



# Protests erupt over bigoted law

## Black & trans\* people lead way in N. Carolina

By L.T. Pham and Q. Wideman  
Raleigh, N.C.

On March 23, the North Carolina General Assembly fast-tracked House Bill 2 in response to a Charlotte city ordinance set to take effect April 1 that would protect trans\* people from discrimination.

The General Assembly called a “special session” to present the bill, whose details were not revealed to any lawmakers until that same morning. In under 12 hours, the bill was passed in two committee meetings, the House, the Senate and then enthusiastically signed by right-wing Gov. Pat McCrory.

Earlier this year, Gov. McCrory signed HB 318, a law assaulting undocumented immigrants and all workers.

HB 2 has been deemed one of the worst anti-trans\* bills in the country. Now law, it is sweepingly broad and makes attacks on LGBTQ folks as well as workers and other oppressed peoples. HB 2 requires that trans\* people must use the restroom that aligns with their “biological sex,” instead of the gender with which they identify. Trans\* people can be denied public accommodations on the basis of their actual or perceived gender.

HB 2 also includes provisions that make it much more difficult for all oppressed workers to file state claims against their employers for discrimination. Additionally, the state can now prevent local governments from enforcing a minimum wage standard for contract workers.

This bill’s proponents, who had never before expressed concern for survivors of sexual assault, claim its purpose is to protect women and children from sexual predators. The right-wing proponents of the bill have specifically used the legislation to scapegoat trans\* women, and all trans\* people in general, for sexual assault.

In short, this new law is an attempt to consolidate state power in order to further divide the working class while using trans\* people as a scapegoat.

### A People’s Special Session

Queer and trans\* people of color were present all day at the General Assembly as the bill was being pushed through. Many of us sat in on the hearings waiting for an opportunity to speak against this racist and transphobic bill, only to be told that public comment was limited.

In the first hearing, a young, Black trans\* person approached the mic to speak after the committee chair had ended public comment after only 25 minutes. Immediately, they (some trans\* people prefer to be referred to by the pronoun “they”) were told by a state sheriff to be quiet and to return to their seat. Instead, they said out loud that not a single person of color has been to the podium.

Following this, they were escorted out as they shouted, “Trans people are survivors too!” They were banned from re-entering any legislative building for the rest of the day.

By that night, the bill was passed into law, and queer and trans\* people of color from across the state began to organize a response. Many are a part of the North Caro-



PHOTOS: KAYDEE GAWLICK (ABOVE); INSERT: DOLORES CHANDLER

lina BlackLivesMatter Queer and Trans People of Color Coalition, a grouping of grass-roots organizations and Black Lives Matter youth organizers with a leftist orientation — many of whom organized the Pride disruption last summer.

By March 24, nearly 1,000 people had RSVP’d online to a demonstration called in front of the governor’s mansion. A statement released by the NC BlackLivesMatter QTPOC Coalition, and printed in Workers World, highlighted the disproportionate impact this bill will have on queer and trans\* people, people of color, workers and other vulnerable communities.

The demonstration also called for its own “People’s Special Session” to take up the concerns and anger that queer and trans\* people had been barred from expressing

at the General Assembly.

### Power and indignation

Nearly 1,000 people from across the state convened in front of the governor’s mansion that evening. As folks gathered, chants began that exposed the many attacks included in this new law: “Queer rights are workers rights!” and “Black lives matter!”

As the crowd began to grow, queer and trans\* people of color organizers brought the crowd into the street and began the occupation of Blount Street. As the masses moved toward the governor’s mansion, arms linked

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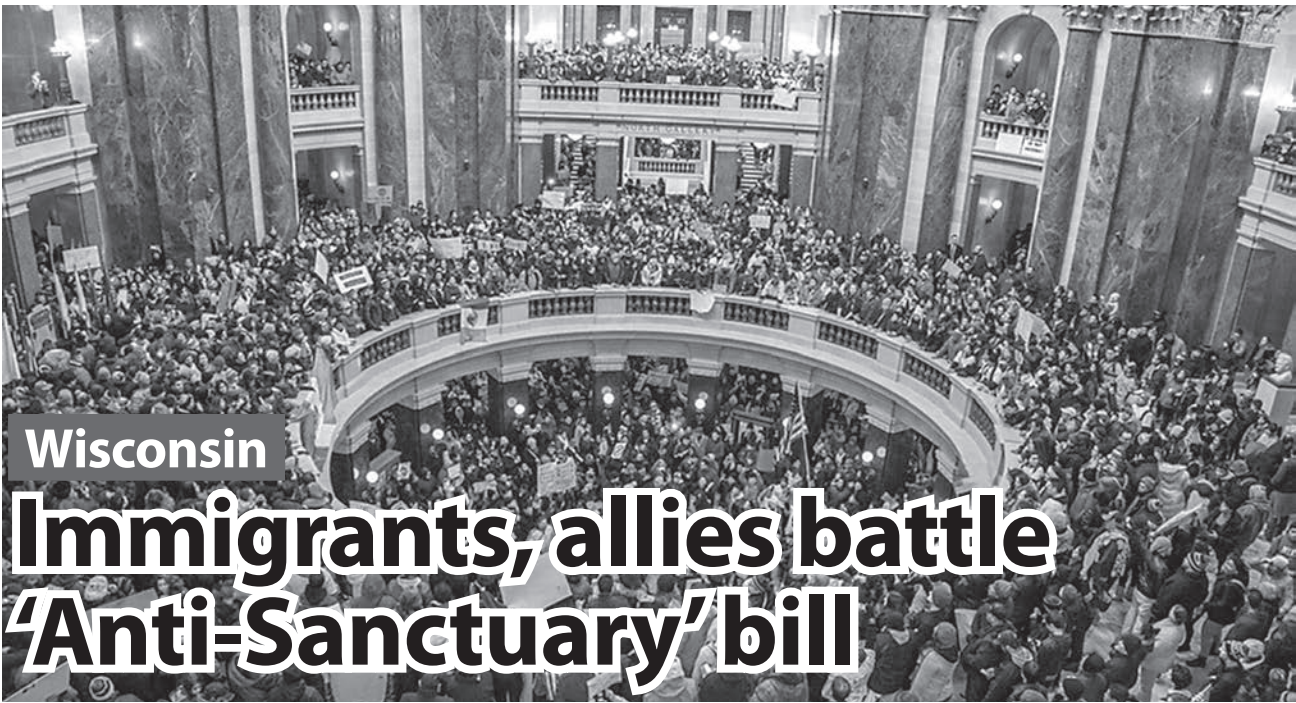
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# Wisconsin Immigrants, allies battle 'Anti-Sanctuary' bill

PHOTO: JOE BRUSKY

On Feb. 18, 2016 50,000 participate in a Day Without Latinos, Madison, Wis.

By Workers World Staff  
Milwaukee

Due to mass statewide resistance by immigrants and their allies, an “anti-sanctuary” bill in the Wisconsin Senate was not taken up for a vote before the politicians adjourned for the year.

In a March 16 statement the immigrant and worker rights organization Voces de la Frontera wrote: “Last night the Wisconsin State Senate adjourned for the year without taking up Assembly Bill 450, a bill that would lead to more cases of racial profiling and strengthen the collaboration between local law enforcement and immigration agents. The Senate’s decision comes at the end of three months of organizing by immigrant and Latino communities across Wisconsin, that culminated in A Day Without Latinos and Immigrants, a statewide general strike and mass mobilization on the State Capitol on February 18, 2016.”

Voces continued: “AB450 is one of three anti-immigrant bills introduced in the legislature in this session. Another bill to impound the cars of people stopped for driving without a license was never brought to the floor. A final bill, SB533, to take away counties’ ability to provide local photo identification cards to residents — as Milwaukee County created a program to do — was passed

by both chambers of the Legislature before the mass mobilization that garnered international attention.”

Voces, the group Youth Empowered in the Struggle and many other organizations are demanding Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker veto SB533. Hundreds of representatives that attended the last day of the Senate session delivered a petition with over 15,600 signatures to the governor calling on him to veto the bill. If the governor neither signs nor vetoes the bill, it will become law automatically on April 27.

“In the wake of the Day Without Latinos and Immigrants, we are witnessing a political awakening of the Latino and immigrant community in Wisconsin,” said Christine Neumann-Ortiz, executive director of Voces de la Frontera.

Added Neuman-Ortiz: “The mass general strike was an undeniable statement of the essential and positive contributions that immigrants make to our economy and our society. This is a breath of fresh air in the face of the belligerent, right-wing extremism that is contaminating our political debate and causing a disturbing uptick in hate crimes, including the recent murders in Milwaukee of a Puerto Rican father and Hmong parents in front of their children. Following this historic day, we have been able to grow our organization statewide to continue the momentum toward strengthening the voice of Latinos and immigrants in Wisconsin.” □

## MUNDO OBRERO WORKERS WORLD

### 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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Michigan

# Struggles expose ruling class program as disaster

By Abayomi Azikiwe  
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Members of the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions, and Utility Shut-offs and other community-based organizations held a demonstration outside the Wayne County Treasurer’s Office on March 23 demanding a moratorium on the scheduled 30,000 tax foreclosures set for March 31.

During 2015, a similar campaign won a halt to tax foreclosures for approximately 70 days, allowing residents of Wayne County to make arrangements to pay their obligations. This postponement of foreclosures last year by the Treasurer’s Office only provided a temporary measure to ease the flow of the inevitable dislocation of tens of thousands more people around and outside the city.

Just one week prior to the protest, a delegation of activists from the Moratorium NOW! Coalition, Detroit Eviction Defense, Russell Woods Neighborhood Association, Charlevoix Village Association, and residents of Rosedale Park, Woodbridge and others met with acting Treasurer Eric Sabree to call for a halt to the massive foreclosures that will drive more African-American, Latino/a and working-class people out of the city and Wayne County.

Sabree and his staff said that they could not declare a moratorium since it was against state laws and that they had no alternative except to foreclose on occupied homes. He pointed to the numerous programs available to assist homeowners short of a total halt to the seizures.

Pat Driscoll, of Detroit Eviction Defense, pointed out that during the previous decade there were instances when former Treasurer Raymond Wojtowicz removed thousands of homes from the foreclosures roles. Erroll Jennings, of Russell Woods on the city’s west side, brought deed abstracts from his family home documenting property tax moratoriums imposed in the mid-1930s.

Several of the participants at the demonstration were themselves victims of the housing crisis. Jennette Shannon, of Detroit Eviction Defense, has faced down over 20 eviction attempts by the courts, which she has fought in order to keep her home on the northwest side, purchased through a (fraudulent) land contract.

With the large-scale foreclosures of homes, small businesses, churches and lots in the city, so-called “investors and

developers” are given priority to purchase over those seeking to redeem their homes. These real estate scavengers have bought thousands of structures and vacant land in the city. In many cases, they resell the homes without paying back property taxes and other liens.

Consequently, when working-class people buy these houses through land contracts, they are often swindled out of them, along with their hard-earned money. Often within months, they are sent eviction notices for nonpayment of taxes, including water bills.

Shannon told WW outside the Treasurer’s Office, “I received 400 delinquent water bills for commercial accounts. My backyard was mortgaged for \$300,000 after the home was divided into two separate parcels without my knowledge.”

One major reason why people are buying homes on land contracts is because the banks are not writing mortgages in the city. In 2015, less than 400 mortgages were issued for the entire city of nearly 700,000 people.

Nonetheless, after homes are seized by the county, thousands of them wind up being taken over by the Detroit Land Bank Authority, which is the largest property owner in the city. The Detroit Blight Removal Task Force, chaired by Dan Gilbert, owner of Quicken Loans, is one of the major players in the current crisis of forced removals and privatization.

After occupied and foreclosed as well as abandoned homes and businesses are identified for seizure by the Blight Task Force, they are taken over by the DLBA. Every month hundreds of homes are claimed by the Wayne County Circuit Court, which is overseen by Judge Robert E. Colombo Jr.

