A broad struggle against the privatization of Puerto Rico’s public education began March 19 with a teachers’ strike as the Legislative Assembly tries to approve what it calls “educational reform.”

The strike was called by the Front to Defend Public Education, which encompasses several labor union groups. Besides teachers’ organizations, such as UNETE, Educación, Ecuamoros, the Federation of PR Teachers and Puerto Rican Educators in Action, it includes the National Organization of Directors of Schools and the Organization of Directors and Administrators. Other unions such as UTIER, representing the energy sector, as well as several progressive organizations, parents and students have joined the call.

This call to action comes at a crucial time for Puerto Rico. Six months after hurricanes Irma and Maria and just three months before the new hurricane season begins, the devastation caused by the storms has not been resolved.

Thousands are still without electricity. Catastrophic unemployment, homelessness, and major health problems persist, including an increase in suicides and depression. The “recovery” work of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is ineffective and borders on criminal.

Colonialism stifles true government

Colonialism prevents a country from being able to set up a government responsive to the interests of its people. Every four years in Puerto Rico, a legislative farce takes place in which elite rulers are elected who continue the subjugation of the people for the benefit of U.S. interests, perpetuating colonialism and dependence.

The present government is trying desperately — even comically — to force through Puerto Rico’s annexation by the U.S., the so-called Tennessee Plan. It wants to artificially transform the archipelago into what would appear to be a state of the union. In reality, only does the Fiscal Control Board govern, but the government of Ricky Roselló hires all consulting firms, “experts” and agencies from the U.S. to impose their criteria on the Puerto Rican people.

The deepening misery and suffering of the people are totally ignored while million-dollar contracts are distributed right and left.

In addition, this “bankrupt” country is paying extravagant salaries to the president of the Fiscal Control Board, Natalie Jaresko ($625,000), who is Ukrainian; Héctor Pesquera, head of the new “National Security” agency and formerly an oppressor with the FBI
Big guns destroy U.S. schools

By Sara Flounders

Bigger guns are destroying children’s lives in U.S. schools than the AR-15 used in the heinous Florida school massacre.

Schools across the country are facing untenable choices of what programs to slash and how many teachers to cut, with an impact that puts millions of young lives and futures at risk.

These cuts in essential programs are because each year the U.S. military budget is relentlessly increased by 10 percent. Some of this increase is hidden in cost overruns of “supplements” for ongoing wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

In order to “balance the federal budget,” annual 5 percent cuts are ordered, on average, to “discretionary spending” in federal agencies and also to state and city programs.

Federal funding makes up an average of 31 percent of state budgets in 2018. Even where local tax increases or bonds attempt to fill the budget gap, this increased revenue is not enough to make up for cuts in state funding, due to federal cuts.

On a national level, state education funding per student is lower in 2018 than in 2008. Education workers’ job benefits such as health care premiums and pensions are cut, or increased costs are demanded from these already underpaid city and state workers.

But worse cuts are on the way.

Trump’s 2018 budget plans to increase military spending and cut nonmilitary programs by the same amount. The latest budget will dismantle numerous programs in health care, nutrition, affordable housing, the environment, science, the few remaining poverty programs, transportation and infrastructure projects that will affect the quality of life of millions upon millions of working and oppressed people.

Children’s education and health programs face the deepest cuts.

U.S. military expenditures are already larger than that of the rest of the world combined, and U.S. weapons could incinerate the world many times over. To continue to expand this military, there is no essential program that the U.S. capitalist class is not willing to lose and destroy.

In order to justify this enormous theft of the people’s resources, the U.S. ruling class must create endless political crisis and military confrontation on an ever-more-dangerous scale. The resulting militarism permeates society with the poison of both random and calculated violence.

Meanwhile, profits are constantly increasing to the military corporations, private contractors, secret spy agencies, cyber warfare units and maintenance of more than 1,000 foreign military bases. Billions that could go to education are poured into research and development of new weapons systems.

End gun violence in the schools!

Money for education, not for war and militarization! Flourniders is a co-coordinator of the International Action Center, a leading anti-war and anti-imperialist organization based in the U.S. (center.org)

Join us in the fight for socialism!

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

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

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

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

Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the never-ending quest for ever-greater profits. Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, joblessness and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism. The U.S. is the richest country in the world, yet no one has a guaranteed right to shelter, food, water, health care, education or anything else — unless they can pay for it.

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Interview with Amazon worker
‘We feel extremely exploited’

Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos has an obscene individual net worth of over $824 billion. Yet, the company’s half-million-plus workers worldwide are struggling to survive economically while being pushed to their physical limits to maximize productivity at Amazon’s “fulfillment centers.” Comrade James Costello was hired at the Indianapolis warehouse in October, just before the high-pressure peak season began on “Black Friday.” Amazon has five warehouses in Indiana, each employing around 5,000 workers. Amazon is now the 19th largest employer in the state. This is part 1 of Costello’s recent conversation with WW labor reporter Martha Grevatt about working for Amazon.

Martha Grevatt: Tell us about the working conditions.
James Costello: With a full shift, however many packages come in, we’re expected to push out at least around 20,000 packages, sometimes higher, sometimes lower. It can get unsafe when we have 30,000 or more packages because the other part of the job is loading them into vehicles, and it’s hard to get them all pushed out. Packages get stacked up so people end up having to lift packages by themselves and get sprains and other injuries, including to their back. Small injuries like that are not covered by Amazon. You can go home, but it’s an unexcused absence. If you are severely injured, insurance will cover it, but only if it can be proven that the injury took place during working hours. At the Plainfield, Ind., facility someone was killed during peak season last year. They got killed by a lift. They were pulling packages, and the lift came down while they were at the bottom underneath it. This demonstrates both a lack of proper safety training and a lack of workplace adherence.

MG: Is there a high rate of injuries? How are injured workers treated?
JC: There are a lot of injuries but many go unreported. It’s really an issue for the older people working there, just the physical requirements and the injuries. People work injured because they can’t afford to take the time off to get better. Then the burden is on you to prove you actually got injured at the workplace. If you can’t prove that, Amazon won’t help you.

MG: How many hours are you required to work each day and each week?
JC: Right now I work full time, seven to eight hours a day, five days a week. However, if there’s a large load coming in, those hours can be extended or hours can be shortened on a slow day.

MG: What kind of breaks do you get?
JC: There’s one 15-minute break if you work under eight hours. If you work more than eight hours, there can be an optional unpaid 30-minute break for lunch.

MG: Is this adequate?
JC: I don’t feel it’s adequate, personally. When you’re standing the entire day and running all over the place, 15 minutes isn’t enough. If there’s a lot of packages, they will start the break but then expect you to be back at the line after the 15 minutes is up. So going to and from the break area is included in the 15 minutes.

MG: So you are on your feet half your break?
JC: If you work far from the break area, yeah.

MG: Do workers have issues with being able to use the restroom?
JC: Yes. You are pushed to make those quotas, and if you use the bathroom, they see you as not being “productive.” I was told by a co-worker who has worked at multiple locations that they got written up for using the restroom because it meant they were under the quota. So you have to go without using the restroom.

MG: There has been a lot in the media about Amazon’s tracking of workers and workplace surveillance. Can you talk about this and what kind of working at atmosphere it creates?
JC: For whatever aspect you are working in — fulfillment-picking, packaging or distribution — each category has its own labor tracking process. Fulfillment is Amazon’s term for the process of picking (locating bought item in inventory and going through the pick process) and packaging item, sorting and loading and then sending item outside the facility. These are the steps to get the item from inven- tory to delivery. You have a mobile computer device where you scan a product that goes into the system, and you have to meet a quota per hour on packages pushed through. Going under quota can lead to being sent home early or possible termination if it recurs multiple times.

