

In New York City

BLACK LIVES MATTER!

By Taryn Fivek and Nathaniel Peters  
New York City

Hundreds of activists skillfully moved past police barricades to scale the stairs to Manhattan's High Line Park and drop two banners April 1. One read, "Stop Trump and de Blasio's War on Black People!" and the other read, "F-ck the Police." Tourists and residents alike took photos and anti-racist literature as activists successfully evaded police while chanting, "Black lives, they matter here! Refugees, they matter here!" and "How do you spell racist? N-Y-P-D!"

The protest initiated by the People's Power Assembly, and supported by NYC Shut it Down, Why Accountability, Workers World Party, Hoods 4 Justice and other activists, sought to bring the battle for Black lives to the forefront of New Yorkers' minds through their militant action, which also took over Macy's at Herald Square, Chelsea Market and the Whitney Museum. One person was arrested and was later released.

Many consider Mayor Bill de Blasio a political ally against Trump's white supremacy, especially since he so often claims that New York is a "sanctuary city" for migrants and people of color. However, Broken Windows Policing, which he supports, is the height of hypocrisy, as it targets people of color primarily with unwarranted summonses and can flag undocumented migrants for deportation for minor infractions like subway fare evasion.

Despite record numbers of activists turning out to march against Trump since the November election, corporate media have been too busy diverting attention toward Russia and north Korea to focus on continued grass-roots resistance against white supremacy.

"This march showed that there is still a militant movement on the ground in NYC dedicated to the abolition of racist policing," said Mike Bento of NYC Shut It Down. "Through the speeches and the chants, the march showed how all the recent attacks on oppressed people by the Trump administration are related to the oppression of Black people up to and including the de Blasio administration's continued support of broken windows policing. From stop-and-frisk to project raids, Trump's social-cleansing platform is facilitated by the continued support of racist policing by



WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN  
April 1, New York City

liberal politicians at the local level."

Clare Fogerty, an organizer with People's Power Assembly and NYC Shut It Down, had earlier attended Timothy Caughman's funeral. Caughman had been stabbed to death March 20 by a depraved racist who had traveled from Baltimore to New York with the stated intention of murdering Black men. Local media ran stories that mentioned the murderer's "sharp outfit" and history of fighting in the murderous U.S. military,

while Caughman was a "career criminal" living in a halfway house. While the media carried on their racist ways, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio saw Caughman's funeral as a great media opportunity.

"De Blasio stood up at Timothy Caughman's funeral and claimed to care about the lives of Black people," Fogerty told WW. "If that was truly the case, he would hold the NYPD accountable for it's continued savage treatment of Black people. He held the funeral up by 10 minutes

'cause he was late and we were waiting for him to capitalize on the death of a Black man. He turned it into a press conference, a goddamn charade."

The April 1 action sent a powerful message across New York — that racist state violence will be challenged wherever and whenever possible. The non-permit protest action traversed midtown to make a strong statement against white supremacy, proving once again that the real path to liberation is in the streets. □



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# RAMONA AFRICA discusses MUMIA ABU-JAMAL, U.S. prisons & Trump



By Lamont Lilly

*Former U.S. political prisoner Ramona Africa is the Minister of Communication for the MOVE Organization and a Philadelphia-based organizer with the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal. She is also the only living survivor of the 1985 MOVE bombing, when the FBI and Philadelphia police dropped two C-4 bombs on her organization's home, killing 11 people. Read along as we discuss the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, the conditions of U.S. prisons and Donald Trump. Read the entire interview on workers.org.*

**Lamont Lilly:** Mumia has been in prison for over three decades now, working on four, most of his time being in solitary confinement and on death row. They’ve tried to break him, but he continues to find strength and keep writing and teaching, even while incarcerated. Right now, Mumia is sick with hepatitis C. There has been a national movement to get Mumia the medicine that would cure it, but the state of Pennsylvania is not allowing that. What the hell is going on?

**Ramona Africa:** Well, there are two attorneys fighting hard on this, Robert Boyle and Bret Grote, who have been fighting to get Mumia treated. (tinyurl.com/lmy4z49) There is a cure for hepatitis C — and that’s what they are pushing for. It’s a drug called Harvoni. The thing is, it’s a two-prong fight. Harvoni in India and Africa costs like \$4 a pill, \$7 a pill. In the United States, it’s like \$1,000 for one pill. The cure is a 90-day treatment. You have to take it every day for 90 days. It is a proven cure, not just a “treatment.” This is the cure for hepatitis C.

One prong of this fight is the pharmaceutical companies. How can you dare charge people \$1,000 a pill (\$90,000 basically for the cure)? Yet, in other countries, much poorer countries, they’re charging people \$4 and \$7 for this pill. I’m not saying that they should raise the price of their pills. I’m saying that these pharmaceutical companies here in the U.S. should not be charging \$1,000 for it over here.

**LL:** You mentioned a “two-prong” fight. What is the second problem that you all are fighting?

**RA:** The other prong is what you just spoke on — the institution. Mumia is so well-known. The situation with

him gets a lot of attention. What the institution is saying is that if they give the treatment to Mumia, then they will have to give it to the other 6,000 to 7,000 inmates in the state of Pennsylvania who also have hepatitis C. And yes, yes, you should! You took custody of these people! You took responsibility for them! So yes, if they’re sick, of course you’re supposed to treat them! I mean, come on.

**LL:** I heard that the prison where Mumia Abu-Jamal is being detained doesn’t have clean drinking water. Is that true? You also have family members in that prison. What have you heard about this?

**RA:** Let me tell you. I know people have heard about Flint, Mich., but contaminated water is not just in Flint. (tinyurl.com/ludzcd4) The prison that our brother, Eddie Africa, and Mumia are in is called Mahanoy Correctional Institution. The water there is so, so bad! It is so bad that they started giving the inmates three little Dixie cups of water with each meal. This is ridiculous! That’s nine little Dixie cups of water per day because the regular water is not drinkable. This is what they’re giving them, nine little Dixie cups of water per day? It’s unreal! Most people have no idea this is going on.

Where my brother Mike Africa is being incarcerated — at Graterford Prison here in Pennsylvania — the water is really bad there, too. He convinced the “Lifers Association” to sell bottled water. It’s one of their fundraisers. But he pays close to \$20 for a case of water. That’s ridiculous. He’s spending \$60 a month for water.

They were telling the guards straight up: Don’t drink the water. Bring your own. My brother Mike works in the

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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 59 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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# DOC promises hep C drugs for Mumia Abu-Jamal

By Betsey Piette

Political prisoner and revolutionary activist Mumia Abu-Jamal was notified March 31 by the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections that he would start receiving Harvoni to treat his hepatitis C infection on or before April 6.

At the same time, Abu-Jamal was informed that medical tests given earlier in the week confirmed he has cirrhosis of the liver, putting him at greater risk of other health complications, including deadly liver cancer.

This bittersweet victory follows a nearly two-year struggle on the streets and in the courts to win access to life-saving hep C medications for Abu-Jamal and thousands of other prisoners in Pennsylvania.

When Abu-Jamal first filed for legal action against the Pennsylvania DOC in September 2015, medical tests taken in

July indicated there was a 60 percent chance he already had cirrhosis. His hep C infection was first diagnosed during a routine blood test in 2012. He began to show signs the infection was worsening in March 2015. Suffering from a severe skin rash and unexplained weight loss, Abu-Jamal suddenly collapsed in a diabetic near coma.

Abu-Jamal and his supporters are relieved that he will finally get the treatment he needs, But there is also a rising tide of anger over the DOC's refusal to comply with previous court requests. Abu-Jamal's attorney, Robert Boyle, noted that, while it is a victory that the DOC has been ordered to get the drugs to Mumia, "It is a scandal that his condition had to get this bad first. It is a scandal also that the DOC has dragged its feet."

Abu-Jamal told Prison Radio: "My first reaction was really shock, anger, disbelief. If I had been treated in 2015, if I had been treated in 2012 when they say they first diagnosed it, I wouldn't be this far advanced. I wouldn't have F4 [a stage when the disease advances from liver fibrosis to cirrhosis]."

In a March 31 public announcement, DOC spokeswoman Amy Worden claimed the only reason for Abu-Jamal's treatment was the progression of his disease diagnosed by tests taken earlier in the week. But hep C experts say treatment with anti-viral medications should be routine at any stage of the disease.

And what Worden failed to mention was that the DOC has fought treatment for Abu-Jamal at every step of the way, including most recently refusing to comply with a Jan. 3 federal order to test and treat him within 21 days.

### PA protocol ruled "unconstitutional"

Despite Abu-Jamal's grievances within the prison system and subsequent court appeals, the DOC did little throughout this process to test for the progression of the disease. It repeatedly stalled, gave false information to the courts and refused to provide adequate treatment.

During a Dec. 15, 2016, federal court hearing, the state's malfeasance came to light. The DOC had filed a false affidavit subsequently used by a U.S. court to dismiss an earlier suit by Abu-Jamal. During the same hearing, the DOC's attorney inadvertently revealed evidence of a recently developed state "protocol" for hep C treatment.

The DOC protocol stated that new anti-viral medicines were to be provided only when a prisoner's disease had gotten to the stage where it was imminently life-threatening, as evidenced by advanced cirrhosis and other symptoms. In other words, the state would wait to treat until the prisoner was near death.

In a January 2017 ruling in Abu-Ja-

mal's favor, federal Judge Robert Mariani called these state protocols an unconstitutional form of "cruel and unusual punishment." Mariani further noted that the cost of providing antiviral drugs to all the Pennsylvania prisoners needing them should not be used as a basis for withholding medication.

Around 700,000 prisoners in the U.S., including 6,000 in Pennsylvania, suffer from active hep C. To date the Pennsylvania DOC has provided treatment for roughly 1 percent of prisoners with the disease. The state argues that providing treatment is cost prohibitive, at around \$50,000 per prisoner if drugs are purchased at a bulk rate. This argument ignores the reality that failure to treat the curable disease means spending hundreds of thousands of dollars per prisoner to treat related diseases including diabetes, heart disease and cancer.

### Enough is enough

Speaking to a group of Abu-Jamal supporters, attorney Boyle noted that the DOC complied only at the very last minute with Judge Mariani's order to treat Mumia. He denounced what he called the DOC's outrageously cavalier actions: "This exposes the DOC's brutality. They wait until people go into a serious phase of a disease and then say, practically, 'If it's too late, it's too late.'"

On the day the DOC informed Abu-Jamal that he would be receiving the hep C treatment, its state attorneys filed a motion with Judge Mariani to have the case "declared moot." After trying to evade compliance with the previous court order, the DOC now wants to avoid paying compensation for damages Abu-Jamal has suffered because of their negligence. The state also clearly wants to avoid a higher court ruling that could go against them, opening the door to a mandate to treat all prisoners.

Supporters of Abu-Jamal have organized countless demonstrations and petition drives to pressure Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf and DOC Commissioner John Wetzel. Activists are asking for vigilance and continued protests and calls to insure that the DOC delivers the full drug treatment to Abu-Jamal. There is concern that many supporters are under the false impression that Abu-Jamal was already receiving the drugs under Mariani's January ruling.

Pam Africa, with the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, stated: "There would be no concession from the DOC to treat Mumia without the international protests and legal actions. Moreover, the fight for Mumia is a fight for all prisoners, and all of us — hep C treatment for Mumia and all prisoners and those outside the prison walls as well! To the DOC, we say enough is enough!" □



## The illusion of correctional 'medicine'

By Mumia Abu-Jamal

*Taken from a March 31 audio recording on prisonradio.org*

In the netherworld of American prisons one must jettison any medical assumption one brings in from the so-called free world. We've been conditioned to see nurses as sweet sources of solace and doctors as people dedicated to healing the sick and easing our pain.

In prison, new rules govern medicine and care. Here, money is master. The ill are all but ignored. This may seem harsh, but I must assure you reality is even harsher.

Recently, I wrote of jailhouse lawyer Dennis Solo McKeithan and his battle to get examined and treated for the painful nerve disorder known as shingles.

As I read this trial transcript I found the remarkable comments and questions by the judge instructive. He asked essentially if a company hired by the DOC [Department of Corrections] to provide health care had a conflict because, as a private company, its interests were to make money by refusing to provide medications needed by prisoners. The witness denied his suggestion, but the judge had hit a nerve.

