



DUMP TRUMP April 14 NYC

Workers, youth battle anti-labor law

Mass protests in France

By John Catalinotto

Paris police swept the tents and banners of young protesters from the Place de la Republic on the morning of April 11. The youth had occupied the square since March 31. That’s when demonstrations throughout France of more than 1 million unionists and students protested the new anti-labor law pushed by the government of François Hollande.

The new law would make it even harder to find secure employment. It would allow bosses to fire workers without the kinds of notice and protections the French working class had won in earlier struggles. It also eliminates the guaranteed 35-hour work week.

By all indications, this new incarnation of 2011’s “indignant ones” in Spain and Occupy Wall Street in the United States will be back, even if police pushed protesters out of the squares of the 60 cities and towns outside the capital.

In all those squares, tent cities arose. People stayed up all night to debate the big questions facing their future. By all appearances, the young people hold the support of the unions and social organizations to the left of the misnamed Socialist Party that Hollande heads.

Two days earlier, on April 9, some 390,000 people in cities and towns all over France had taken to the streets to trash the new anti-labor law. This was the first weekend demonstration in the continuing series of protests. It included the participation of families with young children.

Two major union federations, the CGT and FO, backed the protests, but university and high school students and young workers continued to lead the way. The demands have gone beyond the new law. Even as early as February people wanted to take the protests to another level. They decided after a protest they would just stay in the streets. (theguardian.com, April 8)

“On March 31, at the time of the labor law protests, that’s what happened,” a former delivery driver told the Guardian. “There was torrential rain, but still everyone came back here to the square. Then at

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Students from public high schools in Philadelphia protest austerity. See page 7.

Activists expose Clintons’ racism

By WW Philadelphia Bureau

Two protesters disrupted former President Bill Clinton while he spoke at a Hillary Clinton campaign event in North Philadelphia on April 7. With signs and vocal comments, the activists took Clinton to task over his disastrous 1994 crime bill and Hillary Clinton’s roles in bloody coups, from Honduras to Libya.

In an uncharacteristic response, the normally calm and collected Bill Clinton engaged in a heated back and forth with

the protesters for as long as 15 minutes. During the exchange, Clinton accused Black Lives Matter activists of “defending” crack dealers, murderers and gang leaders. Just one day later, Bill Clinton said of his racist tirade, “I almost want to apologize for it.”

The protesters, Erica Mines and Rufus Farmer, are two native Philadelphia activists with the Philadelphia Coalition for R.E.A.L. (Racial, Economic and Legal) Justice and Workers World Party. WW spoke to them after the protest.

Workers World: One of the signs you held read, “Clinton crime bill destroyed our communities!” What did you mean by that?

Rufus Farmer: The crime bill that Bill Clinton signed into law in 1994 — the “Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act” — greatly contributed to the mass incarceration of African people, as well as other minorities. The bill, once established as law, made it so that an individual would receive an unnecessarily

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Oklahoma earthquakes spike fracking opposition

By Chris Fry

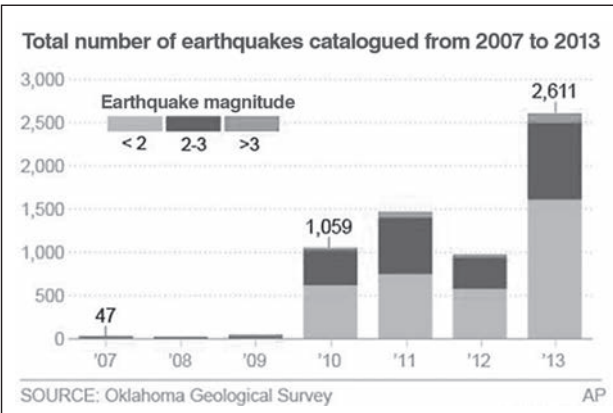
The state of Oklahoma had five earthquakes on April 3. There had been 29 earthquakes in the previous week, 222 in the past month and 3,424 in the past year. The strongest quake in Oklahoma this year registered 5.1 on the Richter scale in Fairview, Okla. (earthquake.com, April 3)

On March 28, the U.S. Geological Survey, a federal agency that has historically been very friendly to the oil and gas industry, said it had traced the vast increase of earthquakes in and around Oklahoma to the industry’s injection of wastewater from fracking and oil extraction into deep underground wells near ancient fault lines: “The central U.S. has undergone the most dramatic increase in seismicity over the past six years. From 1973 to 2008, there was an average of 24 earthquakes of magnitude 3.0 and larger per year. From 2009 to 2015, the rate steadily increased, averaging 318 per year and peaking in 2015 with 1,010 earthquakes. Through mid-March in 2016, there have been 226 earthquakes of magnitude 3.0 and larger in the central U.S. region. To date, the largest earthquake located near several active injection wells was a magnitude 5.6 in 2011 near Prague, Okla.” The earthquake near Prague, a town of 2,500 people, destroyed a dozen homes, damaged 200 buildings, injured two, and caused more than \$1 million of damage.

According to the USGS, Oklahomans are now as likely to experience a damaging earthquake as people living in quake-prone areas of California. And, as the agency further notes, in the central U.S. “there may be thousands of faults that could rupture in a large earthquake.”

A tide of ‘earthquake swarms’

For the last six years, the state government of Oklahoma has done very little to stem this tide of what the USGS calls “earthquake swarms.” In Oklahoma City, “the oil



Last year there were 3,424 quakes in Oklahoma, the strongest registering 5.1 on the Richter scale.

Pickens ridicule the notion that the oil industry is at fault. “Wastewater wells and fracking have nothing to do with — they’re not even earthquakes,” he told 300 of his buddies and minions at the Southern Republican Leadership Conference. Pickens claims the rise in quakes is the result of increased government monitoring. (readfrontier.com, May 23)

But this huge hike in corporate-caused earthquakes has sparked a rising tide of anger among the people of Oklahoma. More than 500 people recently attended a public meeting on the earthquakes at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond, where the famed environmental activist Erin Brockovich spoke, as well as an official from the Sierra Club.

This and like actions forced the Oklahoma Corporation Commission, known to be pro-Big Oil, to ask the oil and gas industry to voluntarily reduce by 40 percent the amount of wastewater disposed of in deep underground wells. Experts call this too little, too late. They are demanding a complete moratorium on all wastewater injection throughout the state.

They demand that the oil and gas companies either treat the waste liquid so it becomes usable water, which would eat into their profits, or stop all fracking. Only the growing struggle by Oklahoma residents can force these profit-hungry corporations to do what is necessary to protect the health and safety of the communities from these earthquake swarms. □



industry holds so much sway that for decades drill rigs have extracted crude from directly beneath the Capitol building.” (swtimes.com, March 6)

Oil billionaires like T. Boone

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Who we are & what we’re fighting for

Hate capitalism? Workers World Party fights for a socialist society — where the wealth is socially owned and production is planned to satisfy human need. This outmoded capitalist system is dragging down workers’ living standards while throwing millions out of their jobs. If you’re young, you know they’re stealing your future. And capitalism is threatening the entire planet with its unplanned, profit-driven stranglehold over the means of production.

Workers built it all — it belongs to society, not to a handful of billionaires! But we need a revolution to make that change. That’s why for 58 years WWP has been building a revolutionary party of the working class inside the belly of the beast.

We fight every kind of oppression. Racism, sexism,

degrading people because of their nationality, sexual or gender identity or disabilities — all are tools the ruling class uses to keep us apart. They ruthlessly super-exploit some in order to better exploit us all. WWP builds unity among all workers while supporting the right of self-determination. Fighting oppression is a working-class issue, which is confirmed by the many labor struggles led today by people of color, immigrants and women.

WWP has a long history of militant opposition to imperialist wars. The billionaire rulers are bent on turning back the clock to the bad old days before socialist revolutions and national liberation struggles liberated territory from their grip. We’ve been in the streets to oppose every one of imperialism’s wars and aggressions. □

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BROOKLYN:

Ground zero for gentrification

By Imani Henry

Brooklyn is definitely ground zero for gentrification in New York City. Specific to Brooklyn is that rents have gone up by outrageous degrees in neighborhoods where the average median income is under \$35,000 a year. Over 25 percent of the people of this city make under \$25,000 a year.

People in migrant communities of color neighborhoods, where households have banded together in order to have multiple breadwinners just to pay rent, are being priced and pushed out. The New York Times reported a 400 percent increase in foreclosures in Brooklyn in 2015.

The conditions are such that they devastate the racial, cultural, linguistic and economic diversity of the city.

Landlords, police harass tenants

We see increased tenant harassment in Brooklyn — everything from landlords turning off and denying access to gas for three to 18 months, to hoarding people's rent checks and money orders and then taking people to court for nonpayment, to using people's immigration, racial or gender status against them under the threat of eviction.

We're currently fighting a landlord who refuses to make repairs for long-term tenants in order to force them out — and then overcharges new tenants. What we have observed is if you just moved to Brooklyn in the last five years and you're in a rent-stabilized apartment, chances are you're being overcharged by \$300 to \$400.

Tenant harassment is coupled with police harassment. We've been able to prove that since 2012, rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods have had high rates of "stop and frisk" profiling. "Broken window" policing has meant summonses for everything from riding bikes on the sidewalk to walking between subway cars,

spitting on a subway platform and being in a park after dusk.

We do so much work trying to stop the level of tickets and summonses written to drivers of color for "driving while Black or Brown." Traffic checkpoints are a regular occurrence and ticketing drivers is part of a monthly quota system for the New York Police Department to make income.

We and other groups are also documenting that this is specifically racially motivated and that there is a completely different set of rules and systems, particularly for white people moving into neighborhoods in Brooklyn. We have heard that police presence decreases in neighborhoods once more white people have moved in. We've also begun taking video — and we encourage others to do so, too — documenting new, white residents drinking alcohol or smoking cigarettes on the subway without getting any tickets.

There is clearly a double standard for people of color and migrants moving in or trying to live or stay in Brooklyn. Landlords refuse to rent or sell to people of color, and at the same time, the police are doing everything in their power to push people out of Brooklyn. We're back to Jim Crow segregation in New York City.

On March 23, the mayor's housing plan was approved by the City Council. This plan leaves out a large percentage of the people of New York. Some 25 percent of the people here make \$25,000 and under a year. Mayor Bill de Blasio's plan is pro-gentrification. It relies solely on developers building largely luxury housing and allowing for a few units to go to people of mostly middle income.

The mayor's plan is geared towards people who can afford market-rate apartments and allows them to become the majority in a building. That is ridiculous. The vast majority of the people who live in New York City are low to middle income. We should have the majority of the



Imani Henry assaulted at mayor's hearing.

housing. We want to see affordable permanent housing.

We are in a housing crisis. Eighty percent of the people of this city spend most of their money and resources on paying rent. It is time to have rent regulation and rent stabilization universally in New York. The vast majority of people live in unregulated housing, and we should turn that around. We don't need new condos and luxury developments. What we need is real affordable housing for everyone.

We're seeing people new to New York City who don't know their rights and don't know they're in a rent-stabilized apartment. They've been told lies like, "You're getting preferential rent," so they think they're getting a deal. But the landlord is ready to jack up the rent on them at any time to market price. Part of rent stabilization is having the right to a lease renewal, succession rights to have family

members on the lease, and repairs that are covered by the landlord. When you're an unregulated tenant, you're at the mercy of your landlord.

This is why elders, especially women of color who have had their apartments for over 30 years, are being unjustly taken to landlord-tenant court. We have cases where families who are dealing with elders in hospice care are suddenly being dragged into housing court so that the landlord can throw their entire family out when the loved one on the lease dies.

Developers and the de Blasio administration

At the end of the day, the de Blasio administration is beholden to the developers. Capitalism is about profit. Progressive journalist Aaron Cantu has written about the developers behind de Blasio's pro-gentrification housing plan.

Our community boards must be elected and have veto power because the borough president, who is in many cases tied to real estate money, appoints a community board that then is beholden to him and not to the community. The developers then come to our neighborhoods and get licenses to build. The mayor has made it easier for them to rezone our neighborhoods.