The other aspect of that question is the atmosphere. The workers are really put up against management to a point that the workers feel extremely exploited. When they get a drink of water or go to the bathroom, they know they’re being watched constantly. This creates an atmosphere of uneasiness. Even talking can create problems because workers are fo- cused on “I gotta be more productive.”

‘Time’s Up Wendy’s March’

By Anne Pruden
New York

Farmworkers and their allies com- pleted a five-day “Free- don Fast” organized by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, on March 15 at the United Nations’ Dag Hammarskjold Plaza. This followed a march of thousands of protestors in a five-block-long “Time’s Up Wendy’s March.” The demonstration began at the U.N. building and passed by the New York offices of Wendy’s board chairperson and largest shareholder Nelson Peltz. Demonstrators chanted “Boycott Wende- dys!” and “Down and down! exploitation! Up, up fair food nation!” Supporters came from as far away as Tennessee, Texas and California to show solidarity with the farmworkers.

For five days, the hunger strikers and their supporters camped and rallied outside the Trian fund offices of Trian Partners. A promi- nent colorful banner read, “We fast because Nelson Peltz has the power to end sexual violence against farmworker women.” Some 103,000 petition signa- tures were gathered supporting the fast and Wendy’s boycott. Although Peltz’s fund office accepted only a fraction of the pe- titions, fasters celebrated, saying this showed the farmworkers’ strength and the company’s weakness.

Those fasting and their allies de- manded that Wendy’s join the Fair Food Program, set up by the CIW in 2011 in Florida. This established groundbreak- ing worker protections, including more humane working conditions and fairer wages. Significantly, it includes a no-tol- erance policy on sexual harassment and abuse faced by tens of thousands of wom- en immigrants in the tomato fields.

While McDonald’s, Burger King and other fast food giants, Wendy’s owners and top officials refuse to join the pro- gram. Protesters denounced ongoing wage theft, child labor and other human rights abuses and violence faced by workers in Mexico’s produce indus- try. Wendy’s currently has its tomatoes there to avoid having to join the Fair Food Program, recognize workers’ rights and stop abuse of women in the fields. Prior to joining the Fair Food Program, Wendy’s website provides background on this important struggle and its Fair Food Program, as well as daily coverage of the Freedom Fast.

Kathy Durkin contributed to this article.

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A ‘Defiant Workers’ Spring’

By Otis Grotewohl

The class war is still stirring in West Virginia since the conclusion of the cou- rageous, nine-day education workers’ strike. Some 1,400 members of Commu- nication Workers Local 142 walked out statewide against Frontier Communica- tions on March 4. They were joined by their sisters and brothers in Ashburn, Va. Members of Workers World Party vis- ited CWA picket lines while also showing solidarity with the teachers and school support staff waging battle against cap- italist government officials.

One CWA striker told Workers World, “This fight was a long time coming, but there is no denying the school workers inspired us. We have been trying to ne- gotiate a decent contract since August, but we have had two extensions and the company wants to lay off 200 workers.” Picketers pointed out that when Front- ier bought out Verizon in 2010, there were 2,100 positions; today there are only 1,400. The other aspect of that question is quotas, and if you use the bathroom, they know they’re being watched constantly. This creates an atmosphere of uneasiness. Even talking can create problems because workers are fo- cused on “I gotta be more productive.”

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Fronter uses modern day ‘gun thugs’

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Kathy Durkin contributed to this article.
Miami bridge collapse
Did builder put profits before safety?

By G. Dunkel

A pedestrian bridge under construction over a seven-lane highway leading to Florida International University collapsed March 15, killing six people and injuring 10 in a mass of crushed cars, steel and concrete.

The 950-ton span was being built under a new construction protocol called “Accelerated Bridge Construction.” Its intent is to speed up construction and reduce traffic interruptions by building bridges off-site, then rotating them into place. This last step occurred March 10 during a six-hour period.

According to the university’s website, the bridge was designed to weather a Category 3 hurricane and last 100 years. A March 10 press release celebrated the bridge’s completion.

Atoor Azizainimani, chair of FIU’s Civil and Environmental Engineering Department and director of its Accelerated Bridge Construction University Transportation Center, stated: “This project is an outstanding example of the ABC method. Building the major element of the bridge — its main span superstructure — outside of the traveled way and away from busy Eighth Street is a milestone.”

The Federal Highway Administration lauds ABC technology as a “timely innovation,” especially when “approximately 25 percent of our nation’s aging bridges need repair or replacement and our high-ways are already congested without the added strain of road closures.” (Fhwa.dot.gov/bridge)

Given the pressing need to replace hun-dreds of bridges and other decaying infra-structure in the U.S., there is tremendous interest in ABC, which has been widely used in Europe. Not only does it save time and avoid rerouting traffic during con-struction, but it saves big bucks.

Safety first?
Like anything else, however, ABC bridge construction methods must be used carefully and to precise specifica-tions, with consideration of safety put ahead of convenience and saving money. The reasons for the collapse of the FIU bridge are probably going to take a long time to discover and likely involve multi-ple factors. Both Architecture News and the NBC affiliate in Miami have pointed out three serious errors known so far.

A meeting held by the engineering firm Figg Bridge Engineers with representa-tives from FIU and the Florida Depart-ment of Transportation accepted Figg’s assertion that cracks appearing in the bridge “did not compromise the structural integrity of the bridge,” even though Figg did not explain why the cracks appeared. Work on tightening some internal cables in the bridge that had loosened, as well as a “dangerous” stress test, went on while traffi-c was allowed to flow under the bridge.

No temporary support structures were in place under the bridge, which would have helped prevent an abrupt failure like the one that occurred. But they would have cost money and interfered with traf-fic while being installed and removed.

“Innovations take a design firm into an area where they don’t have applicable ex-perience, and then we have another unex-pected failure on our hands,” said Robert Holbrook, an engineering and construction management professor at the University of California, Berkeley, after reviewing the bridge’s engineering and analysis of the collapse. (canada.constructconnect.com, March 16)

In this era of deregulation, cutbacks and austerity, saving time and money might seem a worthwhile objective, but not when it comes to the safety and lives of pedestrians, drivers and workers.

Justice for Siham Byah!

By Sam Ordóñez

Siham Byah, a recently deported ac-tivist and mother from Boston, gave a pressing account of her case on March 1. She described her case and presented her demands to U.S. Immigra-tion and Customs Enforcement and the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families.

While at a routine check-in with immi-gration services in November 2017, Byah was detained. The DCF took her 8-year-old son, Naseem, into custody, despite Byah’s wishes that her partner care for him. The two have still not been reun-ited. Among Byah’s demands were a clear plan for reunification with her son, men-tal health support for him and an investi-gation into the irregularities in her case.

At the press conference, Byah stated, “It is my belief, as well as that of my attor-ney, and all involved, that my extradition was nothing more than a low blow agree-ment between the Moroccan and Ameri-can governments as a retaliation for my political opinions and actions.

An outspoken activist in Boston, Byah has been involved with the February 20 movement/USA chapter since 2011. This movement arose in Morocco that year during what is known as the “Arab Spring.” Her deportation is part of a larg-er racist campaign of terror by ICE and the Trump administration targeting mi-grant activists.

