts at "regime change," stop the threat of nuclear war against north Korea, stop Trump's vile comments belittling women and attacking African-American athletes who take political stands.

The focus on Russia also diverts attention from the full support that the ruling class, from Wall Street to Silicon Valley, is giving Trump's economic program of corporate tax cuts and "deregulation." The banks will stop at nothing to ensure that the Trump program of theft from the poor continues, whether or not Trump himself remains in office.

Tycoon Warren Buffet openly stated his joy in a letter to shareholders of his Berkshire conglomerate, which gained some \$29.1 billion from the tax cut: "Our smiles

will broaden when we have redeployed Berkshire's excess funds into more productive assets," and he promised more mergers. (msn.com, Feb. 23) Nothing was mentioned about hiring workers for good paying jobs.

In the wake of the financial catastrophe of 2008, Congress passed a law that barred banks with assets of more than \$50 billion from merging with or acquiring other banks. Now, spurred on by Trump, a bill favored by both political parties would increase that threshold to \$250 billion. And it doesn't stop there. The Federal Reserve with its new Trump-appointed head is busy "softening" the merger application rules penalizing banks' violations of fair lending, money laundering and marketing laws. Some 370 banks are currently in the so-called "penalty box" because of suspected violations.

As every worker knows, mergers usually mean layoffs — lots of layoffs. And that's even if the lax rules don't quickly lead to another crisis when the next bubble bursts.

The workers and oppressed communities cannot afford to trust the Mueller probe or the Democratic Party to stop the Trump regime's giveaways to the rich and austerity program for the poor. Only a powerful struggle can do that — independent of the Democratic Party — by uniting the working class of all nationalities and genders to fight not only Trump the individual but his entire program. □

## Parkland students do the right thing

By Deirdre Griswold

The young people who survived the Feb. 14 massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., are doing the right thing. They are not bottling up their shock and sadness, to live with fear and trauma over the gunning down of their friends, as has happened after so many other mass shootings in the past. They are fighting mad and organizing to try and change the world around them.

Many hundreds of students walked out of schools in both Broward and Miami-Dade counties in solidarity with those in Parkland who had lived through the shooting, as well as in remembrance of the 17 people who perished in the hail of bullets. One hundred of the Parkland teenagers then took a seven-hour bus ride to attend a session of the Florida House in Tallahassee, where a bill to ban assault weapons was on the table. Despite the students' angry pleas, the legislators refused to take up the bill.

The youth then went to the media to denounce politicians whose votes are bought by big contributions from the National Rifle Association.

What is important here is not that these students might have illusions that a gun-control law will fix the problem. What is important is that they turned their grief and shock into concerted action against the powers that be. They were not passive or paralyzed in the face of such an unbelievably horrendous experience. From many different backgrounds and identities, they came together to try to take destiny into their own hands.

### Where gun violence comes from

Gun violence in this country has been an awful reality ever since the first European settlers mowed down Indigenous peoples in order to take their land. Guns made it possible for agents of the Southern slavocracy to kidnap whole families from Africa, taking away all their human

rights so they could be bought and sold as profit-making commodities. Hired guns made it possible for the Rockefellers and other robber barons to break workers' strikes in the early days of union organizing, and cops with guns are still called out whenever there's a picket line or a protest.

The AR-15 assault rifle, the fearful weapon used to massacre the Parkland students, is but one of the death-dealing devices developed for the Pentagon to carry out its imperialist interventions around the world.

What causes a young man to take such a weapon into a school and kill his fellow students? CNN reported on Feb. 18: "In a private Instagram group chat, confessed school shooter Nikolas Cruz repeatedly espoused racist, homophobic and anti-Semitic views and displayed an obsession with violence and guns." As with Dylann Roof, who slaughtered nine Black parishioners in Charleston, S.C., in 2015, racism was a big factor in Cruz's violent act, even though the majority of students he killed were white.