## Financial interests to blame

Moreover, what cannot be overlooked are the underlying causes of the housing crisis in Detroit and Wayne counties — the central role of the banks through the initiation of predatory loan schemes during the 1990s and early 2000s, which resulted in tens of thousands of evictions and the further deterioration of neighborhoods across the city and its suburbs.

Political officials, either not understanding the magnitude of the crisis or unwilling to confront the perpetrators,



Outside the Federal Court as Detroit bankruptcy trial begins, Sept. 2, 2014.

repeatedly refused to impose a moratorium on the banks’ actions and declare a state of emergency based on the concrete conditions facing the municipalities.

The failure of local governmental entities to stand up to the banks, and the successive Democratic and Republican governors and legislatures in Lansing, has worsened the continuing crises of community desolation and disinvestment. Michigan was the only state to lose population in the last census of 2000-10, further weakening municipalities and school systems.

## Schools and municipal services collapsing

These same bank-led policies constitute the basis of the Detroit Public Schools debacle, where new legislation is in the works to further disenfranchise local people. The corporate media never mention that effective control of the DPS has been the official policy of the state since 1999 under then Governor John Engler, a Republican.

After over five years of direct state administration, a board was elected in 2005 that was still heavily corporate dominated. By 2009, yet another emergency manager was appointed who was only accountable to then Governor Jennifer Granholm, a Democrat.

When Engler took over the DPS in 1999, the system had a \$93 million surplus, along with voter-approved \$1.5 billion in bond funding designated for school improvement. Under emergency management, the system is on the verge of bankruptcy, with a reported \$3.5 billion debt.

Conditions are so deplorable that

teachers have recently engaged in a series of wildcat strikes demanding better working conditions. Buildings have been neglected under this form of administration; mold, water leaks, lack of heating and other problems have not been addressed.

Part of the new state legislative plan places significant control of the DPS under corporate-installed Mayor Mike Duggan, the first white mayor in four decades. Many Detroit educators believe this is just another scheme to siphon public money allocated for schools into the coffers of private interests.

Former Detroit Public Schools teacher Richard Clay said during the March 23 demonstration, “The present plan is designed to finish off the system for good.”

Also, the water crises in both Flint and Detroit stem from a privatized governance model that endangers hundreds of thousands of people through massive shut-offs and poisoning.

During the Detroit bankruptcy proceeding in 2013-14, emergency management functionaries acknowledged that the massive water shut-offs were part of the restructuring of the city.

Although a two-month moratorium was declared on water shutoffs after pressure was exerted through mass and legal actions led by the Moratorium NOW! Coalition during July 2014, a task force established by the Duggan administration and the City Council has rejected any form of an “affordability plan” for clients of both the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department and the Great Lakes Regional Water Authority.

These developments in Michigan illustrate clearly the disastrous consequences of corporate rule over municipalities and state structures. Other states around the U.S. are suffering similar problems manifested through school closings, teacher layoffs, privatization of public services, evictions of working-class and poor residents, escalating police and judicial repression, environmental degradation, burgeoning poverty, etc.

Only the redistribution of wealth stolen from city residents can begin to ameliorate the problems of declining schools, neighborhoods and municipal services. A mass movement led by workers, residents, students and youth is the only alternative to worsening austerity under corporate control. □

# Michigan prisoners protest for decent food

By Martha Grevatt

From Alabama to Michigan, prisoners are resisting the inhuman conditions they are subjected to. On March 19 and 20, inmates in Kinross, Mich., staged a protest over bad food, which had almost 100 percent participation. Kinross is in the state’s Upper Peninsula and hundreds of miles from any of the majority-Black urban areas where many prisoners have families. There are about 1,300 inmates.

On March 20, the prisoners staged a silent but disciplined protest by returning to their cells 20 minutes early in a unified fashion. The next day, all but a few dozen prisoners skipped breakfast. Boycotts of lunch and dinner also had

more than 95 percent participation.

Trinity Services Group has the food service contract for all of Michigan’s prisons. It took over the state’s contract with Aramark, whose blatant disregard for food hygiene drew numerous complaints. Using the Freedom of Information Act, the Detroit Free Press found “a litany of problems,” including maggots, rodents and food shortages. (March 22) Aramark won the bid in 2013 after the state privatized prison food service and fired 370 unionized workers, who were feeding 43,000 inmates in 33 prisons.

Complaints about the food have not ceased since Aramark’s three-year contract was terminated last year before it had expired. David Sole, an organizer in the ongoing campaign to free Michigan

political prisoner the Rev. Edward Pinkney, told Workers World that the terrible food served to prisoners has been a constant concern. “Rev. Pinkney has been in several Michigan prisons since December 2014, including, very briefly, in Kinross. After Aramark was ousted from the state prisons, Rev. Pinkney reported that Trinity was just as bad. Rev. Pinkney has lost 30 pounds, and he isn’t a big fellow. He and many other prisoners look forward to quarterly food shipments permitted by the prisons that can be ordered by relatives.”

Decent food is a recognized human right. The human rights violations that Rev. Pinkney and 43,000 Michigan prisoners are subjected to must end. Solidarity with the Kinross prison protest! □

## MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper. Edited by Monica Moorehead.

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  - Black Youth: Repression & Resistance** LeiLani Dowell
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- Available at major online booksellers.



# City University of New York under attack

**By G. Dunkel**  
**Retired Professional Staff Congress member**  
**New York**

To emphasize the demand that the state of New York adequately fund the City University of New York and give the Professional Staff Congress a decent contract, 41 members of the PSC and their supporters, including two City Council members, Inez Barron and I. Daneek Miller, staged a die-in in front of the Third Avenue office of Gov. Andrew Cuomo March 24. Five hundred members of the PSC, plus students and university workers represented by District Council 37, held a support rally across Third Avenue.

The PSC has been without a contract for five years. DC37, part of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, hasn't had a new contract for six years.

Die-in participants were arrested and got desk appearance tickets, which means they were not held in jail, but must show up in court to face charges.

Before the die-in blocked the entrance to the building, a delegation from DC37 went to his office and presented him with a 5,000-signature petition demanding a decent contract for DC37 members.

CUNY is the third largest public institution of higher education in the United



WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

Labor, students protest outside NY governor's office March 23.

States. Counting full and part-time professional schools and institutes, CUNY enrolls around 450,000 students, overwhelmingly children and members of New York City's working class.

Seventy-five percent of its students are people of color; 40 percent were born outside the United States; 38 percent come from families with incomes below \$20,000 a year; 30 percent work more than 20 hours a week for pay. (CUNY Office of Institutional Research) Almost

all the students see a CUNY degree as an essential step for getting a decent job and a chance for a better life.

Cuomo's first executive budget, presented in January, shifted responsibility for a \$485 million contribution to CUNY's budget from the state to the city. This is about one-third of CUNY's total budget. Cuomo's step reneged on the state's obligation to support CUNY's senior colleges, which it assumed during the city's 1970s financial crisis.

Barbara Bowen, president of the PSC, said of CUNY's finances, "It's just a constant, constant austerity, even though we're way past the recession." Trying to deal with a major budget shortfall, CUNY has reduced the courses it offers, laid off part-time faculty, particularly the adjuncts who have no job security, and squeezed money from student services and even laboratory supplies. (New York Times, Jan. 14)

Measuring from just before the 2008 recession, the amount of per-student

state funding that CUNY receives has declined 17 percent, adjusted for inflation. But tuition, which goes into the state's pockets before it gets returned to the colleges, has gone up \$300 per student per year ever since Cuomo became governor in 2010.

The reaction to Cuomo's shorting CUNY's budget by \$485 million was so sharp that the day before the die-in, Cuomo announced he would fully fund CUNY.

But then the New York State Senate announced it was going to restore the \$485 million cut to "send a message" that CUNY administrators have not done enough to fight campus anti-Semitism. What provoked this charge is a few demonstrations by Students for Justice in Palestine where chants of "Zionists out of CUNY" and "U.S. out of the Middle East" were raised. (Forward, March 25)

Like many reactionaries in the United States, the New York State Senate uses the charge of anti-Semitism to slander any struggle against the colonialist and pro-imperialist role of the Israeli state.

Some Israeli and pro-Zionist newspapers have picked up this struggle against the SJP as part of their ideological offensive against the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement and are trying to hold the education of the working class of New York City hostage. □

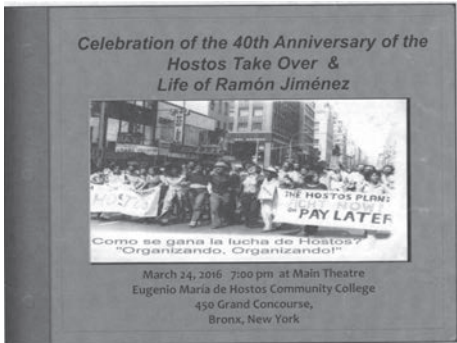
# Struggle for Hostos Community College celebrated

**By Sara Catalinotto and Lupe Family**  
**Bronx, N.Y.**

March 24 — They came to remember the past and envision the future. Current students, alumni and activists gathered in the South Bronx tonight to celebrate the history of Hostos Community College. Many brought their children or grandchildren to watch a brand new documentary film titled "Hostos: The Struggle, the Victory."

Hostos is more than a college. It represents a community win, in an organizing effort led by revolutionary Puerto Rican New Yorkers who had been in the Young Lords Party and others who were just becoming politically conscious.

Hostos was the only bilingual institution in the City University of New York system in 1976, named after Puerto Rican scholar Eugenio María de Hostos. That



CREDIT: RAMÓN JIMÉNEZ PROJECT

year it was targeted to be closed down by an emergency financial control board. The racist austerity plan also threatened predominantly Black and Afro-Caribbean Medgar Evers College.

A campaign of mass demonstrations culminated in a takeover of the Hostos building by students and professors on March 25, 1976, which lasted 20 days. The demonstrators organized meals,

childcare and security along with round-the-clock vigils on the outside, while classes continued. They won the demand to keep both colleges open! Forty years later, Hostos has grown to four buildings and remains a leader in re-entry programs for former prisoners.

Tonight's event also paid tribute to people's attorney Ramón Jiménez, who is both a veteran leader of the 1976 campaign to save Hostos and co-producer, along with Félix Romero, of the documentary film.

College President Dr. David Gómez and Bronx elected officials, who essentially owe their jobs to what one speaker called "the internal colony" that aspires to self-determination, shared the stage with organizers from El Maestro Cultural Center and the South Bronx Community Congress. Hostos graduate Victor Vázquez, among others, emphasized the role of women leaders in making this struggle a success.

Other speakers included retired Hostos professor Gerald Meyer; State Assembly member Charles Barron; and a spokesperson for Venezuela. Activists from Philadelphia called on everyone to protest at the Democratic National Convention there, for Puerto Rico's independence and for the release of political prisoner Oscar López Rivera. (For information on López Rivera, see tinyurl.com/h6xmpcr)

A letter from López Rivera to Jiménez was read, and Luis Cruz y Orquesta Son Borincano performed. The Hostos Professional Staff Congress faculty union supported the event, and various professors brought classes to the auditorium.

"Hostos: The Struggle, the Victory" is a powerful demonstration of how people's power can beat back structural racism. The hour-long documentary will soon be available for streaming. □

# Yemeni protest targets Saudi Arabia, U.S.

**By Workers World New York Bureau**

Hundreds of thousands of people marched in Sana'a, the capital of Yemen, on March 26 to protest the U.S.-armed Saudi monarchy's year-long war against their country.

In New York City, members of the U.S. Yemeni community and supporters gathered several hundred strong outside the United Nations the same day to show solidarity with the embattled homeland. Protesters marched from there to the Saudi embassy.

