Activists demand
No medical execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal

By Joe Piette
Frackville, Pa.

As we go to print, Department of Corrections officials refused to meet with a delegation of pro-Mumia activists on April 6 in Mechanicshury, PA. April 10 actions are being organized in the U.S. and worldwide to save the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

April 3 — Car caravans carrying over 40 people travelled from Philadelphia and New York City today to SCI Mahanoy prison in Frackville, Pa., in an effort to save the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal. After months of medical neglect, this U.S. political prisoner, who has supporters worldwide, had been diagnosed with and hospitalized for diabetic shock on March 30.

His family, friends and political supporters, many of whom have been actively fighting for Abu-Jamal’s freedom for decades, say that the prison authorities exacerbated his illness through bad diet and medical neglect and are trying to carry out an unofficial execution of the prisoner. They are calling for continued protests to prevent this execution.

Abu-Jamal had been rushed to Schuylkill Hospital in Pottsville, Pa., on March 30 for undiagnosed adult-onset diabetes with blood sugar levels over 700. Normal levels fluctuate around 100, and standard diabetes charts show 300 as dangerously high and requiring immediate treatment. After only two days in the civil hospital, Abu-Jamal was returned late on April 1 to the prison infirmary — the same one that had mistreated his illness for months while his condition worsened.

Today, prison officials initially refused any in-prison visits to the world-renowned former death row prisoner. They relented after six carloads of supporters from Philadelphia, including a van of Philadelphia Student Union high school activists, and more cars from New York City converged at the entrance to the prison.

Those able to visit included Abu-Jamal’s brother, Keith Cook, Mike Africa, Johanna Fernandez and I Abdul Jon. They reported on Abu-Jamal’s shockingly diminished state of health: His skin was discolored and extremely scarred by severe eczema, and he appeared to have lost 80 pounds.

Although Abu-Jamal was confined to a wheelchair and hampered by slurred speech, protests of recent years helped to make the epidemic of low wages a prominent issue and wrested some very modest gains, such as a curtailed struggle, no matter how heroic, could never succeed in forcing major concessions from mega-corporate, low-wage employers like McDonald’s and Walmart, especially in this high-tech, low-wage, globalization, finance-driven, permanent-crisis phase of capitalism.

Global capitalist restructuring has altered global working class. The vast restructuring of global capitalism and the global working class, which is still underway — despite the fact that the restructuring is already several generations old — has radically altered the relationship of forces between the working class and capital.

The most important change is that limited and localized workers’ struggles, while necessary and inevitable, must be transformed into generalized working-class rebellions — free of the political and ideological, organizational and conceptual boundaries that have long constrained the working-class movement. The leadership of the labor unions that have been in the forefront of the low-wage workers’ protest has thus far played a contradictory role in the development of this struggle. On one hand, the organization of low-wage workers would not be possible at this stage without the resources that labor unions like the Service Employees, Food and Commercial Workers or UNITE HERE have contributed to this fight. We com...
Activists save Community Garden, for now

“We’re just tired of being pushed out, and we’re not going to have it anymore,” said Linda Grant, one of the Afrika Town and Q’lombo community organizers. On April 3, the organizers of the newly created Afrika Town Community Garden called out supporters for a protest to defend the space against bulldozers threatened by the landlord. The community rallied to defend the space and a temporary victory was won, with the threat to raze the space held at bay for the moment. The beautiful mural and gardens had been completed just weeks before, organized by the Q’lombo community center located next door.

The formerly empty lot, full of trash, had been magically converted by volunteer marathons, gardeners and community members into a welcoming community space, a “police-free zone,” as a stand against gentrification in West Oakland.

Organizers have been holding free breakfasts, needle exchanges, self-defense classes and numerous other programs. They have also painted sidewalks in the block surrounding the space in the Black Liberation colors of red, black and green. They intend to claim a multiblock area in the surrounding neighborhood as Afrika Town. See video: “Welcome to Afrikatown, home of Qi-lombo, Oakland, CA” at vimeo.com/123879697 —Story and photo by Terri Kay

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And thanks for helping to grow the revolutionary press in the U.S.!
People's Tribunal to fight police brutality

By Martha Grevatt
Detroit

Millions of people around the United States have seen the video of the brutal beating and choking of Detroit resident Floyd Dent by police in nearby Inkster, Mich. A squad car’s dashboard camera documented the Jan. 28 assault and the video has since been widely viewed.

After being pulled over for an alleged stop sign violation, Dent opened his car door and showed his hands. He was immediately dragged from his vehicle, punched, put in a headlock and tasered. Dent spent two days in the hospital with four broken ribs, a fractured left orbital and blood on the brain.

Dent, a 37-year Ford worker and member of United Auto Workers Local 600, has mass support. Dozens packed the court in April to see if he could be held guilty of drug possession. After viewing the video, a judge had previously thrown out charges of assault and resisting arrest.

Judge David Groner granted a two-week postponement for discovery purposes. Close to 100 supporters picketed the Inkster police station that afternoon.

Dent’s attorney, Gregory Robl, is still seeking the names of all the officers involved in the beating as well as the mug shot video that shows the extent of Dent’s injuries. Speaking to the media, Robl challenged the police claim that crack cocaine was found in the vehicle. The video showed a police dog detecting nothing and the bag of “evidence” does not have Dent’s fingerprints. Dent also used a polygraph.

Several hundred people marched April 3 from the site of the beating to the police station. The march was called by the Michigan chapters of the National Action Network along with the Council on American-Islamic Relations and Take on Hate. Supporters included Detroit Black Lives Matter, the Michigan Black Workers Network, the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality, the Detroit Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, retired Rev. Ed Rowe of Central United Methodist Church, U.S. Rep. John Conyers Jr., former state Rep. Rashida Tlaib and several dozen UAW activists.

The Detroit suburb of Inkster is near-ly 75 percent African American. Over 80 percent of the police force is white, including the chief. With the exception of William Melendez, who is Latino, all of the cops at the scene of Dent’s beating were white.

