

Mobilize to say No war, no way!

Syria poison gas? Pretext for U.S. military attack

By Sara Flounders

U.S. wars are based on lies and staged provocations. This is hardly news.

Now comes the charge that on April 7 someone — the imperialists are saying it was the Syrian government, although there is no proof of that — killed dozens of Syrians with a poison gas attack on the town of Douma, which had only recently been liberated from anti-government forces.

The brutal seven-year war against Syria had been winding down after the failure of every effort by U.S. imperialism to overturn the Syrian government.

The last groups of reactionary, Saudi-backed military units were defeated this month. They had relentlessly shelled the civilian population of Damascus, the Syrian capital, for years. Thousands of these fighters have finally surrendered and were forced out of the hills of East Ghouta province overlooking Damascus. They are due to be bused out of the area to Idlib, a rebel-held area in the far north of Syria.

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Gaza Mass uprising defies Israeli oppression

By Deirdre Griswold

The people of Gaza, in a show of their unbreakable will to resist Israeli rule and control their own destiny, have begun a series of demonstrations at the heavily fortified border with Israel that are to continue every Friday until mid-May. The result has already been a historically heroic uprising by Palestinians, young and old, women and men, who are joining the demonstrations by the thousands.

It is not only the Israeli government’s murderous repression that has ignited this firestorm of resistance. The Palestinian people know full well that Israel is backed to the hilt by the U.S. imperialist government. Israel has functioned as imperialism’s attack dog against the peoples of the Middle East for decades. Now President Trump’s decision to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem is meant to destroy the possibility — known as the “two-state solution” — of the Palestinians being able to establish a state on any part of the lands stolen from them in 1948.

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PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD, VIA MONDOWEIS
Palestinian women at Gaza border during the Great March of Return.

Anti-war April 14-15

Why we march

By Workers World editors

SpringAction 2018, a significant coalition of hundreds of progressive groups, has been mobilizing for anti-war demonstrations across the U.S. on April 14-15. Its appeal calls for an end to all U.S. wars and militarism along with fighting white supremacy at home and defending immigrant rights, as well as protecting the environment.

Radio host Mimi Rosenberg invited three of the New York based organizers of these demonstrations on her April 4 Morning Show on Pacifica Radio 99.5 FM, WBAL.org, to discuss these protests on the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The following are excerpts from the comments Kayla Popuchet, a Haitian-Peruvian student activist; Jose Monzon, a Black anti-war activist and member of Black Alliance for Peace; and Sara Flounders, co-director of the International Action Center and member of the United National Antiwar Coalition, made on the show.

Rosenberg: “You cannot remain silent,” say our

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WORKERS IN MILITANT MOTION

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How I remember Winnie Madikizela Mandela

By Devyn Springer

News broke on April 2 that Winnie Madikizela Mandela, revolutionary South African anti-apartheid activist, died at age 81. Also known by her birth name, Zanyiwe Madikizela, Winnie played a key role in the struggle against the brutal apartheid regime in South Africa that lasted until the early 1990s. She became an international symbol of African women's liberation.

Winnie was married to Nelson Mandela from 1958 to 1996. During the 27 years he spent behind bars, she helped him communicate with the outside world and brought him political reading materials.

Winnie fought for a better world — not just in South Africa but globally — throughout her spouse's imprisonment. The apartheid police state violently harassed, beat and surveilled her. She was expelled to a small Free State town, harshly betrayed by friends and former allies, and spent over 18 months in solitary confinement at Pretoria Central Prison.

Winnie was always keen to discuss gender roles in South Africa, particularly within the anti-apartheid movement. She often focused on revealing how the women and children of the nation were as important to the struggle as the popular male leaders.

In discussing the exceptionalism ascribed to Nelson Mandela, Winnie said: "Mandela was extricated from the masses. He was made an idol, almost Jesus Christ. This is ... a lot of nonsense. The freedom of this country was attained by the masses of this country. It was attained by the children who gave their lives in 1976, who faced machine guns with stones and dustbin lids. It was attained by women who were left to fend for their families. They fought the enemy. We are the ones who fought the enemy physically, who went out to face their bullets." (London Review of Books, Jan. 9, 2014)

Soweto Uprising inspired resistance

The Soweto Uprising took place in 1976, just outside of Johannesburg, when a series of demonstrations by thousands of Black middle and high school students protested the implementation of the apartheid educational system. The students were met with enormous violence, as over 1,500 South African police fired into the unarmed crowd. The state reported a mere 23 casualties at the time, but

The Soweto Uprising took place in 1976, just outside of Johannesburg, when a series of demonstrations by thousands of Black middle and high school students protested the implementation of the apartheid educational system.



Coretta Scott King on the right. (Below) ANC leaders Winnie Mandela, Nelson Mandela and South African Communist Party leader Joe Slovo.



the truth is that hundreds of students lost their lives due to police terror.

Winnie was one of the first to understand the significance of this international tragedy and was able to garner world attention to the murder and abuse of these children. Along with her campaign against this state-sanctioned violence, she also urged her then incarcerated spouse — who still maintained great influence despite his incarceration — to support the uprising. The Soweto Uprising became a pivotal moment in the anti-apartheid struggle, inspiring resistance in Black towns throughout the country.

For decades — until the very last weeks of her life — Winnie was a fighter. When college students united across South Africa under the slogan #FeesMustFall, setting off protests around the country in 2015, she joined them in the streets. Upon hearing of violent police crackdowns on the thousands of protesters, she announced that she would participate with the crowd for another day of marching and protesting. Winnie militantly stated: "Let us see if the police will shoot with me in the front line. I dare them to." (News 24, Oct. 22, 2015)

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END POLICE MURDER = ABOLISH CAPITALISM

The recent police executions of two Black men — Stephon Clark in Sacramento, Calif., and Saheed Vassell in Brooklyn, N.Y. — are just two examples of the ongoing racist U.S. police war. Both murders have received major social media attention, with militant protests shutting down a major interstate highway, sports events — and even a city council meeting.

According to the Washington Post database, 294 people in the U.S. have been fatally shot by police from the first day of this year to April 5. The breakdown of those killed based on nationality is: 124 white, 60 Black, 38 Latinx and 72 “other” or “unknown.” Fifty-six were diagnosed with mental illness, including Vassell.

According to Quick Facts issued by the U.S. Census, as of July 1, 2016, whites constituted 76.7 percent of the population, while Black and Latinx peoples combined constituted 31 percent. The number of police killings of Black and Brown people is grossly disproportionate to their overall numbers in the U.S. The police killings of Indigenous people are not even on official records! None of the cops involved in these shootings have been indicted on any kind of murder charge, much less arrested.

These killings help to reinforce the Marxist view that agents of the repressive state apparatus, especially the police, are above the laws that working and oppressed peoples are obliged to obey — or they risk being heavily fined, put in jail or killed.

This is why capitalism, which the police protect and serve as an armed force, must be abolished and replaced with a socialist system that provides for human needs for all — and doesn’t serve the interests of the super-rich.

— Monica Moorehead

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However, Winnie’s life was not without controversy, slander and false accusations. The apartheid-state police detained her on many occasions. In her autobiography, “491 Days: Prisoner Number 1323/69,” Winnie reported several beatings and torture by police and how she spent over a year in solitary confinement. (Ohio University Press, 2014)

In 1986, due to her vocal support of what was labeled a violent uprising by the masses, she faced strong political and personal defamation. In court her opposition cited a speech in which she said, “With our boxes of matches and our necklaces (referring to a practice known as ‘necklacing’ in South Africa), we shall liberate this country.” (Guardian, Jan. 27, 1989)

And throughout her life, Winnie did light boxes of matches. She was falsely accused of supplying arms for revolutionaries and of kidnapping. The Western media carried out a smear campaign against her, eerily similar to that against Black revolutionary Angela Davis during the 1970s.

Winnie’s role was to uplift the voiceless, defending women and children, and making sure that every human being was heard by any means necessary. In an interview in the Duluth News Tribune on June 23, 1990, she said: “We are the women who waited. We are the women who kept burying our children all these years. We are the women who have seen in a physical sense the horrors of apartheid. We are the women who collected the bodies of our children in 1976.

“We are the women the government has brutalized year in and year out. We are the mothers of the children who have been turned into vegetables by the South

Boston demands justice in police killings

Hundreds of people gathered in front of Boston Police Department headquarters in Roxbury, Mass., on April 4, the 50th anniversary of the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. They were there to protest the police killing of Stephon Clark in Sacramento, Calif., and to demand justice for the victims of police shootings in Boston.

Among the rally speakers were Hope Coleman and Rahimah Rahim, mothers of Terrence Coleman and Usaamah Rahim, two of those fatally gunned down by police in recent years. After this event, activists and community members

marched from police headquarters to Peters Park, a few blocks away from where Coleman was murdered in 2016. Among those at the day’s actions were a large number of high school students, some of whom were involved in organizing the recent Boston March for Our Lives.

Mass Action Against Police Brutality, which organized the event, has repeatedly called on Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey to appoint a special prosecutor and reopen the cases of all Boston victims of police brutality.



PHOTO: HOWARD ROTMAN

Hope Coleman, mother of police killing victim Terrence Coleman, addresses the crowd in Boston.

— Workers World Boston bureau

19 shots, 4 officers, one unarmed Black man in Brooklyn

In Crown Heights, Brooklyn, on April 4, four police officers (three undercover) fired 19 shots into one Black man holding nothing but a metal pipe. They fired without question or hesitation.

They killed Saheed Vassell, a 34-year-old with bipolar disorder. He left behind a 15-year-old son, Tyshawyn; a mother and father, Lorna Vassell and Eric Vassell; a family and a whole community that loved and supported him.

Residents poured into the streets immediately, expressing grief, shock and anger at the murder of one of their own. Cops closed down the streets and began militarizing the area to counter the peo-

Saheed Vassell’s killing by police sparked a massive protest by his community in Brooklyn on April 5



WW PHOTO: SOFIA ADAMS

ple they had just traumatized. All night cops faced off residents in the streets and had snipers on the roofs of surrounding buildings.

Within hours of the murder, a surveillance video surfaced that showed Saheed Vassell pointing the metal pipe at people on the street. In this video people didn’t even flinch. But this video was used to justify Vassell’s murder and criminalize him after his death.

That night, calls were made for an action the next day for Saheed Vassell. NYC Shut It Down, the People’s Power Assembly and Workers World Party met with family and community members to gauge their feelings and gain their consent to help organize a rally and march.

The following day, thousands crowded around speakers at the corner of Utica Avenue and Montgomery Avenue, showing solidarity with the family and community and anger at the constant murder of Black people. The rally heard from Vassell’s mother, Lorna, and his younger brother, who showed grief and proclaimed the need for justice.

Following the rally, the crowd took to the streets, shutting down lanes of traffic with little police presence. The march went to the 71st Precinct where protesters faced off behind the barricades, demanding the release of the names of and the firing of the officers who murdered Saheed Vassell, and the release of 911 call information and recordings. Speakers asked people to stop calling the police.

Shannon Elayne from Why Accountability gathered the crowd as they chanted over and over, “Cops lie all the time, and all the time, cops lie.”

