Selma 50 years later —

Fight’s still on for liberation

By Minnie Bruce Pratt
Selma, Ala.

A jubilant, determined crowd of more than 100,000 people marched over the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Ala., from morning to afternoon on March 8 to mark the 50th Jubilee anniversary of “Bloody Sunday,” a key event in the Civil Rights struggles of the 1960s.

The vast majority of those participating were African American and working class. They came determined to defend their basic rights to assemble and to vote, rights fought for on the bridge on March 7, 1965. And they came determined to “march on” toward freedom.

Represented was the complete breadth and depth of the Black nation within the U.S. — from revolutionaries to social clubs. People marched with their churches and with political organizations like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the NAACP. There were hundreds of Masons in formal black suits and white shirts and the Eastern Star Women’s auxiliary in white dresses. There were contingents from historically Black colleges and universities, Black sororities and fraternities, and from Buffalo Soldier Motorcycle Clubs in New Jersey and North Carolina.

A huge GirlTrek contingent marched “for the health of our bodies, our families, our communities,” honoring the names of Nzinga, Harriet, Sojourner, Fannie Lou and Ella on the backs of their blue T-shirts. There was a group from Baltimore Bois, “working to create an alternative space for Black masculinity.”

Representation of multinational working-class unity was strong, with many delegations present, including union machinists from Tennessee and Kentucky, local Montgomery workers with the National Association of Letter Carriers, Atlanta home-care workers building their “Raise Up for 15” campaign, and the Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en La Lucha (Center of Workers United in the Struggle), which is organizing fast food workers. Nineteen busloads of United Auto Workers members from Detroit, Chicago and Greenacres, Ind., had come for the big rally the day before.

Other social justice groups marched,

Ferguson, Attica & the repressive state

Victory in Boston bus drivers’ struggle

Dept. of In-Justice & police terror

Protesting killer cops in Madison, Wis.

Big Oil’s ‘bomb trains’

Defend Venezuela!

Women in Bangladesh

Every issue is a woman’s issue

Continued on page 6
ExxonMobil
What’s behind Christie’s sweetheart deal?

By Stephen Millies

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie says he wants to settle an $8.5 billion environmental lawsuit against ExxonMobil for just $2.92 billion. That’s not even three cents on the dollar.

Bradley Campbell, former commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, called Christie’s proposed settlement “a disgrace.” Campbell pointed out that ExxonMobil gave $500,000 to the Republican Governors Association in 2014, when Christie was governor. (New York Times, March 3)

But it takes more than a single bribe to explain this rotten deal, even if Christie is running for president and hoping to benefit from Big Oil. There’s a history of Rockefeller family power in New Jersey behind it.

The oil giant and its predecessor companies have been polluting New Jersey’s wetlands for over a century. It was held liable for $1.3 billion in 1995 to clean up the Bayway refinery in Linden and facilities in Bayonne. Linden became a cancer cluster for New Jersey refinery workers.

Christie is a vicious bully who loves to belittle and humiliate teachers at meetings. He wants to rob public workers of their hard-earned pensions.

But that the Garden State governor is the meekest of mice when it comes to standing up to ExxonMobil, which had revenues of $407 billion last year. According to the World Bank, that’s more than the gross domestic product of South Africa’s 54 million people.

Even former Alabama Gov. Sarah Palin, a notorious Tea Party right-winger, put up a bigger fight over the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil tanker spill. “Outrageous! Unbelievable!” she wrote in a July 15, 2008, email in reference to ExxonMobil’s $500,000 gift. “Outrageous! Unbelievable! Outrageous!”

For years following Newark’s 1967 rebellion against racism, Prudential refused to invest hardly any money in its hometown. The Black and Latina/o city was economically strangled while corporations shut down factories in Newark and built offices in the suburbs.

So it’s not surprising that Christie is holding up Hurricane Sandy money for Hoboken, N.J., despite the $80 percent of that city having been under water. Hoboken Mayor Dawn Zimmer said Christie’s people threatened to withhold the Sandy money if she didn’t approve a giveaway of three blocks to a Rockefeller real estate group. (CNN, Jan. 21)

Gov. Chris Christie is a bully towards poor and working people but he’s just another flanky for Rockefeller power.

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Americans are fighting for: Workers World

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The campaign to rehire and win justice for four Boston school bus drivers, illegally fired by the notorious union-busting Veolia Corp., got a big boost on March 5. After only ten minutes of deliberation, the jury voted unanimously to acquit union leader Steve Kirschbaum of all charges brought by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

In October 2013, the nefarious anti-worker company Veolia hired by the city to operate school transportation, fired four leaders of United Steelworkers Local 8751 — recording secretary Andre Francois, steward Garry Murchison and Vice President Steve Gillis — after looking out the workers and falsely claiming that the union had conducted a “wildcat strike.”

The frame-up charges were brought after a tire company owner railed them with the school bus drivers demanding the rehiring of the four. The action ended with an indoor rally in the drivers’ breakroom. Veolia managers provided false testimony to the state to make it look like they had been attacked by Kirschbaum and that the premises had been violently entered.

The charges, while totally concocted, were serious. They initially included three felonies — breaking and entering to commit larceny, malicious destruction of property, and assault and battery with a dangerous weapon — as well as trespassing.

The courtroom victory was the result of an eight-month people’s mobilization that included six pack-the-court rallies; national call-in days to both the district attorney and the mayor; and weekly bus yard rallies organized by the people. People’s lawyers Barry London and John Pavlos were appointed to defend the union leaders, andKirschbaum won a full acquittal.

During lunch breaks, the drivers held告诉 vigil outside the courthouse to de facto union hall. People’s supporters packed the court for three trial days, transforming the setup of the courthouse into a de facto union hall. During lunch breaks, the drivers held Continued protest line outside the courthouse, building, carrying placards saying “Drop the Charges” and “No Contract, No Work!”

Dorchester District Court trial is about the gathering place for the political movement, as the following activists showed up to support the union: Brock Satter, of the Mass Mobilization Against Police Violence; Sandra Macinotch, of the Coalition for Equal Quality Education; Chuck Turner, former city councilmember; Herculano Fecteau, of the Boston Teachers Union; Tony Van Der Meer, of the Africana Studies Department at University of Massachusetts, Boston; and a delegation of American Indians of New England.

City Councilmember Charles Yancey gave updates to the overflow crowd outside the courtroom, and on two of the three trial days, I-93 protester Tsung attended. Tsung was part of a demonstration in January that blocked the interstate highway, where a number of activists were arrested, in solidarity with “Black Lives Matter.” The verdict was not just a victory for this political, social union — which fights for its members while also marching with the Black Lives Matter movement; the verdict also defended Brazilian, transgender and queer rights; and stands with Palestine — but a victory for the movement as well. Union-busters pushed back

What happened in court was a demonstration of the union-busters, a setback for Boston’s 1% and a blow to the city’s entrenched racist forces, who want to reappropriate public education.