Melendez, who was seen punching Dent in the head at least 16 times, earned the nickname “Robocop” during his 16 years on the Detroit police force. By the time his scandal-ridden career there ended in 2009 over falsified reports, he had developed a reputation for wrongly arresting people, planting fake evidence and lying under oath to cover up his misdeeds. He shot and killed Lou Adkins in 1996 and Ernest Crutchfield III in 2003, both unarmed. At the time, UAW leaders and the department in citizen complaints and lawsuits filed against an officer.

In 2010, Inkster hired Melendez, fully aware of his record. Inkster police Chief Vicki Yost also came from the Detroit force. As partner of officer Eugene Brown when he killed Lamar Grable in 1996, she testified on Brown’s behalf in a civil law suit. Despite this and other controversies, Yost moved up the ladder in Detroit but left in 2014 to become Inkster’s head cop. The protests have demanded that Robocop and Yost be fired.

People’s Tribunal to fight police brutality launched

By Colin Ashly
Harlem, N.Y.

On April 2, community members, activists and organizational leaders packed the historic National Black Theatre in Harlem, N.Y., for the opening session of the People’s Tribunal on Police Violence and Structural Racism. Organized by the People’s Power Assemblies, the tribunal was organized as the first in a series of events that would amplify the voices of the people who have suffered in the racist and violent system.

The event started with opening remarks by Jonathan McCreary, the director of the NBT’s Theatre Arts Program, who welcomed everyone to the space and reminded participants that a heart prepared to give and to be gifted with the healing power of communal stories was an act of liberation.

Larry Hales, an organizer of the PPA, followed with remarks about why this tribunal was so necessary, in this current moment, to bring people together in dialogue about police violence and multiple forms of systemic racism.

A panel of various races and family members of loved ones lost to police violence spoke. Kamal Muhammad and Prince Akeem, two youth activists, shared their personal experiences with police. Prince Akeem detailed the way police harassment was normalized in his adolescence, but how a series of incidents with the police eventually led to his path to activism.

Cynthia Howell, niece of Alberta Spruill who died of a heart attack after police mistakenly raided her home in 2003, spoke passionately of her aunt’s death and her family’s quest for justice. As organizer of Families United For Justice — a group of family members of victims lost to police violence — Howell emphasized the importance of family members telling their own stories.

Kenneth Chamberlain Jr., son of Kenneth Chamberlain Sr. who was killed by police in 2011, both gave witness to the tragic death of their loved ones and showed the resiliency of communities and families and communities, but they also showed the resiliency of communities and activists who have chosen to speak out in a desire to fight oppression and shut the system down. Many in the audience committed themselves to helping build the tribunal in the coming months, with the goal of letting the people decide how to counter police terror.

In the end, the tribunal asked the audience to consider how to build a more just system, and how to build communities that are more just. The audience was enthusiastic, and the organizers of the PPA are already looking forward to the April 2 program.

Detroit cops cause young autoworker’s death

By Martha Grevatt
Detroit

On March 30, 24-year-old Anthony Clark Reed died at the hands of Detroit police. The young African-American nursing student, also an autoworker, was stopped by police for an alleged traffic violation for having tinted windows on his vehicle. The windows, however, were factory-installed and thus not likely in violation of any state law.

Handcuffed, the asthmatic youth told police he couldn’t breathe.

Officers say they gave Reed two puffs of an inhaler and then performed CPR unsuccessfully. The unconscious Reed was taken to a hospital where he was pronounced dead, allegedly of a heart attack, according to a hospital staff person. (Birminghampost.com, April 2)

Reed lost his life just two blocks from his father’s Springwells Avenue Baptist Church in southwest Detroit. The family wasn’t notified by police of his death until almost 12 hours after the incident.

“Why wasn’t there an officer there to talk to me and tell me why we had lost our son?” Reed’s father, Pastor Kevin Clark, asked. “Why was there complete silence about his death until 8:30 the next morning? ... Something happened that they did not want the public to know about, least of all me.”

Clark further stated: “When Detroit police pulled him out of the car he was already in panic mode and they handcuffed him, and he’s trying to tell them he can’t breathe. I believe it caused his death. ... He dropped dead right there, in the hands of Detroit police officers who were negligent.”

Reed’s friends and family packed a candlelight vigil at his father’s church. Compared to the Floyd Dent case in nearby Inkster, Mich., there is not yet mass public outrage over Reed’s death. Media coverage has been spotty concerning this police killing, one of more than 300 so far this year in the United States.
Retail workers win wage increases

As campaigns to raise the minimum wage to $15 continue to grow, some retail giant advocates are acknowledging that struggling by minor gain raises to workers. Big box retailer Target announced Thursday that some 7,000 workers in the U.S. would receive a pay increase from $9 to $15 per hour by 2023. While raises will benefit many of those workers, it is uncertain how much of the raises will be significant enough to make a difference in their lives. 

Target, which employs some 347,000 workers in the U.S., is just one of the retail giants that have acknowledged the struggles of retail giants by granting minor pay raises to workers. Big box retailer Wal-Mart, which employs more than 1.5 million workers across the country, announced plans to raise its base pay to $9 an hour by April and $10 by next February. (CNBC.com, Feb. 19) While the raises will benefit a total of more than 800,000 workers across the country, these concessions fall short of workers' demands for union jobs at living wages. 

McDonald's “cynical and mean-spirited” stunt

In a move described by workers and advocates as a “cynical and mean-spirited” publicity stunt, McDonald’s announced April 1 — April Fool’s Day to low — that the billion-dollar chain would increase average hourly pay from $9.00 to $9.90 by July. By June 1, the raises will benefit 93,000 workers in 1,500 restaurants owned by the fast food giant — only about 5% of its workforce. Buried in the fine print, however, the billion-dollar chain would increase average hourly pay from $9.00 to $9.90 by July. 