Yemeni activists Walid Fidama and Nabil Al Jomael addressed the rally, and Syrian poet Rana Nasrallah read a powerful poem of support for the Yemeni people.

A statement by Stop the War on Yemen read: "Over 40,000 civilians, mostly women and children, have been killed

by air bombing. The Saudi-led coalition's siege and blockade of Yemen stopped food and medicine from entering the country, putting 30 million Yemenis in need and suffering from famine, especially children."

The statement said that Yemen, home to one of the world's oldest civilizations, is "being subjected to destruction and demolition and the people of Yemen are subjected to massacres, collective punishment and genocide by the Saudis, their coalition, their ISIS and Al Qaeda." It pointed out that the Saudi claim of Iranian intervention in Yemen is a lie and that the Saudis are trying to overthrow Yemen's elected democratic government.

The marchers called for an end to the Saudi bombing and blockade, an end to arms sales to Saudi Arabia, an end to diplomatic recognition of the Saudi puppet

regime, emergency humanitarian aid to the people of Yemen and an international commission to investigate Saudi war crimes

Members of the International Action Center brought signs denouncing the U.S. role in the Saudi kingdom's genocidal war. Speaking for the United National Antiwar Committee, Bill Dores said that the Saudi war against Yemen is as much a U.S. war as was Bush's invasion of Iraq.

"The bombs and missiles that rain down on the people of Yemen are made in the USA, the planes that fire those missiles are made in the USA, the pilots that fly them are trained in the USA and the ships that blockade Yemen's coast are made in the USA," said Dores. "The Saudi kingdom has no independent military capacity. The U.S. ruling class, Wall Street bankers and oil billionaires are getting

rich off this war, not only from the massive U.S. arms sales to the Saudi kingdom, but from the hundreds of billions of petrodollars the Saudi royals keep in U.S. banks. That is why people in the United States must take a stand against this war." □

**WAR WITHOUT VICTORY**

by Sara Flounders

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

— Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, President, U.N. General Assembly, 2008-2009; Foreign Minister of Nicaragua's Sandinista government.  
Available at all major online booksellers  
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## Lowndes County, Ala.

# ‘The original Black Panther Party’

By Minnie Bruce Pratt  
White Hall, Ala.

In rural Lowndes County, Ala., on March 5, a dozen people gathered in the yard of a small, white frame house here to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of “the original Black Panther Party.”

Most have heard of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, the Black nationalist and socialist organization anchored in California. From 1966 to 1982, the BPP sponsored armed citizen defense against police violence as well as uplifting social programs for its community. Before the surveillance, harassment and assassination carried out by the FBI’s infamous counterintelligence program (Cointelpro), the BPP had offices in 68 cities and thousands of members.

The seedbed of that revolutionary organization was in the Lowndes County community of White Hall — population 831 — and in the house that served as headquarters for the local SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) voting rights campaign. SNCC grew out of a 1960 student meeting organized by Civil Rights and economic justice activist Ella Baker at Shaw University in Raleigh, N.C., and was a catalyst throughout the South for grass-roots, militant voter rights organizing.

In 1966, SNCC and local activists formed the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, an all-Black, independent political party that ran a slate of Black candidates in county elections. All Alabama parties had visual symbols on the ballot. The Alabama Democratic Party had the logo of a white rooster with the words, “White supremacy for the right.” That language was not removed until 1996.

The LCFO chose a ferocious black panther for its symbol, saying it represented

“courage, determination and freedom,” so the organization began to be known locally as “the Black Panther Party.”

LCFO handbills on voting rights contained the seeds of the later BPP Ten-Point Program, as the organizers announced they would set up local health clinics and called for adequate community nutrition. When Kwame Touré (Stokely Carmichael) and other SNCC members in the Lowndes County campaign went on to California organizing, they asked local activists if they could use the Black Panther Party name in their new organization, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense.

### ‘The Panther is not dead!’

From the front steps of the SNCC Freedom House, Willie Ricks (Mukasa Dada), a former SNCC member who organized in Lowndes County, said: “This little, small, country place is a historic place. The panther is not dead.” He affirmed the Black Panther Party spirit still lives in the Black Lives Matter movement. Dada had coined the phrase “Black Power” in a famous interchange with Touré.

Dada also honored those who gave their lives in the struggle — from Viola Liuzzo to Che Guevara — and spoke of the struggle’s roots in Africa: Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South Africa. He acknowledged the socialist and nationalist leadership of Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Léopold Senghor of Senegal, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Sékou Touré of Guinea as part of an African and socialist revolution. He stated that the liberation of people of African descent would come only with the freeing of the entire continent of Africa from imperialism and capitalism.

He concluded, “Reparations for the people who built the world up and got nothing for it! If we want freedom, we have to fight for freedom.”

Dada told of the armed struggle nec-

essary to defend voting rights for the 95 percent Black population in Lowndes against white supremacy. SNCC workers went to the plantations ready with weapons in order to register voters. People who tried to vote were evicted from their homes by plantation owners. When evictees built a “tent city” by the side of U.S. Highway 80, the housing was repeatedly shot up by the Klan.

Dada said, “If anyone was attacked, we ran to them.”

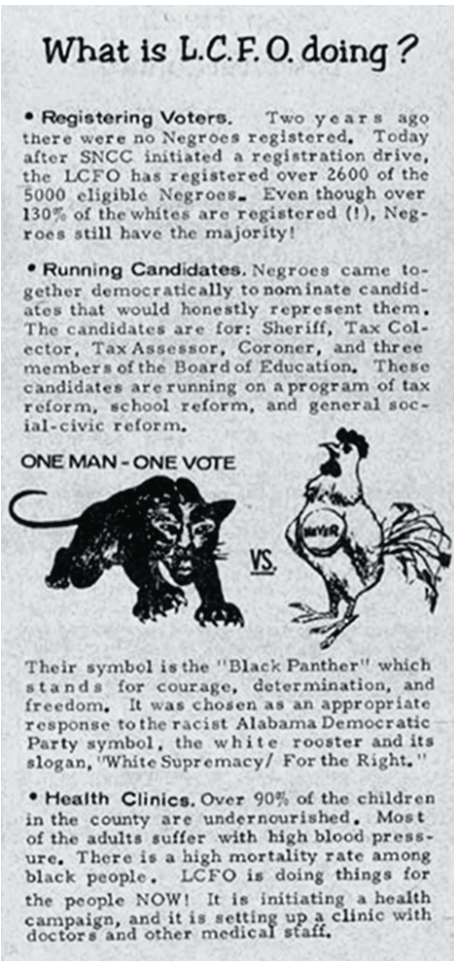
When SNCC workers first arrived in Lowndes, they flagged down a school bus bringing children of the Black community home from their segregated school. They asked the driver, John Jackson, 16, if they could ride from house to house with him, to let people know SNCC was opening voter registration. Jackson took them to his father.

Matthew Jackson, a farmer, armed them and assigned his children and grandchildren as their aides. Jackson senior also gave them the frame house for their use, located next to the Jackson family home of 100 years. Its central breezeway had been used as a schoolhouse for the Black community’s children before any public education had been allowed them.

### Roots of resistance

The support of the Jackson family and other local activists comes from deep roots of resistance in Lowndes County — a resistance in the area going back to the Indigenous peoples of the Creek Confederacy.

A historical marker at the road to the SNCC Freedom House announces a nearby 1813 “Battle of Holy Ground,” where U.S. troops defeated a Creek uprising. What the marker doesn’t say is that the battle at Ikan Atchaka/Econachoca (“sacred ground”) was a key moment when the Redstick Movement of the Creek na-





# Response to NC HB2 from #BlackLivesMatter Queer & Trans People of Color Coalition

March 23 — On the anniversary of the passing of Blake Brockington, a Black trans teen from Charlotte, N.C., Gov. Pat McCrory and the North Carolina General Assembly moved to attack working people and create dangerous conditions for women, LGBTQ people, Black and Brown people, and any workers who experience discrimination or who struggle to make ends meet. The General Assembly and Gov. McCrory chose to criminalize trans and gender nonconforming children and youth, and to scapegoat trans women and other trans people for rape by passing NC HB 2. House Bill 2 bars city and county governments from raising their municipal minimum wage, as well as prohibiting anti-discrimination policies that account for gender identity, expression and sexual orientation. Lawmakers were given only five minutes to review the bill and it passed within a 12-hour period without a single trans person of color being allowed to speak.

- This bill reinforces the school-to-prison pipeline that trans and gender nonconforming students of color already face, by making their choice of toilet grounds for suspension or arrest.
- This bill rolls back decades of hard-won progress and will harm our whole state. It undermines municipal democratic control, advancements in anti-discrimination policy and further prohibits wage increases. This is a direct assault on working families and particularly working women of color, who are most likely to be paid poverty wages. LGBTQ folks of color are work-

- ers, and we are worth more![1]
- This bill uses trans panic and the scapegoating of trans women to derail real conversations about safety and consent. Trans and queer people are survivors of sexual assault, too. Our safety matters, and we don't make our community safer by threatening others with the brute force of the murderous police or incarceration. If our state is truly concerned for survivors of sexual assault, it will make comprehensive consent and sex education mandatory. This law does nothing to prevent indecent exposure and sexual assault, which are already illegal, but instead prevents local governments from protecting the safety and livelihoods of queer and trans people.
  - We honor and fight for Blake by affirming that our lives matter. Anti-transgender bias and legislation and persistent structural racism directly impact the devastating rates of suicidality, unemployment, physical and sexual violence, poverty, incarceration and homelessness experienced by transgender people of color.[2]
  - Trans and Queer people of color demand a living wage and freedom from criminalization and discrimination, in the workplace and in the bathroom.

Tonight, we are calling for a Special Session of the People outside of the Governor's mansion. For Blake Brockington, for Angel Elisha Walker, for all Black and Brown trans and queer people in North

Carolina who have been murdered, disappeared or incarcerated, it is our duty to speak. It is our duty to demand freedom, to demand a living wage, to demand education, to demand comprehensive health care that is accessible and free of charge.

**Signatories:**  
**QPOCC, The Tribe,-**  
**#BlackLivesMatter North Carolina, Sister Song, Ignite NC, Southern Vision Alliance, Youth Organizing Institute, #BlackLivesMatter Gate City, Workers World Party, SONG NC, Greensboro Mural Project, GenderBenders, Fight for \$15, QORDS, Trans Pride in Action, Queer Youth Circus, House daLorde, Movement to End Racism and Islamophobia (MERI-NC), SAFE Coalition NC, LGBTQ Center of Durham, Center for Family and Maternal Wellness.**

[1] Trans People of Color experience rates up to four times the national unemployment rate. Black transgender people live in extreme poverty with 34 percent reporting a household income of less than \$10,000 per year. This is more than twice the rate for transgender people of all races (15 percent), four times the general Black population rate (9 percent), and over eight times the general U.S. population rate (4 percent). Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Discrimination Survey. National Center for Trans Equality and National GLBTQ Task Force (2011).

[2] In the 2011, Injustice at Every Turn National Report comprising of 6,450

## A Historic First



Monica Moorehead, WWP presidential candidate with

## Union endorses WWP

At the March 24 monthly membership meeting of the Boston School Bus Drivers, Steelworkers Local 8751, AFL-CIO, CLC [Canadian Labour Congress], the members voted unanimously to officially endorse Workers World Party candidate Monica Moorehead for president and Lamont Lilly for vice president in 2016.

transgender and gender non-conforming participants: 41 percent of respondents reported attempting suicide, 55 percent lost a job due to bias, 51 percent

# Smash HB2, smash anti-LGBTQ, anti-worker

The following is a March 25 solidarity statement from the 2016 presidential campaign of Workers World Party to the people fighting House Bill 2 in North Carolina.

