

Lives cut short by killer cops, pages 9 and 11.

Inside the anti-racist resistance

Chicago youth shut down Trump

By Danielle Boachie
Chicago

March 11 — Donald Trump’s racist, anti-immigrant, sexist, right-wing rhetoric has been met with powerful, organized protests both inside and outside of nearly every one of his major campaign events.

While demonstrators have been able to cut his talks short through disruption and civil disobedience, tonight was the first time the movement was able to completely prevent him from speaking, forcing Trump to cancel his campaign rally in Chicago.

This protest, as has been the case in various cities, was organized and led by youth of color. Black and Brown young people are leading the movement against Trump, white supremacy and bigotry.

As Cruz Rodriguez, a member of DePaul University’s Students for Justice in Palestine — and one of the students in my group that I took direction from — said on Facebook after the rally: “This movement was led by students of color — all the way! We did not endorse any other presidential candidate. We organized to take a stand against the rise of white fascism and white supremacy across the United States! BLACK and BROWN power came together to shut down a white supremacist! ... THE REVOLUTION WILL GO ON!”

Youth participated from many organizations

I arrived at the University of Illinois at Chicago Pavilion at 3:30 p.m. and met up with Cruz and other students, some of whom I had not met before, in the line to go inside. For weeks leading up to the event, groups came together online and in person to organize efforts to shut down the rally.

This was not my first time disrupting a Trump rally from the inside. Back in December, many progressives, including multiple members of Workers World Party, organized disruptions both inside and outside of the Dorton Arena in Raleigh, N.C. Many of the same tactics and efforts were used here in Chicago to successfully shut down Trump’s white supremacist rhetoric.

While in line, I spoke with some Trump supporters near me who assumed I was there with the same motivation as them. A concerned mother spoke to me about her support of “the wall” Trump wants to build between the U.S. and Mexico. As the line moved, a crowd of anti-Trump demonstrators across the street grew in number. As a protester walked by with a sign reading “TRUMP = RACIST,” the family in front of me turned and said, “How can we be racist when you are in line? These protesters don’t know anything.” I am an immigrant from Ghana, and it took all the self-control I had not to blow my cover.

Unlike in Raleigh, where we had to blend into the crowd or risk being preemptively kicked out, it became evident very early that many of us in the Pavilion were there to shut Trump down. I was inspired and energized



Victory inside the University of Illinois at Chicago Pavilion, March 11.

by the presence of youth — from Students for Justice in Palestine, Muslim Students Association, Black Youth Project, Assata’s Daughters, Fearless Undocumented Alliance and other organizations.

Struggle against white supremacy victorious

Of course, I worried for our safety as reactionary supporters grew weary of the growing number of disruptions, as well as the wait time. Many of us were inside the Pavilion for over two hours before we learned that the rally was “postponed.”

During that time, many of the demonstrators held disruptions by yelling chants and ripping up Trump signs. One reactionary began yelling at one of our people, and we all, as a collective, chanted “KICK HIM OUT!” until he was eventually removed by police. Once it was announced that the rally was cancelled due to “security concerns,” we all rushed onto the floor of the Pavilion, chanting “WE SHUT IT DOWN!” in celebration of our victory.

Outside, student groups led marches and speeches for hours, bringing together youth, students and community

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Rallies demand freedom for Aafia Siddiqui

By Lyn Neeley
New York

In Boston on March 8 and in New York City on March 11, the first two of four national rallies demanded that the U.S. government “Free Aafia Siddiqui” and allow her to return to her family in Pakistan. Framed in a U.S. court in 2010, she has been serving an 86-year sentence at Carswell Federal Prison ever since.

Human rights fighter Ramsey Clark, a former U.S. attorney general, has described Siddiqui’s case as “the worst case of individual injustice I have ever seen.”

At the New York rally, Mauri Saalakhan outlined Siddiqui’s story and told why he is dedicating his life to freeing her. He said that Siddiqui was at the top of her class at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, earned a scholarship to Brandeis University and became a successful practicing cognitive neuroscientist until she was framed and accused of being a Muslim terrorist. In 2003, she was abducted by Pakistani secret police while riding in a cab with her three children. They grabbed her two oldest and ripped the infant from her arms.

The two older children were returned to her family five and six years later. They returned speaking perfect English. The youngest is believed to have died, as the oldest, Ahmed, remembers seeing his baby brother bloody on the ground.

While held in Pakistan, Siddiqui was tried for attempting to shoot U.S. interrogators in Afghanistan in 2008, although she was the only one shot in the incident.

At the rally in front of the federal building, Lynne Stewart, the heroic activist lawyer who was also a political prisoner at Carswell, spoke about the horrendous conditions she and Siddiqui had to endure there. But, said Stewart, Siddiqui is facing far worse conditions because despite her serious gunshot injuries, she is still being kept in solitary confinement, is serving a life sentence and has not been able to see any visitors. Stewart said that, worst of all, Siddiqui has not been able to see or hear from her children.



Lynne Stewart, former U.S. political prisoner, speaks at New York rally, March 11.

“Millions of Pakistanis and all that nation’s political parties from left to right, religious to secular, have demanded her return to Pakistan,” Shahid Comrade, of the Pakistan USA Freedom Forum, told the protesters. “Aafia has become a symbol of thousands of disappeared prisoners.”

Sara Flounders was in Pakistan with Cynthia McKinney in December 2012 when she was invited by Siddiqui’s defense committee to speak for her repatriation. She told the New York demonstration: “Hundreds of thousands of Pakistanis rallied again and again at demonstrations calling on the U.S. to repatriate Siddiqui. The huge, huge demonstrations show how Siddiqui’s case is deeply felt by the people there. But,” she continued, “our rallies are covered more in Pakistan than in the U.S. because of backwardness and racism in the U.S. Siddiqui’s name here is relatively unknown even though this is where her sensational sham of a trial took place.”

The Boston rally, organized by Boston’s Women’s Fight-back Network, took place at MIT, where Siddiqui graduated. The rally attracted a lot of attention from students on campus. Speakers included former political prisoners, union activists, students and many youths.

The third rally is set for March 19 in Washington, D.C., and the fourth on March 30 in Fort Worth, Texas. □



Who we are & what we’re fighting for

Hate capitalism? Workers World Party fights for a socialist society — where the wealth is socially owned and production is planned to satisfy human need. This outmoded capitalist system is dragging down workers’ living standards while throwing millions out of their jobs. If you’re young, you know they’re stealing your future. And capitalism is threatening the entire planet with its unplanned, profit-driven stranglehold over the means of production.

Workers built it all — it belongs to society, not to a handful of billionaires! But we need a revolution to make that change. That’s why for 57 years WWP has been building a revolutionary party of the working class inside the belly of the beast.

We fight every kind of oppression. Racism, sexism,

degrading people because of their nationality, sexual or gender identity or disabilities — all are tools the ruling class uses to keep us apart. They ruthlessly super-exploit some in order to better exploit us all. WWP builds unity among all workers while supporting the right of self-determination. Fighting oppression is a working-class issue, which is confirmed by the many labor struggles led today by people of color, immigrants and women.

WWP has a long history of militant opposition to imperialist wars. The billionaire rulers are bent on turning back the clock to the bad old days before socialist revolutions and national liberation struggles liberated territory from their grip. We’ve been in the streets to oppose every one of imperialism’s wars and aggressions. □

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Because of BDS struggle

Security giant announces exit from Israel

By Joe Catron
New York

After nearly four years of a global campaign of boycotts and divestments, including five months of weekly protests in New York, British-Danish security conglomerate G4S said on March 9 that it would sell its Israeli subsidiary “in the next 12 to 24 months.”

G4S Israel, which holds contracts to equip Israeli detention centers and prisons, military and security forces, settlements, walls, checkpoints and other occupation infrastructure, had made its parent company the target of an international network of Palestinians and supporters.

“BDS pressure is making some of the world’s largest corporations realize that profiting from Israeli apartheid and colonialism is bad for business,” said Mahmoud Nawajaa, a spokesperson for the Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) National Committee, in a March 10 statement.

G4S announced its withdrawal from Israel in its year-end financial report, which indicated a 40 percent drop in the company’s pre-tax profits. (middleeast-monitor.com, March 10)

On April 17, 2012, the 38th annual Palestinian Prisoners’ Day and the start of a mass hunger strike by thousands of Palestinian political prisoners, the Boycott National Committee and prisoner support groups launched a global campaign against G4S because of its support for Israel’s occupation of Palestine and political imprisonment of Palestinians.

G4S Israel, in which G4S holds a 92 percent stake, equips Israel’s Damon, Ketziot, Megido, Ofer and Rimonim prisons, which together hold over 5,400 Palestinian political prisoners, as well as its Kishon and Jerusalem detention and interrogation centers — notorious for the torture of thousands of Palestinians who have passed through them.

The company also services Israel’s checkpoints in the West Bank and Gaza



PHOTO: JOE CATRON

Participants in one of the many protests outside G4S in New York City.

Strip — including those attached to its infamous “Apartheid Wall,” ruled illegal by the International Court of Justice in 2004 — as well as its West Bank settlements and military and security forces facilities.

On Aug. 3, the National and Islamic Forces, the national Palestinian prisoners’ movement inside Israeli jails, released a statement supporting the campaign.

“We emphasize the importance of boycotting the security corporation, G4S, which supports the occupation and has established the closest relationship with it, as well as other companies providing similar services in this arena,” the prisoners wrote.

The campaign against G4S has included boycotts of its services and efforts to force institutional shareholders to divest from its stocks.

Because of G4S’ massive scale — with more than 623,000 employees in over 110 countries on six continents — the world’s largest security firm and second-biggest private employer (after Walmart) offers

a convenient target across much of the globe.

Broad global opposition to G4S

After protests by supporters of Palestine, in 2014 the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, followed by the United Methodist Church, sold their shares in G4S, and Durham County, N.C., ended its contract to provide privatized security guards at government buildings.

Other activists have also targeted the company for its activities in the United States, which include running for-profit youth jails and holding, transporting and deporting migrants detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Last year, Columbia University and the University of California divested from G4S after students organized against their schools’ holdings in it and other companies that operate private prisons and detention centers.

Internationally, G4S has faced growing losses as businesses, labor unions, student groups, colleges and universi-

ties, charities, religious institutions and local governments have refused to share in the company’s complicity with Israeli apartheid.

At the end of February, the massive restaurant chain Crepes & Waffles in Colombia ended a contract with G4S. The United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund office in Amman, Jordan, did the same in early March.

Showing the breadth of opposition to it, G4S announced its withdrawal from not only the Israeli market, but also its youth detention facilities in the U.S. and Great Britain.