While investigations into the cause of fatal explosions in New York's East Harlem and East Village are still in progress, a couple of things are certain. These so-called accidents are happening more often, and there are potential dangers from gas leaks everywhere. 

The March 26 explosion on Second Avenue in the East Village, which left two people dead, injured 22 and destroyed three buildings, was the latest incident in a dangerous trend involving gas and gas pipelines. From 1994 to 2013, the United States had 745 serious disasters with gas distribution, causing 278 fatalities, 1,059 injuries and over $110 million in property damage. During that period an additional 110 incidents through gas transmission caused 41 deaths, 395 injuries and over $44.1 billion in damage to property. And as of January 2014, 1,041 incident from gas of all system types resulted in 363 deaths, 3,592 injuries and close to $82.4 million in property damage. (bpintelligencer.org)

Crime prosecutors and the police believe the explosion in the East Village may have been caused by continued tapping of a gas line. Criminal charges could be filed as a result of the explosion. Members of Utility Workers Local 1-2 were part of the first responders’ team — along with the New York Fire Department, Police Department and emergency medical technicians — to secure the area by shutting down the gas systems, a representative of the union told Workers World. Meanwhile, displaced tenants are receiving legal counseling and compensation for their losses. A meeting to inform them of their housing and personal property damage brought more than 100 victims of the explosion together with lawyers and housing activists. 

Waxin Lone, director of housing services for GO-LES (Good Old Lower East Side), said the group was actively working to provide legal counseling and representation to displaced tenants, as well as tenants who have not lost their buildings but have notices to vacate. 

Many of the tenants who lost their apartments and personal property focused on the landlords of the buildings. But Thomas M. Curtis, lawyer for the landlord of one of the buildings, told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution that management forced officials to relent on their refusals to allow family members and friends to visit him. 

While their time in prison has not cured him of his symptoms. Abu-Jamal spent almost 30 years on Pennsylvania death row after he was convicted of first degree murder on July 3, 1982, stemming from the 1981 killing of a white police officer in Philadelphia. He has consistently proclaimed his innocence. Amnesty International maintains that Abu-Jamal's original trial, which was irredeemably tainted by politics and racism, failed to meet international fair trial standards. State and federal appeals for a new trial to prove his innocence have been systematically obstructed by politics and racism. 

Mass movement saved his life before

Immediately after Abu-Jamal's execution was scheduled in the summer of 1995, a march of 25,000 people in Philadelphia forced the state to rescind the execution. Another 27 years of worldwide protests finally won Abu-Jamal's release from death row in 2012.

Another fatal explosion after gas leak

By Larry Littman

While investigations into the cause of fatal explosions in New York’s East Harlem and East Village are still in progress, a couple of things are certain. These so-called accidents are happening more often, and there are potential dangers from gas leaks everywhere. 

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**Venezuela exposes U.S. imperialism as April Fool**

By Teresa Gutierrez

U.S. activists were thrilled when an invitation to observe a meeting at the United Nations allowed them to witness a profound event against U.S. imperialism and in defense of Venezuela.

On April 1, April Fool’s Day, the only one really tricked was the U.S. government, thinking that it could get away with its escalated aggression against Venezuela with no opposition. As solidarity activists witnessed, the world condemned President Barack Obama’s March 9 decree against Venezuela at a “Day of Solidarity with Venezuela” held at the U.N.

Ominously, the Obama administration declared on March 9 that the situation in Venezuela was “an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.” Obama sent a letter to Congress announcing that the U.S. would be applying to Venezuela the International Emergency Economic Powers Act. Washington named seven Venezuelan politicians to be targets of this act; enforcement could include seizure of their property in the U.S.

The March 9 decree intensifies U.S. aggression. This move bodes danger for the Venezuelan people. It signals that the U.S. government is entrenched in continuing and escalating its war of aggression against the Bolivarian Republic. Ever since 1998, when President Hugo Chávez began to use oil profits for the good of the people and not Wall Street, imperialism has been increasing.

On April 1, huge parts of the world responded by joining the U.S. decree and declaring their solidarity with Venezuela. The United Nations Day of Solidarity with Venezuela heard leaders from Cuba, Ecuador, Paraguay, Iran, South Africa, Bolivia, Argentina, Sudan, the Russian Federation, Nicaragua, Syria, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Zimbabwe and Palestine. Each of the speakers from these nations spoke eloquently and boldly against U.S. imperialism.

U.S. activists were pleased to learn that a routine U.N. event turned into an inspiring rally of unity and solidarity. Invites applauded enthusiastically from the balcony, turning the heads of diplomats who appeared very pleased with the support.

Although the March 9 decree is dangerous and must continue to be condemned, Washington’s chagrin is it is the U.S. and not Venezuela that is becoming more isolated. On April 3, Telesur reported that the U.S. sub-secretary for Latin America, Roberta Jacobson of the State Department, said that she was “surprised not more countries defended the U.S. sanctions and decree claiming Venezuela a threat,” saying “I am disappointed that there were not more countries to defend [the sanctions].”

Furthermore, Jacobson was critical of the solidarity shown by Latin American countries for Venezuela. “The tone that Latin American leaders are using demonizes the United States as if it were the source of Venezuela’s problems, and this makes it hard for us to proceed pragmatically,” she complained.

Speakers at the April 1 event represented more than 200 individuals. Cuba, for example, represented ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance of Our America); Ecuador, CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) which has 33 members. UNASUR (United Nations of South America) was represented by the Paraguayan speaker. The South African speaker represented the Group of 77 including China.

This shows the breadth of worldwide opposition to the decree. In fact, Telesur reports that at least five million tweets from 105 countries were counted on Twitter demanding that Obama repeal the decree.

From the U.S., a broad list of activists also demanded that Obama repeal the decree in an open letter to him. Over 120 people signed, including Ramsey Clark, Noam Chomsky and Eva Golinger.

Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro declared March 9 an annual anti-imperialist holiday. President Maduro officially announced the creation of a “Bolivarian Day of Anti-imperialism” to be held every year to commemorate the Venezuelan people’s answer to the executive order released by President Obama on that date.

Venezuela has also initiated a worldwide petition campaign that has already gathered over 6 million signatures and will be delivered to Obama in Panama on April 10.

President Maduro said on Venezuelan national television, “The history books will remember President Obama as the one who tried to intimidate a people and in the attempt, elicited the nationalist, patriotic and Bolivarian spirit of that people.”

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**execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal**

they were not in a mood to leave — DOC Press Secretary Susan McNaughton agreed to meet with about 20 supporters who argued for Mumia’s life, with many documenting the encounter.

“Millionaire convicted murderer John DuPont was allowed to have his choice of medical personnel treat him,” said Joanna Fernandez. “Why can’t Mumia?”

“Today is Good Friday, the day Jesus was executed. Haven’t you learned anything from that?” said Kevin Price. “It was a state execution back then too!” yelled someone from the back of the crowd.

“We’ll be here every day until we get what Mumia needs,” said Pam Africa.

The Rally to Free Mumia was a face-to-face meeting with DOC Commissioner John Wetzel on April 6, and only left after McNaughton promised to relay the requests to her supervisors.

A press release from the Campaign to Bring Mumia Home, the Free Mumia Coalition, MOVE, International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal and the Philadelphia International Action Center Lettered the following demands: no execution by medical neglect and torture; daily visits by Mumia’s family, friends and attorneys; quality health care and treatment for all prisoners; and the release of Mumia Abu-Jamal, all political prisoners and the terminally ill and elderly (over 55) from Pennsylvania prisons!

What you can do to help

People are urged to continue making calls to Secretary of Department of Corrections John Wetzel at 717-728-4109 to demand Mumia be immediately allowed to serve a meeting at the United Nations allowed them to witness a profound event against U.S. imperialism and in defense of Venezuela.


What may be even worse, however, is how the town’s police judges and political leaders conspired to loot the community — by fining them into more poverty, fines which today account for some 25 percent of the county’s budget.

There is largely silence, however, over the role of judges, who used their robes to squeeze money from the community, with unfair fines and fees — even using their badges as an identity card.

In 1869, during the reign of England’s Queen Vic-
toria, a statute known as the Debtors Act was passed, which forever abolished imprisonment as punishment for debt.

In today’s Missouri, it’s still used to punish and ex-
plot the poor. But, truth be told, it ain’t just Missouri. Famed Rolling Stone writer, Matt Taibbi, in his 2014 book, The Divide, tells a similar tale, but from points all across America — Brookly, St. Louis, Gainesville, Georgia, Los Angeles, San Diego and beyond — [where] poor people are being lured, hoodwinked and squeezed by cops, by judges, by local governments — to part with their last dime — to support a system corrupt to the core.

By Mumia Abu-Jamal

Transcribed from March 5 audio column posted by prisonradio.org. For more thorough reports, the U.S. Depart-
ment of Justice’s Pattern and Practice Study paints a damning picture of a long, cruel and bitter train of maltreatment, mass profiling, police targeting and brutality against black people in the Missouri town of Ferguson.

Correctly, cops have been criticized for their juve-
nile emails and texts of racism and contempt against the local Black community and even Black leaders in Washington, D.C.

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Taibbi’s full title might give us some insight: The Di-
vide: American Injustice in the Age of the Wealth Gap.

It’s the system — one of exploitation or predation, ultimately of capitalism.
Baltimore activists fight back – Water is a human right!

By David Card
Baltimore

At the end of March, Baltimore city officials announced that they would be turning off the water supply to a huge number of properties in the city and surrounding county in the coming weeks. In total, the city department of public works plans to turn off water to 27,000 properties for $40 million in unpaid bills. While the debt may seem considerable, the city is ignoring how critical water is for survival and is being dishonest in its portrayal of the situation.

If you listened to the city government, you would think that the debt was racked up merely by “lazy people who don’t want to pay.” The truth is far more complex. Of the 27,000 properties, the ones that make up the lion’s share of the debt are commercial businesses. It was discovered that 370 businesses collectively owe $15 million of the total $42 million. This represents more than a third of the total debt by just over one percent of the properties. That number of businesses is also almost certainly an exhaustive list of commercial properties included in the 25,000 figure.

While these big businesses have been able to rack up huge arrears into the millions of dollars, the city is now shutting off the water of anyone with a bill over $250. The hypothetical double standard of the city government is astounding! The city is allowing businesses unlimited access to water to make profits while the people who need water for their survival face an immediate water shutoff if they can’t pay.

In a city with as much unemployment and low wages as Baltimore, the last thing that working and oppressed people need is a threat to their water supply. Without water, families are not only unable to drink, but forced into unsanitary conditions where they cannot shower, use a toilet, clean dishes, etc. Additionally, according to the Maryland Department of Human Resources, a condition of child neglect is when a child is consistently unwashed or with poor hygiene. This means that a family that loses their water supply due to the inability to pay is at risk of having their children taken away and placed in foster care.

These egregious actions on the part of the city government have sparked outrage in the community. A campaign led by the Baltimore People’s Power Assembly; the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; Fight Imperialism, Stand Together youth; the Right to Housing Alliance; and others has begun to fight back against this violation of human dignity.

On March 30, a rally was held outside of Baltimore City Hall to call for a moratorium on the water shutoffs and demand that the banks and businesses pay the outstanding bills in full. There were also calls to either reduce water rates for residents or to make water free altogether.

The people of Baltimore, however, are not alone in this fight. Baltimore has received solidarity from activists around the world, most notably from Detroit, where water shutoffs have been an ongoing issue for years, and from Ireland, where water charges have recently sparked large protests.

Around the world, access to water is increasingly under attack, but people are fighting back. It is becoming clearer that water is something that everyone should have access to, no matter who or where they are. The demand is being raised that from Baltimore to Detroit and from Ireland and Africa to India, access to water is a human right!