From the moment the four bogus charges were filed against Kirschbaum in July 2014, it was clear that they were part of the series of attacks on the union by the corporate world branches throughout the country, standing shoulder to shoulder with us in the finest tradition of union solidarity, marching in pickets, rallies, packing the court room and doing 101 organizational tasks required to successfully carry out the struggle.

“We will be forever indebted and grateful for this exemplary solidarity in action,” Kirschbaum emphasized. “We knew we will win.”

The not-guilty verdict — which has so thoroughly discriminated the version of events put forward by Veolia managers — can only help the campaign to rehire the four. Those in the Boston establishment who were holding their breath over this trial, and hoping to see one of the union’s leaders convicted, are now facing a renewed, re-energized, fighting, militant union that is not afraid to take things to the next level.

Those who know this local also know that its members intend to fight, not only to rehire the four, but also to deepen the battle against the Black Lives Matter movement and the struggle against racism; stop the school closings announced by Mayor Walsh; defend public school transportation by keeping middle school students off the subway and on school buses; and defend the righteous 1-93 protesters and their First Amendment rights.

UNION!
By Fred Goldstein

Several judicial rulings in recent weeks have demonstrated the determination of the capitalist government to shield the front-line forces of the repressive, racist state — especially cops and prison guards — from individual punishment.

While city police departments and prisons can be investigated and sometimes penalized, the waves of mass revolts and street fights that have erupted last summer while police beaters have virtual immunity from individual punishment for their crimes. The ruling class relies upon them and their willingness to directly inflict brutality upon the workers and the oppressed to enforce the racist, capitalist order.

Protecting criminal brutality in Attica

In 2011, George Williams, who is Black, was beaten within an inch of his life by white prison guards at the Department of Corrections facility in Attica, New York. Three of the guards were indicted for gang violence and were facing 8 1/2 to 25 years in prison on each of three counts of assault, but the cops were only accused of simply beating Williams. Other guards had been indicted on the grounds that George Williams is disabled for the rest of his life.

The New York Times did an exhaustive investigation of brutality in Attica, and cried by advocates of prisoners’ rights and even some officials to shut the prison down.

Why would the Times, a mouthpiece for the ruling class, concern itself with the plight of prisoners in Attica?

In 1971, when the major rebellion in prison was the site of the largest, most important and most political prison rebellion in U.S. history, this fact lives in the memories of both the prisoners and the guards. The establishment does not want to risk another rebellion if the prison authorities get too out of control that they detonate an uprising.

Extermination of George Zimmerman

On Feb. 24 of this year, the Justice Department ruled that George Zimmerman, who shot to death unarmed 17-year-old Trayvon Martin after stalking him in a gated community in Sanford, Fla., was not guilty of any civil rights violations.

Zimmerman was not just a lone racist individual, separate from the capitalist state, when he shot Martin. In fact, he was an informal arm of the Sanford Police Department. Zimmerman was the coordinator of the local arm of the community neighborhood watch program. He was directly under the supervision of the Sanford Police Department. Zimmerman was a participant in “brutal confrontations” resulting in serious personal injury among inmates between last August and January and cited in the Hearings and the Corrections Department about the 4,074 times guards used physical force against inmates in 2014, the highest total in a decade.

There are 9,000 prison guards at Rikers. Not one has been indicted or sent to jail. It is almost impossible to dismiss them, let alone charge them with a crime. Such brutality has become so public because the entire prison system is built on the idea that the state needs to control the Black community at large and poor people in general. As the prison population grows, the need for control increases and the brutality increases along with it.

To enforce this regime in a country that has a racist prison system — 25 percent of the world’s prison population — but only 5 percent of the world’s people, the capitalist class and its state not only need to use brutality but also they need to protect the enforcers of that brutality. No investigations or reports or expressions of outrage will stop prison brutality, except for a prisoner rebellion and outside support from a mass movement.

Ferguson: Reining in police to protect police

In the first week of March, the Justice Department made two announcements that seemed contradictory.

On the one hand, Attorney General Eric Holder announced the results of a five-year investigation that he described as “a profound failure of the system and the criminal justice system in Ferguson, Mo., were riddled with the same problems we found in the case.”

On the other hand, Holder announced that the Justice Department found no grounds for a federal indictment of Officer Darren Wilson for violation of Michael Brown’s civil rights. Even worse, Holder and the Justice Department emphatically denied that 18-year-old Michael Brown, who was unarmed, was shot with his hands in the air. Thus Washington lent its full force to the lies of the racist Ferguson district attorney, Robert McCullough, who got the charges against killer cop Wilson thrown out despite eyewitness testimony from people in the community.

Why would the Justice Department charge, on the one hand, that there is ethnic racism in the police department, a culture of impunity for arbitrary arrest, brutality and illegal, excessive fines for everything from jay walking to having high grass in your yard that has established a virtual debtors’ prison system against African Americans? Why would it at the same time exonerate a racist cop who was seen to shoot Michael Brown with his hands in the air and who left Brown’s body on the street for four hours?

The answer is very straightforward. Both rulings were in the interests of the ruling class. The judgment against the Ferguson Police Department is a message to all the police in St. Louis and beyond to stop playing with fire. Ferguson is a fuse, and St. Louis is a powder keg which could go off if the police killings and targeting of the Black community are not curtailed.

The Ferguson investigation would never have taken place without the rebellion that began there and swept the country, expanding the Black Lives Matter movement. Tens of thousands of youth, Black, Brown and white, mobilized for months, disrupted downtown shopping areas, invaded malls, blocked highways and roads, and generally caused havoc in major and minor cities from one end of the country to the other. The struggle drew in athletes, politicians, cultural figures and celebrities.

The ruling class fears a repeat of this kind of rebellion. They know that this movement could grow even larger and more powerful and draw in broader working-class forces, such as the low-wage workers’ movement and other rank-and-file movements, as well as the oppressed and downtrodden in the inner cities. This could lead to a challenge to capitalist social stability.

The Black Lives Matter movement forced the federal government to investigate a city of 21,000 people — which is completely out of the ordinary. Right now the Justice Department is investigating the police departments of cities like Cleveland, Philadelphia, Las Vegas, Spokane and Seattle, among others. They all have large urban populations.

The federal investigations in these urban areas with large African-American and Latino/a populations are motivated by ruling-class fear of the spread of social unrest at a time of deep economic crisis, poverty, hunger and unemployment, especially in the oppressed communities.