From 2015 to today, my lawyers and I have been demanding real treatment for my hepatitis C infection.

The DOC initially filed a false affidavit which justified a U.S. magistrate's dismissal of my own suit. The DOC argued that my hepatitis was fine; that it could go years without treatment.

A federal judge disagreed and held a hearing which showed the affidavit was false and months later declared the so-called DOC protocol unconstitutional. The DOC fought back, arguing that my hep C was at a low level. The judge again disagreed, declared the protocol unconstitutional a second time and ordered me treated.

The DOC essentially ignored the court order for close to two months and earlier this week subjected me to more testing. Well the results just came back.

Not only do I have advanced hepatitis C, I have cirrhosis of the liver — called F4, because the DOC didn't want to spend money to treat my infection. The DOC said it would cost them \$600 million. It may only cost me my life. □

## RAMONA AFRICA

*Continued from page 2*

kitchen there, and he was telling me that in the guards' dining room they have filters on the water spigots, but not for the inmates, of course. That is the state of what's happening in this country, not just with Mumia, but in prisons all over this country. ([tinyurl.com/mlmapdu](http://tinyurl.com/mlmapdu))

I don't know what it's going to take for people to really — and I mean really! — get the message that this system and those running it are not operating in our interests, in the interests of the people. Their only interest is money and keeping this system going. I don't know when people are really going to get that, but we can't look to this system for anything.

**LL:** Speaking of "the system" and those who are running it, what are your thoughts on the election of Donald Trump?

**RA:** I'm not a Hillary Clinton fan at all, but the bottom line is they told people to their faces: "Your vote doesn't count." You don't elect the president. They say that Hillary had over 2 million more votes than Donald Trump. ([tinyurl.com/zkayrtu](http://tinyurl.com/zkayrtu))

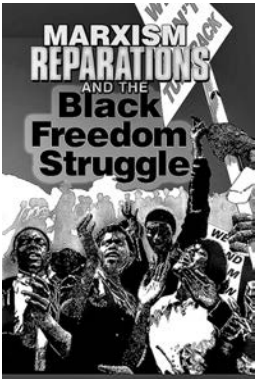
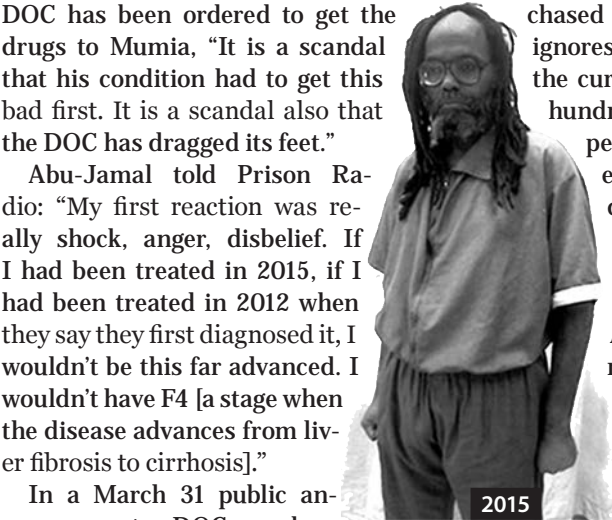
So, why he is now the president? Because this mystical electoral college selects the president. That's why. It has nothing to do with who "the people" elected. They tell you that to your face, and you're still going to believe in this system? You're still going to hallucinate that you can get something out of this?

I don't know what it's going to take for people to realize that we don't need this system. We can't use or get anything from this system. It's the system that needs us, that relies on the people, not the other way around. We have to let this system go and make up our minds to do for ourselves, because we sure aren't getting anything from this system. Nothing!

**LL:** We wish you and Brother Mumia Abu-Jamal much strength and continued resistance. We honor your many sacrifices for the people. Thank you for your time, Ramona!

**RA:** Thank you, Lamont. Long live the revolution! Free Mumia! On a move!

*Lamont Lilly was the 2016 Workers World Party U.S. vice presidential candidate. In 2015, he was a U.S. delegate at the International Forum for Justice in Palestine in Beirut, Lebanon. He is also an activist and organizer in the Black Lives Matter movement.*



## MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

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Available at Amazon and other bookstores.



Detroit

# Protest demands release of funds

By Jerry Goldberg  
Detroit

A demonstration at the Wayne County Treasurer’s office in Detroit on March 31 called for an immediate moratorium on tax foreclosures and water shutoffs. According to Loveland Technologies, which surveys tax foreclosures, 43,624 homes were noticed for tax foreclosure this year; of this number, 35,601 of these homes are in Detroit, and 31,586 surveyed as occupied. (makeloveland.com) This is on top of the over 150,000 homes

already subjected to tax foreclosures since 2002, as well as the approximately 100,000 mortgage foreclosures which have occurred in Detroit since 2006 as a result of the racist, predatory, subprime lending schemes perpetrated by the big banks. The state of Michigan has received \$761 million dollars in Helping Hardest Hit Funds from the federal government since 2010. These funds are a pittance of the \$700 billion bank bailout. The funds available to avoid these tax foreclosures are not being used or used

properly. While the purpose of these funds is supposed to be to keep families in their homes, \$381 million has been earmarked by MSHDA (the Michigan State Housing and Development Authority), the state administrator of the Helping Hardest Hit program, for blight removal (blight caused by the banks and corporations). Only \$216 million is being used to avoid foreclosures by paying homeowners’ delinquent mortgage and property tax bills.

Funds frozen for Detroit’s ‘hardest hit’

Over \$200 million of blight funds remained unspent as of January, according to the most recent federal treasury report on the Hardest Hit program. This is because they are continually being frozen due to the corruption and fraud of the Detroit Land Bank and Blight Removal Task Force, as documented in federal, state and city audits. Despite this corruption, MSHDA is refusing to reallocate these funds to keep families in their homes as they were intended.

Tens of thousands of Detroiters also face water shutoffs, which are nothing but evictions in another form. These are in addition to the 70,000 water shutoffs that occurred between 2014 and October



WW PHOTO: ABAYOMI AZIKIWE

Former Detroit City Councilwoman Joann Watson speaking.

2016. (Detroit News, Oct. 13) The demonstration, on the last day for residents to make payments before their homes are slated to be auctioned off, was addressed by TV broadcaster and former City Councilwoman Joann Watson; mayoral candidate Coleman Young II; William Davis of the Detroit Active and Retired Employees Association; Abayomi Azikiwe and Jerry Goldberg of the Moratorium Now! Coalition; and Mariah Urueta, Michigan organizer at Food & Water Watch. Every speaker called for an immediate moratorium on foreclosures and water shutoffs, and use of the Hardest Hit Funds to keep families in their homes with running water, not to tear them down.

A lawsuit by the American Civil Liberties Union is also moving forward, challenging the inflated and illegal property tax assessments in the city of Detroit, as well as the failure to offer tax abatements to thousands of poor Detroiters who are entitled to them under the law. □

# Brooklyn housing activists: ‘Kill the bill!’

Outside the home of New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, an upscale Manhattan residence called Gracie Mansion, a protest for affordable housing on April 1 demanded that the mayor “Kill the bill.” It was led by Brooklyn’s Crown Heights Tenants Union and drew mostly Black women.

The developer BFC Partners is trying to get the city to rezone the Bedford-Union Armory in Crown Heights, a castle-like, block-long structure of red brick. Its plan is to turn the armory into 330 luxury apartments using nonunion labor. BFC will receive \$25.1 million worth of tax write-offs for the new Brooklyn housing plan.

Only 20 percent of the new housing would be for tenants earning less than \$46,000 a year. In 2014, the average income of a family of four in Crown Heights was \$41,870.

Explaining that rents are so high that city workers are forced to live in shelters, speakers denounced luxury development in their borough, like the plans for the armory.



Built to house the Army’s 23rd National Guard regiment, the armory has been dormant for decades. In this community of mostly Black and Afro-Caribbean tenants, there is no housing for the homeless and plans for a nearby shelter for 1,000 more homeless. Why not have the armory provide housing, not shelters, for the homeless?

Mayor de Blasio and Brooklyn Councilmember Laurie Cumbo have the power to vote down the rezoning. Protests and more will continue until the working class has real affordable housing instead of a system serving only the wealthy.

— Story and photo by Anne Pruden

# Bay Area acts to halt home evictions

By Tristen Schmidt  
Oakland, Calif.

Over 60 community members and activists gathered March 29 in front of the former Oakland family home of 76-year-old matriarch Dorothy DeBose to demand its return to her.

The home had been owned by her family for over 50 years until a predatory loan was offered and payment missed. Then Michael Marr of Community Fund LLC, one of Oakland’s largest private owners of rental properties, placed an unlawful claim on the house. A crew from the Alameda County Sheriff gave Ms. DeBose ten minutes to leave her home before they changed the locks in mid-March. Marr is currently facing criminal indictment from the Department of Justice for rigging foreclosure auctions to keep house prices artificially low for his financial benefit.

Over 12,000 families, the majority Black and Brown, have been evicted from Oakland homes since 2006, many under questionable circumstances. Action attendees called Marr’s office to request a meeting and were told he was on his way, but he was a no-show.



PHOTO: ALLIANCE OF CALIFORNIANS FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT/ ACCE  
Dorothy DeBose fighting home eviction.

Home occupation squads were scheduled to begin that evening to prevent Marr from coming to remove Ms. DeBose’s possessions until a meeting could take place between Marr and the family, in search of a resolution to move the family back in.

Further demands were for a community fund, and for other predatory landlords to reduce artificially inflated rents and give back some of their holdings to a community land trust in order to keep elders, children and other vulnerable, valuable, community members in their homes.

The action took place on the same day as a nearby San Francisco vigil honoring 100-year-old Iris Canada who was evicted from her longtime home for landlord profit in February and died weeks later in the hospital from related stress. □

# On the picket line

By Alex Bolchi,  
Mattie Starrdust  
and Sue Davis

## Tom Cat Bakery workers fight for jobs

Thirty-one immigrant workers at Tom Cat Bakery, an industrial baked goods supplier in Long Island City, N.Y., received letters from the payroll department demanding they prove legal immigration status by March 15. “Unless you present us with valid identification,” the letter reads, “... you are considered by the Homeland Security Investigations to be unauthorized to work in the United States.” (villagevoice.com, March 22)

The workers, who are organized with the nonprofit advocacy group Brandworkers, immediately sprang into action with a rally March 22 calling for community support and demanding the company defend the workers from the DHS attack. According to Tom Cat worker Librada Antigua: “The Trump administration may want us to disappear, but we’re not leaving our children for anything. Our unity is our strength, and our commitment is to victory.” In response to the show of united resistance, the company has agreed to delay layoffs until April 21.

Henry Rivera, an 11-year Tom Cat worker who immigrated in 2005 from Honduras, encouraged workers to participate in May 1 general strike actions to fight back against the increasing anti-immigrant attacks, “We are organizing not just for Tom Cat workers, but for workers in New York and the whole nation to encourage them to fight for justice.” (licpost.com, March 29)

## NYC women of color fight for equal pay

A protest called at City Hall for April 4, Equal Pay Day, is part of the fight for back pay by more than 1,500 women of color who hold administrative managerial jobs in New York City agencies. Signifying the wage gap, the date symbolizes how far into the year women must work to earn what men earned in the previous year.

When Communication Workers Local 1180 discovered two years ago that these women workers were being grossly underpaid — by upwards of \$65,000 a year — CWA filed a complaint with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which quickly found in their favor. When the city failed to respond to EEOC’s request to pay up, Local 1180 filed a notice of claim last December demanding retroactive pay amounting to \$243 million. The union called the demonstration to spotlight that the city is still negligent. (cwa1180.org)

## Congress sides with bosses in two cases

Yet again, Congress sides with bosses instead of working folks. In early March, Rep. Jody Hice introduced HR 1364, the Official Time Reform Act of 2017. It would cut the clock on that part of the workday that union shop stewards can spend on “official time.” That’s time spent at work representing the union, resolving members’ concerns and problems. It’s a request guaranteed under civil service law passed 40 years ago, and a method already exists for curtailing it — management and supervisors can deny the request.