After the crowd discovered the cops were barricading them from the surrounding streets, a wildcat march happened. Hundreds of protesters chanted through the streets. This time, the police followed en masse while helicopters flew above, monitoring the crowd. Community members lined up against the police at Utica and Montgomery to prevent them from coming into community-occupied space.

Some folks mentioned they recognized various officers from Manhattan who were not part of the local 71st Precinct. Protesters chanted at the cops to “Go home!” After two hours, the police left in droves, leaving behind one car for surveillance. The crowd cheered; music played. The family of Kimani Gray, a 16-year-old Black child murdered by police in 2013, was there and played music from their cars. Ever since, community members have been in the streets fighting off the police and demanding justice for Saheed Vassell.

The 911 call has been under speculation by the community, as people from Crown Heights knew Saheed Vassell and how harmless he was. He was regarded as a funny “jokester,” who would pick up trinkets on the street and play with them like toys.

It must also be noted that it is part of the culture in oppressed communities to never call the police, especially not about people whom you know. Black and Brown folks know all too well that calling the police will only bring more harm. These communities have developed constructive ways to settle issues without police presence. This leads to the conclusion that the 911 callers were not from the community.

Crown Heights is a middle-class neighborhood in the heart of Brooklyn. It is a predominantly Caribbean and African community battling the plague of gentrification, another form of systematic violence against oppressed communities. Gentrification is displacing and driving Black and Brown folks out of their homes, and the result is murder when newcomers call the police on disenfranchised individuals or groups.

The 911 call also connects to the stigmatization of mentally ill people. The police described a caller as saying, “A man is pointing guns at people and he looks crazy.” This ableist language paints mentally ill people as inherently and inevitably violent. But, according to Mental Health.gov, people with mental illnesses are 10 times more likely to be victims of violence, and only 3 percent to 5 percent of folks with mental illness are violent.

A Drexel University study found that Black men are three times more likely to be killed by police than white men. (tinyurl.com/y7w8ecec)

The murders of Black and Brown bodies are nothing new and are a result of the capitalist state. Law enforcement institutions in the U.S. originated as slave catchers. Black folks were and still are treated as disposable bodies only to be used for labor and exploitation. To end the murders of Black folks, we must disarm and abolish the police and, importantly, abolish capitalism.

— Kayla Popuchet

NYC construction workers: Defending union jobs nationally

Thousands of construction workers crammed two blocks south of Times Square April 4 to protest The Related Companies’ use of nonunion labor on the massive Hudson Yards westside development. “New York City is a union town,” said Gary LaBarbera, president of the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York, opening the rally. After a moment of silence remembering Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., he noted that workers are still in the streets 50 years after his death.

Chanting “Union!” and waving green #CountMeIn placards, the workers were protesting because Related, which built the first phase of Hudson Yards with union workers, has refused to sign a project-labor agreement for the second phase. The developer hired Boston contractor Gilbane Building Co., which uses a so-called “open shop” mix of union and nonunion workers, to construct a 51-story office tower. Also, Related has hired nonunion metallic lathers and operating engineers, not workers from Laborers Local 79.

Noting that nonunion labor is cheaper, Mason Tenders District Council Business Manager Bobby Bonanza said: “It’s not about saving nothin’. It’s about breaking us.” Carpenters Local 157 member Dave Songuy agreed that “New York City is the last stronghold.” Vincent Alvarez, of the NYC Central Labor Council, added, “As goes New York City, as goes New York State, so goes this nation.” Steamfitters Local 638 President Patrick Dolan Jr. joined in: “If you can break the trades in New York, they’re done in the rest of the country. It ain’t gonna happen under us.”

Related is suing the Building Trades Council and LaBarbera personally, accusing them of defamation and fraudulently inflating labor costs. The council, joined by the New York State AFL-CIO, has responded by filing unfair-labor-practice complaints with the National Labor Relations Board, accusing Related of illegally retaliating against union supporters. (Labor Press, April 5) This struggle is just beginning. Stay tuned.

Join FLOC’s fight for tobacco workers: Boycott VUSE

E-cigarettes have different qualities from those of their analog peers, but conditions are the same for the mostly Latinx workers who labor in Southern tobacco fields. Workers routinely get “green tobacco sickness,” heat stroke and pesticide exposure that poisons them, while children must work to support their families. A North Carolina farmworker earns less than \$8,000 a year.

That’s where the international union fighting for farmworkers’ rights, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, comes in. More than 10 years ago FLOC took on Reynolds American, one of the largest tobacco corporations in the world. FLOC wants Reyn-



By Alex Bolchi and Sue Davis

1,400 Frontier workers win three-week strike

After nearly 11 months of bargaining and 22 days on strike, the Communication Workers and Frontier reached a tentative agreement for 1,400 CWA members who work in West Virginia and Ashburn, Va. As of ratification, the contract expands job security for all members — a major victory — and provides wage increases and modest increases in health care coverage.

“Going on strike is never easy,” said Ed Mooney, vice president of CWA District 2-13 in a statement. “But [our members] knew what was at stake for their co-workers and for their communities. Thanks to their strength and unity, [we] reached an agreement with Frontier that [continues] good, family-supporting jobs.” Workers received an outpouring of support from community members who were already in the streets supporting the teachers’ strike. They returned to their jobs on March 28. (cwa-union.org, March 25 and April 2)

Organizing: ‘Best thing that ever happened’ at LA health center

Health center workers at the Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center in downtown Los Angeles won an organizing victory by voting 113 to 55 to join United Electrical Workers on March 22. These workers provide advocacy and support for people with disabilities, allowing them to live in their own communities. But management wasn’t helping them. So the workers organized to stop management disrespect, thereby helping both themselves and their clients.

In UE’s West Region delegate meeting in Chicago March 25-26, the workers told of management’s excessive write-ups that lead to firings and ridiculous policies like having to somehow report to management eight hours ahead of time when they are sick. Marc Baca reported the good news: “People throughout this process have become more militant, they’ve lost that fear they had. This campaign essentially brought back the sisterhood and brotherhood that we used to have, the sense of family ... [Organizing] is the best thing that has ever happened at Lanterman.” (April2, UE News) □

Workers mass in Memphis, commemorate Dr. King and sanitation strikers

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Memphis, Tenn.

April 4 — Thousands of people from far and wide, including worker delegations, gathered here on the 50th anniversary of the heroic Memphis sanitation workers strike and the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Wearing their union T-shirts, NAACP jackets or other identifying organizational garb, they filled huge halls to standing room only and marched with today’s American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 1733 sanitation workers to a rally next to the Mason Temple. UNITE HERE brought at least 2,000 members, travelling to Memphis on 41 charter buses.

Thousands gathered for more speeches and singing outside the Lorraine Motel, where King was killed by a single bullet.

The Lorraine and nearby buildings house the National Civil Rights Museum, with an extraordinary collection of photos, documents, videos, oral histories and related items. On display is a sanitation truck like the one that crushed to death workers Echol Cole and Robert Walker, sparking the 1968 strike.

The famous slogan of the sanitation workers’ picket signs, “I Am a Man,” appeared on murals and commemorative T-shirts and was inclusively transformed on the AFSCME banner to “I Am 2018.”

Many present were older people who had participated in marches and voter registration drives, faced police dogs and water cannons, or been fired from their jobs or evicted from their homes. Everywhere were families with teenagers and small children. Young adults, now part of #BlackLivesMatter and movements against police killings, state violence,

gentrification, low-wages, poverty and white supremacy, came to April 2-3 training sessions. These were designed to transfer organizational skills and knowledge of previous civil rights struggles to today’s activists.

AFSCME Memphis sanitation workers broke open the fight for public sector employees to belong to a union. In 1968, they used their power to withhold their labor as a tool to win collective bargaining rights and hold onto those rights.

Dr. King’s support of the sanitation workers’ strike was also key to the Poor People’s Campaign that he launched earlier in 1968, intending to bring the struggle against economic inequality and systemic poverty to Washington, D.C. King coupled this action with his denunciation of the U.S. war on Vietnam, declaring the U.S. government to be “the greatest pur-



PHOTO: AFSCME 1733

AFSCME 1733, the Memphis union local that won the 1968 sanitation strike for its 1,300 members, marches proud and strong in Memphis 50 years later, April 4, in memory of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

veyor of violence in the world.” He made the economic link clear by saying “the bombs dropped on Vietnam explode” in the nation’s communities of poor and working people.

From a new Poor People’s campaign to the April 14-15 national “End U.S. Wars at Home and Abroad” rallies — in the strikes and walkouts by public education teachers and staff in West Virginia, New Jersey, Kentucky, Oklahoma and Arizona — the resistance embodied in the Memphis sanitation workers and in Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. lives on! □



WW PHOTO: GLORIA RUBAC

By Gloria Rubac
Houston

A tribute, “From South Africa to Third Ward: A Celebration of the Life and Legacy of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela,” was held April 8 at the SHAPE Community Center. This was the exact location that Madikizela

Mandela visited in Houston in 1981.

The gathering was organized by Akua Holt with Amandla Productions and chaired by the national chair of the National Black United Front, Kofi Taharka. Over 100 people were treated to music by Swatara Olushola, poetry by Sister-Mama Sonya and a phone call from an activist in South Africa. Drumming by 12-year-old Olaniyan, Runyararo Fana, Phindisela Mkhathshwa and Furaha Terri Nairn-Collins opened and accompanied the program as activists spoke.

John “Bunchy” Crear, a leader of the

Black Panther Party Alumni Association, told of the Panthers’ involvement in the anti-apartheid struggle and support for all liberation struggles in Africa. South African Bongi Goba spoke about the love her people have for Mandela and the dignity she possessed despite all her travails, from imprisonment to banishment: “Winnie was the rock who led our women all over the world to seek our liberation. Mama Winnie led the underground railroad in South Africa. She held the struggle on her shoulders.”

Goba also sang music from her home-

land with another South African, Phindisela Mkhathshwa. The secretary of the local National Black United Front, Folade Madzimoyo, told her personal story of learning about Winnie Mandela and how touched she was by her long life of organizing against apartheid. “I was sad when Nelson Mandela died, but I was crying when Winnie died,” she said.

To close the tribute, Taharka asked all those in attendance who had ever marched or picketed against apartheid to stand up. As about two dozen people rose, they were strongly applauded. □

Houston honors life of Winnie Madikizela Mandela

Spectrum strike

Second year in workers' war with banks

By John Steffin

It has now been over a year since 1,800 members of International Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 3 went on strike against cable monopoly Spectrum/Charter in the New York City/New Jersey area.

Strikes against utility companies are often long struggles, even when it's the largest strike in the country, as was #SpectrumStrike at one time. Strikers can stop repairs, but they can't stop the automated production. This strike has its own unique conditions, leading to the persistence of Spectrum/Charter trying to break the workers and their union. To understand, we need to get into the economics around the recent takeover of Time Warner by Spectrum/Charter.

In 2015, Spectrum/Charter gobbled up Time Warner and became the second largest cable provider in the U.S. Mergers like this have reached gargantuan proportions — so much so that one individual company alone doesn't have the money on hand to actually purchase another company as big as Time Warner.