He was also immersed in the state-sponsored gun culture. The book "National Security Cinema" documents how the Pentagon and CIA have worked with Hollywood to produce more than 800 films and over 1,000 network TV shows that glorify war. And how many more make heroes out of the police and their guns?

Guns in the hands of the military, the police and the Nazi-fascist-Klan right wing — as seen last summer in Charlottesville, Va. — are meant to oppress and repress the people.

When the workers and oppressed arm themselves — as did Robert Williams and the Monroe, N.C., branch of the NAACP in the 1960s, the Black Panther Party founded in 1966 and Native people at Wounded Knee in 1973 — it is a justifiable act of self-defense.

But you don't hear the NRA or its paid politicians endorsing that. □

## Letter to the editor No pledge of allegiance to racism

My son Jeremiah Boykin called me from school on Friday, Feb. 16, to tell me that he was dismissed from class because he did not stand for the pledge of allegiance. His constitutional rights were violated. He was verbally and almost physically assaulted by the person supposed to teach him anatomy.

The teacher, a Mr. Himes, showed anger and hostility while shouting: "My father fought in the war for the anthem. Respect the anthem! Do you understand?" while pointing in my son's face to the point where he was scared and had to back up.

People think we don't like the song, and that is true! It doesn't match up with most Black people's lives in America, where Black children and adults young or elderly are shot down by police who act as judge and jury on behalf of the system of racism and the thin blue line.

I say: No more abuse that whittles away at you to make you feel ashamed to be Black. It is my duty to take on the system for my Black children. They don't know their own strengths yet. I am here to tell the world that you are worthy, loving, charismatic, smart and a pleasure to raise.

I propose taking police out of the schools to stop the school-to-prison pipeline. Give the extra money in pay to the teachers and set up proper vetting of these teachers so that every Black child can get a proper, dignified education.

Sit out the pledge of allegiance. The Supreme Court of the United States, in West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette, 319 U.S. 624 (1943), already

stated you have this right:

"If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein.

"We think the action of the local authorities in compelling the flag salute and pledge transcends constitutional limitations on their power, and invades the sphere of intellect and spirit which it is the purpose of the First Amendment to our Constitution to reserve from all official control."

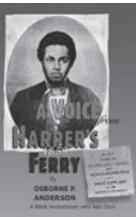
Colin Kaepernick kneeled during the national anthem to shed light on the fact that our Black children are being killed and beaten down by police. He is now a vilified person by the white media and masses and has been targeted by the NFL for exercising his constitutional rights while Black. He is now blacklisted by the NFL.

I stand with Colin Kaepernick and Jeremiah Boykin. Both asserted that the actions of whiteness and white America caused them to sit out the anthem.

Fighting racism is not a crime. My daughter Takiyah Thompson proved that, when all charges were dropped against her for allegedly taking down a Confederate statue in Durham. Racism in schools and elsewhere is the true crime. Teachers who carry out acts to demean and demoralize young Black people are the true criminals that must be dealt with swiftly.

Mikisa Thompson  
Durham, N.C.

Find them at: [www.workers.org/books](http://www.workers.org/books)



**A Voice from Harpers Ferry**  
Osborne P. Anderson's account of the raid on Harper's Ferry appeared in pamphlet form in 1861 right after the start of the Civil War. Includes essays by Mumia Abu-Jamal, Monica Moorehead and Vince Copeland.



**The Klan & Government: Foes or Allies?**  
Examines the special relationship with the state that has allowed the Ku Klux Klan to exist for over a century despite its criminal history of lynchings, murders, and intimidation.



# Ukraine and Donbass: Four years of solidarity and struggle

By Greg Butterfield

*Based on a presentation given at a Workers World Party class in New York City on Feb. 20.*

Four years ago this week, a coup overthrew the elected government of Ukraine. Both the Democratic and Republican wings of the U.S. government supported the coup. Leaders of both parties went to Kiev, the capital city, in late 2013 and early 2014 and proudly had their photos taken with leaders of the right-wing Euromaidan movement, including open neo-Nazis like Svoboda leader Oleh Tyahnybok.