Since this control exists, rendering HR 1364 redundant, what are its true intentions? Congress wants a chilling effect on workers who need representation, but also wants to ice those workers who want to serve as stewards. If enacted, this bill would take retirement time from stewards as a penalty. It’s literally asking a steward to choose be-

Continued on page 5



# A veteran activist on: ‘Labor Rights Equal Civil Rights’

By Martha Grevatt

*“Labor Rights Equal Civil Rights” was the theme of a historic “March on Mississippi” held March 4 on the Nissan plant in Canton. Over 4,000 people from labor and the community turned out to demand an end to “voter suppression” — i.e., the right to vote in a union representation election, free of intimidation. Over 80 percent of the plant’s workforce is African-American. Of Nissan’s 45 plants worldwide, this is one of only three without union representation; the two others are in Smyrna and Decherd, Tenn.*

*WW talked to Clarence Thomas, retired executive board member of International Longshore Workers Union Local 10, who flew from San Francisco to Canton to attend the march.*

**WW:** What brought you to the March on Mississippi from California?

**Clarence Thomas:** I was made aware of it by Danny Glover. Danny and I go back to the mid 60s. In terms of our class, we’re two of the most prominent people who came out of [San Francisco] State College and the Black struggle there. Glover is in the tradition of Robeson, Belafonte and others who have used their celebrity status to further the cause of the oppressed and the working class. Danny told me some of the things he’d been doing with Nissan workers, so when I found out it was taking place in Canton — my wife has family there — I felt that now that I’m retired I needed to be there.

I also was interested because I had heard something about the struggle,

heard about other struggles relative to multinational corporations moving to the South, and states are pretty much bidding on these multinationals to come to their state. They’re taking money from economic development in the community and making it available to corporations (tax breaks, etc.).

**WW:** Tell us your impressions of the march

**CT:** This was a positive and uplifting weekend despite the reasons for being there, of not being able to get a [union representation] vote in 14 years. It was organized as a March on Mississippi and one of the themes was “end voter suppression” — help us fight for the rights of Nissan workers and all workers in Mississippi to vote without interference by the employer. “Workers’ rights equal civil rights” was on the T-shirts that they issued.

I thought it was 5,000 in attendance. It was a multiethnic, multigenerational crowd. That was unusual for people to see in the South outside of a sporting or cultural event, which I thought was interesting, because this was a political event.

**WW:** Why did Glover talk to college students?

**CT:** Nissan markets the Altima towards the urban market and likes to pride itself in being a socially responsible car company. Altima is the top seller in the African-American community. Because Nissan markets the Altima towards the urban market, students buy that car. I was with Danny while he was with students at Tupelo College. We met scores of students at various schools. That was

reflected in rally attendance.

**WW:** Does Nissan treat Southern Black workers unfairly?

**CT:** Danny has been involved in delegations of Nissan workers that have visited union plants in Brazil, South Africa and France. So it appears as if Nissan allows union representation in 42 plants, but the three [including two in Tennessee] where they don’t is in the so-called “land of the free and home of the brave,” which I think is quite a contradiction.

But if you look at the trends of moving to the southern region of the U.S., and knowing the historical situation with respect to the lack of union representation in the South, we can plainly see that multinational corporations, specifically auto, are coming to the South specifically to find a place where unionization will not only not be an encumbrance, but efforts to vote will be suppressed through intimidation. So the whole story of harassment and intimidation is part of the tradition in the South toward Black people and how it relates to the campaign to organize workers at Nissan.

**WW:** Do you have any ideas on moving this critical fight forward?

**CT:** This issue is not just limited to Canton. Union density, when it comes to the private sector, [is] around six or seven percent. There’s movement of multinationals to the South. This is a looming question for labor.

What would be an advantage is that the labor movement understands that [the fight] cannot be limited to just the question of the vote. Workers need to be



Paulo Cayres, CNM-CUT of Brazil, Clarence Thomas, Ginny Coughlin, SEIU organizer at March 4 march in Mississippi.

able to put forward their agenda and concerns, which should also be environmental, health care, education, etc. Unions need to be a part of a coalition of concerns that are not just related to the vote but to the class and to the community.

That’s what we’ve done in Oakland. When they wanted to expand the port we started the Coalition for an Accountable Port. What it did was to make sure that with the facility they were building, it would be done by organized labor. Also the community had to be involved in the building and apprentice training and get prevailing wages. I also mean things like: What do we do to preserve the marine habitat? What do we do with the dredge? We have a wonderful habitat with exotic birds and where the community can picnic.

We organized a coalition so they could not divide the community or labor or the environment by making concessions to one and not the other. When you [go it alone] you don’t connect the dots. □

# Trump kicks environmental destruction up a notch

By G. Dunkel

March 25 - President Donald Trump signed an executive order March 24 clearing the way for building the Keystone XL Pipeline. The State Department promptly issued the necessary permits. This pipeline, which was resisted by environmental activists and Native nations, will make it cheaper to transport Canadian crude oil mined from tar sands in Alberta to Gulf-state refineries in the southern United States.

Rex Tillerson, the former CEO of Exxon/Mobil and currently secretary of state, deflected criticism by recusing himself from the decision, but an under secretary had no problem issuing the permit. Given the current low price of crude oil and how expensive it is to extract oil from tar sands, some articles in the business press

questioned the economic justification for this pipeline.

But the Trump administration, increasingly under attack, needed to nail down its support from Big Oil and corporate profiteers. This decision goes along with its encouragement of coal mining, even though the market for coal is being sharply undercut by competition from other energy sources like natural gas and wind and solar alternatives.

It lines up with the administration’s easing of requirements that would improve mileage for automobiles and trucks. That supports the oil and automobile profiteers, as does removing emission standards.

Along with his giveaways to the energy corporations, Trump has moved to unleash the Pentagon by giving the generals even more leeway to launch air attacks

throughout the oil-rich region of North Africa and the Middle East.

This endless warfare instigated by U.S. and NATO regime-change agendas has already displaced millions. Their situation is made even worse by climate change, which has superheated the region, threatening the water supply and agriculture in already arid lands.

All this runs counter to any efforts to rein in global warming. It would be difficult for Trump to formally renounce the guidelines put in place by the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate, but he is making an end run around them in his quest to make the U.S. even more profitable for big business.

## China leads in curbing fossil fuels

China has long had a major problem with smog and industrial pollution from steel plants and coal-fired power plants. Now, due to global warming, changing wind patterns have weakened the winds in northern China that would blow this smog and particulate pollution away.

New research points to the melting of the Arctic Ocean’s ice cover, combined with a resulting increased snowfall in Siberia, as the main factors leading to stagnant air over northern China.

However, as the March 25 New York Times pointed out, “As the Trump administration hints that it might move away from international efforts to cut emissions, environmentalists are looking to China, the world’s largest emitter of greenhouse gases, to play a leading role in curbing the use of fossil fuels.”

With four times the population of the U.S., China’s per capita CO2 emissions are much lower than here. However,

China is already the world’s leading producer of solar and wind power technology. Its economic plans are built around a steady move away from fossil fuels.

## Arctic ice cover changes impact planet

According to the National Snow and Ice Data Center, which has used satellites for 38 years to map sea ice, the extent of the Arctic ice cover is now the lowest on record. The ice is also much thinner, meaning it is more likely to melt over the summer.

Thin ice makes the traditional harvesting of whales and seals by the Inuit people of the Arctic more difficult. These sea animals make up a major portion of their sustenance.

With less ice covering, the Arctic Ocean heats up more, driving up temperatures throughout the Arctic — and worldwide. This winter there were long spells of above-average temperatures over the Arctic Ocean, promoting the melting of shore-line glaciers in Alaska and Greenland and raising ocean levels worldwide.

## Floods in Peru harm poorest people

While it is hard to definitively pin particular weather events on global warming, the fact that water temperatures off the northern coast of Peru have risen 5 to 6 degrees Fahrenheit has produced a local El Niño, with flooding throughout Peru. By March 20, according to the National Institute of Civil Defense, 643,216 people had been affected by it, with more than 100,000 injured, 78 dead and 141,149 houses affected.

San Miguel in Piura province has re-

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On the picket line

tween your future and your member’s. It’s muffling whistleblowers but also union calls to serve as stewards. Under capitalism, officials reckon only with capital’s forces and never the working people who shape labor and our unions. (afge.org, March 13)

Anti-worker President Trump signed a joint resolution March 27 to nullify the Fair Pay and Safe Workplaces rule issued by the Obama administration in 2014. Its purpose was to safeguard workers by making sure federal contracts do not go to companies that habitually violate labor laws by failing to pay overtime and minimum wages, deny lunch breaks or force employees to work off the clock. “By repealing these protections ... contractors with even the worst track records [are] off the hook — a punch in the gut to workers, taxpayers, and law-abiding businesses,” said Christine Owens, executive director the National Employment Law Project.

A congressional report released in March assessing federal contractors’ compliance with labor laws found “significant” abuses. Dozens of worker deaths occurred at companies that took shortcuts with health and safety standards. More than 300,000 workers employed by federal contractors in the past decade have experienced wage theft. Nearly one-quarter of the U.S. workforce is employed by a federal contractor or subcontractor. (Rewire, March 28) □



# People with disabilities battle Trump

By Edward Yudelovich

Ari Ne’eman, president of the Autistic Self Advocacy Network, warned about Donald Trump’s election as U.S. president: “It’s a disaster. ... Assuming we can take him at his word on his stated policy positions, there is a tremendous risk for people with disabilities.” (Huffington Post, Nov. 10, 2016)

According to the Jan. 20 Washington Post, moments after Trump took the oath of office, the White House website page with information about federal policy on opportunities for people with disabilities was removed.

In 2005, attorney James Schottel Jr., a person with a quadriplegia disability, sued producers of Trump’s “reality” show, “The Apprentice,” for discrimination, for specifying “excellent physical” health as a requirement for appearing on the show. (usatoday.com)

In 2011, also on “The Apprentice,” Trump repeatedly called Oscar-winning actor Marlee Matlin “re\*\*\*d”, an offensive term used to ridicule someone’s intellectual or developmental abilities. He directed demeaning sexual comments toward her and mocked the sound of Matlin’s voice. Matlin is deaf and uses American Sign Language to communicate. (tinyurl.com/jnte7eh)

During a 2015 rally, candidate Trump mocked and imitated the limited arm movements of New York Times journalist Serge Kovalski, who has the disability of arthrogryposis, a condition restricting the way he moves his limbs. (Washington Post)

In response to criticism from conservative columnist and wheelchair user Charles Krauthammer, paralyzed from the waist down, Trump mocked Krauthammer, saying in July 2015: “I went out, I made a fortune, a big fortune, a tremendous fortune. ... Then I get called by a guy that can’t buy a pair of pants.” (tinyurl.com/kafqcaz)

## Half of people killed by cops have a disability

According to disability rights journalist, David M.Perry, whose son has Down syndrome, as many as half of all people killed by police have a disability. This includes African-American Eric Garner, who suffered from asthma and heart disease. He was killed by a New York City cop’s illegal chokehold after uttering his heartbreaking last words: “I can’t breathe.”

In his original research for the Ruderman Family Foundation, Perry notes that this was Garner’s statement to a government employee (the cop) that he needed reasonable accommodation, which is legally required to be provided under the Americans with Disabilities Act. (tinyurl.com/jk8y5f3)

Under Trump’s Department of Justice, headed by bigot Jeff Sessions, police accountability could be even more reduced, to the detriment of people with disabilities.

“Trump is the most ableist president in modern history,” Perry comments. “He takes any kind of physical or mental difference that he perceives or imagines as a weakness and uses it as a tool for dominance.” The bigoted Trump could certainly also compete strongly with his 44 predecessors as one of the most sexist, misogynist and racist of U.S. presidents.

In a 2015 Al Jazeera America article, Perry also exposed Trump’s Democratic opponents for slighting people with disabilities: “Hillary Clinton has just a brief overview of disability rights issues on her website ... and in the first Democratic presidential debate, the only mention of disability occurred when Bernie Sanders responded to a question about recent mass shootings by talking about mental health. Because people with psychiatric disabilities are vastly more likely to be victims of violence than perpetrators of it, many disability rights experts find the conflation of disability with gun violence dangerous.” (tinyurl.com/m4gtqzs)

## Disabled veterans at risk

Trump’s 2016 election campaign website only discussed disability in relation to veterans. One of Trump’s “Big Lies” is that he is a great champion of veterans’ rights.