The investigation of Ferguson, which hopefully will end up alleviating some of the more outrageous aspects of national and racial oppression in the city and surrounding areas, is entirely a byproduct of the heroic and determined resistance of the Black Lives Matter movement. The ruling class knows it wants to take the steam out of it. In order to do this, sections of the Obama administration want to rein in the cops from acting too aggressively.
By Abayomi Azikiwe

On March 4, the U.S. Department of Justice issued two seemingly contradictory reports. U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder officially announced that Darren Wilson, the police officer who had killed unarmed African-American youth Michael Brown on Aug. 9, 2014, in Ferguson, Mo., would not be indicted on federal civil rights violations charges due to lack of probable cause. Wilson, who has since resigned from the Ferguson Police Department, claimed that he felt threatened by the 18-year-old before he drew his weapon and fired numerous shots into the young man's body.

The same Department of Justice also issued a comprehensive report on the systematic discriminatory policies of the Ferguson police. These findings are by no means news to the people of Ferguson and St. Louis County.

Journalists, activists and other observers have noted the appalling and repressive character of the police in St. Louis for years. The Department of Justice investigation into Ferguson concluded that the police are systemically targeted for punitive actions by the criminal justice system. The DOJ report substantiates such assumptions by stating unequivocally: “Data collected by the Ferguson Police Department from 2011 to 2013 shows African Americans for 85 percent of vehicle stops, 90 percent of citations, and 93 percent of arrests made by FPD officers, despite comprising only 67 percent of FPD citations of non-African Americans on the scale of Watts in 1965, which was also another Ferguson or another rebellion on revenue generation is communicated to the local St. Louis County. Also the DOJ documents that in March 2013, the Ferguson municipal court was told by the city finance director to Chief Jackson that “unnecessary ticket writing ramps up significantly before the end of the year, it will be hard to significantly meet the revenue targets.”

As Marxists have shown time and again, the police is an instrument for the repression of the workers and oppressed by the capitalist class, the ruling class, the billionaire profiteers.

The higher levels of the state — for example, the Justice Department — will try to manage this repressive apparatus so that it does not trigger open uprisings. But those in suits and ties will also always try to control and to deliver to the public the perception that they are doing something. And that is why we are looking at a substantial sales tax shortfall, it is not an insignificant issue.

Also the DOJ documents that in March 2013, the Ferguson Finance Department from 2011 to 2013 shows African Americans for 85 percent of vehicle stops, 90 percent of citations, and 93 percent of arrests made by FPD officers, despite comprising only 67 percent of FPD citations of non-African Americans.

The pervasive racism in the U.S. was evident by this white police officer when he told ABC News in an exclusive interview that he felt morally threatened by an unarmed African-American youth. These are the same excuses given for decades to justify the police killings of African Americans and other oppressed people in the U.S.

Brown's family to file civil suit
On March 5, the family of Michael Brown announced they would pursue civil litigation against Darren Wilson for the wrongful death of their son. Since the march and the brutal murder of Brown have been denied redress within the local and federal court systems, they are seeking alternative means to hold Wilson liable for his actions that resulted in the death of Brown.

“THERE WERE OTHER ALTERNATIVES AVAILABLE TO HIM. HE DID NOT HAVE TO KILL MIchael Brown,” said Daryl Parks, an attorney for the family of the slain teen.

Racist emails common
The DOJ report revealed racist emails circulated by Ferguson officials in law enforcement and the courts reflecting the virulent racism within the municipal system. These electronic notes and “ethnic jokes” draw upon some of the worst stereotypes within U.S. society.

African Americans are accused of not taking care of their children, and of being lazy and criminally inclined. Even President Barack Obama was described as an animal by a Ferguson employee.

These emails continued to circulate and no one was ever held accountable by Ferguson officials. In the aftermath of the release of the DOJ report, a court clerk and two police officers have left their jobs. However, no one has been criminally prosecuted for these offenses.

Darren Wilson remains untouched
Despite the damning proof of blatant racism, police brutality, judicial misconduct and criminal conspiratorial actions, no one has been arrested or indicted for these violations of the law, which the DOJ says contravenes the Fourth, Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution. Darren Wilson, who shot down Michael Brown, was not indicted by the local St. Louis County prosecutor and also escaped any criminal charges from the DOJ.

According to the DOJ, in its statement related to the decision not to indict former Ferguson Police Officer Wilson on federal civil rights violations charges: “The evidence does not establish that the shots fired by Wilson were objectively unreasonable under federal law. When Brown turned around and moved toward Wilson, the applicable law and evidence do not support finding that Wilson was unreasonable in his fear that Brown would once again attempt to harm him and gain control of his gun.”

Such a rationale for not indicting Wilson, and the same stereotypical reasoning enunciated by this white police officer when he told ABC News in an exclusive interview that he felt morally threatened by an unarmed African-American youth. These are the same excuses given for decades to justify the police killings of African Americans and other oppressed people in the U.S.

The pervasive racism in the U.S. was also revealed when an Oklahoma State University all-white fraternity was videotaped chanting slogans saying that African Americans will never join their organization and that they should be hung from trees. Although the group was suspended by their national office and the university has publicly distanced itself from the racist organization, these attitudes are not an anomaly.

It will take a much more broadly organized mass movement to overthrow racism and police brutalization. The character of the U.S. capitalist and imperialist system is rooted in racial discrimination and economic exploitation, which must be eradicated for true equality and self-determination to be won by the nationally oppressed.
by Sue Davis

Women are the fastest growing prison population in the U.S. due primarily to harsh sentencing for nonviolent crimes and drug offenses. Over the last three decades the number of women incarcerated has mushroomed, though they account for less than 7 percent of the country’s 2.4 million inmates. This gives the U.S. the highest proportion of prisoners of any country in the world.

“In 1977, 11,212 women were in prison,” write editors Robin Leyvi and Ayed Waldman in the book “Inside This Place, Not of It: Narratives from Women’s Prisons” (McKewney’s Books and Voice of Witness, 2011) “As of 2009, that number had increased to 107,000.”

“There are now more than 200,000 women behind bars and more than one million on probation and parole,” reports the American Civil Liberties Union. “Many of these women struggle with substance abuse, mental illness, and histories of physical and sexual abuse,” as well as desperate poverty leading to crimes of survival.”

Racial discrimination against people of color, which permeates every aspect of U.S. life, combined with judicial injustice, means that women of color are disproportionately imprisoned. “African-American women are three times more likely than white women to be incarcerated, while [Latino] women are 69 percent more likely than white women to be incarcerated,” reports a 2012 study on racial disparities in the U.S. criminal justice system by the Center for [U.S.] American Progress.

Another reason for the skyrocketing number of women in prison is the criminalization of domestic violence, which affects between 85 percent and 90 percent of women in prison. Child abuse and sexual violence put them at risk because their survival strategies often include illicit activity driven by threats of violence or coercion. Also, laws passed to help protect women victimized by male partners are subsequently used against them, as in the case of Marissa Alexander.