Ukraine is a large country of 45 million people in eastern Europe. Before 1991, it was part of the Soviet Union. It was considered the Soviet breadbasket — an important source of agricultural products, the way we often think of places like Iowa or Kansas. It provided wheat and other essentials to the whole Soviet Union and other socialist countries and national liberation struggles.

The eastern part of Ukraine, called the Donbass region, was an essential source of coal and other mineral wealth. Ukraine also developed many high-tech industries in Soviet times.

After the USSR was broken up, Ukraine went through a series of increasingly pro-Western capitalist governments. In 2013, the government headed by President Viktor Yanukovych was being pushed by the European Union and the U.S. to break from Ukraine's historic trading partner Russia. Yanukovych wavered but eventually decided to continue trading with Russia.

That was the death knell for his government.

There were other reasons, too. Ukraine was going to host a natural gas pipeline between Russia and Western Europe. The U.S. didn't want this to happen. It wants to control the flow of energy to its erstwhile European allies.

There was also a military-strategic factor. Since 1999, the U.S.-led NATO military alliance has expanded four times, adding 13 countries, mostly former socialist countries of eastern Europe. This is part of the long-term U.S. strategy of surrounding Russia in order to break up the country and install pliant regimes.

Russia has an important naval base in Crimea on the Black Sea. For a long time, Crimea was part of Russia, but during Soviet times it was transferred to Ukraine. Russia continued to lease the base from Ukraine after the breakup of the USSR. Washington wanted that base.

**U.S. strategy used fascists and billionaires**

To implement its strategy, Washington applied economic and diplomatic pressure from the EU countries. It mobilized nongovernmental organizations that receive U.S. funding. It worked with wealthy oligarchs in Ukraine who wanted closer ties with the West. And it used openly fascist, neo-Nazi political formations and armed gangs nurtured since the end of World War II. This was the motley alliance that carried out the coup of February 2014, supposedly against "corruption."

After the coup, fascists took over the streets of Kiev and other cities of western Ukraine. Imagine the torch-wielding, white supremacists who marched in Charlottesville last year taking over cities throughout the East Coast of the U.S. and you'll get the idea.

Together with the police and internal security forces of the new regime, these



WW PHOTO: GREG BUTTERFIELD  
New York protest against right-wing coup in Ukraine, Feb. 28, 2014.

fascists invaded and torched offices of communist organizations, attacked immigrant communities and beat leftists in the streets. The new government's official ideology was right-wing Ukrainian nationalism, as espoused by World War II Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera. The regime declared that Russians were the enemy and only the Ukrainian language would be allowed.

In the eastern part of Ukraine, which was more working class and where Russian speakers make up the majority, an anti-fascist resistance movement emerged.

First, the people of Crimea organized a popular referendum and overwhelmingly voted to leave Ukraine and rejoin Russia. Knowing the U.S. sought to grab its strategic naval base, the Russian government agreed and took control of the region, protecting its residents from the looming war.

The Crimean referendum gave a big boost to the resistance in eastern Ukraine. The popular movement grew and became more militant. People took up arms and seized government buildings in Donetsk, Lugansk, Kharkov and other cities.

In Kharkov, the movement was pushed back by police and fascists. But in Donetsk and Lugansk, in the coal-mining Donbass region, the rebels were able to hold out. They organized their own referendum and declared independence in May 2014.

**U.S.-backed Ukraine's bloody war**

Ukraine launched a bloody war against the independence forces, claiming that the rebel militias were actually a Russian military invasion. Although some Russians did unofficially come to help, along with anti-fascists from other countries, the majority of the militias were made up of local workers and farmers defending their homes and families.