In January, ICE detained New York activist Ravi Ragbir, although a massive outpouring of community support won his freedom. More recently, Latinx or-ganizer Alejandra Pablos was detained in Arizona. As with Byah, ICE detained these two activists during routine check-ins. Other deported or detained activists include Jean Montrevil in New York; Daniela Vargas, a “Dreamer,” who was picked up moments after speaking about her experience in Jackson, Miss.; and Maru Mora-Villalpando in Seattle.

As the Trump administration con-tinues its vicious attacks on immigrant communities — including terminating temporary protected status for Haitian, Salvadoran, Nicaraguan and Sudanese immigrants and attacking Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), it is no surprise that outspoken community leaders and activists are among its first targets.

ICE’s anti-immigrant campaign is also an assault on the union movement, aimed at decimating the most militant ranks of organized labor. Much organizing in recent years has been car-ried out in employment sectors where jobs are held predominantly by immi-grant workers. Increasingly, union lo-cals have struggle-oriented immigrant majorities.

It is not that all progressive peo-ple ally themselves with unions, unorga-nized TPS workers and activists from immigrant communities who are fighting for permanent status and citizenship for their peers, and all undocumented people tar-geted by Washington’s inhumane, racist attacks.

#FreeTheBlackPride4

Rally for Black Pride 4 finds both Christo-pher Columbus and the city of Columbus “Guilty”!

By Workers World Indianapolis bureau

A large multinational crowd gathered on March 12 in front of the Columbus, Ohio, City Hall in solidarity with the Black Pride 4. The event, organized un-der the leadership of Black Queer and Intersectional Columbus, raised the dema nd to Free the Black Pride 4, who had been arrested at Stonewall Columbus Pride in June 2017. The demonstration featured speakers from BQIC, Get Equal, People’s Justice Project and Interna-tional Socialist Organization. Members of Workers World Party attended the event in solidarity.

The Black Pride 4 had been arrest-ed and arrested for briefly disrupting Stonewall Columbus Pride in order to protect systemic racist police violence and violence against trans people of color. Stonewall Columbus organizers had consistently refused to create space for Black trans and queer voices. They also refused to listen to safety concerns of queer, trans and intersex people of color (QTIPOC) as they worked with Columbus police to carry out their event. Stonewall Columbus organizers continued to work alongside the state by testifying against the Black Pride 4 in court.

Sentenceing of three of the Freedom Fighters took place on March 13. Wripply was ordered to perform 80 hours of community service and given two years probation. Addington was ordered to pay court costs, 60 hours community service and two years probation. Kendall got a $50 fine plus court costs, with 48 hours community service and two years probation.

The fact that none of the three will serve jail time is a partial victory. The struggle to create space for those who faces felony charges, has yet to go to court.

Columbus Community Pride is now be-ing organized for 2018 in order to highlight the count of the raid on Harper’s Ferry in 1861 right after the start of the Civil War.

It is urgent that all progressive peo-ple ally themselves with unions, unorga-nized TPS workers and activists from immigrant communities who are fighting for permanent status and citizenship for their peers, and all undocumented people tar-geted by Washington’s inhumane, racist attacks.

Learn more. Available online without charge. Find them at: www.workers.org/books

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

A Voice From Harpers Ferry
Osborne P. Anderson’s account of the raid on Harpers Ferry appeared in pamphlet form in 1861 right after the start of the Civil War.

MARXISM, REPARATIONS & THE BLACK FREEDOM STRUGGLE
An anthology of writings from Workers World newspapers.
Edited by Monica Moorehead.
Available at major online booksellers.
A million students walk out for safe schools

By Jayla Rae
Raleigh, N.C.

A million students, from all ages and backgrounds, marched out of schools on March 14 in solidarity with the 17 victims of the mass school shooting in Parkland, Fla., on Feb. 14. They chanted: “When our classmates are under attack, what do we do? Stand up, fight back!”

The student-led walkout was called by youth activists in Parkland, who requested solidarity actions from students and allies all across the U.S. to demand an end to violence in schools. The Parkland activists’ request was simple: That everyone walk out of classrooms at 10 a.m., be out for 17 minutes to honor and uplift the 17 lives lost, and demand that all schools become a safe space for all students and teachers.

This writer was an active organizer, with a small group of other students, in forming a walkout at our school, Leesville Road High School in Raleigh, N.C. During second period on March 14, we gathered in the main lobby of our school with a banner that read, “Make Our Schools Safe #endtheviolence,” and a bullhorn.

Soon hundreds of students — Black, white, Latinx, Muslim — along with teachers, filled the halls, ready to march out of the school. Many were wearing orange, used to signify opposition to gun violence since 2013, after the death of Hadiya Pendleton, a 15-year-old African-American student in Chicago.

Students held signs that read, “Stop the violence,” and “No more silence.” After a march to the football field, students of color leading the way, a brief program began, with two seniors taking the bullhorn and making space for participants’ thoughts as students and as women of color.

One 18-year-old student, Alia Hassan, said: “We stand in solidarity with Stoneham Douglas, Sandy Hook, Virginia Tech, University of Texas, Columbine, Red Lake. … The list goes on. This is the eleventh week of 2018, and we are 14 school shootings in. We are making the change, when our lawmakers have been oblivious to our safety.” She then uplifted the names of the 17 victims from the Parkland shooting, 14 of them students and three teachers, and called for a moment of silence.

Another student said she and her friends participated in the walkout because “it’s our duty to make change in our society today.”

To some students, a safe school means stricter gun control laws or outlawing the AR-15, a weapon most commonly used during mass shootings.

But to most students, safe schools mean more than gun control.

Safe schools means arming our teachers, not with guns, but with better pay and more resources for the classroom. Safe schools means kicking police “resource officers” out of the schools and ending the harassment and criminalization of Black and Brown students. Safe schools means having all-gender restrooms for queer, trans and gender nonconforming students; and destroying the racist, sexist dress code that most schools have. Safe schools mean having more counselors and dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline.

The fight for safety in schools does not end with the March 14 walkout. Students are demanding that lawmakers and adult allies start listening and taking action to make schools safe.

On March 24, people from all over the country will be traveling to Washington, D.C., to participate in the “March for Our Lives” rally against gun violence. Organizers are asking for solidarity marches in different parts of the world. They are dedicating this moment to student-led activism, and will take to the streets to demand that safety become a priority.

Continued from page 1

Your diversity is your great strength.

At a time when people of color, migrants, women, the LGBTQ community and vastly underpaid workers are being attacked by the billionaire president and his cronies, trying to pit us against each other, you are affirming the concept of SOLIDARITY.

Your love of life and each other gives you the strength to push back against all who are trying to pull you down.

Why are these terrible things happening in our schools?

We live in dangerous times — the crumbling of an empire, really. An empire built from the beginning on stolen Native land and enslaved African people. The current $700 billion military budget is meant to prop up this dying empire. A huge promotion of police violence saturates our culture. This sends the message that guns and bombs will fix everything.

At a time when we can afford to be less than revolutionaries? Think long about it, dear courageous young people, as you join the struggle to fix the horrible mess this system has made of the world.

To the students marching on March 24

Armed white supremacist and Nazi parade openly, and the billionaire president won’t condemn them. All this feeds into racism, anti-women, anti-gay fantasies acted upon by young men like Dylann Roof and Nikolas Cruz.

This is not an issue of love versus hate. We can do both. We can love one another and hate all that is meant to divide us. We can love music and kindness and kicking around, and hate exploitation and bigotry. Che Guevara famously said: “The true revolutionary is guided by a great feeling of love.” He also fought to make a social-ist revolution.

The very future of the world that will be yours, from the polar ice caps to the rising seas, is threatened by the chaotic, profit-driven system of capitalism.