Power to the five queer and trans\* youth arrested on March 24 amidst a powerful demonstration of many hundreds — largely Black and Brown, LGBTQ youth — outside the North Carolina governor's mansion after the Legislature there rushed through House Bill 2, one of the most severe anti-LGBTQ, anti-worker laws in the country.

The Monica Moorehead-Lamont Lilly presidential/vice presidential campaign condemns in the strongest terms this heinous attack on LGBTQ people and stands in full solidarity with the powerful resistance led by Black and Brown, queer and trans\* young people, many from the Black Lives Matter movement.

Right-wing bigots who control the North Carolina Legislature introduced the bill, using the pretext of overturning a local ordinance. The City Council in Charlotte had passed a measure that would have allowed trans\* people to access the bathroom that best matches their gender identity. But the statewide bill was a much broader assault on the LGBTQ community and workers.

The new law criminalizes trans\* and gender nonconforming people and puts the safety and the lives of LGBTQ people in danger. It rolls back anti-discrimination policies on the books. It gives bosses much greater power to discriminate



Lamont Lilly, WWP vice presidential candidate, speaking in Boston on Feb. 29.

against or fire workers based on their race, gender, gender identity and expression, religion or sexual orientation by depriving workers of the ability to bring suit on these grounds in state courts.

The Legislature convened a special session of the General Assembly on March 23 and rammed the bill through both houses. The governor then signed this atrocious bill into law within 24 hours.

In 2015, at least 20 transgender people in the U.S. were recorded as murdered, the vast majority being transwomen of color. The real number is likely much higher. LGBTQ people — particularly people of color and women — experience higher rates of poverty, homelessness and lack of access to quality and sensitive health care, and they face the risk of violence and incarceration.

## Moorehead-Lilly '16

Abolish Capitalism - Black Lives Matter - Fight for Socialism @wwp2016

### WORKERS WORLD PARTY.ORG

Workers World Party stands unequivocally on the side of LGBTQ people in the fight for self-determination, trans\* and gender liberation!

HB2 comes just months after the North Carolina Legislature passed HB318, an anti-immigrant bill that was a full-scale attack on immigrant workers. HB318 gave more power to cops and Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents and prohibited municipalities from adopting "sanctuary" policies protecting immigrants, among other things.

HB2 also comes during the rise of the presidential campaign of ultraright, racist billionaire Donald Trump. Trump's campaign is using a vicious platform of racism and bigotry to mobilize and embolden the most reactionary forces in society, forces who would like nothing more than to turn the clock back on the advances made by the Civil Rights, Black Liberation, working-class, union, women's and LGBTQ movements.

The ruling class relies on sowing divisions to keep workers and the oppressed divided — HB2 is an attempt to scapegoat transgender people to do just that. The rulers tremble at the thought of the multinational, multigendered working

class uniting — especially in this period of a deep, irresolvable crisis of the capitalist system — because they know what will happen to them and the tools they use to divide us:

They will be smashed into the ground and swept into the dustbin of history.

We stand on the side of workers and the

## Bigoted law d

Continued from page 1

and facing inward, the mansion's police detachment became aggressive, pushing and yelling at the peaceful demonstrators. When the police realized that the group would be too large to control and had a fighting spirit of its own, they fell back.

Soon, five queer and trans\* organizers took a spot in the center of the crowd, sat down and chained themselves together as a statement of resistance. The crowd built around these five and chants continued. Organizers asked that those in the crowd form a wall of protection around those who were most vulnerable at the action. What followed was a beautiful display of solidarity as queer and trans\* people of color moved toward the inside of the circle, while anti-racist whites held the outside as cops attempted to look inward.

The crowd held Blount Street for over





h USW 8751 president, Andre François, on March 24.

## P election campaign

Local 8751 becomes the first AFL-CIO union to formally endorse the WWP 2016 Moorehead/Lilly campaign! Living the legacy of African-American communist leader W.E.B. DuBois and socialist labor leader Eugene Debs by saying NO to the lesser evil scam!  
— **Report and photo by Stevan Kirschbaum, USW 8751 vice-president**

were harassed/bullied in school or were the victims of physical assault (61 percent) or sexual assault (64 percent). [www.endtransdiscrimination.org](http://www.endtransdiscrimination.org) □

## r attacks!

oppressed and fight for a revolutionary socialist future that can abolish once and for all the rule of the capitalist class and that rids society of all forms of oppression.  
**LGBTQ liberation now!**  
**Smash racism, sexism, LGBTQ bigotry and all forms of oppression!**  
**Fight for a revolutionary socialist future!**

## draws broad protest

two hours as the group held space for trans\* people of color to speak, sharing their stories about state violence and bathroom harassment. Some called for the ousting of Gov. McCrory, and many called to shut it all down. At one point in the evening, lights were turned on in the mansion, and McCrory himself stood in the window to witness a powerful showing of queer and trans\* people who refused to be his pawns.  
As the night wore on, police threatened a street sweep, but organizers were able to hold the street for another 20 to 30 minutes until those unable to risk arrest moved to the sidewalk to cheer on those committed to civil disobedience. As arrests were made, Black trans\* women spoke out about the immense risks that civil disobedience and arrest hold for trans\* people of color, sang and chanted the names of murdered

# Supreme Court weighs women’s access to contraceptives

By Sue Davis

On March 23 in Washington, D.C., the area in front of the Supreme Court was filled with protesters, as attorneys in *Zubik v. Burwell* presented their arguments to the justices. Many young women students loudly and visibly demanded access to contraceptives as their reproductive right. Opposing them were nuns with huge signs denying those human rights under the sanctimonious guise of “religious liberty.”

*Zubik v. Burwell*’s lead plaintiff is Little Sisters of the Poor, a nonprofit nursing home run by nuns. It is the second case heard by the Supreme Court opposing the requirement that all employer-provided health plans provide birth control at no extra cost under the Affordable Care Act. It’s the fourth case opposing the ACA. Nine separate cases representing nonprofit affiliates of religious organizations — colleges, universities, hospitals and such — heard by nine appeals courts, were combined in this case.

In 2014, the first case against the ACA’s contraceptive mandate, brought by family-owned Hobby Lobby, set a precedent when the court ruled 5-4 that closely held private businesses could refuse insurance coverage of contraceptives they viewed as causing abortions (but which don’t do that, according to the medical profession) under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993.

The *Zubik* case contends that nonprofit businesses affiliated with religious institutions should receive the same contraception exemption as churches, temples and mosques and not be required to sign an opt-out form stating their religious opposition under the RFRA. They insist that filling out such a form makes them “complicit” in the “sin” of providing birth control — because it allows students and workers, who may or may not observe the religion, to obtain contraception.

However, according to the RFRA, all religious beliefs must not “significantly impinge on the interests of third parties.”

### Who is more ‘burdened’?

Both Justice Samuel Alito and Chief Justice John Roberts asked questions exposing their ignorance of how the ACA insurance system works. They suggested that women get separate policies to cover

contraceptives. The three women justices and U.S. Solicitor General Donal B. Verrilli Jr., representing the Obama administration, explained that making women get two sets of insurance was illegal and wouldn’t work.

Mother Jones summarized: “Verrilli explained that overwhelming evidence shows that even small cost barriers to contraception keep women from using it, which in turn results in more unplanned pregnancies and abortions. Congress wanted women to be able to get contraception seamlessly, from their regular doctors and through their regular health insurance plans.” (March 24)

“There has to be an accommodation, and that’s what the government tried to do,” said Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. (Nation, March 24)

To pose the question of whose rights would be more burdened — hundreds of nonprofit administrators who are allegedly morally offended while filling out forms once a year or thousands of women forced to make continual end-runs to get costly contraceptives? — makes the answer obvious.

### Deep divisions among justices

The hearing exposed deep divisions among the justices. Four progressives faced off against four conservatives, including Justice Anthony M. Kennedy who occasionally joins the progressives. He sided with the conservatives in Hobby Lobby, though he wrote a separate concordance strictly limiting the ruling.

During the hearing, Kennedy flip-flopped, supporting the nuns’ argument at one point, while articulating the main contradiction at another: “It’s going to be very difficult for this court to write an opinion which says that once you have a church organization” entitled to an exemption, “you have to treat a religious university the same. I just find that very difficult to write.” (New York Times, March 23)

As in the Texas case the court heard on March 2 (see March 8 article in *Workers World*), Kennedy’s vote is critical. However, it is profoundly undemocratic that one justice’s decision would affect thousands of women.

Three scenarios are possible. First, if the court vote is deadlocked at 4-4, the rulings of nine appeals courts will stand.

Eight voted against the nonprofits, allowing coverage, and one voted to uphold the RFRA claim, so students and workers in seven Midwestern states would not have coverage. But the tie would not set a precedent, so the case could be reopened with nine justices. However, many articles noted, if Kennedy joins the other three conservatives in a tie, that would contradict his Hobby Lobby decision — necessitating another court case.

Second, the court could vote to delay resolution of the case until a ninth justice is seated. Third, if Kennedy votes with the progressive justices for a 5-3 decision, students and workers will be able to access contraceptives through their insurance.

### ‘Historical Racism Matters’ in this case

This case exposes deep divisions rooted in capitalist class society: centuries-old misogyny, racism and anti-poor bias. As Kira Shepherd points out in her must-read essay posted March 25 on *Rewire* (formerly RH Reality Check), “The Context of Historical Racism Matters in the Birth Control Benefits Case”:

“Even as unintended pregnancy rates have declined in recent years, racial and economic disparities have persisted. Moreover, historical racism in the health-care system has contributed to higher rates of maternal mortality among women of color compared to white women, which combined with other poor health outcomes have had an impact on the psychological, economic, and social vitality of these communities. If the plaintiffs in *Zubik* are successful, it could open up the door for many other nonprofit entities and for-profit businesses to opt out of providing contraceptive insurance coverage on which women of color depend.”

Shepherd concludes: “Contraception and counseling can help right some of the wrongs done to women of color in the area of reproductive justice and liberty. The Affordable Care Act contraceptive mandate takes us one step closer to such justice. It would be a grave injustice for the Supreme Court to allow the plaintiffs in the *Zubik* case — and others who might follow in their wake — to take us one step back.”

*Kathy Durkin contributed to this article. Davis, a longtime reproductive rights and justice activist, is the author of the pro-choice novel ‘Love Means Second Chances.’*

tify the bosses’ and the politicians’ greed.

The politicians do not want to see a united front against homophobia, transphobia, sexism, racism, ableism or any other issue plaguing the working class. They want to divide us, using lies that make us enemies of each other. But as revolutionaries, we understand that fighting for the working class means fighting back against every attack on oppressed peoples.

The actions in response to HB 2 will only grow in militancy as more and more people realize that we cannot contend with the police powers of the state on a basis of morality or conscience. A government that is so ready to deny trans\* people the right to pee or self-identify, deny workers the right to fight against racism and discrimination, and prevent people from identifying with the oppression of others does not have a conscience and is

not interested in one.

The March 24 demonstration sent a strong message to the ruling class: “If we don’t get no justice, then y’all don’t get no peace.” We will not stop fighting until trans\* people can determine our own futures; until police violence against Black communities ends; until immigrants have freedom of movement; until women are free from the chains of patriarchy; until all working-class and oppressed communities are free from the chokehold of capitalism.

Black lives matter! Abolish the police! Defend trans\* women! Protect queer youth!

*L.T. Pham was arrested during the protest.*

*Trans\* is used with an asterisk to indicate the spectrum of all the different genders of people who do not conform to the either/or of male/female.*



# Revolution is good for your health

## Cuba, Puerto Rico and Zika



By Lyn Neeley

The Caribbean countries of Puerto Rico and Cuba, both located near the Zika hot zone, have similar peoples and climates — but a very different relationship to the Zika crisis.

Cuba, a sovereign socialist country, has been investing ample money and resources to nearly eliminate *Aedes aegypti*, the mosquito that carries Zika, dengue and chikungunya. Puerto Rico, as a colony of the United States, has been deprived of its political, economic and legal sovereignty, putting it at the mercy of the U.S. Congress and financial institutions. The island is expected to be hit hard by a surge of Zika over the next few months.