Equality for Flatbush is partnered with large, affordable-housing tenant groups and small grassroots groups. More protests are being planned. We will be launching a campaign demanding elected community boards. Groups are bringing lawsuits against community boards and the city administration for their role in tenant harassment and discrimination.

We must turn the tide around and make sure that tenants, homeowners, small businesses, people of color, migrants, LGBTQ people, elders, people living with AIDS, people with disabilities and victims of domestic abuse — all can stay in their homes. □

Flint lead poisoning is tip of the iceberg

By Martha Grevatt
Detroit

This April 25 will mark two years since the infamous event that exposed the city of Flint to lead-contaminated water. On that day, Flint disconnected from Detroit Water and Sewerage and began getting untreated drinking water from the polluted and corrosive Flint River. For 18 months, city residents' cries for help were ignored and belittled as they suffered from a myriad of health consequences and saw their children's progress in school decline dramatically. When Flint switched back to Detroit water in October 2015, the damage was done.

Flint, a majority Black city with the highest poverty rate in Michigan, is a case study in environmental racism. None other than the New York Times editorial board reached that conclusion in a March 25 opinion piece titled "The Racism at the Heart of Flint's Crisis." The editors cited the March 23 report by the Flint Water Task Force, appointed by Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder to study the crisis and its causes. While timidly avoiding the word "racism," the task force concluded: "Flint residents, who are majority Black or African-American and among the most impoverished of any metropolitan area in the United States, did not enjoy the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards as that provided to other communities."

The same racism and anti-poor discrimination that created the Flint water crisis continues to make residents' lives a living hell. State and federal aid, trickling in at a snail's pace, falls well below what is needed immediately to repair the water infrastructure and provide the medical, nutritional and social support that can give Flint's children a shot at overcoming the effects of lead poisoning.

The recommendation for children under six and pregnant women to drink only bottled water remains in effect. All others are being told to drink only filtered water. The latest report from whistleblowing scientist Marc Edwards shows overall improvement in the water's lead levels but indicates excessive levels remain in almost 8 percent of Flint homes. In other words, at least 8,000 residents are still at risk.

New information shows that the water is still not safe for washing. Residents are still contracting skin rashes. Scott Smith, the chief technology officer of Water Defense — founded by actor Mark Ruffalo — stated April 9 that, until the water is fully tested for toxins that can be inhaled in an aerosolized mist or absorbed through skin contact, it cannot be confirmed safe for bathing or showering.

Taxpayers foot bill for governor's defense

The culpability of Gov. Rick Snyder is beyond dispute. Snyder appointed and oversaw the emergency manager dicta-

tors who controlled Flint when the decision was made and carried out to hook into the Flint River. Snyder also appointed the Department of Environmental Quality officials who violated the federal Lead and Copper Rule by stating repeatedly that anti-corrosive chemicals were not needed, claiming for 18 months that the untreated water was safe. The governor's own hand-picked task force placed primary responsibility on the DEQ itself.

Snyder recently raised the ire of Michigan residents even more by expropriating millions of tax dollars for his legal defense from lawsuits filed against him by hundreds and potentially thousands of Flint residents. Now, his lawyers are claiming that a lawsuit filed by activist Melissa Mays and nine other residents is untimely. Why? Because the decision to connect to the Flint River was made in April 2014 and, therefore, the lawsuit should have been filed within six months of that decision!

"There are questions of fraudulent concealment (by the governor) and I don't think you can claim on the one hand people have not timely filed when you concealed the information that would later lead them to the danger," Mays' attorney rightly countered. (Detroit News, April 8)

Lead poisoning throughout the U.S.

Flint has put the effects of lead poisoning in the public mindset. Now, there

are regular reports exposing how widespread the problem is. In many communities, children test positive for elevated blood lead at higher levels than Flint. In three cities — Atlanta, Philadelphia and Allentown, Pa. — the combined total of lead-affected children is 500,000. In Allentown, 23.5 percent of the children are affected. The rate in Cleveland, also a majority African-American city, is over 14 percent — twice that of Flint — because of the high number of older homes with lead-based paint. People on Native reservations also have a high rate of lead exposure.

The consequences are devastating. A 2015 study of elementary school students in Chicago tied 15 percent of all failing grades to lead poisoning.

Lead's dangers have been known to physicians since the time of the Roman Empire. That this toxin still poses a threat to human well-being is an indictment of a system that devalues children of color and poor children, offering only a future of mass incarceration, unemployment, military servitude or low-wage jobs.

The pollution of the Flint River originated with corporations, especially the auto manufacturers, that made billions off the workers' productivity, only to abandon them once the factories became old. These polluters, along with the state, must be forced to pay for the human damage they have inflicted. □

\$1,000-a-pill is death sentence for HCV patients

By **Dave Welsh**
Foster City, Calif.

One Harvoni pill a day for 12 weeks can cure hepatitis C with a 95 percent success rate. But a Big Pharma company, Gilead Sciences, which “owns” Harvoni, charges \$1,000 per pill or \$84,000 for a full treatment. It manages to sell the same drug in Egypt for \$10 a pill. (New York Times, Dec. 15)

Anger at this outrageous price gouging prompted loud global demonstrations on April 1. At Gilead’s headquarters in California’s Silicon Valley, hep C patients and caregivers from Oakland’s Oasis Clinic, their faces painted yellow to symbolize the effects of this debilitating disease, staged a “die-in,” while a crowd chanted: “Gilead’s profits are rising! Hep C patients are dying!”

Speakers, who included Dr. Diana Sylvestre and Orlando Chavez from the Oasis Clinic, pointed out that over 5 million people in the U.S. are infected with the virus, including some 200,000 military veterans and 700,000 people in U.S. prisons — including political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Mumia was infected with hep C vi-



PHOTO: DORO-CHIBA INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE

rus in 1981 from a tainted prison blood transfusion after he was shot by police, according to a statement by the Labor Action Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal that was read at the rally. “Mumia’s infection began to show symptoms in 2015, which is typical for this slow-incubating but usually fatal (if untreated) disease. Mass mobilization is the only reason Mumia got any medical attention at all, and he is still denied the curative Harvoni treatment. ... The Pennsylvania prison system is now trying to kill Mumia by medical neglect.”

Like ‘conditions under apartheid’

Abu-Jamal’s lawyers recently unearthed a Pennsylvania Department of Corrections secret protocol explicitly calling for “observation, but no treatment for HCV infected prisoners, until they are at death’s door (if then),” the committee said. Mumia has filed suit against the DOC. He is asking that all 10,000 prisoners in Pennsylvania who suffer from HCV be given the curative pills.

Demonstrations, initially called by ACT-UP (the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), also took place the same day in

London, Paris, New York and Johannesburg, demanding that the pills be made available free to prisoners and affordable to all HCV sufferers.

Their cause is supported by South Africa’s largest union. The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa wrote to Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf earlier this year demanding that Harvoni pills be given free to Mumia and other HCV-infected prisoners. “The refusal of health care,” said the NUMSA letter, “reminds us of the conditions we were put in under apartheid prisons [in South Africa], where sick detainees were allowed to die in very deplorable lonely conditions in solitary as part of the punishment for their role in the struggle.”

Gilead Sciences, which turned a net profit of \$18 billion in 2015 from revenues of \$32 billion, has been well connected with movers and shakers in Washington, D.C. Donald Rumsfeld joined its board of directors in 1988, the year the company was founded, and served as chair of Gilead from 1997 to 2001, when George W. Bush appointed him secretary of defense. George P. Schultz, secretary of state under Ronald Reagan, also served on the Gilead board. □

Coal baron gets slap on wrist for death of 29 miners

By **Benji Pyles**
Charleston, W.Va.

April 8 — Many in West Virginia and eastern Kentucky were dismayed when news came that notorious Massey coal baron Don Blankenship would face only a maximum of one year in prison for his role in the Upper Big Branch Mine disaster. Blankenship was not even charged with the murder of the 29 miners, but rather “conspiracy to willfully violate mine health and safety standards.” (more at “Coal Mine Boss found guilty of conspiracy,” bit.ly/1WhKZHx)

Critical observers have expressed doubt that he would see any jail time, due to the long history of a lack of punishment

for capitalist coal barons who put profit ahead of human well-being. However, Blankenship’s crimes and cavalier attitude toward the lives of workers were so egregious that he was, in fact, sentenced to a full year in prison and forced to pay a \$250,000 fine. The federal prosecutor recommended this sentence, which is the maximum possible for this misdemeanor.

The day after the verdict, Blankenship’s million-dollar attorneys filed a notice of appeal on his behalf. They say they are confident that the decision will be overturned. Currently, it is not known when he will be required to report to prison.

After the verdict, Blankenship told the Charleston Gazette-Mail: “There was no direct evidence I committed a crime. I am

not guilty of a crime.” Instead of owning up to his crime and being eternally grateful that he’s getting off easy, Blankenship continues to mock workers and their families.

Capitalism: a law for rich, another for poor

It’s a scathing indictment of the capitalist system, and the state that protects it, that a millionaire who killed 29 people was given a mere slap on the wrist while Black and Brown youth are being locked away for decades over minor drug offenses — and when released, cannot get a job due to their record. Blankenship has no such difficulties ahead of him. He has amassed a fortune robbing the working class of the products of their labor. His net worth is rumored to be in the hundreds

of millions of dollars. In West Virginia, even in the rare instances where the federal government might consider a criminal coal boss liable, the barons can get away with mass murder if they write a big enough check.

Outside the courtroom, the people let Blankenship hear their righteous indignation. “That man has no remorse,” said Tommy Davis, who lost his son, nephew and brother in the explosion.

“He’s standing up there, and he’s hugging them people. I don’t hug nothing but a damn tombstone. I hold a picture. I don’t get to hold no grandchildren.”

“I miss my family. He hugged his, and all he gets is a year,” local media outlet WSAZ reported Davis as saying. “They need to be stricter, more harsh penalties for people like that who puts greed — money — over human life.”

Union member and organizer with the Appalachian Workers Alliance, Ethan Young, commented: “I pray that Blankenship’s cellmate is one of the countless miners who broke his body in those mines and became addicted to pain pills while trying to cope with the painful existence he endured for the profit of the Coal Baron.”

That Blankenship is able to walk away from this with his pockets only a little lighter is an indictment of the system, proof that the political establishment and their courts can’t deliver justice for West Virginia’s working class. The only way forward is the seizure of state power and the means of production by the working class. We must build a new system — a democratically planned economy where all property is collectively owned by the working class and all labor is directed at fulfilling people’s needs, instead of making profits for a small minority of millionaires and billionaires.

For more on the struggle, follow the Appalachian Workers Alliance blog at bit.ly/1MZ9Mhi, on Facebook at fb.com/appalachianworkersalliance and on Twitter @AWAworkers.

Stephen Pearson, an organizer with the Appalachian Workers Alliance, contributed to this article.

Students say ‘Dump Trump’

By **Workers World Staff**

With youth and students taking the lead, Donald Trump was confronted across Wisconsin during his campaign there. Trump and other presidential candidates were touring the state leading up to the April 5 primary.

On March 30, students and workers in Green Bay confronted Trump. Before this, Trump was confronted in Janesville and other locations.

On April 3, at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, a rainbow of individuals from an array of organizations came out to protest Trump. They were outraged that the UWM administration would allow the anti-worker, white-supremacist Trump to speak on campus. Protesters gathered in Spaight’s Plaza and held a militant demonstration facing off against city and campus police protecting Trump.

At one point, the protesters marched through adjacent streets and through the campus, returning to the site where those entering to hear Trump were. The students and workers again faced off against police on foot and horseback. When a student was snatched by the police and detained, the protesters held an hours-long



PHOTO: WI BAIL OUT THE PEOPLE MOVEMENT

sit-in to demand the name and release of the student.

During the sit-in, numerous students and workers spoke out against Trump and capitalism and for socialism. When the student, Chivaliea Hayes, was released, the protesters dispersed, vowing to stop Trump at his next appearance in Milwaukee on April 4.