A terrible blow was the massacre in the multinational port city of Odessa on May

2, 2014. Fascists bused into the city then attacked a protest encampment and set fire to the House of Trade Unions, killing over 40 people.

Washington backed the coup government in Kiev to the hilt. Secretary of State John Kerry rushed there to deliver a multimillion dollar loan. Vice President Joe Biden made several visits, becoming the unofficial "colonial governor" of Ukraine under the Obama administration. The U.S. and its allies provided military aid to Ukraine, much of it through third countries. NATO provided training to Ukrainian troops and neo-Nazi volunteer battalions.

According to the United Nations, more than 10,000 people have been killed in the war. Hundreds of thousands more have been made refugees, most fleeing to safety in Russia.

The worst fighting took place in the first year. Now, the situation is frozen in a semiwar state. There is an internationally brokered truce, but it is regularly violated by the Ukrainian side. An economic blockade has created many difficulties for those who remained or returned to Donetsk and Lugansk. Recently, the Trump administration and Congress repealed restrictions on direct U.S. sales of heavy weaponry to Ukraine and the ban on training neo-Nazis like the Azov Battalion.

While Trump claimed he wanted better relations with Russia during his campaign, he serves the U.S. ruling class and its interests, just as previous administrations did. Trump has given free rein to the Pentagon generals whose job is to conquer on behalf of Wall Street.

The Ukrainian government has implemented more and more austerity measures to secure loans from the International Monetary Fund. It has sped up the privatization of industry and land, leaving workers jobless and forcing many to migrate. U.S. and western European capitalists have been gobbling up Ukraine's agricultural land and natural resources

at bargain prices. Repression is intense. Communist organizations and symbols are banned. There are hundreds of political prisoners — leftists, journalists, military draft resisters and regular people who have voiced their opposition to the regime on social media.

**Solidarity with anti-fascist resistance**

Although the war in Ukraine does not get much attention from mainstream media these days, its impact is being felt right now. The following things have happened so far in February: A fascist gang beat and robbed two anti-fascist youth leaders in front of police in Kiev. Ukrainian forces shelled a school for special needs students in Dokuchaevsk, a village in Donetsk, while class was in session. Our comrades from the Ghost Brigade, a communist-led, anti-fascist militia, repelled an attack in Lugansk. The former head of NATO called for 2,000 U.N. "peacekeepers" to occupy the Donbass. And a new team of U.S. "advisors" was spotted on the front line.

The war in Ukraine is also part of the witch hunt over supposed Russian "election interference" that is currently being used to smear anyone who opposes the two-party system in the U.S. The U.S. rulers are angry that Russia and the residents of Crimea and Donbass were able to checkmate their plans to bring NATO tanks and ships right up to the Russian border. Along with the military aid that Russia has given to Syria, this is driving the campaign to whip up a war fever against Russia.

Since 2014, Workers World Party and anti-war organizations we work with, including the International Action Center, have engaged in international solidarity with the anti-fascist resistance inside Ukraine and in the Donbass republics. This organizing has resulted in educational forums, petition campaigns and protests, including one held in Times Square immediately after the coup four years ago.

WWP has developed friendly, cooperative relations with exiled communists from Ukraine. Our organizers have travelled to Russia, Crimea and the Donbass republics to meet with resistance activists and offer our support. Workers World newspaper has been one of the few sources for real news on the struggle there in the English-speaking world. We work to build solidarity here among the people's movements against white supremacy, police brutality, anti-immigrant raids and exploitation of low-wage workers.

We demand:  
Recognize the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics!  
U.S.-EU out of Ukraine!  
Free all political prisoners!  
Stop the war drive against Russia! □

WORKERS WORLD

MUNDO OBRERO

Contracción económica y expansión militar

Continúa de página 12

de los pueblos oprimidos y los países en vías de desarrollo.

