

School workers strike and win raise

Class war in West Virginia

By Martha Grevatt
and Minnie Bruce Pratt

UPDATE, MARCH 6: After nine consecutive work days out on strike, West Virginia's militant teachers and school staff faced down a right-wing governor and legislature to win a 5 percent pay raise, not just for themselves, but for all state workers. They had vowed to stay out until they won. The bill authorizing the raise passed the House and Senate and was signed by the governor this afternoon. Teachers and staff are likely to return to work March 7 but the possibility of renewed action remains, especially in relation to health insurance funding. To continue to follow workers' struggles in the state, including Frontier workers represented by CWA, still out on strike, go to FB: WWP West Virginia - Strike Support.

March 5 — In West Virginia, famous for pitched battles between union miners and the coal barons, class war is raging. This time it's teachers and all school employees on one side and right-wing capitalist politicians on the other. To quote the old labor song, "Which Side Are You On?" — "there are no neutrals."

Education workers were still out on the picket lines at the end of the day, continuing their historic statewide strike for better wages, as well as blocking health care takeaways and other union-busting

attacks. West Virginia ranks 48th in the U.S. for teacher wages — teachers earn less in only two other states. Starting pay is around \$32,000 a year, and teachers with families must often apply for food assistance.

The strike in all 55 counties, which began Feb. 22, will continue indefinitely until the state Senate passes a bill granting state education workers a 5 percent raise.

On Feb. 28, the House approved the 5 percent pay raise, which billionaire Republican Gov. Jim Justice approved in talks with the three unions the day before. But on March 1, the right-wing Senate proposed taking away the pay raise and diverting it toward supposedly "fixing" the health insurance plan. The legislature must believe the workers will fall for this as if it's a magic trick. This capitalist fakery only made the workers angrier.

Members of both the House and Senate are heavily influenced by the coal, oil and gas company owners of West Virginia.

For three days, including a Saturday when a special session was called, the Senate failed to pass the 5 percent raise. Then they tried to substitute a 4 percent raise under the cover of giving it to all state workers.

A joint statement from the striking unions explained why that was unacceptable: "You do not equalize pay for different groups by simply taking from

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An open letter from a teacher to West Virginia educators

Dear education workers of West Virginia,

Your militancy is phenomenal. Your courage to stand up and fight back is inspiring. Your bravery is powerful. Your 55-county-strong strike is historic. You are what we all need.

You have stood in defiance of billionaire Gov. Jim Justice and the anti-worker West Virginia Legislature in order to fight for decent family-supporting wages, for access to affordable health care and in defense of your union rights. You have inspired by showing us a militant strike led overwhelmingly by women.

You have shown that this strike is not just a fight for educators. This is a fight for students, communities and all workers to have these same basic rights.

I am a social studies teacher in a neighborhood high school in Philadelphia, and your action has caught the attention of me and my co-workers. While we have collective bargaining for public employees (a right won through a strike similar

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International Working Women's Day:

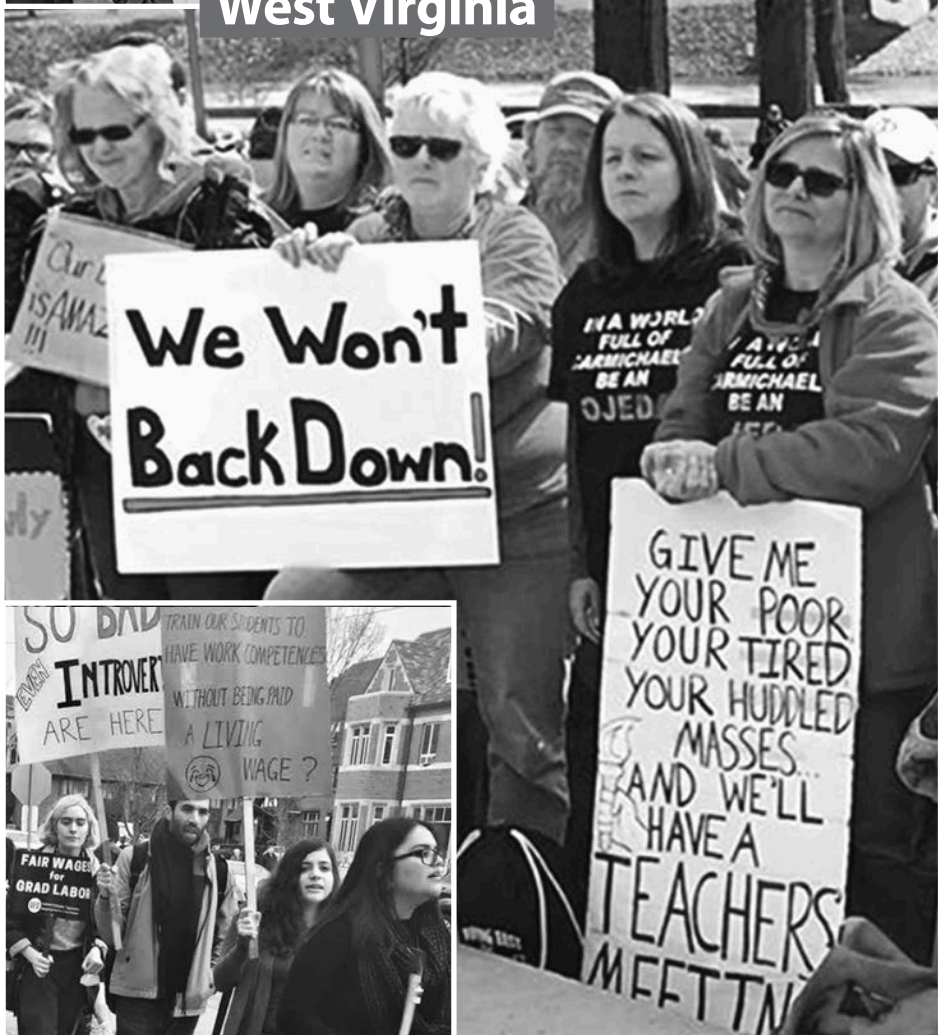
DPRK women • Trans lives • Black maternity
Women, struggle, solidarity 6-7, 10

Women lead the way in workers' rights struggles around the world.

CWA worker and striking public school teachers and staff in West Virginia; below, striking graduate school workers in Illinois.



West Virginia



WW PHOTOS

Illinois

WW PHOTO: KAITLYN GRIFFITH

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MARCH MADNESS, NCAA & slave labor

By Monica Moorehead

March 5 — The FBI announced Feb. 23 it had obtained evidence the National Collegiate Athletic Association violated various codes of ethics regarding its Division I basketball programs. The FBI got the evidence through emails, financial records and an estimated 4,000 wire-tapped conversations.

This investigation ran from 2015 until 2017 and involved agents and financial managers from ASM Sports. That agency established relationships with high school basketball players and families to lure them with incentives to commit to college and university athletics programs ASM contracted with. The incentives included sums of money, large and small, along with food and travel expenses. The incriminating records were mainly those of Andy Miller, until recently a high-profile agent for National Basketball Association stars. Miller is president of ASM Sports.

At least three dozen schools famous for their sports programs have been named in this probe. These include Alabama, Duke, Kentucky, Louisiana State University, Maryland, Michigan State, North Carolina State, University of North Carolina, Seton Hall, Texas, University of Southern California and Washington. Players from these schools who could be connected to the probe include some currently in the NBA.

Once the FBI decides to publicly release the documents, the information potentially could lead to sanctions against the named schools and the suspension of players, the vast majority of them African-American men whose families struggle financially to make ends meet. Besides sanctions, criminal charges could conceivably be brought by the FBI against the players or even some of the coaches.

Some student-athletes accused of associating with ASM Sports were not allowed to play in college games over the Feb. 23-24 weekend. Those who did play were taunted as “cheaters” in chants from fans.

The NCAA and individual schools plan to carry out their own investigations into yet another scandal coming on the heels of the Larry Nassar sexual assaults on over 160 gymnasts and other women athletes.

NCAA President Mark Emmert, whose annual salary is close to \$2 million not including perks, hypocritically stated, “These allegations, if true, point to systematic

Jay Williams as a student athlete playing for Duke University.



failures that must be fixed and fixed Simply put, people who engage in this kind of behavior have no place in college sports. They are an affront to all those who play by the rules.” (espn.com, Feb. 25)

Student-athletes treated as slave labor

But as well-known Black journalist, Shaun King, pointed out in the headline for his online Feb. 22 Intercept article: “The NCAA says student-athletes shouldn’t be paid because the 13th Amendment allows unpaid prison labor.”

King reminded readers that the NCAA hierarchy had challenged lawsuits in 2016 and 2017 advocating for student-athletes to be treated like other workers by paying them for their labor. Lawsuits filed for the college players rightfully stated that student-athletes were being treated the same as prisoners, who are exploited as slave labor.

The NCAA justified no payment for student-athletes by basing its legal argument on a horrifying clause in the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Adopted after the U.S. Civil War in 1865, that amendment abolished the unpaid labor of slavery except during involuntary servitude in prison because of a criminal conviction. The NCAA’s legal argument racially stereotypes African-American athletes in disproportionate numbers, but generally exploits all student-athletes, regardless of nationality and economic backgrounds.

The implications of not paying student-athletes go to the heart of the recent NCAA scandal. The NCAA is first and foremost a multibillion-dollar enterprise, seeking to make profits under capitalism. In 2006, CBS and Time Warner signed a 14-year contract with the NCAA to air its three-week March Madness basketball tournament, online and on TV, for \$10.6 billion.

None of the student-athletes on the 68 teams selected yearly in the tournament brackets receive one dime from the NCAA. It is illegal for student-athletes to receive any kind of financial compensation, even if their likeness ap-

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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.

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Join us in the fight for socialism!

Wages are lower than ever, and youth are saddled with seemingly insurmountable student debt, if they even make it to college. Black and Brown youth and trans people are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis.

WWP fights for socialism because the working class produces all wealth in society, and this wealth should remain in their hands, not be stolen in the form of capitalist profits. The wealth workers create should be socially owned and its distribution planned to satisfy and guarantee basic human needs.

Since 1959, Workers World Party has been out in the streets defending the workers and oppressed here and worldwide. If you’re interested in Marxism, socialism and fighting for a socialist future, please contact a WWP branch near you. □

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#DEFEATAUSTERITY

Activists to gather in Detroit

By Workers World Detroit bureau

Organizing is in high gear for the National Conference to Defeat Austerity taking place March 24 in Detroit. Youth organizer Mond Jones told Workers World some of the perspective behind this important gathering, which will have an international focus: “Austerity is one of the concrete ways capitalism and white supremacy manifest themselves against the people. Austerity is a term used to describe policies that aim to reduce government deficits by budget cuts and tax hikes on the poor. These budget cuts attack things like education and public health first and foremost.

“Every day in Detroit we see the effects of austerity in practice. We see it in the mass water shutoffs that have swept the city for years. Thousands of families lose water over petty delinquencies, while corporations rack up hundreds of thousands in unpaid water bills without penalty.

“Detroit is under attack. But not just Detroit. We see the same austerity in Puerto Rico and all over the world. We see it anywhere there are oppressed people, anywhere the banks and the billionaires work together to line their pockets and keep workers under.”

The conference will include a panel on the history of the deliberate targeting of Detroit by the banks and corporations because of its leading role in the Black liberation struggle as a result of the concentration of revolutionary African-American workers in the auto industry.

A fightback agenda

A highlight of the conference will be an international panel featuring Ricardo

Santos Ramos, former president of the Electrical Industry and Irrigation Workers Union (UTIER) of Puerto Rico. The panel will also include talks on austerity and the struggle in Lebanon and Palestine, the Philippines and a report from Venezuela.

Presentations will explain how austerity reflects the direct imposition of rule by finance capital to ensure its profits at the expense of wages, pensions and benefits for the working class. An analysis of the Trump tax plan and Pentagon war buildup, which will lead to the virtual destruction of what little remains of the social safety net, will be discussed.