Even Spectrum/Charter needs help — which must be gotten from Big Banking. But taking money from the banks comes with a catch — a catch that Lenin described over 100 years ago in his popular pamphlet of 1916, "Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism." The lesson that still applies is quite simple: The banks become the boss — what Lenin called the "finance capitalist."



PHOTO: ONWY UZOIGWE

New York/New Jersey workers have been on strike against Spectrum/Charter since March 28, 2017.

The banks only lend out billions of dollars if they know they are going to get something in return. So when Charter/Spectrum took on \$27 billion in debt to finance the purchase of Time Warner, the company effectively handed decision-making over to their lenders.

The banks push to eliminate worker benefits and bust unions. Attacking the workers is the same tactic all bosses use to extract more profits from a company. But the banks are more vicious and unrelenting because they can afford to be. They do, after all, hold the entire bourgeoisie's wealth in their coffers.

Despite a year of its workers striking, Charter/Spectrum — backed by a large segment of the finance capitalist class, including such big names as Goldman Sachs, Bank of America, Deutsche Bank and Credit Suisse — still refuses to bargain with IBEW Local 3.

It is a tribute to the power of IBEW

and the loyalty of its members that the union has held out for over a year during this onslaught by the financial capitalist class.

Workers are doing everything they can to continue the strike, but there is a financial toll. The

local is digging deep into the pockets of its strike fund, paying striking workers \$350 a week. But once workers use up their personal savings, that fund doesn't cover basic expenses. In the last few months, some workers have reported difficulties paying rent, and they've turned to borrowing from friends to get by, in hopes that the struggle will soon end.

These are the conditions that have turned the #SpectrumStrike from a struggle between workers and one boss into a titanic struggle between one of the country's most powerful unions and the entire financial capitalist system.

With a new wave of labor militancy rising from West Virginia's education workers, raising class consciousness across the country, what can militants do to help IBEW Local 3 win? West Virginia showed that it took more than the teachers and support staff to win. Solidarity was the key, as students, parents

and other unions all came out in force to show support.

Spectrum currently services 25 million customers in the U.S., potentially a huge base of support for the #SpectrumStrike. If enough people refuse to pay for their service or transfer their service to another company, the banks will get the message, and tell the company to back off.

Solidarity between consumers and workers is already organically there. Since the merger, Charter/Spectrum, besides slashing worker benefits, has jacked up its prices to pay off its debt. As a monopoly, it can afford this, since in many cases the company is the only cable provider in an area.

The Charter/Spectrum local monopoly also creates a potential fightback strategy. What if militants in New York City, for instance, pushed the city council to revoke Spectrum's franchise? Of course, a general strike or even smaller solidarity strikes in key industries could always tip the balance in the favor of the workers!

These are all potential tactics to help the #SpectrumStrike. Whatever form this strike takes going forward, it's clear that to win, we must fight together.

It should be stressed that we all stand to benefit if IBEW Local 3 wins.

Since 1916, when Lenin first diagnosed the rise of finance capital, the rule of the banks has only spread and deepened. The #SpectrumStrike is but one battle in this global war of the banks against the people. □

Protesters for Palestine to Philharmonic 'Violins, not Zionist Violence'

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

Over 70 people participated in a rally and press conference outside the Kimmel Center on April 6 to protest the Philadelphia Philharmonic Orchestra's plans to tour and perform in Israel in June 2018. The event was organized by a newly formed coalition, Philly: Don't Orchestrate Apartheid.

The rally greeted concertgoers and musicians as they exited an afternoon performance. Participants carried banners and signs opposing Israel's occupation of Palestine, along with enlarged pictures of Israeli soldiers terrorizing and arresting Palestinian children.

Earlier in the day, activists distributed flyers explaining objections to the trip to people attending the concert. The orchestra labels the trip "cultural diplomacy" and claims it is not "a political mission." But the orchestra admits that the trip is "in celebration of [Israel's] 70th anniversary" and was organized in close collaboration with Israeli government officials.

The trip's scheduled performance in Jerusalem coincides with Israel's unilateral declaration of that city as its capital, in violation of international law. There are no plans to tour cities in the West Bank or Gaza.

Israel kills Palestinians in Gaza

Meanwhile, the Israeli army killed more than 30 Palestinian civilians in Gaza participating in the Great March of Return, which protested 11 years of total blockade and 70 years of occupation. (See article on news from Gaza.)

Palestinian activist and author Susan Abulhawa opened the news conference

by reading excerpts from a letter sent in March to the orchestra management requesting a meeting. Over 100 musicians, artists, scholars, union members and activists, along with 30 social justice organizations, signed the letter calling on the orchestra to cancel the tour. A copy of that letter was sent with a special appeal to the orchestra's unionized musicians in the American Federation of Musicians Local 77.

When orchestra co-presidents Ryan Fleur and Matthew Lode answered on March 26, they invoked "peace and tolerance through music." Yet they plan to meet with Miri Regev, Israel's minister of culture and sport. Regev recently likened African asylum seekers in Israel to "a cancer" — but apologized to cancer survivors for the association with Black people! Regev also posted a video of herself with Israeli soccer fans as they shouted genocidal chants at Palestinians.

One immediate result of the rally was the removal of Regev's name from the orchestra's website posting of the tour itinerary.

'No cultural exchange of racism'

"It is not okay to use our city's art in the service of apartheid," Abulhawa stated, noting the solidarity that "Palestinians have and have always had with Black America. These connections between our struggles have to be continually made. Our solidarity transcends reciprocity."

The Rev. Graylan Hagler, African-American pastor and activist from Washington, D.C., stated, "There should be no cultural exchange of racism, of apartheid, of dehumanization and the robbing of culture, history or Indigenous peoples' land."

Pam Africa, the minister of confrontation for the MOVE organization, asked: "How can the orchestra send people to a country where they are murdering Palestinians, who were there long before the Israelis came? When are you going to stand on the side of righteousness?"

"The African-American community," stated Dr. Anthony Monteiro, just "commemorated the 50th anniversary of the brutal assassination of our leader, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. At the same time, we watched in horror as the Israeli military ... murdered unarmed Palestinians. We suffer almost just like the Palestinians. We call on the Philadelphia Orchestra to end its relationship with the state of Israel until that state stops killing innocent Palestinian people. ... [King] would have stood with the Palestinian people without hesitation."

Mike Wilson, from the anti-police brutality organization REAL Justice, stated: "It is natural to see alliance between Palestinian people and Black people in this country. Philadelphia is a city of color. If the people of this city knew what Israel is doing to the Palestinian people they would say 'hell no' to the orchestra trip. Even Super Bowl champion players in the Philadelphia Eagles made it clear they would not go."

Palestinian activist Ribhi Mustafa from Al-Aqsa Mosque stated, "We stand in shame in the birthplace of freedom to talk about the Philadelphia Orchestra going to the state of Israel to perform while the Israeli state is murdering innocent civilians."



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

One sign reads "Tune out apartheid, don't fiddle for Israel" over an image of a violin, and another "Violins — not Zionist Violence."

We will be back

Retired union member Joe Piette noted that not all orchestra performers may want to go to Israel. He urged performers to stand in resistance to the trip. "We understand that the workers are not making these decisions and we stand by them and their union."

Piette pointed out the 140 plaques to many Black musicians on the sidewalks in front of the Kimmel Center, calling out the names of Marian Anderson, Nina Simone, John Coltrane, Pearl Bailey, Chubby Checker, Teddy Pendergrass and Bessie Smith: "These artists would be outraged that the orchestra would go at the same time Israeli snipers are deliberately shooting down innocent people." □

WAR WITHOUT VICTORY

by Sara Flounders

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

— Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, President, U.N. General Assembly, 2008-2009; Foreign Minister of Nicaragua's Sandinista government.

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WORKERS IN MILITANT OKLAHOMA

Education workers defy and push forward

By Ben C. and Sara C. Oklahoma City, Okla.

April 11 – Teachers and education support staff have now been on determined walkout to fund Oklahoma public education since April 2.

April 6 – Schools in districts serving the majority of the state’s students are officially closed as righteously angry educators continue to pack the state Legislature building and grounds. According to the Oklahoma Education Association (@okea twitter), Friday’s goal was to obtain education funding of \$84 million yearly via taxes on online Amazon purchases, “ball and dice” games at casinos, and by vetoing the repeal of a \$5 tax on hotel/motel stays.

OEA President Alicia Priest sent out an action alert at the end of Friday’s legislative day, announcing victory in the passage of the online tax and casino tax bills. Priest added: “Lawmakers should expect to see us at the Capitol on Monday, fighting for the passage of capital gains legislation.” Ending capital gains deductions could generate \$120 million in state income, especially from corporations.

Beginning on Monday, April 2, tens of thousands of teachers, school workers, students and community members have shuttered schools across Oklahoma and rallied inside and outside the Capitol building. The contradiction of resource-poor classrooms on oil-rich land is so sharp that even many district administrators endorse this mobilization as necessary to bridge the funding gap.

Generally speaking, these workers are not defying management but are confronting the state institutions that actually determine their pay and the education budget: Oklahoma’s governor and the state Legislature. Other unions have joined the ongoing demonstrations at the Capitol building as well, including state workers’ Oklahoma Public Employees Association denouncing their own low pay. Teamsters are driving shuttle vans for demonstrators and have refused to cross education workers’ picket lines. Oklahoma Education Association members include public school teachers, coaches, counselors, librarians, nurses, custodians, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, secretaries and other support personnel.

Community support

The National Indian Education Association issued a statement of support for the strike, noting: “More than 100,000 Native students attend public schools in the state. They deserve a quality education provided by adequately funded schools. With their strike, Oklahoma educators



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are demanding the state fulfill its responsibility and fully fund public schools and provide raises to educators. Funding for textbooks, supplies and professional development are critical and are necessary to create positive, culturally responsive learning environments where students can be inspired and thrive.”

On April 4, a hundred teachers began a 110-mile march from Tulsa to the Capitol in Oklahoma City to dramatize their commitment to better schools for all. Marcher Aaron Baker confirmed to WW that the date was chosen to align with the #MLK50 commemorations in Memphis. He and other protesters that WW met prior to Wednesday are now posting scenes of children lined up to give them high-fives, and of other Oklahomans providing food and first aid. As of Friday morning, a newsok.com poll asking, “Do you support the teacher walkout?” had an over 86 percent “yes” response from some 24,000 online readers.

High school students held their own rally April 3 outside the statehouse, backing the goals of the walkout. Though the emphasis may have been on voting in the future, these youth are realizing their organizing power, and some are highly class-conscious. As Noah Frost of the Edmond North Young Socialists told WW: “It’s important for students to stand with the teachers not only because we are also fighting for our own education, but to promote class unity and consciousness. This whole movement is more than just asking for more pay, it’s standing up to the ruling classes to demand what’s right.”

The progressive movement in the capital has chimed in as well. The Oklahoma Peace House took out paid full page ads in the two largest Sunday papers, showing that this state imposes the lowest tax on oil profits of all oil-producing states. Local women’s, Indigenous, Black Lives Matter, LGBTQI, environmental, pro-Cuba and pan-African organizations are among those helping to arrange food and housing in Oklahoma City for out-of-town teachers, as well as library enrichment for out-of-school youngsters. Activist Camille Landry told WW that these groups support the teacher unions’ efforts on principle, despite the unions’ failure so far to center their issues and voices—and

the statistical likelihood that many of this week’s demonstrators voted for the bigot-in-chief Trump.