At such a time, can we afford to be less than revolutionaries? Think long about it, dear courageous young people, as you join the struggle to fix the horrible mess this system has made of the world.

Mass movement marches against Trans Mountain pipeline

By Jim McMahan
Vancouver, Canada

Over 10,000 people marched on March 12 in the city of Burnaby, near Vancouver, B.C., Canada, opposing the $7.3 billion Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline. First Nations, whose people would be most directly affected by this massive pipeline carrying bitumen oil from Alberta tar sands, led the rally. This is the largest fightback since the First Nations movement fought the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock, N.D.

The Inlet at Burnaby is where the 700-mile pipeline will come to the shore and the oil will be loaded on tankers. Rueben George and other Native activists and elders from across Canada spoke at the rally. George represents the local Tsidel-Wautish First Nation, which is directly in the path of the pipeline.

Rally speakers protested Kinder Morgan’s invasion of their community. They also spoke against oil spills, species extinction and global warming.

Indigenous women have launched the Tiny House Warrior movement, with plans to build houses in the path of the pipeline. The rally was held in a clearing next to where the finished pipeline would soon be next to where the finished pipeline would be. Tiny House Warrior movement, with plans to build houses in the path of the pipeline.

The Kinder Morgan pipeline will increase an old, smaller pipeline’s capacity from 300,000 barrels a day to 800,000. It will increase traffic in the Salish Sea from five to 34 tankers a month. It is inevitable that an oil tanker accident will occur, and overwhelm and destroy the ecology of the Salish Sea. That body of water includes the straits of British Columbia, between Vancouver city and Vancouver Island, and the Puget Sound in Washington state.

The Justin Trudeau federal government is promoting the pipeline, but the provincial and local governments oppose it.

The struggle has intensified since the March 11 rally. Kinder Morgan gained a court injunction to prevent demonstra-tors from coming near the Kinder Morgan terminal. On March 17, 28 demonstra-tors were arrested.

To the students marching on March 24

The Protect the Inlet campaign includes First Nations on both sides of the Canadian-U.S. border, along with many community and environmental groups, with thousands of people pledged to commit civil disobedience to stop the pipeline.
Custodians win big in Durham, N.C.

By Dante Strobino
Durham, N.C.

Custodians in Durham Public Schools won a 27 percent wage increase on March 2 after a month-long fight. Workers had been complaining about going years without any pay increase. Many have part-time jobs with no benefits.

After powerful testimony directly from workers, the DPS Board of Education voted to "in-source" the custodians back to direct DPS control and move away from a private contractor to clean the schools. They did this by a large majority of full-time and part-time custodians who work for either Service Solutions or their subcontractor, Premier.

The new decision will bring full-time workers up to potentially $16 per hour; part-time workers will see the largest wage increases on March 8 after a month-long strike. Many have only part-time jobs; they will gain at least $3.22 per hour and paid sick days.

In the 2016 election, every single one of West Virginia’s 55 counties voted for reopening schools. But the stress and tension between teachers and school workers was evident every-where in the U.S. in this period of dead-end capitalism and nev-er-ending budget cuts.

When the strike ended on March 5, the education workers were proud they had fought and won a 5 percent raise for all state workers. They clearly expect all state workers to receive that raise.

Before the strike, there had been some stress and tension between teachers and school service workers. But the stress was constantly increased through the process of on-the-ground struggle, the conversations on the picket line, mass rallies in Charleston, and the #55United digital-age communication.

Education workers were quite clear that they were striking for all state work-ers. WW talked to one high school teacher who said: “We want to get 5 percent. And we want all the state employees to get the same. They can’t afford it and we can. We are striking for them too.”

This teacher referenced the fact that workers employed directly by the state are subject to “no-strike” restrictions in West Virginia. But teachers, employed by their counties, have more due process if fired.

When the strike ended on March 5, the education workers were proud they had fought and won a 5 percent raise for all state employees. They clearly expect all state workers to receive that raise.

The workers also built solidarity with other unions and community groups. In parallel to the school workers’ strike, a 14-week contract between the Communication Workers in West Virgin-ia and Ashburn, Va., went out on March 4. When WW/P-W members visited school picket lines across the state on March 6, school workers were getting news of a like-ly win — and were immediately packing up picket signs and coffee pots to load di-rec-tly to CWA picket lines in their county. A Roanoke (Va.) People’s Power Network contingent drove to Charleston with their banner “Class Struggle in Session,” raising cheers from the strikers.

This is Part 2 of the article summarizing the lessons of the recent education workers’ strike in West Virginia.

For the full article, go to workers.org.

By Otis Grotewohl
Charleston, W.Va.

Lessons of the West Virginia strike

Widespread solidarity among students, community members, striking teachers and school workers was evident every-where in the state. Students organized a separate march and rally in Charleston on March 2 to support their teachers. The teachers, well aware that many students would go hungry without school meals, put together systematic plans to feed their students when schools were closed. Teachers made sandwiches, packed meals, worked with churches and other community groups to get food delivered, and made it clear they were not "abandon-ing" students, as right-wingers accused.

Role of a communist party

In the 2016 election, every single one of West Virginia’s 55 counties voted for Republican presidential candidate billion-naire Trump, with his false promises to “save” workers and their solidarity-wrecking racist slurs. Trump got 70 percent of the state’s vote.

In the 2018 West Virginia strike, work-ers overturned that vote. Education work-ers united as a multinational force and came out for their own class interests in every one of the 55 counties.

Faced with the grim reality of their struggle for funding against the legislative dominance of Big Oil and Big Banks, the education workers rose up independent of existing political parties and took action on their own behalf. This unity was forged despite the atomization of workers in the past decade, despite differences and contradictions between workers. It was a worker, race, and class struggle organized by the Black workers. The bosses have con-vinced the undocumented Latinx workers that the county won’t hire them directly. So the bosses coerced these workers to speak out in favor of the private company at the school board meeting, while a list of entirely Black workers challenged the company in favor of in-sourcing.

This struggle highlighted how the boss-es use racism to attempt to divide and conquer the workers. But in the end, the workers overcame these racist attacks!

Building Durham Workers Assembly

Workers across Durham are continuing to organize through the Durham Workers Assembly to help build worker organiza-tions to challenge employers. The assem-블y was launched by a core group of work-ers’ organizations dedicated to organizing workers across Durham into unions and to “make Durham a union town.”

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Jersey City teachers face down injunction

By Sara Flounders
Jersey City, N.J.

Teachers here walked out on strike on Friday, March 16. Represented by the Jersey City Education Association, they refused to back down in the face of a court injunction that ordered them back to work. New Jersey state courts have ruled on public sector unions from striking.

The teachers’ assertion of their right to strike has now won a big labor victory, according to union leaders. Late on Sunday, March 18, the JCEA announced that an agreement had been confirmed with the Board of Education, pending approval by a teachers’ vote to accept or reject the contract.

The union had spent the weekend making plans for picket lines in front of all 38 public schools. K through 12. Jersey City is the second-largest city in New Jersey by population (435,997) and is rich in racial, ethnic and language diversity. The overwhelming majority of the city is Black, Latinx, Asian and Arab. Its 30,000 public school students speak more than 40 different first languages.

A visit to the packed and bustling union hall confirmed an intense level of mobilization and commitment. Many groups came to offer support and solidarity. Parents were arriving with bags of snacks and supplies for the strikers.

Friday’s picket lines in front of each school were greeted by drivers honking in support. Many high school students joined their teachers on the lines. School nurses, paraprofessionals, secretaries, child-study teams, guidance counselors and noncertificated administrators whose contracts are up next for negotiation also joined the pickets.

