

# MAY DAY

By Deirdre Griswold

May Day is back. This glorious day to honor working-class struggle began in the United States more than a century ago, but was submerged here during decades of red-baiting and class collaboration. Even as workers around the world were marching by the millions on International Workers' Day, it seemed like the class struggle had been extinguished in the U.S.

But not any more. This year militant May Day marches took place in scores of cities across the U.S., some with tens of thousands participating. It was the massive eruption of millions of immigrant workers in 2006, especially in Los Angeles, that first ignited interest in May Day in a younger generation of oppressed workers. Since then, immigrants have played a leading role all over the country in organizing against low wages, stolen wages, forced unpaid overtime, anti-union laws, unsafe

working conditions, and racist and sexist discrimination by the bosses. Where there were no unions, they organized. Where unions existed, they fought to make them fight. This important role of immigrants in showing how to resist and improve workers' lives through organization and struggle is reminiscent of the leading role immigrants played in the very first May Day commemorations here, back in the late 1800s. Then, they came pri-  
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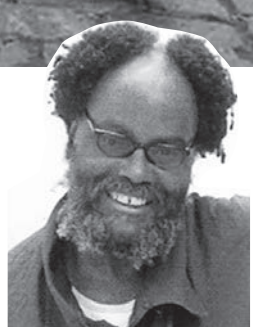
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## Students walk out over layoffs

Hundreds of students at Bayonne High School held a spontaneous walkout from classes on April 27 in Bayonne, N.J. They were protesting the layoffs of 300 staff members, including 261 teachers, 15 secretaries, eight engineers and two bus drivers.

The local school board announced the layoffs during their meeting the night before, after it had been announced that no layoffs were to take place. In fact, a majority of the fired teachers had been promised tenure for the fall semester.

The students marched to City Hall, where they chanted and expressed how deeply they feel for their teachers. Sultan Ahman stated, “I’m losing my math teacher, my history teacher and my gym teacher.” Elmer Beltran added, “We care about them. They are our mentors. We tell them about our problems.” ([nbcnewyork.com](http://nbcnewyork.com), April 28)

April Polsunas, a parent, said, “I’m absolutely ashamed that they’re



doing this to the teachers right now. It leaves everyone unstable. It leaves our students not knowing what they’re going to be doing.” ([fios1news.com](http://fios1news.com))

— Report by Monica Moorehead



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# Trump, the gangster president

By Fred Goldstein

In accordance with their role in capitalist society, most high government officials, elected or appointed, have gangster-like qualities. These officials spend much of their time conspiring with the wealthy on schemes for fleecing or otherwise attacking the masses of people. Unlike the mob, they must carry out their schemes within the framework of capitalist politics.

The mob is differentiated from the capitalist establishment in that they are not constrained to carry out their crimes under cover of legality. On the contrary, mob activities function outside the boundaries of bourgeois legality with the silent consent of the ruling class and its law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, mob crimes are on a vastly smaller scale than the crimes of the Pentagon, the CIA and the FBI.

That being said, among bourgeois politicians with gangster qualities, Donald Trump stands above the crowd. He is a pampered real estate billionaire who has functioned by ordering subordinates around, cheating contractors and stiffing workers. When he gets caught in a mistake, he mobilizes his army of lawyers to clean things up.

He won the presidency by using his television career as a springboard and taking advantage of the complete bankruptcy of the Democratic Party leadership. His campaign strategists also took advantage of the undemocratic institution of the Electoral College to eke out an electoral victory while losing the popular vote. (Hillary Clinton, of course, was also a corrupt, militaristic, Wall Street-owned enemy of the people.)

## Presidency as the road to (more) riches

Trump has not only refused to divest from his billions in assets but also sought to earn even more from his status in the White House. He continues to urge foreign leaders and associates to stay at his Washington hotel. He has raised the fee for membership at the Mar-a-Lago golf club from \$100,000 to \$200,000. He has refused to release his tax returns in order to cover up his investments. He has deals in Turkey, Azerbaijan and other places around the globe. He has drawn up a tax plan from which he and his fellow real estate moguls will reap hundreds of millions of dollars.

His daughter, Ivanka Trump, has spread her brand all over the world and continues to do so. His son-in-law and chief adviser, Jared Kushner, keeps a real estate empire of his own. “Although Mr. Kushner resigned in January from his chief executive role at Kushner Companies,” reports the New York Times of April 26, “he remains the beneficiary of trusts that own the sprawling real estate business. The firm has taken part in roughly \$7 billion in acquisitions over the last decade, many of them backed by foreign partners whose identities he will not reveal.”

Now this right-wing, authoritarian, blustering buffoon, who knows nothing of bourgeois statecraft and has no inclination to learn or to seek advice, is formally in charge of U.S. imperialism.

When Trump gets U.S. capitalism in trouble with U.S. imperialist allies in NATO, or threatens corporate interests by ranting about trade wars with the People’s Republic of China (population 1.3 billion), Canada and Mexico (U.S. big business’ two largest trade markets), or cannot get the Republican Congress to throw 24 million people off health care, or passes an anti-Muslim travel ban that

*The ruling class is responsible for keeping Trump in office and for every racist, reactionary thing he does. Trump is their representative as a class and the masses must hold the capitalists accountable for every crime Trump commits against the people.*

provokes a world countermovement, or threatens to provoke a mass rebellion by saying he will deport 11 million undocumented workers, etc., etc., all his subordinates, flunkies and lawyers cannot help him out of the jam.