In New York City, Samidoun: Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network has protested at 4 p.m. on most Fridays since mid-October outside the G4S office at 19 West 44th St.

Like other parts of the global campaign to force an end to G4S’ Israeli contracts, these weekly gatherings will continue until the company’s promises are implemented.

The next protest, on March 18, will highlight the imprisonment of Mohammed Abu Sakha, a children’s instructor and performer at the Palestinian Circus School and one of 670 “administrative detainees” held by Israel without charge or trial.

“At a time when Israel is stepping up its campaign of mass incarceration as a way of repressing Palestinian society, G4S should immediately end its role in the notorious Israeli prison system, as well as its involvement in securing Israeli checkpoints and illegal settlements,” stated Sahar Francis, director of the Ramallah-based Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association.

“This latest news from G4S,” said Francis, “is welcome but it has no immediate effect on those facing serious human rights violations inside Israel’s prisons today.”

Joe Catron is an organizer with Samidoun: Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network.

Alabama prisoners rise up

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

About 100 prisoners ignited a fire and tried to gain control of their dormitory in the March 11 uprising at Holman Correctional Facility in Atmore, Ala. The action began after an incident in which Warden Carter Davenport and a prison guard were stabbed. In a video inmates circulated on social media, one participant said: “We’re tired of this shit, there’s only one way to deal with it: Tear the prison down.” (supportprisonerresistance.noblogs.org)

The Equal Justice Initiative in June 2014 called on the Alabama Department of Corrections to remove Davenport from his previous post at St. Clair Correctional Facility, after three inmates were killed

there within a span of 10 months. EJI reported Davenport had a history of “unprofessional conduct,” including beating a handcuffed prisoner. An EJI report also noted St. Clair guards were smuggling drugs and other contraband into the prison. Davenport was reassigned to Holman in December.

In a Vice.com interview, St. Clair prisoner Melvin Ray revealed violence had escalated there after Davenport began cutting programs, including one using mediation between inmates. Ray, who is serving life without parole, is a leader in the Free Alabama Movement, a group of inmates raising awareness about the dreadful conditions in the state’s prisons.

The conditions at Holman mirror the cruel and unusual conditions in all Alabama prisons — overcrowding, racism, guard brutality, lack of medical care, slave labor and solitary confinement. Mentally ill prisoners are segregated for years on end with no treatment and rotated between units at Holman and St. Clair.

In 2014 a patient died at Holman from hepatitis C complications after being given no treatment. The state of Alabama has a contract with Corizon, the largest for-profit provider of prison health services. Corizon is currently locked in a battle in Pennsylvania over nontreatment

of 10,000 prisoners, including political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, suffering from untreated hepatitis C. (workers.org, Sept. 25)

Prisons function on inmates’ unpaid labor

The state’s answer to these abuses is more prisons. Gov. Robert Bentley has asked the Alabama legislature to approve an \$800 million prison bond issue.

But the Free Alabama Movement has a different analysis and strategy. In their 2014 “A Flicker Turns into a Flame” report, FAM stated: “Mass incarceration, unconstitutional overcrowded prisons and inhumane treatment are more about economics than the humanity of people. The numbers support our contention that ‘MONEY’ is the motive and most important factor in explaining the policies and conditions within the Department of Corrections.” (freealabamamovement.com)

FAM concludes: “Prisons don’t function without inmate labor. And every day that the prison doesn’t function the prison profit margin plummets.”

Robert Council, known as Kinetik, one of the founders of FAM, also serving life without parole, is incarcerated in Holman. In a 2015 Common Dreams in-



terview, he said: “We have to shut down the prisons. We will not work for free anymore. All the work in prisons, from cleaning to cutting grass to working in the kitchen, is done by inmate labor. [Almost no prisoner] in Alabama is paid. Without us the prisons, which are slave empires, cannot function.

“Prisons, at the same time, charge us a variety of fees, such as for our identification cards or wrist bracelets, and [impose] numerous fines, especially for possession of contraband. They charge us high phone and commissary prices. Prisons each year are taking larger and larger sums of money from the inmates and their families. The state gets from us millions of dollars in free labor and then imposes fees and fines. You have brothers that work in kitchens 12 to 15 hours a day and have done this for years and have never been paid.”

In April 2014 members of FAM went on strike to demand wages for the unpaid labor they do for the state. They continue to organize in Alabama prisons. □

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LESSONS OF BOSTON

Unions must fight for oppressed communities

This is the second of three articles to appear in WW based on excerpts from a conference call dialog among members of Team Solidarity in Boston and Workers World Party, held on Feb. 14. Part 1 was published in the March 10 issue of Workers World and included remarks by Larry Holmes, Andre François and Chuck Turner. The discussion centered around what made it possible for the Boston School Bus Drivers Union, Steelworkers Local 8751, to win a long struggle against the global giant Veolia/Transdev, in which the union got a good contract and the return of four fired leaders with back pay. This article begins with additional remarks by Turner.

‘Building a movement’
– **Chuck Turner** (continued)
Former Boston city councilor and community activist

The struggle that’s going on in [Local] 8751 is tremendously important to the workers and the community and needs to be duplicated across the country. At the same time, I have to recognize, as a person who is 75 and has been active in the community, delivering service to Black people and people in general throughout my life, the reality is that the majority of people of my race are not in unions and not employed.

So that raises a very serious question: In addition to organizing our workers who are in companies and in unions, how do we begin to develop a movement around the issue of our unemployment? And how do we put ourselves to work? Because the reality is Black people cannot look to the capitalist system to employ those of us who have been robbed of our labor for the last 400 years.

How do we begin to think about building a movement that will put us back to work so that future generations will have some likelihood of working? At this moment, there are millions of us who are unemployed across the country and have no realistic expectations of a job or of being in a union. There are 900,000 of us who are in prisons who are going to be coming back to communities where the official unemployment rates are 20 to 30 percent.

While we have to focus on organizing our workers who are in the unions and on

building unions, we also have to recognize that, for liberation for ourselves as a people, we have to build strategies among those who are unemployed for putting us to work, because we certainly cannot look to the capitalists to do that

‘Workers’ first line of defense’
– **Steve Kirschbaum**
Vice president, USW 8751, and one of the Four (fired workers)

8751 is very, very interested in playing whatever role we can play, as Chuck was able to do, with the Boston Workers’ Alliance and other efforts to deal with workers coming out of prison and being denied employment. This is organizing to organize the unorganized. We need to take a page out of what was done with the unemployed marches and other efforts in the 1930s. I think this is critical for both the Team and the Party to pay very serious attention to.

This victory was not really a three-year victory. It was decades in the making, and it was a resounding confirmation of militant, class-conscious, politically active unionism, which some call “social unionism.” We take to heart what other revolutionaries — Lenin, Trotsky, Sam Marcy and others — have said: That the unions are the workers’ first line of defense, not just for a contract, not just for a grievance, but for all those ills of capitalism that affect our class.

At first, when we were fired, the Tea Party commentators in the bourgeois press and others redbaited us; they talked about our support for Cuba, for presidents Chávez and Maduro in Venezuela, for General Giap in Vietnam. They quoted from remarks we’d made at Workers World conferences about GPS technology representing Homeland Security’s incursion into the workplace. That was an indication from the enemy that this was really a political struggle, a calculated campaign to drive out of USW Local 8751 those “red” political forces who had founded the local and had been in the local for 40-plus years.

One of the main reasons for our victory was solidarity with and from the community, rock-solid alliances based on the fact that the union had been so much a part of all the struggles of the community, particularly communities of color, and the

political movement over the decades in Boston.

Those alliances are also recognition that 8751 itself is of the community. Our local is now 98 percent people of color, mostly from Haiti, mostly immigrant workers and a large percentage of women. Local 8751 is a snapshot of the insightful description of the changing character of the working class in Sam Marcy’s book, “High Tech, Low Pay.” [Read online at workers.org/marcy/cd/samtech/index.htm.] When I first started driving the school buses in 1974, among the workers driving the buses were only a handful of people of color and two women. The successful fight, since the 1970s, to provide good union jobs for workers in the oppressed communities and for women represents one of the most significant achievements for the politically class-conscious leadership of the local.

We all have to broaden the definition of solidarity. Yes, we had a rock-strong rank and file who were loyal, militant and defiant. I remember a scene at the end of one of the trials, when the head of the corporation was leaving the court and was chased by a hundred workers. If it wasn’t for the cops, I don’t know what would have happened to him. My Haitian brothers and sisters said, “If this was Port-au-Prince, we know what would have happened to him!” That’s the kind of power we have in the rank and file.

And, yes, we have sought to broaden the view of solidarity, to join with the anti-Veolia national and worldwide movements: the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement in support of the Palestinians; the Black Lives Matter movement; the anti-war movement; and all the other political movements.

We are trying to live the trade union legacy of the founders of Workers World Party. We call it “old-school unionism,” employing the fundamentals: militant mobilization and reliance on the rank and file; building solidarity with the community and engaging the union in all struggles of the “workers and oppressed”; fighting racism, sexism, LGBT oppression, discrimination against people with disabilities, poverty and war. For example, I’m very proud of the fact that the language we won in the new contract guarantees no discrimination against our trans* sisters and brothers. This language was drafted in consultation with leaders from the movement, bringing their voice to the negotiating table.

Our struggle provided a virtual strategic and tactical “clinic” regarding “how to” address the many challenges facing labor militants: dealing with a global corporate monster; a viciously anti-union bourgeois state (cops, courts and City Hall); vicious austerity cuts; class collaborationists in the local’s leadership; the nonstruggle trade union bureaucracy (“labor lieutenants of capital”); and so forth.

We believe the rich lessons of this victory are worthy of study by our movement. Our successful battle provides concrete confirmation that you can fight back and you can win. Our enemies may have the money, but we have the people and we have the power!

‘For a union to remain strong’
– **Garry Murchison**
Former president, USW 8751, grievance chair, and one of the Four

In Local 8751 are a group of people who do exactly what our other members do. We don’t hold executive positions and

sit in an office all day. We actually get out in the field, we participate, we have conversations with our members, we have yard meetings. We don’t act as if we are an Executive Board — we are bus drivers, regardless.

But in other unions that has seemed to change, and what’s more, that’s what we need to get back to — to drop back down to the workers’ level, instead of acting as a position just for the position. If you act as if the position is better than the people you are representing, then you are no better than the company that is trying to harm your members. So the lesson from that is: In order for a union to remain strong, no one can buy you out. In order for a union to remain strong, no one can sell you. Why? Because right is right and wrong is wrong.