Zika arrived in Puerto Rico earlier than expected. As of March 23, there were already 258 locally acquired cases in Puerto Rico, including 35 pregnant women. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Only 20 percent of those who contract Zika show any of its mild, flu-like symptoms, but evidence shows that the virus can target fetal nerve cells, causing infants to be born with microcephaly — unusually small heads and incomplete brain development. Since Zika hit Brazil last year, a total of 863 cases of microcephaly have been confirmed and 4,300 more are suspected. (Livescience, March 22)

Zika is also linked to a rise in Guillain-Barré syndrome, a nerve disorder causing muscle weakness, paralysis and even death in adults. There has already been one reported case in Puerto Rico and new cases are predicted to arrive this fall.

This health menace comes at the worst possible time. Puerto Rico faces an unpayable \$73 billion public debt and a 40 percent unemployment rate. Close to 58 percent of the people live in poverty.

Austerity measures forced by the U.S. government have led to the closing of hospitals and health care centers, reduction of services and migration to the U.S. mainland of thousands of medical professionals. Thousands of civic workers needed to fight mosquitoes have been laid off, leading the country to offer early release for those convicted of drug abuse in return for public service to help with the Zika crisis.

In addition, the U.S. Congress last year imposed cuts in Puerto Rico's already meager reimbursements of Medicare and Medicaid.

Puerto Rico's colonial government has cut essential services in order to pay on the debt, putting the majority of Puerto Rican families in misery. The government has been privatizing or selling public property like the health services, phone company, industries and roads. (Workers World, June 4, 2015)

More than 3,000 doctors have left Puerto Rico for the U.S. to work in better conditions. The massive migration of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. South totaled 144,000 in 2014. Many are young college graduates, representing a real brain drain of Puerto Rico's future.

Workers World reported last year on May 28: "There is only one pediatrician for every 900 children on the island. The infant mortality rate is 8.2 per thousand live births. There is a general deterioration of health in the population, including mental health, which presents itself as an increase in depression and suicide."

Mosquitoes reproduce rapidly in standing water, so workers are attempting to seal all septic tanks and clean up dumps, junkyards, abandoned pools

and houses, and areas strewn with water-catching litter like old tires. Although 900,000 discarded tires were cleared from residential areas, Thomas Frieden, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), said, "You just can't remove all the standing water in Puerto Rico." He added, "Really intense efforts to control mosquitoes have made very little impact." (New York Times, March 19)

*Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes in Puerto Rico have developed resistance to permethrin, the main insecticide spray used for years in neighborhood areas. And the spray is quickly washed away with the rains. Roberto Barrera at the CDC said, "The growing resistance to permethrin is a blow for public health authorities hoping to limit the damage Zika may wreak in Puerto Rico." (STAT, March 10)

CDC experts are searching for alternative pesticides. Barrera said eliminating the mosquito hasn't been as successful as in the past when Puerto Rico was battling dengue, carried by the same mosquitos.

Nearly 100 women a day become pregnant in Puerto Rico, so the country is focusing on finding and educating them. The government provides mother-and-child nutrition clinics. About 5,000 women have already attended lectures on Zika at the clinics. While health clinics hoped to provide pregnant women with kits including bug repellent, a mosquito net and condoms, which would also prevent possible sexual transmission of Zika, only 30 kits arrived and were gone on the first day.

Women are told to hold off getting pregnant until the Zika crisis is over — but preventing pregnancy has challenges. The government has frozen the price of condoms, threatening stores with fines of up to \$10,000 if they raise the cost. (It did the same for repellent and window screens.) But Catholic Archbishop Roberto González criticized Puerto Rico's condom distribution plans, asking people to "practice self-discipline." (New York Times, March 19)

Schools are run down and overcrowded due to lack of funding. Talk of "reconfiguration" of schools is actually another attempt to privatize education. High school girls make up 20 percent of all pregnancies in Puerto Rico, so schools are getting screens and air conditioning to keep the mosquitoes out. But the former secretary of health, Dr. Johnny Rullán, asked, "What are you going to do about doors if you have 50 kids running in and out?" Girls are being given insect repellent and allowed to wear pants to cover their legs.

**Congress holds back funds**

In February, the Obama administration asked Congress for \$1.8 billion to deal with the Zika crisis. While Congress has no trouble allocating hundreds of billions of dollars for war and corporate subsidies, the head of the House Appropriations Committee, Republican Hal Rogers, turned down the request and said the money should come instead from funds set aside to fight Ebola, dengue and chikungunya.

These tropical diseases will only worsen and spread north as global temperatures rise. Imperialist countries and transnational corporations are the major contributors to world climate change, much of it from deforestation and the burning of fossil fuels. Washington needs



PHOTO: GRANMA

Cuba emphasizes public health and has prevented a Zika outbreak with an aggressive campaign to monitor fevers and clean up places where mosquitoes breed.

to be held accountable for money to fight the growing Zika crisis.

Work being done by the CDC on dengue and tick-borne diseases is being put on hold so CDC staffers can put all their resources towards fighting Zika. Dr. Anthony Fauci, scientific director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, calls the Zika outbreak "a serious situation," adding, "We can't sustain it if we don't have the support that we need."

"There's a fair amount of pessimism about [controlling Zika] among the people who tried to fight dengue and chikungunya," said CDC Director Frieden.

**Cuban socialist health care brings success**

How has Cuba been so successful in wiping out the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito and minimizing the Zika crisis? It wasn't until March 15 that Cuba confirmed the first case of locally contracted Zika: a 21-year-old woman from Havana who had not traveled out of the country. In 2015, Cuba had 1,641 cases of dengue and no fatalities, one of the lowest rates in the Americas. El Salvador, with a little over half the population of Cuba, suffered nearly 50,000 cases. In Cuba, coordinated efforts by whole communities plus government resources helped curb *Aedes aegypti* and control dengue disease.

In Cuba, there is socialist medicine. Everyone is covered. Cuba emphasizes public health and has prevented a Zika outbreak with an aggressive campaign to monitor fevers and clean up places where mosquitoes breed. Anyone showing flu-like symptoms is tested immediately to decrease the risk of transmission of dengue virus, chikungunya or Zika.

"Cuba is famously proactive when it comes to fighting tropical diseases — with years of experience — useful now that the whole world is turning into the tropics," pointed out The Nation on Feb. 2.

As soon as Zika hit South America, Cuba responded with "extreme vigilance and measures to combat mosquitoes; examining anyone with a non-specific fever and strengthening sanitary controls at the country's entry and exit points." (Granma, March 10)

Over 200 National Revolutionary Police and 9,000 Revolutionary

Armed Forces are employed to eradicate *Aedes aegypti*. Trained public health workers educate the population in preventative measures: cleaning roofs, basements, elevator shafts, rivers and water areas; covering potable water tanks; eliminating standing water and repairing leaks. It provides the population with products to prevent mosquito bites.

Nonbiodegradable containers like used tires and plastic bags collect water and are ideal habitats for mosquitoes to lay their eggs. Cuba is renowned for its recycling programs. Trash is creatively used to fix cars and bicycles or make toys; plastic bags are washed, dried and used over and over.

The Cuban health ministry MINSAP (Ministerio de Salud Pública) is providing even more frequent and regular checkups in order to prevent possible Zika infection and reduce the risk of microcephaly. It recommends that all women of child-bearing age take folic acid, whether they are trying for a baby or not, to improve immune defense.

Infants are immunized against 13 diseases, using vaccines made mostly in Cuba. Mother-to-child transmission of HIV-AIDS and syphilis has been eliminated, paving the way for generations to live free from those diseases.

After leading Cuba's great revolution to victory, Fidel Castro said Cuba's future must be "a future of people of science." Socialist Cuba was one of the first countries to develop biotechnology companies, years before Europe. Cuba exports biotech and medical products and vaccines to all five continents.

Zika has now hit 38 countries. Panama's first case of microcephaly was reported on March 22, after a Zika crisis there. In Brazil, scientists expect an additional 2,500 cases of microcephaly because of its Zika epidemic.

The slogan of the progressive independence movement in Puerto Rico is "Puerto Rico is not for sale." To stop the spread of Zika and reduce the risk of a whole generation becoming victims of microcephaly and Guillain-Barré syndrome, Puerto Rico needs funds for health care workers, schools and women's clinics — not having its resources drained by a national "debt" caused by its subordination to U.S. imperialism. Puerto Rico needs a sovereign, socialist system like Cuba.

*Berta Joubert-Ceci contributed to this article.*



PHOTO: ORIOL CRUZ

Cuba responded to the Zika crisis with extreme vigilance and measures to combat mosquitoes.

**'The original Black Panther Party'**

*Continued from page 5*

gan to liberate themselves by escaping to swampy lands near the Alabama River to live in "maroon" lands and secret encampments of Native peoples.

Though no direct connection can be traced, it seems possible that the appeal of the black panther to local Lowndes County people might rest in its Indig-

enous roots — the fact that the Panther gens, the Katsalgi, was one of the primary Creek social units. In folk narratives, the panther is sometimes featured as a leader or commander of other animal peoples. (native-languages.org)

*Southern native Minnie Bruce Pratt cast her first vote in Alabama in November 1966 — for the Black Panther Party.*



# Latin America Briefs

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

## Colombia

Thousands of people took to the streets in Bogota and in more than 100 other municipalities around Colombia on March 17. It was the largest mobilization in the country in the last 15 years.

The people responded to a call from the Coordination of Social Organizations, made up of more than 40 organizations, including the Central Union of Workers of Colombia and the General Confederation of Workers. The breadth of the represented sectors is a giant step toward achieving the group's ultimate goal: real peace with social justice.

The entire left — the different federations and trade unions, youth and students, the peasants, the Afro-Colombian people, Indigenous people, women, the LGBTQ community, all representing the people who are dissatisfied with the neoliberal policies of the Juan Manuel Santos government — came out to publicly demonstrate.

It was really a demonstration of united people's power that confronts government actions that are undermining the welfare of the masses.

In Havana, Cuba, the FARC-EP (the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia — People's Army) and the government of Colombia are laying the foundation for a peace agreement. On the other hand, the Santos regime has been unraveling the threads in Colombia, where these accords will be consolidated. And the people have responded by demanding the inclusion of issues that had been brought to the ne-

gotiating table but which the government rejected. These include the call for a new constitutional assembly to re-establish the country on a more just foundation.

The following excerpts from the letter to President Santos, about why the national strike was called for March 17, illustrate the critical situation in the country:

“After the failure of the negotiations on the Legal Minimum Wage, the absurd and arbitrary sale of ISAGEN [the state-owned power generation company] ... the announcement of the wrongful Tax Reform for the popular sectors, ... your non-compliance toward pensioners and workers over an agreement signed by you to reduce health contributions from 12 to 4 percent; ... [since we have] confirmed [the] non-compliances with agreements signed with Agro-Livestock Dignity, Agrarian Summit, as well as with the truckers' crusade, taxi drivers and other sectors; [and] in addition to the above, the noxious legislative agenda, the high degree of impoverishment of our farmers and the majority of the population, the high cost of the basic family food basket and public transport, unemployment, sub-employment of the informal sector, unpayable foreign debt, all of them a product of a regressive neoliberal economic model; we have decided to convene, organize and carry out a NATIONAL DAY OF PROTEST which will be a NATIONAL STRIKE.”

Then they included the 15 key demands, among which are the development of a structural program with emer-



Protest in Buenos Aires.

gency measures for the people in the Guajira; compliance with the agreements signed between the government and the various organizations; raising wages; stopping the privatization of public enterprises; overhauling the Free Trade Agreements; stopping the privatization of health and education; respecting labor rights; guaranteeing human rights; and stopping the criminalization of protest, among others.