Finalmente, al igual que Bretaña, las industrias básicas estadounidenses están en declive, en una estado de decadencia, y bajo un feroz ataque competitivo por los mismos aliados que el gobierno de los EUA hizo tanto para cultivar y resucitar luego de la segunda Guerra Mundial. Incluso los observadores más superficiales del estado de la posición mundial de los Estados Unidos no pueden dejar de sorprenderse por la creciente divergencia en-

tre dos tendencias orgánicas que son un producto del capitalismo monopolista.

Por un lado, está la contracción económica evidente tanto de la base económica nacional como la mundial del imperialismo estadounidense. Por otra parte, existe el impulso continuo e implacable para la expansión militar. Ambas tendencias crecen orgánicamente desde el cuerpo político de la estructura de la clase capitalista de explotación y opresión.

La existencia continua, lado a lado, de estas dos tendencias como si fueran in-

dependientes entre sí, es absolutamente incompatible y por necesidad conduce a una catástrofe. No hay una posición de repliegue imperialista para el capitalismo estadounidense. Hay sin embargo, una solución socialista al agravamiento catastrófico de esta aguda contradicción imperialista.

**\*Nota de MO:** Doctrina Carter fue la amenaza del entonces presidente Jimmy Carter en 1980 de usar la fuerza militar para defender "sus intereses" en el Golfo Pérsico. □





# Contracción económica y expansión militar

Al momento de una profunda y creciente crisis económica, muchos de los ideólogos burgueses y particularmente sus economistas, han tornado cada vez más su investigación hacia analizar la naturaleza y profundas implicaciones de la gran crisis económica que comenzó con la crisis del mercado de 1929.

Un pensamiento recurrente que sigue acechando a muchos en la clase dominante es la posibilidad de que, a pesar de las predicciones actuales, aún pueda ocurrir una catástrofe económica con las dimensiones de la debacle de 1929.

Uno de esos profesores que se preocupa por la crisis económica de 1929 es Charles P. Kindleberger. En su libro, “El mundo en depresión”, 1929-1939, presenta la tesis de que “la depresión mundial de 1929 fue tan extendida, tan profunda y tan prolongada, no debido a las profundas perturbaciones del sistema monetario, sino porque el propio sistema monetario era básicamente inestable” y, por lo tanto, se quebró.

Según Kindleberger, cuando el liderazgo económico de Bretaña se había erosionado después de la Primera Guerra Mundial y los Estados Unidos no pudieron asumir el control, el sistema monetario colapsó por su propio peso.

## Inestabilidad monetaria no es causa de colapso

La tesis de Kindleberger no es un enfoque nuevo. Muchos economistas burgueses se han ocupado ampliamente de la crisis monetaria del comienzo de la década de 1930 y de una forma u otra atribuyen la crisis a una mala gestión o a factores accidentales.

No fue, por supuesto, la inestabilidad o las imperfecciones del sistema monetario capitalista las que causaron el gran colapso económico. La causa de la crisis, como lo ha sido desde la primera crisis capitalista mundial de 1825, fue la sobreproducción capitalista. Las crisis monetarias recurrentes, que se han vuelto tan prevalentes en la época imperialista, son el efecto de la sobreproducción capitalista, no la causa.

Sin embargo, Kindleberger señala un aspecto muy importante de la economía capitalista mundial durante todo ese período que tiene relevancia hoy en día, especialmente en lo que afecta a los Estados Unidos. Está claro en su libro, aunque no lo dice con precisión, que no era sólo el liderazgo económico de Bretaña que se había erosionado. El hecho significativo que emerge de toda la era de la década de 1930 fue que Bretaña, a pesar de su posición victoriosa después de la Primera Guerra Mundial, había perdido un terreno considerable en la base económica para su liderazgo militar, diplomático y político a escala mundial.

## Base económica erosionada

El imperio británico tal como estaba durante la crisis económica - militar, diplomática y políticamente - ya no tenía la formidable base económica para sostener su liderazgo imperialista mundial. El costo financiero y económico de mantener tal liderazgo estaba muy desproporcionado a los retornos requeridos para un próspero explotador imperialista.