By Lamont Lilly
Boston

The unique approach of Boston School Bus Drivers, United Union Local 651, to unionism and solidarity with the oppressed offers a much needed blueprint for building power within the community. During our organizing drive, it was quite inspiring to see a local union work hand in hand with neighborhood youth against police brutality. It was quite encouraging to see the rank and file of the Boston school bus drivers work with parents and community members to organize against school closings and badly timed budget cuts to public education.

USW Local 8751 was founded in 1978 through efforts of the bus driver organizers to desegregate the Boston public schools. It was four years prior, in 1974, that busloads of ·disobedient children were attacked by racist vigilantes outside the Boston school system on the desegregation routes not only physically, but also educationally. These attacks were not only physical, but also emotional. The children were terrorized into silence, and often times, they did not dare to speak out against their oppressors.

This new, growing trend of in-school violence is a matter of survival. Veolia’s current attack on the Boston School Bus Drivers Union was directed at the desegregation drivers. In July of 2014, recording secretary and Charles-ton Chief Steward Andre Francois; Vice President Steve Gillis; former President Greg Murchison; and union founder Stevan Kirschbaum. In spite of phony felony charges brought against Kirschbaum by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on behalf of Veolia in July of 2014, union members stuck together and remained diligent – working to organize against school closings and badly timed budget cuts to public education.

In Oakland, Calif., community groups were encouraged to select a neighborhood to protest to on April 15. At the New York City press conference announcing the April 15 protest, low-wage workers ended by challenging a “living wage initiative,” connecting these two vital struggles.

What organized labor can learn from the Black Lives Matter movement

The organized labor movement can learn a great deal from the example of the

April 15 protests: Turning point for low-wage workers

Continued from page 1

Baltimore activists fight back – Water is a human right!

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At the end of March, Baltimore city officials announced that they would be turning off the water supply to a huge number of properties in the city and surrounding county in the coming weeks. In total, the city department of public works plans to turn off water to 27,000 properties for $40 million in unpaid bills. While the debt may seem considerable, the city is ignoring how critical water is for survival and is being dishonest in its portrayal of the situation.

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While these big businesses have been able to rack up huge arrears into the millions of dollars, the city is now shutting off the water of anyone with a bill over $250. The hypothetical double standard of the city government is astounding! The city is allowing businesses unlimited access to water to make profits while the people who need water for their survival face an immediate water shutoff if they can’t pay.

In a city with as much unemployment and low wages as Baltimore, the last thing that working and oppressed people need is a threat to their water supply. Without water, families are not only unable to drink, but forced into unsanitary conditions where they cannot shower, use a toilet, clean dishes, etc. Additionally, according to the Maryland Department of Human Resources, a condition of child neglect is when a child is consistently unwashed or with poor hygiene. This means that a family that loses their water supply due to the inability to pay is at risk of having their children taken away and placed in foster care.

These egregious actions on the part of the city government have sparked outrage in the community. A campaign led by the Baltimore People’s Power Assembly; the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; Fight Imperialism, Stand Together youth; the Right to Housing Alliance; and others has begun to fight back against this violation of human dignity.

On March 30, a rally was held outside of Baltimore City Hall to call for a moratorium on the water shutoffs and demand that the banks and businesses pay the outstanding bills in full. There were also calls to either reduce water rates for residents or to make water free altogether.

The people of Baltimore, however, are not alone in this fight. Baltimore has received solidarity from activists around the world, most notably from Detroit, where water shutoffs have been an ongoing issue for years, and from Ireland, where water charges have recently sparked large protests.

Around the world, access to water is increasingly under attack, but people are fighting back. It is becoming clearer that water is something that everyone should have access to, no matter who or where they are. The demand is being raised that from Baltimore to Detroit and from Ireland and Africa to India, access to water is a human right!

By Lamont Lilly
Boston

The unique approach of Boston School Bus Drivers, United Union Local 651, to unionism and solidarity with the oppressed offers a much needed blueprint for building power within the community. During our organizing drive, it was quite inspiring to see a local union work hand in hand with neighborhood youth against police brutality. It was quite encouraging to see the rank and file of the Boston school bus drivers work with parents and community members to organize against school closings and badly timed budget cuts to public education.

USW Local 8751 was founded in 1978 through efforts of the bus driver organizers to desegregate the Boston public schools. It was four years prior, in 1974, that busloads of ·disobedient children were attacked by racist vigilantes outside the Boston school system on the desegregation routes not only physically, but also educationally. These attacks were not only physical, but also emotional. The children were terrorized into silence, and often times, they did not dare to speak out against their oppressors.

This new, growing trend of in-school violence is a matter of survival. Veolia’s current attack on the Boston School Bus Drivers Union was directed at the desegregation drivers. In July of 2014, recording secretary and Charles-ton Chief Steward Andre Francois; Vice President Steve Gillis; former President Greg Murchison; and union founder Stevan Kirschbaum. In spite of phony felony charges brought against Kirschbaum by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on behalf of Veolia in July of 2014, union members stuck together and remained diligent – working to organize against school closings and badly timed budget cuts to public education.

In Oakland, Calif., community groups were encouraged to select a neighborhood to protest to on April 15. At the New York City press conference announcing the April 15 protest, low-wage workers ended by challenging a “living wage initiative,” connecting these two vital struggles.

What organized labor can learn from the Black Lives Matter movement

The organized labor movement can learn a great deal from the example of the

April 15 protests: Turning point for low-wage workers

Continued from page 1

Baltimore activists fight back – Water is a human right!

By David Card
Baltimore

At the end of March, Baltimore city officials announced that they would be turning off the water supply to a huge number of properties in the city and surrounding county in the coming weeks. In total, the city department of public works plans to turn off water to 27,000 properties for $40 million in unpaid bills. While the debt may seem considerable, the city is ignoring how critical water is for survival and is being dishonest in its portrayal of the situation.