The Unitary National Command — the steering committee of the mobilization — has highlighted the importance of everyone's commitment to put pressure on the government to name a Negotiating Commission to attend to these demands.

## Argentina

In Argentina, 250,000 people marched on March 24 at the Plaza de Mayo on the Day of Remembrance for Truth and Justice commemorating the 40th anniversary of the civilian-military coup of 1976. The coup installed a bloody dictatorship that killed and exiled thousands and disappeared 30,000 Argentinians.

The march not only commemorated the cruelty of 40 years ago, but protested against the neoliberal and pro-U.S. policy of the current government of Mauricio Macri.

The leader of the Grandmothers of

the Plaza de Mayo, Estela de Carlotto, summarized the position of the march against Macri, saying, “40 years after the genocidal coup, we feel again called to defend democracy. ... The change of government has brought the daily violation of rights.” (Telesurtv.net)

At the very same time, U.S. President Barack Obama was visiting the capital Buenos Aires and commemorated the anniversary with the Argentine president in a separate activity where there was no presence of human rights organizations, including the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo who refused the government's invitation.

It must be mentioned that Obama has never apologized for the U.S. criminal association with the dictatorship. The people, while demonstrating against his visit, also demanded from Obama the clarification of the U.S. role and the release of classified information, including the names of the disappeared.

We must highlight the hypocrisy of Macri, whose legislative bloc voted in 2006 against the bill that would officially proclaim March 24 a day dedicated to the Remembrance.

If Obama and Macri thought that Argentina could be a wedge to divide the Latin American countries seeking progressive development for their peoples, they got a clear message from this united and massive demonstration, showing that the will of the progressive people is alive and well in that nation.

*Translation: Michael Otto.*

# What does the Brazilian crisis teach us?

By Olmedo Beluche

*The author is a Panamanian sociologist and political activist.*

A huge political crisis is looming over the giant Brazil. A judicial investigation called “Lava Jato” has exposed a pattern of corruption involving senior officials from Petrobras, a semi-public Brazilian multinational corporation in the petroleum industry, large construction companies and Brazilian politicians.

Allegations of corruption involve not only the Workers Party (PT), as the media would like to present it, but the Progressive Party (PP) and the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB), both right-wing parties.

But the right wing is maneuvering with the collaboration of the bourgeois media, led by the Globo network, and the complicity of the U.S. embassy, to only target charges against President Dilma Rousseff, former President Ignacio Lula Da Silva and the PT.

## Rightist coup maneuver

The right wing aims to impose a parliamentary coup d'état, forcing the impeachment of the president by Congress, which is headed by rightist Eduardo Cunha, who is accused of receiving more than \$5 million in “tips” from Petrobras.

The coup maneuver would be to get Rousseff out through a rigged trial held by the corrupt Congress and to seize power by promoting Vice President Michel Temer, of the right-wing PMDB, currently allied with the PT government, without holding new elections or any kind of referendum.

## How did the corruption operate?

The central actors in the crisis are Petrobras executives appointed by the PT government, Renato Duque and Pedro Barusco, and a former senator of that

party, Delcidio Amaral.

The scheme was that Petrobras sold mainly gasoline at prices below the international market prices to Braskem, the largest petrochemical company in Latin America, which is a subsidiary of the multinational Odebrecht Group. The millions in profits to Braskem (and theft of Petrobras) is estimated at \$1.6 billion between 2009 and 2014.

Then Odebrecht, through its offices and phantom companies in such tax havens as Switzerland and Panama, paid “tips” to the staff who had expedited this lucrative business.

Research estimates that the “tip” for Duque and Barusco was approximately 2 percent of the value of each contract. As Duque was treasurer of the PT, it is estimated that some of the money was used to finance the party. But the corruption also stains the head of the right-wing opposition in the Senate, Eduardo Cunha, accused by the Supreme Court of receiving payments of \$5 million.

The charges include the directors of Odebrecht and the “operator” of the PMDB, as well as a manager of Petrobras, who is related to the Progressive Party. As is already known, Marcelo Odebrecht, head of the company, has been sentenced to 20 years in prison for these crimes.

## Political system is mother of corruption

What the media don't report is that the supposedly “democratic” political systems require additional packets of millions of dollars to participate in the electoral process for a chance of “being elected.”

Where it is most clear that the injection of economic power determines election results is in the U.S., where politicians are funded directly by powerful corporations and billionaires. Once politicians are elected, they receive additional funding from lobbyists.

The media also hide the fact that they and their owners, having an absolute monopoly on the means of communication and imposing prices on all advertising, are the main beneficiaries of the millions spent on election campaigns.

## Lula and Odebrecht

It has recently come out that there is a close relationship between former President Lula Da Silva and the Brazilian Odebrecht construction company. Research has brought to light that between 2011 and 2013, Lula received “sponsorship” from these companies and grants up to about \$5 million U.S. to the “Lula Institute,” and \$3 million U.S. was paid to him in royalties for his lectures abroad.

Lula argues that these payments are legal and that other former presidents who also travel the world promoting their countries and companies charge a hefty sum for lecturing.

Not only is Lula's version of the legality of such payments credible, but also it is public knowledge that he has never refused to testify before the judges on the subject. However, from the working-class point of view, which Lula has represented for decades, the close relationship with a transnational company like Odebrecht presents ethical-political dilemmas that can be and are widely and publicly discussed in Brazil.

## Rousseff's economic policy alienates working-class social base

Crushed between a growing capitalist crisis, falling prices of raw materials, increasing social struggles, as well as the media campaign against her, President Rousseff and the PT, instead of going to the left, are giving in to neoliberal policies. That the PT is looking to the right in search of support is shown by its alliance with the PMDB.

Although the PT government inaugu-

rated in Latin America the so-called social policies involved in Lula's “Zero Hunger Plan,” the truth is there have been no fundamental changes in the basic aspects of life expected from a government that said it would work on behalf of the workers. On the contrary, the Rousseff government leans increasingly toward neoliberal measures.

The social situation is deteriorating: 1.5 million jobs were lost in 2015. In 2016, the unemployment rate is 7.6 percent. Youth unemployment in the metropolitan area of Sao Paulo exceeds 28 percent. Inflation last year edged close to 11 percent.

This year, President Rousseff adopted two agreements that aroused union opposition: the PT, PMDB and Social Democracy Party (PSDB) decided together to give the private sector oil reserves belonging to Petrobras and to freeze the minimum wage and salaries of public employees, while giving priority to debt payments to the banks.

## For a democratic and popular way out of the crisis

Faced with the political crisis looming over Brazil and facing the right-wing's maneuver to attempt a parliamentary coup to remove Rousseff and replace her with the vice president, important sectors of the leftist opposition have denounced the move against democracy and against the people, proposing that there can be no way out that does not include popular participation.

The Latin American experience in general and the Brazilian in particular show that the only way to save progressive political processes from the attacks of the right wing and imperialism is not by trying to negotiate and give in to their demands, but by convening popular mobilization and taking more radical socialist measures.

*Translation and minor editing by WW/MO staff.*



# WORKERS WORLD

## editorial

# Billionaires and the minimum wage

Ah, the contradictions of capitalism. You can't get away from them.

Capitalist bosses want to pay their workers the lowest wages possible. They also want to sell their products for the highest prices possible. This is the source of the class struggle and of the fierce competition among capitalist enterprises and groups of enterprises.

It is also the source of capitalist crisis. How can you sell if people can't buy? Credit is one way, but there always comes the day of reckoning.

California's Gov. Jerry Brown on March 28 announced a deal with leaders of the State Legislature to pass a law that would raise the minimum wage in the state from the current \$10 an hour to \$15, to be phased in over six years. This comes after a vigorous campaign waged by unions and other workers' organizations — which include many immigrants, workers of color and women, often single mothers, who usually get paid the least.

The reaction by the bosses is of course mixed. Those paying low wages are fiercely opposed to it, even though it won't take full effect until 2022. Others, who want to be able to sell more of their products, are grudgingly agreeing to it — hence the acquiescence by a section of the capitalist political establishment.

And then there are those among the wealthy, be they owners of enterprises or the idle rich living off inherited wealth — and there are many of those enjoying life in sunny California — who are scared by the prospect of a rising militancy among workers that could cost them even more in the future.

The struggle won't end here, of course. The bosses will continue to find ways to squeeze more work out of the workers and will look for ways to cut their wages at the same time. That's the nature of capitalism. Opponents of the law have said it will cause layoffs. That doesn't have to happen, but the bosses may make it happen just to spite the law. We should see this as a limited victory, which will make a difference only if it inspires greater struggle for even bigger wins in the future.

A March 29 New York Times article about car manufacturing and sales in China contained an amazing fact, yet it was just a phrase in one sentence: "The buyers are not just China's college-educated, white-collar elite, but also the beneficiaries of the country's roughly eight-fold growth in blue-collar wages in the last dozen years."

So blue-collar wages in China today are eight times what they were a dozen years ago!

This reflects the enormous growth in productivity as People's China has developed a modern industrial base. Most of that growth has gone to raise the people's standard of living. Productivity here has also grown tremendously. Yet workers' real wages here peaked in 1973, more than 40 years ago! All the growth in productivity since then has benefitted only the rich, turning millionaires into billionaires. And creating today's in-your-face inequality.

China had a revolution. We need our own revolution to free up our economy. It's as simple as that. □



## ¿Qué nos enseña la crisis brasileña?

Continua de página 12

desempleo es 7,6 por ciento. El desempleo juvenil en la zona metropolitana de San Pablo supera el 28 por ciento. La inflación el año pasado bordeó el 11 por ciento.

Este año, la presidenta Rousseff, adoptó dos acuerdos que le han ganado repudio sindical: en acuerdo PT, PSDB y PMDB decidieron entregar al sector privado reservas petroleras de PETROBRAS y decidió el congelamiento del salario mínimo y de los sueldos de los empleados públicos, anteponiendo el pago de la deuda a la banca.

**Por una salida democrática y popular a la crisis**

Frente a la crisis política que se cierne

sobre Brasil y frente a la maniobra de la derecha que pretende un golpe parlamentario para sacar a Dilma y sustituirla por su vicepresidente, importantes sectores de la oposición de izquierda denuncian la jugada contra la democracia y contra el pueblo, proponiendo que no puede haber ninguna salida que no contemple la participación popular.

La experiencia latinoamericana en general, y la brasileña en particular, demuestran que la única manera de salvar procesos políticos progresistas de los embates de la derecha y el imperialismo, no es tratando de pactar y ceder a sus requerimientos, sino convocando la movilización popular y radicalizando las medidas de carácter socialista.

Where do your federal taxes go? Largely to pay for the U.S. war machine, which gobbles up over half the national budget. You don't want to, but your money helps the superrich launch military adventures to control the global economy. Big Oil and Fortune 500 companies like General Electric reap the benefits, but they don't even pay taxes year after year. Your taxes also subsidize billion-dollar-merchandisers like Walmart and McDonald's, whose workers get paid so little they're forced to rely on government services to keep their families alive.

# 'Berta did not die, she multiplied'



By Teresa Gutierrez

March 24 — It has been three weeks since the assassination of beloved Indigenous leader and environmentalist activist Berta Cáceres of Honduras.

Berta was killed by unknown assailants on March 3, after many death threats for her tireless work in defense of the Lenca nation as well as for the organization she co-founded, COPINH (Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Honduras), which defended the Lenca people's treasured ancestral land and rivers.

The Honduran and U.S. governments' response is not to seek her murderers, but to harass, arrest and threaten COPINH instead. Immediately after her death, the Honduran state detained her comrades in COPINH and confiscated their cell phones and other belongings. The Honduran government, a U.S. puppet, even made the absurd accusation that it was, in fact, COPINH members who had killed Berta.