Workshops will be held on fighting water shutoffs; stopping foreclosures; education cuts; the Poor People’s Campaign; and the mass incarceration of youth and proliferation of prison labor. The Southern Workers Assembly will lead a workshop on the growing strikes and fightback by public workers, especially in the South, as witnessed in West Virginia with the teachers’ strike.

A special workshop on understanding and reading financial instruments will be led by Maurice B.P. Drew, co-executive director of the Refund America Project, the preeminent organization studying Wall Street bond refinancing and extortion against the working class. RAP research has been used by organizations fighting the banks’ robbery in Detroit, Puerto Rico, Chicago and elsewhere.

Action proposals will be on the agenda, including participation in the Poor People’s Campaign, May Day and demonstrations against the ongoing tax foreclosures and water shutoffs in Detroit.

The conference will start March 24 at 10 a.m. at historic St. Matthew’s-St.



Joseph’s Episcopal Church, 8850 Woodward Ave. Following that, there will be dinner and an evening of cultural presentations. To register go to moratorium-mi.

org. For more information, see the Facebook event at tinyurl.com/ycx68v2s; on Twitter @DefeatAusterity; or contact defeatausterity@gmail.com.

Bay Resistance says ‘Crush ICE’

By San Francisco Bay Area WW bureau

Hundreds of mostly young people shut down the San Francisco headquarters of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement department gates and blocked the intersection of Sansome and Washington streets on Feb. 28 to protest the gестапо-like roundup of alleged undocumented immigrants in the Bay Area.

Activist youths, labor union members, church-affiliated people and anyone opposing the ICE attacks that break up immigrant families and disrupt the lives of millions joined the action. They joined



PHOTO: INDYBAY

Downtown San Francisco, Feb. 28.

arms — sometimes using lengthy extensions — and chanted against ICE while blocking ICE entrances and traffic in downtown San Francisco.

One group of marchers arrived following a large banner that read, “Crush ICE.” Other protesters painted an enormous sign on the street with the message that the Bay Area was protesting ICE and demanding to “Keep families together.”

ICE’s assaults on various communities in the Bay Area from San Jose to Oakland to San Francisco had led to the arrests of 150 people. According to ICE spokespeople, another 864 people had been targeted but escaped. For this slip-up, ICE officials attempted to blame local elected politicians like Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf, who warned people of the upcoming raids. Many of the local elected officials in California oppose the blatant repression of the raids and say they won’t cooperate with ICE.

According to Indybay.org on March 1, “Some protesters — yelling, ‘Shut ICE down!’ — locked themselves together in human chains to block traffic well into the afternoon.” Others blocked ICE gates to prevent them from bringing more arrestees in.

Protester Trilce Santana said, “What we want is for the folks who have been detained in this round of raids to be set free and to be able to have due process if they are still detained.” Santana said raids “destroy families, they spread terror, they make communities unsafe because [immigrants] are not able to reach out for services out of fear.” (Indybay, March 1)

The Feb. 28 Mercury News reported Anand Singh’s comments: “We’re here to stand for justice and due process for all people.” Singh is president of UNITE HERE Local 2, a union representing thousands of workers in the service industry. □

Rent strike wins in East LA

By Scott Scheffer
Los Angeles

Residents of the East Los Angeles neighborhood of Boyle Heights are savoring a rent-strike victory organized by a group of tenants. The Mariachi rent strike forced a rich real estate developer to sign the first-ever collective bargaining agreement between tenants and a landlord in Los Angeles.

About half the tenants in the 24-unit building are Mariachi entertainers. They moved there to be near Mariachi Plaza, where these traditional performers gather to get paid gigs.

Real estate developer Frank BJ Turner purchased the building with a plan to spike the rents of five to seven tenants at a time, each step giving him more leverage over the remaining tenants. Turner quickly demanded rent increases of 60 to 80 percent on seven apartments. He named the building “Mariachi Crossing” to exploit the culture even as he aimed to drive people out.

Boyle Heights fights gentrification

During the Bill Clinton administration a plan was initiated to demolish federal housing projects and build smaller, single-family dwellings. A group of Boyle Heights women known as “Mothers of the Projects” blocked the bulldozers at three different housing projects. They demanded that the replacement housing be provided to neighborhood residents — at affordable rents — and they won.



PHOTO: BOYLEHEIGHTSBEAT.COM

Artists and community fight evictions.

More mothers joined and they became “Unión de Vecinos,” Union of Neighbors. They have been fighting for the rights of Boyle Heights tenants ever since.

Recently investors bought art galleries and apartment buildings in Boyle Heights. Apartment rents are rising. Low-income people are being forced out. Galleries that formerly featured local artists are being replaced by showrooms selling artwork for sometimes tens of thousands of dollars.

Activists have disrupted “art tours” and protested gentrification. Unión de Vecinos has gained community esteem. Fernando Ramirez, an East L.A. resident, staff organizer for the United Electrical Workers and a tenant rights organizer, told Workers World: “We don’t want corporate art, we have our own art. None of these galleries has connections with our community. And there’s nothing wrong with homes being fixed and updated. But there’s a saying in the struggle: Your luxury won’t be our displacement!”

Gentrification and spiking rents are plaguing all of LA, and working-class people have been fighting back. In 2015 the Los Angeles Tenants Union was formed and began opening chapters in different neighborhoods. Unión de Vecinos founded the Boyle Heights LA Tenants Union. The seven tenants who were suddenly facing unaffordable rent increases in early 2017 contacted the union.

Their outreach emphasized their connection to Mariachis, the beloved icon in this Mexican community, and to expose the name and face of Frank BJ Turner. Other tenants joined the campaign and posters appeared all over the building. Social media got the word out widely.

When Turner refused to meet, they kept up the pressure, calling a rent strike that lasted nine months. Each month they paid their pre-increase rent to Turner and put the increase in an escrow account. After returning the checks for two months, Turner began accepting them, while still demanding increases.

‘See you at your house’

Some 75 to 100 tenants demonstrated at Turner’s Beverly Hills office and then at his home in the lavish Rancho Park neighborhood. Clearly rattled, Turner’s office finally agreed to a meeting — if the tenants would just call off a planned

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Behind Janus v. AFSCME

A racist, sexist threat to all union labor

By Edward Yudelovich

The U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments Feb. 26 on the Janus v. AFSCME, Council 31 case. A decision, expected by June, threatens to overturn a 1977 SCOTUS decision that defended the right of public sector unions, such as the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, to collect dues from nonmembers represented by the unions.

These nonmembers receive the same collective bargaining, economic and medical benefits as dues-paying members. Thus a decision against automatic collection of dues from all workers weakens the ability of public worker unions to do their job.

Since 7.2 million, or nearly half the 14.8 million union members in the United States, are public sector workers, the Janus case represents a potential blow to union membership density and the fiscal survival of many unions. The union membership rate of public sector workers is 34.4 percent, while that of private sector workers is 6.5 percent. (U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics, Jan. 19)

In addition, because of the makeup of public sector workers, the Janus case is a special threat to the rights of women and of African-American workers. Women made up 57 percent of the public sector workforce in 2012. As of 2015, one in five African Americans works for the government in a public sector job. Black women make up 17.7 percent of public sector workers.

#45 backs attack on unions

Since the Janus case is an attack on labor, Black people, women and all workers, it should be no surprise that Trump — the racist bigot and misogynist in chief, called “45” in disgust by many union members — is supporting Mark Janus, the public employee in Illinois who brought the suit against the union. The Trump administration’s Department of Justice filed a brief in support of Janus, alleging that Janus’ First Amendment free speech rights were violated.

Trump’s appointment of reactionary justice Neil Gorsuch to the court was aimed at establishing a reactionary majority. This majority can override the March 29, 2016, Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association 4-4 deadlocked SCOTUS decision, an earlier version of the case on the same issues.

#45 is joined by the National Right to Work Movement, which stepped up its campaign to turn back the clock on labor

rights in this case. “Right to work” is a Big Lie, made in the U.S., with its roots in the racial brutality of the Jim Crow South and a pretext to pass off anti-union legislation as free speech.

Workers resist ‘right-to-work’ Big Lie

But workers’ leaders have answered this Big Lie. On Dec. 8, Lee Saunders, the first African-American president of AFSCME, representing 1.6 million public sector workers, pointed out in a statement titled “The False Slogan of Right to Work: An Attack on Worker Freedom”:

“More than half of African Americans make less than \$15 per hour. But belonging to a union is likely to lead to a substantial pay raise and superior benefits. African-American union members earn 14.7 percent more than their non-union peers. The union advantage for Latinx is even greater: 21.8 percent.”

There are two important reasons for this gain in wages. The civil service merit system, used to attain public sector employment by examination based on one’s ability to perform on a test, makes discrimination more difficult for the bosses. Furthermore, specific civil rights statutes in many state and local governments protecting women workers and workers of color from discrimination, won from decades of labor and civil rights struggles, have many more protections than similar federal and local laws for private sector workers.

The weekend before the court heard the Janus case, many thousands of workers organized Working People’s Day of Action protests in more than 25 cities on Feb. 24. Labor and civil rights groups held a protest in front of the Supreme Court during the hearing on Feb. 26.

Many of the rallies commemorated the 50th anniversary of the historic 1968 Memphis, Tenn., sanitation strike. At that time the predominantly African-American sanitation workers, represented by AFSCME Local 1733, walked out on strike for more than two months. This was the famous “I Am a Man” strike, which the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was supporting when he was assassinated.

The Memphis workers were fighting to improve wages of 65 cents an hour and life-threatening work conditions. Their strike began two days after a nine-day sanitation workers’ strike in New York City. In the next two years sanitation workers struck in Baltimore; Washington, D.C.; Charlotte, N.C.; Atlanta; Miami; St. Petersburg, Fla.; and Corpus Christi, Texas.

One could say that the biggest demon-



PHOTO: NEW YORK CITY CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL

New York City workers march on Working People’s Day, Feb. 24.

stration against “right to work” now is the continuing strike of public school teachers in West Virginia. The overwhelming majority of the strike leaders are women.

Racist invented ‘right-to-work’ slogan

The Big Lie of so-called right-to-work — that is, the so-called “right” to not be in a union — was coined by Texas oil lobbyist Vance Muse in the 1930s. He opposed the unionization of U.S. workers and helped pass the first anti-union laws in Texas.

Muse was editor of The Christian American and worked for the anti-Semitic and anti-Black Southern Committee to Uphold the Constitution. He also used his segregationist views as an argument against unions, stating that with unions: “White women and white men will be forced into organizations with [racist slur] ... or lose their jobs.” (Labor Notes, Aug. 3, 2017)

Muse also fought against against the Adamson Act, which gave an eight-hour workday to railroad workers. Instrumental in passing a number of anti-union laws in the South, he proposed and campaigned for a right-to-work amendment to the U.S. Constitution. While Muse failed then to get the amendment passed, 28 states now have anti-union right-to-work laws.

NAACP fought Woodrow Wilson’s civil service racism

The roots of right-to-work go further back — to #28, Democratic Party President Woodrow Wilson, from Virginia. Wilson’s racism is obvious given the 1915 film showing at the White House of the

racist, pro-lynching movie glorifying the Ku Klux Klan, “The Birth of a Nation.”

Prior to Wilson’s inauguration in 1913, African Americans had been making slow but steady progress in federal employment and were about 5 percent of all federal civil servants nationwide, working side-by-side with whites. Then Wilson segregated federal workplaces, including the railway mail service, which mandated curtains be installed to separate Black and white clerical workers and required segregated lunchrooms and restrooms.

On May 27, 1914, Wilson’s Civil Service Commission issued a new order requiring that applicants for federal jobs submit a photograph — so African-American applicants could be excluded. The NAACP and the historically Black National Alliance of Postal Employees (NAPE was formed in 1913 after Black people were excluded from the Railway Mail Association) campaigned for many years against the racist use of the application photograph. The National Association of Letter Carriers, while battling to keep Jim Crow branches out of its organization, voted at its 1939 convention to support abolition of the discriminatory photograph, which was finally abolished on Nov. 7, 1940.