Recent attempts by lawmakers such as Gov. Mary Fallin to undermine support for the walkout include labeling marchers as “outside agitators,” “actors,” “paid protesters” and “Antifas”; and assigning the state Bureau of Investigation to look into “threats made against legislators.” These code words may work on convinced right-wingers, but could also teach people involved in their first protest movement to ultimately identify with other movements that are treated similarly and worse by the media and state.

No-strike orders defied

Many schools across the state have remained closed throughout the week, during which major standardized testing had been set to begin in the younger grades. Education workers are vowing to remain out of the classrooms until their demands are met and education is fully funded by the Legislature and governor. Certain districts have reopened schools and demanded that teachers and school workers return, with mixed results. In solidarity, teachers in districts with vacancies are encouraging colleagues to apply for another job at a more supportive site.

Western Heights, considered an urban and poor small district in Oklahoma City, had lawyers issue a threat to dock striking teachers for the cost of hiring substitutes (about \$87 a day). The next day, at least one marcher’s sign read, “Western Heights, we walk for you too.” In fact, 30 Western Heights staff defied the order. By Thursday, district teachers resolved the problem by organizing field trips to bring classes to the Capitol in yellow buses! (tinyurl.com/y8p8apym)

Impressions from the ground

“They want to shut down and privatize public services and make them to be for profit,” a veteran Oklahoma teacher, Tom Smith, told WW. “That’s why we see all these things about charter and private schools. Nobody’s making any money [on public schools]. That’s why you see everybody wanting to privatize your pension funds, and so forth. We need to solve the root cause and then we can begin to heal up.”

Smith was one of hundreds who gladly received solidarity handouts from Workers World and the Southern Workers Assembly in the first two days of the strike.

Every day, education workers have filled the grounds of the Capitol building



in what resembles in many ways an encampment, setting up canopies with the names of their school districts, and even conducting classes for students. Thousands have packed the plaza on the south side of the building for daily rallies. These rallies, in addition to featuring Oklahoma school workers, parents and students, have included West Virginia teachers, have acknowledged the strikes by education workers taking place in Kentucky and elsewhere, and have included defiant calls to continue to return to the Legislature en masse each day until demands are met.

The atmosphere outside the building also has a marked tone of jubilant resistance, featuring cultural performances, music, dancing and a generally celebratory environment. Many carry creative, homemade signs that reiterate the call for full funding, or highlight the abysmal state of education in Oklahoma, including textbooks that are 20 years old, crumbling school buildings and other deplorable conditions. Some signs point to the role that the big oil and gas companies in the state play and demand that they pay up to fund education. Other signs draw the connection between the massive amount the state spends to incarcerate people compared to the meager funding it provides for education.

Long lines that last throughout the day snake around the Capitol building from both entrances as education workers and their supporters have also maintained a strong presence each day inside the halls of the Legislature. Packing the balconies of each of the four floors of the building — in a scene that is reminiscent of the state Capitol takeover by state workers in Wisconsin in 2011 — education workers fill the building each day with speeches and chants. When the House or Senate have been in session, hundreds of teachers pack the seating area and the narrow halls outside the doors leading to the chambers, drowning out the sessions with chants for full funding of education.

After Oklahoma Gov. Fallin compared education workers to “a teenage kid that wants a better car,” many pursued her when she appeared on Thursday at the Capitol, jangling their keys in the air and chanting, “Where’s my car?”

Big Oil and Jim Crow

Oklahoma teachers are ranked 49th in pay countrywide. Only Mississippi and South Dakota rank lower. (In addition to the 50 states, the District of Columbia is included in the ranking.) Ninety of the state’s 500 school districts have switched to a four-day school week due to a lack of funding to keep schools open for a full five-day week.

The state is also one of the top five petroleum and shale-oil producing states in the country. The U.S. Energy Information



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MOTION

ard



‘We didn’t walk out on them – they met us there! Love our kids!’ said teacher Steve Gilliland.

STEVE GILLILAND TWEET



WW PHOTO

Administration reports that oil production in Oklahoma has increased by two and a half times since 2005. However, Oklahoma taxes oil and gas production at the lowest rate in the U.S. — a dismal 2 percent. House Bill 1010xx, passed just prior to April 2 under the pressure of the impending teacher and school worker strike, raises that to a paltry 5 percent for three years and possibly 7 percent afterwards. Big Oil pipelines are often built on Native lands and there have been many struggles — and some victories — by Indigenous peoples to stop their construction.

Cuts to education were higher in Oklahoma than in any other state following the 2008 Great Recession, with state funding for public schools cut by 23.6 percent between 2008 and 2014. The schools, the public sector and the people of Oklahoma were robbed to ensure that the oil and gas industry in particular, and other big business in general, would continue to make greater and greater profits.

Harold Hamm — net worth estimated at \$18.7 billion — is one of the biggest oil industry heads in the state. Hamm personally attended the recent vote on House Bill 1010xx to raise the tax on oil and gas production in the state. WW correspondents heard several reports that Hamm has cynically bused in oil and gas employees “any time they discuss the gross production tax” to help his efforts to lower taxes on his industry.

Lyman Nichols and Doug Law — two of the other major oil industry executives in the state — have been targeted along with Hamm by demonstrators. A Native-led group of protesters placed a banner denouncing “the Oligarchy” over a state-sponsored tribute to that industry on the day the strike began.

Oklahoma education workers are directly confronting Jim Crow right-to-work (for less!) and other anti-worker laws in the state through their actions. Racism — against Indigenous peoples, Black and migrant workers — has long been a tool the bosses have used to divide the working class and break apart worker struggles that have opened in Oklahoma.

The fight against white supremacy is part and parcel of the class struggle, and as the resistance in Oklahoma continues to unfold, it will be critical to find more opportunities to take on that fight to build greater unity against the interests of Big Oil, the banks, and the politicians who do

Bryce Carter, UE150 steward from Greensboro, N.C., speaks to Winston-Salem MLK Day rally on April 4.

PHOTO: NORTH CAROLINA AFL-CIO



NORTH CAROLINA

Workers continue MLK’s fight for economic and civil rights

**By Dante Strobino
Durham, N.C.**

When the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. came to Memphis, Tenn., in support of striking sanitation workers 50 years ago, he was actually on his way to North Carolina. A few months after his assassination, in August 1968, sanitation workers in Charlotte, N.C., also went out on strike. This inspired many other sanitation worker strikes across the South in 1968, including in Atlanta, St. Petersburg, Fla., and Durham, N.C. In Charlotte, the mediator was forced to meet with the workers, Black and white together, in a public park, because facilities large enough to hold the entire group were segregated.

King’s campaign for economic and civil rights continues in North Carolina, where the NC Public Service Workers Union, United Electrical Workers Local 150, has been building a statewide campaign to fight for a Municipal Workers Bill of Rights and also to challenge the Jim Crow ban on public sector collective bargaining.

Winston-Salem workers fight for \$15 and more

On April 4, the anniversary of King’s assassination, city workers, communi-

ty-labor support groups and faith organizations in Winston-Salem, N.C., rallied for a family-supporting wage of at least \$15 an hour. Hundreds of city workers are currently making the city’s minimum of \$11.25 an hour. Over 100 people gathered at the event, organized by Working America, with support from over a dozen other groups, including UE150, NC AFL-CIO, First Baptist Church, Goler Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church, the Winston-Salem NAACP and such long-standing local civil rights leaders as the Rev. John Mendez and the Rev. Paul Robeson Ford.

“We have come today not only to commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., but to build a movement,” the Rev. John Mendez, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church, told the crowd. “A commemoration stands still, but a movement moves forward.”

Monticello Mitchell, a city worker in the Vegetation Department, spoke out against the economic squeeze faced by city workers. “The packages in the store are getting smaller and the prices are getting higher,” Mitchell said. “A \$15 wage for those who don’t make \$15 would help.”

On hand were members of the two-year-old Greensboro City Workers Union, a chapter of UE Local 150, to lend their encouragement for efforts of Winston-Salem city workers to organize a union. Bryce Carter, Streets Department worker and UE150-elected steward, shared many of their recent union victories, including wage improvements of the lowest paid from \$8.03 per hour to \$11.50. Also won were policy changes to create space for organizing the union, including winning payroll deduction. Carter said: “I am proud of our chapter. We just keep pressing on. We come together and make changes.”

A major issue that sparked the Memphis sanitation strike 50 years ago was the death of two workers, Echol Cole and Robert Walker. Only this past summer, a Charlotte city worker, Anthony Milledge, was killed by heat-related illness after working overtime in the broiling summer heat. Greensboro city workers were also injured on the job last summer. The union exposed the city of Greensboro’s lack of heat-safety guidelines to protect workers. Carter noted that, after pressure from the union, “The city has now drafted a policy to keep workers safe in excessive summer heat.”

Durham city workers win City Council resolution

Durham city workers have also been organizing for improved safety, union rights and raises. After a campaign of several months, the Durham City Council voted April 2 to pass a resolution commemorating April 4 and the legacy of Dr. King, and calling on the state legislature

to repeal the law, General Statute 95-98, passed in 1959 by an all-white, Jim Crow state legislature, that bans public workers from collective bargaining. Through the resolution, the council also conveyed three pages of recommendations for “improved union access and rights” to the city manager.

In concert with the Durham Workers Assembly, UE150 has been organizing pressure on the city to pass this resolution, along with forming a Workers Rights Commission to assist private sector worker organizing.

Cummins engine workers rally for health care

The Carolina Auto, Aerospace and Machine Workers Union, a chapter of UE Local 150, also organized a workers’ rally on April 4 at the Cummins engine plant outside Rocky Mount in rural Whitakers. The Teamsters, who organize Cummins workers in West Virginia, had reached out to UE150 about a companywide campaign to fight back against a high-deductible health plan.

Workers at the plant wore stickers to their jobs that stated, “Cummins high deductibles keep us sick. All Cummins workers want \$1,000 more in their HSA” [health savings account].

The April 4 rally leaflet stated: “Things have changed at Cummins. Now the company is forcing workers into dangerous, unaffordable, high-deductible health care plans. Employees skip medications, delay doctor visits and are racking up debts. And the inexpensive health services at the state-of-the-art Cummins Livewell Health Center are only convenient for those who live near the company’s headquarters in Columbus, Ind.”

According to the joint UE-Teamsters press release, “Cummins is one of the largest diesel engine manufacturers in the world. In 2017, Cummins had revenues of \$20.4 billion and net income of \$1 billion. Shareholders received \$700 million in dividend payments in 2017. Since introducing high-deductible health plans at Cummins, the top five managers made more than \$150 million in total compensation, and shareholders received more than \$3 billion in dividend payouts, though the company itself has not achieved lasting medical cost savings.”

Jim Wrenn, Cummins Rocky Mount employee and president of UE150/CAAMWU, pointed out: “We have coworkers facing \$6,000 or more each year out-of-pocket to get health care for their families, so this is a huge financial cost for us to bear.”