Alexander was imprisoned for three years for shooting off a gun to prevent an abusive ex-spouse from coming near her and their children. As of Jan. 27, 2012, she must spend two more years in house detention while wearing and paying for a surveillance ankle monitor. (See fact sheet about domestic violence on freearmissanow.org.)

Brutal medical care, rampant sexual assaults

If recent revelations about violent conditions at Attica prison in upstate New York or Rikers Island in New York City are horrible, women prisoners are forced to live in equal world, sadistic and punitive conditions, according to the 13-inch-depth narrative in “Inside This Place, Not of It.” One of the women quoted a guard as saying, “As long as no one dies on my shift, I don’t care what you do to each other.”

Though the Hollywood stereotype of prison-rape-prevention class, that is not the case. Institutionalized abuse can be traced to the capitalist system itself, with the guards as front-line soldiers protecting ruling-class private property. In the book six women discuss health issues: a forced, medically unnecessary cesarean; ovaries involuntarily, unknowingly removed along with cysts; no care for diabetes and cirrhosis; forced removal of a child following birth; no treatment for hepatitis C or mental illness; and misdiagnosis of HIV for which toxic drugs were taken for 17 years. In the last case, the prison refused to accept responsibility for the misdiagnosis.

Five of the women were raped or forced to become sexual slaves of guards. At least three of them faced vicious retaliation by other guards when news of the secret relationship was exposed or the women brought charges against the guards. Retaliation continued when the women were transferred to other prisons.

But four of these women brought charges against their tormentors and stopped the abuse. Another woman reported such widespread opposition by inmates to invasive genital searches in Colorado that the state finally ended them. One of the inmates, who can only be heralded as survivors who found strength and self-esteem despite the system, are working to help others. As one summation put it: “If I can help anyone avoid what I went through, that’s what it’s all about.”

One woman, a 16-year-old who received a life sentence for murder and became addicted to heroin in prison to numb her pain, but who eventually kicked her habit, started a program to help other juvenile offenders in prison. “Because of my case, my son [16] advocates ... on behalf of youth getting a second chance. ... Me and my son, we’re working together to change things.”

But the only way to really change things is to “tear down the walls” and the corrupt, criminal capitalist system that relies on racism and mass incarceration at home while waging wars abroad.  

Selma 50 years later

By Susan Rosenberg

Fight’s still on for liberation

Selma 50 years later. The struggle in the streets

The struggle for their rights. “African-American women are three times more likely than white women to be incarcerated, while [Latino] women are 69 percent more likely than white women to be incarcerated,” reports a 2012 study on racial disparities in the U.S. criminal justice system by the Center for [U.S.] American Progress.

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But the only way to really change things is to “tear down the walls” and the corrupt, criminal capitalist system that relies on racism and mass incarceration at home while waging wars abroad.

Diane Mathiowetz and Jimmy Raynor crossing the Pettus Bridge.

Ashley Yates, a Ferguson activist with BlackLivesMatter, commented to the Huffington Post: “Mike Brown is our Jimmie Lee Jackson. We’re still seeing this very real history living and repeating itself today. We’re seeing the tear gas. ... We’re seeing people oppressed for standing up for their rights.”

Struggle in the streets

The struggle is ongoing on the ground and in the streets continues — including in Selma.

In addition to legislative repression, the extralegal, white-vigilante Ku Klux Klan is alive and active. On the morning of March 8, threatening Klan leaflets were discovered throughout Selma, including at a traveling display against lynching class created by Michael O.G. Law of Philadelphia. The wheels of his truck were also sabotaged.

Robert Jones, the grand dragon of the Loyal White Knights of the KKK, admitted in an Alcom interview that the Klan left about 4,000 flyers in the Selma area Montgomery area over the last two weeks, with propaganda against immigration and “against King,” referring to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

A local group resisting this racist, divisive propaganda is Students UNITED, a multinational organization of students from elementary through college age. Their goal is to provide all Selma children, 60 percent of whom live in poverty, with more educational chances. With art and protest, they emphasize “UNITY” and explicitly denounce racism in Selma.

They have participated in protest marches against a recent public memorial to KKK founder Nathan Bedford Forrest.

On Jubilee March morning, Students UNITED led a march of about 2,000 people to demand the renaming of the Pettus Bridge. Edmund Pettus was a Confederate officer, active of white supremacy and thought to be a Klan member.

Throughout the Jubilee weekend there was intense organization for renewed, unified, grassroots struggle. At a series of workshops at the Brown Chapel AME Church, people came together to address problems of voting rights restrictions, immigra-

tion rights, pollution and environmental dangers, poverty and cuts/elimination of Medicaid, labor rights and lack of living wages, and the criminal injustice system.

There were speakers on rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people; unemployed people; and women.

The Rev. William Barber, president of the North Carolina NAACP, spoke for an “anti-racism, anti-poverty, anti-war agenda.”

The Rev. Barber is a leader of the “Moral Mondays” movement against austerity assis-

tances on public services and needs.

There were powerful, militant attacks on what Barber called “the new Jim Crow” building a people’s campaign for voting rights and against poverty.

The weekend was a momentous gathering of the movement — those who are in the streets now, together with Black Civil Rights and Nationalist “foot soldiers” veterans who militantly fought and won against Jim Crow segregation.

In this gathering, people were striving for stronger unity and the possibility of tremendous momentum forward. Their watchword was “March on!”

Minnie Bruce Pratt was born in Selma, Ala. Other contributors to this story were Dianne Mathiowetz, Jimmy Raynor and Anne Pruden.
Ever since the first International Women’s Day was observed in 1909, women all over the world have been fighting for fair wages and decent working conditions. On International Women’s Day of 2023, women and activists around the world marched and rallied to demand better working conditions and wages. Women lifted signs showing black women fatally killed in police custody saying, “We are not meat to be used and discarded.”

Marches, rallies target police violence and low wages

By Workers World Bureau

Students, women and supporters braved the rain in Chicago March 6 to demand “Food as a Human Right.” They marched on the Federal Building to demand the right to unionize with “Fight for $15” and the Black Lives Matter movement. IWD events were held from coast to coast over the March 6-8 weekend. A roundup of international activities will be featured in next week’s issue.

March, rally, solidarity in Chicago

“We demand ‘Food as a Human Right.’ They shouted, “Save the burgers, save the fries, demand ‘Food as a Human Right.’ They are no exception. Spurred on by austerity measures and for the most basic needs, food, water and health care, workers, students, women and supporters gathered at Oak Street Beach to march and rally, solidarity in Chicago. The meeting was endorsed by a coalition of the Detroit Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions, and Utility Shutoffs, talked about building united struggles to fight against government austerity measures and for the most basic of human rights like access to quality food, clean water, and health care.

Two daycare workers discussed not being paid for three months because of recent daycare cuts by the state of Illinois, leaving families with no childcare and daycare centers in desperate need. Kyna Blackburn from Malcolm X College expressed fury over the killings of Black youth and supported women leading united fightback struggles.