***Este artículo, escrito por Sam Marcy, fundador del Partido Workers World - Mundo Obrero en junio de 1980, analiza la contradicción básica dentro del imperialismo estadounidense, la cual es aún más catastrófica hoy en día.***

Ya en la década de 1920, la aristocracia financiera e industrial británica se enfrentaba a la perspectiva inminente de la pérdida de “nuestra India”, al igual que luego Estados Unidos se vio forzado a enfrentar la perspectiva de perder “nuestra China”. Las responsabilidades financieras y económicas que el imperialismo británico tenía hacia los azotados estados capitalistas de Europa, así como hacia su lejano y extenso imperio, abrumaron sus obsoletas industrias de carbón y metal, así como su industria del transporte, incluida incluso la industria naviera.

Bretaña no “entregó” su liderazgo económico a los EUA como sostiene Kindleberger. Los EUA conquistaron los mercados británicos por medio de la guerra económica, particularmente en América Latina y partes de Asia. Todo esto fue contado en su momento en un iluminador libro con el expresivo título de “América conquista a Bretaña” de Ludwell Denny.

Bretaña perdió su liderazgo mundial porque no podía competir económicamente con los EUA, a pesar de que su armada era insuperable y que su imperio mundial todavía estaba bajo su control judicial y militar. La ola revolucionaria mundial surgida de las luchas de liberación nacional, ya plenamente a la vista en China, India e Indonesia, dejó en claro que la expansión militar de los imperialistas británicos, mientras su base económica se reducía tanto domésticamente como en el exterior, creó una situación imposible para Bretaña. Una explosión, un colapso, era inevitable.

## Posición de retirada

Hubo, sin embargo, un lado positivo en esta imagen oscura para el capital financiero británico y para los imperialistas en general. Hubo una posición de repliegue para Bretaña que evitó el tipo de explosión que podría haber terminado en una conflagración revolucionaria que convirtiera a Bretaña en una verdadera república socialista.

Mientras que el capital financiero estadounidense se hizo cargo de gran parte de los mercados de Bretaña y en general, fortaleció su posición en relación con toda Europa occidental y Japón, al mismo tiempo aseguró la existencia continua de Bretaña como formidable poder imperialista. Además, se convirtió en el garante de la intereses vitales de Bretaña frente a otros rivales imperialistas como Alemania, así como Japón, y un baluarte general de la política mundial reaccionaria.

Por lo tanto, la aguda contradicción que surge de la profunda divergencia entre la base económica cada vez más reducida de Bretaña y sus crecientes compromisos financieros, diplomáticos y militares, encontraron una posición de respaldo en el

no muy suave abrazo del capital financiero de EUA con su gran potencial militar.

## ¿Pero cómo es Estados Unidos hoy?

Hay algunas similitudes sorprendentes entre la posición británica de 1930 y la posición de EUA hoy. Al igual que Bretaña, solo que más, los EUA están en las garras de una profunda contradicción geopolítica, una que se convierte más clara con el pasar de los días.

## Contradicción básica

Por un lado, los EUA se encuentran en medio de una constante expansión militar de proporciones sin precedentes y prácticamente inimaginables. Por el otro lado, la base económica para mantener esta postura militar tan desenfrenada ha ido erosionándose lenta pero seguramente.

La actual crisis económica seguramente se acelerará y continuará la erosión. La enfermedad, sin embargo, es mucho más profunda que la crisis actual, y tampoco nació con el pronunciamiento de la Doctrina Carter\*.

A diferencia de Bretaña en la década de 1930, los EUA no tienen una posición alternativa, un hecho que tanto los planificadores políticos y económicos en las cumbres del establecimiento capitalista no pueden sino estar profundamente conscientes.