This campaign continues in the spirit of Dr. King, who said, “Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.” □



PHOTO: TEAMSTERS LOCAL 886

Teamsters Local 886 refused to cross the education workers’ picket line to do renovations on the state Capitol.

their bidding and impose harsh austerity measures on communities.

As education strikers continue to push forward in Oklahoma on April 5, news is breaking that teachers in Washington, D.C., are also staging a walkout against underfunded school conditions there. These teachers are placing their action in the broader context of the uprising being led by education workers in Oklahoma, Kentucky, Puerto Rico, Arizona, West Virginia and elsewhere.

This burgeoning struggle against austerity cuts and for meeting people’s needs shows signs of continuing to expand in the days and weeks ahead — with teachers and school workers in the lead. □

Syria poison gas?

Pretext for U.S. military attack

Continued from page 1

The Syrian government has also established humanitarian corridors enabling more than 150,000 civilians to be evacuated by its forces.

The town of Douma, where the supposed gas attack took place, was the last to be liberated. The Army of Islam or Jaysh al-Islam had agreed to an evacuation. The Syrian Arab Air Force had destroyed more than 300 positions of Jaysh al-Islam in the Douma district, including its main headquarters, communication networks and ammunition depots, over the last 24 hours before the supposed gas attack.

Syria has no motive

The idea that the Syrian government would choose this moment of victory to suddenly unleash a gas attack is incredible and ridiculous. But it is a charge that serves as an excuse for the U.S. and NATO to renew their bombing, especially since only a week earlier Trump had talked about getting the U.S. out of Syria.

The gas attack, which is said to have killed at least 42 people, was top-of-the-news, front-page coverage in the U.S. media along with Trump's tweets. While the charge that Syria did it was met with contempt and ridicule throughout most of the world, NATO members France and Britain dutifully chimed in with immedi-

ate threats to bomb Syria.

The Israeli regime beat them to it and immediately seized the opportunity to attack Syria. Two Israeli F-15 fighters fired missiles into Syria's Tiyas Military Airbase in Homs province before dawn on April 9.

It is beyond belief to accept that Israel — whose troops have killed 28 unarmed Palestinian civilians and injured more than 1,500 over the past two weeks, in addition to the thousands it has killed in its past bombings of Gaza — was attacking Syria over the deaths of civilians.

Charges with no proof

The imperialists' blatant assertion of Syrian guilt is not only totally unfounded, it is unprovable and totally implausible.

Syria has repeatedly denied allegations of chemical weapons use, underscoring that it has no weapons of mass destruction. This was confirmed by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

The Syrian Foreign Ministry points out that similar allegations emerge every time the Syrian Army makes advances in its fight against terrorist groups.

Last year on April 7, the Pentagon, without waiting for any evidence, attacked Syria's Shuayrat Air Force base with 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles, supposedly in response to chemical weapons being used

at Khan Shikhoun, a town in southwestern Syria. The sudden attack, orchestrated with immediate photos and a coordinated campaign of war propaganda by a compliant media, reached new heights.

Protecting civilians is the claim made by the imperialists to justify their massive bombings, destabilizations campaigns and starvation sanctions — resulting in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians.

Wider war threatened

A wider war exploding from a confrontation in Syria is a growing danger. Most dangerous right now is that it coincides with the installation of extreme right-wing war hawk John Bolton as Trump's new national security advisor.

When the U.S. ruling class wants a war, the corporate media fall into line. Whether it was the phony claim that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction in 2002, which U.S. officials knew to be a lie, or the phony "attack" by Vietnamese PT boats on a U.S. warship in the Gulf of Tonkin in 1964, the U.S. media have repeated the government's lies to justify its wars.

This goes all the way back to the sinking of the battleship Maine in 1898, which was used to justify the Spanish-American war. A U.S. Navy inquiry in 1974 commissioned by Admiral Hyman Rickover concluded that the Maine sunk, not because

of a Spanish mine, but because munitions stored aboard caught fire and exploded.

U.S. military corporations have an enormous stake in continued war. But it goes wider than that. The big imperialist corporations and banks fear the defeat of all U.S. strategic plans for the region. So once again military, corporate and media forces are dragging out the same playbook they have used time and again to keep U.S. troops in Afghanistan, south Korea, Syria and the more than 1,000 U.S. military bases around the world.

It is especially ominous that Russia was immediately blamed, along with Syria. Russian and Iranian assistance to Syria has helped frustrate U.S. plans for the overthrow of the Syrian government. In their constant drumbeat of non-stop demonization, U.S. opinion molders don't even bother to present facts or motivation when making charges against Russian President Vladimir Putin.

They also paint a dire picture that a U.S. military pullout from the region would lead to chaos and benefit Russia, Iran or China, while also leading to a resurgence of the Islamic State group in Syria. What the war planners really oppose is a unified, sovereign Syrian state.

Progressive forces opposed to endless U.S. wars must confront these criminal charges against Syria and demand of the U.S. warmakers: "Hands off Syria!" □



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE



Ahed Tamimi



Gaza: Mass uprising defies Israeli oppression

Continued from page 1

But repression breeds resistance. The people of Gaza are setting an example of fighting back that resonates with so many who are suffering under the current "world order" — a regime dictated by the tiny class of superbillionaires who have sucked the wealth out of oppressed nations and peoples all over the globe.

The Palestinians have put their bodies on the line, even at the very real risk of being shot down by Israeli soldiers.

Protests continue despite murderous repression

On March 30, at the first protest, 17 unarmed Gazans were killed and hundreds were injured as Israeli troops used live ammunition and tear gas against the demonstrators. That date is known as "Land Day." It marks the deaths in 1976 of six Palestinians who had been protesting the Israeli government's seizure of agricultural land from people who had farmed it for generations.

At the second protest on April 6, some 20,000 Gazans gathered at the border. Israeli troops shot and killed nine of the protesters, one of them only 14 years old. This time some of the youths burned tires, hoping the dense smoke would

shield them from Israeli snipers.

Among those shot and killed was Palestinian journalist Yaser Murtaja, who was covering the protests while wearing a vest showing the word "PRESS" in huge letters. Murtaja, 30 years old, was born in Gaza and had never been allowed to travel outside by the Israelis.

The weekly protests, known collectively as the Great March of Return, are planned to continue until May 15, when the Palestinian people will be commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Nakba, the Catastrophe. The Nakba occurred in 1948 when some 700,000 Palestinians were brutally evicted from their homes by Zionist armed gangs, incited by the U.S. and European imperialist governments. Today, two-thirds of the Palestinians in Gaza are descendants of those made refugees in 1948.

Gaza is a small strip of land along the Mediterranean Sea, less than half the area of New York City. Some 200,000 Palestinians are forced to live within its borders under the most intolerable conditions. They are trapped there by an Israeli land, sea and air blockade, and few are ever allowed to leave. Most are city dwellers, but some have small farms that

attempt to supply food to the population.

After 10 years of blockade, some 80 percent of the people there are dependent on humanitarian assistance for their very survival.

Rejecting Israeli claims that the protesters were coerced by the Palestinian organization Hamas, one British paper described the conditions in Gaza: "Nor could demonstrators have been persuaded to participate in these numbers were it not for the hopelessness they feel after 11 years that have seen them suffer three bloody wars, an Israeli-Egyptian border closure, and an Israeli blockade that has imploded Gaza's economy. There is despair over the undrinkable tap water, the four hours of electricity, the shortage of medicines and the relentless increasing unemployment rate among one of the most educated peoples in the Arab world. Over 60 percent of under-25s are unemployed." (The Guardian, April 8)

End the occupation! Free Palestine now!

Over the last decade, resistance to Israel has grown with each new atrocity.

In 2008, Israel launched a full-blown invasion of Gaza in which more than 1,400 Palestinians were killed.

On May 31, 2010, nine pro-Palestinian activists were killed when Israeli commandos raided a Gaza-bound flotilla trying to bring aid in defiance of the blockade. The Israeli attack left a trail of dead and wounded among the 688 activists on the ship, the Mavi Marmara.

In November 2012, an Israeli missile strike killed Hamas commander Ahmed Jaabari in Gaza City, sparking a confrontation in which 174 Palestinians died.

In July 2014, Israel launched another air and ground offensive against Gaza that killed 2,100 Palestinians, including 495 children.

Not all Israelis support these murderous acts. The human rights group B'Tselem is urging soldiers to disobey any orders to shoot at unarmed civilians. Three Israeli experts on international law have agreed that firing on unarmed protesters is illegal.

On May 15, Palestinians will commemorate the Nakba. On May 16, the U.S. government will move its embassy to Jerusalem. There will undoubtedly be massive demonstrations by Palestinians on these days, not just in Gaza but all over the world. Everyone who is for the rights of the oppressed should be there. □

Boston solidarity with Palestinian resistance

By Sam Ordóñez
Boston

A series of demonstrations took place in Boston this week in response to the Israeli Defense Forces’ massacre of Palestinian protesters along the Gaza border. On April 2, the Answer Coalition of Boston called an emergency demonstration in Copley Square. Anti-imperialists and allies of the Palestinian people gathered to denounce Israel’s crimes and express solidarity with the Palestinians killed and wounded by IDF snipers during the Great March of Return.

After the speakout, militant protesters marched to the Israeli Consulate, chanting, “Gaza, Gaza, don’t you cry! Palestine will never die!” and “Resistance is justified when people are occupied!” Once they arrived at the consulate, the protesters demanded an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the return of all land.

On April 3, eight protesters from the Boston chapter of IfNotNow, an orga-

nization of U.S. Jewish activists, chained themselves to the Israeli Consulate during a demonstration. They demanded that the consulate take a public stance against the violence carried out by the IDF. They and other protesters called for an end to the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank.

According to IfNotNow Boston, there was no response from the consulate, and Boston police arrived on the scene within minutes. The eight protesters who had chained themselves to the consulate were arrested by the police without hearing a word from the consulate staff.

Midday on April 5, another group of protesters gathered in front of the consulate with demands to end the genocide of Palestinians. Later in the day, the Answer Coalition held a mock trial to “Indict Israel, not Ahed Tamimi.”



As the Palestinian people continue to resist Israeli occupation with the Great March of Return, another rally has been called by the Boston Palestine Solidarity Network for April 21 on the Boston Com-

mon. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the Nakba, the Catastrophe, when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forced to flee their homes during the 1948 war. □

Chicago anti-war coalition to march

By Jeff Sorel
Chicago

The Chicago Anti-War Coalition, a new formation composed of dozens of organizations, will rally and march on April 21 to demand an end to wars at home and abroad.

The coalition was formed in February. It seeks to mobilize the building anger in this city against wars being waged by the U.S. government on peoples throughout the world, including here in the U.S., where racism and police violence run

rampant, and schools and housing decay from lack of resources.

Initiating organizations included Albany Park Neighbors for Peace, Arise Worker Center, Chicago ALBA Solidarity, Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, Chicago Area Peace Action, Gay Liberation Network, Illinois Green Party, International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines-Midwest, Labor Beat, North Shore Coalition for Peace and Justice, Nuclear Energy Information Service and Workers World Party. Numerous other organizations

have now endorsed the April 21 action.