Denzel Baldwin, a McDonald’s worker from Rockford (Ill) Fight for $15, gave a moving talk about the need for a living wage. A father of two, including a child with a disability, Baldwin spoke about the greed of corporations making huge profits off the backs of exploited workers who should have the right to unionize.

On March 8, a coalition of Chicago organizations continued the IWD celebration with a lively rally in support of Rasmia Odeh, the Palestinian leader who is being sentenced to jail on March 12 in Detroit on trumped-up charges of “unlawful procurement of naturalization.” The meeting was endorsed by a coalition of progressive Chicago organizations, including the Chicago Community Federation of FBI Repression, the US Palestinian Community Network, Freedom Road Socialist Organization, Port Workers Union Local 100,chicago Branch of Workers World Party.

Marching in New York City to ‘End state repression’

Hundreds of multinational women activists gathered in the busy shopping area of Herald Square in Manhattan, N.Y., on March 8 under the political theme of “End State Repression, Police Terror and U.S. Militarization.” Initiated by the International Working Women’s Day Coalition, whose motto is “Every issue is a women’s issue,” groups organized contingents with powerful banners and placards. Many were in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. There were also signs showing black women fatally killed in police custody saying, “We are not meat to be used and discarded.”

Delphine Matthews opened the Herald Square rally by telling the crowd about the police killing of her son, Frank McQueen, in Chester, Pa., last June. Matthews and her granddaughters travelled from Philadelphia to participate in the protest. Other speakers included representatives from the Laundry Workers Center, May 1 Coalition for Worker and Immigrant Rights in Southeastern Michigan, United Electrical Workers of People’s Solidarity, 15 NOW, Gabriela USA, Parents to Improve School Transportation, Radical Women, Socialist Alternative and Workers World Party.

Following the rally, a spirited protest surprised shoppers with drumming and chants en route to a police precinct on West 35th Street near 9th Avenue. Speakers connected the struggles to free Palestinian political prisoner Rasmia Odeh, the Palestinian, who due to police brutality to the built-in violence of capitalism and imperialism abroad. A group from 15 NOW and the Peoples Power Assembly carried out a direct action inside a McDonald’s in solidarity with the fast food workers. While some marchers picketed and held an impromptu speak-out against the police brutality.

The march ended at the Solidarity Center on West 24th Street with a direct action inside a McDonald’s in solidarity with the fast food workers. While some marchers picketed and held an impromptu speak-out against the police brutality, others connected the struggles to free Palestinian political prisoner Rasmia Odeh, the Palestinian, who was wrongly charged with the SFPD last October.

Amilcar Pérez-López, 21 years old and a Guatemalan immigrant, was killed by two undercover San Francisco police officers in front of his home in the Mission District on Feb. 26. Cops claimed he was attempting to steal a bicycle and did not drop a knife he was holding. Neighbors say he was actually trying to retrieve his cell phone, could barely speak English and had already dropped the knife before he was shot and killed. The San Francisco Police Department held a town hall meeting on March 7 to attempt to win the public to their side of the story. The crowd that turned up at the elementary school where the meeting was held rejected the cops’ fiction. Speaker after speaker denounced the undercover cops, notorious in the community, and challenged the need to use lethal force. The mother of Jamaican-born O’Shean Evans, killed by the SFPD last October, spoke angrily about the treatment of immigrants and the SFPD’s callous disregard for human life. Following the town hall meeting, on March 7, both a vigil for Amilcar and a march against this latest police killing were held.

Women of Youth Against War & Fascism, who marched to the women’s jail in July 1970. They were equally inspired to show solidarity with women who have currently borne the brunt of the fascist system. The march ended at the Unitarian Church where activists were greeted by a dinner prepared by the men of the Peoples Power Assembly and Baltimore International Workers of the World. After dinner, local women activists were presented with awards and then talked about the causes they embraced, such as OUR Walmart, the Mexican student movement, the FPA and BLM movement, and the Palestinian struggle to end Israeli occupation. Tawanda Jones was recognized as an anti-police brutality activist who fought for justice for her brother, Tyrone West. A proposal to organize for the April 4 protest for a $15 minimum wage and justice for low-wage workers was also passed.

Celebrating women’s resistance in Oakland, Calif.

About 300 people marched and rallied in Oakland, Calif., on March 8 in a “Speak out for Justice and Celebrate Women’s Resistance and Power.” The event theme was “Uphold the Legacy and Power of Women’s Resistance Here and Abroad.” Speakers showed the interconnections of many issues, including the fight against gentrification, the struggle to free Rasmea Odeh, the Palestinian, who the SFPD is trying to deport and separate from her young daughter, and the fight for justice for Mario Romero.

Initiated by Gabriela San Francisco and endorsed by numerous international, national and local groups, including Workers World Party, the event included numerous cultural performances at the Lake Merritt Amphitheater.

J. Hill, Monica Moorehead, Sharon Black and Terri Kay contributed to this report, which Sue Davis edited. Read more details about this roundup at workers.org.

Report and photo by Terri Kay

On International Women’s Day
Marches, rallies target police violence and low wages

By Workers World Bureau

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Report and photo by Terri Kay
Protests continue here over the March 6 police killing of Tony Robinson, a 19-year-old Black man who was shot five times in the chest while unarmed. Almost immediately after police officer Matt Kenny killed Robinson, hundreds came out to protest near the scene where the murder took place in Robinson’s residence near Willy Street and Few Street. A March 6 media release by the Young, Gifted and Black coalition read, “Given the racial disparities in Madison, we have known our city is no different. Young, Gifted and Black will continue to fight against this state violence against Black people and for justice for Anthony Robinson.” YGB, which formed in the wake of the Ferguson protests, has been leading demonstrations for months against police terror, mass incarceration and other forms of state violence against people of color.

Killed cop Kenny has a history of violence in the Madison Police Department. He shot to death another unarmed individual in 2007. Nevertheless, Kenny has received a commendation by the MPD, which clearly defends his actions.

Robinson’s grandmother, Sharon Irwin, and aunt, Lorien Carter, spoke to the gathering crowd March 6.

Referring to the police killings of young Black men such as Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner and others, Irwin said: “This can’t go on anymore. It’s going on across the United States and it’s ridiculous. You [police] don’t have a license to kill.” Carter said family members were not allowed to see Robinson after he was pronounced dead. “We were told he was evidence,” Carter said. “He wasn’t referred to as his son or your son, just evidence.”

Robinson’s mother said that Anthony had just graduated early from Sun Prairie High School and was planning on studying business at Madison College. The capitalist media have already begun to attempt to assimilate Robinson’s character.

The police killing of Robinson is not unusual in recent history. From Ferguson, Mo., to Wisconsin, incidents like this happen every day in the United States. Dozens of Black and Brown people have been killed by police in Milwaukee, Madison and elsewhere over just the past two decades in Wisconsin, all ultimately killed for the color of their skin and being perceived as Black.