‘A class-struggle approach’
– **Steve Gillis**
Financial secretary, USW 8751, and one of the Four

Those of you who graciously came to Boston to fight the court case against Local 8751 know the way that we won was to employ a class-struggle approach. We organized hundreds of people, even on some of the most snowbound days of the year, when everything in the city was closed except Dorchester District Court. We got people to court in a way that had never been seen in the city of Boston. We packed the court, we subpoenaed our bosses, we subpoenaed the general manager of the corporation, we subpoenaed a government official. The Veolia guy who is now in charge of transportation — we made him sit in the hallway for three days while picket lines and demonstrations went on inside and outside. We put the company on trial, in effect, at Dorchester District Court, and the working-class jury, after a three-day trial, took less than 10 minutes for a verdict of “not guilty.” It was obvious to them, as it was obvious to us, as it is obvious to hundreds of million of people around the world, that this corporation and this government, with its austerity plan, are guilty of crimes. It is not us!

In the last couple of weeks, while performing my duties as administrator of the members’ 401(k) pension plan and also being in the yards, it’s been an additional task to try to figure out what to do about the wage theft that’s also coming from the entire system. These recent weeks have seen the capitalist system begin a huge collapse in its financial system and in its system of oil production, which is at its base.

We’ve seen hundreds of thousands of layoffs happening in this period, and we hope some of the lessons from the Boston School Bus Drivers’ victory will be able to bring to our class an understanding of how to fight that. The victory that we’ve had can be very useful to anybody else in this country or around the world who is fighting the same kind of government-austerity monster that Veolia is. It’s almost the epitome of the corporate Pinkerton hired gun! This is a corporation of international criminal proportions.

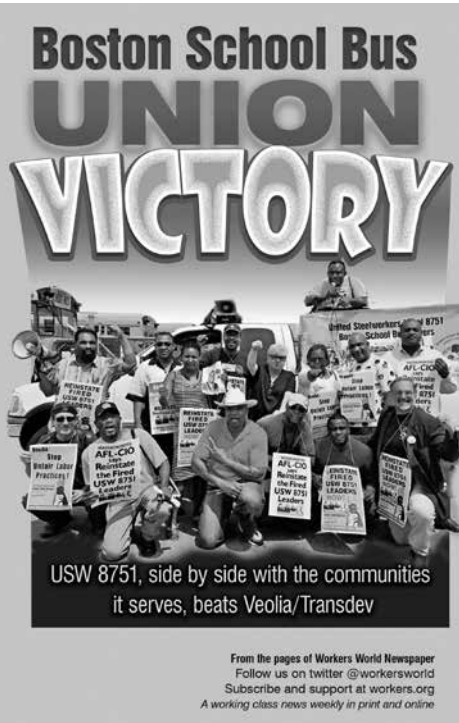
But we can see how this colossus is something of a monster with feet of clay, and we can spread the lessons of victory and be of assistance in organizing a broad struggle to overthrow this system that is targeting us every day.

To be continued.

A new book to be released for May Day:

Boston School Bus Union Victory

Blow by blow from the front lines – articles reprinted from the pages of Workers World newspaper



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Mass struggle in France defends workers

By G. Dunkel

A half-million workers and students took to the streets in more than 200 separate protests throughout France on March 9 to demand that the government withdraw its proposal to modify the labor code. Many of the workers struck for the whole day, exercising their constitutional right to strike.

Over 1 million people have signed an online petition requesting the government withdraw its bill.

Many protections French workers won after hard struggles in the last century would be weakened if this bill is adopted. Benefits provided in other countries by union contracts are enshrined in the national French labor code that applies to all workers.

That means almost all workers qualify for five weeks of vacation, plus 10 holidays and something called RTT, similar to comp time, which reimburses them with paid time off if they work more than 35 hours a week. Their statutory benefits include health coverage, unemployment allowances, retirement/pension funds and time off for life changes like the birth of a child or a death in the family.

There is a special labor court in charge of administering and enforcing these rights and also ruling on layoffs and firings. That court makes legally enforceable decisions generally much quicker than arbitrations in the U.S.

Youth turnout significant

While the militant trade unions like Force Ouvrière (FO) and the General Confederation of Workers (CGT) had a major presence in the protests, along with left parties like the New Anti-capitalist Party and the French Communist Party, what was remarkable was the high proportion of youth who came out. Some oppositional members of the governing party also participated.

While the party running the French government calls itself “Socialist,” it firmly defends the interests of the French bourgeoisie. Under this party, French imperialism actively intervenes alongside U.S. imperialism in the Middle East and Africa.

The reformist unions, like the Confederation of Democratic French Labor (CFDT), only called for the government’s proposal to be “modified.” This slogan

only brought out a few hundred protesters in Paris on March 12 and scattered handfuls in some of the largest French cities. (FranceTV.info, March 13)

The unions representing workers for both the long-distance railroad lines and the regional lines also struck on March 9 to protest proposed changes in their working conditions. While the government and the companies tried to downplay the number of railroad employees who struck, Belgian television reported that there were 190 miles of traffic jams in the Paris metropolitan area on the morning of March 9. (BFMTV.com)

Though the participation of university students, along with student unions, is fairly common in broad social movements in France, the extent of the participation of high school students was unusual. French TV showed a number of high schools whose entrances were blocked by piles of trash cans and construction bar-



riers. The students who should have been in the building held a “general assembly” outside on the street to decide how they were going to participate in the protest.

French television on March 13 reported that French President François Hollande and Prime Minister Manuel Valls intend to meet with the leaders of the union confederations and the student unions to

see if they can reach an agreement on the government’s proposed changes.

The FO and the CGT, along with their allies in the militant student unions, have made it clear that they want the government proposal withdrawn, not reworked. They have said they will organize a truly massive protest on March 31 if the bill is still on the table. □

The myth of ‘free trade’

By Stephen Millies

Media experts claim that Bernie Sanders won Michigan’s Democratic primary because he attacked “free trade.”

Human beings have been trading with each other for thousands of years. What is “free trade” now being touted? Just this: **capitalist monopoly trade.**

Globalization is over 500 years old. The capitalist world market was jump-started by the two greatest crimes in history: the African Holocaust and the extermination of Indigenous peoples throughout the Americas.

Karl Marx pointed out in “Capital” that the exploitation of European workers “needed, for its pedestal, slavery pure and simple in the new world.” The silver mines of Potosí in Bolivia — operated with enslaved labor for centuries — lubricated the new capitalist trading system.

The Industrial Revolution was launched by the slave trade. “It was the capital accumulated from the West Indian trade” — that is, profits from slave-grown sugar — “that financed James Watt and the steam engine,” wrote Eric Williams, the first prime minister of independent Trinidad and Tobago, in “Capitalism and Slavery.”

Starving people became a source of profit for capitalist merchants. Referring to India, Marx wrote in “Capital” that “between 1769 and 1770, the English manufactured a famine by buying up all the rice and refusing to sell it again, except at fabulous prices.”

In the 1840s a million Irish starved to death as “huge quantities of food were exported from Ireland to England,” according to Cecil Woodham-Smith in “The Great Hunger.”

In 1943, a century later, 3 million Bengali people starved to death as food was diverted to British troops. Prime Minister Winston Churchill turned down offers of food aid from Canada and the U.S., while regretting that Mahatma Gandhi wasn’t one of the victims. (International Business Times, Feb. 22, 2013)

Why did Bernie Sanders praise Churchill during the Feb. 11 Democratic debate? That’s just as atrocious as Hillary Clinton lying about Nancy Reagan’s “very effective, low-key advocacy” about HIV/AIDS when in fact both Ronald and Nancy Reagan prevented any mobilization to fight the epidemic.

Drug pushing in name of ‘free trade’

Capitalists are always trying to find new markets in order to sell their goods at a profit. Britain’s East India Co. earned vast profits by smuggling opium into China.

When the Chinese emperor tried to stop this drug pushing, the capitalist British government launched in 1839 a series of “opium wars” in the name of “free trade.”

Among the U.S. drug dealers who accumulated fortunes was Warren Delano, a grandfather of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. (Hudson River Valley Heritage) Only the Chinese socialist revolution stopped this drug addiction.

A big victory for free trade was the 1846 abolition of tariffs on wheat imports into Britain. Capitalists claimed that “cheap food” would benefit workers.

At the time these same capitalists were fighting the adoption of a 10-hour work day. Twelve hours were then standard in British cotton textile mills. The cotton was picked by enslaved people in the United States working from “no see” at dawn to “no see” at night.

British factory owners wanted cheap imported food so they could reduce the wages of the then largely unorganized British workers. U.S. capitalists then use cheap imported clothing to keep pay low.

That has also enabled them to raise rents. Deutsche Bank estimates that today 30 percent of New York City households fork over at least half their income to landlords.

New form of colonialism

The North American Free Trading Act of 1993 allowed U.S. big business to open up low-wage factories in Mexico’s maquiladoras.

Among the job losers were members of Teamsters Local 808 at the Swingline stapler factory in Queens, N.Y., which shut down in the late 1990s. Racist Mayor Rudolph Giuliani actually hailed this plant closing. (New York Daily News, July 8, 1997)

But NAFTA’s biggest victims were Mexican workers and peasants. NAFTA effectively overturned the great land reform in the 1930s of Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas. According to the Siera Club, 2 million Mexican farmers have been forced off their land since then because of food imports from the U.S.

NAFTA overrides Mexico’s environmental laws. While children in Flint, Mich., are being lead poisoned, old lead batteries are being shipped to the Eléctrica Automotriz Omega plant near Monterrey, Mexico, where workers are poisoned. (Washington Post, Feb. 26)

Capitalist “free trade” is 1,130 garment workers being buried alive in the collapse of the Rana Plaza factory building filled with sweatshops in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on April 24, 2013. That’s nearly eight times the number of 146 workers, overwhelmingly Jewish and Italian young women immigrants, who were murdered by the bosses in New York’s Triangle Shirtwaist Fire in 1911.

Super-bigot Donald Trump wants to divert our anger over corporations killing jobs into hatred against workers in other countries. Capitalist candidates are bashing the People’s Republic of China, the Pentagon’s number one target.

It wasn’t China that shut down nine of the 10 auto plants in Flint — it was GM.

What we need instead is more workers’ solidarity. After Chicago workers launched the movement for an eight-hour day on May 4, 1886, four of their leaders — George Engel, Adolf Fischer, Albert Parsons and August Spies — were eventually hanged. But, inspired by what became May Day, the international workers’ movement won the eight-hour day for millions of workers, with the help of the Russian Revolution. □

Oakland, Calif.

Event supports Haitian people

By Dave Welsh
Oakland, Calif.