Why do organizers believe this to be the right time to relaunch the anti-war movement in Chicago? Because, according to coalition literature, the U.S. government “continues to regularly bomb and drone-strike in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen and Somalia, and is funding a murderous covert drug war in Mexico. Now it is threatening new wars against North Korea, Iran and Venezuela, and has adopted a dangerously more aggressive policy on nuclear war, while engaging in dangerous brinkmanship with Russia.”

The action will begin with a rally at Congress Parkway and Michigan Avenue, followed by a march through the Loop to a second rally at Tribune Tower. Speakers will include Maria Hernandez of Black Lives Matter, Joe Lombardo of the United National Antiwar Coalition, Randi Nord of Geopolitics Alert, Frank Chapman of the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, Maya Arcilla of Anakbayan-Chicago, Dr. Anne Scheetz of Physicians for a National Health Program and Kathy Kelly of Voices for Creative Non-Violence. □

Why we march

Continued from page 1

next guests, when faced with the extreme militarists who have just joined the Trump administration, Mike Pompeo and John Bolton, calling for war on Iran and north Korea and new attacks on Palestine. What are the motivators for the “End U.S. Wars” action?

Popuchet: A call to end U.S. violence against oppressed people of the world, to end the U.S. putting interest in “resources” over people, and to draw the connection between U.S. militarism against oppressed nations, and the way the government treats our own people. The U.S. gives millions of dollars to Israel, where fascist IDF [Israeli Defense Forces] troops treat Palestinians as subhuman, the same way the NYPD [New York Police Department] treats people of color. The NYPD was trained by the Israeli forces.

A couple of weeks ago, we leafleted at the March for Our Lives about the April 15 action and also about the killing of Stephon Clark by police, to draw the connection that people are dying by U.S. gun violence in Iraq, Yemen, Palestine, the same way that people are dying in the streets of Brooklyn and Sacramento and Ferguson.

Monzon: For me, a primary motivator has been [King’s] anti-war position, which has been a largely forgotten part of his legacy. It is no coincidence he was murdered the year after his “Beyond Vietnam” speech and at the same time he was organizing with sanitation workers.

To me, 50 years later, things are largely the same. Most of our tax dollars go to U.S. wars of aggression against poor peo-

ple of color abroad while at the same time [the U.S.] is cutting programs for working people and people of color here at home. To me, we are living King’s famous quote that every bomb dropped in Vietnam explodes here at home in the form of less services for everyone.

Rosenberg: How do you see mobilization around anti-war, anti-imperialist, anti-globalization, against racist oppression with the youth community?

Monzon: We went to the March for Our Lives [on March 24] and gave out a lot of material on anti-war actions, Black Lives Matter, and people were very receptive. I think that even though the motivating factor has been opposition to personal “gun violence,” I think that there is a heightened sense of a need to oppose militarism and the assaults on marginalized people in this country.

I think the way to mobilize and link it for people is really to say: “Look, a large part of the reason why we don’t have services here at home and that there is a lack of education and health across the board is that so much money that should be going to creating a more equitable society here is being spent to destroy other nations abroad.”

Popuchet: My generation of youth, we are fighting back against the terrorism that threatens us. Being an oppressed person, I walk through the streets being nervous about the police, and that’s the way people in Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq have felt their entire lives, because of my own government.

Rosenberg: What are the demands

being raised at the anti-war demonstrations on April 15?

Popuchet: We oppose sanctions by the U.S. government because those kill people. We oppose U.S. nuclear threats. We oppose U.S. involvement in elections [in other countries]. Just look at what they did to my country in Latin America. We are opposing U.S. funding fascist states such as Israel and we also oppose the state violence that happens within our own borders.

Monzon: We are saying fund human needs and not endless war. So instead of spending money to destroy nations, let’s spend money to provide services here at home like universal health care and education.

Rosenberg: How do you see a way to move beyond a reactive strategy, to a more permanent solution to implement the goals you are stating?

Monzon: A big part of the strategy needs to be a revitalization of the anti-war movement. We can see that other movements have revived in the last few years in the Occupy movement, Black Lives Matter, #MeToo. If we can rebuild opposition to U.S. war, similar to the Vietnam era, if we can rebuild that movement, that will propel us forward.

Popuchet: The NRA [National Rifle Association] is the product of a larger system. If we can build consciousness about that, as part of the anti-war movement, we can apply that to any type of U.S.-foreign interaction. The U.S. is beating the war drums against Russia, against the DPRK [Democratic People’s Republic of Korea], while at the same time deploying more troops into the Black Sea area and Eastern Europe. If that’s not building and gearing up for a war, I don’t know what is.

Flounders: Thanks so much for this program and particularly on this day for Martin Luther King Jr., who made these links 50 years ago, and paid the price. The April 14-15 rallies are organized by a large coalition, so we are expecting an important mobilization in cities around the U.S.

Here in New York City, on April 15, we rally at 2 p.m. at Herald Square, 34th Street and 6th Avenue, and then we march to Trump Tower. At www.springaction2018.org you will see a list of hundreds of endorsers, a broad spectrum of the U.S. political movement that doesn’t always come together, but that has now united to oppose all U.S. wars, sanctions, coups, and the escalating attacks, repression, racism and cutbacks at home.

Monzon: People should come out on April 14-15, thinking of the increased U.S. war mobilizations, remembering that the U.S. has the largest arsenal of nuclear weapons in the world. There is a real potential to endanger all life on the planet. This is a fight for our lives.

Popuchet: For the sake of oppressed peoples internationally, there needs to be a revival of the anti-war movement. People here in the U.S. need to come out on April 14-15 to show their solidarity with the people who the U.S. has disenfranchised and marginalized. And not only for them, but also for the disenfranchised within the U.S., we need to stand together and call for an end to the violence, because we know the U.S. government is not going to do that.

Rosenberg: We’ve got to build that mass national movement, for people’s power. Let’s get to that demonstration.

For more information, see springaction2018.org.

U.S. hands off Venezuela

When the Wall Street Journal starts shedding crocodile tears over the plight of the Venezuelan people, it’s time to watch out for the next war.

The WSJ ran an article April 6 detailing the plight of Venezuelans who can’t get appropriate medical care. Something must be done, cries the Journal, to rescue these poor people!

But when the voice of big money says, “Something must be done!” to the White House and the Pentagon, that something often involves economic blockade, regime change, destruction of infrastructure and mass murder.

The article ominously appeared just a week before Donald Trump is set to attend the Organization of American States Summit in Peru on April 13. OAS organizers have been trying to exclude Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. Their goal is to mobilize the Latin American states against Venezuela.

What’s revealing about this media alarm for a “humanitarian crisis” is that the WSJ’s usual approach is to put profits above people, even in words.

Wall Street doesn’t cry about the Yemenis killed by Saudi Arabia — with U.S. military help. It doesn’t sob about the million-plus Iraqis killed and many more displaced by the 2003 U.S. invasion and occupation. It doesn’t report

the plight of Hondurans suffering from the militarist regime foisted on them in 2009 with U.S. support.

It is reasonable to doubt that suddenly the WSJ is putting people first. Is Wall Street really worrying about the lack of health care in Venezuela — while it promotes dismantling health care for the poor in the U.S.? Is Wall Street worrying about nutrition in Caracas when its government dismantles the food-stamp program here?

We say “B.S.” We offer a simple suggestion to solve the alleged humanitarian crisis in Venezuela: U.S. hands off the Bolivarian Revolution!

End all sanctions on Venezuela. End the blockade of the country’s trade. Restore Venezuela’s access to international banks. Stop mobilizing reactionary regimes in Colombia, Argentina and Brazil against Venezuela. Stop conspiring with right-wing oligarchs and pro-fascist gangs. Stop trying to provoke a military coup, like the one that kidnapped then President Hugo Chávez 16 years ago on April 11 — until the Venezuelan people forced his release.

Those are actions that would go a long way toward improving the everyday life of all working-class Venezuelans. □

Answer to #45’s border bluster Resist

By John Catalinotto

Everything the current federal administration does is made more venomous through the president’s tweets and comments. Anyone resisting this president must confront his words and actions head on.

Starting on April 1, Trump started tweeting that he would ask the Pentagon to deploy troops and/or National Guard forces to the U.S. border with Mexico. The tweets followed a vicious campaign by the openly racist sector of ruling-class media — Fox & Co. — warning of a “caravan” of asylum-seekers from Honduras traveling through Mexico to the U.S.

#45’s motivation appears to be mobilizing his racist and reactionary base for the upcoming congressional elections. Though the act reeks of opportunism, it must also be taken seriously.

Those opposing his disgusting action must mobilize all progressive forces against this vile attack on Mexicans and Central Americans.

Take note here: People who leave Honduras are doing it because the Obama administration backed the overthrow of the government there in 2009 — and the Trump administration backed the 2017 fraudulent election of the current hated dictator.

U.S. policies created a hell in Honduras, and #45 is now condemning those who try to flee that hell.

Sending federal troops to the U.S. border is illegal without the authorization of Congress. Sending state National Guard units to the border needs the cooperation of state governments. And any such deployment is an affront to the Mexican government — an ally of Washington — as well as to its people. The New York Times and Democratic Party opposition to Trump, both loyal to U.S. imperialism, have pointed out much of this in their reactions.

More revolutionary resistance has an-

Former U.S. military members become Veterans for Peace in solidarity with Indigenous peoples at Standing Rock, N.D., resisting the Dakota Access Pipeline in 2016.



other way to throw a wrench into the repressive state machinery that Trump wants to unleash.

That tool is to disrupt the obedience of the troops. In the U.S. imperialist military, this obedience is based on working-class soldiers lacking class consciousness or solidarity in relation to the oppressed peoples they are sent to kill and conquer.

But, from time to time in history, ordinary troops have surprised their commanders and turned upon the master class they were supposed to serve. This happened in the U.S. Armed Forces at a high level 50 years ago — during the war against Vietnam.

Today’s U.S. military is a “professional” and volunteer military. The generals expect obedience. Nevertheless, very few of today’s soldiers, including National Guard troops, imagined they would be sent to confront and threaten mainly women and young children attempting to cross into the U.S. to find work or asylum.

How many troops may hate these orders?

All those who oppose #45, all those who consider themselves part of resistance to his poisonous and racist rule, should make sure that every regular soldier in the army, every National Guard member, knows that they will be supported if they refuse to take part in this action on the border.

Every voice from within the military that speaks out against these criminal acts should receive support. And these voices of disobedience and resistance should be shared far and wide to reach every rank-and-file troop.

Catalinotto is the author of “Turn the Guns Around: Mutinies, Soldier Revolts and Revolutions” (World View Forum, New York, 2017).

Docentes de Oklahoma confrontan Capitolio

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estatales para obtener los fondos educativos que ellos, sus estudiantes y sus comunidades merecen.

Las/os docentes han aprovechado el potencial de las redes sociales para contrarrestar los medios corporativos que promueven el concepto burgués de que las/os educadores son “codiciosos y egoístas”. Las/os educadores están diseminando sus movimientos de base a otras/os trabajadoras por todo el país.

Las/os trabajadoras de la educación claramente afirman que quieren dignidad y respeto, atención médica accesible y un salario digno, como todas las personas que trabajan en el mundo. Transmiten a una audiencia global la necesidad de un conocimiento más completo de los recortes de austeridad promovidos por las compañías de petróleo, los bancos y las corporaciones, cortes que exigen, a su vez, la solidaridad para las acciones y huelgas de las/os trabajadoras.