On March 17, with the Trump administration’s support, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Veterans Administration Accountability First Act of 2017. This bill would allow VA workers to be fired arbitrarily, without any due process. It would eliminate the union grievance process as a means to appeal negative personnel actions.

David Cox, national president of the American Federation of Government Employees union, representing about three-quarters of VA workers, said: “The House has passed a venomous piece of legislation that would undermine the government’s sacred obligation to serve our veterans by gutting frontline employees’

basic worker rights at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

“Make no mistake — this legislation is not about improving accountability at the VA, and it certainly won’t improve veterans’ access to quality care and earned benefits. This is part of an orchestrated attack on the rights of federal workers and employee unions.” (tinyurl.com/l sax5ql)

Rene Imperato, a Vietnam war veteran with several disabilities, told Workers World: “My disabled veteran friends at the VA in Manhattan and I are all aware of this threat from the Trump administration to our services, and we are on high alert in the event that Trump implements these cutbacks to veterans benefits.”

## Disability rights activists resist

Donald Trump and his extensive real estate holdings have been sued a number of times for violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), including by James Conlon, a person with paraplegia. In 2003, Conlon complained that the buses to Trump’s Atlantic City casino were virtually impossible to access in a wheelchair and was told that there were no buses available for wheelchair users. Conlon ultimately forced a settlement out of Trump. (tinyurl.com/k7q5nm8)

A U.S. Department of Justice investigation into these cases found that Trump’s Taj Mahal was nearly inaccessible for all people with disabilities. DOJ findings included no signs indicating parking for people with disabilities in the self-park garage, bathrooms without proper Braille for visually impaired people, failure to insulate bathroom pipes to prevent harm when contacted, and counter surfaces in the buffet not at a proper height for individuals in wheelchairs.

Trump continued his attack on people with disabilities in pursuing his campaign promise to repeal the ACA — the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act — passed in 2010.

Section 1557 of the ACA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in certain health programs, plans, activities or insurance marketplaces. The ACA protections against discrimination in health care — including race, color, national origin, sex and age — were not adequately guaranteed by previous federal civil right laws and, therefore, had to be enhanced by the ACA.

Fortunately, massive resistance tantamount to a rebellion stopped Trump’s

threat and the so-called American Health Care Act repeal of ACA was withdrawn in Congress on March 24. The resistance included community and immigrant rights groups, workers in and outside unions, students and people with disabilities for whom repeal of ACA would have been a national death sentence.

Such positive results from resistance are far from without precedent in the disability rights movement.

On March 12, 1990, disability rights activists descended on the U.S. Capitol demanding the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which expanded rights to people with disabilities. Over 1,000 protesters came from 30 states to protest for ADA. After the rally and speeches, over 60 activists abandoned their wheelchairs and mobility devices and began crawling the 83 stone steps up to the U.S. Capitol building entrance, as people loudly chanted “What do we want?” “ADA!” “When do we want it?” “Now!” Other activists remained at the bottom holding signs and giving encouragement to the crawlers.

“I want my civil rights,” Paulette Patterson of Chicago stated as she was inching her way to the top. “I want to be treated like a human being.” Eight-year-old Jennifer Keelan was famously taped while laboring up the stairs. “I’ll take all night if I have to,” she firmly stated. The second-grader from Denver had a cerebral palsy disability and decided to partake in the crawl after joining ADAPT (Americans Disabled for Accessible Public Transit). She was inspired by her friend Kenny Perkins, who passed away in January 1990. As Jennifer reached the top she stated, “I’m doing it for Kenny.” (Los Angeles Times)

Michael Winters, a leader in the Independent Living Movement, later wrote in ADAPT Narratives about the event and the reaction people had to the crawl: “Some people may have thought that it was undignified for people in wheelchairs to crawl in that manner, but I felt that it was necessary to show the country what kinds of things people with disabilities have to face on a day-to-day basis. We had to be willing to fight for what we believed in.” (tinyurl.com/l226bv6)

The “Capitol Crawl” of 1990 is seen by many present-day U.S. disability activists as being the single action most responsible for encouraging the ADA into law.

*Yudelovich is a World World Party activist with emotional and one-sided hearing loss disabilities.*

# JDL attacks AIPAC protesters

By Joe Catron

Hundreds of Palestinians and supporters rallied outside the White House before marching to the Walter E. Washington Convention Center on March 26.

The demonstration, organized by the Cleveland and Midwest chapters of Al-Awda: The Palestine Right to Return Coalition and the Answer Coalition, protested United States aid to Israel, scheduled to exceed \$38 billion over the next decade, and the opening of an annual policy conference by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

Other rallies by the Jewish campaign IfNotNow and the women’s organization Code Pink had already begun outside the convention center.

Before the march from the White House arrived, members of the far-right Jewish Defense League attacked participants in the growing protests.

Their assaults with flagpoles hospital-

ized at least two demonstrators: Ben Doernberg, an IfNotNow member from Boston, and Kamal Nayfeh, a Palestinian-American instructor at North Carolina’s Central Piedmont Community College.

“I feel hits from everywhere, and I fell down and I can feel the kicks everywhere on my body,” Nayfeh recounted to Charlotte’s WSOC television station.

“The only thing I told them was I am a Palestinian,” the 55-year-old father of four added. “They didn’t know anything about me.” (wsoc tv.com)

The attack on Nayfeh resulted in criminal charges against two JDL members: Yosef Steynovitz, a 32-year-old from Thornhill, Ontario, Canada, for assault with significant bodily injury, and Rami Lubranicki, a 59-year-old from Howell, N.J., for assault with a dangerous weapon.

Some media say the two also face charges of a “suspected hate crime” due to “anti-Arab” bias, a claim that other reports have disputed.

## Resurgent extremism

Lubranicki, an Israel-born U.S. citizen, previously founded both the anti-Muslim website “Islam Exposed” and the group “American Bikers United against Jihad.”

The latter attempted to terrorize Muslims in Islamberg, N.Y., last May by staging a “Ride for National Security” through the rural area. But their plans fizzled when exactly five bikers encountered a mobilization of 400 supporters from the surrounding community.

Steynovitz is one of a small but vocal number of JDL militants, centered around Toronto, who frequently deploy across the border for counter protests in the U.S.

The largely dormant JDL, whose bombs once sparked fear across the continent, has re-emerged, if only for limited skirmishes, since the March 2015 election in Israel of a far-right governing coalition



PHOTO: JOE CATRON

that even former Secretary of State John Kerry called “the most right-wing in Israeli history with an agenda driven by the most extreme elements.” (time.gov)

But with Israel continuing its drive to the right, and Zionism losing whatever appeal it once held for many Jews, as well as much of the U.S. public at large, the JDL’s unapologetic racism and thirst for violence may represent a growing tendency within the world Zionist movement.

*Catron is an organizer with Sami-doun: Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network.*



# No defunding of Planned Parenthood!

By Sue Davis

The U.S. Senate voted 51-50 on March 30 to overturn an Obama administrative rule not allowing states to defund Planned Parenthood payments for Title X patients. The House passed the same resolution in February, so it now goes to the Misogynist in Chief to be signed into law.

Collateral damage in this totally biased vote is 4 million poor women who rely on Title X of the Public Health Service Act for comprehensive family planning — which covers contraceptives but not abortion — and related preventive health services. Government payment for abortions for low-income women has been outlawed since 1976 by the Hyde Amendment.

Title X was passed by the Nixon administration in 1970, when politicians recognized the basic health care rights of low-income families or uninsured people, including those not eligible for Medicaid. They were aware of the connection between sex and science. They saw the need to make family planning accessible to poor families as part of their agenda to cut welfare payments for children.

Passing this resolution means that if states choose to defund Planned Parenthood as a service provider for Title X patients — 11 states already have such laws — that poor women, mostly young women of color (59 percent) and immigrants, often in rural areas of the Midwest and South, will have to search for new providers or go without vital health care.

Planned Parenthood serves a third of Title X patients, using \$70 million a year in family planning grants to provide birth control and sexually transmitted infection and cancer screenings. The organization is singled out because it provides abortions for 3 percent of its millions of patients through more than 650 clinics nationwide.

Statistics from 2014 (the last year the Guttmacher Institute issued them) show that Title X averted nearly a million unintended pregnancies, 326,000 abortions and 166,000 teen pregnancies. Without



Title X funding, teen pregnancy would have been 30 percent higher; unintended pregnancies would be 33 percent higher.

A March 2016 Guttmacher report attributed the decline in abortions between 2008 and 2011 to limiting unintended pregnancy through more contraceptive use rather than state restrictions on abortion. It concludes: “Supporting and expanding women’s access to contraceptive services leads to lower incidence of abortion.”

But today’s predominantly male lawmakers consciously ignore the basic connection between contraception and unintended pregnancies. Added to their overriding hatred of legal, safe, accessible abortion is their contempt for and lack of compassion for all women, let alone the extra-heavy burden that poor women carry as they struggle to care for their families. By depriving poor women of easy access to contraception, this ill-advised bill will only drive desperate women to seek abortions.

Though the Republican Party lost a major opportunity to defund Planned Parenthood directly when the reactionary American Health Care Act self-destructed at the end of March, the April 2 New York Times reported that it has two more chances: attaching a defunding provision to a bill financing government operations for the rest of the year or adding one to a tax reform bill.

Vice President Mike Pence has played a significant role in the crusade to defund Planned Parenthood going back to his days in Congress when he was the first to introduce such a bill in 2007. He cast the deciding vote on March 30, when

48 Democrats were joined by two Republican women in a 50-50 tie. One senator noted ironically that Pence had not gotten the message after attending a “women’s empowerment” forum prior to the vote.

But the real irony about “women’s empowerment” was noted by British columnist

Sarah Ditum in her comment on Trump’s speech at the forum: “I don’t know what that expression [women’s empowerment] means [since it] apparently no longer entails giving women any power, including the power to decide whether they want to be pregnant or not.” (independent.co.uk, March 30)

In an act of desperation in early March, Trump offered Planned Parenthood a deal: Stop performing abortions and keep receiving \$550 million in federal funding. The answer was a resounding “No deal!”

### Indictments for anti-Planned Parenthood video

Meanwhile, two days before the Senate vote, the people who deliberately created a maliciously deceptive video about

Planned Parenthood — David Daleiden and Sandra Merritt of the bogus Center for Medical Progress — were indicted March 28 by the state of California on 15 felony counts. They are charged with “violating the privacy of health-care providers by recording confidential information without their consent” by using false identities in the state to conduct “interviews” about donating fetal tissue for medical research.

Their 2015 smear video was instrumental in initiating the national witch hunt against Planned Parenthood, which bolstered the demand for defunding by charging the organization with “selling baby parts.” Although several states initially investigated the organization on such charges, no evidence was found to substantiate the claims. In a clear repudiation of the video, the lawsuit calls CMP “a complex criminal enterprise conceived and executed by anti-abortion extremists.”

Validated by two recent global marches involving millions of women and their supporters demanding women’s rights, the struggle for quality, comprehensive health care for all women continues in the U.S. As Nancy Northrup, president and CEO of the Center for Reproductive Rights, noted after the Title X vote, “[Women’s] health and rights should never be up for debate.” (March 30) □

# ALL OUT FOR MAY DAY Build Workers World!

May Day (May 1) is when we:

- 🌐 Honor workers and the oppressed all over the globe
- 🌐 Invite all workers to come out of the shadows
- 🌐 Take our rightful place as the creators of all things
- 🌐 Stand in solidarity against all forms of repression and exploitation
- 🌐 Say that capitalist greed, austerity, misery & war be banished forever
- 🌐 Affirm the need for a revolutionary socialist future

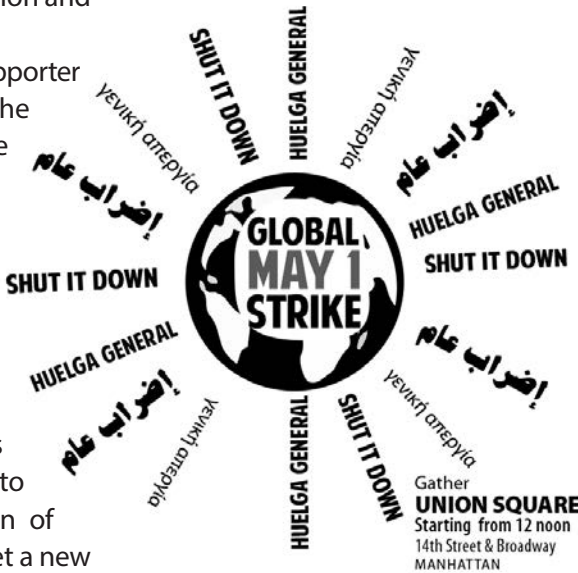
We want what our name stands for — a workers’ world where all people are entitled to share in the abundance that this Earth is capable of in peace and plenty.