An event commemorating the 25th anniversary of the inauguration of Haiti’s first democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was held at the Eastside Arts Alliance in east Oakland on Feb. 28. The event also marked 12 years since the Feb. 29, 2004, U.S.-backed coup d’etat which overthrew Aristide and the progressive Lavalas government. The United States and its allies installed a United Nations military occupation of Haiti that continues to this day.

In addition to powerful drumming, there were talks by Pierre Labossiere of the Haiti Action Committee; Walter Riley, a civil rights attorney and chair of the Haiti Emergency Relief Fund; and Lara Kiswani of the Arab Resource & Organizing Center.

The event was organized by the Haiti Action Committee, which issued this statement: “This is a critical moment to



PHOTO: MALAIKA KAMBON

‘We will not obey’ — slogan of the mass movement resisting the stealing of Haiti’s elections.

stand with Haiti, denounce U.S. attacks on Haiti’s sovereignty and defend Haiti’s popular movement. Tens of thousands of Haitians face tear gas and live ammunition in almost daily demonstrations demanding free and fair elections and an end to foreign intervention. The power of this movement forced postponement of a fraudulent presidential ‘runoff’ scheduled for Jan. 24th.” □

Latinos/as, immigrants and the elections

What the Miami Democratic debate revealed

By Teresa Gutierrez

A recurring theme in the 2016 presidential elections is immigration, especially on the Republican side.

The inflammatory rhetoric from Republican contender Donald Trump is especially insidious with his calls for building a wall on the southern U.S. border, inciting some of the most hateful racism ever.

But the Democrats also raise immigration, and it was especially a top issue in the presidential debate held on March 9.

The running theme on immigration, Trump's racist "Build the Wall" bombasts, coupled with the economic crisis that has ushered in untold hardship begs the question for Latinos/as: what road to take in this election season? Should Trump just be dismissed and brushed off like an exasperating mosquito? What will Latinos/as gain by supporting the Democrats? What can stop the deportations? What vote will bring good paying jobs, affordable health care and education for all? Who can stop the gentrification of our communities?

The answers lie not in the voting booth but in the streets. They lie in building a movement, not just any movement, but one guided by revolutionary class consciousness, a movement that knows that to make real gains for Latinos/as, the first task is to defend Black Lives Matter.

Democrats and the 'Hispanic' base

The March 9 Democratic Party debate was held in Miami, whose population is 70 percent Latino/a. It was particularly geared to the primarily Latino/a audience and social climate of southern Florida. It was sponsored by Univision and the Washington Post and held at Miami-Dade College.

Univision is the fifth largest television network in the U.S., averaging about 1.5 million adults watching during primetime and, according to its publicity, it outperforms "one or more of the English-language broadcast networks [ABC, CBS, NBC or FOX] on two out of every three nights."

The debate was indeed unique. It was bilingual and aired in Spanish simultaneously on Univision. The questioners and moderators often spoke Spanish before being translated.

It held a Latino/a flavor throughout the night, which started with a young Mexican-American singing the U.S. national anthem in his charro mariachi outfit.

Of course, the national anthem offends many who know that the anthem is in reality a pledge to the imperialist system.

The boy was Sebastien de la Cruz, who in 2013 had already made national news. During the National Basketball Association finals that year, Sebastien sang the national anthem at a San Antonio Spurs game

in San Antonio, Texas, also in his mariachi outfit. He immediately received backlash from racists who were offended that he had sung that song in his charro gear.

To the Spurs' credit, they wonderfully brought back Sebastien a few days later at another game as a show of support for the young boy who had been told to "go back home" and other racist garbage. Sebastien had heartfully countered, "I am home."

A constant characteristic of Democratic Party elections is their courting of the Latino/a vote. This year is no exception. The same is true for the courting of African-American votes.

So it was no surprise that Sebastien was invited to open the debate, charro suit and all.

Other Latino/a flavors of the night irked a lot of Latinos/as, however. When Hillary Clinton stated, "I said, 'Basta,'" on a past development, social media went nuts.

The Sun Times Network later reported that Google Trend searches for the word "basta," which means "enough," spiked 2,550 percent.

But many Latino/a activists were angered by a politician's use of Spanglish, especially one who is such a warmonger and one who not long ago characterized African-American men as "super predators."

Clinton's role in Honduras is especially offensive as she was part of the Washington administration that supported the ouster of democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya. His ouster then led to extreme social turmoil, at least 25,000 deaths and a mass exodus to escape the violence.

Is Clinton 'Hispandering'?

At another moment in the debate, moderator María Elena Salinas asked Clinton if she was flip-flopping on the immigration issue or "what some would call 'Hispandering.'"

Hillary Clinton has been accused of Hispandering many times. The word is Spanglish for the fake interest and pandering of Latino/a issues and culture for self-serving interests.

On Dec. 10, National Public Radio reported that Clinton was accused of this another time, when she called herself "La Hillary" [the Hillary] and "Tu Hillary" [Your Hillary]. On another occasion last year, Clinton ran a tweet with a picture of her, Bill and their grandchild with the quote, "Seven ways Hillary is just like your abuela." "Abuela" means grandmother.

Another thing that made the debate in Miami different was the participation of an immigrant woman from Guatemala who raised a question from the floor.

Although, unlike other outlets, Univision often represents the interests of Latinos/as, it is still a capitalist institu-

tion. It too falls prey to bourgeois ways so that it rarely puts dark-skinned Latinos/as on the screen. And it has also put dark-skinned or Indigenous people from the Americas in a servant or negative role.

So when Lucía Quiej asked her question, it was a joy to see. She was short and dark. And beautiful.

She looked like the people that the U.S. has slaughtered in Guatemala, like someone from the Indigenous Lenca nation, whose leader, Berta Cáceres, was just recently killed by the death squads in Honduras that "La Hillary" helped create.

Quiej asked the candidates what they would do about cases like hers, where her husband had been picked up and deported for an invalid driver's license. Her children could be seen sitting next to her with tears in their eyes.

Both candidates spoke for family reunification.

During the evening, the moderators pressed on and forced the candidates to answer the question, "Would you deport children?" as president. Both said no, Sanders more forcefully.

Clinton repeated the view that only criminals or terrorists should be deported, but ironically no one pointed out that under those guidelines Quiej's husband would still be deported as he had "broken" the so-called law of driving without a license.

And no one pointed out the insulting remark that Clinton had made in an earlier debate this year when she said that the U.S. cannot allow more Central American children into the country because "we have to send a message to parents that it is dangerous to send children." This is imperialist arrogance at its finest.

Sanders on Nicaragua and Cuba

The night of the debate continued with another theme necessary to raise here. It was a question raised to Bernie Sanders about a 1985 interview where he praised Daniel Ortega's Sandinista government and made a favorable comment about Fidel Castro as well.

Sanders' answer for the most part was progressive and important for national TV.

Sanders did characterize Cuba wrongly. He stated that "Cuba is ... an authoritarian, undemocratic country, and I hope ... it becomes a democratic country."

The truth is that Cuba is, in fact, more democratic than the U.S. In Cuba, one does not need billions of dollars to run for office. Policies in Cuba are thoroughly hashed out among the whole population; there are many elections, all free and fair; its mass organizations are directly linked to the government; and so on.

But Sanders also said that Cuba has educated its children, has provided free health

care, sends doctors around the world and has "totally transformed society."

Most important, Sanders told millions of people, "Throughout the history of our relationship with Latin America we've operated under the so-called Monroe Doctrine, and that said the United States had the right to do anything that they wanted to do in Latin America. So I actually went to Nicaragua and I very shortly opposed the Reagan administration's efforts to overthrow that government. And I strongly opposed earlier Henry Kissinger and the [inaudible] to overthrow the government of Salvador Allende in Chile. ... [We] should be working with governments around the world, not get involved in regime change. The key issue here was whether the United States should go around overthrowing small Latin American countries. I think that that was a mistake."

Clinton, however, was venomous in her lies against socialist Cuba, stating the Cuban government "oppresses," "disappears," "imprisons" and "even kills people" for expressing their views. The National Network on Cuba has demanded Clinton's correction and retraction of these slanders.

When you consider where the debate took place — in the Dade County hotbed of anti-Cuban revolution sentiment — Sanders' pro-Cuba remarks, even though tainted with imperialist propaganda, were important to be heard. At the end of the debate, in fact it was Sanders, not Clinton, who got a standing ovation. No small thing.

Is this and his other progressive remarks enough reason to support Sanders? That is material for another commentary.

Liberation, not deportation!

But Clinton's Hispandering, the fact that a Democratic administration has carried out more deportations than any other U.S. president, the U.S. government's role in Honduras, its support and funding for the bloodbath raging in Mexico, its lack of intervention on behalf of the missing Ayotzinapa 43, and the deteriorating conditions for Latino/a workers in this country are more than enough reasons for Latinos/as to break, en masse, with the Democratic Party.

But food for thought is also Sanders' inability to break from the capitalist system, his failure to genuinely recognize the profound impact of racism on society and to go beyond income inequality to support the need for reparations for Black people. These are just more examples of the need to break from all of the Democrats.

What would happen if just once when Sanders was asked, "How can you possibly pay for free college tuition?" he said, "Shut down the Pentagon! Take the money from there!"

The capitalist system needs deportations. It needs racism and war to survive. The two parties have survived for generations because, after all is said and done, they defend capitalist interests.

More and more Latinos/as, especially the youth, recognize that politicians who change depending on which way the wind is blowing are not people who can defend you. Latino/a youth have gone through a period that has led them to conclude, as one youth declared in Chicago, "Liberation, not deportation!"

That is why Workers World Party's Moorehead/Lilly 2016 presidential campaign says that this system must be overturned in order for humanity to survive. We are taking our message to the Democratic and Republican conventions this summer. No racist wall! No Hispandering! No capitalism!

Gutierrez is the co-manager of WWP's Moorehead/Lilly presidential campaign.

Chicago youth zap Trump

Continued from page 1

members who not only wanted to deny Trump a platform for his rhetoric, but to make connections between his narratives and institutionalized racism in Chicago.

Local movements have focused their efforts on Mayor Rahm Emanuel and State's Attorney for Cook County Anita Alvarez, who worked together to cover up the shooting of Laquan McDonald by police in 2014. Alvarez waited 13 months to release video footage of the murder and prosecute killer cop Jason Van Dyke.

Chicago police occupied the streets with the ruse of protecting Trump sup-

porters. Yet the organized protest could not be stopped. Marches continued into the evening, and sections of the protest were able to block the parking garage that Trump supporters were vacating.

At one point, many of his supporters taunted us from the upper levels of the garage, but they knew, just as we did, that they had lost. Their bigotry and white supremacist rhetoric are not welcome in Chicago.