From each school there was a Friday morning march to the Board of Education. There, while drums pounded, the speaker system blared the “Twisted Sister” song, “We’re Not Gonna Take It!” The teachers’ strike decision had followed a raucous school board meeting, last past midnight. Though it ended without the board satisfying the teachers’ demands.

Faced with the strike since Friday, mass demonstrations, marches and overwhelming community support, the board was forced to concede to a contract that met the teachers’ demands, including an agreement on salaries and health care costs.

Health care costs skyrocket

The burning issue across New Jersey and for many teachers in the U.S. is skyrocketing employee health care costs. Local teachers spoke of premiums as high as $4,400 a month, totaling $57,000 a year. Due to health care costs increasing 15 percent in recent years, teachers were faced with take-home pay in 2017 totaling less than what teachers received 10 years ago.

The 4,000 teachers had worked without a contract since Sept. 1, as negotiations with the Board of Education ground to a halt. The teachers last sat down in January when they then also defied a court injunction and fines to stay out for five days. With unity and determination, they won an important victory 20 years ago. (tinyurl.com/ybl782dp)

Tax abatements for the rich

Jersey City’s rate of poverty at 25 percent is now double the state average. The city is sharply divided between expensive waterfront and downtown development and heavily taxed immigrant and working-class neighborhoods facing gentrification.

The city’s claim of inability to meet the teachers’ demands due to lack of funds and a $85 million deficit was challenged by the teachers’ union. Mayor Steven Fulop for his silence on teacher demands: “Nobody but developers get to see them. Then he gives them abatements that do not pay any school taxes.” Fulop campaigned recently for re-election as a liberal, pro-union Democrat.

The picture of Jersey City was one with state-wide implications, as unions across New Jersey struggle to cap employee health care costs.

The Jersey City strike was connected by teachers, many supporters and local media to growing national militancy by teachers and school workers, given the recent successful nine-day education workers’ statewide strike in West Virginia.

The Puerto Rican Teachers Federation, EDUCAMOS and allied teachers’ organizations in the Broad Front in Defense of Public Education (FADEP) have called a national teachers’ work stoppage March 19 in response to neocolonial austerity imposed by U.S. and Spanish capitalists. Kentucky teachers are fighting to keep the pension system from being gutted by “austerity reform.” Arizona teachers have begun highly visible actions sporting “Red for Ed” T-shirts. Oklahoma teachers are striking and winning support against weakening the “Dreamers” whose Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals status is still in limbo as both parties in Congress ignore their demands.

The strike was the longest in University of Illinois history. The strike began Feb. 26 after the administration refused to guarantee tuition waivers for workers.

Tuition waivers were initially secured in the first contract bargained by the Graduate Employees Organization in 2009. Without them, many graduate workers would have to pay twice their stipends to cover the cost of enrollment.

The two-week occupation today forced the cancellation and relocation of dozens of classes. GEO received solidarity letters and support photos from workers and their local unions across the U.S. and internationally.

Members and supporters turned out in the hundreds to rallies on the campus quad, calling on the university administration to return to the bargaining table. Strike activities culminated in a 24-hour occupation of multiple buildings on campus.

Graduate workers rolled out sleeping bags and pitched tents in front of buildings facing gentrification. Graduate workers rolled out sleeping bags and pitched tents on March 8 in the Swanlund Administration Building, which houses the chancellor’s office, and the Henry Administration Building, which houses the president’s office. They brought food and water and promised not to leave until bargaining resumed.

Faced with a choice between returning to the bargaining table and forcibly ejecting graduate workers from their own campus, university officials decided to reconvene with the GEO’s bargaining committee on March 9. The occupation was suspended during negotiations.

The five-year contract was approved by 98 percent of the vote. It provides substantial gains for graduate workers. Tuition waivers are once again secured. On March 8 pay increases. Health insurance coverage was expanded; ethnicity, immigration status, gender expression and arrest records were added as protected information; and the ability to grieve microaggressions as discrimination was introduced.

The UIC GEO’s Twitter and Facebook pages celebrated the victory, while maintaining a measured focus on what lies ahead for the organization, the importance of enforcing and improving their contract, and how graduate workers can win through unionizing their campuses.

A tweet from March 9 reads: “We did it. We won.” Are these areas of our contract we need to strengthen? Yes. Will we continue to organize our workplace, empower members, and keep the pressure up? Yes. You better believe it. La lucha continua. □
By Monica Moorehead

The movie “Black Panther” has finan-cially taken the global film industry by storm since its official release in the U.S. on Feb. 16. Directed by the dynamic, young, multitalented African-American director Ryan Coogler and featuring a predominantly black cast, “Black Pan-ther” has accumulated more than $1 bil-lion globally in ticket sales from Africa to China, including more than $600 million from the U.S. box office alone as of March 19. The movie shatterer box-office re-cords for the four-day “President’s Day” weekend in February.

According to comscore.com which, together with Screen Engine, conducts exit polls of film goers on a global scale, the racial composition of those attend- ing “Black Panther” during the Feb. 16-19 holiday weekend in the U.S. was 37 per-cent Black, 35 percent white, 18 percent Latinx and 5 percent Asian. These are significant numbers, considering that the Black population is estimated to be around 14 percent of the general U.S. population.

The Disney-produced, Marvel comic book-based movie had a budget of $200 million. This is a large sum of money ever given to a Black director to make a Hollywood film.

This is only the third feature film made by Coogler, who is a native of Oakland, Calif. His first was “Fruitvale Station,” which focused on the real-life murder of Oscar Grant, a 22-year-old Black man, who on Jan. 1, 2009, was shot in the back by a white Bay Area Rapid Transit police officer as Grant lay face down on the Fruitvale Station subway platform in Oakland. The murder was captured on cell video. Following a rebellion in Oakland, the officer was found guilty of manslaughter and served less than a year in prison.

Not only is “Black Panther” a box-of-fice success historically. It has also been acclaimed by many critics due to the brilliant acting and visuals. The movie is based on a comic book character with the same name created in the 1970s by two white comic book cre- ators, writer Stan Lee and artist Jack Kirby. They were responsible for creating popu-lar comic book characters like the Hulk, the X-Men, Spider-Man and many more. Movies based on many of these characters have made billions at the box office.

There was much specula-tion on whether a big-budget movie directed by a Black director with a virtually all-Black cast could become a blockbuster: Would white au-diences pay money to see such a movie? “Black Panther” answered that question with a resounding yes.

What “Black Panther” is and isn’t

Before the movie opened, many Black activists had the misconception that “Black Panther” would focus on the Black Panther Party, a revolutionary, anti-cap-italist, anti-imperialist formation founded in 1966 on the principle of self-deter-mination for Black and other oppressed peoples against racist and state repres-sion. This is understandable.

But nothing could be further from the truth. It is highly unlikely that any stu-dio bosses, who are still overwhelmingly white, would fork over $200 million to a Black director to bring forth a positive story featuring a national liberation or-ganization.

“Black Panther” is very much rooted in the philosophy of Afrofuturism, a term first raised by white critic Mark Dery in his 1994 essay, “Black to the Future.” Since then it’s been made universally popular by Black authors like Octavia Butler and Ismael Reed and artists Janelle Monáe, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Sun Ra and Jimi Hendrix.

Author Yasha Womack states that Afrofuturism is “the intersection be-tween black culture, technology, liber-ation and the imagination, with some mysticism thrown in, too. It can be ex-pressed through film; it can be expressed through art, literature and music. It’s a way of bridging the future and the past and essentially helping to reimag-ine the experience of people of colour.”