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Workers fight back against austerity

By G. Dunkel

The capitalist ruling classes in countries all over the world are pressuring local and national governments to spend less on services like education, health care, public transportation, roads and water, and pay more attention to cutting wages and pensions. Resistance to these austerity policies is growing, as workers showed with major protests in Quebec, Ireland, and Belgium.

Quebec

Quebec, nearly as big as Alaska, stretches from the western border of New York state to Newfoundland, far to the east of Maine. The major part of its 8 million people live in the cities of Montreal and Quebec, but some also inhabit remote, isolated parts like the Gaspé Peninsula and Côte-du-Nord.

Some 50,000 university students all over this vast province have been on strike since March 29, after strike votes on the campuses. Fifteen thousand students marched in Montreal on April 3, defying the cops. Unions and community groups have held smaller protests.

The Montreal protest marked the end of a day in which 133,000 students throughout the province walked out, even though the minister of education called on local campuses to expel student leaders.

These protests and the strike have been called by the Association of Student Union Solidarity (ASSE).

Two thousand five hundred union members formed a human chain around the National Assembly, Quebec’s parliament, on March 30 to mark the end of their contract. They want a 13.5 percent raise over the next three years, while the government only offers contracts with 5.2 percent raises. They have stood tall, so should we.

The government has said it won’t compromise, but some members of the Irish Parliament who spoke on April 5 were predicting that the strike would fall over this issue.

Ireland

Under pressure from the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the Irish government has imposed a major increase in the amount it charges for water. Tens of thousands have gone to the streets in major protests over this charge ever since it was announced by Prime Minister Enda Kenny.

The last protest took place on April 4 in Dublin, where up to 80,000 people — in a country of 4.5 million — came out to chant “Enda Kenny, not a penny!” and “No way, we won’t pay!”

Memet Udhag of “People Before Profit” and the Irish Anti-Racism Network, spoke in the context of United Nations World Anti-Racism Day: “We say today water is a human right. Black and white, we will unite and we will fight. From Bolivia to Detroit to Greece, people have been fighting against cuts, against austerity.” (Irish Times, April 6)

The government has said it won’t compromise, but some members of the Irish Parliament who spoke on April 5 were predicting that the strike would fall over this issue.

Belgium

The Belgian government has announced it will raise the age of retirement from 65 to 67 years and change the way raises are calculated, which would cost each worker $2,000, over the next six months, salary, over the course of her or his career.

On March 30, both the Flemish-speaking (Flamand) and the French-speaking (Walloon) unions held a joint demonstration in Brussels against these austerity proposals. Both called for a general strike on April 22 against their employer, the government of Belgium.

Even while fired, the four leaders have continued to organize and build resistance. Weekly rallies and mass meetings have continued to convene at nearby bus yards, union halls and music halls throughout the province. Solidarity and working-class support have poured in from all over the country. Local organizers have continued to coordinate national call-in days to Boston Mayor Marty Walsh. During the trial of Kirschbaum, every court hearing was completely packed with community supporters through “people’s mobilizations.”

Their goal is not only to get their four leaders reinstated, but to build a local and national campaign against austerity measures, political repression, racism and resegregation. Not only is Local 8751 fighting to protect local union rights, they’re fighting to inter toпор for people to organize against the state and build the struggles necessary to change it. They want a better future and they have shown that this is possible. The men and women of Local 8751 prove that solidarity and team morale remain strong.

Workers.org
By Abayomi Azikiwe

Confederate Army forces retreated from Richmond, Va., in early April 1865 in the face of advancing Union troops, many of whom were Africans. Soon the Union forces reached the last capital city of the secessionists. The Confederates had set fire to large areas of the city, but the African troops helped to re-store order in those areas.

This historic anniversary in United States history is being recognized this year. Nonetheless, the conclusion of the Civil War, which lasted from 1861 to 1865, represents the beginning of efforts to reconstruct the U.S. without slavery and national oppression—a quest that has still not been realized in 2015.

The Confederate military forces believed that if they abandoned Richmond they could continue the war against Pres- ident Abraham Lincoln, but their cause was lost. Absent a central focus and with demoralization widespread among the secessionist troops, they were doomed to disorganization without real reason to continue the fight.

Just a few days later, the Confederates surrendered to Gen. Ulysses S. Grant. The conclusion of the Civil War was marked by the passage of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, setting the stage for Reconstruction.

Post-Civil War struggle for Reconstruction

Even with the passage of the 13th Amendment, the state governments established from 1865 to 1867 were dominated by former Confederates, who passed “Black Codes” laws that maintained white dominance and banned due process to African people. It was not until the national election of 1868 and the actions of the radicals and their allies in Congress during 1867 that some move- ment took place in granting citizenship rights to Africans and organizing the South into separate states.

Then President Andrew Johnson was outraged by Congress assuming the au- thority over Reconstruction. Later he barely escaped impeachment and by the end of 1867 fell from political grace. By the time he left office at the end of 1868, Johnson had issued a general amnesty for the former Confederate leadership.

During this period the 14th Amend- ment to the Constitution was ratified granting citizenship rights to former slaves. By 1869, the 15th Amendment gave voting rights to African-American men. It was not until 1870 that the first African Americans entered the U.S. Congress—Joseph H. Rainey from South Carolina and Hiram Revels of Mississippi.

However, at the conclusion of the Civil War in 1865, the Ku Klux Klan was formed in Tennessee by Nathan Bedford Forrest, a former slave trader and Confederate general. Forrest had been responsi- ble for one of the most egregious atroci- ties of the war, committed in April 1864 at Fort Pillow, Tenn., where hundreds of Union freedmen who had escaped slavery and their white masters were massacred. Starting in 1865, the Klan organized openly and conduct- ed a ruthless terrorist campaign in all the states throughout the South. Soon it was battling the Reconstruction process.