While this was a victory, we cannot stop here. Youth of color will continue to be at the forefront of the movement against sexism, racism, homophobia and anti-immigrant bigotry! □



Chicago militants prepare an unwelcome

What does Sanders win in Michigan mean?

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire
Detroit

Democratic Party bosses and corporate media pundits were taken aback on March 8 when they grossly miscalculated the strength of Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders’ campaign in Michigan. Pollsters projected a win for former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton by 21 percent to 37 percent. Nonetheless, Sanders took over 50 percent of the vote to Clinton’s 48 percent, winning 20,000 more votes than Clinton and exposing the consultants’ flawed research methods.

It appears Sanders drew votes from regular Democratic Party stalwarts and independents, including young people, women, African Americans, Latinos/as and Arab Americans, to a far greater degree than anticipated by the politicians who had lined up behind Clinton. Even the claim that only 31 percent of African Americans in Michigan voted for Sanders — based on exit poll results — is questionable in light of the statewide outcome.

In Flint, for example, where many campaign commercials showed that recently elected Mayor Karen Weaver had endorsed Clinton, Sanders won in the city’s Genesee County. People are outraged and traumatized by the poisoning of the public water system under the aegis of Republican Gov. Rick Snyder. Flint was the scene of a Democratic debate on March 6.

Sanders constantly attacked the 1990s administration of President Bill Clinton and its engineering of the North American Free Trade Agreement and deregulation of the financial industry. These policies resulted in massive personal bankruptcies, job losses and home foreclosures during the first decade of this century. Sanders’ attacks resonated among Michigan residents.

Clinton attempted to accuse Sanders of not supporting the so-called “auto bailout,” which he denied. Sanders’ response during the debate centered on Clinton’s, and by

implication President Barack Obama’s, continuing “bailout” of Wall Street. Despite the ruling-class propaganda echoed in the corporate-funded media, actual unemployment and poverty in Michigan are still far higher than the national average. Majority African-American cities have been subjected to emergency management — and, in Detroit, to bankruptcy — which has stripped away basic bourgeois democratic rights such as local control over municipalities and school systems.

The Democratic administration under Obama supported the imposition of emergency management and bankruptcy in Detroit and other cities. As a result, billions of dollars in pension funds, health care benefits, public assets and services were turned over to financial and corporate interests.

The Democratic Party machine

Clinton’s campaign managers relied on what has been perceived as the loyal base of the party, including elected officials, union leaders, African-American churches and women. They falsely assumed that the bulk of potential voters were to be found in the confines of precinct delegate organizations, labor representatives, religious groups and mainstream civil rights organizations.

Nonetheless, over half of the people who voted in the Democratic primary rejected the Clinton campaign’s superficial sloganeering and patronizing nature. The perceived Democratic Party constituencies are in a state of flux due to the economic downturn hitting Michigan and elsewhere.

In Detroit, the first white mayor in 40 years was installed amid emergency management and bankruptcy in 2013. This city administration lacks real grassroots support, which has been revealed in public meetings where Mayor Mike Duggan and other officials have been shouted down. With the downsizing of heavy industry and municipal services, hundreds of thousands of unionized workers have lost their jobs.

In many communities where African-American churches are located, the crises of job losses, home foreclosures, evictions and utility shutoffs have dislocated hundreds of thousands of people. In Detroit, many leading churches, which had thousands of members less than two decades ago, have been reduced to several hundred people, many of whom are seniors.

Eight years ago, many in the African-American, Latino/a, Middle Eastern and Asian communities, and among women in general and lesbian women, gay men, bisexual, transgender and queer people, voted en masse in support of Obama and the Democratic ticket. Since then, the problems of perennial unemployment, increasing poverty, mass incarceration, police brutality and judicial impunity have persisted. The Democratic-dominated Congress and White House during the years 2006 to 2010 failed to deliver minimal reforms. People now won’t tolerate the same empty promises regarding the ongoing decline in living standards and political empowerment.

Sanders’ campaign personnel have worked quietly on the ground in Michigan since Labor Day weekend. Supporters of Sanders participated in the Detroit Labor Day parade, which tens of thousands of unionists attended. They were at the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day demonstration in Detroit, the largest gathering of

progressive forces in southeast Michigan. Sanders’ people were outside the Fox Theater during demonstrations on March 3 against the Republican debate.

Beyond Michigan, toward November

Despite the claims of Clinton supporters, African Americans and other oppressed groups who are also workers and youth are looking for more than the same dubious approach to racial, gender, foreign affairs and economic issues.

Donald Trump has mobilized right-wing, racist and pro-fascist sentiments among broad segments of the white population. To defeat Trump in the general elections, the Democratic Party must overcome the lack of enthusiasm surrounding Clinton.

Moreover, the lack of real democratic practice within the party is starkly evident. Clinton holds far more delegates than Sanders even though her margin of victory in state primaries and caucuses remains thin leading into the battle for Ohio, Illinois and other states in March and April.

If the undemocratic methods lead to a Clinton victory, the Sanders supporters who have come out in rallies on campuses and community venues numbering more than 10,000 may be alienated from a Democratic Party running Clinton.

Continued on page 9

March hits candidates’ silence on U.S. wars



WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

By **Joe Lombardo**
New York

Hundreds of people rallied in New York’s busy Herald Square on March 13 for a day of Peace and Solidarity. Called by the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC), the protest called attention to the fact that none of the major candidates are speaking about the U.S. wars and interventions happening in many parts of the world.

The protest called for an “End to the Wars at Home and Abroad.” This was reflected by banners and signs that included, “Money for Jobs and People’s Needs, not War,” “Rebuild Flint! Rebuild our Cities! End the Wars,” “Defend the Black Lives Matter movement” and “No to Islamophobia.”

A number of groups supported the rally, including the International Action Center, the Islamic Leadership Council of New York, Al-Awda: The Palestine Right to Return Coalition, BAYAN USA, the People’s Organization for Progress, the U.S. Peace Council, World Can’t Wait, World Beyond War, the Haiti Support Network, Action 21, the Syrian American Will Association, the Manhattan Greens and many others.

The rally was chaired by leaders of UNAC-affiliated groups, including UNAC co-coordinator Joe Lombardo, Sara Flounders of the International Action Center,

Margaret Kimberley of Black Agenda Report, Nat from BAYAN USA and Terrea Mitchell of the People’s Power Assembly.

The Peace Poets, an inspiring group of local spoken-word performers, opened the rally. Poet Raymond Nat Turner and Filipino dancers from BAYAN USA also performed.

The speakers included Imam Abdul Rashid Talib of the Mosque of the Islamic Brotherhood and former president of the Islamic Leadership Council of New York City, Kathy Kelly of Voices for Creative Non-Violence, former Army Col. Ann Wright, president Al Marder of the U.S. Peace Council, Khaldoun Makhoul of the Syrian American Will Association, Nina Macapinlac of BAYAN USA, Lawrence Hamm of the People’s Organization for Progress, Flounders, Kimberley and many others.

After a two-hour rally, protesters took to the streets for a march to the United Nations. Along the route, they received many enthusiastic signs of support from people on the streets. At the U.N., others, including attorney Lynne Stewart, spoke and the Raging Grannies sang.

Though it is usually difficult to break into the corporate media in New York, the event got wide coverage, from local television and radio stations to many international news outlets. □

AIDS Activists, not politicians, led fight against epidemic

By **Minnie Bruce Pratt**

Hillary Clinton’s anti-LGBTQ statement on March 11 showed how the ruling class fabricates “history” out of thin air and lies to suit its own purposes. During Nancy Reagan’s funeral, Clinton praised former Republican President Ronald Reagan’s spouse for “starting a national conversation” about HIV/AIDS.

Furious pushback from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community on social media, and even from the conservative Human Rights Campaign, rapidly exposed Clinton’s lie and forced her to immediately give a terse apology. More importantly, the outrage underlined the fact that widespread organizing in the streets — and not ruling-class politicians — was the force that opened up action on AIDS.

In fact, by 1987, more than 20,000 people had died of AIDS, but President Reagan had not even uttered the name of the disease. Nancy Reagan refused to help her friend, movie star Rock Hudson, who appealed for assistance as he was dying of AIDS-related complications in 1985. (The Daily Beast, March 11)

At a press briefing on Oct. 15, 1982, Reagan’s Press Secretary Larry Speakes was asked repeatedly if the president intended to address the epidemic health



ACT-UP 1980s protest at the U.S. National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md.

crisis. Speakes replied with derisive, homophobic laughter at hearing of the deaths from AIDS. The vicious laughter echoes in a video posted at Slate.com on Dec. 1. (tinyurl.com/zhuogdf)

The “conversation” about AIDS was begun by dedicated, militant organizations like ACT-UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power). Their iconic pink triangle poster, which read “Silence = Death,” originally bore these words: “Why is Reagan silent about AIDS? What is really going on at the Centers for Disease Control, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Vatican? Gays and lesbians are not expendable. Use your power. Vote. Boycott. Defend yourselves. Turn anger, fear, grief into action.” (actupny.org) □

Marching on International Women’s Day

Women globalize struggle for equality

By Kathy Durkin

Solidarity and struggle form the essence of International Women’s Day, as intended by its European socialist founders in 1910. Although capitalist governments hide IWD’s true history, women workers, progressives, socialists and national liberation and anti-imperialist forces put forward its real meaning.

In this epoch of capitalist globalization and economic crisis, corporations are intensifying their exploitation of the planet’s peoples and resources. They are grabbing and privatizing land, displacing Indigenous farmers and destroying the environment. Transnational companies mistreat workers in the factories, fields and sweatshops, denying them decent wages, working conditions and respect. But they do not pursue their mad drive for superprofits unchallenged.

Women of all nationalities and in all economic spheres are fighting back. They march, rally and sit-in to oppose wars, occupations, repression, all forms of oppression and social injustice. A vast number of heroes from every corner of the globe stand up to the exploiters and say “NO!”

Berta Cáceres ¡presente!

This year we honor our Honduran sister, Berta Cáceres, a world-renowned Indigenous Lenca leader and environmentalist who was fatally shot by gunmen in early March. Despite mounting death threats, this courageous woman successfully organized a campaign to stop construction of a hydroelectric dam.



ALABAMA

LGBTQ struggle wins

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

Decades of lesbian/gay/bi/trans/queer organizing have won two more important victories in the U.S., this time in Alabama.

Alabama has been a reactionary hotspot of Republican rear-guard opposition to LGBTQ rights. But on March 7, the U.S. Supreme Court restored adoption rights denied by the Alabama Supreme Court to a lesbian mother divorced from her same-sex partner.

The couple had been in a 16-year relationship and had co-parented three children. This historic ruling affirms same-sex adoptions in the more than 30 states that still do not recognize them despite last year’s Supreme Court decision affirming the right to same-sex marriage.