It is in the interest of all public sector, private sector, organized and unorganized labor, and precarious workers to collaborate, unite and invoke the great labor slogans: “An injury to one is an injury to all.” That echoes the refrain from the great labor song, “Solidarity forever, for the union makes us strong!” □

Grad workers and teachers strike in Illinois

By Kaitlyn Griffith

Graduate workers at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign entered their third day of striking on Feb. 28. Workers demonstrated, using empty buckets and trash cans as drums. The grad workers are represented by the Graduate Employees’ Organization (GEO).

At 8 a.m., grad workers formed five picket lines outside of each entrance to Lincoln Hall, which houses the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. As the day progressed, the picket lines grew until they combined into one that circled the entire building. This was the third consecutive day that all classes in Lincoln Hall had to be canceled or moved.

The GEO first secured full tuition waivers in their first collective bargaining agreement ratified in 2009. But the UIUC administration has refused to guarantee the waivers, potentially forcing graduate workers to pay \$30,000 in tuition, when many live on annual stipends of \$16,000.

Hundreds of graduate workers rallied with faculty and undergraduate supporters on the main quad. The UIUC administration is refusing to come to the table to bargain in good faith, so the strike will continue into March. □



WW PHOTO: KAITLYN GRIFFITH

Grad workers strike at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Feb. 28.

Class war in West Virginia

School workers strike win raise

Continued from page 1

one group and passing it to another. The purpose of this is clear — to divide us and to pit us against each other.”

The three unions are the American Federation of Teachers-West Virginia, the West Virginia Education Association and the West Virginia School Service Personnel Association.

A Senate clerical error actually endorsed the 5 percent increase briefly before pro-business senators rushed to erase the raise. One striker's social media comment was that the legislators seemed to need a teacher to help them check their figures and their draft language.

The strikers' impact was felt early when the governor approved, and the Republican-majority House passed, the pay hike. The governor had to back away from pushing bills that gutted seniority, promoted charter schools, prevented unions from deducting union dues from members' paychecks, and would expand “Teach for America” — a program that hires new college graduates without teaching degrees at a lower rate of pay. These types of bills are part of a national anti-union campaign funded in part by the far-right billionaire Koch brothers.

The governor's offer did not create a permanent fix for the Public Employees Insurance Agency, only proposing a temporary “freeze” on health care insurance premiums and a “task force” to find more funding sources. However, the worst legislative changes to PEIA, mostly various excuses to raise premiums, are paused for the time being.

The strength of what is essentially a general strike of education workers was demonstrated March 2 when 45 county school superintendents told Republican legislators that schools would stay closed until the 5 percent increase passed. Now all 55 superintendents have taken that position.

Statewide wildcat strike

Strikers have rallied around the slogan #55Strong. The multinational, majority-women, rank and file set in motion and unsatisfied by the governor's proposal, stated strongly they deserved a bigger say in the deal's content. So on Wednesday, Feb. 28, workers continued to picket, with shouts of “We're not letting anybody cross this line!” Some who voted for Trump and Republicans in the last election now point to betrayal by the rich, shouting, “Make

‘em pay in May!” when election primaries are held. (USA Today, March 1)

Under state law, public sector strikes are illegal, but West Virginia workers know labor history. The Battle of Blair Mountain in 1921 in Logan County was the largest labor uprising in U.S. history, with 10,000 armed coal miners confronting 3,000 police and strikebreakers. Throughout the 20th century the United Mine Workers was a mighty force, with wildcat strikes common, including thousands during the 1970s. Some strikers are wearing the red neckerchiefs that miners wore during the 1921 revolt.

On Thursday, March 1, the workers defiantly began their second week on strike. One union member told WW that most strikers want big businesses, especially Big Oil, taxed at a higher rate so the state can pay education workers better wages and benefits.

On March 2, 3 and 5, militant rallies drew thousands to the state capital, Charleston. On March 2, hundreds of students marched to support their teachers, holding signs and chanting, “Teachers stand for us, we stand for teachers.” They have joined teachers in occupying the Capitol building interior for multiple days.

Mond Jones, an organizer of the Workers World “Defeat Austerity” conference in Detroit on March 24, described his day in West Virginia: “On the morning of March 5 we had breakfast just inside West Virginia. The teachers at nearby tables had on strike T-shirts. They said it's easier to organize a strike now with social media. At the Capitol there were about 10,000 people — 4,000 occupying inside and 6,000 outside. They were mostly women, all very militant. Our literature was well-received. All the unions had a strong presence, along with the Retired Teachers Association.”

Jerry Goldberg, of the Moratorium NOW! Coalition in Detroit, told the rallying strikers: “We are with you 100 percent.”

This historic struggle is not just between pro-union workers and anti-union politicians. It's labor vs. capital. All West Virginia workers face dangers to their health and livelihoods from the predations of Big Oil and Big Banking. 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 percent or \$1,020 per citizen.”

Fighting for the union

Unions benefit everyone. Their structure offers combat assistance, resources and organizational communication. Unions enable members to connect and build militancy from the ground up.

While worker anger has been widespread at top union leaders, who appeared ready to end the strike prematurely, strikers are reacting positively to the unions' official announcement that the walkout would continue until the 5 percent raise becomes law. They fought to have unions and they are fighting to make them fight.

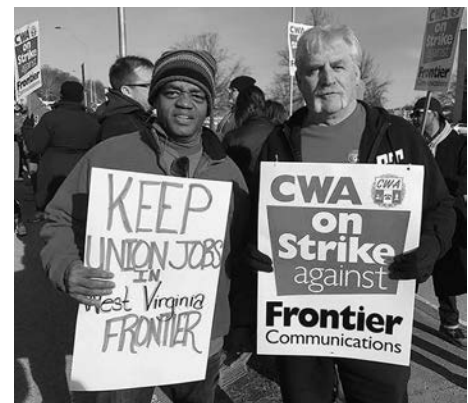
Teacher and union activist Phil, demonstrating at the Capitol building on March 1, told WW: “There's been lots of anti-union talk from ultra-left and conservatives. Folks need to fight within their unions, to make them more progressive and class conscious. We need to radicalize and transform unions from within at the local level.

“Some believe the association leaders are negotiating directly with the governor. It's really the legislators striking the deals and selling out the workers. These politicians have the interests of energy



WW PHOTOS

Above, Charleston, W.Va., March 5. Below, inspired by teachers, CWA workers strike Frontier Communication in W.Va. and Va., March 5.



companies and private capital.

“The struggle of education workers and teachers is a class struggle for social justice, a social struggle against racism and capitalism and against austerity. We hope to build the idea of class consciousness through the participation of local unions. When people drop out of unions, we don't build class consciousness. Hopefully, after this struggle, people will continue to participate and strengthen and radicalize their unions.”

Despite failings in upper-level leadership, the union is not the enemy. The enemy is the billionaire capitalist class!

Solidarity multiplies

Tremendous solidarity has come from other unions: Teamsters, Mine Workers, Communication Workers and even unions in other countries.

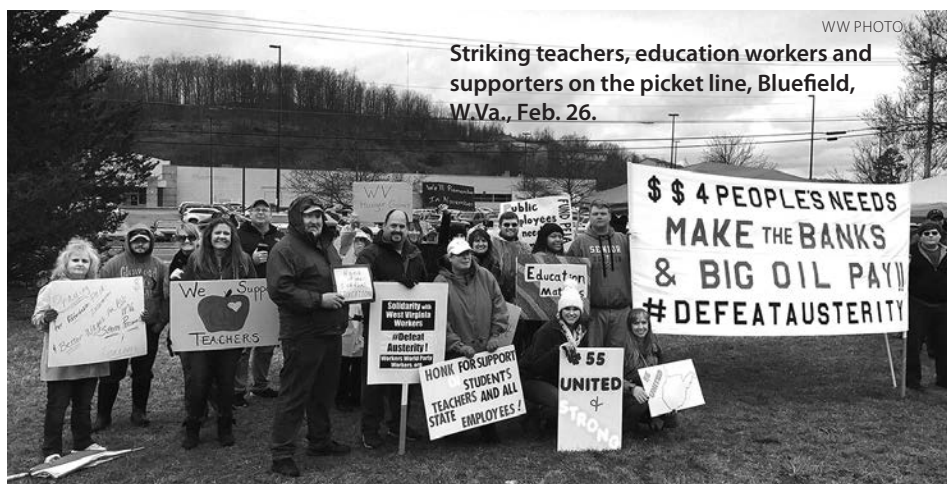
The Southern Workers Assembly issued a solidarity message: “In the days as we await the Supreme Court decision on the Janus case, which would effectively make public sector workers in all states right-to-work, we are reminded that even workers in the RTW states, concentrated in the U.S. South, can build their unions, fight back and win. The type of mass rank-n-file action displayed by WV educators is an example for us all to follow.”

More solidarity messages have flowed in, including from the Boston School Bus Drivers Union, United Steelworkers Local 8751; Harvard TPS Coalition, a group of union cooks, custodians and clerical workers at Harvard University supporting immigrant workers losing temporary protective status; and New York-based Parents for Improved School Transportation.

The West Virginia example is already being followed. About 1,400 members of the Communication Workers in West Virginia and Ashburn, Va., walked out March 4 at midnight and are striking Frontier Communications. Many of them were learning about strikes by picketing alongside teachers. They are fighting for job security as Frontier has eliminated 500 jobs since acquiring Verizon landlines in 2010.

The world is watching the class war in West Virginia. Power to the rank-and-file union members directing their burning anger against the viciousness of the capitalist system!

Otis Grotewohl contributed to this article.



WW PHOTO

Striking teachers, education workers and supporters on the picket line, Bluefield, W.Va., Feb. 26.

An open letter from a teacher to West Virginia educators

Continued from page 1

to yours), we still went over four years without a contract, losing hundreds of millions of dollars in wages. While we are not “Right-to-Starve,” we have lost 30 schools to closure and over 60,000 students to privatized charters, as well as over 6,000 union members in the past few years. Your struggle is ours.

We know that we, as teachers and education workers, are the most unionized sector of the economy. While the Supreme Court threatens to destroy our organizations, encouraging the decline of unions to lower our wages and benefits, they will not stop us from struggling for our rights.

While your strike was not “legal,” you have shown that legality is nothing compared to people's power.

Every day, we teachers have a tremendous responsibility to our students and our communities. Every day that you are on strike you are showing you take this responsibility seriously. West Virginia educators have shown that you are ready to take the responsibility to fight for our entire class and to galvanize us in the first major workers' struggle since the last election.

Let this be a lesson for workers across the U.S. to “Strike for our rights!”

We hope your struggle to win better

pay and benefits, along with building your union, connects with teachers in Oklahoma, who are planning to strike for the same reasons. We hope you connect with educators in Detroit fighting to defeat austerity attacks and with educators in Puerto Rico, where U.S. banks set up financial dictators to try to close 300 schools and bring in charters to bust unions, using Hurricane Maria as a battering ram of austerity. We hope you connect with the movement that rose up after the death of cafeteria worker Philando Castile, a Black school worker and union member killed by Minnesota police.

Solidarity wins! Let's continue to build solidarity with our students' lives who are under attack and with our communities facing crisis after crisis. This means fighting racism, fighting violence against women and LGBTQ people, fighting for health care for all and more, in order to unite all people in a struggle for dignity, respect and equality.

In honor of the Battle of Blair Mountain and the many militant workers' strikes in the history of West Virginia, let's continue to build solidarity and union power!

Solidarity Forever!

Scott Michael

American Federation of Teachers Local 3, Philadelphia Federation of Teachers

This is an edited version of a talk given at the Feb. 3 “Women and the Fight for Socialism” forum hosted by Workers World Party in New York City.

North Korean women thrive despite imperialist threats

By Julie Varughese

The Institute of International Studies in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea released a study on Jan. 30 titled “White Paper on Human Rights Violations in U.S. in 2017.”

When I read it, I burst out in laughter. The DPRK (also known as north Korea) was mocking the United States for making claims about the status of people in the DPRK.