The UWM “Dump Trump” protest was organized and supported by many groups, including Youth Empowered in

the Struggle at UWM, the African Student Association, Students for a Democratic Society, the Black Student Union, the Latin American Solidarity Committee, Students for Justice in Palestine, Black Lives Matter, Community Uprising, the Wisconsin Bail Out the People Movement and Workers World Party.

Also on April 3, students and workers confronted Trump and his supporters at Nathan Hale High School in West Allis, a suburb of Milwaukee. □

Richard Levins: Marxist scientist, communist

Richard “Dick” Levins, communist and distinguished Marxist scientist, died on Jan. 19 at the age of 85. He was a population geneticist, mathematical ecologist and philosopher of science. Applying dialectical materialism to biology, he fought against any theory that tried to justify imperialism, racism and class oppression. His extensive work includes “Evolution in Changing Environments” and “The Dialectical Biologist,” articles co-authored with Richard Lewontin. At his death, Levins was professor of population sciences and head of the Human Ecology program in the Department of Global Health and Population, Harvard School of Public Health. The following is an edited memorial reflection by his daughter, writer-activist Aurora Levins Morales.

My father was a product of the Jewish radicalism of the small towns and cities of southern Ukraine. He was raised by his grandmother Leah in a Brooklyn extended family home. Leah, born in the Ukraine, was my father’s main source of political education as a young person. Leah was a sweatshop labor organizer and a feminist. She worked with Margaret Sanger, teaching immigrant women in the tenements about birth control, went to hear Emma Goldman speak and greatly admired Rose Schneiderman, the feminist, socialist labor leader who first said working women needed both bread and roses.

His father was the other source. Reuben Levins was the first U.S.-born member of his family, also Ukrainian Jews,

and by his teens helped lead the Young Communist League as it split from the Young Socialists.

I’m not sure at what age [my father] joined the Communist Party, but he was certainly a member when he started college at 17. He had left home by then, and a year later met my Puerto Rican mother, Rosario, at a communist social evening. They fell for each other at first sight. Their second date was a lecture by Black feminist communist Claudia Jones. Their next date was the Peekskill riot, when white supremacists tried to stop Paul Robeson from performing. They were married in June 1950 as they were both turning 20, and went to live in Ithaca [N.Y.], where my father was enrolled at Cornell.

Long relationship with Puerto Rico, Cuba

When he graduated, he was unemployed as a communist. The Korean War had started, and [my parents] were uncertain what would happen when my father refused to fight. So they went to Puerto Rico to get to know my mother’s country and have some time together before a possible separation if my father was jailed.

This was the start of my father’s long relationship with Puerto Rico. At that time he was still a geneticist. My mother’s questions turned him toward ecology. But in the meantime, he was a tropical farmer, conducting fruit fly experiments in between trips to market to peddle vegetables and eggs.

Where my father taught was the [University of Puerto Rico] system’s main



Levins, in Hanoi, 1970. (Back row, far right)

PHOTOS: RADICALISMOJUDIO.ORG

campus, and a focus for both anti-war and pro-independence organizing. There were massive draft card burnings, protests against the ROTC on campus and a growing identification with anti-colonial struggles throughout the world, especially with Cuba and the rest of Latin America. In addition to his UPR biology courses, my father taught Marxism classes in people’s homes.

In 1964, my parents were invited to Cuba, where my father was asked to help reorganize the University of Havana biology department. This was the beginning of a lifelong commitment to the Cuban Revolution and to the development of Cuban science. His work on evolution and complexity in environments changed the field of ecology, with profound and widespread impact, but it was in Cuba he was best able to integrate his science and politics and help to develop a revolutionary science that could be put into practice at the service of human liberation.

‘From Rebel to Revolutionary’

In 1966, he wrote “From Rebel to Revolutionary,” a work still deeply relevant.



Maricao, Puerto Rico, early 1950s.

In it, he laid out the necessary evolution from reactive to strategic thinking, using an array of examples from the anti-colonial struggles of the time.

In 1967, we moved to Chicago, and the focus of his political work changed. The Movimiento Pro Independencia had become the Puerto Rican Socialist Party; he was a member of the Chicago chapter. He was an expert witness in a case against the U.S. Navy in Vieques, testified at the U.N. on decolonizing Puerto Rico and taught a class on Puerto Rican history and politics for the Young Lords.

His commitment to his work in Cuba grew and he traveled there more often, eventually going every year. He also went to Hanoi on a science delegation in 1970 and came back to found Science for Vietnam.

For my father, being a revolutionary included infinite curiosity and kindness. He loved exploring how other people think, understanding the roots of their ideology and thinking about why and how we make mistakes. One day when I was 10, I asked him some question about our “enemies,” and he said, “There are no bad people, only bad choices.” That, as much as any theoretical treatise, expresses the way my father approached the world. □

GE’s ‘moral fabric’ and its forgotten socialist wizard

By Stephen Millies

Is General Electric one of the corporations “destroying the moral fabric” of the United States? That’s what Bernie Sanders told the New York Daily News editorial board on April 4.

GE’s CEO, Jeffrey Immelt, got so angry that two days later he attacked the presidential candidate in the Washington Post.

Judge for yourself whether GE is a corporate criminal.

Immelt bragged about jobs at GE facilities in Sanders’ home state of Vermont. He didn’t mention that Jack Welch — his predecessor as GE’s CEO — fired 112,000 workers.

Since 1978, the company has gotten rid of 22,000 jobs in GE’s hometown of Schenectady, N.Y., alone. That’s according to Thomas F. O’Boyle, author of “At Any Cost: Jack Welch, General Electric, and the Pursuit of Profit.”

GE workers called Welch “Neutron Jack” because he destroyed people’s jobs while leaving the factories intact, just as the neutron bomb was supposed to kill people with radiation while leaving cities’ infrastructure intact. Welch argued that, “ideally you’d have every plant you own on a barge,” so it could move to where the lowest wages were.

In Massachusetts alone, according to O’Boyle, GE fired 7,000 workers in Lynn and 8,000 in Pittsfield. Erie, Pa., saw 6,000 GE jobs evaporate while Fort Wayne, Ind., lost 4,000.

Nobody works at the 77-acre GE factory in Bridgeport, Conn., anymore. This factory employed 12,000 workers during World War II. The factory still employed 3,000 in the late 1970s, but the last 70 workers were let go in 2007. (Connecticut Post, March 23, 2010)

No wonder census statistics reveal that

nearly a quarter of Bridgeport’s population lives in dire poverty.

Polluter and nuclear menace

Immelt also didn’t mention that GE’s two aviation plants in Vermont released 60,000 pounds of toxins in 2011, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

GE fought for decades against any EPA-imposed cleanup after dumping more than 1.3 million pounds of cancer-causing chemicals into the Hudson River. (cleanup.org) The company also poisoned Connecticut’s Housatonic River and, from another plant, the Coosa River Basin in Georgia.

Japan’s nuclear disaster at Fukushima, which started with a 2011 earthquake, involves five GE Mark 1 reactors. Three GE engineers — Gregory C. Minor, Richard B. Hubbard and Dale G. Bridenbaugh — quit in 1976 to protest the reactor’s unsafe design. (ABC News, March 15, 2011)

There are 23 Mark 1 reactors in the United States.

Tax havens and pension rip-offs

Immelt claimed that GE pays “billions in taxes.” But in 2010, GE paid zilch in taxes after making \$14.2 billion in profits. It actually got \$3.2 billion back in refunds from Uncle Sam that year. (New York Times, March 24, 2011)

Last year, GE held \$119 billion in offshore profits in 18 overseas tax havens. (International Business Times, Oct. 6, 2015)

GE is moving its headquarters from Fairfield, Conn., to Boston after getting promises of \$25 million in property tax breaks over 20 years. Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker also wants to provide GE with \$120 million in new roads, parking and utility improvements. (boston.com, April 8)

At the same time, Boston is threaten-

ing new public school cutbacks.

Immelt didn’t reveal in his Post article that GE will be slashing medical benefits for retirees, allowing the company to save \$3.3 billion. (thetstreet.com, Aug. 4)

In 2014, Immelt got \$37.2 million in total compensation, more than \$100,000 per day. Nearly half of this package is because of a big increase in his pension. (Reuters, March 10, 2015)

The socialist founder of GE labs

GE also tried to destroy UE, the Electrical Workers union, with red-baiting attacks and helped propel Ronald Reagan’s political career.

With this record, is it any surprise that GE has “never been a big hit with socialists,” as Immelt wrote in the Washington Post?

Yet the founder of the GE Research Labs was the socialist Charles Steinmetz. The first industrial research facility in the U.S. started in Steinmetz’s Schenectady, N.Y., garage in 1900.

Charles Steinmetz was born in the German empire in 1865. As a university student he was forced to flee the country because of Bismarck’s anti-socialist laws.

Attempting to enter the U.S. in 1889, he was initially turned away by immigration officials. Steinmetz had kyphosis, a curvature of the spine, and only \$10 in his pocket. Donald Trump would have deported him.

A gifted mathematician, Steinmetz worked out “Steinmetz’s Law,” which figured out the heat loss, “hysteresis,” in electric motors. This paved the way for developing alternating current power. Steinmetz, along with others, created the first commercial three-phase power system.

By 1900, Steinmetz was the most famous electrical engineer in the world and was known as “the Wizard of Schenectady.” Helping to protect Steinmetz’s 200

patents at GE was the African-American engineer and inventor Lewis Latimer.

Steinmetz helped elect George R. Lunn as Schenectady’s socialist mayor in both 1911 and 1915. Another GE town, Bridgeport Conn., also had a socialist mayor — Jasper McLevy — from 1933 to 1957.

Charles Steinmetz became president of the city’s school board, where he provided free meals for hungry students. Judging from his other positions, Steinmetz would have been thrilled by the Black Panther Party’s Breakfast for Children programs.

A supporter of unions, Steinmetz changed cigar brands when cigar makers went on strike. In 1922, Steinmetz got 291,000 votes when he ran for state engineer and surveyor on the Socialist Party/Farmer-Labor ticket in the New York state election.

A. Philip Randolph got 129,000 votes running for secretary of state on the same ticket. Randolph later led the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and initiated the 1963 March on Washington.

Steinmetz welcomed the socialist revolution in Russia. He wrote the introduction to “The Industrial Revival in Soviet Russia,” by A. A. Heller.

On Feb. 16, 1922, Steinmetz wrote Soviet leader V.I. Lenin of his “admiration of the wonderful work of social and industrial regeneration which Russia is accomplishing under such terrible difficulties.

“I wish you the fullest success and have every confidence that you will succeed. ... If in technical, and more particularly in electrical engineering matters, I can assist Russia in any manner with advice, suggestions, or consultation, I shall always be very pleased to do so, as far as I am able.”

Lenin wrote two warm letters to Steinmetz in response. But before Steinmetz could help, he died on Oct. 26, 1923. □

The racist criminalization of African Americans

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

When former President Bill Clinton spoke on April 7 in Philadelphia, protesters interrupted him, exposing Democrats’ role in the mass incarceration and state repression of oppressed peoples in the U.S. during the 1990s. He responded by trying to justify decades of criminalization of tens of millions of African Americans.

Clinton’s mere suggestion that African Americans were somehow responsible for the high rates of incarceration derived from racist assumptions. They deliberately ignore the ongoing legacy of slavery and Jim Crow manifested by pervasive racist discrimination in the labor market, educational system, housing sector and criminal justice system — and reflected in the corporate media.

Even though Bill Clinton later expressed his alleged regret for the confrontation, this does not absolve the U.S. ruling class for persistently targeting people of color communities and imprisoning 2.2 million women and men.

Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton has been confronted repeatedly over the legacy of Bill Clinton’s administration and his signing of several “criminal justice” bills that fostered the large-scale recruitment of police and construction of prisons to disproportionately house African Americans and Latinos/as.