Same-sex marriage has been explicitly illegal in Alabama — based on a 1996 gu-



A U.S.-backed coup that ousted elected president Manuel Zelaya in 2009 ushered in a pro-corporate government that is abetting transnational companies in their expropriation of Indigenous lands and erection of mines and dams, to Native peoples’ detriment. Cáceres bolstered women’s role and encouraged solidarity and collective action to resist capitalism’s crimes.

Cáceres’ execution sent shock waves throughout Central America. On March 8, hundreds of women marched in Honduras’ capital, Tegucigalpa, to demand justice for her. So did their sisters in Nicaragua and other countries in the region.

In Venezuela, thousands of women marched through Caracas to Miraflores Palace to support President Nicolás Maduro. They also honored the late President Hugo Chávez, leader of the Bolivarian Revolution, which has enacted concrete measures for women’s advancement.

In socialist Cuba, women’s gains since the Revolution have been profound. The Federation of Cuban Women, founded in 1960 by Vilma Espin, has been instrumental in this process. With free education, women are two-thirds of university graduates. Due to free, accessible health care, Cuba has a lower infant mortality rate than the U.S. Moreover, Cuban women make up 53.1 percent of the parliament, second only to Bolivia in the Americas.

Women in Haiti have a his-



tory of struggle. Some 300,000 people are still dislocated by the 2010 earthquake, while cholera rages on and women continue to report sexual assaults by U.N. troops. This year the Aristide Foundation in Port-au-Prince held a much-needed, all-day, free health clinic for IWD; some 1,500 women attended.

Athens protesters: ‘NATO out of Aegean Sea’

U.S./NATO wars have forced over 1 million desperate migrants to flee the Middle East and North Africa, but the warmakers won’t solve the massive refugee crisis they created. European governments are closing their borders, stranding many migrants in Greece. Yet, the Greek people — who themselves are suffering from a financial chokehold imposed by U.S. and European Union bankers — are showing generosity and solidarity toward the refugees, who the Feb. 29 Washington Post reported are 57 percent women and children.

More than 1,000 activists marched through Athens on IWD in solidarity with the migrants and protesting U.S./NATO militarism in Syria. Mairini Stefanidi, president of the Federation of Women of Greece, which co-organized the action, said, “With people’s solidarity, we reach out to the women refugees, who arrive in our countries with babies in their hands. They are victims of the inhuman interventions of the U.S., NATO, European Union and their allies.” The All Workers Military Front (PAME) also sponsored the march. (RT, March 8)

Turkey is increasingly suppressing political protests under right-wing President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. However, hundreds of women ignored a ban on their IWD protest and marched through Istanbul on March 6 to demand their rights. Riot police fired rubber bullets at the demonstration. Activists also resisted police repression in Ankara.

From Egypt to South Africa

IWD was commemorated across the African continent in many activities.

In Cairo, Egypt, outside the Press Syndicate, women denounced the military and interior ministry, and called for the release of imprisoned family members.

A statement from the Congress of South African Trade Unions raised the marginalization of Black women workers with disabilities; unemployment and poverty among young Black women; discrimination against lesbians; and exploitation of women migrants.

COSATU called on its affiliates to pay special attention to women who work in unsafe jobs “not always protected by law and where enforcement is weak,” including domestic workers, farmworkers and migrant workers. It reiterated its commit-



ment to workplace struggles to ensure that women workers have the right to secure job opportunities, training, decent working hours, a living wage, social security and access to basic services.

Zimbabwean women af-

firmed that President Robert Mugabe has promoted gender equality and that advances have been made, including by affirmative action, in higher education.

End the occupation of Palestine!

The situation for Palestinian women is very grave, due to constant abuse by the Israeli military in occupied Palestine, especially in Gaza. Many are impoverished and unemployed and/or their homes destroyed. The Israeli armed forces have killed 190 Palestinians since October, including eight women and 49 children, and arrested 118 women. Fifty-seven Palestinian women are incarcerated; 13 are girls.

But Palestinian women keep protesting the U.S.-funded Israeli occupation and expansion in the West Bank and blockade of Gaza, with IWD marches in the West Bank. Human rights activist Manal Tamini from Nabi Salah was arrested that day.

Activists from many women’s organizations marched to the U.N. office in Gaza. They called for an end to Israeli violations of Palestinian women’s rights and for international pressure on Israel to lift the siege of Gaza.

The Freedom Flotilla Coalition announced that March 8 marked the launching of a campaign to send a “Women’s Boat to Gaza.”

No to capitalist globalization!

In Asia, women workers rallied for their rights against corporate exploitation.

Garment workers and activists staged a rally in Dhaka, Bangladesh, outside the National Press Club. They remembered their sisters and brothers who perished in factory disasters, including at Rana Plaza in 2013. Global brands reap mega-profits from super-exploiting such workers.

Millions of women are forced to migrate to find work, often facing racism and abuse while denied any rights. In Hong Kong, migrant workers marched to the Indonesian Consulate, demanding that its government stop human trafficking.

Members of Gabriela, an umbrella women’s organization founded over 30 years ago in the Philippines, joined with a migrant workers’ union to rally near Malacanang Palace in Manila, and denounced the government’s “export labor policy.” Their banner called for “Justice for all victims of trafficking.”

Women’s oppression is based in unequal class society; imperialism, corporate exploitation and oppression of nationalities further impact millions of women. In the spirit of International Women’s Day, it is time to intensify the struggle against the horrors of capitalism, as its founders intended, and to lay the foundation for a truly just world under socialism. □

CUNY Rising challenges cutbacks, austerity

By G. Dunkel
Retired PSC union member
New York

For the past five years members of the Professional Staff Congress have worked without a contract and for the last six years without a raise. The PSC represents the faculty and professional staff at the City University of New York.

For the past seven years, members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees District Council 37, which represents most of the CUNY workers not in the PSC, have worked without a raise.

Many members in both unions say this pay lag has gone on too long.

CUNY is the third-largest university system in the United States, with more than 285,000 full-time students. Seventy-five percent of its students are people of color; 40 percent were born outside the U.S.; 30 percent come from families with incomes below \$30,000 a year. (CUNY Office of Institutional Research) These students, like their family members be-



WWW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

CUNY students and workers, March 10.

fore them, belong to New York City's vast, multinational working class.

What impelled the creation of the CUNY Rising Alliance was Gov. Andrew Cuomo's announcement on Jan. 13 that he was removing \$485 million from the state's contribution to CUNY and assigning it to the city. The CUNY administration called this a "crushing" cut that would increase tuition by 50 percent. Since the 1970s the state has been the principal source of support for CUNY's senior colleges. However, during the past

decade or longer there has been a serious erosion in state financial support.

The CUNY Rising Alliance (#CUNYrising) began its fight-back campaign March 10 with a late afternoon rally outside Gov. Cuomo's Manhattan office, followed by a march through midtown and a rally at a church.

Diverse coalition fights back

Barbara Bowen, president of the PSC, said at the rally: "In a cruelly unequal economy and a society still shaped by structural racism, CUNY offers the one shot at a stable life, a good life, for hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers. We call on Albany not to take that opportunity away.

"The PSC's five-year fight for a contract," continued Bowen, "is part of the fight for investment in CUNY. Failing to invest in our contract is failing to invest in CUNY students. There is no educational justice in New York, no racial justice and no economic justice without a strong City University."

DC 37 Executive Director Henry Garrido told the protesters: "For tens of thousands of New Yorkers, the quality of education and affordability offered by the

City University of New York is a path to upward mobility. That path is now being blocked by a proposed budget that would raise CUNY tuition by \$300 a year and shift \$485 million of the state's share of CUNY funding to the city, while excluding monies for ongoing university operations. It also denies CUNY employees the \$15-an-hour minimum wage hike the governor has proposed for all other public employees."

On March 13, the University Student Senate held a press conference in front of City Hall and then marched across the Brooklyn Bridge to Cadmon Plaza. Many different CUNY campuses were represented, and almost all of the politicians who spoke were graduates of CUNY, many having attended when CUNY's tuition was free.

The CUNY Rising Alliance, with 20 organizations, includes the Hispanic Federation; the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies; Make the Road New York; Working Families Party; the New York City Central Labor Council; as well as the PSC, AFSCME DC 37 and a number of CUNY student groups, in particular the University Student Senate.

To find out more about the CUNY Rising Alliance, read its Platform for Change posted on psc-cuny.org.

'Suffragette' Movie review

By Martha Grevatt

March is Women's History Month. No study of women's history would be complete without honoring the millions of women who fought fiercely for the right to vote.

There are few, if any, realistic depictions of this monumental movement on film. The Mary Poppins version portrays the magical maid's wealthy boss, Mrs. Banks, prancing in her suffragist attire.

"Suffragette," the film released last October and now out on video, presents a very different perspective on this early 20th century struggle in Britain. The story of the militant mass movement is set in London's working-class East End and told through the eyes of 24-year-old laundry worker and mother Maud Watts.

Watts, a fictionalized character played by Carey Mulligan, has worked at the Glass House laundry for 10 years. The film graphically depicts the long hours, harsh working conditions and low pay that Watts and other young women endured, along with lewd advances by the boss.

At first aloof to the suffrage movement, Watts eventually accompanies her co-worker and seasoned activist Violet Miller to a meeting. Like thousands of other working women, Watts becomes convinced that nothing will change their lives for the better as long as women are denied the right to vote.

"Suffragette" takes place in 1913, when many courageous and committed women were jailed, risked death and carried out actions that went well beyond the nonviolent, legal tactics that had failed to yield results. Emmeline Pankhurst, militant leader of the Women's Social and Political Union, incites women to rebel.

Everything from bricks to dynamite is used to send a message to the state that women refuse to accept their disenfranchisement. Watts' growing commitment to the struggle and her multiple arrests take a toll on her family life.

Toward the end of the film, Emily Wilding Davison, an actual leader in the WSPU, is portrayed making the ultimate sacrifice. She gives her life for the cause of women's equality. Masses turn out for her funeral.

The film is commendable for highlighting the role of working-class women

as well as the militant tactics they used. Filmmaker Sarah Gavron has, however, been properly criticized for "whitewashing" the suffrage movement. All the suffragists shown are white — and English, except for a Welsh couple. The only Irish character is Inspector Steed, who sells his services by bragging of his past experience hounding Sinn Fein, the leading political movement fighting for Irish independence and unity.