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Write checks to Workers World and mail them, with your name and address, to 147 W. 24th St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10011. Or donate online at workers.org/donate/; it’s easy to set up monthly deductions. We are grateful for your help in building Workers World — for today and for the future!



## Environmental destruction

Continued from page 5

ceived 10 inches of rain since Jan. 1; its average annual rainfall is usually 2 inches. Further inland, Morropón generally gets 4 inches of rain by early March; this year it has received 43 inches.

Damages have come not only from flooding but also from mudslides. Peru had suffered from a drought until the rains started. Poor people who built their houses on river banks and low-lying spots lived with occasional floods. But the mud slides, which carry much debris as well as mud, along with the extraordinarily heavy rains, have washed these houses away.

With water supplies heavily damaged, most water systems in Peru are having trouble functioning. Cholera is spreading. Standing water facilitates the spread of mosquito-borne diseases like dengue, malaria, the zika virus and chikungunya.

### Deadly famine in East Africa

East Africa has suffered from a severe drought for several years. Food production has been sharply cut. War, drought and a collapsed economy have brought Somalia to the edge of famine, with young children and the elderly dying of hunger.

Some local officials say they are digging mass graves because they fear large numbers of people will die quickly.

It is easy to see the direct U.S. role in the conflict in Somalia. Since 2001, the U.S. has carried out extensive covert operations involving reconnaissance missions, bombings and capturing Al-Shabaab militants, the jihadist group vying for power in Somalia.

Kenya and Ethiopia, two U.S. allies, have also invaded Somalia.

Oil-rich South Sudan became a new country in 2011 after decades of a war for separation from Sudan supported by the U.S., which had imposed sanctions on the Sudanese government. Once separation was achieved, most of Sudan’s oil resources passed to the new country, which was then wracked with civil war. Now its agriculture has collapsed and a famine has been declared.

It is easy to blame the weather for the famines, deaths, injuries and loss of infrastructure and economic production that come with flooding and other catastrophes. However, in reality they are caused by imperialist wars and capitalism’s voracious appetite for profit, that overrides all human considerations. □



# WWP Midwest conference mixes theory and action

By Kris Balderas-Hamel  
and Dorothy Brown  
Detroit

Workers World Party's Detroit Branch, along with the Wayne State University chapter of Students for a Democratic Society, hosted a Midwest conference March 24-26 on resisting capitalism and all its oppressions and fighting for socialism. This important gathering took place during the 100th anniversary year of the Russian Revolution, which was discussed at the conference, along with the need for socialist revolution in the United States here and now.

Conferencegoers came from many states, including Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey, and were predominantly youthful. More came from Detroit and other Michigan cities and towns. For many it was their first WWP conference.

The weekend kicked off the evening of March 24 with a "Red, Black and Queer" slideshow presentation by long-time union and LGBTQ organizer Gerry Scoppettuolo of Boston before a packed house at the Detroit WWP headquarters. "Red, Black and Queer" refers to the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union in the Congress of Industrial Organizations which achieved unity of Black, white and gay union members. The slideshow referenced decades of people's resistance in the struggle for LGBTQ liberation.

During the conference, a wide range of topics affecting working-class and oppressed peoples in the Midwest and beyond was discussed at plenaries and in break-out groups. These included fighting ruling-class Jim Crow attacks on public education, unions, women, LGBTQ people and more. Others highlighted the Fight for \$15 movement, the prison-industrial complex, the fight to free Michigan political prisoner Rev. Edward Pinkney, May Day strikes and immigrant rights, and the struggle for women's and LGBTQ+ liberation. For many young activists it was their first time speaking at a socialist conference.

The battle waged in Detroit against the devastation wrought by the capitalist



Kris Balderas-Hamel speaks about Workers World newspaper.

banks and the largest municipal bankruptcy in U.S. history were discussed. Much more from the front lines of the people's struggle was analyzed from a Marxist viewpoint and within the context of overthrowing capitalism and fighting for socialism.

### Proletarian internationalism

The thoroughly internationalist conference included speakers Lorena Buni, chairwoman of Anakbayan Chicago; the National Solidarity Officer of Anakbayan USA; Claude "Toutou" St. Germain, Haitian leader of Boston Fanmi Lavalas; and Jesús Rodríguez-Espinoza, Consul General of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Chicago, who gave a special presentation on the political struggle in Venezuela.

WWP First Secretary Larry Holmes and Teresa Gutierrez, a WWP national committee member from New York City, spoke about struggling in the Trump era and making May Day a general strike for immigrant rights, respectively. Other talks included steadfast defenses of Africa, Yemen and Syria from attacks by U.S. and NATO imperialists and special tributes to the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and Fidel Castro, leader of the Cuban Revolution.

Each plenary ended with an open-mic session where conference participants could comment, ask questions, raise political concerns and provide information about struggles in their area.

After the conclusion of the first day, members of the SDS chapter, youth mem-

bers of WWP and allies participated in a demonstration demanding gender-neutral bathrooms on the WSU campus. The youth, students and allies marched throughout the campus and militantly defied Detroit and WSU cops who were menacing and harassing them.

A cultural event took place at the WWP headquarters following the protest. It was emceed by WWP member and Michigan Peoples Defense Network activist Mond Jones and

included youth and students doing a range of cultural presentations. Cambria York, a WWP member from Indiana, led a spirited sing-along of militant and revolutionary songs. The event lasted until the early morning hours.

Leaders of the Boston School Bus Drivers, United Steelworkers Local 8751 kicked off the last day of the conference, March 26, with rousing talks on their union victories and the role of solidarity and WWP in forming and maintaining a fighting, militant union. A variety of active and retired union members participated throughout the weekend, as did many unorganized, unemployed and underemployed workers. An open mic brought many young revolutionaries up to speak, stoked by the conference and the spirited yet disciplined militancy they experienced the day before.

At the conclusion of the conference a tour of Detroit on "Labor History, Black Liberation and Capitalist Devastation" was led by Abayomi Azikiwe and Martha Grevatt.

### Revolutionary youth sum it up

Cambria York, an agender (without a gender) organizer from Indianapolis, told WW: "I found Detroit to be a microcosmic representation of the horrors

capitalism can unleash upon the world, centralized in the locality of the most disinherited and disempowered, and an immensely prescient reminder of the work we have at hand and ahead of us.

"From the myriad of speakers (I filled a book with notes) to leading a crowd of comrades and friends in sing-a-long versions of 'Solidarity Forever,' 'The Ballad of Ho Chi Minh,' 'Go on Home, British Soldiers' and 'Which Side Are You On?' among other anthems of struggle, I felt welcomed and at home. The principled elders of the party were there to offer wisdom, and the impassioned youths constantly breathed life into a movement whose flame is immortal."

Joe Mshahwar, a youth leader in the Detroit WWP branch and a key conference organizer, gave Workers World his assessment of the revolutionary weekend: "The conference was a tremendous success. Youth cadre, with the support and hard work of older comrades, were able to pull off a thoroughly Bolshevik conference in the midst of a multifaceted ruling

class offensive on local, state, national and international levels. Comrades and allies brought powerful analysis rooted in struggle, spanning our fight on the streets of Detroit to the fight on the streets of Caracas.

"On Saturday, after a full day of plenaries, conference participants joined SDS in facing down pigs to demand all-gender bathrooms at WSU. The night ended with an open-mic cultural program featuring dozens of spoken word and musical artists and a resistance sing-along. It was an experience I won't forget, a testament to the powerful work of communists in the ravaged rust belt."

Conference sessions can be viewed on the Workers World Party - Michigan Facebook page. □



Mond Jones addresses plenary.

## History of U.S./Saudi role in Yemen

Based on a talk by WWP member Randi Nord at the March 25 WWP/SDS Midwest Socialism Conference.

I'd like to discuss the truth behind the al-Qaida threat in Yemen and what the struggle in Yemen means for U.S. imperialism and the Middle East.

Western involvement in Yemen dates back many decades. Shortly after British occupation ended in 1967, South Yemen identified as a socialist state with strong ties to the Soviet Union, China, Cuba and revolutionary Palestinians.

North and South Yemen unified in 1990, shortly before the Soviet Union officially dissolved. U.S. imperialism's intervention in the region exacerbated the conflict within unified Yemen.

Western corporate media credit the rise of al-Qaida in Yemen to conflict caused by Houthi rebels in 2011, with the al-Qaida forces allegedly using the chaos from the uprising to gain footing in the country's tribal areas. This is false.



Randi Nord

The hills of Yemen had long been a place of recruitment and planning for al-Qaida long before their branch in the Arabian Peninsula was officially announced in 2006.

In the 1980s, U.S. imperialism was busy arming reactionary sectarian forces in Afghanistan to fight the communist government in Kabul and its Soviet allies. Rural tribal areas in Yemen were ideal for recruiting fighters to take on what locals saw as Soviet invaders and godless communists. Fighters from parts of Africa and Saudi Arabia moved through Yemen.

But U.S. imperialism is also directly responsible for the devastating situation in Yemen we see today.

Yemen was a poor country prior to the current conflict, and now Yemen is starving, its population hard pressed to find food, clean drinking water or medical care, on the brink of famine. Many people — especially children — are dying every day from malnutrition or

preventable illnesses like cholera.

Not only are Yemenis subject to air strikes from both Saudi Arabia and the United States, but Saudi-backed fighters have been terrorizing civilians on the ground. They even threaten doctors and patients inside hospitals, forcing doctors to work at gunpoint.

Aid agencies have left Yemen due to the Saudi regime's relentless bombing campaign that targets civilian infrastructure including hospitals, funerals, homes, airports and agricultural areas, killing thousands and displacing millions.

Unemployment is rampant. The illiteracy rate is climbing. Already the poorest country in the region, Yemen lives under an air blockade, which obstructs aid from entering the country and prevents civilians from fleeing.

The U.S. has come under fire from several human rights groups for supplying arms to Saudi Arabia.

Documents released via Wikileaks show that the Obama administration started arming and training the Yemeni

government prior to the start of the war today. Washington and its imperialist allies are directly to blame.

The new Trump administration has actually increased the U.S. military presence and air strikes in Yemen, including a raid so horrendous that even the corporate media condemned its causing the death of dozens of Yemeni civilians — including an 8-year-old girl — and one Navy Seal.

While the U.S. claims to be fighting al-Qaida in Yemen, the U.S.-backed Saudi coalition and al-Qaida share a common enemy in the new Popular Resistance Coalition. The Houthis, portions of the Yemeni military and their allies have formed a broad coalition to fight back against both Saudi aggression and U.S. imperialism.

Washington aims at propping up a Saudi-friendly and anti-Iranian government in Yemen. This is carried out by selling billions of dollars of weapons and supplies to the Saudis and their allies, including Qatar, Morocco, Bahrain, Sudan,

*Continued on page 9*



# U.S. military to increase aggression in Yemen

By Ava Lipatti

For over two years, Saudi Arabia and its Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) allies, in coordination with the United States, have waged a vicious war on Yemen.

The attacks began in early 2015, when the Ansarullah (also known as “Houthi”) movement ousted the Saudi-backed administration of Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi. Ansarullah is allied with former Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh, who himself was ousted in the 2011 “Arab Spring.” In an attempt to reinstate its client, the Saudi Arabian regime launched an aggressive military campaign known as “Operation Decisive Storm.”

The Saudi monarchy had the backing of the U.S. and the help of the United Arab Emirates, Morocco and other regional allies.

According to the United Nations, over 10,000 Yemeni civilians have died in the

conflict. More than half of the 26 million Yemenis are currently experiencing food shortages, mostly due to Saudi blockades of key Yemeni ports. Plagued with widespread famine, destroyed hospitals and infrastructure, and perpetual Saudi bombings, Yemen is facing a major humanitarian crisis. Western corporate media have remained virtually silent.