Prison population up 500 percent since 1980

Jeff Guo writes that during Democratic and Republican administrations over the last four decades, “the prison population has quintupled. [Due to] disparities in arrests and sentencing, this eruption has disproportionately affected black communities. Black men are imprisoned at six times the rate of white men. ... For some high-risk groups, the economic



consequences have been staggering. According to Census data from 2014, there are more young black high school dropouts in prison than have jobs.” (Washington Post, Feb. 26)

What are the implications of an exponentially expanding system of incarceration where since 1980 the U.S. prison population has risen by 500 percent? Within the federal system alone, the 1980 to 2013 increase was 790 percent.

African Americans and Latinos/as are profiled, arrested, prosecuted, convicted and sentenced in disproportionately higher numbers than whites. This stems from the legacy of national oppression, institutional racism and economic exploitation.

Law enforcement’s brutality and terrorism, imprisonment and judicial supervision serve the capitalist ruling class’ interests. Demonization and criminalization of the nationally oppressed provide a rationale for their disparate treatment by the legal system.

Taking at least 2.2 million people out of society profoundly affects the rates of poverty and labor exploitation and further marginalizes large segments of the working class and poor by the U.S. ruling class.

Additionally, many prisoners work inside the prisons at slave wages, which drives down wages of those outside the system. If these men and women were not incarcerated, the capitalist system’s inability to provide adequate employment and housing for African Americans

and other imprisoned population groups would be revealed.

Moreover, the underdevelopment of the African-American community is impacted by the absence of a large segment of its population and the fact that former prisoners face tremendous obstacles to their reintegration into community and family life.

Guo’s article notes that “mass incarceration’s ill effects are concentrated in places already in distress. In some inner-city neighborhoods, up to one-fifth of the young black men are behind bars. ... [I]n their absence, their communities start to fracture. So when they get out ... there are no jobs and no support networks.”

The inherent racial inequality in U.S. society is seen in the unemployment rate of African Americans, which is twice that of white workers. Guo states, “The truth [about unemployment], after accounting for incarceration, is even worse.” The jobs report should include “an extra chart to recognize the 1.6 million prisoners [in state and federal prisons] in America,” suggests Guo. “They don’t show up anywhere in the government’s measurements of economic activity, but their absence is dearly felt.”

Racist use of ‘law and order’ issues

These topics will continue to be a focus of the debate interjected from outside the Republican and Democratic campaigns’ official discourse. The capitalist class has much at stake here: It needs to socially

contain and economically exploit large segments of the nationally oppressed, most of whom are members of the working class.

During many presidential election campaigns, “law and order” issues have been politicized in a racist way. The Republican and Democratic ruling-class parties have preyed on the fear of street crime and public corruption as political tools to win elective office. This tactic extends back to the post-Civil War Reconstruction era when former planters sought to justify denying civil rights to the former enslaved population.

Yet the ruling class’s crimes are not projected as a principal threat to the broader society. How many bankers have been imprisoned for their theft of trillions of dollars of wealth created by the U.S. and global workforce?

Wall Street and the Pentagon try to rationalize their massive crimes by claiming they are protecting people from “terrorism.” Imperialist wars of regime change and genocide have killed and displaced more than 60 million people in the last quarter-century. Yet they are not classified as egregious acts warranting tougher laws and stiffer prison sentences.

The instability of global capitalism is expressed in further militarization and privatization in both industrialized and developing states. Only a complete break with the financial institutions’ and transnational corporations’ dictates will provide the billions of impoverished people worldwide with an opportunity to live in peace and genuine security. □

Palestinian stu

By **Joe Catron**
New York

The Filipino organization Bayan USA organized a reception in New York’s Solidarity Center on April 10 to welcome three Palestinian students from the occupied West Bank.

Local members of Bayan’s International League of People’s Struggle affiliates: Al-Awda New York; The Palestine Right to Return Coalition; the International Action Center; the Palestinian Youth Movement and Samidoun: Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network; as well as activists with New York City Students for Justice in Palestine joined the gathering. The reception coincided with a meeting of the ILPS’ International Coordinating Committee in Utrecht, the Netherlands.

The three students, from An-Najah National and Birzeit universities, are part of a larger group addressing campuses and communities across the United States on the impact of colonialism on education in Palestine during the 2016 Right to Education (R2E) tour.

The three had previously spoken at the An-Noor Social Center in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, on April 8, at a community event organized by NYC Students for Justice in Palestine in the heavily Palestinian neighborhood and planned to address a student group at Hunter College on April 11.

The tour, the second of its kind, continues a tradition of building ties between movements that began in November 2014 in Ferguson, Mo., the site of a massive Black uprising after the killing of Michael Brown by a local police officer.

“The R2E organizers are putting a spotlight on two locations [where] the tour will be arriving this year: the University of Hawaii and the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota,” Osama Mor, Amira Sakalla



Protesters expose Clintons’ racism

Continued from page 1

harsh sentence for even a nonviolent offense.

Furthermore, due to this bill, billions of dollars were used to fund prisons — money that could have been used to fund schools, hospitals, etc. — while at the same time this very bill disallowed Pell Grants for people incarcerated in federal and state prisons. These prisoners were no longer allowed a grant for “higher” education, thanks to this bill.

Many minorities received harsh sentences for nonviolent offenses and, once incarcerated, were no longer able to use the Pell Grant to receive additional education. For these reasons, and others, the 1994 crime bill, along with the conditions of our communities that were created by the state — an offspring of capitalism and white supremacy — has contributed to the destruction of our communities.

Erica Mines: We also wanted to let Bill Clinton know that just because his wife is running for president, we as Black folks have not forgotten what his presidential term was and how it affected us, and how Hillary also supported the crime bill through her racist statements calling Black youth “superpredators.” We haven’t forgotten about the destruction they caused.

WW: What did you think of Clinton’s response to you?

EM: He has this deeply embedded hatred, and I’m just kind of glad we were there to expose that. It’s totally not what

we intended to do, but it’s there and it serves a purpose, especially when you talk about capitalism or imperialism and war.

RF: Clinton failed to take ownership of his role in the mass incarceration of African people in the United States. Instead, Clinton blamed African people for the crime bill by insisting that it was us who had cried out to him that we wanted him — and other politicians — to do something about crime in our communities. Clinton then went on to add that Erica and myself, and perhaps all who protest on behalf of Black liberation, are defending drug dealers and murderers.

EM: I think it was good what he said. Now maybe Black folks across the country can see that voting Democrat isn’t the best way of working for the interests of the Black community.

WW: How did the crowd respond to you?

RF: Most in the crowd, at least those close to me, disagreed with the message that Erica and I presented. We raised our signs — I’m sure you’ve seen them by now — and the crowd attempted to block our signs with their Hillary signs. One person, an elder of African descent, literally called me a demon as I was having a peaceful conversation with a Clinton supporter after Bill Clinton left the stage.

Even before that, a member of security asked us to put our signs down. At the time, Erica and I were merely standing there, our signs raised, completely silent. This member of security claimed we were causing a disruption of sorts and thus had

to put our signs down. Erica asked, “Are you telling people with Hillary signs to put their signs down?” To this, the security member had no response.

WW: What would you say to the people who believe we need to support Clinton in order to beat Trump?

EM: People forget that she was partially responsible for the murder of Moammar Gadhafi just as he was on the doorstep of creating a centralized African currency. And she was never out there supporting the mothers of police brutality victims; she was supporting the crime bill that was destroying Black communities.

If people want someone like that in the office of the president, then I think it speaks a lot about what people in this country think of Black people.

RF: If we take a look at Hillary’s record, at her comments, at the things that she has endorsed — the invasion of Iraq for instance — it’s rather easy to see that Hillary Clinton endorses U.S. imperialism, oppression of minorities and crimes against humanity in general. Clinton may be of a different brand of white supremacy, but it is still white supremacy just the same.

And for that reason, Erica, myself and the Philadelphia Coalition for REAL Justice will always actively oppose Hillary Clinton. We are doing this to ensure a better future for African people and for everyone suffering from the oppression pushed upon us by capitalists and those who support white supremacy. Black liberation! □

Protesters demand justice for India Cummings

An angry crowd of protesters occupied the steps of the Erie County Holding Center in Buffalo, N.Y. on April 4, once again demanding justice for India Cummings, a young Black woman who died at the hands of guards at the center. The crowd demanded the ouster of Sheriff Tim Howard after this most recent death under suspicious circumstances at the jail.

Caravans of activists from Rochester, N.Y., Cummings’ hometown, participated in solidarity with the families of those who have been murdered by police.

Protesters occupied a number of locations in downtown Buffalo, marching and blocking traffic on multiple streets and unfurling a banner that demanded “Not One More!” between the flagpoles of the Erie County building. The protest ended with the chant derived from an Assata Shakur poem: “We have a duty to fight for our freedom!”

The march was one of an ever-growing series of protests. The next one will be at the Holding Center on May 2.

— Tom Answeeney



Lamont Walls dies in Iowa jail

By Mike Kuhlenbeck
Des Moines, Iowa

Thirty-eight-year-old Lamont Walls died at Broadlawn’s Hospital in Des Moines after being found unconscious in his cell at Polk County Jail on March 25.

Walls was a student at the American College of Hairstyling when he was arrested by two plainclothes police officers on March 23 during what police called a “narcotics investigation.” One witness, Temmera Donnelly, said the officers failed to identify themselves. (kcci.com, March 29)



Officers said Walls tried to run away and consumed what “looked like” a bag of narcotics. He was taken to a nearby hospital and was released to Polk County Jail after a medical evaluation. He was arrested for a “probation violation” and “interference with official acts.” (kcci.com)

Two days later, at around 5:30 p.m., Walls was found to be unresponsive by the jail’s staff. He was then transported to Broadlawn’s Hospital, where he died in

police custody.

Family members and community groups like Iowa Citizens for Justice are suspicious about the circumstances surrounding Walls’ arrest and untimely death.

Before being taken to jail, Walls was conveyed by medics to the Methodist Medical Center for evaluation. Later, it was reported that an autopsy found nine small bags of heroin in Walls’ stomach.

Community activists are demanding that hospital officials explain why Walls got released from their care if he had swallowed drugs. “Laws should be changed or policies should be changed if someone was seen by an officer swallowing drugs, it should be mandatory because that probably could have prevented him from dying,” Walls’ family friend Calvetta Wil-

liams said. (whotv.com, April 3)

Black Lives Matter activist Kaija Carter, who helped organize a vigil with Walls’ family, said in a public statement that Walls “was brutalized by Des Moines police.”

The family is calling on authorities to release medical records, arrest reports, jail surveillance video and other evidence to corroborate the official story. They also support the formation of an “independent commission for citizens to report cases of police brutality.”

On March 27, a candlelight vigil was held outside the Polk County Jail to honor Walls’ memory.

“We demand answers for our brother,” Carter said. □

Students on U.S. speaking tour



and Kristian Davis Bailey, National SJP activists and U.S.-based coordinators of the tour, wrote on March 29. “Both of these locations [reflect] the long history of U.S. settler-colonization, and their inclusion in the tour aims to accentuate the continuing struggle of both the Kanaka Maoli [Indigenous Hawaiian] and Oglala Sioux Indigenous peoples.” (mondoweiss.net)

‘Our lives are political’

At the Solidarity Center, tour participants discussed the impact of Zionist settler colonialism on Palestinian education. Zionist obstacles include checkpoints, the “Apartheid Wall,” and restrictions on travel and residency by both Palestinians and foreign university staff, as well as targeting of students for political imprisonment, with “administrative detention” without charge or trial.

“Political activity isn’t a choice in Palestine,” one said. “Our lives are political.”

The students also spoke of various forms of Palestinian resistance and of the need for U.S.-based supporters to build the growing Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement and fight Washington’s massive aid to Israel, currently valued at over \$3.1 billion a year.

Bayan leaders discussed U.S. aid to the Philippines and the country’s legacy of

resistance to both Spanish and U.S. colonialism. They also brought up similarities between the Palestinian and Filipino struggles. A video was shown of Leila Khaled, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine leader and Palestinian resistance icon, addressing the ILPS’ Fifth International Assembly in Manila last November.

Following the event, the students participated in a similar meeting hosted by ICE-Free NYC in the nearby office of Families for Freedom.