Unos años después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, los EUA eran el líder militar y económico del imperialismo mundial. Era el poder dominante incuestionable en los asuntos mundiales y había alcanzado prácticamente la hegemonía política y militar suprema sobre el mundo burgués y sobre los países y pueblos oprimidos dependientes y en vías de desarrollo que estaban en la órbita del mundo imperialista.

En ese momento, a principios de la década de 1950, los EUA eran responsables de más del 50 por ciento de la producción bruta mundial. A principios de la década de 1960, la participación de los Estados Unidos en la producción bruta mundial había disminuido a cerca del 35 por ciento. Hoy, según las mejores estimaciones, está entre el 25 y el 27 por ciento.

## Debilita la posición geopolítica

Si el producto nacional bruto de EUA se produjera para el uso humano y no con fines de lucro, sería más que suficiente para satisfacer las grandes necesidades de la población estadounidense y sobraría. Pero la producción a los efectos del beneficio capitalista, que implica competencia por los mercados capitalistas y fuentes de materias primas, plantea un conjunto completamente diferente de circunstancias e inevitablemente pone en juego la posición geopolítica de los EUA.

Desde ese punto de vista, la posición relativa de los EUA como potencia mundial se vuelve tremendamente debilitada. Significa, por ejemplo, que en el caso de cualquier lucha militar sería, el adversario, ya sean los imperialistas rivales o los países socialistas, pueden tener acceso a una porción de las tres cuartas partes de la producción total del mundo.

De manera similar, la porción relativa de los Estados Unidos en el producto mundial bruto seguirá disminuyendo a medida que las fuerzas productivas en el resto del mundo inevitablemente seguirán expandiéndose relativas a la posición de los EUA. En una mancomunidad cooperativa socialista mundial, por otro lado, la participación de la producción estadounidense, aunque sea en una escala relativamente decreciente, sería de tremenda importancia debido a su tecnología altamente sofisticada y su capacidad para la producción en masa.

## Inicio de declive general

La Segunda Guerra Mundial permitió a EUA ejercer su hegemonía política, económica y militar sobre el mundo burgués. Desde el final de la Segunda Guerra Mundial hasta la derrota final de los EUA durante la guerra de Vietnam, la economía capitalista estadounidense estaba experimentando un resurgimiento económico general, a pesar de varias recesiones capitalistas que, en general, fueron de corta duración.

Un aspecto significativo de los ciclos económicos fue que cada pico del ciclo económico fue menor que los anteriores, un síntoma del comienzo del declive general y la erosión de la base económica de los EUA. El crecimiento militar comenzó alrededor del 1946 cuando el complejo militar-industrial era plenamente validado por decreto del gobierno en la forma de un memorando de Dwight D. Eisenhower en abril de 1946, cuando era Jefe del Estado Mayor del Ejército de los EUA. (Ver: *Generals Over the White House* por Sam Marcy, World View Publishers).

El crecimiento militar, que estaba en pleno apogeo en la década de 1950 y continuó sin pausa alguna hasta el final de la guerra de Vietnam, ocurrió por lo tanto, durante un período de auge económico general, no obstante las varias recesiones significativas que sucedieron. La acumulación también ocurrió mientras el imperialismo estadounidense retenía la mayoría de sus mercados bajo su paraguas militar. ¡Cuán marcadamente diferente es la situación de hoy!

El crecimiento militar continúa después de que EUA ha perdido su posición dominante en Asia y ha sido severamente restringida y puesta bajo mucha presión en toda Latinoamérica. Su posición en Europa se ha debilitado política y económicamente, y en Medio Oriente está más vulnerable a los ataques revolucionarios de los pueblos oprimidos. Por lo tanto, mientras continúa la expansión militar, la base económica estadounidense continúa deteriorándose y contrayéndose.

Las fuentes para la extracción de plusvalía a escala mundial se han estrechado y abrumado por una presión revolucionaria de intenso carácter por parte

*Continúa a página 11*