Eventually in 1876, after a disputed national presidential election, the fed- eral government largely abandoned the Reconstruction policy. Although in sev- eral states including Tennessee, South Carolina and North Carolina, African Americans would continue to hold of- fice through the 1880s and 1890s, by the turn of the 20th century the experiment in democracy was completely overtaken.

By 1877, the federal government had withdrawn its forces from the South, prompting decades of reaction character- ized bypeonage, sharecropping, tenant farming, lynching and repressive laws. The story of Reconstruction unfolded in another century of national oppression.

Lynchings reinforce legal segregation

Lynching became common throughout the South and many areas in the North. Thousands of African Americans were summarily beaten, tortured and killed. Peonage, sharecropping, tenant farm- ing and contract labor laws created con- ditions analogous to those that prevailed during slavery. In 1896, the Supreme Court in its Plessy v. Ferguson decision consolidated federal law in favor of legal- ized segregation.

It would take until 1954 for this deci- sion to be reversed, with specific refer- ence to public education. A mass Civil Rights struggle beginning in December 1955 set the stage for a renewed effort to eradicate U.S. apartheid.

The first federal law in support of equality since Reconstruction was passed in 1957, relating to the ability of the Jus- tice Department to enforce voting rights. By 1960, students took the lead through the sit-in movement and the Freedom Rides to militantly make a move toward the eradication of legalized segregation and for universal suffrage.

Continuing relevance of Civil War and Reconstruction

It is now 50 years since the height of the African-American national movement characterized by mass demonstrations and urban rebellions. In 1963, near the 100th anniversary of the Civil War and the freedom of slaves, the March on Washington took place in granting citizenship and for universal suffrage.

African Americans entered the U.S. Congress—Joseph H. Rainey from South Carolina and Hiram Revels of Mississippi. By 1869, the 15th Amendment gave voting rights to African-American men. It was not until 1870 that the first African Americans entered the U.S. Congress—Joseph H. Rainey from South Carolina and Hiram Revels of Mississippi.

The infrastructure to publicly supply water that is safe to drink doesn’t exist in Haiti, nor does safe disposal and treat- ment of human wastes.

The U.N. admits Haiti’s problems. To- gether with the Haitian and Dominican governments and regional Latin Amer- ican and Caribbean councils, the U.N. has put together a so-called plan to fix Haiti’s structural problems, which would remove the threat of cholera.

The U.N. has spent billions on Mi-

As U.N. shirks its responsibility

Cholera in Haiti increases

By G. Dunkel

In October 2010, some of the troops in the United Nation’s military forces intro- duced cholera to Haiti. Since that time, 800,000 people or 6 percent of the coun- try have gotten the disease, and 8,000 or so have died. There have been 22,000 cases of pneumonia, among those 9,000 cases of which 2,100 have died.

Some progress has been made over the past three years in reducing both the number of new cases and the death rate from cholera. In Haiti, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) have been working with health public workers in Haiti because it comes right before the rainy season, which starts in May.
Even as State Dept. reneges on terms
Washington finally deals with Iran

By Fred Goldstein

April 6 – The agreed nuclear framework, negotiated between the Iranian government and an unalliance of imperialist bandits, in addition to China, must be put in proper perspective. When viewed the terms of the framework agreement, and whatever the ultimate outcome of the negotiations, the fact is that imperialist powers have had to sit across the table and agree, in one form or another, to Iran’s right to a nuclear program and to lift the sanctions.

Under ordinary circumstances this framework would most likely be accepted by the ruling class. But politics has gone so far to the right in the U.S. that it is now impossible for Iran to sit across the table and agree, in one form or another, to Iran’s right to a nuclear program and to lift the sanctions.

In Washington, negotiations with Iran have revealed themselves to be an illusion. By sending its delegation to Teheran, the U.S. has made clear that it is not intending to develop a weapon that the government is open to wide inspection and significant reduction of nuclear enrichment.

Dangers of the negotiations

In any negotiations between a superpower such as the U.S. and a country like Iran, there is always the fear that the smaller country will be overwhelmed and forced into dangerous concessions that compromise its sovereignty and independence.

In this light it is perfectly understandable that revolutionary Marxist, working-class, anti-imperialist partisans of Iran worry about, above all, the inspection process.

Iran is strong enough to give leeway on enrichment. As long as they have their nuclear program intact and infrastructure intact, the Iranians can afford to compromise.

If, however, the imperialists are allowed to take advantage of an unlimited inspections regime to undermine the security of the country and gain military and intelligence advantages that could be used in times of conflict or for sabotage, then the question of national sovereignty comes into play.

The U.S. Fact Sheet has described the right of the IAEA to get access to “suspicious sites” or investigate allegations of “covert sites or facilities” anywhere in the country. This open-ended regime will hopefully be clarified by the Iranian government in such a way as to prevent the unlimited access that is implied by the State Department.

The concern about dangerous or unwarranted concessions arises because the Iranian regime has a dual character. On the one hand, it is an anti-imperialist government with a clerical leadership. On the other hand, it is a capitalist regime. And despite the anti-imperialist nature of the present leadership, bourgeois moderates in Iran have significant political strength. There is an understandable fear that they may have a negative influence on the outcome of the negotiations.

Decade of threats and sanctions

But so far the Iranians have stood up to a decade of threats and sanctions. It is true that it is politically impossible for Iran to compromise its sovereignty at this juncture.

Iran was sanctioned three times by the U.S. Congress with drastic measures in 2000 and 2011. And it was sanctioned by the European Union in 2010 and 2012. All the sanctions were explicitly aimed at ending Iran’s enrichment program and dismantling its nuclear program.

In 2009, the U.S. fomented the so-called Green Revolution aimed at a counterrevolutionary overthrow of the government of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and its replacement by pro-imperialist elements. That effort was defeated.

During all that time the Iranian government increased its enrichment facilities, increased the percentage of enrichment, developed an anti-ballistic missile, created higher-grade uranium, and more and better centrifuges. Tehran has buckled under the most extreme sanctions enforced by the entire gang of imperialist robbers.