En Oklahoma

Una delegación de solidaridad de las/os miembros del Partido Workers World-Mundo Obrero llegó a Oklahoma City el 1 de abril a tiempo para participar en la manifestación en el Capitolio. La delegación trajo carteles, pancartas, folletos, periódicos WW-MO y su energía para apoyar a las/os educadoras, estudiantes y sus familias y a miembros de la

comunidad de Oklahoma.

El miembro de la delegación, Ben, comentó: “Esperamos construir una mayor solidaridad entre la lucha aquí y otros trabajadores y personas oprimidas en los EUA, en todo el mundo, y especialmente con la lucha de los pueblos indígenas aquí en Oklahoma”.

“Estamos entusiasmadas/os de estar aquí viendo este despliegue y viendo el activismo sindical y la solidaridad de todos. Los trabajadores están dando un gran salto en su estado”, dijo Sara, una maestra y activista. “La gente quiere leer el periódico de WW-MO que tiene en su portada la huelga de maestros de Puerto Rico. Las/os maestros aquí saben que son parte de algo más grande. Hay una comprensión de la clase trabajadora de que los millonarios petroleros están tomando decisiones que perjudican a los niños, lo que se ve en los discursos y en las pancartas como “Haz que el petróleo y el gas paguen”. ¡Las personas saben contra quién están peleando!”

* Right to Work states: 27 estados han prohibido los acuerdos de seguridad sindical al aprobar las llamadas leyes de “derecho al trabajo”. En estos estados, le corresponde a cada empleado en el lugar de trabajo decidir si se une o no al sindicato y paga las cuotas, aunque todos los trabajadores estén protegidos por el acuerdo de negociación colectiva negociado por el sindicato. <https://www.nlr.gov/>

Rail workers’ strike in France impacts big business

By G. Dunkel

The French railroad strike currently on two days out of five — two days strike followed by three days working, repeat — until the end of June has an obvious impact on commuters and travelers. Passengers hustle by the thousands up and down platforms to get on trains, which, if they come, are so crowded that not everyone fits.

If the videos showing this traffic have a furtive, hasty aspect, it might be because the French National Railway Company (SNCF) management, which owns the television stations, only wants to allow pro-management news shown on TV. The SNCF bosses insist that TV crews have a SNCF minder to go with them or leave the premises.

The SNCF is also playing “fool-you” regarding the level of participation in the strike. French workers, who have an individual, constitutional right to strike, don’t get paid for days they strike. If on an SNCF-worker’s weekend — their days off — they don’t file that they are on strike, they do get a day’s pay.

Another trick of the SNCF bosses is to report the level of strike participation of all its workers, which is between 30 and



45 percent. They fail to report the rate for their operating personnel — those who make the trains run. This is much higher, from 70 to 85 percent.

Two other major economic impacts are in the areas of tourism and freight.

In 2017, tourism directly contributed about 83 billion euros to the French gross domestic product. Hotel industry spokespeople have estimated that the SNCF strike has cut tourism by 10 percent. This cut is a tremendous blow to industry profits.

The other major economic impact is to freight. The SNCF has privately owned competitors for its freight business, which control about 40 percent of the market. The strike also hits these competitors because the workers who control all the signals — including those the freight lines need — are members of the

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Brazil

Lula behind bars, workers get ready to fight

By Chris Fry

“If my crime was putting poor, Black people in universities, allowing poor people to eat meat, to have their own cars, have their own homes, then I will continue being a criminal in this country, because I will do much more.” (Washington Post, April 7)

So said the immensely popular former Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, popularly known as Lula, as he was surrounded by a throng of thousands of supporters while leaving the ABC Metalworkers Union headquarters on April 7 to begin serving a draconian 12-year prison sentence on trumped-up corruption charges.

This ended a two-day standoff with the Brazilian National Police at the union headquarters. Cops faced thousands of poor and working Brazilian people in São Paulo who were prepared to fight to prevent Lula’s arrest.

But by no means does Lula’s surrender spell the end of the struggle against the right-wing, U.S.–supported regime led by Michel Temer.

Once head of the metalworkers union, Lula, as head of Brazil’s Workers Party (PT), was Brazil’s president from 2003 to 2011. Dilma Rousseff, another PT leader, succeeded him. As Mark Weisbrot wrote in the New York Times on Jan. 23: “From 1980 to 2003, the Brazilian economy barely grew at all, about 0.2 percent annually per capita. Mr. da Silva took office in 2003 and Ms. Rousseff in 2011. By 2014, poverty had been reduced by 55 percent and extreme poverty by 65 percent. The real minimum wage increased by 76 percent, real wages overall had ris-



PHOTO: TELESUR

Supporters of ex-president Lula da Silva say, “No to the coup” and “No prison for Lula” on April 10.

en 35 percent, unemployment hit record lows, and Brazil’s infamous inequality had finally fallen.”

While these reforms earned the support of millions of poor and working people in Brazil, they spawned intense hatred among the wealthy and, of course, the hostility of U.S. imperialism. In 2014, a collapse of commodity prices sent Brazil into a deep recession. When the Rousseff government tried to accommodate the business community, Big Capital combined gains for the right in Parliament with a judicial attack to impeach President Rousseff. Her attackers could prove no real corruption, but only that she produced “inaccurate” budget numbers.

The right-wing Parliament then installed Temer as president, even though he, like many of them, faces corruption charges. The right-wing legislators have gone to great lengths to protect Temer and themselves from these charges.

The Temer regime has also enacted austerity measures to roll back PT reforms. They loosened the legal criteria in the labor laws for what constitutes slavery. This step caused opposition lawmakers to erect a banner reading, “Saving Temer = slave labor.”

Under Temer, companies found guilty of causing environmental damage have been able to have their fines greatly reduced. Funds for public schools and hospitals have been cut back sharply.

However, the failure of the right wing to slash Brazil’s pension system has disappointed the imperialist banking establishment. “We’re not particularly bullish on pension reform rollout in the near term,” said Yacov Arnopolin, a Pacific Investment Management Co. money manager in London. Arnopolin includes South Africa, Mexico and Argentina as places where reform is progressing. “Our shortlist is focused on places where we

can see favorable momentum.” (Pensions & Investments, Feb. 23)

Social unrest in Rio de Janeiro caused the judicial coup regime to deploy troops to that city’s slum areas. Under Brazil’s Constitution, the changes necessary to cut pensions cannot be made while the military occupies that city.

Lula to press right to run for president

Lula was put on trial supposedly for accepting a bribe by receiving an apartment from a giant construction company named OAS. No documentation was ever produced to show that Lula or his family ever took this “gift” or ever lived in the apartment. The only evidence was testimony from a convicted OAS official, who then received a reduced jail sentence.

On April 5, with thousands of the former president’s supporters surrounding the building, Brazil’s Supreme Court wrestled with Lula’s appeal for 10 hours before voting 6 to 5 to deny it. Lula correctly points out that he has been hit with these charges to prevent him from running for president this year.

Lula surrendered to the police so he could continue the legal appeal of his conviction and press his right to run for president even while he is imprisoned. No right-wing candidate has even come close to matching his popularity among the Brazilian people. The Temer regime and their courts are doing everything they can to prevent Lula’s name from appearing on the ballot.

Whatever the outcome of Lula’s legal appeals, the massive and militant support for Lula shows that Brazilian workers and poor are mobilizing and preparing for a fight. □

By Rémy Herrera
Paris

Labor in France confronts President Macron, tool of the oligarchs

April 8 — Since the beginning of March, France has plunged into social turbulence. Dissatisfaction is rising everywhere. Demonstrations multiply, as do strikes, notably in public transport — from railway to Air France workers, among sanitation workers, and also in the mass retailing sector. Workers in the French supermarket group Carrefour, the country’s largest private employer, struck after the announcement of the closure of hundreds of stores and the loss of thousands of jobs, despite a billion euros in profits recorded last year.

This is, at last, the first real confrontation of labor with Emmanuel Macron since his election as head of state almost a year ago.

But the question is: Who is French President Macron? He’s called handsome, elegant, brilliant. At just 39 years of age, he was elected president of the republic in May 2017, after a meteoric political rise. He also impressed Donald Trump, whom he invited to Paris last July 14 to

celebrate a national holiday and attend a military parade on the Champs Élysées.

This is the first time France has a president who speaks English so well and smiles “like an American.” That should be no surprise: He was a member of the “Young Leaders” of the French-American Foundation, an institution responsible for “strengthening ties between France and the United States.”

Nevertheless, Macron’s electoral base is very narrow. Although he led the first round of the presidential elections in April 2017, he received only 24 percent of the vote — 8.66 million votes — only slightly more than the far-right-wing National Front candidate Marine Le Pen, who received 21.3 percent, or 7.68 million votes. His other opponents, François Fillon on the right with 20 percent and Jean-Luc Mélenchon on the left with 19.6 percent, trailed him by a bit less.

Running against the far-right candidate in the second round, Macron played it smooth: France is not racist; it is a well-known fact. Macron was elected by a landslide, with 66.1 percent of the voters, but with more than 25 percent abstaining.

Sure of himself, he celebrated his victory the evening of the first round by holding a reception in a luxurious Parisian restaurant, surrounded by powerful jetsetters like Jacques Attali, former adviser to President François Mitterrand and great friend of the establishment, and Daniel Cohn-Bendit, former leader of the May 1968 student revolt, who later became a

loyal servant of European big capitalists.

Product of high finance

Macron is a pure product of high finance. After having been a public auditor, he declined a proposal from his boss’s boss, Laurence Parisot, to accept the post of general manager of the employers’ association, Mouvement des Entreprises de France (MEDEF), preferring to work as an investment banker at Rothschild, where he became a managing partner.

President François Hollande, who was elected as a member of the Socialist Party, first appointed him deputy secretary general of the Elysée (2012) and later minister of Economy and Industry (2014). Choosing a banker to run industry, what could be more logical? The “Macron Act,” which was forced through Parliament in 2016, made the labor market even more “flexible,” allegedly to “unblock” the French economy by eliminating laws that protect workers’ rights.

Macron’s success can largely be explained by the decline of the country’s two traditional governing political parties: the classic right, currently called the Republicans, and the formerly left Socialist Party, which has become the new right, as it no longer defends workers’ rights at all.

With the presidencies of Nicolas Sarkozy (2007-12) and Hollande (2012-17), Republicans and “Socialists” had indeed modified their historical trajectories and bowed down before finance, becoming its

faithful servants. That was quite new in France. And this is the main cause of the collapse of these two main parties, which shared power before Macron, both holding executive power without providing alternative programs.

Macron is nothing more than the repolished and rejuvenated synthesis of a fundamental trend in French political life: abandonment of national sovereignty and absolutely lamentable submission of the state. It is no surprise that the pro-U.S. imperialist line oriented to NATO and North America is strengthened at the same time.

It was enough to get him elected. His election campaign, orchestrated by an obsequious and unanimous media under orders from a handful of oligarchs, sold him like a commodity. With the allure of an airport novel to boot: his spouse, Brigitte Macron, was his high school drama teacher!