As the U.S. deploys more troops to Syria and Iraq, Pentagon involvement is set to increase in the war on Yemen as well. The Barack Obama administration sold billions of dollars of weapons to the Saudi government, and provided intelligence, logistical support and drone strike campaigns. The Yemeni population had to face U.S. airstrikes, Saudi bombs and malnutrition, all without food or health care resources, while it also faced assaults from al-Qaida.

During his short time in office, Trump has already escalated U.S. attacks on Ye-

men. In late January, the U.S. military carried out a raid that resulted in an estimated 30 civilian deaths, continuing the Pentagon’s policy of never protecting civilian lives in countries it invades.

In late March, the Trump administration proposed increased U.S. involvement in Yemen on behalf of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, after granting the Pentagon more authority to conduct airstrikes in Somalia. The Trump administration is reportedly considering aiding a Saudi/UAE offensive against Hodeida, another key Houthi-held Red Sea port. The U.S. generals are also considering more arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has reportedly signed off on a precision-guided munitions sale, while Defense Secretary James Mattis has requested White House approval for U.S. surveillance, intelligence and operational planning in the UAE-led offensive on Hodeida. The administration

has also approved a \$5 billion sale of 19 F-16 fighter jets to Bahrain, a part of the Saudi-led offensive. (The Hill, April 1)

Due to the Shiite ideology of Houthi forces, Saudi and U.S. corporate media have accused them of being a proxy of Iran. There is no evidence, however, that the Houthis are operating as Iranian allies. The assault on Yemen is no doubt part of a wider campaign for the U.S./NATO/Saudi-GCC/Israel alliance to secure their political, economic and military dominance in the region. Like the U.S./NATO war on Syria, the war on Yemen functions as an attempt to subvert the Iranian government.

The Trump administration’s granting of more authority to the Pentagon and the continuing U.S./Saudi war against Yemen will only increase the suffering in the region. Only the Yemeni people should decide how to run their country. U.S. and Saudi Arabia, hands off Yemen! □

# Mosul, Iraq: U.S. guilty of war crimes

By John Catalinotto

Using the standards that the corporate media applied to the Syrian/Russian re-taking of Aleppo last December, the U.S. and its coalition are guilty of war crimes for their actions during the ongoing assault on Mosul in Iraq that began last October. Only this time the media reports are quieter.

The Pentagon boasts that its bombings avoid civilian casualties. On March 17, however, the New York Times admits that air strikes hit a building “in which scores if not hundreds of civilians were killed, according to Iraqi witnesses.” (April 1)

According to the same article, “Airwars, a nongovernmental organization that monitors reports of civilian casualties in international airstrikes, has asserted that at least 2,831 civilians are likely to have been killed as of March 28 by the coalition’s air attacks since August 2014.” The Pentagon put this figure at 229, not counting this just past March.

An Associated Press article on April 1 quotes Bashar Abdullah, a resident of the neighborhood known as New Mosul, who lost more than a dozen family members in the March 17 attack: “How could they have used this much artillery on civilian locations? Iraqi and American

forces both assured us that it will be an easy battle, that’s why people didn’t leave their houses. They felt safe.”

These bombings that kill civilians can only increase now that the Donald Trump administration has turned over combat decisions to the military leaders in the field.

It is also likely that there will be more casualties among U.S. troops. “The Pentagon said that officially there are 5,262 U.S. troops in Iraq even as officials privately acknowledge at least a couple thousand more there.” (AP, April 1)

When the Syrian army retook Aleppo last December, the city’s inhabitants greeted the soldiers as liberators from the Islamic State group and the other sectarian militias, such as the U.S.-backed Free Syrian Army.

The population of Mosul, which IS has repressed, also has been persecuted by the Baghdad government. Ever since the U.S. purposely exacerbated sectarian rivalry between Shiite and Sunni communities in Iraq — as a tool to “divide and conquer” the Iraqi resistance to U.S. occupation — the mostly Sunni city has been targeted by sectarian militias.

In London on April 1, a group of exiled Iraqi women held a vigil opposite 10 Downing Street, the residence of the British prime minister, to protest the



London protest, April 1.

bombing and killing of civilians in Mosul city, according to a report by Iraqi author Haifa Zangana.

The ongoing U.S.-led coalition’s war crimes against Mosul are an extension of the imperialist war against Iraq that began with the 1991 bombing of the

country’s infrastructure, a 12-year-long blockade and sanctions policy, and the 2003 invasion that lasted until 2011 and now has been extended by the return of U.S. troops. This aggression has killed more than 2 million Iraqis and displaced many millions more. □

## History of U.S./Saudi role in Yemen

Continued from page 8

Egypt and the United Arab Emirates.

However, despite his recognition from the imperialists, the Yemeni people reject ex-President Hadi and consider him a puppet for Saudi Arabian and imperialist interests.

Saudi-backed forces include many foreign fighters from the UAE and parts of Africa.

Yemen includes many important port cities, including Aden and Mocha. Resistance control of these ports could drastically alter global trade routes and the flow of capital.

But perhaps most importantly, the U.S. and its allies oppose an anti-imperialist resistance government in Yemen, as this could threaten the stability of other Western-allied countries.

The Yemeni people echo the same attitude as that of Syrians: if only foreign powers could stay out of our country, we Yemeni people could work this out on our own. They want foreign fighters out and they want the Saudi-led aggression to stop. They also know the West — specifically the U.S. — is directly to blame.

As revolutionary socialists inside the U.S., we must fight for the U.S. to end terror alliances with Saudi Arabia and similar states. We must fight for Yemen’s right to self-determination. □

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by Sara Flounders

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## Letter to the editor Young worker on socialist education

I am a community college student and worker in northern Lower Michigan and I’m writing in response to the Workers World Party Midwest Fightback Conference which I attended on Saturday, March 25, in Detroit. There were many inspiring and effective speakers and workers there, all of them congregated to express the urgency of theory and action to develop a socialist society which will benefit the people.

The conference was cosponsored by Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) at Wayne State University, but I noticed that the topic of socialist education wasn’t really explored.

The current model for higher education excludes the majority of the population from the many opportunities attending a college or university presents. As a full-time student, I believe it’s our duty to

fervently fight for socialist education for all individuals.

One of the greatest changes we will see by switching to a tuition-free, socialist system of higher education is increased enrollment rates. A socialist society, where the public is welcomed into these institutions, instead of being charged money by them, is so unlike this society. Under capitalism, individuals who live in poverty, work full-time jobs and live with pre-existing debt fear the economic consequences of further education.

I encourage us all to demand that local and federal policymakers treat universities as public institutions rather than corporations whose intentions are only to profit off education. Instead, we must fight for the right to free, quality education for all.

**Emory P.C. Whaley**  
Charlevoix, Mich.



# Black, Brown, Indigenous girls’ lives matter

The hashtag #MissingDCGirls, out of Washington, D.C., went viral on social media the week of March 27, dramatizing the special vulnerability of Black and Brown girls to violence and sexual exploitation.

Racist bias about which girls’ lives matter shows up clearly in mainstream media. The photo of a missing blonde and blue-eyed girl, like JonBenét Ramsey, gets prime-time news coverage for months in 1997. But viewers never hear CNN mention the death of Aiyana Stanley-Jones, a seven-year-old African-American girl killed when Detroit police invaded her home in 2010.

Where are the “Amber Alerts” sent out when Black girls go missing? As one Twitter post exclaimed: “Can someone explain to me how [so many Black girls] go missing in 24 hours in D.C. and it’s not a goddamn news story!?”

The New York Times tried to play down the righteous furor that surfaced due to the hashtag, saying there was no “epidemic” of missing girls. (March 31)

But according to the Black and Missing Foundation, Black children are 36.5 percent of all missing U.S. children. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children confirms this figure and also notes that missing Latinx children are 17 percent. Black people are only 12.5 percent of the U.S. population.

That girls of color are half or more of the missing children is certain. That the missing include large numbers of trans and gender-nonconforming girls and children is surely also true.

The Times tried to minimize the crisis by admitting the lives of Black and Latinx children are “often ignored by public officials.”

But the fact is that children of color, including girls, are actively targeted by the racist policies of “public officials” — from policing the schools to pipelines to for-profit prisons, to collusion of cops with sex trafficking, to slashing cuts in public housing, social services, education.

There is a centuries-long, racist U.S.

record of “protecting” white women and girls to promote white supremacy, while covering up the untold number of crimes against the humanity of women and girls of color, from enslavement and peonage, rape and sexual abuse, to low-wage labor and daily disrespect.

Predictably, there are calls for “more police” to solve the problem of missing children, including girls. But from the slave patrols of the 19th century to this day, the police exist to occupy, criminalize, control and terrorize Black, Brown and Indigenous communities in the U.S.

And an epidemic of violence against women and girls of color rages across the occupied and colonized Americas. In Canada, according to government figures, over 1,000 Indigenous women and girls have been murdered or gone missing in the last 20 years, many of them teenagers. At the maquiladoras on the Mexican-U.S. border at Juarez, hundreds of Latinx young women and girls have been disappeared. So many are assumed dead that the term *femicidio* or *femicide*

is used frequently these days.

Capitalist fortunes and corporations have been built on the bodies and labor of girls and women of color — from the children they have birthed, from their labor in the fields and factories and fast-food restaurants to forced sex work on U.S. military bases. The racist, anti-woman U.S. state will not stop this exploitation, founded as it was on that very exploitation.

In 1977, the Combahee River Collective, a group of Black, lesbian, socialist feminists, wrote of the struggle for the lives of Black women and girls: “We might use our position at the bottom ... to make a clear leap into revolutionary action. If Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free, since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression.”

Let us take up their challenge to “leap into revolutionary action” to defend the lives of girls and women of color everywhere! □

## Women defend Standing Rock and Indigenous Sovereignty

By Stephanie Tromblay

*This article is excerpted from a talk given March 18 at the Workers World Party forum in New York City in honor of International Working Women’s Month. Read the entire talk at workers.org.*

The heroic struggles against the pipelines on the Great Plains raging right now were begun and are led by Native women and youth.

The Standing Rock youth movement began with a young Lakota woman and her cousins who were demanding a safe space at Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota for youth, who face oppression from the colonial-settler state forcing Native peoples onto reservations.

These youth activists went to the anti-Keystone XL camp, met Indigenous Environmental Network activists, with Native women in leadership, trained in direct action, and the camp became their safe space.

After the KXL was halted due to the widespread struggle against it, the youth focused on Standing Rock. There, they — along with Ladonna Brave Bull Allard and other traditional Lakota and Dakota women — established the Sacred Stone camp in the pathway of the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Traditionals from the reservation then joined and set up a Council Lodge. They began to work with the youth to embrace elements of their original culture and

values. Youth were even deputized as *akicita*, warriors who protect the people.

**Women and youth will fight and win**

In Oceti Sakowin society, the women are responsible for protecting the water and leading the people, and the men stand shoulder-to-shoulder with them.

The Standing Rock youth embraced the old traditions of runners to carry news. They ran to Omaha and then to Washington, D.C. to deliver petitions to the Army Corp of Engineers opposing this threat to the waters of their reservation.

The call from Standing Rock women and youth to all the Native Nations was heeded. Indigenous people dropped their daily lives and came to the camps from great distances — from the Dine in the Southwest Four Corners, many Oklahoma-based nations, Pacific coastal nations, even Native peoples from the Land of the Condor, South America.

Knowing that any show of military resistance could be met by extermination and massacre, as happened uncounted times in the unceasing Indian wars of this colonial-settler state, all was done peacefully and in prayer. Women and youth stood up to company goons to protect sacred sites and ancestral graves and were attacked with G4S dogs, tear gas, mace, rubber bullets, concussion grenades, LRADs that can permanently damage hearing, even water cannons in freezing wintry conditions.

The hundreds of arrested included many elders and many, many women. One of the last arrested was Regina Brave, who is 80 and a veteran of the Wounded Knee takeover in 1973.

Many people took grievous wounds as a result of the military repression at Standing Rock. A young Dine mother of four, Vanessa Dundon, lost sight in an eye after being shot in the face with a tear gas canister. Sophia Wilansky, a young white environmentalist ally from the Bronx, N.Y., had her arm blown up when goons threw a concussion grenade at her. She is still recuperating.