(theweek.com, July 24, 2014)

While there are themes dealing with colonialism and the legacy of slavery, the movie takes place in Wakanda, a mythi-cal African kingdom, that has been free from white colonial rule, able to control its own resources, most notably vibranium, the source of unimaginable techno-logical advances concentrated in Wakan-da. This kingdom is run by T’Challa, played by the multitalented Chadwick Boseman, who maintains his throne by fighting off challengers. Boseman’s previous portrayals include Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, singer James Brown and baseball great Jackie Robinson.

T’Challa’s security team is dominated by strong, powerful African women fight-ers called Dora Milaje and led by Okaye, played by dynamic Zimbabwean actor Da-nai Gurira. Rounded out by Kenyan/Mex-ican actor Lupita Nyogo and Guinese actor Letitia Wright, the characters they play have no problem pointing out T’Chal-la’s weaknesses, despite Wakanda being a patriarchal society.

T’Challa’s main protagonist is Erik "Killmonger" Stevens, played by another mul-titalented actor, Michael B. Jordan. This actor has appeared in all three of Coogler’s feature films, including his breakout role in “Fruitvale Sta-tion,” in which he played Oscar Grant. While T’Challa does not want to share the vibranium with other vulnerable na-tions, Killmonger, who is T’Challa’s cousin, seeks to share vibranium with other African and op-pressed peoples of the world to fight off colonial domination. Many will view him as an internationalist.

In his opening scene, Killmonger is seen sitting in a British_matched, naming Afri-can artifacts. When a white woman cu-rator approaches him, he asks her what country each artifact comes from. He corrects her on some answers, saying that each of the artifacts was illegally stolen, much to her chagrin. Complicating his motives, Killmonger allies himself with a racist, white, South African mer-cenary, played by Andy Serkis, who also wants vibranium — to make a profit.

Once again, the real issue of coloni-alism is brought before the masses of peo-ple in movie theaters, many of whom are unsure of how much was stolen from the African continent over the centuries.

Boseman stated that despite his char-acter being portrayed as the hero, he re-lated more to the Killmonger character, stating: "Killmonger is trying to achieve greatness … but there’s an expectation of greatness for me. I don’t know if we as African Americans would accept T’Chal-la as our hero if he didn’t go through Kill-monger. Because Killmonger has been through our struggle, and I [as T’Challa] haven’t." (cinemablend.com)

Boseman deemed his character as be-ing "privileged," which is so true. Under this moniker, he fights his challengers to hold on to his power while his “sub-jects” are lookers.

Despite any political contradictions in this film, it has, with no doubt, reso-nated deeply with Black audiences in the U.S. and throughout the African diaspora worldwide, especially youth, due to its positive cultural portrayals of African peoples that run counter to Hollywood’s historical and shameful racist movie ste-reotypes.

For this reason, “Black Panther” is worth seeing, along with the talented actors and the beautiful, Afro-african-themed costumes created by vision-ary costume designer Ruth Carter. □

San Diego march says ‘Respect and trust Black Womxn’

By Gloria Verdieu

San Diego

Over 300 people showed up on March 10, in overcast, rainy weather, for the “Black Lives Matter: March for Black Women.” The march was organized and led by Black women for Black women, with individuals and grassroots organizations coming to support and show solidarity.

The Sept. 30, 2017, Washington, D.C., March for Black Women organized by Black Women’s Blueprint, Trans Sistas of Color Project, Black Youth Project 100, and allied state anti-violence coalitions and held on the 20th anniversary of the Million Woman March, inspired the San Diego march. Local San Diego organizers held two Black women roundtable discus-sions and then began plans for this historic March for Black Women, which was hosted by Black Lives Matter San Diego and the March for Black Women organizing committee. (#MariBWSID)

Sister Karen of the Kumeyaay Nation said, “I think what’s been happening with the police is the attack on the Black community and the state’s response has been extreme violence, and that’s what the march is to move us forward to put an end to police brutality.”

The march began with a prayer, fol-lowed by Nyisha Geedoubleu, who gave the background story about “why we march.”

Cast of ‘Black Panther’

‘Last October, Colin Kaepernick, the African-American former quarterback for National Football League’s San Francisco 49ers, was asked after a game why he was wearing a Muslim All-i-t-shirt. He said, “to pay homage, [All-i] fought a very similar fight and was trying to do what’s right for the people.”'
Women, Cuba and the road to revolution

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

By Teresa Gutierrez

I’m not going to limit my remarks to women in Cuba but will include also women in the socialist camp. The lives of women dramatically changed with the overturning of the Soviet Union and socialism in Eastern Europe. The facts demonstrate that the lives of women there are on an unprecedently better under socialism than under capitalism.

The New York Times has cited research that women in socialist Eastern Europe had so many more rights and privileges than women under capitalism. Women did not just enjoy greater maternity leave, guaranteed free child care, state investments in education and training, but women under socialism also enjoyed more sexual pleasure! (Aug. 12, 2017)

But that makes sense, doesn’t it? Women’s lives are so different under capitalism that when you get home, not only are you tired from work — if you’re lucky enough to have a job — but the weight and worry of life under capitalism makes pleasure of any kind a distant dream. So it makes sense that women enjoyed more sexual pleasure under socialism.

When the material basis of society benefits the workers and the oppressed and not the corporations, when society is planned and organized for the masses and not for profit, life is qualitatively better.

But with the collapse of the socialist countries came the collapse in the quality of women’s lives. One study notes: “A striking image of the changes after the fall of the Berlin Wall was that of women lining the highways offering sex for sale.” Women in Eastern Europe began to be trafficked in record numbers directly because of the collapse of socialism. (Kligman et al., When we were tickling Women,” Social Politics, March 2003)

From bounty of rights to human bondage

This is the difference for women under capitalism, instead of under socialism. And for trans women and women of color, the horrors multiply. Imagine the lives of women in Cuba if their revolution were to be overturned. Fortunately, we don’t have to imagine this because we have every confidence in the leadership and the people of the Cuba. They will not go back to capitalism.

They will fight to the last breath to defend socialism.

Here in New York we will soon have the chance to hear directly from a Cuban woman deeply involved in the building of socialism. Griselda Aguilera was seven years old when she joined the literacy campaign in the early days of the revolution. In less than one year, as people were sent out to teach and give the masses the right to read and write, Cuba raised its literacy rate to 96 percent. This, of course, greatly benefited women.

And they were the first to found the Federation of Cuban Women (Federación de Mujeres Cubanas). The FMC helped win paid maternity leave for six whole months, with another six months of unpaid leave. That was improved in 2003, when paid maternity leave was extended to one year for both mothers and fathers. Less a woman: “a Cuban man wants no longer exists, and the man that a Cuban woman wants is yet to be born.” Isn’t that beautiful dialectics?

How important these points are when you are in the struggle! Because if we don’t learn how to deal with contradictions, how to apply the struggle with nuances and delicacy, how frustrating and demoralizing it can be. And when frustrated and demoralized, we cannot go forward. This is how I see the struggle against sex discrimination, against the war, against the U.S. right now. A helpful struggle, going forward, but far from what we need.

For us, whether we speak of the women’s movement or the labor or anti-war movement, or even the party: Neither the movement nor the party we want is yet to be formed. Not because we don’t fight or organize, but because of material conditions, because of the actual reality we live in.

Since the socialists, communists and revolutionaries deal with the here and now as well as with the future, we have to imagine a socialist revolution.