The white paper pointed out all the ways people in the U.S. are being exploited and attacked by the racist, patriarchal, capitalist, settler-colonial state founded on genocide and slavery.

As a relatively isolated nation, the DPRK is constantly attacked by outright lies in the Western media and by sanctions on what it can import and export, which limit its ability to take care of its own people. It also faces a constant threat of a nuclear attack by the U.S., which keeps a large military presence in south Korea and Okinawa and on its ships. Following north Korea’s recent move to co-operate with south Korea, the U.S. has only ramped up its aggressive language against the DPRK. In fact, the U.S. war against north Korea has never ended.

In November, a United Nations human rights panel claimed north Korean women are deprived of education and job opportunities and are often subjected to violence at home and sexual assault in the workplace. Recent pieces have come out saying that women and children are being raped and sex trafficked.

This is the kind of news that tugs on the heartstrings of liberals and encourages so-called humanitarian intervention — the same humanitarian intervention that destroyed Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. But how many more times will we here in the U.S. tolerate hearing these lies being told about countries the ruling class needs to invade to maintain full spectrum dominance?

Let me tell you about what the CIA — the surveillance and terror arm of the U.S. government — reported about north Korean women in their CIA Factbook.

More women than men exist in North Korea. Women live to an average of 74 years old, which competes with the U.S. average of 79 years.

According to the Library of Congress, “The social status and roles of women were radically changed on July 30, 1946, when authorities north of the 38th parallel passed a Sex Equality Law. The 1972 constitution asserted that women hold equal social status and rights with men. The 1990 constitution stipulates that the state create various conditions for the advancement of women in society.”

According to the CIA Factbook, women make up 47 percent of the DPRK’s labor force. Women are obligated to serve in the military from age 17 to age 23. Women who have three or more children are permitted to work only 6 hours a day and still receive an 8-hour-a-day salary.

DPRK has better health care, education

North Korea is considered a low-income country, but it is on a par with or better than developed countries like the U.S. when it comes to health care and education.

For example, the “contraceptive prevalence rate” for women between the ages of 20 and 49 is 78.2 percent. In the U.S., that number is 74 percent. Women here pay for contraception. In north Korea, it’s free. The fertility rate is 1.95 children per woman in north Korea, which is about the same as in the U.S.

The obesity rate in north Korea is 6.8 percent. In the U.S., it’s 35 percent among men and 40.4 percent among women, according to the Journal of the American Medical Association.

North Korea has more hospital beds per capita than the U.S., putting the DPRK on par with south Korea, Japan and Monaco. North Korea has 13.2 beds for every 1,000 people, while the U.S. has only 2.9 beds per 1,000. (Clearly, patients are given more time to recover.)

The DPRK is about on par with the U.S. in the number of doctors for every 1,000 people. In north Korea, it’s 2.78; in the U.S., it’s 2.55.

The literacy rate for people ages 15 and older is 100 percent. You can’t say that



DPRK team defeats the U.S. to win the women’s World Cup for soccer youth in Papua, New Guinea, November 2016.

about the U.S., where it’s 86 percent. Everyone in north Korea goes to school through the end of high school, and that’s mandatory. That’s not the case here in the U.S. But North Korea makes it easy for people to go to school.

After Korean War 1950-53, DPRK emphasized health care

After losing 20 percent of its population and seeing its landscape decimated during the 1950-53 war when the U.S. attempted to destroy the people’s republic, the DPRK emphasized health care. Between 1955 and 1986, the number of hospitals grew from 285 to 2,401, and the number of clinics from 1,020 to 5,644. There are even hospitals attached to factories and mines.

In spite of all the sanctions and the constant threat of nuclear war, north Korea has built and provided a health care system that benefits women. North Korea has even been described as having a health care system that is the envy of the developing world.

According to World Health Organization Director-General Margaret Chan, the DPRK has “no lack of doctors and nurses.” North Korea’s government provides universal health care for all citizens. In 2001, north Korea spent 3 percent of its gross domestic product on health care. Despite the U.S. spending close to 18 percent of its gross domestic product on health care — more than any country in the world — it does not have the best health outcomes. It ranks 12th in life expectancy among the 12 wealthiest industrialized countries, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. That means the so-called greatest country in

the world is at the bottom.

WHO criticized an earlier Amnesty International report on north Korea for an outdated and factually inaccurate report that described “barely functioning hospitals.”

Pyongyang Maternity Hospital and North Pyongan Provincial Maternity Hospital were awarded plaques declaring them Baby-Friendly Hospitals in 2009 by the UNICEF Thailand office for attaining all 10 targets of breastfeeding set by WHO and the United Nation’s Children’s Fund. Mothers typically stay in the hospital for 10 days after giving birth, and those who give birth through Caesarean section stay for 15 days. Mothers of triplets are hospitalized until the smallest child weighs at least 13 pounds.

The late President Kim Jong Il decided to build the Pyongyang Maternity Hospital in 1978 because he wished no more women would die because of pregnancy complications, which is how his mother died. Current President Kim Jong Un added the breast cancer treatment wing in 2012 because his mother had died of breast cancer.

We defend the Korean people’s right to determine the fate of their peninsula, because a threat of invasion by the U.S. military and its allies on behalf of the global ruling class anywhere in the world against oppressed peoples is a threat of invasion and exploitation everywhere.

Julie Varughese, a candidate member of Workers World Party, is communications advisor at the Black Alliance for Peace, an organizer with The People’s MTA and co-founder of Antiwar Future, a campaign to build a youth-driven anti-war movement in the United States.

Philly workers fight bigotry at nonprofit agency

By Joe Piette

The Black and Brown Workers Cooperative organized a press conference outside the office of Philadelphia FIGHT on March 1 to denounce racist, sexist and anti-labor practices at the agency, which provides services to people living with HIV/AIDS.

BBWC Co-Founder Abdul-Aliy Muhammad read a list of 10 demands, including the immediate resignation of Executive Director Jane Shull and Medical Director Karam Mounzer.

A year ago, a scathing report by the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations on racism in the city’s historic LGBTQIA-populated neighborhood, known as the Gayborhood, cited discrimination patterns in FIGHT’s workplace culture, policies and practices. The report recommended that bars and FIGHT officials and staff receive anti-discrimination training and abide by the city’s fair practices and equal op-



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Members of The Womanist Working Collective and the Black and Brown Workers Cooperative in front of the Philadelphia Muses mural.

portunity requirements. (tinyurl.com/y8jsqrjo)

FIGHT officials have failed to make adequate corrections and now want the link to the report taken off PCHR’s website. BBWC’s press release explained that the report “was informed by the

countless voices of Black and Brown LGBTQIA folks heard during the historical Racism in the Gayborhood hearing which took place on Oct. 25, 2016. This [request] directly undermines Black and Brown LGBTQIA folks who are most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.”

BBWC demanded a worker-led selection and hiring process for the next executive director: “Should the selected ED abuse their power, the workers retain the right to vote the ED out and restart the hiring process.”

Mandatory anti-oppression trainings for staff and board members and implementation of a grievance procedure involving third-party mediation were other demands. The BBWC gave the board “until the end of the business day on March 14 to respond.” (Look for March 1 post on tinyurl.com/fb-bbwc/.)

BBWC co-founder Shani Akilah added: “An organization is not community-based if the leadership does not reflect those most impacted. We declare that the days of people in power getting government money to profit off of Black illness while not actually delivering services ... in the way that our communities require [are over]. ... We demand that community-based organizations become actual community-based organizations through internal workers democratically electing who leads that organization. ... If you are calling yourself community based, you must be controlled by the community, not by government money, not by quotas, not by CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] reports.”

Philadelphia Councilmember Helen Gym, ACT UP Philadelphia, the Womanist Working Collective and workers from West Philadelphia Federally Qualified Health Centers all made statements supporting BBWC’s call for institutional change at the nonprofit. □

INTERNATIONAL WORKING WOMEN'S DAY

Racism's impact on maternity

Commentary

By Mikisa Thompson

Women's History Month is an annual U.S. event that highlights the contributions of women to historical events and contemporary society. As a Black woman in contemporary society, there are many issues that affect me and my community at large. Racism and the ways in which white supremacy rears its ugly head are woven into our lives on a daily basis — especially when we are most vulnerable.

As Black women, during pregnancy and childbirth, we are at the most vulnerable to systemic racism. Black women are disproportionately affected by police brutality, low wages, homelessness and the violence of racism and genocide.

Black mothers die of heart failure

According to a Dec. 7 article in ProPublica, “In recent years, as high rates of maternal mortality in the U.S. have alarmed researchers, one statistic has been especially concerning. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention], black mothers in the U.S. die at three to four times the rate of white mothers, one of the widest of all racial disparities in women's health. Put another way, a black woman is 243 percent more likely to die from pregnancy- or childbirth-related causes.”

That number — 243 percent — is a heavy one to take in. The way racism shows up in those blessed to be Black women is especially blatant when it comes to health care. The bias toward Black women and children is the crux of the problem. Women of most races aren't heard when they speak up about pain management or just a general feeling of not feeling well. Imagine being a Black woman and experiencing tremendous pain during and after childbirth, and you are not given the basic care — which is adequate pain management — like your female counterparts who are enduring the same process of trying to bring forth life.

Two women who have recently experienced childbirth, along with a serious health crisis or death, come to mind.



Erica Garner

One is Erica Garner, who died of a broken heart on Dec. 30 after her father, Eric Garner, was murdered in 2014 by the state in Staten Island, N.Y. The other is the number one athlete in the world: Serena Williams.

Erica Garner experienced a side effect of living while Black when her father was murdered. This trauma led to a heart attack after the birth of her son last August. This is an all too common occurrence after a Black woman births a baby.

The American Heart Association says, “Peripartum cardiomyopathy (PPCM), also known as postpartum cardiomyopathy, is an uncommon form of heart failure that happens during the last month of pregnancy or up to five months after giving birth.” (Dec. 12)

However, the AHA also says this is “a rare occurrence” — because it isn't checking for PPCM among Black women. If the organization was doing that, everyone in the U.S. would or should be outraged.

Megan Brooks, in an article titled “Peripartum Cardiomyopathy More Severe for Black Women,” writes: “African American women with PPCM are diagnosed later postpartum, they present with more severe systolic dysfunction, their cardiac function worsens after diagnosis more often and recovers less frequently, and, when cardiac function does recover, it takes much longer to do so.” (posted on Medscape, Oct. 13)

Serena Williams gave birth to her baby daughter on Sept. 1. She has a history of

blood clots. After giving birth via C-section, she had a hard time breathing. In a Jan. 10 article in Vogue titled “Serena Williams on Motherhood, Marriage and Making her Comeback,” she explains that she knew that she needed a “CT scan with contrast and IV heparin (a blood thinner) right away. The nurse thought her pain medicine might be making her confused. But Serena insisted, and soon enough a doctor was performing an ultrasound of her legs. ‘I was like, a Doppler? I told you, I need a CT scan and a heparin drip,’ she remembers telling the team. The ultrasound revealed nothing, so they sent her for the CT, and sure enough, several small blood clots had settled in her lungs. Minutes later she was on the drip. ‘I was like, listen to Dr. Williams!’”

Infant mortality among African Americans

Williams, who has unlimited funds, was not initially heard by the medical staff. Imagine the situation facing a woman living in a poor neighborhood going to a hospital with a biased staff. It most certainly would have led to a different outcome. This is good information to know. What do we do with this informed knowledge? Who takes up our cause? Also, with the high rate of Black mothers dying, it leads to the topic of infant mortality rates among Black children.

When I was pregnant with my son, I heard a statistic that Black boys had the highest infant mortality rate up until the age of five! I couldn't stop worrying about my son until he was five. I still worry because he can get shot while at school or while being a Black male anywhere in the U.S.

According to the CDC: “Infant mortality is the death of an infant before his or their first birthday. The infant mortality rate is the number of infant deaths for every 1,000 live births. In addition to giving us key information about maternal and

infant health, the infant mortality rate is an important marker of the overall health of a society.”