That’s because in this deteriorating democracy, they needed a talented actor to make the French population forget that their country is no longer sovereign but governed by high finance. However, the play whose performance is announced was not written in advance. Social unrest is growing.

Herrera is a Marxist economist, researcher at Centre National Recherche Scientifique, working at the Centre d’Économie de la Sorbonne, Paris. WW Contributing Editor G. Dunkel translated.

Rail workers’ strike

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unions on strike.

One firm, Lahaye Global Logistics, which runs a daily, round-trip rail freight service between Rennes and Lyon, said it would lose 20,000 euros for each strike day because it would have to shift from rail to trucks. Grain exporters and bulk chemical firms also face significantly higher costs. (tinyurl.com/ydz8fv77) □



PHOTO: SALA DE PRENSA

Paro nacional docentes, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 6 de marzo.

Docentes de Oklahoma confrontan Capitolio

Por Otis Grotewohl y Molly Matewan

Decenas de miles de educadoras/es, trabajadoras/es estatales, padres, madres, estudiantes y miembros de la comunidad se reunieron hoy en Oklahoma City, la capital del estado, para exigir fondos y recursos adecuados para la educación pública. Dos minutos más tarde, el sistema escolar de Oklahoma City informó que sus escuelas estarían cerradas hasta que las/os maestros regresen a sus aulas.

La presidenta de la Asociación de Educación de Oklahoma, Alicia Priest, dijo a las/os manifestantes en el Capitolio que las/os educadores seguirán en huelga hasta que ganen todos los fondos que han estado pidiendo. “La educación es un derecho, por eso tenemos que luchar”. La música de las bandas escolares levantó el ánimo para apoyar a las/os maestros en huelga, la mayoría de los cuales son mujeres.

Hope Davis, una estudiante sorda y una de las primeras oradoras en la manifestación, llamó a la legislación aprobada el 28 de marzo “una curita” cuando su estado necesita puntos de sutura. La legislación había otorgado a las/os maestros un aumento promedio de \$6.000 por sólo un año, y había aumentado los impuestos sobre la industria petrolera y los cigarrillos.

Davis dijo que su clase de matemáticas tiene 40 estudiantes, y desde que su maestra renunció, ha tenido que tomar cursos suplementarios en línea. Los salarios de las/os maestros de Oklahoma son tan bajos que muchas/os educadores se han mudado a los estados vecinos para ganarse la vida, lo que deja a las escuelas de Oklahoma sin personal suficiente y con graves problemas de rotación de personal.

Debido a esta crisis, el sentimiento pro-sindical está aumentando en muchas/os miembros de la comunidad. Un profesor/cantante conocido como el Sr. Booker le dijo a WW-MO que hasta ahora “sindicato” había sido una mala palabra en Oklahoma.

Inspiradas/os por la huelga de nueve días de las/os trabajadores de la educación en Virginia Occidental -representada en el mitin de hoy por Dale Lee,

presidente de la Asociación de Educación de Virginia Occidental- las/os maestros, para-profesionales y personal escolar de Oklahoma han estado preparándose para los piquetes desde principios de marzo.

Al acercarse el lunes, el primer día de huelga, las/os docentes pidieron un aumento salarial de \$10.000 durante un período de tres años. Las/os maestros de Oklahoma vieron por última vez un aumento en 2008, un aumento tan insignificante que siguen siendo algunos de las/os educadores peor pagados en los EUA. Oklahoma también ha experimentado importantes medidas de austeridad en los últimos diez años, incluyendo un recorte del 30 por ciento en el presupuesto de educación del estado.

Propuesta de ‘curita’ educativa

Al principio, el paquete de ingresos aprobado el 28 de marzo parecía una victoria. La gobernadora republicana Mary Fallin aprobó el primer aumento de impuestos en Oklahoma en 28 años para cubrir parcialmente el aumento de \$6.000 para las/os maestros, junto a un aumento más pequeño para el personal de apoyo escolar.

Las/os maestros obligaron a los legisladores a aumentar los impuestos sobre la industria petrolera en un 5 por ciento en el paquete de ingresos, una victoria casi desconocida en un estado de “derecho-al-trabajo”, algo que las/os maestros de Virginia Occidental no pudieron imitar. La industria del petróleo ha dominado Oklahoma por generaciones.

Las/os educadores ganaron esa batalla en parte, porque fueron capaces de identificar claramente para los legisladores que el dinero para cubrir el aumento en el presupuesto de educación debería provenir de las compañías petroleras cuyos impuestos siguen siendo abismalmente bajos. Pero el proyecto de ley dejó fuera otros \$200 millones para otros fondos de educación y \$255,9 millones para el seguro de salud de las/os maestros, financiamiento que las/os educadores de base llamaron una demanda central.

Al igual que en Virginia Occidental, las/os miembros de las filiales estatales tanto de la Asociación Nacional de Educación como de la Federación Estadounidense de Maestros están involucrados en esta lucha.

El domingo por la noche, Priest, líder de la AEO publicó en la web un discurso: “Entonces, ¿por qué estamos marchando el 2 de abril? Bueno, hay 700.000 razones para ello. ¡Nuestras/os estudiantes, y ellas/os se merecen algo mejor! Todos hemos escuchado historias de estudiantes, padres y maestros afectados por once años de recortes en nuestras aulas. Ven sillas rotas en los salones, libros de texto obsoletos que están pegados con cinta adhesiva y tamaños de clases que han aumentado. Las/os maestros están tan drásticamente mal pagados que se ven obligados a donar su plasma, trabajar en múltiples trabajos e ir a los comedores públicos para mantener a sus familias”. (tinyurl.com/ybltvzlx)

La militancia de base dentro de la AEO

fijó el 2 de abril como fecha límite para que los legisladores satisfagan las demandas de las/os educadores.

El presidente de la Federación de Maestros de la Ciudad de Oklahoma, Ed Allen, al principio aconsejó a las/os maestros que aceptaran el aumento salarial de \$6.000, describiéndolo como un “pago inicial” para la educación pública. Pero después de una inspección más detallada del lenguaje del proyecto de ley, y bajo el estímulo de las bases, Allen y otras/os están tomando un enfoque más proactivo.

El Presidente de la FAM, Randi Weingarten, comentó en una entrevista realizada el 2 de abril en NPR: “[La legislatura] tomó de un bote de educación para echar en otro bote de educación, en lugar de aumentar los dólares que se necesitaban para las/os niños en educación pública”. Weingarten dijo sobre el activismo docente: “La era de la resignación pasiva ha terminado. Con la experiencia del caso Janus, veremos más y más de esto.” Janus vs. AFSCME, el caso potencialmente antisindical que afecta a las/os trabajadores del sector público, fue escuchado el 26 de febrero por la Corte Suprema de los EUA, y será decidido en junio.

Las/os educadores de Oklahoma también consideraron que el aumento de sueldo propuesto era inadecuado porque los aumentos para las/os paraprofesionales y el personal de la escuela eran menores que para las/os maestros, lo que enfrentaba a las/os trabajadores entre sí. Las/os ayudantes de educación especial, por ejemplo, a veces ganan menos de \$10 la hora, y tendrían un aumento menor que las/os maestros con quienes comparten las aulas.

Esta estrategia legislativa podría ser un intento de los gobiernos estatales de debilitar la solidaridad entre las/os trabajadores de la educación y, en última instancia, disminuir el poder de sus sindicatos. En Virginia Occidental, las/os trabajadores de la educación lucharon y ganaron el mismo aumento para todas/os sin importar la posición, ya sea maestro, trabajador de la cafetería o conductor de autobús.

Oleada de lucha obrera en los estados de ‘derecho al trabajo’

Las/os educadores de Oklahoma han visto una oleada de solidaridad de los sindicatos a nivel local y de fuera de la ciudad. En un estado con menos del 6 por ciento de sus trabajadoras/es sindicalizados, los camioneros de Oklahoma City se unieron a las/os maestros en el Capitolio para ampliar sus demandas.

La página de Facebook “I Support Oklahoma Teachers” (Apoyo a los Maestros de Oklahoma) informó que sindicatos de trabajadores del hierro e ingenieros operativos también se solidarizaron. “Parece que las obras de construcción en todo el estado cerrarán el lunes”, afirmó un post el sábado. La prensa local en gran medida, ha cubierto la huelga de manera positiva, y las comunidades de todo el estado han expresado su apoyo a que las/os educadores adopten esa postura.

Muchas/os educadores en los estados

de derecho-al-trabajo (Right to Work States*) dominados por los republicanos ven la huelga de las/os trabajadores de la educación en Virginia Occidental como una señal de alarma, y no es difícil ver por qué. Las condiciones materiales en los salones de clase en Oklahoma y Virginia Occidental son muy similares, y comparten muchas características con los salones de clase en Kentucky y Arizona.

El salario de las/os maestros de Oklahoma ocupa el puesto 49 en los EUA, de acuerdo con la ANE, debajo de los maestros de Virginia Occidental en el 48° y las/os maestros de Arizona en el 43°. Esos tres estados, y otros, aprobaron leyes predatorias de derecho-al-trabajo, arraigadas en el racismo de Jim Crow, que abolieron los derechos de negociación colectiva de las/os trabajadores, prohibieron las huelgas y eliminaron los requisitos de que los patronos negocien un contrato.

Las/os maestros de Kentucky forzaron el cierre de más de 20 escuelas el 30 de marzo, luego de que los legisladores aprobaran sorpresivamente un proyecto de ley de “reforma” de las pensiones, robando las pensiones de las/os docentes. Las/os educadores y partidarios continuaron su protesta en Kentucky el 2 de abril, cerrando escuelas en 21 condados, y llenaron las escaleras y el balcón en los recintos de la Cámara y el Senado del edificio del Capitolio en Frankfort. Las/os educadores de Kentucky se han comprometido a continuar las acciones hasta que se revierta el proyecto de ley.

Alrededor de 2.500 maestras/os de Arizona se congregaron en la capital de Phoenix el 28 de marzo, exigiéndole a una legislatura hostil un aumento del 20 por ciento y un aumento en el presupuesto educativo. El gobernador de Arizona Doug Ducey afirmó categóricamente que no tendrá en cuenta las demandas de las/os educadores. Debido a este enfrentamiento, las/os maestros de Arizona podrían ser los próximos en huelga.

El 19 de marzo, con amplio apoyo comunitario y estudiantil, las/os miembros de la Asociación Educativa de Jersey City ganaron una huelga de un día por mejores salarios, atención médica y dignidad. El mismo día, las/os maestros en Puerto Rico se enfrentaron en una feroz batalla contra el colonialismo y la privatización por los EUA. Las luchas en EUA son ahora parte de un movimiento internacional de docentes desde Inglaterra y Puerto Rico, hasta Argentina y Francia.

En cada estado donde existen leyes de derecho-al-trabajo, los patronos han forzado una carrera en espiral hacia abajo a las/os trabajadores en términos de salarios y beneficios. Los políticos estatales -republicanos reaccionarios y demócratas capitalistas por igual- han recortado los servicios públicos durante décadas a través de medidas de austeridad.

Con la eliminación de la negociación colectiva a través de las leyes de derecho-al-trabajo, las/os educadores están luchando directamente con los gobiernos

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