Gavron's response has been that "in the UK, the brilliantly diverse ethnic makeup that we have today emerged primarily in the 1950s," and therefore working women of color weren't part of Britain's suffrage struggle. (bust.com/Suffragette)

In fact, for over a century, the poor East End had been home to African, South Asian, Irish and other oppressed nationalities. Asian, Jewish and Irish women were in the WPSU leadership. The East End branch of the WPSU, allied with the trade unions, spoke up for Irish and Indian independence. Working women from oppressed nationalities were part of the voting rights struggle; even if their numbers were few, they belong in the narrative.

The filmmakers' biased inability to portray women from oppressed nations is further demonstrated by the promotional shirts — worn by the stars, including Pankhurst portrayal Meryl Streep — which display an actual quote by Pankhurst: "I'd rather be a rebel than a slave." As critic Holiday Black explained, "There is just no way on earth that being a white woman, at any point in history, is like being a slave." (bust.com, Oct. 6)

Did the filmmakers think whitewashing the movement would give the film a better shot at the Oscars? The film was completely snubbed by the racist, sexist, anti-working-class Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, as well as the Golden Globes.

There is a bigger story, one of the multinational, politically conscious movement. Eventually the East End branch broke away from the WSPU, maintaining a working-class orientation and strong opposition to British imperialism. Leaders of the East London Federation of Suffragettes later helped form the British Communist Party. That story, too, needs to be brought to the big screen.

Killed by racist cops Kionte Spencer's life celebrated

PHOTO: WI BAIL OUT THE PEOPLE MOVEMENT

Dozens of community members, including Kionte Spencer's relatives, participated in a celebration of his life on March 13 at Garst Mill Park in Roanoke, Va. Spencer was shot and killed by Roanoke County police officers on Feb. 26.

The commemoration began with a group circle and powerful songs. Youth who had spent time at the park with Spencer spoke about their relationship with him, their mentor, and told how he touched their lives. A collective speak-out followed, where participants described their relationships with Spencer — and demanded justice and accountability from the Roanoke County police department.

The department hasn't released any video of the shooting or names of the officers who were involved. Those at the gathering demanded the release of the names and the video and called for an independent investigation of the murder.



A collective meal was held after the speak-out where those who had gathered got to know each other and shared memories of Spencer. Community members from faith-based churches and organizations, union members, anti-war activists, students and others discussed the next steps in the campaign to obtain "Justice for Kionte."

For more information, see facebook.com/JusticeforKionte.

— Workers World Staff

What does Sanders win in Michigan mean?

Continued from page 7

Should this happen, it could create the conditions for a Republican victory with or without Trump. Sanders would have a better chance of defeating Trump.

Obama's electoral victories in 2008 and 2012 showed that the majority of people in the U.S. can be mobilized into an electoral alliance of African Americans, Latinos/as, Asians, Middle Easterners, women, unionists, lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender and queer people, environmentalists and others. If the Sanders campaign fails to secure the nomination, then these same social elements that elected Obama twice must be independently organized, concentrating on a broader and deeper program based upon their class interests

and fighting national oppression.

History has shown that fundamental change in the U.S. will not come from the election of Democratic Party administrations and Congresses. The Democratic Party is still a manifestation of the imperialist ruling class, which inherently reinforces national oppression, class exploitation of the workers and the poor, and the continuation of imperialist war against underdeveloped states internationally.

The workers, youth, women and all other oppressed sectors of the population need their own political party that can directly address the existing social conditions. Only when the workers and oppressed take power in their own name can a real political revolution take place. □

WWP Presidential campaign

We stand with Chicago's anti-racist youth!



The following statement was jointly written by Workers World Party presidential and vice presidential candidates, Monica Moorehead and Lamont Lilly.

March 14 — The forced cancellation of the Donald Trump rally at the University of Illinois at Chicago on March 11 was a beautiful display of resilience and resistance led by the most oppressed. These are brave and conscious youth, Black, Latino/a and white, who should be congratulated and saluted for their militant actions. Instead, Trump, other right-wing politicians and some mainstream media called the anti-racist protesters “outside agitators” and “professional disruptors.”

UIC students had earlier submitted a petition with tens of thousands of signatures to the university administration demanding that the Trump rally be cancelled. But their petition was ignored. As a result, these young people said they had no other choice but to be inside to con-

front the white supremacists who came to support Trump. Thousands more anti-Trump protesters were outside blocking traffic and staying in the streets. Many of the protesters were of Mexican descent and carried signs reading “Liberation not deportation” in response to Trump’s virulent anti-immigrant rants.

It’s no coincidence that many of Trump’s rallies have been interrupted by young people, many of whom belong to or are inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement.

Trump has put out a call from the stage numerous times to his thug supporters to physically assault protesters, the majority being Black, Latino/a and Muslim. At a March 9 rally in Fayetteville, N.C., a young Black man was punched in the face as the police were escorting him out. Although this assault was captured on camera, the racist perpetrator was not arrested right then and there. When the cops eventually did arrest the racist attacker, Trump publicly stated that he would pay the attacker’s legal fees.

Now the authorities in North Carolina have decided not to press criminal charges against Trump for his exhortations to violence against protesters. Meanwhile, racist right-wing militias are organizing to act as stormtroopers against protesters at Trump rallies.

Bold young activists are an inspiration

Our campaign also deplores the role of the Chicago police, who are not neutral when it comes to the struggle between anti-Trump protesters and pro-Trump supporters. These are the same Chicago police who have slaughtered Black youth like Laquan McDonald, shot 16 times in 2014; Quintonio LeGrier, shot seven times; and Bettie Jones, a 55-year-old Black grandmother. Both were killed in 2015. We also condemn the role of the Kansas City police, who in cowardly acts twice pepper-sprayed an anti-Trump protest on March 12.

Those who stand for justice and people’s power must be supported, not demonized. Only those standing up against white supremacy and for class unity should have their First Amendment

rights protected, not neofascists like Trump and his supporters. White supremacy should have NO voice because it is a dangerous obstacle to building class solidarity! We must not allow so-called liberals, right-wingers and the media to violence bait anti-racist fighters. The true perpetrator of violence is white supremacy in all its forms, including the police and state repression of the capitalist class.

We’re on the side of the oppressed and the workers. We’re on the side of socialist revolution, the only solution for the poor and the working class. We extend much love to the freedom fighters in Chicago, whose heroic actions will inspire others today, tomorrow and way beyond the November elections. Our campaign looks forward to being in the streets with these fighters this July in Cleveland and Philadelphia at the Republican and Democratic national conventions.

As presidential and vice presidential candidates, it is an honor to stand with these bold young activists who are an inspiration to the growing movement for social change and against racist terror. □

Southern workers converge to organize the South

By Dante Strobino
Raleigh, N.C.

Longshore workers from Charleston, S.C. Hospital workers from El Paso, Texas. Diesel engine parts manufacturing workers from Rocky Mount, N.C. State mental health workers from Petersburg, Va. Farm workers, union organizing committees and social movement activists from 10 states and over 30 workplaces.

They all came from across the U.S. South to attend the first session of the Southern Workers School. Organized by the Southern Workers Assembly, the school took place March 4-6 in Raleigh, N.C. Seven more school sessions will take place over the next six months to continue to develop an action plan and give workers the opportunity to engage in joint study.

This session of the school had several main objectives, including building a plan, with the worker leaders and rank-and-file activists gathered, to strategically organize workplaces across the region and begin the development of a committed core of activists. This core will study political economy and the organizing lessons of past union and Civil Rights campaigns in the region to inform a strategy where workers can best build unions and workers’ power.

The school was also held to help develop social movement conditions and bottom-up worker activism in order to attract support from international unions and other sources and be able to challenge those among the world’s largest corporations that invest in the region. Net income from U.S. and foreign investments in the South now equals \$3.7 trillion, making it the world’s fourth-largest economy behind Japan.

‘For a broad fighting movement’

“The Southern Workers School is not an event,” stated Saladin Muhammad, of Black Workers for Justice, in his opening remarks. Muhammad is a retired international representative of the United Electrical Workers. “It’s about building infrastructure for a broad, fighting social movement that exposes the capitalist system and to build workers’ power

to transform the economy.” Along with Muhammad, Ed Bruno, retired southern director for the National Nurses Union, developed and presented the curriculum for the school.

A school document reads: “The U.S. South is a region where forced labor and a system of racist apartheid were legalized. It shaped a culture of social, economic and political divisions that has made the U.S. South a region of low-wage labor, low union density and political conservatism. Because of the role of the U.S. South in fueling the growth of U.S. and global capitalism, particularly as a region producing the majority of the world’s cotton for the European textile industry during the 18th and 19th centuries, there was an acceptance of the conditions of forced labor and racist oppression in the European countries and developing global economy profiting from the international slave trade and forced labor.

“Rank-and-file workers, especially in the South, need a new orientation and organizing forms that break with business unionism that demobilizes members, bargains concessionary contracts, and aligns with corporate-run political parties.”

The school also sought to connect to the broader social movements, including the Black Lives Matter movement and against racist police killings. In the week before the school, a 24-year-old Black man, Akiel Denkins, was killed by a Raleigh police officer, and several demonstrations took over the streets.

‘About more than getting paid right’

“I lived through the 1960s,” stated Rolanda McMillan, a fast food worker from Richmond, Va., with Raise Up. “It’s about more than getting paid right. It’s about, am I gonna get killed tomorrow by a cop because of the color of my skin? Am I on a terrorist list because I am a Black woman?” McMillan also testified about being fired from McDonald’s for going on strike for \$15 an hour and union rights, but later winning her job back after her co-workers, the community and Raise Up pressured the company.

Professor Patrick Mason from Florida State University led two major sessions about the political economy of the South.



PHOTO: WISCONSIN BAIL OUT THE PEOPLE MOVEMENT

Some of the participants at the Southern Workers School.

Mason’s presentation focused on the role of chattel slavery in shaping the economy here, including the continued repression that Black folks have faced in the region since abolition: the counterrevolution after Reconstruction, Black codes, sharecropping, Jim Crow, segregation, mass incarceration and overpolicing.

So-called “right-to-work” (for less) laws were enacted in the South to maintain segregation in the workplace and thus prevent the unity of workers organizing into unions and into a united working class that fights to bring about a society that addresses the human rights and needs of all. New York State alone has more union members than all 12 Southern states combined.

“Right-to-work,” anti-union codes and stripping of collective bargaining have now spread outside the South to states like Michigan and Wisconsin. Workers from Detroit and Wisconsin attended the school to show solidarity and connection with the workers’ movements there. A strong delegation of day laborers from New York, who belong to the Movimiento Independiente de Trabajadores (Independent Workers Movement), also attended.

The victorious Boston School Bus Drivers Union, United Steelworkers Local 8751, which recently defeated the global apartheid corporation Veolia/Transdev, led a session Sunday morning. Their two-year campaign to reinstate four unfairly fired bus driver leaders, win a just contract, fight hundreds of stalled grievances, take back their local union under

progressive leadership and beat back criminal charges provided rich experience and lessons to share with Southern workers and inform future campaigns.