The Department of Health and Human Services reports that African Americans have 2.2 times the infant mortality rate as non-Hispanic whites and African-American infants are 3.2 times as likely to die from complications related to low birth-weight as compared to non-Hispanic white infants. In 2014, African Americans had over twice the sudden infant death syndrome mortality rate as non-Hispanic whites, and African-American mothers were 2.2 times more likely than non-Hispanic white mothers to receive late or no prenatal care.

Dr. Joia Adele Crear-Perry, founder of the National Birth Equity Collaborative, says: “The United States is the only developed country in the world where maternal mortality is on the rise. Black women in the U.S. die at 3 to 4 times the rate of white women. Black babies die at 2 times the rate of their white counterparts. With clear evidence of this inequity, this is an urgent public health and human rights issue.

“As a black woman from the Deep South who is an obstetrician and a mother, my strong desire to end this inequity is amplified every time I look into the faces of my daughter and my patients. It was with this understanding that I created the National Birth Equity Collaborative in 2015.” (The Renewal Project, Nov. 30)

Black women will continue to do the work so that the least of these can flourish. The statistics brought up in this article should lead to a major uprising because white supremacy is dismantling our homes by way of harming Black women and our children. This is genocide — the deliberate killing of a large group of people, especially those of a particular ethnic group or nation.

Wake up people! The effects of racism are literally and figuratively killing us. Let us continue to pull down monuments to white supremacy. Eventually, that will cause real change when it comes to one day erasing the systemic causes of racism and its impact on the health of Black women and our children. □

Defending trans lives from violence

By Workers World Boston bureau

Dozens of queer, trans, intersex, two-spirit, nonbinary people and their supporters gathered Feb. 24 at City Hall in North Adams, Mass., to speak out about the wave of trans murders reported in the early weeks of 2018 in the U.S.

Demonstrators waved trans liberation flags and carried signs made in memory of fallen trans women: Christa Leigh Steele-Knudslie of North Adams; Vicky Gutierrez of Honduras and Los Angeles; Celine Walker in Jacksonville, Fla.; and Tonya “Kita” Harvey of Buffalo, N.Y. Demonstrators also gathered in Buffalo, N.Y., and outside an LGBTQ conference in Amherst, Mass.

Ben Power — director of the Holyoke, Mass., Sexual Minorities Archive, one of the event's organizers and a close friend of Christa Leigh Steele-Knudslie — began the rally with touching recollections of Christa's life and her role in organizing the local trans community. Power also drew links between anti-trans violence and harassment and the deadly toll of intimate partner violence upon so

many women, including trans women. Steele-Knudslie's husband was arrested in January and charged with her murder.

This connection was echoed by Jahaira DeAlto of the Berkshire LGBTQ Pride committee, who explained to the crowd that, as “an out, proud and alive trans woman of color, I am twice as likely to become a victim of intimate partner violence in my lifetime; I am also twice as likely to experience sexual assault in my lifetime; and as I turn 39 years old, I will be four years past my life expectancy.”

Nat Heathman, a Narragansett two-spirit activist and member of Workers World Party, spoke from an Indigenous peoples' perspective on the abuse and murder of trans people. “I just want to say that we are standing on stolen land. This land belonged to my ancestors. And one of the great things about this land is that before the colonialists came here and stole it and ruined it, trans and non-binary people lived here. So we are not a new thing. ... We're not abnormal, this is not an illness, this is not a fad and it's not an anomaly. If humanity matters to you, then this should matter to you as well.”



Kenneth Mercure, co-founder of Berkshire Pride, speaking in front of the North Adams, Mass., town hall.

Time to take action

Queer organizer and member of the Boston WWP trans caucus Gery Armsby told the crowd and passersby, “We are demanding that all people of conscience take action to defend trans lives, especially the lives of trans women of color, who face transphobia at the intersection of racism and sexism.”

Armsby continued, “We live in a racist, woman-hating society ... so every time we set out to speak truth to power we should think about building the broadest possible solidarity to show that we can and must

change that. We won't end transphobic murders unless we fight just as fiercely against racism and police brutality with the same breath. We won't stop getting harassed about the gender markers on our documents unless we fight for all undocumented people at the same time! We won't get quality trans-competent health care unless we fight for health care as a right for all people at the same time. We won't have better jobs and wages for trans people until we win the right of every person to a job and a living wage and a union.”

Continued on page 8

WW PHOTO: SAMUEL ORDÓÑEZ

A tax in sheep’s clothing

By Deirdre Griswold

Taxes paid to the federal government will go up this week, by a yearly total of about \$6 billion, if Trump goes ahead and signs an order imposing tariffs on imported steel and aluminum. That comes to an average of about \$78 per year for a family of four. It’s not a huge amount, but it adds up.

If Trump had said, “I’m raising your taxes,” he might have been denounced even by many of those who supported

him. But he didn’t say that. He said he was protecting jobs.

Most of the media commentary on the president’s announcement concerned whether or not raising the prices of these imported commodities would encourage more production here. The consensus was that it won’t. Steel and aluminum plants have been shedding workers mainly because of changes in technology that eliminate jobs, not foreign competition.

But imposing import tariffs of 25 percent on steel and 10 percent on aluminum

will raise the prices of goods made from them. It is also likely to set off a global trade war as other countries impose tariffs on U.S. goods — and that could lead to an actual loss of jobs here.

So why is Trump imposing this hidden tax on the people?

Is he scraping the bottom of the barrel for government revenue so as to make a little dent in the huge budget deficit? It has really ballooned since the capitalist political establishment cut taxes on the rich while raising the military budget sky high.

The national debt has now exceeded 20 TRILLION dollars. Paying just the interest on the debt is now the fourth-largest item in the federal budget. The financial institutions are laughing all the way to the bank, even as payments on this huge debt eat up any useful social programs.

We can’t know exactly what Trump’s motives are (assuming that he knows himself) without getting into the mind of this scheming billionaire, and who wants to go there? □

U.S. denial of visa to world union leader protested

In early February, the U.S. State Department denied a travel visa to George Mavrikos, the general secretary of the World Federation of Trade Unions. Workers World Party issued the following statement in protest of the U.S government’s action.

Workers World Party strongly protests the U.S. government’s decision to deny a visa to World Federation of Trade Unions General Secretary George Mavrikos. As leader of a world labor federation with 92 million members, brother Mavrikos has every right to travel to this country. World union leaders have every right to exchange ideas, information and solidarity with U.S. workers — workers whose rights are being eroded as we speak by the union-busting administration in Washington and by profit-driven capitalists.

This case is particularly outrageous, given that Secretary Mavrikos was expected to participate in a March event at

the United Nations, where he is a permanent representative of the WFTU, which has had a U.N. presence since its founding in 1945.

Workers here can learn a great deal from the class struggle-orientated WFTU, which is growing all over the world, especially in Africa, Asia and Latin America. We can learn from the workers of Greece, Mavrikos’ homeland, whose resistance to capitalist austerity is an inspiration to workers and oppressed people everywhere.

We demand the U.S. government issue the visa that Mavrikos applied for and cease its efforts to prevent U.S. unionists from learning about the anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist fighting unions that comprise the WFTU.

The WFTU sent the following message to Workers World Party after receiving our message:

Dear comrades,

We acknowledge receipt of your statement.

We thank you for the solidarity and we ensure you that the WFTU will firmly continue its internationalist and anti-imperialist action in favor of the world’s working class.

Fraternal regards,

WFTU HQ

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.

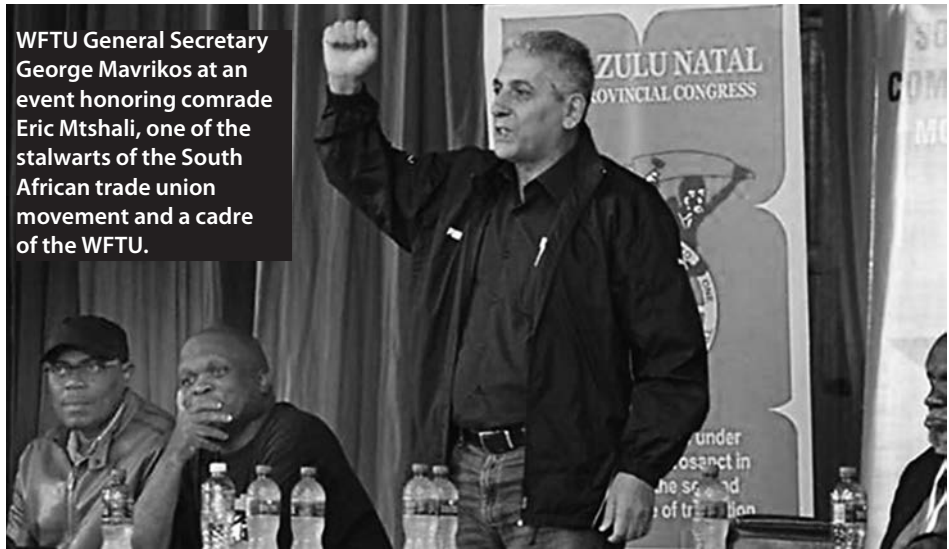
While all issues are women’s issues, WW focuses in 2018 on women in the U.S. who bear the brunt of Trump’s racist, sexist, bigoted, xenophobic agenda — working-class immigrant women who are being detained and deported for the “crime” of crossing borders to find work so they can provide for their families, 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. □



Rent strike wins in East LA

Continued from page 3

demonstration. Although he wanted to meet only one tenant at a time, he finally agreed to meet a committee. After his lawyers offered practically nothing, the organizers walked out, saying, “See you at your house!” which they did.

Turner’s lawyers asked the tenants to stop protesting at his house, but still wouldn’t offer anything. A second demonstration at his home was larger and drew other chapters of the LA Tenants Union.

Even some of Turner’s wealthy neighbors brought food to the picketers, and the local media again covered the story extensively. Turner’s office offered deals to individual tenants, but no one broke their unity. Later in November, activists showed up at his home a third time — but this time they pitched tents on the sidewalk, and Mariachis performed late into the night.

In early December, Turner’s office came to the bargaining table and the tenants won.

Ramirez explained the agreement that Turner was forced to sign: “Of the nine months of extra rent withheld during the strike, the tenants were allowed to keep

six months. The rent would increase by 14 percent, but each year after, the increase can only be 3.5 percent. When the agreement expires, Turner is legally obligated to negotiate again, which was something his lawyers opposed from the beginning. And maintenance of the building is in the contract.”

Ramirez added: “We try to always link the immigration struggle with our tenants’ rights struggle, because Immigration and Customs Enforcement is driving people out and that makes the neighborhood even more vulnerable to these corporate thieves.

“When they knock down a building and put up a new one, we want the rents to be appropriate for the median income of the people who live in the neighborhood so the same kind of tenants can move back in. We want to negotiate five-year contracts that spell out the limits on rent increases and to always have maintenance as part of the agreement.”

Currently rent strikes are happening or being planned in four more Los Angeles neighborhoods, with a combined count of about 400 rentals. □

Defending trans lives from violence

Continued from page 7

Armsby reminded the group: “The Stonewall Rebellion of 1969 was ignited by queer and trans youth of color who were already active in the struggles against racism, war and economic injustice that were raging in the late 1960s. So, in truth, this is what the struggle for trans liberation is all about: fighting shoulder-to-shoulder to bring about real change. Let’s revive the spirit of Stonewall, and with the memory of our fallen comrades in our hearts, let’s fight like hell for real, lasting justice, solidarity and power for all the people.”

After the rally concluded, there was a march to Christa Leigh Steele-Knudsen’s home in a nearby working-class neighborhood. This allowed participants to bear witness to the site of her murder and to share memories about her life. Along the way, marchers were heckled by some who shouted, “Trump! Trump! Trump!” WWP members helped keep the march secure, upbeat and strong, explaining over a bullhorn to residents on porches what the march was about and chanting, “Trans lives matter” and “The people united will never be defeated!” □

Actions demand ‘U.S. hands off Korea!’

By Workers World staff

Meetings, literature distributions and demonstrations occurred around the U.S. to protest the continuing escalation of war threats by the Trump administration against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Here are reports about some of them.