In Milwaukee, the struggle for justice for Dontre Hamilton rages on. Hamilton was shot 14 times and killed instantly by police officer Christopher Manney last April 30 at Red Arrow Park in Milwaukee. Manney was fired last year but has an appeal hearing March 19, which the Coalition for Justice is mobilizing for.

Under the banner of Black Lives Matter, activists have resisted in Wisconsin and nationwide, telling the racist cops and politicians that modern lynching will not be tolerated. These ongoing actions include street demonstrations, direct action and civil disobedience inspired by the revolutionary resistance of the people of Ferguson.

Stop police-state terror!

On March 7, hundreds at a YGB organizing meeting in Madison decided the next actions in response to Robinson’s killing. Following the meeting, a protest took to the streets with a lead YGB banner declaring, “Black Lives Matter.” Members of the Coalition for Justice, including Maria Hamilton, the mother of Dontre Hamilton and Occupy The Hood members from Milwaukee, participated in these actions. Many working-class white youth are also demanding justice for the Robinson and Hamilton families and others whom Wisconsin police have killed. On March 8, hundreds participated in Madison in a Kid Action and Candlelight Vigil for Robinson.

The YGB and Coalition for Justice aim to call actions to inspire people to resist the system that criminalizes and kills people of color.

On March 11 at 3 p.m. in Madison, poor and working people will rally against the New Jim Crow and demand justice for Tony Robinson, meeting at Worthington Park at the corner of Darbo Drive and Rosemary Street in the Darbo neighborhood.

A student walkout at Edgewood High School is also scheduled. All protestors will converge at a protest location of the rEvolution. A statement from Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST) says the youth group stands “firmly opposed to racist killings whether in Ferguson, Gaza or Madison. Down with the racist police state! Justice for Tony Robinson and all others who have been harmed or killed by police terror!”

Heath Tschetter is a member of Jamesville, Wis., FIST. For more information, go to siwbaileooupeople.org.
Five derail in just 10 weeks

Stop crude oil ‘bomb trains’

By Bettye Piette

March 7 — In the past three days, two trains carrying crude oil derailed and exploded in Northern America, one March 5 in northwestern Illinois near the Missis- sippi River, and March 4 in the northern Onta- ria, Ontario, the second such incident in Canada in three weeks. These wrecks followed a derailment February in West Virginia and a January derailment in Philadelphia.

When a CSX train carrying 3 million gallons of crude oil derailed in Pennsylvania, the derailed in Fayette County, WV., on Feb. 16, huge fireballs shot hundreds of feet into the sky, houses burned and at least 2,400 residents were evacuated. The train had jumped the tracks, sparking a fire that lasted over three days and left area residents worried about long-term water quality in a nearby river.

No one was injured in a remote area of northern Ontario on Feb. 15 when a 100-car Canadian National Railway Co. train carrying crude oil derailed and caught fire. In 2013, however, an unattended crude oil train rolled into the center of Lae-Megantic, Quebec, unleashing a maj- or fire that destroyed dozens of buildings and killed 47 residents.

Federal authorities from the Depart- ment of Transportation predicted that these dangerous derailments could be- come commonplace in upcoming de- cades. The DOT anticipated an average of ten incidents a year costing billions of dollars and endangering large numbers of people. Beating that estimate, there have now been five such incidents in 2015 in just over two months.

Most trains involved were carrying highly combustible crude oil from North Dakota’s Bakken shale formation. These potentially deadly “bomb trains” are be- coming all too common.

The energy industry has resisted de- mocracy, “members only” organization that the oil prior to shipping, claiming it’s too expensive. The more gaseous mixture happens to bring a higher profit for the energy industry.

25 million people at risk

Since 2008, rail shipments of oil in- creased from 9,500 carloads to around 500,000 in 2014. The oil trains travel through towns and cities compared to respond. There has been “no corre- sponding increase in safety prepared- ness plans,” according to the Center for Biological Diversity.

A study by the CBS released Feb. 19 estimates that 25 million people in the U.S. live in the one-mile evacuation zone near rail lines, which is recommended by the U.S. Department of Transporta-

The German auto union IG Metall took a stronger position. IG Metall President Elke Herbst stated that “cooperation be- tween Volkswagen and anti-union groups or yellow unions” was unacceptable. (AP, Nov. 3)

Chattanooga teachers’ union activist Chris Brooks, who organized commu- nity support for the UAW drive last year, said ACE is a pro-company “yellow union” — crafted by the business community for the sole purpose of advancing the inter- ests of the business community while publicly proclaiming to actuate be a ‘union’ and providing ‘representation’ to the workers.”

Brooks points out that ACE’s mailing address is that of Evans, Harrison and Hackett PLLC, the law firm of attorney Maury Nicely, who headed Southern Mo- mentum. Leaked emails expose collusion between Nicely, anti-UAW VW worker Mike Burton, South-Carolina-based union-busting consultant Jim Gray, for- meral plant manager Don Jackson, the Chattanooga Regional Manufacturers Assos- ciation and the local Chamber of Com-merce (chattvincity.com).

The name “yellow union” refers to company-funded “unions” and also to worker groups that claim no company sponsorship but accept funding from cor- porate-funded union-busting organizations. Often employing violence, these company unions were created to make it impossible for labor militant unions in the Congress of Industrial Organizations to bargain col- lectively. Corporate-funded groups like the Open Shop Committee — then as now — claimed to be for the “right to work.” The CIO called it what it was: “the tyran-
sions or oil spills, yet both served to ex- pose the city’s glaring lack of any viable evacuation plan or campaigns to raise public awareness of the potential risk. On the contrary, what has come to light is city officials’ reluctance to disclose the studies the city had done or even to open the door to bringing much-needed union representation to all of the Euro- pean and Asian auto “transplants.” This would impact class relations throughout the South. For the UAW to succeed, how- ever, the only way for it to move forward is by forming a fighting union again.

Martha Grevatt is a 27-year VW Chrysler worker.

UAW, take heed!

VW workers need a fighting union

By Martha Grevatt

Just over a year ago the National Labor Relations Board conducted a union repre- sentation election at the Volkswagen plant in Chattanooga, Tenn. Presumably, with a company that signed pledge not to engage in anti-union intimidation, it was an easy win for the United Auto Workers.

Yet the union narrowly lost the elec- tion. A key factor in the surprise, 712-626 vote was the virulent anti-union crusade by right-wing forces. In particular, 402x183

They’re [referring to ACE] not a labor organization, said UAW International President Gary Jones. “They’re real only a real union can give them the voice they need.