The Trump administration greenlighted the DAPL, and oil may run through it very soon. But the struggle has spread. Many of the water protectors have joined other pipeline struggles around the country, from the Trans-Pecos in Texas to the Sabal Trail in Florida. People are fighting the Pilgrim pipeline in New York, which is planned to run close to the Indian Point nuclear plant.

We should support the hundreds of people arrested at Standing Rock, especially those facing extreme charges such as Red Fawn Fallis from Denver. She was assisting the medics and protecting people who had been injured when she was targeted for arrest. Cops and goons planted a gun on her, and now she faces felony charges.

When the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe called a four-day demonstration in

WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

Stephanie Tromblay speaks at International Women’s Day roundtable discussion, March 11.

A black and white photograph showing Stephanie Tromblay, a woman with glasses, speaking into a microphone at a roundtable discussion. She is seated at a table with other participants. In the background, there are posters, one of which says "¡Alto a las redadas!" and another with the word "ISSUE".

Washington, D.C., many Native nations joined them.

USA Today ran online coverage with the headline “Women of Standing Rock aren’t backing down.” Native women being in leadership is not a new thing. In traditional Indigenous societies, communities were almost all matrilineal.

The original white feminists in Seneca Falls were inspired by the Haudenosaunee women — the Mohawk, Seneca, Tuscarora, Oneida, Onondaga and Cayuga nations — the so-called Iroquois people.

The fight is to defend the sovereignty of Indigenous Nations and the enforcement of treaty rights for those nations that have treaties — and many do not. The fight is to protect the water, the earth and life itself, the biosphere.

Workers World Party salutes ALL the Water Protectors and the Land Defenders.

Free Red Fawn Fallis! Mni wiconi! Water is life! □

WORKERS WORLD

MUNDO OBRERO

Manifestación masiva mata ley anti salud

*Continúa de página 12*

comunidades oprimidas. La gente de todo el país dijo un rotundo “No!” al recorte de Planned Parenthood, a los recortes de impuestos para multimillonarios, mientras 24 millones perderían seguro de salud.

La ACA sigue siendo un programa capitalista por el cual millones de personas están obligadas a comprar un seguro de salud en el mercado, aunque muchas/os trabajadores de bajos ingresos reciben subsidios federales para hacerlo.

Sin embargo, el 9,1 por ciento de la población todavía no tiene seguro. (NY Times, 15 de septiembre) Algunas aseguradoras cobran primas y deducibles que son demasiado altos para muchas/os

consumidores. Además, las subvenciones federales se ven amenazadas por una demanda pendiente de los reaccionarios.

**“Medicare para todas/os”**

El lema “Medicare para todas/os” está siendo planteado nuevamente por el movimiento progresista que presiona para un programa de seguro de salud con un solo pagador. Esto sería mucho más fácil y realmente menos costoso de administrar y potencialmente podría cubrir a todo el mundo en EUA. El programa necesitaría algunos ajustes y adiciones, pero sería una mejora sobre el sistema de la salud con fines de lucro y productos farmacéuticos. Por esto vale la pena

luchar y es posible bajo el capitalismo.

La lucha por el cuidado de la salud demuestra que el sistema capitalista necesita ser descartado. ¡El cuidado de la salud es un derecho humano! Se debe proporcionar para todas/os, no en la capacidad de pago y para maximizar ganancias. Cuba socialista asegura que la atención médica, incluyendo los medicamentos, sean accesibles a todo su pueblo. A nadie se le niega por falta de fondos.

La lucha no ha terminado, pero la gente está envalentonada por esta victoria. Neil Gorsuch, un aliado de grandes empresas, es el nominado de Trump al Tribunal Supremo. El jefe de HHS Tom Price, que tiene jurisdicción sobre Medi-

care y Medicaid, ha tenido recortado ambos programas. Detesta la ACA y se opone vehementemente a muchos beneficios de seguro, incluyendo el acceso a anticonceptivos gratuitos para las mujeres a través de Medicaid y todos los planes privados. Tanto Gorsuch como Price deben ser objetados.

Esta administración quiere revertir nuestros derechos. La reforma fiscal y el presupuesto inhumano de Trump en favor de los negocios están en el horizonte. Todas/os debemos permanecer vigilantes y listas/os para protestar contra cualquier ataque a programas esenciales del gobierno. Cada golpe de la clase dominante debe ser contrarrestado por una lucha unida. □



# Student strike answers as Fiscal ‘Junta’ attacks Puerto Rico

By **Berta Joubert-Ceci**

On March 31, the Financial Control Board known as the “Junta” — the collection agency — met for the sixth time since its inception, this time in Puerto Rico. The U.S. Congress imposed the Junta on the Puerto Rican people under the Promesa Law (Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act of 2016), and its role is basically to collect the illegitimate debt produced by the sale of municipal bonds.

The purpose of this meeting, according to its website, was to passively “receive proposals and presentations on the subject of economic development by various representatives of government, private and third sector entities.” (juntasupervision.pr.gov)

As part of its debt repayment plan, the FCB will impose a \$450 million cut to the University of Puerto Rico, leading to the closure and or “consolidations” of some of the 11 campuses of the university. This gigantic cut is a serious blow to higher education that will cause the institution to lose its accreditation.

Hundreds of students and solidarity organizations protested outside the building where the Junta was meeting, trying to expose the Junta’s criminality and insisting it comply with their demands.

Starting early in the morning, they marched from the well-known Muñoz Rivera Park to the Convention Center where the Junta was meeting. They even walked inside the large fountain at the entrance of the Center, which was heavily guarded by hundreds of police and firefighters.

The protesters were mostly students at the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), who exposed what in this moment is the true mission of the FCB — to destroy Puerto Rico as a country. The UPR, the only public institution of higher education in Puerto Rico, embodies the very future of the archipelago. There, the future teachers, scientists and professionals are pre-

## Right wing rebuffed in Ecuador

Lenín Moreno, candidate for the Alianza País, won the runoff election on April 2 by more than 2 percent of the vote over the rightist candidate Guillermo Lasso, a banker and pro-imperialist candidate who had the support of the Ecuadorean oligarchy and U.S. imperialism. Progressive governments and left parties all over Latin America and the Caribbean, including revolutionary Cuba, supported a Moreno victory, which is a continuation of the existing government. The same party, Alianza País, is the leading party in the National Assembly by an even greater margin.

The left in the region see Moreno’s win as a positive step blocking rightist gains following the election of a right-winger in Argentina and rightist victories through virtual coups in Brazil and Paraguay. So far Lasso refuses to recognize this clear electoral victory, crying fraud, although international observers, including the Organization of American States, said there were no irregularities in the election.

— **Report by John Catalinotto**

pared to be able to lead the country’s development for the benefit of its people.

In fact, the UPR is ranked as one of the most prestigious institutions of the Caribbean, and hence has drawn participation from major U.S. educational institutions and from NASA, among many others. Since it is subsidized by the government, the UPR offers students from poorer families better career possibilities.

### Student strike!

That last day of March was already the fourth day of the strike, which was called by the students on March 21. In a general assembly, students of the Río Piedras campus had approved, by 1,312 votes in favor and 253 against, a stoppage of academic work from March 28 to April 5. On the fifth day, students of the 11 campuses of the UPR will meet in a National Assembly with students from the Conservatory of Music of Puerto Rico and the School of Plastic Arts of Puerto Rico.

Then, on April 6, the Río Piedras campus will go on indefinite strike. This decision for an indefinite strike was made on March 21 and is not subject to the results of the National Assembly called for April 5.

The first demand of the striking students is to audit the debt. This has not yet been done and current Gov. Ricardo Roselló, whose New Progressive Party advocates statehood and who, therefore, has a subordinate relationship to the Junta, even eliminated the independent auditing board. The other demands are

no budget cuts, no tuition increases and make reforms for UPR.

### Obscene hiring by the Junta

The Junta — read the U.S. Empire — has decided to destroy its colony, Puerto Rico, and turn it into a backyard for fun and investment for its billionaires, who receive a huge Puerto Rican tax exemption. That’s even more than before.

While ordering deep education cuts for Puerto Rican students and other austerity measures such as wholesale tax increases, closing 300 public schools, and a long list of cuts and “adjustments” that further impoverish the population, the Junta obscenely squanders the Puerto Rican people’s money with impunity on million dollar contracts.

With crocodile tears, José Carrión, president of the FCB, said, “Because of the crisis in the country, I am ashamed of every check I sign,” in a message sent to the Puerto Rican chapter of the U.S. Association of General Contractors. (elnuevodia.com, March 30)

This statement was a response to massive criticism after the board appointed as its executive director Natalie Jaresko, a Ukrainian-American woman born in Chicago. The U.S. State Department had sent Jaresko to Ukraine to serve as minister of finance, where she exercised a predominant role in the efforts of the U.S. to control the Ukrainian government.

According to an article in Claridad on March 29 titled “Jaresko: Why did she come to the Caribbean?” Jaresko was closely associated with the infamous

U.S. Agency for International Development. “Regarding the management Jaresko (joined by her then spouse) made of funds [of USAID] there were allegations of corruption because she allocated millions of dollars as a ‘bonus’ much higher than her base salary.”

While the Junta is reducing the pensions of Puerto Ricans, raising taxes and all kinds of fees, cutting people’s benefits and access to health services, it is giving Jaresko a salary of no less than \$650,000 a year plus travel expenses to Kiev, a chauffeur, housing, etc. — all paid by the impoverished people of Puerto Rico!

Add to this the hiring of an “ethics officer” for the Junta. “To the salary of the new executive director of the Fiscal Control Board (Jaresko), add a compensation of \$750 an hour for the work of Ethics Officer Andrea Bonime Blanc.” (NotiCel, April 1)

### The people have the last word

As the empire, with its criminal Junta, is attempting to decide the future of Puerto Rico, the students together with other sectors, including labor, environmental and social, and including Puerto Ricans in exile — the so-called diaspora — are preparing to intensify the struggle. It is a crucial time for Puerto Ricans, and the people are feeling it in their hearts. And they are getting ready.

From the United States, we should unite our voices and actions to protest the dictatorial Junta in defense of and in solidarity with the Puerto Rican people.

¡Viva Puerto Rico Libre! □

## General strike rocks French Guiana

By **G. Dunkel**

The last two weeks of March saw the people of French Guiana stand up in a massive struggle for justice, health care, education and jobs, in addition to water and electric service.

All 37 trade unions in the Union of Guianese Workers began an unlimited general strike on March 27, which shut Guiana’s economy down completely and was still in full force on April 2. Before the general strike was called, protests mainly shut schools and set up roadblocks, especially where main roads cross.

In France, three of the most progressive unions, the CGT, the FSU and Solidaire held a press conference March 27 to support the unlimited general strike. It has been an issue in France’s presidential campaign.

When May 1, International Workers Day, comes up at the end of this month, the struggle in Guiana should have a prominent place in the placards, banners and speeches.

French Guiana is a virtual colony of France with the formal status of a French department. Located in the northeast corner of Latin America, it was used as France’s penal colony for 100 years or so. The Guiana Space Center is the main facility for launching European rockets. About 60 percent of the world’s commercial launches are done at the GSC, as its location near the equator gives rockets a 19 percent boost from the Earth’s rotation.

March 28 saw a massive demonstration of 20,000 people in Cayenne, the capital of French Guiana, called by the collective Pou Lagwiynn dékolé. Some 4,000 people came out in Moroni, Guiana’s second-largest city. These were

historic numbers, given that Guiana’s population is at most 250,000 people.

The main chant was “Nou bon ké sa” (“We are fed up”).

A people’s militia called 500 Brothers Against Delinquency led the demonstration and kept it on track. Video clips show the 500 Brothers — large Black men, dressed in black with face-covering hoods — encouraging merchants to remain closed.

The demonstrations, while predominantly Black, were very diverse, with many whites and descendants of indentured servants brought from India who mainly live in the interior of Guiana, an area not linked by roads to the rest of the country. Whole families came, along with nurses and doctors, truck drivers, farmers and teachers.

The situation of the majority of people in French Guiana is better than many other places in Latin America. It has drawn a large number of migrants, both those with documents and those without, so that today more than 35 percent of the people there are foreign born. But conditions in Guiana are far worse than those in metropolitan France.