To be sure, Iran wants to be free of the sanctions. It wants normalization of relations. Iran will be forced into compromises — but hopefully on the basis of sovereignty, independence and holding imperialism at bay.

It must be remembered that the background to these negotiations is not only the hardships being suffered by the Iranian people, but the growing and deepening regional crisis, from Afghanistan to North Africa, of U.S. imperialism and its partners in crime in London, Paris and Berlin — not to mention the global capitalist economic crisis. These are among the realities that brought the imperialist side to the negotiating table.
Outrage pushes back bigoted Indiana law

By Cheryl LaBash

The “Summit of the Peoples,” to be held April 10-11 in Panama City, Panama, is a key moment in the defense of Latin American democracy. The Caribbean countries have been given a name by the United Nations: “human rights agents.” The OAS, which prepared the final document, was directed by the U.S. force to be deployed to the Palmerola base in Honduras. The 250-person group is designed to “secure” the OAS’s territorial claim to the isthmus. The OAS’s secretary general, as a smokescreen for bigoted and racist agendas, will be in Panama, along with the biggest politicians, in Indiana and Arkansas, some of the biggest corporations in the U.S. panicked in the face of mass outrage and protests and pressured two right-wing Republican governors to sign the bill "threatens to undermine the spirit of inclusion present throughout the state of Arkansas and does not reflect the values we proudly uphold." (NPR, April 1)

The racist, anti-worker, low-wage corporate CEOs. The capitalist class is a calculating class, and they immediately saw the corporate Lobby case, as a smokescreen for bigot-otism. It was "corrected" to narrow the scope so it covered the actions of Walmart and businesses from using it to refuse "to offer or provide services, facilities, use of public accommodations, goods, employment, or housing" based on "race, color, religion, ancestry, age, national origin, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or United States military service." As a result, CNN notes, "the state has now enacted protections based on sexual orientation for the first time in its histo-

The bill must also be placed side by side with the recent convention and sen-
tation by Indian workers and their unions. Every major union supported the ban on discrimination in the workplace and within the union. (UAW, April 5)

In recent years, the Hoosiers Anti-Rac-

The OAS gave credentials to figures with a political agenda, including Puerto Rican President Ramon castillo, a long-time anti-communist. The OAS’s secretary general, as a smokescreen for bigot-otism, will be in Panama, along with the biggest politicians, in Indiana and Arkansas, some of the biggest corporations in the U.S. panicked in the face of mass outrage and protests and pressured two right-wing Republican governors to sign the bill "threatens to undermine the spirit of inclusion present throughout the state of Arkansas and does not reflect the values we proudly uphold." (NPR, April 1)

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Casualties mount in U.S. proxy war in Yemen

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Despite daily airstrikes by Saudi Arabia since March 26, the Ansarullah (Houthi) rebels, who govern the presidential palace in the southern city of Aden the following week.

Subsequent reports claim that the Houthi rebels, the Yemeni army, and the pro-government militia forces have retreated to try to save key infrastructure. The ongoing talks have been held in Astana, Kazakhstan, which is supported politically by Iran.

In late 2015, the Obama administration initiated the de-escalation and massive bombing of Libya, displacing Col. Muammar Gadhafi’s Jamahiriya political system, destroying national institutions, and causing dislocation and economic decline there. Corporate media report that counterpart-tacks by forces loyal to the Saudi-backed, ousted Hadi regime were bolstered by arms drops from Riyadh. They structure the struggle in Yemen as a proxy war with Saudi forces on Hadi’s side battling Irani-influence. In fact, Washington is using its regional pro-Western allies to carry out bombings intended to bolster U.S. corporate, financial and strategic interests in the region.

Most of the weapons, including fighter aircraft utilized by Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council, made up of reactionary oil-rich monarchies, come from the U.S. and EU member states. The political independence exerted by Yemen’s Houthi movement is a concern for the United States and Wall Street, given their overall aim is to secure and expand U.S. interests on behalf of the super-rich "imperialists" in the Arabian Peninsula, but it borders wealthier oil-rich Persian Gulf states. The war's consequences for the surrounding Yemen, including the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, have strategic significance for U.S. imperialist considerations.
Por Scott Williams

casi ninguna información por las autoridades sobre el preso político Mumia Abu-Jamal tuvo acceso durante su tiempo en la prisión, pero las visitas de sus amigos y familiares durante varios años después de su trágico muerte.

Finalmente, antes del mediodía de hoy, a la esposa de Mumia, Wadiya, y a su hermano Keith Cook, se les permitió visitarle en el penal de la cárcel de Correccional Estatal en Dallas, PA. Phil África fue el encargado de esta visita. Cook fue parte de una delegación de parte del Partido de los Trabajadores que visitó a Mumia en 1981 y condenado en una farsa de juicio.

La preocupante hospitalización de Mumia, así como los cientos de preguntas que se hicieron por la misma, pusieron a prueba las reacciones de las autoridades del penal. La oficina de Kerestes dio respuestas que buscaban más apoyo a Mumia, señalando un nuevo juicio para demostrar su inocencia en un nuevo juicio.

De acuerdo con los informes, el gobierno de EUA ha trasladado temporalmente a su personal diplomático y personal de inteligencia a su familia gobernante. Jeff Rathke, portavoz del Departamento de Estado de EUA, dijo: “Debido a la deteriorada situación de seguridad en Yemen, el gobierno de EUA ha trasladado temporalmente a su personal diplomático en la embajada en Saná a otra ubicación más segura en Yemen.”

Los medios de comunicación occidentales han informado que el gobierno de EUA ha estado en contacto con el gobierno de Yemen, reforzando el escenario de una posible intervención militar en el país.

En Yemen, el movimiento Ansurallah, más comúnmente conocido como Houthi, ha estado en conflicto con el gobierno gobernado por el presidente Hadi. Los Houthi han sido apoyados por Arabia Saudita y otros países de la región, mientras que Irán ha sido enemigo de la guerra.

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