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company unions crumbled in the 1930s under its “Community com- pany unions crumbled in the 1930s under its “Community com- panies” and its “USWA” and “users’ organization” policies. Few group having at least 15 percent of VW workers as members is entitled to meet on company premises and bring its concerns to VW that group can claim 15, 30 or 45 percent of the workforce. Any group that reaches the threshold. Meanwhile, the new UAW Local 394 at VW that recalls the days before the UAW’s “Community organizations” and the local Chamber of Commerce (chattvincity.com). The name “yellow union” refers to company-funded "union" and also to worker groups that claim no company sponsorship but accept funding from corporate-funded union-busting organizations. Often employing violence, these company unions were created to make it impossible for labor militant unions in the Congress of Industrial Organizations to bargain collectively. Corporate-funded groups like the Open Shop Committee — then as now — claimed to be for the “right to work.” The CIO called it what it was: “the tyran-
sions or oil spills, yet both served to ex- pose the city’s glaring lack of any viable evacuation plan or campaigns to raise public awareness of the potential risk. On the contrary, what has come to light is city officials’ reluctance to disclose the studies the city had done or even to open the door to bringing much-needed union representation to all of the Euro- pean and Asian auto “transplants.” This would impact class relations throughout the South. For the UAW to succeed, however, the only way for it to move forward is by forming a fighting union again.

Martha Grevatt is a 27-year VW Chrysler worker.
Defend Venezuela, end the sanctions!

President Nicolás Maduro of Venezuela deserves the highest praise and support for firmly rejecting the latest round of U.S. pressures designed to undermine and topple the Bolivarian Revolution.

On March 9, the Obama administration added more sanctions on Venezuela, calling the country and its leaders “an extraordinary threat to the national security of the United States.”

Such a declaration is not just an incredible, bold-faced lie. It is also the kind of language that allows branches of the U.S. government to step up their subversive efforts against Venezuela in very material ways — through economic sabotage, election operations and outright military moves.

Maduro answered this attack, saying, “President Barack Obama, representing the U.S. imperialist elite, has personally decided to take on the task of defeating my government and intervening in Venezuela to control it.” He called it a “colonial mistake” and “imperialist arrogance” and saluted those Venezuelan officials facing U.S. sanctions as “heroes.” “I congratulate them,” said the former bus driver and union leader, adding that “it’s an honor” to be included on the U.S. sanctions list.

What is the Bolivarian Revolution anyway? It is a valiant effort by the Venezuelan masses and their leaders to break away from the domination of U.S. capital and recreate their country toward building cooperation with other nations in the region. It is a struggle to overcome the terrible heritage of centu-
ries of exploitation, pillage of the land and extermination of Native peoples that characterizes all the Americas. It is a movement to unite all those who have been oppressed and exploited in order to establish new relations based on solidarity and mutual respect.

It was the election of Hugo Chávez to four terms as president, with massive support from Venezuela and the Bolivarian Revolution! It was sharply divided from the U.S. imperialist elite, has person-
ized to contribute in the analysis of experi-
ice and propuestas que, respecto a estos asuntos, puedan servir de insumos para agilizar y facilitar las discusiones de los plenipotenciarios de Gobierno Nacional y las FARC-EP, que permitan la concre-
tación de acuerdos que conduzcan al fin del

Stop crude oil ‘bomb trains’

have become the primary method of transport to expanding East Coast refineries. The two richest men in the U.S., bil-

Continued from page 9

ders in the U.S. has decreased in recent years, the number of dangerous crude-oil train derailments has grown. The trains carrying oil are longer, heavier and more difficult to control or stop. The train that derailed in Ontario in February was over a mile long and weighed 14,355 tons.

In many cases the aging railway infra-
structure, especially bridges, was never
designed to carry such heavy loads. Class 1 trains have a weight capacity of around 16,000 tons or 8,143 tons. The Federal Railway Administration does not keep data on bridge inspections, and most states don’t employ workers dedi-
cated to inspecting bridges.

The railroad industry has called for tighter regulations, and is receiving great-

acces to the refineries and the oil industry that own the cars have resisted making changes, including upgrading tank cars, because that cuts into their profits.

Many of the initial accidents were blamed on outdated DOT-111 tank cars that were never designed to carry vola-
tile crude. Changes in DOT regulations due to take place in May 2015 require the use of newer, supposedly more resilient CPC 1232 models. However, most of the recent explosive derail-
ments involved these “safer” cars.

Also, simply reducing the speeds at which the trains travel through heav-
ily populated areas may not solve the problem. The train involved in the Lac-Megantic disaster was stopped at the time.

Concern for human life and the envi-
ronment must be put before the greed of the energy industry’s drive for higher

profits. Until the safety issue is ad-
dressed there needs to be a moratorium on train transport of crude oil. Unless these corporations take measures to address growing safety concerns, mil-

EUA en el Proceso de Paz de Colombia

Inicio de la página 12

Género, hay habido audiencias especiales con organizaciones de la mujer y de la pob-

lación LGBT de Colombia. Se estableció una Comisión Histórica del Conflict y sus Víctimas para estudiar las causas con la vista dirigida hacia el fin del conflicto. Las FARC han propuesto la celebración de un Foro Nacional Constituyente en donde sea el pueblo quien decida el futuro de la implementación de los acuerdos.

Necesidad de acompañamiento del proceso

El proceso, aunque avanza, se enfrenta a poderosas fuerzas en su contra. Una exigencia de las FARC ha sido el cese al fuego bilateral para que así las negociaciones se puedan celebrar en un amiente de paz. Hasta ahora, el gobierno ha rechazado esta propuesta. El pasado 17 de diciembre, sin embargo, la insur-
gencia faricana anunció un cese al fuego unilateral e indefinido para demostrar su anhelo de consecución de paz.

El presidente Santos, quien se encuent-
ra en estos momentos en España, dijo, según un artículo publicado el 2 de mar-
zo por TeleSUR que “Estamos llegando al momento de iniciar la discusión del cese al fuego bilateral. Precisamente mañana martes viajan cinco generales en servicio activo de la República y un almirante, quienes irán a La Habana para iniciar este proceso”.

El pasado 24 de octubre, las FARC presentaron en La Habana a 18 nuevos miembros que integrarán la Sub Comisio-

nía Técnica sobre cese al fuego bilateral y dejanía de armas “que tendrá el propósito de contribuir en el análisis de experi-
cencias, generación y discusión de inici-
tivas y propuestas que, respecto a estos asuntos, puedan servir de insumos para agilizar y facilitar las discusiones de los plenipotenciarios de Gobierno Nacional y las FARC-EP, que permitan la concre-
tación de acuerdos que conduzcan al fin del conflicto. Los acuerdos sobre estos sub puntos se construirán en la Mesa de Con-
versaciones”. (resistencia-colombia.org/)

Como se ha expuesto, los diálogos se encuentran en una etapa crucial donde los movimientos sociales, particular-
mente en EUA tienen un papel esencial de expresar solidaridad con la insurgen-
cia y el pueblo colombiano, exponer el pa-
pel criminal de EUA y presionar a la Casa Blanca para que abandone cualquier in-
tento de socavar los diálogos.
Battling local and U.S. bosses

Women in Bangladesh fight oppression

By Coleen Davidson

As I walked through the streets of Dhaka, Bangladesh’s capital, I became aware of so much suffering, especially for women. I saw a woman who was forced to leave her crying infant lying on a blanket alone on the sidewalk as she ran around frantically begging for money so that she could feed herself and care for her child. Another time, I saw a woman sitting in the street, crying and cradling her mother’s head as her mother lay dying.