According to Beverly Bell, in the March 22 Foreign Policy in Focus, "Prominent COPINH organizer Aureliano Molina was imprisoned for two days on suspicion of 'a crime of passion,' though he was two hours away. ... Two other COPINH leaders were interrogated for days. ... The government denied their request for accompaniment by their lawyers."

A fellow comrade of Berta's from Mexico who was wounded when Cáceres was killed, Gustavo Castro, also an environmental activist, witnessed her murder. Castro is currently being detained in Honduras and is prohibited from leaving the country until further notice. The movement believes that the Honduran government may attempt to frame Gustavo Castro for Cáceres' murder.

The deaths and repression continue. On March 19, another COPINH member, Nelson García, was viciously shot in the face and killed as he helped defend a community from military occupation.

### Resistance grows

Despite the repression, the movement throughout the country and indeed the world has responded: "Berta did not die, she multiplied."

In the capital, Tegucigalpa, youths spray graffiti with that slogan across the city in an act of defiance to the occupying, U.S.-supported, death-squad government. Demonstrations and vigils are held regularly. On International Women's Day, March 8, marches with women carrying Berta's picture flooded the streets. Reports that organizations of young people are working to take back their land are steady.

The Honduras Solidarity Network issued this alert: "To the national and international community ... through this we make the public aware that ... youth from Guadalupe Carney, Trujillo Colón, Hon-

duras, members of the Peasant Movement of Aguán ... came to reclaim land belonging to the campesino community."

Olivia Zúñiga Cáceres, Berta's oldest daughter, said on Democracy Now! on March 18: "Today, we are here to demand justice and an explanation for the crime of the death of my mother, Berta Cáceres. We've launched ... a battle at the international level, to exert pressure in order to demand that the ... multinational corporations that come to plunder, to exterminate our people ... spill our blood in our territories ... that they stop being financed and leave our country."

Another daughter, Laura, traveled to Washington to meet with legislators about the assassination. There she told of Cáceres' efforts to stop the Agua Zarca Dam construction along the Gualcarque River. This river is vital to the livelihood of the Indigenous Lenca people. More than 100 environmental defenders have been killed in Honduras in the last decade, according to the Global Witness nongovernmental organization.

Laura told Washington that Cáceres had received over 30 death threats.

After Cáceres' death, at least 60 congressional representatives sent a letter to Secretary of State John Kerry requesting an independent, international investigation into her murder.

The letter criticized ongoing U.S. support for Honduran security forces. Earlier this year, the Obama administration announced it would provide up to \$750 million to support security and economic development programs across Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador.

However, it is, in fact, the U.S. government that is ultimately responsible for the death of Berta and the thousands of other human rights activists, political organizers, women, journalists, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer activists and others who have been terrorized for their resistance to an illegal, repressive, fraudulent government.

Berta Cáceres was not just an environmentalist. Her words demonstrate that she was anti-imperialist. In a Guardian newspaper interview in 2015, she declared:

"The political, economic and social situation in Honduras is getting worse, and there is an imposition of a project of domination, of violent oppression, of militarization, of violation of human rights, of transnationalization, of the turning over of the riches and sovereignty of the land to corporate capital, for it to privatize energy, the rivers, the land; for mining exploitation; for the creation of development zones."

The turnover of wealth is all for U.S. imperialism.

*To find out what you can do for the people of Honduras and get justice for Berta Cáceres, demand freedom for Gustavo Castro and support the struggle in Honduras, visit hondurassolidarity.org and otherworldsarepossible.org*

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# U.S. sanctions aim to starve Zimbabwe into submission

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

President Barack Obama’s administration, utilizing the Office of Foreign Assets Control, announced on March 2 a year’s extension of sanctions that encompass two Zimbabwe-based fertilizer firms owned by the government-controlled Industrial Development Corporation (IDCZ).

The OFAC included Chemplex Holdings and the Zimbabwe Fertilizer Company on its sanctions list. IDCZ owns 100 percent of Chemplex’s shares and 50 percent in the Zimbabwe Fertilizer Company. IDCZ also controls 15 percent of shares in Sable Chemicals, the country’s only ammonium nitrate company.

Derick Sibanda, IDCZ spokesperson, said U.S.actions were “aimed at paralyzing” the economy’s agricultural sector and frustrating Zim Asset, Zimbabwe’s economic development program. He said, “The two companies have been ... affected by virtue of being owned by IDCZ but the latest development will worsen the situation.” The two companies are critical in achieving the targets of the country’s Food and Nutrition Cluster. (allafrica.com, March 10)

The anti-Zimbabwe sanctions were implemented in 2003 in retaliation for the government’s year 2000 land reform program. That program entailed seizures of 50 percent of commercial farms owned by descendants of white British colonizers of the country.

Successive U.S. administrations have never fully supported Zimbabwean independence — even during the height of the 1960s and 1970s national liberation struggle. After the country’s indepen-

dence in 1980, Washington sought to limit the sovereignty and economic freedom enjoyed by the people of this agricultural and mineral-rich country.

Although Zimbabwe has held internationally monitored elections since 2000, both the George W. Bush and the Obama administrations have continued the sanctions. The Zimbabwe government, led by the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), attributes most of its economic problems to these continuing punitive economic measures.

The Obama statement alleges, “These actions and policies” of Zimbabwe’s government “continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat” to U.S. foreign policy. “[So] ... it is necessary to continue this national emergency and to maintain in force the sanctions to respond to this threat.” (allafrica.com, March 4) This statement did not document any alleged threats to the U.S. by Zimbabwe, which maintains diplomatic relations with Washington.

**Sanctions expand; food shortages worsen**

These hostile actions take place amid a mounting food deficit stemming from existing sanctions and aggravated by an El Niño weather pattern in southern Africa that impacts regional climate and water availability. Some 4 million people need food assistance, says Zimbabwe’s state-owned Herald newspaper.

Prisca Mupfumira, minister of public health, labor and social welfare, said the government had enough grain stocks to cover the shortages and was moving quickly to import grain to ensure that no one goes without food. She stressed that the government would meet people’s needs, saying, “We have mobilized the re-

sources, and it is all systems out to ensure grain is moved from areas with surplus maize to those that have a deficit.” (Herald, March 15)

Mupfumira emphasized: “We are now looking forward to the importation programs to increase the flows, but the situation is under control.” The District Development Fund’s operation with 10 trucks moves through the provinces “distributing maize from the Grain Marketing Board depots to the vulnerable.”

President Robert Mugabe told a rally in the town of Bindura on March 18 that despite alleged political sectarianism in food distribution, there would be no discrimination based on party affiliations. He assured residents that the government would supply enough food to meet the burgeoning need.

Mugabe stressed: “Whether ... in the party or any association, we are all the same, bound together as one family of Zimbabweans. ... [Food] is being distributed to people as a whole to save them. We might differ on policies but when we talk of food, all of us should be served. It does not matter which church or party one belongs to.” (Herald, March 19)

**U.S. wages economic warfare**

The sanctions not only target potential imports and exports, but also other institutions which assist the IDCZ. The U.S. Treasury Department fined Barclay’s Bank PLC \$2.5 million for “violating” the sanctions against IDCZ.

On March 5, Barclays Bank PLC announced it is closing its operations in Zimbabwe. This could worsen the country’s ability to attract foreign direct investment.

Even though the U.S. has expanded sanctions against Zimbabwe, the Euro-



pean Union has purportedly lifted most of its trade bans on the country. However, with Washington seeking to cripple the ZANU-PF government through blocking financial transactions, these measures will curtail normal relations with other states that do not share U.S. policy.

Barclays PLC controls 68 percent of shares in Barclays Bank Zimbabwe (BBZ) and said it cannot continue combining BBZ with Barclays Africa Group Ltd., since the firm “doesn’t fit with Barclays’ core strategy.” (The Standard, March 6)

There is speculation that the withdrawal of Barclays, a transnational bank, from the African continent indicates an exodus of capital from the region. Neighboring South Africa is undergoing an economic downturn, with devaluation of the national currency and a flight of private investment.

Economist Reginald Shoko said, “Barclays’ exit could jeopardize” foreign investments, as European investors prefer working with international banks. However, economist John Robertson said BBZ was a separate subsidiary and its local banking business would likely continue, unimpeded by the parent firm’s withdrawal, although, he stressed, Barclays’ withdrawal affects all of Africa. (Standard)

Progressive forces must strongly pressure Washington to stop its sanctions against Zimbabwe, so the country can develop its economy free of imperialist impediments. □

## 17 years after war

# Yugoslavia again protesting NATO domination

By **Heather Cottin**

On March 24, 1999, the U.S. led its European NATO allies in a 78-day bombing campaign targeting Serbia in order to destroy Yugoslavia, the last socialist country holding out in Europe. NATO planes bombed hospitals, factories, schools, trains, television stations, bridges and homes, killing thousands of Yugoslavs.

In 2000, the same NATO forces destabilized what remained of Yugoslavia — the republics of Serbia and Montenegro — then overthrew its political leader, Slobodan Milosevic, later imprisoning and trying him in a pro-NATO court in The Hague, Netherlands, for alleged war crimes. Failing in its attempt to convict him, the court case ended when Milosevic died there on March 11, 2006. Many suspect NATO forces had him poisoned.

NATO’s pattern for the destruction of Libya and Syria — and also of Iraq and Afghanistan, with variations — was based on the experience in Yugoslavia: demonization of a leader, with false charges of “ethnic cleansing” to give a pretext for a NATO “humanitarian intervention,” followed by slaughter of civilians from the air and destruction of the infrastructure.

Yugoslavia was a multinational state, formed by uniting the various South Slavic peoples following the imperialist slaughter of World War I. During World War II people from the Yugoslav republics joined an intense partisan resistance against the Nazi-led German occupation.

Josip Broz, also called Tito, headed the Communist Party-led partisans and became Yugoslavia’s first prime minister and president.

Socialism in Yugoslavia produced artists and intellectuals, free health care, zero unemployment, free education, excellent public transportation and advanced industrial and agricultural development.

While the Soviet Union existed, Yugoslavia was an independent and relatively prosperous country. With no Soviet Union after 1991, Yugoslavia was vulnerable to the powerful imperialist countries in Western Europe and the United States, which provoked and exacerbated disputes among the various Yugoslav peoples.

Although Germany, France, Britain, Italy and the U.S. had competitive interests in Yugoslavia, these imperialist powers joined to destroy the multinational state of more than 20 million people and break it into seven small and weak states that would become mini-colonies of the NATO powers.

In 1991 German imperialism, following its annexation of the German Democratic Republic, supported secessionist puppet regimes in Croatia and Slovenia. Germany also led NATO’s backing of one side of the war in Bosnia from 1992 to 1995.

Washington seized the initiative by backing the illegal paramilitary Kosovo Liberation Army in that province in Serbia. The U.S. used the KLA terrorists to provoke NATO’s war against what remained of Yugoslavia in 1999, putting the



Anti-NATO protest, October in Montenegro.

Pentagon’s air power at the head of the pack of imperialist pirates.

**Opposition grows to privatization of Balkans**

After the destruction of Milosevic and his party, neoliberal forces in Serbia and the other republics privatized the health care system, sold off the mines, and closed automobile, petroleum and other industries. Now Bosnia has an unemployment rate of 43 percent, Croatia’s is 19 percent, and tiny Kosovo’s is 45 percent. Kosovo hosts the largest U.S. military base in the Balkans, Camp Bondsteel, which protects Kosovo’s criminal government and oversees NATO control in the Balkans.

Opposition to NATO is growing. This winter major protests against NATO’s subservient governments emerged. When the government of Montenegro agreed to join NATO, thousands of people in its capital, Podgorica, poured into the streets in opposition last Dec. 13. The former Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, Momir Bulatović, told the rally that joining

NATO, which had bombed Montenegro in 1999, would mean “blood of innocent people on our hands.” (RT, Dec. 13)

Bulatović pointed to the pattern that the war against Yugoslavia set: “What has Afghanistan done wrong, what has Iraq done wrong? Why has Libya been destroyed, what’s happening today in Syria?” After 25 years of oppression the people of ex-Yugoslavia are making the connections, resisting NATO and the juggernaut of militarism, occupation and neoliberalist impoverishment.