Los Angeles

WW PHOTO: RASIKA RUWANPATHIRANA

Organizations in **Los Angeles** gathered at a military recruiting station on March 4 to protest U.S. threats against the DPRK and demand no new U.S. war games on the Korean peninsula.

The protest began at the CNN building, with chants demanding the withdrawal of all U.S. troops in south Korea along with U.S. THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) missiles.

Activists spoke about the Olympics held in south Korea as showcasing the desire for peace by the people of north and south Korea, while exposing the belligerence of the U.S. in trying to sabotage peace prospects.

“We gather in the wake of the Olympics, which coincided with calls of support for the Korean women's joint ice hockey team, a united Korea marching under a united Korean flag, and reconvening of high-level talks between delegations from the divided peninsula,” said William Ree from the Korean Peace Alliance who, along with Bev Tang from the International League of Peoples' Struggle, emceed the event.

Rebecka Jackson of the International Action Center said, “These recent attacks by the U.S. are part of a long history of destabilization. This is a struggle of Indigenous people resisting U.S. imperialism and exploitation.”

Bev Tang spoke about the frustration of the U.S. at the Winter Olympics and the answer to it: “Immediately after the closing of the Olympics, Trump announced ‘the heaviest sanctions ever imposed on a country.’”

Organizations participating in the march included the Korean American National Coordinating Council; Los Angeles Korean Progressive JINBO Network; Nanum Korean Cultural Center; Korea Peace Alliance; Answer; Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance; Workers World Party; International League of Peoples' Struggle; International Action Center; and BAYAN SoCal.



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Philadelphia

Resisting criminal sanctions

A **Philadelphia** meeting Feb. 27 featured Hyun Lee, editor of Zoom in Korea, and Deirdre Griswold, editor of Workers World newspaper.

Lee gave a remarkable PowerPoint presentation on economic and scientific developments in the DPRK that allow its population to withstand criminal U.S. sanctions. After a massive project to build tunnels, dams and canals to control waterways in the country's mountainous terrain, the DPRK is now able to grow enough food for its people and does so with much lower electrical usage.

Combined with military advances in nuclear weapons that act as a necessary deterrent and allow the DPRK to defend itself from U.S. attack, the DPRK leadership is directing more attention to reunification with south Korea.

Griswold gave a historical overview of the 150-year attempt by U.S. imperialists to control and exploit Korea. In July 1866, the General Sherman, a U.S. Merchant Marine ship, was stopped and burned in the Taedong River by Korean

patriots. Griswold stressed that the unending spirit of refusal to accept foreign domination continues to this day against Trump's aggression.

The event was organized by the Philadelphia International Action Center and Workers World and was endorsed by International Concerned Family & Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal; Comité Boricua Filadelfia-Camden; and Philadelphia Committee for Peace and Justice in Asia.



WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

Soobok Kim, Vets for Peace, speaks in New York City, March 2.

Activists in **New York City** went to Pennsylvania Station the evening of March 2 to give out factsheets on Korea and issues of Workers World with the headline “Unite to say ‘No war on Korea.’” They began to give out materials inside the station, but the cops pushed them outside. There, they braved strong winds and snow to reach out to workers.

At the Solidarity Center that night, a meeting featured Soobok Kim from Veterans For Peace, New Jersey. Soobok, who has been to the DPRK five times, showed photos and videos of everyday life, from parks to impressive architectural structures.

The presentation also covered the inspirational ways in which the DPRK has been able to apply science and technology to create solutions and alternatives in order to work around the unjust sanctions placed on them. The audience was captivated by the strength of the Korean people and the possibilities they present of what a better world holds in store for us all.



WW PHOTO

Detroit

Demonstrators gathered in downtown **Detroit** during the busy 5 p.m. rush hour on March 2. An activist distributed Workers World newspapers to passersby while saying, “The people of Korea are marching together for peace, but Trump wants a nuclear war. We don't need another war!” He reported that 90 percent of the people responded with “That's right,” “No, we don't” or “I agree.” Not one person said they supported a war with the DPRK.



WW PHOTO

Chicago

WWP members in **Chicago** did street outreach on March 4 at the landmark “Bean” sculpture and at public transit stations, giving people facts about Korea and opposing Trump's dangerous drive to nuclear war.

Activists contributing to this article included Christian Cobb, Kris Balderas Hamel, Andy Katz, John Parker and Joe Piette.

Will U.S. agree to Korea talks?

By Deirdre Griswold

After two days of direct talks in Pyongyang between representatives of both north and south Korea, the south issued a statement on March 6: “The North Korean side clearly stated its willingness to denuclearize. It made it clear that it would have no reason to keep nuclear weapons if the military threat to the North was eliminated and its security guaranteed.

“The North expressed its willingness to hold a heartfelt dialogue with the United States on the issues of denuclearization and normalizing relations with the United States. It made it clear that while dialogue is continuing, it will not attempt any strategic provocations, such as nuclear and ballistic missile tests.”

As of this writing, there has been no public comment yet from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the north confirming or denying this view of the talks. Therefore, what we say here is only preliminary.

Let us assume that the statement from the south is generally correct. What does this mean for the anti-war movement in the U.S.?

This paper reported on demonstrations, meetings and leafleting in five cities last week on the theme “Hands off Korea!” in which Workers World Party participated. These were modest events, but they had an impact and showed it is possible to get out publicly and defend the DPRK despite the avalanche of vicious attacks by the entire establishment media.

But considering the open threats of nuclear war coming from both the White House and the Pentagon in the last year, it is astonishing that there has been no larger response by anti-war forces.

Hopefully, this will change. It should now be very clear that the war danger does not come from the DPRK. For three-quarters of a century, the U.S. has claimed that its military occupation of south Korea and its huge war “games” every year, simulating an invasion of the north, were meant to “protect” the people of the south. This fiction was exploded when athletes from north and south marched together under one flag and were wildly cheered at the PyeongChang Olympics last month.

All along, the DPRK has said that its

nuclear program is meant to defend the country, as a deterrent against a U.S. attack. As long as the U.S. claims it needs to keep — and now upgrade — its nuclear arsenal of 7,000 warheads for “defense,” then the DPRK is a thousand times more justified in having its own deterrent of a few dozen bombs.

However, it is now being reported that the DPRK is willing to discuss with the U.S. how to defuse the tense situation that exists, including the issue of denuclearization.

But such talks will only be possible if the U.S. is willing to discuss ending its “war games,” signing a peace treaty and bringing its troops home from south Korea.

The ball is now in the court of the U.S. The movement here needs to take this situation very, very seriously. Every effort will be made by the war hawks in Washington to ratchet up sanctions and threats against the north in order to block north-south efforts at reconciliation.

“Hands off Korea” should be a top priority in the growing struggle against imperialist wars, being waged around the globe. □

Speakout against war on Korea



Activists held a rush hour “Speakout Against War in Korea” in Philadelphia on March 5 in front of City Hall. As speakers explained, a war against Korea would not benefit either the Korean people or the workers and oppressed in the U.S. Only the corporations and the 1% would profit. Participants also held signs and handed out 500 fliers to passersby, eliciting a number of positive conversations with those who stopped.

— Photo and report by Joe Piette

West Virginia education workers, teaching how to fight

When people familiar with U.S. labor history hear about a strike in West Virginia, what is their first thought? It's about armed miners battling mercenaries, about open class warfare, about the Matewan Massacre in 1920 and the Battle of Blair Mountain in 1921. They think about how physically courageous the miners were. They think about how the women and men in miners' families picked up arms. They remember how important it was to build unity in struggle among African-American miners, Italian-immigrant miners and others who had been born in the region.

It was vital for each section of workers to have leadership in the union. It was vital for the leadership to reflect the militancy of the union rank and file. Or to step aside.

Only by battles to the end could unions grow and strikes win a living wage for the miners and other union workers of mountainous West Virginia.

Fast forward 97 years since the Battle of Blair Mountain. There have been ups and some very big downs for union workers in the United States, including West Virginia. That state is now the site of another historic confrontation.

It involves not just miners — whose work force has shrunk due to changes in technology like "mountaintop removal" — but education workers. Many of these teachers and other school staff, mostly women, are children and grandchildren of the miners who built the United Mine Workers union. They learned early in life that unity and militancy were needed in any strike. That only by fighting and fighting could they win.

Teachers' pay in West Virginia is 22 percent lower than the national average. They have inadequate medical coverage — and even that is under attack. Like all teachers, they have been the target of the bosses' lies, blamed for all the failures of an underfunded school system and the

crisis of the economic system.

They have little to lose, many say. They know they need unity to win and the support of their students and communities. They have made sure to provide food for their students, a majority of whom depend on school breakfasts and lunches. When the leaders of their unions agreed to a deal they found wanting, they rejected it and have tenaciously continued the strike.

As of Monday, March 5, they have built unity among themselves. They carry placards citing the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. They have shown the courage to confront the repressive state apparatus — headed by a right-wing billionaire governor named Jim Justice who dishes out injustice. They are facing down the oil and gas bosses and their legislative lackeys in the state's House and Senate.

The workers are facing down anyone trying to sell them a bad contract. They are setting an example for workers around the country, who are inspired to see the West Virginia struggle unfold.

In nearby Pittsburgh, the threat of a teachers' strike brought an immediate better offer. In West Virginia and Virginia, Communications Workers members at Frontier Communications are beginning a strike with many of the same issues as the teachers and other education workers. Oklahoma teachers are organizing to strike.

The bosses fear that the West Virginia mood might "go viral." Yes! Bring it on!

What those on strike need is the active solidarity of all other unions and workers around the country. Speak up and express your solidarity with and admiration for their struggle. Ask them what they need — people, funds, local actions — and come through.

The outcome of this struggle in West Virginia is vital to building the strength of workers and the labor movement throughout the country. □

Women, solidarity and struggle

International Working Women's Day, March 8, is a time to hail the struggles of women in the U.S. and worldwide. This special day was founded by European women socialists in 1910, who sought to honor women workers worldwide and who called for global unity and solidarity among them.

Today, it is crucial to stress the "international" essence of this day — to express solidarity with our sisters around the globe who are living under the ravages of impoverishment, workplace exploitation, racism and war caused by U.S. imperialism.

The call for solidarity is ever more important as the Trump administration assails with racist vitriol our sisters in Haiti and Africa, bans our Muslim sisters and their families from entering the U.S., and viciously rounds up and deports Latin American immigrants, brutally separating families.

Congress members, Republicans and Democrats, have voted another \$700 billion for the Pentagon to "modernize" its weaponry and armies for expanding U.S. military operations in the Middle East, Africa, East Asia and elsewhere. The worst impact of these wars falls on women and children — a crisis which cries out for opposition and solidarity from women in the U.S.

Meanwhile, at home, the white supremacist, misogynist in the White House has declared war on the hard-won rights and gains of women, workers, oppressed communities, students, retirees, and LGBTQ people, including trans women. As a member of the super-rich capitalists, billionaire Trump has carried out their program of corporate tax cuts. He and his right-wing political cronies are determined to gut essential federal programs to further enrich their coffers and transfer billions more to the military-industrial complex. The potential harm to children, women, low-income workers, people of color, disabled individuals and seniors is enormous.

Build protests, solidarity

Yet, there has been active opposition to Trump's program throughout the 404 days of his presidency. Protests have been led by women, workers, African-American and Latinx people, LGBTQ and disabled individuals, and youth.

Young "Dreamers" and other immi-

grants have organized against deportations. African-American mothers of slain children and their communities have opposed racist police violence. Teachers and other workers have gone on strike to demand higher wages and their rights. And people with disabilities have occupied government offices to protest cuts in vital government health care programs.

Millions of women and supporters marched in January 2017 and again this year to object to the misogyny spewed by #45 and the administration's attacks on their reproductive and other rights.

The #MeToo Movement, initiated by African-American activist Tarana Burke, has exposed and denounced workplace sexual misconduct and inequity. Now with the Time's Up campaign, this struggle extends from Hollywood to hotels, restaurants, fields, offices and factories.