Women Need Socialism for Liberation

Julie Vangphasouk, Taryn Fivek, Teresa Gutierrez, Monica Alonzo and Cosima Bohannan-Blumke, on Feb. 3, in New York City

Fighting U.S. privatization:

Teachers strike in Puerto Rico

Continued from page 1 ($24,800); and Julia Keleher from Philadelphia, now secretary of education ($29,800), among others.

Attacks on the Puerto Rican people have increased since the hurricane. Whether intentional or not, the blows seem aimed at destroying a people by bewildering, overwhelming and depriving them of their ability to react.

That is why the strike is so important.

“Privatizers see teachers as a ‘product’

The fight against educational reform involves not only privatization. The current pro-Gov. Rosselló government also intends to eradicate a nation in order to make way for the “elaboration” of a “product” — in this case students — to serve the interests of U.S. foreign capital.

It establishes charter schools where priority is given to the teaching of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, ignoring the total training of students to be human beings and not robots. Inequality is stimulated by imposing educational vouchers, and foreign values are imposed through hiring — for $16.9 million — a U.S. agency, the Joseph and John Josephson Institute of Ethics, to teach “values” to the student body.

In addition, it plans to impose a U.S.-administered administrative restructuring of the educational system, dividing it into seven Regional Education Offices (LEAs). Its intent is clear in the words of the legislative counsel: “It is the intent to point out that Puerto Rico is the only jurisdiction of the American Nation that has not established the LEA model at the regional level.” (tinyurl.com/jy89wzjz)

They have started a search to fill the posts of these administrators. Where? In the U.S., of course.

That is why the president of the Teachers Federation, Mercedes Martinez, calls this a “corporate reform.”

The day before the strike started, Workers World-Mundo Obrero spoke with Eva Ayala, president of Educamos.

Workers World-Mundo Obrero: What is the goal of the strike?

Eva Ayala: We intend to send a strong and clear message to those who want to impose a model based on a mercantilist vision of education.

One of its effects would be to distance the right to education from the communities by creating seven regions, each of which is to be centralized. Among other implications, they announced they will close 308 additional schools (they have already closed more than 300), which would come to more than 600 schools totally eliminated over four years.

They will also eliminate over 7,500 teaching positions. Many jobs in school lunch services, secretaries and other personnel will also be eliminated. This diminishes the function and cooperation of the communities. The strike aims to move people to put pressure to stop the government’s intentions.

We want to continue to control and appropriate the public funds earmarked for education. The shrinkage of government expenditures and redistribution of wealth are part of their neoliberal policies. That is why they cut expenses and increase profits through massive layoffs, mass closures of schools, elimination of rights, privatization and an increase in the cost of education. They want to use public funds to fatten the pockets of the rich who are paying for their political campaigns.

Educational vouchers use public funds to subsidize private education, which has already been declared unconstitutional. Charter schools have had political and racial biases, and have proved unsuccessful in other jurisdictions in the U.S. On the contrary, they discriminate against the poor, against people with disabilities and have a history of mismanagement of funds, fraud and corruption.

What is new? What has happened is that the current administration has occurred with the new department of education and Rosselló’s government?

EA: Under the misleading motto that “children come first,” they use the most recent catastrophes to advance their positions. They are a good example of “catastrophic capitalism.” After Hurri- cane Maria, Keleher refused to open the schools. She wanted to take advantage of that situation to eliminate schools and deprive the right of people to education.

They intend to leave less than 800 schools functioning, increasing administrative work, force teachers to work over and above the hours attributed to them (contributes slave labor), strengthen their punitive vi- sual process of all processes related to education. Eliminate the right to retirement, and cut corners to transfer to transjurisdictional health, li- braries, vocational training, physical edu- cation, fine arts and social sciences.

One result of the privatization and the lack of materials and equipment, they are reducing the real salaries of the teachers. Secretary Keleher implements these measures but becomes the de facto Fiscal Control Board.

Related articles

Rainbow Solidarity
In Defense of CUBA

By Leslie Feinberg
author of Stone Butch Blues

Rainbow Solidarity in Defense of Cuba is an edited compilation of 25 articles from the Workers World newspaper series by Feinberg entitled Lavender & Red, online at www.workers.org.

Rainbow Solidarity documents revolutionary Cuba’s inspiring trajectory of progress toward liberation of sexualities, genders and sexes. This groundbreaking book reveals Cuba’s inspiring trajectory of progress to-
Who gains from attacking Russia?

Right-wing British Tory Prime Minister Theresa May, her ultra-right Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson and the gutter tha玲 Theresa May, her ultra-right Foreign no evidence, the British imperialist released in an exchange 20 years ago, tries on Russia's border. NATO troops have been placed in coun- against British colonialism. Ask why is no reason to trust them. Ask, Irish, colonial and imperialist interests. There attack on a second-rate former Russian attack on a second-rate former Russian was responsible for a nerve-gas claim ing, without offering evidence, that the Russian government was responsible for a nerve-gas attack on a second-rate former Russian spy and her daughter. The British ruling class has 300-plus years of experience of lying to protect its colonial and imperialist interests. There is no reason to trust them. Ask, Irish, Indian and Kenyan liberation fighters against British colonialism. Ask why NATO troops have been placed in coun-tries on Russia's border. The attacked spy, Sergei Skripal, released in an exchange 20 years ago, has been out of service since. Besides no evidence, the British imperialist officials have no reasonable motive they can hang on the Russian government for risking murder with an illegal nerve agent. The Russian government denied involvement and expelled 23 British operatives in response.

Labor Party leader Jeremy Corbyn suggested that, lacking evidence and motive, it was foolish to try to judg ment and launch a 2018 version of the Cold War. Corbyn reminded the populasa that the “weapons of mass destruc tion” plot used 15 years ago to justify the aggressive and utterly destructive war against Iraq was a fiction. The British ruling class and the right wing of his own party are subjecting Corbyn to withering attack. May and Johnson have threatened additional sanctions against Russian officials. But who would gain from increasing economic sanctions against Russia? U.S.-based financial interests, Qatar gas exporters and even North Sea energy interests lead the pack.

Venezuela launches the Petro

By Gary Wilson

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela opened the pre-sale of the Petro on Feb. 20. The value of each Petro is equivalent to the current price of a barrel of Venezuelan oil, about 60 U.S. dollars. On March 1, Nicolás Maduro, the president of Venezue la, said that the pre-sale had brought in more than 8 billion. Public sale of the petro is scheduled for March 20.

Last December, when Maduro first an nounced the plan to launch the Petro, he said it is meant to break the U.S.-imposed financial sanctions choking the people of Venezuela. The Petro, he said, would help Venezuela “make financial transactions and overcome the financial blockade.” It will give Venezuela some monetary sov ereignty, he added.

Sanctions enacted over the last year by President Donald Trump’s adminis tration have blocked Venezuela’s ability to move money through international banks, interfering with oil exports and even slowing the country’s payments of debt obligations. The sanctions have also blocked the Venezuelan people’s credit and debt cards, as Visa, Mastercard and the others are all controlled by U.S. banks. The petro is a challenge to the U.S.-dominated world banking system and the imperialist controls used for eco nomic and political domination of develop ing countries.

On the website www.elpetro.gob.ve, available in Spanish and English, the Petro is called the first state-issued crypto asset, and a white paper released on the site gives more details. What does that mean? The Petro is a digital token based on the new blockchain technology using a digital, decentralized ledger of all trans actions, called blocks, that are linked and cryp tographically secured. Blockchains are secure by design and being de cen tralized means that no central authority (like the big banks) is needed to autho rize the transaction. Blockchain technology means that the Petro is removed from financial institutions’ interference, including U.S.-imposed sanctions.