Recently elected Local 8751 Treasurer Georgia Scott connected her experience as a young girl in Alabama, where she and others in the Civil Rights Movement were attacked in 1965 by police while marching across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, to her recent union efforts.

President Emeritus Donna Dewitt, of the South Carolina AFL-CIO, told the assembled workers: “The Southern Workers Assembly was responsible for drafting the resolution that was adopted at the national AFL-CIO convention in 2013 to organize the South.” Yet the national unions and the two labor federations, the AFL-CIO and Change to Win, have not engaged in coordinated efforts in many years to organize labor in the South.

With few exceptions, unions organizing in the South tend to be trying to make up for the loss of union members elsewhere. They lack a long-term strategy, including allocating financial resources to organize Southern labor as a social movement. Dewitt continued, “This school was a critical step to move this plan forward.” At the end of the school, workers discussed a constitution for the Southern Workers Assembly and vowed to take it back to their locals for adoption and support.

The struggle to organize the South just took a momentous leap forward. To learn more, visit southernworker.org. □

Zimbabwe cancels foreign firms’ rights to process diamonds

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

The Zimbabwe ministry of mines announced in the capital Harare on Feb. 23 that all but one of the firms involved in mining and exporting gems from the country were being closed. Many of the mining firms’ executives were at the media briefing after the decision had been delivered to them earlier in the day.

These developments must be viewed within the broader context of a worsening crisis in Zimbabwe and neighboring South Africa centered around the economic impact of declining commodity prices and the continuing integration into the world capitalist system.

Permission to mine diamonds had been issued in the past to Anjin, Diamond Mining Corporation, Jinan, Mbada Diamonds, DTZ Ozgeo, Rera, Gye-Nyame, Kusena and Marange Resources.

Minister of Mining and Development Walter Chidhakwa said, “Since they no longer hold any titles, these companies were notified this morning to cease all mining activities with immediate effect and to vacate the mining areas covered by special grants for diamonds. They have been given 90 days within which to remove their equipment and other valuables.” (Zimbabwe Herald, Feb. 23)

Negotiations had been going on between the Zimbabwe government and the mining firms for several months. No agreement was reached on how to consolidate production. The Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) government had proposed combining operations into the Zimbabwe Consolidated Mining Company, but said the firms were not willing to cooperate.

The Zimbabwe government is now saying that it will proceed with mining under the control of a state-owned corporation. Nonetheless, it was not clear to what extent foreign interests will be sought to participate in diamond mining and marketing.

Chidhakwa said that firms representing foreign interests were still able to open up discussions on joint ventures with the state-owned firm. He expressed concern about transparency in the market amid the precipitous decline of nearly 30 percent in prices for gems since 2014.

Mining firms operating in Zimbabwe, which is one of the leading diamond-producing states globally, focus heavily on alluvial extractions which involves digging and sifting through mud, sand and gravel. These require less capital as gems are easily gathered. However, most alluvial gem deposits are exhausted. Local miners claimed they lack the technical capacity or the resources to search for other possible deposits underground.

“Consultation with the existent diamond companies, which took over seven months to allow for extraordinary shareholder general meetings, achieved no consensus between government and the companies on the consolidation issue,” Chidhakwa emphasized. “There was evidence of the desire by the companies to extend the process of negotiation for indeterminable periods at a time when the industry is in decline and definitely in trouble. This was not and remains an unpalatable choice for the government.”

The Marange diamond fields are said to be one of the most lucrative in the world, yet people living in the vicinity are suffering from food shortages and other economic problems. This situation is further aggravated by reports that the gems are being rapidly depleted.

An article published Feb. 23 by Thomson Reuters Foundation says the Marange fields were “estimated to have produced around 17 million carats in 2013, 13 percent of the global rough diamond supply, according to the Zimbabwe Mining Development Corporation. Marange produced 12 million carats in both 2012 and 2014, while production figures for 2015 are not yet available.”

Nevertheless, the reports goes on: “When the Zimunya-Marange Commu-

nity Share Ownership Trust was set up by President Robert Mugabe in 2012, the five diamond companies operating there promised to put in \$10 million each to support local villagers over the coming five years. Four years on, they have deposited only \$400,000 in the trust.”

Mugabe addresses diamond crisis

In a recent television interview, President Mugabe outlined why the measures were taken. He admitted that the country had not sufficiently benefited from the agreements signed with these firms. (Zimbabwe Herald, March 4)

The president and first secretary of the ruling ZANU-PF said, “We have not received much from the diamond industry at all. Not much by way of earnings. I don’t think we have exceeded \$2 billion or so and yet we think that well over \$15 or more billion dollars have been earned in that area. So where have our gold or carats been going[?] ... [T]here has been quite a lot of secrecy in handling them and we have been blinded ourselves.”

Mugabe also mentioned in the interview that he had told People’s Republic of China President Xi Jinping that the government was not satisfied with the performance of the Beijing-based firm which operated in the mines. However, the president did not think the closing down of operations of the Anjin firm would damage relations between China and Zimbabwe.

In the same interview Mugabe said, “I told President Xi Jinping that we were not getting much from the company, and we didn’t like it anymore in this country. So we wanted it to go back.”

Perhaps in response to this interview with Zimbabwe’s president, the state-controlled Herald newspaper reported on March 7: “China will deliver on all mega deals signed between President Mugabe and his Chinese counterpart President Xi Jinping, and the Asian economic giant will not disappoint Zimbabwe, China’s director of African Affairs

Department Mr. Lin Songtian, said last Friday. This poured cold water on speculation that the deals now hung in the balance after the government ordered all diamond mining firms, including those owned by the Chinese, to leave Chiadzwa for refusing to join the Zimbabwe Consolidated Diamond Company.”

El Nino and the economic crisis

In addition to the drop in diamond prices, a drought has struck the region, creating conditions that have impacted energy generation, agricultural production and international food assistance. The lack of rain and excessively warm weather have led to crop failures and shortages of water resources.

An article published March 7 by the Chinese-based Xinhua News Agency reported, “El Nino conditions have caused the lowest recorded rainfall between October 2015 and January 2016 across many regions of Southern Africa in at least 35 years. The period also recorded the hottest temperatures in the past 10 years. Poor rainfall, combined with excessive temperatures, has created conditions that are unfavorable for crop growth in many areas, according to the report.”

This report reveals, “In Lesotho, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe, planting was delayed by up to two months or more, and is expected to severely impact maize [corn] yields. Already an estimated 15.9 million people in Southern Africa are highly food insecure.”

The ZANU-PF government is mulling over a way forward, which portends much for the political situation throughout the region and the continent as a whole.

In South Africa, the economic powerhouse of the region, the value of the national currency (rand) has declined significantly, creating mounting hardships which have aggravated political tensions between the ruling African National Congress and various opposition parties. □

Salt Lake City protesters: ‘Stop killing Black people!’

By **Joanna Straughn**
Salt Lake City

March 3 — Hundreds of people flooded downtown Salt Lake City on the evening of Feb. 29 for an emergency rally to demand justice for Abdullahi Omar Mohamed, who now lies in critical condition at a local hospital after having been shot in the chest and stomach by Salt Lake City police on Feb. 27. Mohamed, 17 years old, who lives with his girlfriend and their son, fled Somalia before moving to the U.S. from Kenya 10 years ago.

The rally stopped traffic as it flowed into an impromptu march along a central thoroughfare with chants of “Whose streets? Our streets!” “Black lives matter!” and “No justice? No peace! No killer police!”

The area of the city where the cop shot Mohamed is adjacent to the city’s largest homeless shelter, right across the street from a shopping and condominium district whose construction gentrified the neighborhood. Also close by are large entertainment venues, from which crowds were leaving around the time the shooting took place. The area was heavily populated at the time.

Witnesses say Mohamed was involved in an argument while holding a broomstick. According to Selam Mohammad, 19, who witnessed the scene, the police



PHOTO: JOANNA STRAUGHN

“told him to put it down, once, and then started shooting him as soon as he turned around. They fired four times and he was hit in the chest and stomach.” (Salt Lake Tribune, Feb. 27)

Another witness who spoke at the Feb. 29 rally behind an illustrated picture of Mohamed was recorded on a video posted on Facebook by Susan Hunt, mother of a victim of a police killing, Darrien Hunt. This witness said Mohamed was already on the ground after the first shot when shots continued to be fired at his body.

Police made no effort to de-escalate the confrontation or subdue Mohamed without shooting.

The police then began harassing homeless people by throwing and kicking their belongings and using abusive language to tell them to leave the area, which is the only place they have to sleep. A vital 20 minutes passed while Mohamed received

no medical attention before an ambulance arrived.

Bystanders were so outraged at the shooting that they began yelling and throwing bottles and rocks at the police. Others in the area were drawn to the scene and joined in. The immediate effect of the shooting was to intensify an already simmering tension into an eruption.

Broad cross section of protesters

The police sent scores of squad cars, and reinforcements appeared with riot shields and assault rifles. Four people were arrested on charges related to civil disorder. The police involved in the shooting were wearing body cameras, but the footage is not being released while the case is under investigation. (SL Tribune, Feb. 29) There are rumors that cell phone footage may exist, but none has yet been made public.

The rally on Feb. 29 was the largest in Salt Lake City in some time. The hundreds in attendance represented a broad cross section of the city’s working class, including oppressed communities. The gathering listened as family members gave eyewitness accounts of the shooting.

Other families who had also experienced the loss of a loved one to a killing by police shared their painful stories.

They recalled the names of other victims of police brutality in Utah, such as Darrien Hunt and Corey Kanosh.

Hunt was killed in Saratoga Springs, Utah, when he appeared wearing a comic-book costume that including a toy gun in September 2014. Kanosh, a member of The Kanosh Band of Paiutes, was an unarmed passenger of a DUI suspect. When Kanosh fled, cops pursued him across a field and shot him down. Left unattended for a half hour, he died of his wounds. (Indian Country Today, Jan. 13, 2015)


One of the rally’s organizers, Gregory Lucero, a member of Utah Against Police Brutality, spoke, noting that the community had already been organizing around the demand for an independent democratically elected police review board to replace the failed mayor’s appointed civilian review board.

Lucero said Mohamed’s shooting bore out the people’s feeling that the police can no longer be left to investigate each other and that the community must have authority over the police. He marked the day as a time to consider more deeply the long history of the police as upholding and carrying out systems of oppression when he told the crowd, “The police began as those who were sent out to capture fugitive slaves,” and observed that they continue to fulfill a similar role today. □



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