Catron is a member of Al-Awda New York: The Palestine Right to Return Coalition and an organizer with Samidoun: Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network.

Philadelphia

High school walkout calls for basic needs

High school students left their classrooms and marched from the Philadelphia School District offices to City Hall in a “Philly School Walkout and Protest” on April 6. They demanded justice-based educational necessities like school counselors, school nurses, nutritious food and enough teachers. Student Marlon Thomas told the crowd the public school

system “punishes its students because they’re not being taught right; they aren’t being funded right; they aren’t being fed right, led right, talked to right. ... There is something wrong with the people in charge of the Philadelphia education system. ... Broke schools don’t work!”

— Report and photo by Joe Piette



‘Philly School Walkout and Protest’ on April 6.

Obama and the Cuban Economy

Part 1: Understanding what wasn't said

The following is the first part of an article published in CubaDebate on April 7 by Agustín Lage Dávila, who has been director of the Center of Molecular Immunology in Cuba since 1991 and a member of the Cuban National Assembly of the Popular Power (Parliament) since 1993. It is available in full at tinyurl.com/hxcvj3.

I had the chance to participate in various meetings with the delegation that accompanied President Barack Obama [to Cuba] and to hear him speak three times; and now I feel a need to share my interpretation of what he said, and also what he didn't say — since in politics what is left out is often as important as what is said.

There are two complementary angles from which to interpret both this visit and the entire process of attempting to normalize relations: what they mean for assessing the past, and what they mean as we move towards the future.

Looking to the past, it is clear that the recently initiated process of normalizing relations between Cuba and the United States must be interpreted as a victory, writ large, of the revolutionary and socialist people of Cuba, of their convictions, their capacity for resistance and sacrifice, their culture, their ethical commitment to social justice; and as a victory for Latin American solidarity with Cuba.

There are some things so obvious to us Cubans that sometimes we forget to underscore them.

- This normalization process was started during the lifetimes of the historic leadership of the Revolution, and has

been conducted by leaders of that same generation.

- It implied recognition for the institutional legitimacy of Cuba's revolution, recognition denied to our Liberating Army in 1898, and also to the Rebel Army in 1959 (although, yes, accorded to the dictatorships of Gerardo Machado and Fulgencio Batista).

- It included explicit recognition of the Revolution's accomplishments, at least in education and health (the two that were mentioned).

- It included explicit recognition of Cuban assistance offered in solidarity to other peoples of the world, and its contribution to such noble causes as global health and the elimination of apartheid in Africa.

- It included explicit acceptance of the fact that decisions about changes and socioeconomic models in Cuba belong exclusively to Cubans, that we have (and have earned) the right to organize our society differently from the way others do.

- It implied a declaration to abandon the military and subversive option, as well as the intent to abandon coercion, as instruments of U.S. policy towards Cuba.

- It expressly acknowledged the failure of policies hostile to Cuba implemented by preceding administrations, which implies (although not declared as such) recognition for the conscious resistance offered by the Cuban people, since hostile policies only fail in the face of tenacious resistance.

- It recognized the suffering the blockade has caused the Cuban people.

- This process did not emerge from concessions by Cuba of a single one of our principles; or from backing off on demands to end the blockade and return the illegally occupied territory in Guantánamo.

- It included public acknowledgment that the U.S. was isolated in Latin America and the world because of its policy towards Cuba.

'A victory for Cuba'

I don't believe that any reasonable, informed person in today's world could interpret this normalization process as anything but a victory for Cuba in its historic differences with the U.S.

Looking to the past, this is the only possible interpretation.

Now then, looking to the future, things are more complicated, and there are at least two possible and extreme interpretations, as well as their intermediate variations:

- The hypothesis of perverse conspiracy
- The hypothesis of divergent conceptions about human society

Both are being debated on Cuban street corners. Readers should be aware at this point that I don't plan to argue for one or the other of these two hypotheses, or for any combination of the two. Future developments will put them to the test, and everyone will be able to draw their own conclusions from this "passage into the unknown."

Those who defend the hypothesis of perverse conspiracy see President Obama's words as false promises or subtle deception, at the service of a plan

conceived for us to open our doors to U.S. capital and the influence of its mass media; allow a privileged economic sector to expand in Cuba, one that with time would be transformed into the social base for the restoration of capitalism and renunciation of national sovereignty. That would be the first step towards returning Cuba to a country of rich and poor, dictators and gangsters — such as we had in the 1950s.

Cubans who think this way have the right to do so: many past deeds in our common history justify such enormous mistrust. These are well known and I don't need to list them here.

Many people remember the famous phrase attributed to [U.S.] President Franklin D. Roosevelt, referring to Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza: "Somoza may be a son of a bitch, but he's our son of a bitch."

Cuban state means 'ownership by the whole people'

Of course, neither President Obama, nor today's generations of North Americans of good will (and there are many) are to blame, as individuals, for the first stages of this historical journey. But also, undeniably, the history is there, and it conditions what they can do and the way we interpret what they do. History's processes are much longer than a single human lifetime, and events occurring many decades ago influence our options now, because they influence collective attitudes that exist objectively and relatively independent of leaders' ideas and intentions.

Even distancing President Obama from the aggressive and immoral policies of previous administrations — those that organized invasions, protected terrorists, fomented assassinations of Cuban leaders and implemented intentions to starve the Cuban people into submission — even establishing this distinction, it can't be forgotten that Obama alone is not the policy making class in the U.S.

In all honesty, I should recognize that the impression given by President Obama here wasn't as conveyor of a perverse conspiracy, but rather as an intelligent, educated man, who believes in what he says. What happens then is that the things he believes in (with every right) are different from those we believe in (also with every right).

This is the second hypothesis then, the one concerning different conceptions of human society, differences that were quite evident in all that was said and also what was left unsaid, throughout the visit by President Obama and his delegation.

They made it very clear that the main direction U.S. relations with Cuba will take will be economic, and within the economic arena, the main strategy will be to engage with and support the non-state sector.

That was very clear, in the speeches and symbolic messages, taking distance from the socialist state-sector economy, as if "state" property were the property of some strange entity, not ownership by the whole people, as it is in reality.

We agree that a nonstate sector should exist in the Cuban economy. In fact, expanded space for self-employment and cooperatives is part and parcel of implementing the guidelines that emerged from the 6th [Communist] Party Congress. But we disagree on the role that this nonstate sector should have in our economy.

Part 2 will discuss the disagreements regarding the nonstate sector.

Demand end to U.S. blockade of Cuba

By WW Staff

Grassroots advocates for ending the economic, commercial and financial blockade of Cuba — which still chokes off trade with the socialist island despite advances in the diplomatic sphere — will walk the House and Senate hallways on April 19 to 21.

The week's activities will wrap up with a Community Forum on Friday, April 22, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law, in the 5th floor Moot Court room. "Through Cuban Eyes" will feature presentations by and a question-and-answer session with a spectrum of Cuban experts. The keynote speaker is Cuban



Ambassador José Ramón Cabañas.

Invited guests from Cuba include a physician and nurse whose international service included fighting the Ebola outbreak in Liberia, in West Africa, and who are experts in Cuba's public health achievements; Luisa Campos, the director of the Havana Literacy Museum and well-versed in Cuba's Yo Sí Puedo method, known for its global literacy success; and Cuban journalism student Jorgito Jerez. Born with cerebral palsy in 1993, Jerez's life story is captured in the docu-

mentary "Power of the Weak" by German videographer Tobias Kriele. Both Jerez and Kriele will premiere the video in New York City from April 14 through 18 before going to Washington, where screenings are organized for April 20 at American University and on April 21 at the University of the District of Columbia.

The Days of Action is a collaboration by the International Committee for Peace, Justice and Dignity; IFCO/Pastors for Peace; the Venceremos Brigade; the Institute for Policy Studies; the National Network on Cuba; and others.

For more information, the events schedule and to reserve your seat for the Friday evening forum, go to theinternationalcommittee.org. □

Veterans with disabilities denied benefits

By Michael Kramer

"The military has long used its discharge system as a mighty club over the heads of its troops. When troops, individually or collectively, refuse to go along with whatever the latest idiocy the military comes up with, there is always some officer around to threaten a bad discharge." The Veteran, April/May 1982 (a publication of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, VVAW)

Decades after the VVAW wrote those words, the Pentagon's policy has not changed. It has used this tool of military discipline against over 600,000 post-Sept. 11, 2001, veterans, according to a study by the veterans service organization Swords to Plowshares. (swords-to-plowshares.org)

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, also known as the G.I. Bill, offers funds to veterans for college education, unemployment insurance and housing. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, formerly called the Veterans Administration, is funded to provide medical, social and rehabilitative services. Veterans with discharges other than honorable are regularly denied these benefits and services. These so-called "bad paper" discharges include "General," "Other Than Honorable Conditions," "Bad Conduct" and "Dishonorable."

In many cases the "bad paper" discharge results from issues connected to in-service injuries and trauma such as post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, substance abuse and military sexual trauma.

The Marine Corps, in particular, tar-

gets young women and men recruits with an aura of everlasting comradeship under the slogan of "Semper Fidelis" (always faithful). The reality for Marine combat veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan is that those with PTSD are 11 times more likely to receive a "bad paper" discharge than those without PTSD, and "1 in 10 are ineligible for benefits." Veterans "are being refused benefits at the highest rate since the system was created at the end of World War II." (New York Times, March 30)

Many of these veterans end up in the streets, shelters or stressful family arrangements. They are denied any help for their medical conditions. There is an appeal process — but it can take years to get treatment for emergency medical conditions, such as those where a suicide hotline is regularly called. □

A year of U.S.-coordinated war in Yemen

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

In March last year a coalition of Gulf states led by Saudi Arabia and supported by Washington began a daily bombing campaign and later ground operation in Yemen.

Over the last year, this war has accelerated, bringing in military forces from Egypt and Sudan in what is seen as a proxy war against the Islamic Republic of Iran and its growing influence throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

The aim was to halt and drive back the Ansarullah Movement (Houthis) in their seizure of territory in central and southern regions of the country. The Ansarullah are a Shiite-based movement that has formed a tactical alliance with elements of the Yemeni military, which remains loyal to former leader Ali Abdullah Saleh.

Despite several attempts to broker a ceasefire, the bombing of Yemen by the Saudi-led Gulf Cooperation Council continues, utilizing U.S.-manufactured warplanes, offensive weapons and intelligence sharing. The administration of President Barack Obama has provided diplomatic cover for the war against Yemen, a continuation of aerial bombardments and drone attacks that have taken place for several years.

On April 4, attacks by warplanes killed at least one person and injured many others in Yemen as the Gulf monarchies continued their bombing of residential areas across the country. Yemeni news agencies also reported that the Saudi-GCC bombing raids struck a camp for internally displaced people located in the northwestern Hajjah Province, leaving at least six children and one woman injured. These bombing operations hit the Lamrour district of al-Shahel, a city in Hajjah.

According to Yemen’s al-Masirah TV, the Saudi-GCC coalition also carried out

bombing raids in Sa’ada, in the north of the country, destroying homes and killing one person. Additional reports said air strikes bombed a telecommunications installation in Saqayn as well as a post office in Haydan. The reports noted that a number of houses were struck in the operation. The two cities are located in the Sa’ada Province, an Ansarullah stronghold.

An April 4 Press TV article stated, “The Saudi attacks on Monday [April 4] came as Ansarullah fighters and allied army units continued to launch reprisal attacks on Saudi and pro-Saudi military positions inside and outside Yemen. Yemenis managed to kill scores of Saudi forces in one such attack on troops in Rabuah region, southern Saudi Arabia. The allied forces also launched missile attacks on Saudi-led forces in al-Naser military base, located between Yemen’s Jawf and Ma’rib provinces.”

Meanwhile, resistance efforts on the part of the Ansarullah and its allies are complicating the war for the U.S.-backed Saudi-GCC coalition. In recent days Yemeni resistance fighters have taken 42 Saudi troops into custody in Bayda and Jawf provinces. Several other Saudi troops were killed in Ma’rib.