Bitcoin is the best known block chain-based token, though unlike the Petro, it is not an asset-based token. According to the Swiss regulator FINMA, tokens can have three func tions: payment tokens, utility tokens or asset tokens. (tinyurl.com/ytv92p)

Payment tokens like bitcoin are best known and also called cryptocurrencies. Utility tokens are used to provide digital access to an application or service. Asset tokens are tied to assets, and are similar to bonds.

The Petro is an asset token tied to Ven ezuela’s oil and mineral reserves. “The Petro (PTR) will be a sovereign crypto asset backed by oil assets and issued by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on a block chain platform,” the white paper says.

Venezuela is also pursuing other ways to circumvent the U.S. sanctions war on their country. They have established trade with China, Russia and Turkey, using each of those countries’ national currency, not the dollar. They are seeking similar terms of trade with other countries. For example, during a recent trip to India, Venezue lan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza said, “We don’t want to use the dollar at all,” reported the Times of India on March 13. “We want to import technology, food products, and medicines by paying (India) rupees and they will pay us in (Venezue la) not in dollars but in Rupees.”

Militant Black union leader honored

By Rebeca Jackson

Los Angeles

The achievements of union and comm unity organizer Chris Silvera were cel ebrated on March 10 when he was hon ored here with the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Teamsters National Black Caucus of Southern California.

Silvera, based in Long Island City, N.Y., is a leader greatly admired throughout the U.S. for his militancy and strategic actions. He is the secretary-treasurer and principal officer of Teamsters Local 808. The local represents a diverse group of workers, including railroad, building maintenance, factory and public sector. Silvera is the longest serving principal officer in the Teamsters union. The Teamsters have a long, revolution ary history in the Black liberation struggle. TNBC was formed in 1971 to ensure that Black workers are represented in key leadership positions in the union, and to promote affirmative action and edu cate Black communities in and out of the union.

The effectiveness of this work is appar ent, as the Teamsters have a wonderful representation of Black leadership, in cluding women. They are a powerful les son in how a progressive union can lead by example.

The TNBC SoCal branch is national ly recognized as a revolutionary, pro gressive branch, so it was fitting that it chose to honor Silvera. The event was organized by Robert Turner, a major pro gressive force in fighting for the rights of Black workers.

Silvera was introduced by Sen. Maxine Waters, who highlighted the importance of Silvera’s victory in having Internation al Workers’ Day (May Day) proclaimed as an official holiday for Local 808 workers. In his acceptance speech, Silvera stressed the importance of revolutionary leadership. He opened with a quotation from the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: “Human progress is neither automat ic nor inevitable. Even a superficial look at history reveals that no social advance rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. Ev ery step towards the goal of justice re quires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate con cern of dedicated individuals.”

Silve ra used this quote to highlight the work that SoCal TNBC does on a continu al basis to make change through class struggle. He confronted Trump’s attacks on the working class and stressed the im portance of all workers remaining united as the working class rather than hiding behind the safety of “middle class” labels. The Local 808 leader stated that it is the union’s duty to organize and move its workers to understand that Trump is not for them, that Trump is explicitly anti-worker. He explained that the union should be used as a vehicle for advance ment, not complacency, and that taking a risk to fight for rights earned by the unions is both necessary and needed.

He emphasized that union business agents must not accept tokens and trimmets for their silence and compliance, but rather be true representatives in up...
By Taryn Fivek

The author was in Caracas, Venezuela, from March 4 through March 8, to represent the U.S.-based International Action Center as part of an international delegation.

You know you're somewhere special when the woman stamping your passport speaks in葡

lish, the Ministry of Popular Power. Venezuela is the birthplace of Simón Bolívar — called el Libertador (the Liberator) — the man who fought the Spanish to keep them out of most of South America. That is why the project that Hugo Chávez Frías embarked on in the 1990s was called the Bolivarian Revolution. The soldier who approaches you while you're waiting for the bus tells you to be careful, that this is a dangerous country. Why is it dangerous? What danger will you face here?

Caracas is on a war footing. There's no other way to put it. There are shortages. The streets are quiet at night, except for the rare gunshot that turns heads. Make no mistake. Though U.S. tanks are not in Venezuela, it is still a U.S.-led economic war going on here. And it's every decent person's duty to stand alert and fight on this side of the Bolivarian Revolution. Amid the shortages, the government’s ability to adequately fund itself is difficult for many people, the ineficiency is expected to remain stable, which may help stabilize the bolívar. The petro may be the world's first cryptocurrency backed by material goods, in this case, Venezuelan oil reserves. Unlike more widespread cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin, there will be a limited supply of petro. This means that its weight to the bolívar is expected to remain stable, which may help stabilize the bolívar. The petro may be stable.

Venezuela's election process

Washington wages economic war on Venezuela’s people

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

Brazilian political activist Marielle Franco, 38, died in downtown Rio de Janeiro on March 14 in what of officials have described as a political assassination. She had just left an evening event, “Young Black Women Who Are Changing Power Structures.” She was killed, along with her driver, Anderson Gomes, by assailants who shot with military precision through her car’s darkened windows. The ammunition used has been traced to batches of U.S.-led aggression.

In the absence of this U.S.-led economic war, Venezuela would have progressed further. Of Venezuela's 24 million people, the three million families living in public housing, the six million who benefit from CLAP, the hundreds of thousands living in the Venezuelan common mines, millions of trade unionists who benefit from some of the most advanced and progressive labor laws in the world, and the many millions more who have benefited from Bolivarian democracy keep fighting to defend their gains and push for more progress.

An international delegation will again be mobilized this year to observe the presidential elections set for May 20. Until then, the Bolivarian Revolution will continue to defend itself against sanctions and economic warfare, and its supporters worldwide will continue to demand that the U.S.-led aggression against the people.
¿Por qué el paro magisterial en PR?

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

El lunes 19 de marzo se iniciará una reforzada lucha en contra de la privatización de la educación pública en Puerto Rico con el llamado a un paro magisterial mientras se reparten contratos miseria del pueblo queda totalmente ignorada, donde la realidad del sufrimiento y la lucha puertorriqueño. Para que impongan sus criterios al pueblo resultoras, “expertos” y agencias de EUA constituyendo la Junta de Control Fiscal. No solo gobierna la Junta de Control Fiscal, sino que Puerto Rico es la única jurisdicción territorial en el mundo en el que la Junta de Control Fiscal, la entidad creada para tener una impresión de la situación.

Entrevista con Eva Ayala de Educamos

El día antes del paro, WW-MO habló con Eva Ayala, presidenta de Educamos, para tener una impresión de la situación.

WW-MO: ¿Cuál es el meta del paro del magisterio para el 20 marzo?

EVA: Pretendemos con el mismo en- tendar a un mensaje contundente y claro a los gobernantes de la élite que aunque con- tengan a tiempo los recursos humanos que Puerto Rico es la única jurisdicción territorial en el mundo en el que la Junta de Control Fiscal, la entidad creada para tener una impresión de la situación.

WW-MO: ¿Cuáles son los próximos pasos?

EVA: Tenemos el paro de este lunes, luego una gran marcha convocada por los padres de Educación Especial y por la Junta de Control Fiscal. También estamos promoviendo el trabajo solidario junto a otras organizaciones. Como organización, EDUCAMOS es partícipe de este paro, para que se haga sentir el apoyo del pueblo.

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