The #MeToo Movement emboldened the young women athletes who spoke out about years of sexual abuse while training for the Olympics. But much more action is needed, especially reparations for the centuries of sexual abuse experienced by Indigenous, Latinx and African-American women due to colonization, enslavement and Jim Crow racism.

When Trump's armed neo-Nazi and Klan supporters spewed white supremacy and anti-Semitism in Charlottesville, Va., last August, young women, people of color, workers and gender nonconforming individuals stood up to them in a strong, united counterdemonstration.

Two days after a neo-Nazi fatally mowed down 32-year-old anti-racist Heather Heyer in Charlottesville, courageous activists, led by young women of color and trans activists, toppled a Confederate statue in Durham, N.C. This act sparked similar actions in other cities.

Now a militant wildcat strike of education workers is underway in West Virginia — almost 95 percent of them women. They are defying their state government and the coal, oil and gas bosses.

This is what is needed: Bold, courageous struggles, which must deepen, grow and join forces to oppose the Trump-Wall Street-Pentagon triumvirate. Foremost in our priorities, we must show solidarity with our sisters at home, especially the most oppressed, and with our sisters abroad, who are hit hard by imperialism.

Solidarity is the essence of International Working Women's Day. □

Teachers and school workers on the picket line in Beckley, W.Va., March 6, the day their nine-day strike was won.

WW PHOTO



MARCH MADNESS, NCAA & slave labor

Continued from page 2

pears on T-shirts or other merchandise that makes profits for others.

Is it any surprise that agents like Andy Miller, who represent the interests of corporate sports giants like Nike, take advantage of student-athletes who dream of being drafted by the NBA in order to financially support their economically challenged families?

The racist NCAA

In response to the latest NCAA scandal, Stan Van Gundy, the white coach of the NBA's Detroit Pistons, stated: "The

NCAA is one of the worst organizations — maybe the worst organization — in sports. They certainly don't care about the athletes. They're going to act now like they're just appalled by all these things going on in college basketball? Please. It's ridiculous." (Detroit News, Feb. 25)

It is important to emphasize that 75 percent of NBA players are African American. Gundy exposed the widespread hypocrisy toward Black football and basketball players. These are the student-athletes most victimized by the NCAA's "one and done" rule that high school players are obligated to spend at

least one year in college, or sit out one year after high school, before they can enter the NBA or National Football League draft. The rule does not apply to hockey or baseball players, the majority of whom are white, who can bypass college to become professional players, starting in the minor leagues.

Gundy stated, "I've always been in favor of [players] going straight to the NBA. I don't understand why, as an industry, basketball or any other professional sport, we're able to limit somebody's ability to make money.... I think personally... the people who were against them coming out made a lot of excuses but a lot of it was racist."

Gundy continued, "I've never heard anybody go up in arms" about letting kids go out and play minor-league baseball or hockey. They're not making big money and they're white kids and nobody has a problem. But all of a sudden, you've got a black kid who wants to come

out of high school and make millions — that's a bad decision?"

Lonzo Ball, a celebrated rookie on the Los Angeles Lakers, stated that all NCAA players — in all sports — should be paid. (Sports Nation, Feb. 26)

On a Feb. 27 Twitter video, Jay Williams, an African-American analyst for ESPN, and a former Duke University and NBA basketball player, called for a player boycott by Final Four teams during the upcoming March Madness tournament. Williams said, "Imagine how quickly the NCAA would realize it's not just a business for [itself], but also a business for the athletes as well." (msn.com, Feb. 28)

In whatever way the latest scandal plays out, Black student-athletes will publicly bear the brunt as scapegoats for the corruption built into capitalism. The hope is there will be more and more pressure from players and fans to compensate these athletes, whose skills, talents and work make college sports so profitable. □

U.N. ignores genocidal war on Yemen

By Randi Nord
Editor, Geopolitics Alert

Saudi Arabia carried out so many terror attacks with Washington's support the last few days in February that this writer had trouble tallying all the incidents. A U.N. Security Council meeting did not address these genocidal attacks and instead chose to focus on rallying support for a war against Iran.

Five young girls between the ages of 7 and 15 died after airstrikes targeted a farm in a village north of Hays in Hodeidah province on Feb. 28. The day before, terror strikes killed another four civilians in Hodeidah. In Nehm, U.S.-backed airstrikes murdered a mother and her two sons in their home.

A total of six died and four were injured in an attack in Saada, including women and children. In a separate Saada attack, paramedics and news reporters had to flee as Riyadh carried out double-tap strikes on a civilian home while rescuers and news personnel entered the scene. This raid left 19 people dead and wounded, including one paramedic.

These airstrike terror attacks in various Yemeni provinces killed dozens — nearly 40 — just during two days.

Silence from U.N. Security Council

The timing of these attacks is particularly heinous. On Feb. 26, Britain proposed a resolution in the U.N. Security Council blaming Iran for supporting so-called “terror activities” in Yemen. Although the measure did not pass due to a veto from Russia, 11 out of 15 members supported its content. China and Kazakhstan abstained while Bolivia voted against the resolution.

If passed, this resolution could open the door to a NATO-led war against Iran. U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Nikki Haley backed up this possibility, threatening “unilateral action” against the Islamic Republic. “If Russia is going to continue to cover for Iran, then the U.S. and our partners need to take action on our own. If we're not going to get action on the council, then we have to take our own actions,” Haley told reporters. (reuters.com, Feb. 26)

Russia instead proposed a counter resolution which upholds the devastating

sanctions against Yemen but removes any mention of Iran. The U.N. Security Council approved that measure unanimously.

Disturbingly (although not shockingly), the Security Council did not address Saudi Arabia's war crimes and genocidal actions in Yemen. Nor did it mention the six-point reconciliation plan that Ansarullah — which the Western media reduce to simply “the Houthis” — submitted to the council.

Covering up war crimes

The British resolution was a clear attempt to skirt the West's own war crimes in Yemen.

Far from a mere passive observer, the United States provides both military and intelligence support to Emirati and Saudi-backed forces. Saudi airstrikes and ground operations have killed and injured more than 35,000 people in the past three years.

U.S. forces provide intelligence support for selecting airstrike targets. Riyadh's airstrike campaign frequently targets markets, homes, cars, media crews, farms, factories, prisons and even ambu-



A home in Sana'a destroyed by Saudi airstrike, killing an entire family, July 2017.

lance crews entering bomb sites. This affirms Washington's direct participation in gruesome war crimes and arguably genocide against the Yemeni people.

U.S. Navy ships enforce the siege and blockade throughout the Red Sea by prohibiting aid and cargo ships from docking in resistance-held territory, such as the Hodeidah port, where Saudi airstrikes destroyed the port's cranes.

Over 8 million Yemenis face direct famine due to the land, air and sea blockade, which severely restricts food, aid, salaries, flow of movement and vital medical supplies. Saudi Arabia demanded the closure of Yemen's main airport in Sana'a and subsequently destroyed its infrastructure. A resultant cholera epidemic affecting 1 million people may soon be exacerbated during the rainy season, which starts in April. □



REVIEW

Venezuela, la oscura causa Venezuela, the shadow agenda

By Cheryl LaBash

In the August 2017 documentary, “Venezuela, the Shadow Agenda,” director Hernando Calvo Ospina challenges prevailing corporate media storylines attacking Bolivarian Venezuela and Nicolás Maduro, its president.

Oil is the root and prized goal of the U.S. effort to destabilize Venezuela today. So says Calvo Ospina through interviews with historians, economists, journalists and an oil expert.

How much oil? U.S. Geological Survey says Venezuela has 28 percent of the world's recoverable oil reserves. According to Carlos Mendoza, Venezuelan oil expert, only 4 percent of the reserves have been developed. Venezuelan oil fields established as long ago as 1913 are still producing half a million barrels of oil per day. Other fields have produced since 1925, 1930 and 1956.

The late President Hugo Chávez Frias and his successor Nicolás Maduro Moro are not the first Venezuelan leaders to attempt to use Venezuelan resources for national development. In 1904 President Cipriano Castro expropriated the New

York & Bermudez Company, which had been exporting Venezuelan asphalt since 1885 without any significant payment to the country. This president was deposed, with the support of the U.S. Navy, as were numerous later presidents who challenged the imperialists or the Venezuelan oligarchy.

This history is key to understanding the current so-called “humanitarian” crisis in Venezuela, manufactured by Washington.

The addition of that seemingly minor word lays the basis for military intervention by the U.S. The intervention could be direct. Or it could be through the U.S. regional surrogate regime in Colombia, Venezuela's neighbor and home to seven U.S. bases.

The collusion of the capitalist corporate media in manufacturing the lie has been denounced by the president of TeleSUR, who points out U.S. reporters are assigned to cover lines outside stores and shortages, not the people's power growing in the country.

Like the lies about weapons of mass destruction that preceded the disastrous

U.S. invasion of Iraq, the false, calculated images of instability and shortages become an excuse for political and military intervention or for potential secession of the oil-rich Maracaibo region.

Latin America and the Caribbean are pushing back against imperialism's offensive to overturn popular advances in what the U.S. considers its “backyard” — Bolivarian Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and Cuba. Also targeted are the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States as a Zone of Peace, the People's Trade Treaty of the Bolivarian Alliance for the People of Our America, and Petro Caribe.

These initiatives and experiments in cooperative development and trade have inspired hope around the world by spreading literacy, health care and the uplift of the disenfranchised, Indigenous, African descendants, women, LGBTQ (GBTQ) and gender nonconforming people.

Paul Gillman, a rock musician, explained that the Venezuelan rulers hated Chávez because he was Black, without a degree and not part of the bourgeoisie: “He made visible the invisible people, that

80 percent who were poor, the 40 percent who lived in extreme poverty. Chavez gave voice, vote and power to the people.”

Has the multifaceted media campaign against Venezuela made you wonder what is going on there? The documentary, “Venezuela, the Shadow Agenda,” exposes imperialist machinations and arms us with facts and history to defend President Maduro and Venezuela. USA/CIA, hands off Venezuela!

“Venezuela, the Shadow Agenda”
 (“Venezuela, la oscura causa”)

38 min., Spanish with English subtitles:
youtu.be/acZjQ1t9MXg.

WORKERS WORLD
MUNDO OBRERO

Impacto del racismo en la maternidad

Continúa de página 12

“Como mujer negra del sur profundo que es obstetra y madre, mi gran deseo de poner fin a esta injusticia se amplifica cada vez que miro las caras de mi hija y mis pacientes. Fue con este entendimiento que creé el National Birth Equity Collaborative en 2015”. (The Renewal Project, 30 de noviembre)

Las mujeres afroamericanas continuarán haciendo el trabajo para que la menor de ellas pueda florecer. Las estadísticas presentadas en este artículo deberían conducir a un levantamiento importante porque la supremacía blanca está desmantelando nuestros hogares a través del daño a las mujeres negras y nuestras/os hijos. Esto es genocidio: la matanza deliberada de un gran grupo de personas, especialmente las de un grupo étnico o nación en particular.

Pueblo, ¡despierta! Los efectos del racismo nos están matando literal y figurativamente. Continuemos derribando monumentos a la supremacía blanca. Eventualmente, eso causará un cambio real cuando se trate de borrar las causas sistémicas del racismo y su impacto en la salud de las mujeres negras y nuestras/os niños. □

NYC Forum

Zimbabwe's struggle for sovereignty

The New York branch of Workers World Party held a Black Liberation forum Feb. 25 on “Zimbabwe: ZANU-PF moving forward” with guest speaker Omowale Clay, a founding member of the December 12th Movement, a Black organization based in Brooklyn, N.Y. Members of D12 have traveled on numerous occasions to the southern African country to extend solidarity to the anti-neocolonial struggle there and against attacks by U.S. and British imperialism on Zimbabwe's sovereignty.

Clay provided an extensive explanation of the internal situation within the ruling ZANU-PF party that led to the resignation

of President Robert Mugabe in December. He went on to say how the new ZANU-PF leadership, with grassroots support, has pledged itself to continue the decades-long struggle to return land seized by white colonial farmers to its rightful owners, the Zimbabwean people.