The Yemeni armed forces, which are supported by Popular Committees loyal to the Houthi Ansarullah Movement, captured 31 Saudi troops in the Rada district in the southern province of Bayda and detained 11 others in the al-Matma district in the northwestern province of Jawf.

News reports claimed that the detained soldiers were being deployed to the west-central Ma’rib province to enhance the Saudi-GCC forces there when Yemeni forces captured them. The Yemeni forces launched a separate operation against Saudi troops using Katyusha rockets in Ma’rib city, resulting in six deaths and 17 wounded. (sabanews.net, April 3)

Attacks were carried out by Saudi-GCC warplanes in Taiz, the third-largest city in the country. Saba News agency reported April 4, “Saudi fighter jets waged on Monday [April 4] a series of air raids on many areas in Taiz province, a local official said. The war jets targeted al-Shuqirah market in the central district of al-Wazeyah, leaving damage to houses and private properties, the official added.”

This same report emphasizes, “The warplanes targeted al-Siteen Street, in the north of Taiz, with several raids leaving serious damage to a number of houses and roads in the area. The Saudi aggression also waged many sorties on Warazan and Khadeer areas in the south of Taiz city, the official added.”

Casualties escalate

It has been estimated by various news and humanitarian sources that up to 10,000 people have died in the intensified fighting in Yemen in the last year. Meanwhile, 80 percent of the population is in dire need of assistance.

A United Nations Children Education Fund report published on March 29, “Children on the Brink,” said that millions of people are being negatively impacted by the war. Children and women have been affected severely through the aerial strikes, ground operations and the attacks on civilian areas, including neighborhoods, internally displaced person camps, schools and medical facilities.

Statistics cited by UNICEF indicate that 63 health care facilities have been bombed and severely damaged, while most hospitals and clinics report extreme shortages in equipment, supplies and personnel. Repeated bombing operations have resulted in sporadic access to electricity.

A news release announcing the report reads: “UNICEF verified more than 1,560 incidents of grave violations against chil-

dren in Yemen. As a result, over 900 children were killed and more than 1,300 were injured in the past year alone. ... With more than 50 verified attacks on schools, children were also killed while at school or on their way to or from school. These numbers represent the tip of the iceberg as they only indicate the cases that UNICEF was able to verify.”

Moreover, the UNICEF report stresses: “The disruption of the inflow of food and fuel as a result of the violence and restrictions on imports has paralyzed the delivery of basic services across Yemen. Beyond the direct impact of the war, UNICEF estimates that nearly 10,000 additional deaths may have occurred among children under five years old in the past year due to preventable diseases as a result of the decline in critical health services including immunization and the treatment of diarrhea and pneumonia. This figure is in addition to the nearly 40,000 children who die every year in Yemen before their fifth birthday.”

With the U.S. military and security apparatuses coordinating the war by providing fighter jets, ordinances, refueling technology, intelligence sharing and diplomatic cover for the Saudi Arabia-GCC coalition and its allied militias, Washington is culpable in the current strife. The impact of the military campaign aimed at the Ansarullah over the last year is compounded by periodic drone attacks ostensibly targeting al-Qaida and its partners inside the country.

Resistance by the Ansarullah and other allied forces is formidable, with ongoing attacks in Yemen and the spread of the war into eastern Saudi Arabia.

Another ceasefire has been announced for April. But if the recent past is any indication the airstrikes and targeting of civilians will only intensify and therefore worsen the conditions for people living in Yemen. □

What is the U.S. up to in Moldova?

By **Greg Butterfield**

Since the beginning of this year, U.S. imperialism has significantly stepped up its intervention in Moldova, a former Soviet republic of 3 million people.

Moldova has been engulfed by waves of mass protests against corruption, price hikes and election fraud for more than a year. But unlike the earlier protests in neighboring Ukraine, dominated by ultraright and pro-Western groups, Moldova’s protesters have been moving steadily to the left. They have been led by parties opposed to the “European path” of neoliberalism and NATO integration that has devastated the country’s economy. They call for restoring good relations with the country’s traditional trading partners in Russia and other former Soviet republics.

Polls taken in late January and early February showed that new parliamentary elections — a key demand of the opposition — would result in an overwhelming victory for opponents of pro-Western reforms.

This set off alarm bells in Washington. Despite Moldova’s modest size, a progressive turnaround in a country with strong working-class traditions and commitment to independence from the West could effect a major change in the region’s political situation, emboldening opponents of U.S. domination and its

drive toward war against Russia.

Mass opposition in Chisinau

U.S. State Department official Victoria Nuland — infamous for her role in the far-right coup in Ukraine two years ago — had met with Romanian President Klaus Johannis in Bucharest on Jan. 18 to bestow Washington’s blessings on schemes to set up a new Moldovan government, to be headed by Pavel Filip, a protégé of the Moldovan billionaire Vlad Plahotniuc.

“The most important thing,” Nuland declared, “is that there is a strong pro-European government.” (newsmaker.md, Jan. 19)

Nuland made her proclamation in the face of mass protests sweeping Chisinau. Protesters declared the plan for a new government illegitimate.

Two days later, Pavel Filip was hurriedly installed as prime minister and set about forming his new cabinet over the objections of the parliamentary opposition and in violation of legal procedure.

The new government was installed in the dead of night, while thousands of protesters outside attempting to enter the parliament were pushed back by riot police brought in from around the country.

U.S. ambassador to Moldova, James Pettit, met in secret with the new government. He reportedly cautioned against using force on the protesters or arresting opposition leaders, instead urging Filip

and his cabinet to wait them out. But he added that, if the situation continued to escalate, the U.S. would not condemn repressive measures. (Omega News Agency, Jan. 30)

In the aftermath of these events, opposition groups, including the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova; the left-leaning, pro-Russian “Our Party,” headed by Balti Mayor Renato Usatii; and the pro-European Civic Platform “Dignity and Truth” met on Jan. 29 to draw up a united list of demands — first and foremost, for early parliamentary elections. (Omega, Feb. 4)

They also called for the release of the Petrenko Group political prisoners — seven communist activists from the Red Bloc party jailed since a protest in the capital last Sept. 6.

U.S. plan: Divide and conquer

It wasn’t long before Chisinau was abuzz with reports that Washington was backing a Romanian plan called “Unirea-2018,” which called for the end of Moldova as an independent state and its absorption by Romania. This is the latest phase in a longstanding project of the far-right known as “Unionism.”

Respected journalist and political commentator Dmitry Chubashenko summarized: “All of the Romanian political elite are obsessed with the idea of Moldova’s accession to Romania. In this respect

there is a full multiparty consensus. No one denies that there is a plan of action under the code name ‘Unirea-2018,’ in which 2018 represents the 100th anniversary of the ‘grand unification’ [Romanian occupation] in 1918. ...

“Currently, the Americans are actively promoting plans for Romania’s absorption of Moldova.” (pan.md, March 16)

The plan reportedly depends on a parliamentary decision rather than a popular vote, and would result in Moldova’s immediate integration into NATO and the EU.

With U.S. support, Moldovan Prime Minister Filip and the oligarch Plahotniuc have been playing both sides in order to undermine the opposition and exacerbate divisions in society.

Since Filip’s appointment, pro-Unionist forces have been widely promoted. He personally intervened to allow Romanian ultrarightist Dzeordzhe Simion to enter Moldova and promote the Unionist case. (grenada.md, Feb. 10)

Meanwhile, media owned by Plahotniuc have given a great deal of airtime to pro-Romanian propaganda.

Yet, on March 27, prominent members of Plahotniuc’s Democratic Party joined some representatives of the opposition at a march to oppose a Unionist demonstration in Chisinau.

Romania occupied Moldova from 1918 to 1944. During World War II, the Roma-

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‘Solidarity with anti-racist occupation at Duke University’

April 6 —The Workers World Party 2016 Moorehead-Lilly presidential campaign sends our solidarity to the occupation of the administration building currently underway at Duke University in Durham, N.C. At the time of this writing, the occupation by nine students to protest racist attacks on Black and Brown university workers and to support workers’ organizing on campus for justice — including higher wages of at least \$15/hour — is entering its sixth day, with no signs of backing down.

On April 1, several hundred workers and students held a demonstration on campus that began the occupation. Since then, hundreds have rallied around the clock outside the administration building. An encampment of dozens of tents has been set up on the lawn to hold rallies, teach-ins, meetings and other activities to build and deepen the base of support for the occupation and to safeguard from any attempts by university administrators and police to break it up.

The protest stemmed from recent revelations that Tallman Trask — a white

Duke University Executive Vice President — hit Shelvia Underwood, an African-American who works as a university parking attendant, with his car. Before fleeing the scene, Trask hurled a racial epithet at Underwood, who suffered physical injuries requiring medical attention. Trask and other university administrators conspired to cover up this incident, along with numerous other reports by Black and Brown parking attendants and other campus workers about rampant racism. Two of the demands of the occupation are reparations for Underwood and a full and transparent investigation into the racism in campus departments.

Already, the occupation has scored two major victories based on the demands put forward: a public apology by Trask and unconditional amnesty for the nine occupiers.

The occupation at Duke University comes amidst a wave of militant protests against racism on campuses across the U.S., which is part of the broader Black Lives Matter movement. From massive walkouts in response to racist police murders; to the strikes and protests

against racism on campus at the University of Missouri that led to the resignation of the chancellor there; and much more, protests at universities against racism, white supremacy and bigotry have been spreading from coast to coast. This must continue, along with showing our solidarity with the struggle against the campus-wide epidemic of sexual violence against women and anti-lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-queer bigotry.

These demonstrations and building occupations happening today carry on the long legacy of the Black Freedom struggle on campuses. During the height of the Black Liberation movement, many universities were rocked by protests and occupations led by Black students to win a number of important anti-racist victories — including an occupation in 1969 of the very building that Duke students have taken over now.

Racism and national oppression are essential for the capitalist system in order to amass vast wealth for the small class of rulers by exploiting the labor of the masses of society, the workers. We

fight for revolutionary socialism — a system where the workers and the oppressed run society and put the resources we create to meet our own needs.

To the occupiers and the many hundreds engaged in this struggle: Your courage, militancy and steadfast commitment to carry the struggle through to victory — and the principled unity and solidarity that has been built between workers and students — is setting an example for the broader movement. We salute you!

We salute the courageous workers who spoke out against racism in defiance of those who want to silence them. Some of the blue-collar workers at Duke are unionized, and the non-tenure-track faculty recently won a union. We stand with the workers until they are all unionized across campus and until justice is won by those fired under racist conditions.

The many peoples’ struggles for justice around the U.S. are with you and are watching closely how these events unfold. We are ready to mobilize in your support and defense, as needed. Carry the struggle forward to victory! □

Lowndes County, Ala.: Roots of revolution Part 2

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

Part 1 of “Lowndes County: ‘The original Black Panther Party’” appeared in the April 7 issue of Workers World.

A revolutionary movement was born in 1966 in the tiny Alabama community of White Hall, Lowndes County — population 831. Local activists and members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee formed the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, an independent Black political party. The LCFO was known locally as “the Black Panther Party” for its ballot symbol. Later, some of the SNCC members founded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, the Black nationalist and socialist organization anchored in California, with a name, symbol and inspiration drawn from Alabama roots and resistance.

Fightback in Lowndes County by oppressed peoples has a long history. From 1800 through the 1830s, the Creek Nation waged a fierce battle to stop the sei-

zure of their land by white colonizers. As slavery and white supremacy became the law of the land, resistance continued.

In 1861, in Lowndes and Montgomery counties, a hundred enslaved people of African descent, together with “poor whites of the country,” planned a rebellion to redistribute the “land, mules and money” of plantation owners. Twenty-five Black and four white insurrectionists were executed when their plot was discovered. (Herbert Aptheker, “American Negro Slave Revolts,” International Publishers, 1943)

In the 1930s, the Sharecroppers Union, organized primarily by the Communist Party USA, led 6,000 members in Lowndes, Macon, Montgomery and Dallas counties. In 1935, the SCU conducted a spring cotton choppers’ strike and a summer cotton pickers’ strike to end starvation wages of \$4 a month and stop workers from being evicted as mechanized farming took hold. Demands included equal pay for women and no dis-

crimination against Black people.