Take the basics: electricity, water and roads. Antoine Karma, Guiana’s representative in the French Senate, told Radio France on March 24 that “30 percent of the people in Guiana don’t have access to potable water or electricity.” Seven out of the 22 communes in the territory are not connected by road. Some women have to travel around 250 miles for maternity care, according to a 2014 government study.

Youth have serious problems with education. Less than half the youth between 15 and 24 are in school and only 12 percent pass the “bac,” the test for going on

to university or technical school. There is a serious shortage of middle schools and high schools.

Some 40 percent of the youth are unemployed, while unemployment overall is 22.3 percent and wages are so low that many more Guianese get government help in order to bring their incomes up to minimum standards than do people in metropolitan France.

Food and housing are much more expensive in Guiana than in metropolitan France. Food is 45 percent more expensive because it either comes 4,500 miles from Europe or is imported from nearby Latin American countries, which means it is subject to significant import duties. Housing is more expensive, since all construction materials have to come from Europe and the French state owns all the land in this former colony.

The leaders of the unions on strike and Pou Lagwiynn dékolé refused to meet with a delegation sent from Paris, including a group of high-level bureaucrats. But after the massive demonstration on March 28, the Holland government got its act together and the very next day sent Matthias Fekl, minister of the interior, and Ericka Bareigts, minister of overseas territories.

In their first meeting with the ministers, the Guiana leadership presented a list of 420 demands. On April 1, the government made an offer of 1.09 billion euros in immediate aid, followed by a medium-term grant of 4 billion euros this year.

The Guianans rejected this offer because it didn’t have the changes they want in their relationship with France. On Sunday, April 2, they added a demand for 2.5 billion euros. □





# Manifestación masiva mata ley anti salud

Por Kathy Durkin

Lo hicimos. La resistencia sirve. La gente en todo el país luchó contra un proyecto de ley de salud draconiana y detuvo su paso. A través de reuniones de ayuntamientos, protestas callejeras creativas, medios de comunicación social, anuncios en vallas publicitarias, peticiones, campañas por teléfono, correo electrónico y cartas, y otras más, la gente rechazó el intento del ala derecha de socavar el seguro médico para millones.

Hubo una rebelión en todo el país contra el proyecto de ley “cuidado de la salud” “tomar de los pobres y dar a los ricos” de Trump / Ryan / Price.

Un estado de ánimo de lucha recorrió el país. Frente a la Casa Blanca, 24 personas fueron arrestadas por desobediencia civil el 23 de marzo, representando a los 24 millones que perderían el seguro bajo la ley del gobierno. Marchas y manifestaciones tuvieron lugar en Washington ese día como parte de una jornada nacional de acción de organizaciones de base y varios sindicatos.

Grupos comunitarios y de derechos de inmigrantes enviaron a personas de varios estados. Estudiantes, trabajadoras/es de la salud y personas con discapacidades se manifestaron. Las protestas continuaron en otras 40 ciudades, muchas fuera de las oficinas de los miembros derechistas de la Cámara. Dos días antes, 300 personas se manifestaron acostándose en el suelo aparentando estar muertas frente a la oficina del multimillonario representante Darrell Issa, en la ciudad de Vista, California.

La AARP (Asociación de Personas Jubiladas) también tuvo acciones en Washington. El Sindicato Nacional de Enfermeras Unidas organizó contra el

propuesto proyecto de ley. Las organizaciones de defensa de la mujere y en pro de opciones reproductivas, como Planned Parenthood, NARAL Pro-Choice America y UltraViolet se movilizaron. Las/os consumidores, incluyendo personas de la tercera edad, organizaciones comunitarias y de libertades civiles, médicos, hospitales y muchas más fuerzas tomaron medidas.

**Bonanza para los ricos, desastre para millones**

El ala derecha ha tratado de revocar la Ley del Cuidado de Salud a Bajo Precio (ACA por sus siglas en ingles) desde el día que fue firmado el 23 de marzo de 2010. Los políticos y los medios derechistas han golpeado el “Obamacare” cada día desde entonces. El presidente Donald Trump declaró la guerra a la ley y juró durante toda su campaña electoral “revocarla y reemplazarla”.

Debido al ACA, más de 20 millones de personas ahora tienen seguro de salud, muchas/os por la expansión de Medicaid en 31 estados y Washington, D.C., y de los subsidios federales para las/os trabajadoras de bajos ingresos para comprar un seguro.

Funcionarios de 19 estados liderados por republicanos todavía rehúsan expandir Medicaid. El ACA también ordenó que los aseguradores privados cubrieran los beneficios esenciales de salud. Cada plan debe incluir ciertos servicios, incluyendo cuidado de maternidad y recién nacidos, servicios de emergencia, tratamiento de abuso de sustancias y mamografías.

Entonces el presidente de la Cámara, Paul Ryan, en 2017 con Trump y Tom Price, secretario de Salud y Servicios Humanos, se apresuraron a obtener la

terrible Ley Americana de Salud (AHCA) aprobada antes de que sus costos y efectos fueran analizados por la Oficina de Presupuesto del Congreso (CBO). Pero no fueron lo suficientemente rápidos.

La CBO dijo que la ley ofrecería miles de millones de dólares en recortes de impuestos a las aseguradoras de salud, compañías farmacéuticas, inversores y otros, alcanzando casi \$1 billón en 10 años. El proyecto de ley habría eliminado los impuestos que pagan por los subsidios para las/os trabajadores de bajos ingresos. (New York Times, 15 de marzo)

La propuesta de Trump / Ryan / Price era realmente un proyecto de ley contra la salud. Con ello, dijo la CBO, 14 millones de personas perderían el seguro en el primer año, y un total de 24 millones perderían la cobertura en 2026. Medicaid perdería \$880 mil millones en 10 años.

La AHCA fue una declaración de guerra contra trabajadoras/es, personas de bajos ingresos y oprimidas/os, mujeres y adultas/os mayores.

Las/os adultos mayores habrían sido penalizados ya que la AHCA permitiría a las compañías de seguros cobrar hasta cinco veces más por las primas que a las/os jóvenes. AARP dijo que una persona de 64 años que gana \$15.000 al año podría pagar primas anuales de \$8.400. El proyecto de ley habría debilitado Medicare y cambiado los costos de Medicaid a los estados, poniendo así en peligro a cada destinataria/o. (NY Times, 10 de marzo)

Esta ley contra la mujer habría retirado el financiamiento a Planned Parenthood, que recibe \$500 millones al año en fondos federales para proporcionar servicios esenciales de prevención, detección y anticonceptivos a millones de mujeres.

Este proyecto de ley era tan impopular que una encuesta de la Universidad de Quinnipiac del 23 de marzo dijo que tenía sólo un 17 por ciento de aprobación, y que uno de cada siete residentes estadounidenses dijo que les haría perder la cobertura.

**Matar el proyecto**

El representante Ryan retiró el proyecto de ley el 24 de marzo, justo antes de que la Cámara de Representantes votara, ya que no había suficientes votos para su paso. Trump había querido el voto ese día. Al intentar ganar, la Casa Blanca incluso prometió al ultraderechista “Caucus de la Libertad” de la Cámara (antes Tea Party) desechar el mandato esencial de los beneficios de salud del ACA, incluyendo cobertura para el cuidado de la maternidad y mamografías. ¡Una sala llena de oficiales masculinos estaba lista para sacrificar el cuidado de la salud de las mujeres! Incluso con eso, los ultraconservadores no se apaciguaron.

El Caucus de la Libertad se opuso al proyecto porque no iba lo suficientemente lejos para destruir todos los aspectos del ACA. Muchos miembros de la Cámara Republicana y todos los Demócratas no votarían por ello porque vieron la movilización de masas y sintieron la presión de las/os manifestantes exigiendo “maten la ley”. Algunos políticos anticiparon consecuencias duraderas si votaban a favor; sus constituyentes nunca lo olvidarían. Aquellos cuyos estados habían expandido Medicaid estaban presionados para votar por ella.

El resultado es una victoria para mujeres, trabajadoras/es, adultos/as mayores, personas de bajos ingresos y las comunidades negra, latina y todas las

*Continúa a página 10*

## Banco de Santander debe reparaciones al pueblo puertorriqueño

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

El Banco de Santander español está profundamente implicado en la actual crisis económica puertorriqueña. El 16 de marzo, varias/os activistas del Comité Boricua Filadelfia-Camden hicieron piquetes en la sucursal de la calle Erie, en Filadelfia, para responsabilizar al Santander. Las/os manifestantes entregaron volantes con los siguientes puntos clave: ¿”Por qué el Banco de Santander debe reparaciones al pueblo puertorriqueño”? (Algunos puntos abajo de la hoja informativa editados ligeramente).

**¿Por qué Puerto Rico no puede solucionar el problema?**

Como “territorio” de EUA, Puerto Rico es en realidad una colonia que no tiene ninguna soberanía en ningún aspecto - político, social, económico o comercial. Por lo tanto, ¡no puede reestructurar su deuda! Todo lo que dicta el gobierno puertorriqueño puede ser rechazado por el Congreso de los Estados Unidos.

**Situación actual en PR**

Puerto Rico está inmerso en la peor crisis económica y social de la historia.

Hay una deuda “pública” de más de \$ 73 mil millones que el gobierno no puede pagar debido a una economía estancada.

La mayor parte de esta deuda ilegítima ha sido causada por bonos municipales que ambiciosos tenedores de bonos - empresas de fondos de cobertura de Wall Street - compraron porque las enormes ganancias resultantes a veces incluso más de 700 por ciento de su valor, estaban exentas de triples impuestos. Ahora estos buitres quieren obtener sus ganancias prometidas oprimiendo a la clase trabajadora de PR.

Cincuenta y ocho por ciento de los niños menores de 18 años viven en la pobreza y uno de cada puertorriqueño padece hambre.

Un promedio de 3.000 personas -en su mayoría jóvenes- emigran cada mes a Estados Unidos debido a la falta de empleo. La población puertorriqueña en la isla está disminuyendo mientras que multimillonarios de EU se mudan allá para aprovecharse de las exenciones de impuestos. Puerto Rico se está convirtiendo en un paraíso para los ricos de EU y la población nativa se convertirá en sus sirvientes. (U.S. Census Bureau 2009-10,

Dept. Agricultura)

Para “arreglar” la falta de pago por parte del gobierno de PR, el Congreso de los Estados Unidos promulgó la ley PROMESA para imponer una Junta de Control Fiscal que actuaría como una agencia de cobro para pagar a los tenedores de bonos. Esta Junta se reunió el 13 de marzo para discutir un Plan Fiscal para la PR.

El Plan de Austeridad resultante será la destrucción de PR y su pueblo. Entre las medidas se encuentran: la reducción del 20 por ciento de la jornada laboral, la reducción del 10 por ciento en las pensiones, el recorte del presupuesto de la Universidad pública de PR, recortes a la atención de la salud, cierre de las escuelas, etc.

**Complicidad de bancos como Santander**

Dos de los miembros de la JCF no sólo eran ejecutivos del Banco Santander, sino también presidentes del Banco Gubernamental de Fomento de PR, la entidad que administra el presupuesto del gobierno y los bonos. Estos dos hombres, Carlos M. García y José Ramón González, “construyeron Valores Santander, el negocio de bonos municipales del banco, que se hizo reconocer como un subscritor de bonos

líder, lo que coincide con el crecimiento de la deuda pública de Puerto Rico.

Esta empresa generó un ingreso significativo para el banco en concepto de honorarios....”el BGF se hizo cada vez más dependiente de técnicas de ingeniería financiera riesgosas. Santander ayudó al Estado Libre Asociado a emitir acuerdos de deuda riesgosos que se basaban en características controversiales... Estos bonos generaban más ingresos por honorarios para el negocio de suscripción de Santander”. (tinyurl.com/lx7kq9s)

La economía de PR se ha desarrollado para satisfacer los intereses de las corporaciones estadounidenses. El único estatus que puede ayudar a PR a convertirse en soberano y construir su futuro en beneficio de su pueblo es como una república independiente.

Es por eso que Estados Unidos siempre ha perseguido y reprimido a la gente que defiende la independencia de Puerto Rico; y hace creer a la gente que sólo puede sobrevivir con la “protección” de los EU. Pero los hechos están a la vista: después de un siglo de intervención y ocupación de Estados Unidos, Puerto Rico está peor que nunca y su pueblo en profunda pobreza. □