On Feb. 20 more than 15,000 people in the Serbian capital, Belgrade, protested in opposition to the Serbian government’s cooperation with NATO. On March 19, thousands marched against NATO in Novi Sad, Serbia’s second largest city.

In 1999 in all the imperialist countries and especially in the United States, the heavy media campaign to demonize Yugoslav President Milosevic weakened war opposition even within the progressive and anti-war movement.

In the U.S. in 1999-2001, the International Action Center and Workers World Party played a leading role among those who stood firm against expanding NATO’s mayhem and slaughter in Yugoslavia. Workers World organized forums and marches all over the country calling for an end to war on Yugoslavia. The IAC also published three books to explain the wars NATO conducted in Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia designed to crush the sovereign nation of Yugoslavia. (iacenter.org)





# ¿Qué nos enseña la crisis brasileña?

Por Olmedo Beluche, sociólogo panameño

Una crisis política enorme se cierne sobre ese gigante que es Brasil. Una investigación judicial denominada “Lava Jato”, ha puesto en evidencia un esquema de corrupción que compromete a altos funcionarios de Petrobras, a grandes empresas constructoras, y a políticos brasileños.

Las denuncias de corrupción involucran no solo al Partido de los Trabajadores (PT), como quieren hacer ver los medios de comunicación, sino que incluyen al Partido Progresista (PP) y al Partido Movimiento Democrático Brasileño (PMDB), ambos de derecha.

Pero la derecha maniobra con ayuda de los medios de comunicación burgueses, encabezados por la red Globo, y la complicidad de la embajada EUA, para enfilar las acusaciones únicamente contra la presidenta Dilma Rousseff, contra el ex presidente Ignacio Lula Da Silva y el PT.

## Maniobra golpista derechista

El objetivo es imponer un golpe de estado parlamentario, forzando el juzgamiento de la presidenta por el Congreso, a cuya cabeza está el derechista Eduardo Cunha, acusado de recibir más de 5 millones de dólares en “propinas” de Petrobras.

La maniobra golpista consistiría en sacar a Dilma, mediante un juicio amañado del Congreso corrupto, para hacerse con el poder imponiendo al vicepresidente, Michel Temer, del derechista PMDB, aliado al gobierno del PT, sin convocar nuevas elecciones, ni ningún tipo de consulta popular.

## ¿Cómo operaba la corrupción?

La crisis tiene como actores centrales a directivos de Petrobras, nombrados por el gobierno del PT, Renato Duque y Pedro Barusco, y un ex senador de ese partido, Delcidio Amaral.

El esquema consistía en que Petrobras vendía principalmente gasolina a precios inferiores a los del mercado internacional a Braskem, subsidiaria de Odebrecht. Las ganancias millonarias de Braskem (y el robo a la Petrobras), se estima en 1600 millones de dólares entre 2009 y 2014.

Luego Odebrecht, a través de sus oficinas y empresas de maletín, en paraísos fiscales, como Suiza y Panamá, pagaba “propinas” a los funcionarios que le habían facilitado estos lucrativos negocios.

La investigación estima que la “propina” de Duque y Barusco era aproximadamente 2 por ciento del valor de cada contrato. Al ser Duque tesorero del PT, se estima que parte del dinero se usó para financiar al partido. Pero la corrupción también salpica al jefe de la oposición derechista del Senado, Eduardo Cunha, acusado por el Supremo Tribunal Federal de recibir gratificaciones por 5 millones de dólares.

También se acusa a los directivos de Odebrecht y al “operador” del PMDB, al igual que a un directivo de Petrobras, relacionado con el Partido Progresista. Como ya se sabe, Marcelo Odebrecht, cabeza de la empresa, ya ha sido conde-

nado a 20 años de prisión por estos delitos.

## Sistema político, madre de la corrupción

Lo que no dicen los medios, es que los sistemas políticos supuestamente “democráticos” requieren millonadas crecientes de dinero para poder participar en los procesos electorales con alguna opción de “ser elegido”.

Dónde más claramente la intromisión del poder económico determina los resultados electorales es en EUA, donde los políticos son financiados directamente por poderosas empresas y multimillonarios, tanto en las campañas, como en sus funciones mediante el llamado “lobby”.

Los medios también esconden que ellos y sus dueños, teniendo el monopolio absoluto sobre los medios de comunicación, e imponiendo los precios sobre las pautas publicitarias, son los principales beneficiarios de los costos millonarios de las campañas electorales.

## Lula y Odebrecht

Ha trascendido recientemente, la relación estrecha entre el ex presidente Lula Da Silva y la empresa constructora brasileña Odebrecht. Las investigaciones han sacado a la luz que, entre 2011 y 2013, Lula recibió “patrocinios” de esas empresas y donaciones de hasta unos US\$ 5 millones al “Instituto Lula” y US\$ 3 millones le fueron pagados en regalías por sus conferencias en el extranjero.

Lula aduce que esos pagos son legales, y que otros ex presidentes también viajan por el mundo promoviendo empresas de sus países y cobran fuertes emolumentos por dictar conferencias.

No sólo es creíble la versión de Lula de la legalidad de esos emolumentos, sino que es público que él no se ha negado nunca a declarar ante los jueces sobre el tema.

Sin embargo, desde el punto de vista de clase obrera, a la que Lula ha representado por décadas, la relación tan estrecha con una empresa transnacional como Odebrecht, sí presenta dilemas ético - políticos que pueden y son debatidos en Brasil.

## Política económica de Dilma la enajena de base social obrera

Aplastada entre una creciente crisis capitalista, la caída de precios de las materias primas, las crecientes luchas sociales, así como la campaña mediática en su contra, la presidenta Rousseff y el PT, en vez de ir hacia la izquierda, ceden a las políticas neoliberales. Ese mirar a la derecha en busca de respaldo lo demuestra su alianza con el PMDB.

Si bien el gobierno PT inauguró en América Latina las llamadas políticas sociales de “transferencias” con el “Plan de Hambre Cero” de Lula, lo cierto es que no ha habido cambios de fondo en ninguno de los aspectos que se esperaban de un gobierno que decía ser de los trabajadores. Por el contrario, el gobierno de Dilma se inclina cada vez más hacia medidas neoliberales.

La situación social se deteriora: en 2015, se perdieron millón y medio de puestos de trabajo. En 2016, la tasa de

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# BREVES DE LATINOAMÉRICA

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

## COLOMBIA

El pasado jueves 17 de marzo, miles de personas salieron a las calles en Bogotá y en más de 100 municipios alrededor del país. Fue la movilización más grande en los últimos 15 años en Colombia.

Respondió a un llamado de la Coordinación de Organizaciones Sociales que está compuesta por más de 40 organizaciones, incluyendo a la Central Unitaria de Trabajadores de Colombia y la Confederación General de Trabajadores. La amplitud de los sectores representados es un paso gigantesco en la consecución de su objetivo final: paz real con justicia social.

Toda la izquierda, las diferentes federaciones y organizaciones sindicales, jóvenes y estudiantes, el campesinado, el pueblo afrocolombiano, indígenas, mujeres, la comunidad lgbt, todo representante del pueblo inconforme con las políticas neoliberales del gobierno de Juan Manuel Santos salió a manifestarse públicamente.

Fue realmente una demostración de poder popular unitario que reacciona ante las acciones del gobierno que atentan contra el bienestar de las masas.

Cuando en la Habana-Cuba se sientan las bases para un acuerdo de paz muy cercano entre las FARC-EP y el gobierno colombiano, el gobierno santista por otro lado, ha estado destejendo en Colombia las fibras donde se asentarían estos acuerdos. Y el pueblo ha respondido exigiendo incluso aspectos que se habían traído a la mesa de conversaciones pero que el gobierno rechazó, tales como el llamado a una nueva asamblea constituyente para así refundar el país en bases más justas.

Los siguientes fragmentos de la carta al presidente Santos sobre la convocatoria al Paro Nacional del 17 de Marzo, ilustran la crítica situación del país:

“Luego del fracaso en las negociaciones del Salario Mínimo Legal, la absurda y arbitraria venta de ISAGEN, [empresa estatal de generación eléctrica] ... el anuncio de la Reforma Tributaria lesiva para los sectores populares, ... el incumplimiento para con los pensionados y los trabajadores sobre un acuerdo suscrito con usted para reducir los aportes en salud del 12 al 4 por ciento ..., constatados los incumplimientos a los acuerdos suscritos con Dignidad Agropecuaria, Cumbre Agraria, así como con la cruzada camionera, taxistas y otros sectores; sumando a lo anterior, la nociva agenda legislativa, el alto grado de empobrecimiento de nuestros campesinos y la mayoría de la población, el alto costo de la canasta familiar y el transporte público, el desempleo, la informalidad, la impagable deuda externa, todo ello producto de un modelo económico neoliberal regresivo, hemos decidido convocar, organizar y llevar a cabo una JORNADA NACIONAL DE PROTESTA bajo la figura de un PARO NACIONAL”.

A continuación se incluían las 15 exigencias claves. Entre las cuales están: el desarrollo de un programa estructural con medidas de emergencia para el pueblo guajiro; cumplimiento de los acuerdos firmados entre el gobierno y las diferentes organizaciones; subida del salario;

rechazo a la privatización de empresas públicas; revisión de los TLC; no a la privatización de salud y educación; respeto a derechos laborales; garantía de los derechos humanos y la no criminalización de la protesta, entre otros.

El Comando Nacional Unitario, el comité timón de las movilizaciones, ha resaltado la importancia del compromiso de todos para que el gobierno nombre una Comisión Negociadora para que atienda estas peticiones.

## ARGENTINA

En Argentina, 250.000 personas marcharon el 24 de marzo en la Plaza de Mayo en el Día Nacional de la Memoria por la Verdad y la Justicia conmemorando los 40 años del golpe cívico-militar del 1976 que instauró la dictadura sangrienta que costó la vida y el exilio de miles, y la desaparición de 30.000 argentinas/os.

La marcha no solo conmemoró la crueldad de 40 años atrás, sino que se manifestó en contra de la política neoliberal y pro-estadounidense de Macri.

La líder de las Abuelas, Estela de Carlotto, resumió la postura de la marcha en contra de Macri diciendo “A 40 años del golpe genocida, nos sentimos nuevamente convocados a defender la democracia... El cambio de gobierno está significando a diario la vulneración de derechos”. (Telesurtv.net)

Al mismo tiempo, el presidente estadounidense Barack Obama visitaba la capital bonaerense y conmemoraba con el Presidente argentino Mauricio Macri en una actividad separada donde no había la presencia de organizaciones defensoras de los derechos humanos, incluyendo a las Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo quienes rehusaron la invitación del gobierno.

Debe mencionarse que Obama nunca se disculpó por la asociación criminal de Estados Unidos con la dictadura. El pueblo, mientras se manifestaba contra su visita, también exigió de Obama, la clarificación del papel de EUA y la publicación de información clasificada, incluyendo los nombres de desaparecidas/os.

Hay que resaltar la hipocresía de Macri, cuyo bloque legislativo en 2006 votó contra el proyecto de ley que haría oficialmente del 24 de marzo, un día dedicado a la Memoria.

Si Obama y Macri pensaron que la Argentina podría ser una cuña para dividir a los países latinoamericanos en busca de un desarrollo progresista de sus pueblos, recibieron un mensaje claro con esta manifestación unitaria y masiva mostrando que la voluntad del pueblo progresista está viva y coleando en este país. □



24 de marzo en la Plaza de Mayo conmemorando la desaparición de 30.000 argentinas/os.