Repression in Lowndes County was brutal, with floggings, rapes and assassinations of union organizers and supporters. However, “armed strikers organized their own ‘posses’ and in one instance a group ‘met the vigilantes as they started to raid a striker’s shack. When the [boss’s] gang saw the opposition was formidable, they ran.” (Robin D.G. Kelley, “Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression,” University of North Carolina, 1990)

The long tradition of resistance continued into 1966. On the night SNCC called the first voter registration meeting in Lowndes County, a room full of Black farmers showed up — armed. When told that SNCC was “a nonviolent organization,” an older farmer replied, “You turn the other cheek, and you’ll get handed half of what you’re sitting on.” (Kelley)

Black women lead

Black women were at the heart of civil rights work in Lowndes County. Gardenia White of White Hall was the lead plaintiff in White v. Crook, a landmark case that strengthened the Civil Rights movement and was a cornerstone of the developing women’s liberation movement.

The case was filed to put Black people on the jury rolls and then expanded to challenge a law that kept all women from serving on Alabama juries. Jury selection became a movement focus after all-white juries acquitted white supremacists of murdering Viola Liuzzo and Jonathan



Lowndes County Freedom Organization, home of the “original Black Panther Party.” Alabama, 1966.

Daniels, white civil rights workers, in Lowndes County.

White and the other plaintiffs won in 1966. The historic White v. Crook suit was one of the first brought to end the systematic exclusion of Blacks from jury service. It also became the first U.S. case in which “a federal court relied on [equal protection in] the 14th Amendment to rule a state law unconstitutional because of sex discrimination.” (Dr. Susan Mallon Ross, “Dialogic Rhetoric,” tinyurl.com/zjjkzvzw)

The winning brief was co-authored by legendary Black civil rights lawyer Pauli Murray — who also co-founded the National Organization for Women.

Another landmark victory was won in 1968 on behalf of Black teachers being denied tenure and job benefits in Alabama. Teacher Dorothy Hinson of White Hall, who initiated the suit, belonged to the activist Jackson family and was the sister of farmer Matthew Jackson, who provided housing, support and arms to SNCC workers in Lowndes County. (tinyurl.com/z9z6ahf) □

What is U.S. up to in Moldova?

Continued from page 9

nian monarchy collaborated with the Nazis, carrying out many atrocities against the populace before the country’s liberation by the Soviet Red Army and local partisans in August 1944.

Petrenko: Unite against regime on April 24

On Feb. 22, after nearly six months in jail, the Petrenko Group prisoners were transferred to house arrest. However, they are still not being allowed to speak directly to the media or use social media sites.

Their trial on trumped-up charges of “organizing a riot” continues, with the activists facing years in prison if convicted.

While welcoming the transfer to house arrest, supporters of the political prisoners pointed out that this was yet another attempt to undermine the opposition, which had demanded their immediate re-

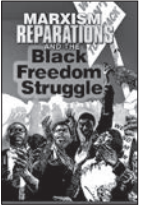
lease and dropping of the bogus charges.

Red Bloc leader Grigory Petrenko appealed for a renewal of united protests against the oligarch regime on April 24.

Urging people not to be diverted by the regime’s manipulation of the Romanian union issue and presidential elections, Petrenko declared:

“Demands for parliamentary elections, de-politicization of the security forces and courts, arrest of Plahotniuc and his cronies, bringing to justice all the accomplices in the theft of a billion [from the country’s banking system] — these are the main slogans around which the opposition must unite.

“I believe that the April 24 protests should be nationwide, regardless of what language we speak and what political views we share. We have a common problem in our country, the criminal Plahotniuc regime.” (grenada.md, April 3) □



MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

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

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Available at all major online booksellers.

Stop auto layoffs: A job is a right!

By Martha Grevatt
Detroit

Fiat Chrysler Automobiles announced April 6 it would indefinitely lay off 1,420 workers at two Detroit-area plants. The indefinite layoffs will begin July 5 when the Sterling Heights Assembly Plant eliminates one of two shifts.

The other 1,900 workers in the plant will be employed sporadically. Workers who build FCA's Chrysler 200 car have spent most of 2016 on "temporary" layoffs with a return-to-work date. However, the call-back dates are postponed or workers return for a week or two and then are laid off again.

The layoffs will also affect Sterling Stamping plant, the assembly plant's main supplier of doors, roofs, hoods and other stampings.

This is the auto industry's first mass indefinite layoff since the 2009 General Motors and Chrysler bankruptcies. Chrysler streamlined its operations then by closing six plants and several warehouses. The company exploited workers' fears of an uncertain future, scaring thousands of them into quitting or taking buyouts and retiring. When sales rebounded, Chrysler replaced these high-seniority workers with new hires who received substantially lower pay and benefits under the two-tier pay structure.

The two-tier payment system was introduced in the United Auto Workers 2007-11 contracts with the Detroit Three automakers and was then expanded as a condition of the bailout during the bankruptcy. Subsequent contracts have raised lower-tier workers' wages, with the latest contract allowing many of them to eventually make top pay. Yet with an eight-year wait to get the maximum wage, pay gaps still exist.

Based on seniority, lower-tier workers are the first ones laid off and the last to

be recalled. Michigan workers can only collect 20 weeks of state unemployment benefits.

In the 1950s the UAW negotiated Supplemental Unemployment Benefits. When combined with state unemployment checks, SUB allows workers to take home more than 70 percent of their weekly pay and makes up the difference when unemployment benefits stop.

However, second-tier workers with one or more years of service can only collect 13 to 26 weeks of SUB, while "temporary" workers and those employed for under a year do not get any SUB. "Traditional" workers with less than 10 years of service are also limited to 26 weeks.

Time to raise hell

The UAW should be raising hell about these layoffs and their resulting hardships. Instead, Norwood Jewell, UAW vice president assigned to FCA, stated, "While today's announcement of a shift reduction at Sterling Heights Assembly is unfortunate, it is not unexpected. FCA is not the only company experiencing a slow market for small cars." (uaw.org/issues/, April 6)

This is pure hogwash. The 2015 Chrysler 200 is not a small car but a midsize sedan. Sales in this segment industry-wide are only down 2.2 percent from a year ago. Auto journalists call the vehicle lackluster, but the 200 was hyped two years ago by Chrysler officials when it debuted at the Detroit auto show.

FCA CEO Sergio Marchionne has allowed its "flagship" 200 cars' sales to plummet as part of its plan to eliminate car production in UAW plants, only building in the U.S. large trucks and sport utility vehicles with the highest profit margin.

Marchionne claims that a "permanent change" has occurred in automotive buying patterns, but facts do not support his stance, as many variables influence this

market. The CEO is gambling with workers' livelihoods

Echoing the company line, Jewell stated, "On a bright note, there is a strong demand for larger-sized vehicles. The company has been planning to increase its capacity to build more trucks and SUVs. ... [T]his move will be a positive one for our members and the company."

This corporate strategy will not help workers when they run out of SUB and unemployment benefits, especially those who are the lower paid. Many of them are African-American youth from Detroit, whose jobless rate is astronomical.

FCA plans to increase the Sterling Heights plant's workforce when it begins building the Ram pickup, but that is 18 months from now. Now the Ram is built at Detroit's Warren Truck Assembly Plant. The retooling will cost the Detroit area 750 jobs, says FCA.

This over-reliance on the large-vehicle market is the very strategy that, compounded by a crisis of capitalist overproduction, nearly ruined Chrysler in the last auto recession. Inflated gasoline prices and a construction slump reduced sales in this segment.

Moreover, large vehicles have the highest carbon footprint. Marchionne's strategy, which the UAW leadership shamelessly endorses, displays a reckless disregard for the planet.

Fiat — now merged with Chrysler — was the beneficiary of the 2010 state-orchestrated bankruptcy, gaining a 35 percent stake in the company at no cost and then gaining full ownership on the cheap. Threatened with Chrysler's liquidation, the UAW made major concessions. Contract language limiting layoffs to 48 weeks over the life of the four-year contract and SUB for the entire layoff period were eliminated. Now the most exploited workers will pay the price.

Capitalists put profits before people

"Slow sales" are presented as the root cause of layoffs, as if market cycles are as natural as weather cycles — and workers must live with the consequences.

The corporate media claim that union wages and benefits are killing autoworkers' jobs. That is the gist of the April 10 Detroit Free Press editorial on Ford's announcement that it would invest \$1.6 billion in a new plant in Mexico employing 2,800 workers. Ford is moving production of its small car, the Focus, from Michigan to San

Luis Potosi. The newspaper blamed the UAW's "ballooning contract demands" and moaned, "Without the tiered wage structure, Ford doesn't have much of a choice where it manufactures small cars."

The contracts ratified last year were not expected to significantly increase labor costs. "This agreement provides a good foundation for Ford Motor Company, our employees and our communities," said John Fleming, Ford's vice president of global manufacturing and labor affairs. (New York Times, Nov. 20)

Punishing the workers for winning a bigger share of the wealth they produce is rampant. Nabisco/Mondalez has announced plans to shift production of Oreo cookies to Mexico from its unionized Chicago factory.

The real threat to workers' jobs, beyond corporations' heartless decisions, is the capitalist mode of production that puts profits before people. This system can't be "fixed" to prevent layoffs and plant closings. What can workers do?

Property right to a job

During the 1935-37 wave of sit-down strikes — which lasted from less than an hour to more than two months — a widespread belief arose that workers have a property right to their jobs. Even President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins and Michigan Gov. Frank Murphy echoed that worker sentiment.

In 1987, as GM closed a record number of plants, the Job Is a Right Campaign asserted that a job is a property right and demanded a moratorium on plant closings. This mass movement helped to strengthen job security language in UAW contracts.

Discussing the right to a job leads to this conclusion: If workers have a property right to their jobs, they have a right to prevent their property from being taken away. This was the key legal defense of the sit-downs, when GM management howled that seizing the plants violated the sacred right of their ownership. Autoworkers, however, have sweat equity in the plants and have the right to occupy them in their own interest.

FCA's layoffs and the auto industry's flagrant disregard of global warming prove that capitalists cannot be entrusted with our future. Workers must seize the means of production — not only to defend their jobs — but to ensure the planet's survival.

Grevatt is a 28-year Chrysler worker and UAW member.

Mass protests in France

Continued from page 1

9 p.m., the rain stopped and we stayed. We came back the next day, and as we keep coming back every night, it has scared the government because it's impossible to define."

"There's something here that I've never seen before in France — all these people converge here each night of their own accord to talk and debate ideas — from housing to the universal wages, refugees, any topic they like."

Occupy and the 'indignant ones'

Anyone who participated in the Occupy Wall Street actions starting in the fall of 2011 in the U.S. will recognize the scenes in France. The young people seize plazas in cities and towns and stay on their feet all night to protest and discuss. Demonstrators in France have even adopted the OWS term "1%" to refer to the bosses and bankers who rule the country.

These actions are also similar to the demonstrations of the "indignant ones" that began in Spain in May 2011. And now some of the "Nuit Debout" ("Up All Night") protests have spread from France across the border to Belgium and back to Spain. The youth don't want to give up their spaces for free and democratic discussion of policies that determine their future.

As in Spain and the U.S. in 2011, however, it looks like the French government is ordering the repressive force of the



Paris, April 9. PHOTO: HUMANITÉ

capitalist state to stop these discussions.

President Hollande, the head of the nominally "socialist" Socialist Party, is still pushing for the new anti-labor law. In the week before the latest protests, the government made a few concessions.

So far the reaction is "too little, too late." The formal organizations of the students are still calling for more demonstrations on April 28.

In Greece and Spain large sections of the population who used to back social democratic parties have broken with those that betrayed their working-class supporters by promoting austerity. In Britain too, Labor Party members broke with the neoliberal Tony Blair wing and elected a new leader from the party's far left.