Capitalism hurts all working people. In the United States, sexism and patriarchy are highly prevalent, and women are faced with income inequality, violence, discrimination and harassment. In opposition countries that are superexploited by U.S. and other imperialist monopolies and by the local capitalists, such as in Bangladesh, life for women is a living hell.

In our Language movement, she added: “Be aware of so much suffering, especially for women. I saw a woman who was forced to leave her crying infant lying on a blanket alone on the sidewalk as she ran around frantically begging for money so that she could feed herself and care for her child. Another time, I saw a woman sitting in the street, crying and cradling her mother’s head as her mother lay dying.”

Coalition demonstrated in bitterly cold Detroit

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By Justin Stanley

Detroit protesters stand with Greece

By Kris Hamel

Activists with the Moratorium NOW! Coalition demonstrated in bitterly cold weather in front of Chase Bank here to show Detroiters’ solidarity with the people of Greece. The protesters demanded: “From Detroit to Greece, stop attacks on the working class; cancel the debt; stop pension and healthcare destroyers and water shutoffs.” This action against austerity took place downtown on Feb. 27, the day after Greece expressed approval over future measures to cut off Greece and threatening a temporary deal.”

The working class in Greece has been suffering for five years under a capitalist dictatorship and severe economic strangulation imposed at the behest of the banks and financial institutions.

A Moratorium NOW! press release stated: “Austerity in Greece has meant conditions much like those faced by Detroiters: A poverty rate of 44 percent, up from just 3 percent in 2009; a 27.7 percent unemployment rate; and 240,000 people with their utilities shut off. In response to these conditions, Syriza was elected to office in Greece on a promise to end the austerity imposed on the working class by the banks and the Troika (the European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund). U.S. financial institutions have swindled huge profits off the backs of the people of Greece, Detroit and around the world.”

The largest municipal bankruptcy in U.S. history concluded last year in Detroit, all for the benefit of the banks and the Troika. All this to the detriment of workers, retirees, resi - dents and social services. The city was devastated by the actions of banks and financial institutions and some of which are also strangling Greece.

In Detroit, these unsavory swirls caused mass home foreclosures and evic- tions; the end at almost a million residents in only a decade, the robbery of municipal retirees’ pensions and health care benefits, and in 2014, the shutting off of water to more than 30,000 people. Now some 62,000 homes face tax foreclosures. Mor oratorio-

Some of the protesters outside Chase Bank, Feb. 27.

Two years after factory collapse

Bangladesh workers address students

Mahinur Begum went to work on the morning of April 24, 2013, even though she knew she shouldn’t.

“We knew the building was unsafe, but we went anyway,” she recalled. Her work - place was a garment factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh, called the Rana Plaza. That day, during her shift, the building col - lapsed.

Speaking to a packed room of stu - dents and activists on March 3, Begum described the collapse of the Rana Plaza building. “The first thing we heard was the sound. Then I was struck by falling machines and concrete,” she said through an interpreter. “After 18 hours, I was pulled out of the rubble. I had lost a toe,” she added. A total of 1,129 people were killed. Begum was among the more than 2,500 who were injured. She spoke at the invitation of UK (University of Kentucky) Students United Against Sweatshops, a student organization that is lobbying the university to stop ties with garment companies who refuse to adhere to new safety regulations.

Rana Plaza stands as the worst disas - ter in the bloody history of the Bangla - deshi garment industry. Kalpona Akter, a trade union activist who is traveling with Begum, noted that 80 percent of Ban - gladesi women’s clothing industry comes from the garment industry. Many legislators are also factory owners. In response to a question from the audience, Akter said that no mainstream political party in Bangladesh is concerned with workers’ rights. The owner of the Rana Plaza has been linked to the ruling Awami League. Conditions for garment workers are Dickensian. Both Begum and Akter said that 14-hour shifts are routine, and that factories are rife with verbal and phys- ical abuse. An average month’s pay is the equivalent of $68, which meant that when Begum was released from the hos- pital, she had to borrow money from her neighbors to pay for medicine.

When asked what people in the U.S. could do to help, both women responded simply: “We need your solidarity.” More information about USAS’s “End Death - traps Campaign” can be found at usas.org/advocacy/enddeathtrapscampaign/

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Injerencia de EUA en Colombia

El pasado 20 de febrero se anunció que Estados Unidos enviaría un representante a los diálogos de paz entre el gobierno colombiano y las FARC-EP que se llevan a cabo en La Habana, Cuba. Ese mismo día, la Delegación de Paz de las FARC emitió una declaración saluando este hecho y destacando: “lo consideramos una necesidad, tomando en cuenta la presencia y incidencia permanente que Estados Unidos tiene en la vida política y militar de Colombia, pudiendo ahora, entonces, coadyuvar al establecimiento de la justicia social, la desmovilización de las fuerzas paramilitares, de la desigualdad y la miseria, que es la manera de ir abriendo el camino cierto hacia la paz”.

Diferente perspectiva estadounidense

Según reporta el Depto. de Estado EUA en su página web, durante una reunión en diciembre de 2014 el presidente elista de Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos le plió al secretario de estado John Kerry que EUA debía “tomar una decisión positiva en el proceso de paz” en Colombia, directamente en apoyo del proceso de paz de Colombia.


Con respecto a la igualdad de remuneración, por ejemplo, de los trabajadores en Colombia, existen varias leyes que establecen el derecho a la igualdad de remuneración, pero la aplicación de estas leyes ha sido insuficiente en muchos casos. Por ejemplo, en el año 2015, el valor de la semana laboral fue de 72 millones de pesos colombianos. Sin embargo, no se ha implementado una política efectiva para garantizar la igualdad de remuneración.

En resumen, la injerencia del gobierno estadounidense en el proceso de paz de Colombia ha sido objeto de debate y controversia, tanto en los niveles internacionales como en aquellos de la sociedad civil colombiana. La postura de EUA ha sido congruente con sus intereses geopolíticos, buscando mantener y fortalecer su influencia en la región. Es importante que las negociaciones de paz sean conducidas con transparencia, respeto a los derechos humanos y la soberanía de Colombia, para garantizar el bienestar de su pueblo y la consolidación de la paz en toda la región.