Kayla Popuchet spoke of her recent trip to Durham, N.C., along with other New York WWP members, to show solidarity with defendants who were on trial for taking down a racist Confederate statue this past August. Both felony and mis-



Kayla Popuchet, Omowale Clay, Monica Moorehead.

demeanor charges were dropped against all the defendants due to the power of the mass movement, Popuchet stated. Monica Moorehead chaired the forum.

To view both of these talks, go to youtube.com/pmsQElqtpL8 and youtube.com/t5Ps_KnYubg.

— Workers World staff



Impacto del racismo en la maternidad

Por Mikisa Thompson

El Mes de la Historia de la Mujer es un evento anual que destaca las contribuciones de las mujeres en los eventos históricos y la sociedad contemporánea. Como mujer negra en la sociedad contemporánea, hay muchos problemas que nos afectan a mí y a mi comunidad en general. El racismo y las formas en que la supremacía blanca muestra su fea cabeza se entrelazan en nuestras vidas a diario, especialmente cuando estamos más vulnerables.

Como mujeres negras, durante el embarazo y el parto, somos las más vulnerables al racismo sistémico. Las mujeres negras están desproporcionadamente afectadas por la brutalidad policial, los bajos salarios, la falta de vivienda y la violencia del racismo y el genocidio.

Madres negras mueren de insuficiencia cardíaca

Según un artículo del 7 de diciembre en ProPublica, “En los últimos años, mientras las altas tasas de mortalidad materna en EUA han alarmado a los investigadores, una estadística ha sido especialmente preocupante. Según los [Centros para el Control y la Prevención de Enfermedades, CDC], las madres negras en EUA mueren entre tres y cuatro veces más que las madres blancas, una de las más amplias disparidades raciales en la salud de las mujeres. Dicho de otra manera, una mujer negra tiene un 243 por ciento más de probabilidades de morir por causas relacionadas con el embarazo o el parto”.

Ese número, 243 por ciento, es muy difícil de asimilar. La forma en que aparece el racismo en las mujeres bendecidas por ser negras, es especialmente flagrante en lo que respecta a la atención médica. El prejuicio hacia las mujeres y las/os niños negros es la clave del problema. Las mujeres de casi todas las razas no son oídas cuando hablan sobre el manejo del dolor o simplemente cuando no se sienten bien. Imagínese que será para una mujer negra que experimenta un tremendo dolor durante y después del parto, y no se le brinda el cuidado básico, que es un tratamiento adecuado del dolor, como a sus contrapartes femeninas que están soportando el mismo proceso de tratar de traer una vida.

Erica Garner

Dos mujeres que recientemente han experimentado un parto, junto a una grave crisis de salud o la muerte, vienen a la mente. Una es Erica Garner, que murió por corazón partido el 30 de diciembre después de que su padre, Eric Garner, fuera asesinado por el estado en el 2014 en Staten Island, Nueva York. La otra es la atleta número uno en el mundo: Serena Williams.

Erica Garner experimentó el efecto secundario de vivir siendo negra cuando su padre fue asesinado. Este trauma provocó un ataque al corazón después del nacimiento de su hijo en agosto pasado. Esta es una ocurrencia muy común después de que una mujer negra da a luz a un bebé.

La Asociación Americana del Corazón dice: “La miocardiopatía posparto (PPCM por siglas en inglés) es una forma poco fre-

cuenta de insuficiencia cardíaca que ocurre durante el último mes de embarazo o hasta cinco meses después del parto”. (12 de diciembre)

Sin embargo, la AAC también dice que esto es “una ocurrencia rara”, porque no monitorea la enfermedad en las mujeres negras. Si la organización hiciera eso, toda persona en EUA debería indignarse.

Megan Brooks, en un artículo titulado “Cardiomiopatía posparto más severa para mujeres negras”, escribe: “Las mujeres afroamericanas con PPCM son diagnosticadas después del parto, presentan una disfunción sistólica más grave, con mayor frecuencia su función cardíaca empeora después del diagnóstico y se recupera con menos frecuencia y, cuando la función cardíaca se recupera, lleva mucho más tiempo hacerlo”. (Medscape, 13 de octubre)

Serena Williams

Serena Williams parió a su hija el 1 de septiembre. Tiene antecedentes de coágulos sanguíneos. Después de parir por cesárea, le costó respirar. En un artículo del 10 de enero de Vogue titulado “Serena Williams sobre la maternidad, el matrimonio y su vuelta”, explica que ella sabía que necesitaba una “tomografía computarizada con contraste y heparina IV (un anticoagulante) de inmediato. La enfermera pensó que su analgésico podría estar confundiéndola. Pero Serena insistió, y pronto un doctor estaba haciendo un ultrasonido de sus piernas. ‘Yo pensaba, un Doppler? Le había dicho que necesitaba una tomografía computarizada y un gotero de heparina’. La ecografía no reveló nada, por lo que la enviaron a la TC, y efectivamente, varios pequeños coágulos de sangre se habían asentado en sus pulmones. Minutos después ella estaba bajo el tratamiento adecuado. ‘¡Yo me decía, “escuchen a la Dra. Williams!””

Mortalidad infantil entre afroamericanas/os

Williams, quien tiene fondos ilimitados, inicialmente no fue escuchada por el personal médico. Imagine la situación que enfrenta una mujer que vive en un barrio pobre que va a un hospital con un personal perjudicado. Sin duda, el resultado habría sido diferente. Esta es una buena información para saber. ¿Qué hacemos con este conocimiento? ¿Quién toma nuestra causa? Además, con la alta tasa de muertes de madres afroamericanas, esto lleva al tema de la tasa de mortalidad infantil entre las/os niños afroamericanos.

Cuando estaba embarazada de mi hijo, escuché la estadística de que los niños afroamericanos tenían la tasa más alta de mortalidad infantil hasta la edad de cinco años. No pude dejar de preocuparme por mi hijo hasta que tuvo cinco años. Aún me preocupo porque puede recibir un disparo mientras está en la escuela o mientras sea un hombre negro en cualquier parte de EUA.

Según el CDC: “La mortalidad infantil es la muerte de un bebé antes de su primer cumpleaños. La tasa de mortalidad infantil es la cantidad de muertes infantiles por cada 1,000 nacidos vivos. Además de brindarnos información clave sobre la salud

No confiar en que Mueller deponga a Trump

WW/MO Editorial: El abogado especial Robert Mueller acusó a 13 ciudadanos rusos y tres compañías el 16 de febrero, supuestamente por conducir un esquema para interferir criminalmente con las elecciones presidenciales del 2016 en EUA. Cuatro días más tarde, Mueller forzó una declaración de culpabilidad de un abogado holandés que trabajaba con los gerentes de la campaña de Trump, Paul Manafort y Rick Gates, por mentirle a los investigadores. Luego, Mueller agregó nuevos cargos contra Manafort y Gates, incluyendo fraude y lavado de dinero. Esto forzó a Gates a declararse culpable el 23 de febrero por hacer declaraciones falsas.

Los medios corporativos que se oponen a Donald Trump y el liderazgo del Partido Demócrata han usado estos eventos para proclamar afanosamente que Trump debe ser expulsado por cargos penales. Pero, ¿deberían las/os trabajadoras y las personas oprimidas estar satisfechas con que el FBI y Mueller estén tomando medidas contra la pandilla racista, misógina, anti-inmigrante y pro-ricos de Trump atacando la supuesta conexión con Rusia?

No. Eso sería retroceder al papel de espectador. Implicaría que podríamos confiar en el Departamento de Justicia del Fiscal General racista Jeff Sessions para luchar contra el racismo.

E implicaría que podríamos confiar en el mismo FBI que espía a los partidos de las/os trabajadoras y ataca a las organizaciones de liberación negra. También colocaría al gobierno ruso como chivo expiatorio por la victoria electoral de Trump, cuando el Colegio Electoral antidemocrático fue quien lo hizo; las leyes para detener el voto de las/os pobres y negras/os y ex prisioneras/os lo hizo, y el fracaso del Partido Demócrata en luchar por los derechos de las/os trabajadoras lo hizo.

Ignorando la agenda de Trump y la derecha y mirando en cambio al fiscal especial, los Demócratas y los expertos intentan desarmar la capacidad de nuestra clase para luchar y formar un movimiento independiente de masas.

Podemos movilizarnos para detener las escandalosas redadas de la Migra. Podemos protestar la entrega del desierto y la tierra indígena a la minería y compañías petroleras. Podemos exponer la política de inmigración de “solo blancos”. Y podemos y debemos organizar para detener las guerras de drones, detener los intentos de “cambio de régimen”, “detener la amenaza de la guerra nuclear

contra Corea del norte, detener los viles comentarios de Trump menospreciando a las mujeres y atacando a los atletas afroamericanos que toman posturas políticas.

Enfocándose en Rusia también desvía la atención del apoyo total que la clase dominante, desde Wall Street hasta el Valle de Silicón, está dando al programa de recortes de impuestos y “desregulación” de Trump. Los bancos no se detendrán hasta garantizar que el programa de robo de Trump de los pobres continúe, ya esté o no Trump en su puesto.

El magnate Warren Buffet declaró abiertamente su alegría en una carta a los accionistas de su conglomerado Berkshire, que ganó alrededor de \$29,1 mil millones por el recorte de impuestos: “Nuestra sonrisa se ampliará cuando hayamos redistribuido el exceso de fondos Berkshire en activos más productivos”, prometiendo más fusiones. (msn.com, 23 de febrero)

Nada fue mencionado sobre la contratación de trabajadoras/es para empleos bien remunerados. A raíz de la catástrofe financiera del 2008, el Congreso aprobó una ley que prohibió a los bancos con activos de más de \$50 mil millones, fusionarse o adquirir otros bancos. Ahora, impulsado por Trump, un proyecto de ley favorecido por ambos partidos políticos aumentaría ese umbral a \$250 mil millones.

Y no queda ahí. La Reserva Federal con su nuevo jefe designado por Trump está ocupado “ablandando” las reglas sobre fusión que penalizan las violaciones de los bancos sobre préstamos justos, lavado de dinero y leyes de mercadeo. Unos 370 bancos están actualmente en la llamada “Caja de penalización” por presuntas violaciones.

Como toda/o trabajador sabe, las fusiones generalmente significan muchos despidos. Y esto incluso si las reglas laxas no conducen rápidamente a otra crisis cuando explote la próxima burbuja.

Las/os trabajadoras y las comunidades oprimidas no pueden confiar en Mueller o en el Partido Demócrata para detener los regalos del régimen de Trump a los ricos y el programa de austeridad para las/os pobres. Solo una poderosa lucha puede hacer eso, independientemente del Partido Demócrata - uniendo a la clase trabajadora de todas las nacionalidades y géneros para luchar no solo contra Trump el individuo, sino su programa completo. □

materna e infantil es un marcador importante de la salud general de una sociedad”.

El Departamento de Salud y Servicios Humanos informa que las/os afroamericanas tienen 2,2 veces la tasa de mortalidad infantil que las/os blancos no-hispanos y los bebés afroamericanos tienen 3,2 veces más probabilidades de morir por complicaciones relacionadas con el bajo peso al nacer que los bebés blancos no-hispanos. En 2014, las/os afroamericanos tenían más del doble de la tasa de mortalidad por síndrome de muerte súbita infantil que las/os blancos no-hispanos, y las madres afroamericanas tenían 2,2 veces más

probabilidades que las madres blancas no-hispanas de no recibir atención prenatal o tardía.

La Dra. Joia Adele Crear-Perry, fundadora de National Birth Equity Collaborative, dice: “Estados Unidos es el único país desarrollado del mundo donde la mortalidad materna está en aumento. Las mujeres negras en EUA mueren entre 3 y 4 veces más que las mujeres blancas. Los bebés negros mueren a un ritmo 2 veces mayor que sus homólogos blancos. Con esta clara evidencia de inequidad, esta es una cuestión urgente de salud pública y derechos humanos”.

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