The outcome of the clash depends not only on the determination of the youth, but also on the support and intervention of France's huge, multinational working class. □

El poder político afroamericano y las elecciones

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celamiento en masa, terrorismo policial y arraigado racismo institucional siguen siendo barreras estructurales para el progreso socioeconómico y el empoderamiento político.

El aparente cambio de perspectiva hacia la campaña Sanders ilustra el descontento entre numerosos grupos del Partido Demócrata, de los cuales las/os afroamericanos son una agrupación indispensable. La dependencia de Clinton en los funcionarios electos y las estructuras organizativas del partido, no ha sido suficiente para sostener una serie de victorias en el Sur y otras áreas durante la primera fase de la campaña.

Surgen preguntas en el electorado sobre el papel del proceso de "superdelegados", en el que fuerzas comprometidas, la mayor parte en representación de los jefes del partido, mantienen la capacidad

de anular las pérdidas electorales sufridas por Clinton en varios estados clave, incluyendo Michigan, Alaska, Hawái y Nueva Hampshire. Esto se convertirá en un debate crítico a la luz de varias encuestas que muestran a Sanders ejecutando una campaña mucho más fuerte contra el principal candidato republicano Donald Trump en las elecciones generales de noviembre.

Estos cambios en las opiniones políticas deben conducir a una mayor independencia política durante el proceso de primarias, elecciones nacionales y posteriormente. Finalmente, las/os afroamericanos, las/os oprimidos de otras nacionalidades y la clase trabajadora en general deben romper con el Partido Demócrata para establecer su propia organización que hable en su nombre y luche por un programa de liberación total y construcción de socialismo genuino. □

WORKERS WORLD
MUNDO OBRERO



El poder político afroamericano y las elecciones

Por Abayomi Azikiwe

El papel de las/os afroamericanos es fundamental durante los últimos dos meses de primarias y asambleas en aproximadamente 20 estados.

Los dos candidatos a la nominación demócrata, la ex secretaria de estado Hillary Clinton y el senador Bernie Sanders, han hecho llamados especiales para ganar a las/os electores afroamericanos.

Este proceso se remonta por lo menos a 1960, cuando un reemergente electorado negro apoyó al candidato demócrata John F. Kennedy, llevándolo a la Casa Blanca. Sin embargo, numerosos militantes de la época, como Malcolm X y Stokely Carmichael, criticaron al gobierno de Kennedy por su fracaso en la protección de las/os trabajadores de derechos civiles, así como por su incapacidad para propulsar legislación en el Congreso para proteger los derechos sociales y políticos a nivel nacional del oprimido pueblo afroamericano.

El 6 de agosto de 1965, la Ley de Derecho al Voto fue firmada y convertida en ley por el presidente Lyndon B. Johnson. Esta ley fue el producto de la creciente lucha de la población afroamericana a mediados de la década de 1960 para exigir la plena igualdad y el derecho a la auto determinación.

Restricciones del derecho al voto reanudadas por el Tribunal Supremo

Casi cinco décadas después, el 25 de junio del 2013, el Tribunal Supremo de EUA anuló las disposiciones de aplicación de la Ley de Derecho al Voto por una sentencia de 5-4 en el caso del Condado de Shelby [Alabama] versus Holder. Esta decisión evisceró la autoridad del Departamento de Justicia para supervisar e intervenir cuando están involucrados problemas relacionados con el acceso al voto y la representación legislativa. El recientemente fallecido juez del Tribunal Supremo Antonin Scalia observó en aquel momento, que ese proyecto de ley

en el período moderno representaba un tipo de “privilegios raciales” para las/os afroamericanos. Esta declaración se hizo en un momento en que la gran recesión había devastado a las/os afroamericanos en las áreas de ejecuciones hipotecarias, pérdida de empleos y disminución de ingresos y bienes de la familia.

Un artículo del New York Times dijo que el fallo “efectivamente anuló el corazón de la Ley de Derecho al Voto de 1965 por una votación de 5 a 4, liberando a nueve estados, sobre todo en el Sur, para cambiar sus leyes electorales sin previa aprobación del gobierno federal. ... En el núcleo del desacuerdo estuvo si las minorías raciales continuaban enfrentando obstáculos a la votación en los estados con una historia de discriminación”. (25 de junio de 2013)

En representación de la mayoría en la decisión, el conservador juez del Tribunal Supremo, John G. Roberts escribió: “Nuestro país ha cambiado. Si bien cualquier tipo de discriminación racial en el voto es demasiado, el Congreso debe garantizar que la legislación que pasa a remediar ese problema hable sobre las condiciones actuales”.

Leyes instituidas por varios estados para aumentar las barreras al voto fueron vindicadas por el fallo. En el mismo artículo del New York Times, las autoridades en Texas “anunciaron poco después de la decisión, que una ley de identificación de votantes que había sido bloqueada entraría inmediatamente en vigor, y que la redistribución de mapas distritales ya no necesitaría aprobación federal”.

Estas y otras medidas como la negación de acceso a las urnas para aquellas personas con antecedentes penales, descalifica aproximadamente a un 25 por ciento de las/os votantes afroamericanos en la Florida. En general, alrededor de 1,3 millones de personas en este estado del sur faltaban en las listas de votantes en el momento de las elecciones primarias del 15 de marzo.

Aumentan luchas populares contra ofensiva derechista

Nunca se iniciaron medidas concretas para abordar estas preocupaciones bajo la administración del presidente Barack Obama. Las elecciones del 2010, 2012 y 2014 vieron la transformación de los demócratas de ser una mayoría en el Congreso, a ser una minoría.

La ausencia de una alternativa política efectiva tanto dentro como fuera del Congreso, dio lugar a la profundización de un programa político de derecha que ha aumentado la capacidad de la clase capitalista para dominar en general a la clase trabajadora y oprimida. La represión estatal por los organismos policiales y de inteligencia refuerza el sistema de explotación con impunidad.

Casi todas las manifestaciones de masas y rebeliones desde 2012 han sido en respuesta a los homicidios de afroamericanas/os y latinas/os por policías y justicieros ilegales. Estas protestas y actos de destrucción de la propiedad han llevado a la militarización en todos los niveles de los cuerpos policiales, que han sido suministrados por el gobierno federal con armas automáticas, vehículos blindados, tanques, productos químicos, porras y dispositivos de sonido diseñados para reprimir y dispersar a la multitud.

Cambio de actitudes políticas en 2016

Nuevas encuestas indican que la campaña de Sanders ha ganado apoyo significativo en la comunidad afroamericana en el Medio Oeste y la Costa Oeste. Una encuesta reciente indicó que en un plazo de dos meses, Sanders lideraba a Clinton entre las/os votantes afroamericanos en Wisconsin antes de la primaria del 5 de abril.

Un artículo del Huffington Post el 31 de marzo señala que “el 27 de febrero, Hillary Clinton lideraba Bernie Sanders entre las/os votantes afroamericanos por 52 puntos. Para el 26 de marzo, lideraba a Sanders sólo por nueve puntos. Y el 6 de abril, Public Policy Polling, una respetada

da organización de encuestas electorales, publicó una encuesta que muestra que Sanders lidera Clinton entre las/os votantes afroamericanos en Wisconsin por 11 puntos”.

La encuesta sugiere que “en definitiva, la campaña de Clinton se encuentra en medio de un colapso histórico - en gran parte debido a la desintegración del apoyo a Clinton entre las/os votantes no blancos – y que los medios a nivel nacional no se han dado cuenta”. Las elecciones primarias en las próximas semanas probarán o refutarán estas afirmaciones.

Esta tendencia se vio en Michigan a principios de marzo y se reflejó en los estrechos y cuestionables márgenes de victoria de Clinton en Illinois y Missouri, junto con la falta general de entusiasmo de su segunda campaña presidencial.

De todos modos, hay un grado de desesperación en la campaña de Clinton sobre todo referente a los resultados de las primarias de Wisconsin. Clinton mantuvo reuniones de campaña en barrios afroamericanos en Milwaukee durante la última semana de marzo.

En dos eventos importantes, el representante Gwen Moore, único miembro afroamericano de la Casa de Representantes de Wisconsin, se paró junto a Clinton en el escenario. Moore dio la bienvenida a Clinton en un Club de Niños y Niñas, alegando que la ex senadora de Nueva York y ex primera dama, había ayudado a jóvenes afroamericanas/os en Carolina del Sur, mientras trabajaba para el Fondo de Defensa de los Niños. (WPR.org, 31 de marzo)

Necesidad de acción política independiente

¿Qué ganan las/os afroamericanos con su continuo apoyo a candidatas/os demócratas centristas, a la luz de la historia de la década de 1990 bajo Clinton y los últimos ocho años de la administración de Obama? Desempleo, pobreza, encar-

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Trabajadoras/es federales bajo ataque

Por Carl Lewis

El Congreso ha desatado una cantidad de leyes derechistas que disminuirían la seguridad de empleo, el pago, y a las/os trabajadores federales, el derecho mismo a pertenecer a un sindicato que les represente. Uno de los intentos más restrictivos de romper los sindicatos es cortar el derecho de las/os representantes sindicales a usar el llamado “tiempo oficial” para representar y negociar los contratos laborales. El tiempo oficial significa sencillamente que las/os representantes sindicales pueden tomar tiempo para representar y negociar por una/un empleado, durante su día regular y recibir su pago regular, sin tener que usar su tiempo de ausencia al trabajo.

La propuesta legislación también exige que las agencias que tengan sindicatos, informen la cantidad de tiempo oficial tomado por oficiales del sindicato para

ayudar y negociar por las/os trabajadores federales. El propósito de esta demanda es golpear a los sindicatos al restringir, o eliminar, el tiempo oficial y convencer al público de que es un gasto del dinero de las/os contribuyentes. Sin el derecho a tiempo oficial, los sindicatos no pueden defender efectivamente a las/os trabajadores contra la disciplina arbitraria y caprichosa, los despidos injustos y las reducciones del pago.

El presidente de una seccional del sindicato Federación Americana de Empleados del Gobierno (AFGE por sus siglas en inglés) le dijo a WW-Mundo Obrero de otro intento de romper el sindicato: “AFGE es el sindicato más grande que representa a las/os trabajadores federales (600.000); sin embargo, una decisión reciente de la Corte de Apelación limita la definición de quienes puedan ser protegidas/os por un sindicato, al reclasificar a las/os empleados como de ‘seguridad confidencial’ de

la misma manera que la Agencia de Seguridad Nacional, la FBI y la CIA clasifican a esas/os empleados como de ‘confidencialidad crítica’ y así quedan impedidos de ejercer sus derechos sindicales. Por lo tanto, esas/os empleados no tendrían derecho de apelación”.

La administración de Obama también propone legislación que cambiaría la definición de lo que es un “puesto de seguridad, y/o ‘confidencialidad crítica’”.

En la edición del Washington Post del 21 de agosto de 2013, el experto del periódico sobre empleados federales, Joe Davidson, se refirió a la irracionalidad de estas decisiones en cuanto a los puestos “críticamente confidenciales”, especialmente para civiles que trabajan en bases militares. En la decisión de la corte antes mencionada, un trabajador de grado inferior que administraba el inventario en un economato, el cual es básicamente un supermercado, fue descrito como alguien

en un “puesto críticamente confidencial”. En el mismo artículo, Davidson escribe que según Tom Devine, director legal del Proyecto de Responsabilidad del Gobierno, “El trabajador está indefenso”. La corte respaldó el argumento de la administración de Obama sobre la Merit Systems Protection Board, [que escucha los derechos de apelación de trabajadoras/es federales], de que no puede revisar o revocar las decisiones de una agencia a tomar acciones disciplinarias o adversas contra la posición sensible de un empleado. Mientras, añadió Devine, la administración está proponiendo regulaciones que harían a casi todos los empleos federales elegibles para la designación de confidencial.

Resumiendo, los sindicatos en el sector federal están obstaculizados por innumerables leyes federales y de agencias, regulaciones y políticas que restringen los derechos y las actividades de las/os trabajadores federales. □