The ruling class is ambivalent about Trump — for good reason. On the one hand, they are salivating over his tax cut hand-out to billionaires and big corporations. They are ecstatic about his deregulation campaign allowing, among other things, the coal companies to poison the water table, the destruction of auto emissions standards to help the auto barons and the elimination of environmental regulations to aid big industry. And, of course, they love his tax breaks for the health insurance companies.

On the other hand, they are frustrated because they were hoping to get big tax breaks from the repeal of the Affordable Care Act, and they wanted to get their hands on \$880 billion in cuts from Medicaid so the money could be used to fund tax breaks for the rich.

However, as much as the ruling class looks forward to profiting from Trump’s tax cuts and regulatory roll-backs, they do not want him to wreck their system. Thus, they have taken measures against him. In the first place, they have surrounded him with generals and Wall Street bankers in the White House and the Cabinet.

## Trump is stonewalled on budget, overruled on NAFTA

But most recently they have given him a beating in the budget negotiations. In the latest \$1.2 trillion budget, Trump came away empty handed, despite all his bullying and bluster. In the negotiations Trump was overruled by the trusted congressional representatives of the ruling class on key issues:

- Domestic spending rose, instead of \$18 billion in cuts demanded by Trump.
- Trump wanted the National Institutes of Health budget slashed by \$1.2 billion. Instead it was increased by \$2 billion.
- Trump asked for the Environmental Protection Agency budget to be slashed by 33 percent. Instead it was cut by 1 percent.
- Planned Parenthood will continue to be funded at current levels in states that do not vote to defund it.
- Trump asked for \$30 billion in increased military spending. He got \$12.5 billion and another \$2.5 billion when he comes up with a plan to defeat the Islamic State group.
- No money for his beloved Border Wall; border security funds for new technology and repairs only; in fact, funds for “border security” were slashed and there was no money for a deportation force.
- Health care subsidies for the poor will remain (the money goes to the insurance companies).

”The Trump administration said it was no longer considering pulling out of the North American Free Trade Agreement, following a day of intense lobbying from business leaders and lawmakers who rallied to quash internal White House discussion of the prospect,” wrote the Wall Street Journal on April 27. Trump was forced to call the presidents of Mexico

and Canada to tell them he had dropped the repeal. He then issued a tweet saying they had called him, instead of admitting that big business and agribusiness had forced him to back down.

## Trump, China and the DPRK

Washington is in the midst of a crisis in Korea. It needs the cooperation of the south Korean regime to pursue its belligerent agenda, but instead, Trump picked this moment to tell the south Korean government that he wants to tear up the trade agreement with their country. It is a “bad agreement” negotiated by President Obama, according to Trump. Actually, it was negotiated under George W. Bush.

To make matters worse, Trump told the south Korean government that it would have to pay \$1 billion for the Pentagon’s Terminal High Altitude Area Defense anti-missile system, despite an existing agreement by the U.S. to pay the cost of its deployment. National Security Adviser Gen. H.R. McMaster had to get on the phone with south Korean officials and reassure them the U.S. would pay. (WSJ, April 30)

Trump has an excessive view of his personal powers, to say the least. He claims to have a good relationship with President Xi Jinping of the People’s Republic of China. He claims that because of his phone calls with Xi, China is going to help the U.S. government out of its fix with the defiant Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

Trump has tried to sweet-talk China and tough-talk the DPRK. But the truth is that the PRC leadership, especially its military, the People’s Liberation Army, cannot ignore the overriding facts of the crisis on the Korean peninsula.

In a phone call on April 23, President Xi asked Trump to refrain from escalating tensions in the region, even if the DPRK announces testing of missiles or nuclear weapons. Xi made an appeal to Trump not to go tit-for-tat and to move in the direction of negotiations.

We certainly do not agree with Xi that the DPRK should be pressured to give up its struggle to build a nuclear deterrent. But, nevertheless, the head of the PRC asked Trump to de-escalate.

One day later, on April 24, in the dead of night, the U.S. deployed the THAAD anti-missile system in south Korea, which is equipped with high-powered radar that reaches beyond the DPRK into China and can be used to spy on the Chinese military. The PRC has already said this deployment would destabilize the strategic balance in the region in favor of U.S. imperialism.

The Chinese leadership and the PLA are fully aware of the threat. It cannot be a coincidence that on the same day as the deployment, China test-launched its first

domestically made aircraft carrier. The ship is due to be completed in 2020.

“China has launched its first aircraft carrier built entirely on its own, in a demonstration of the growing technical sophistication of its defense industries and determination to safeguard its maritime territorial claims and crucial trade routes. The 50,000-ton carrier was towed from its dockyard just after 9 a.m. Wednesday.” (Washington Post, April 26)

But the unspoken message is that China has its own naval power, including a fully armed and functional Soviet-built carrier which it obtained from Ukraine and refurbished. China restrained its response to Trump and the Pentagon by not deploying its armed aircraft carrier and deploying the unfinished one instead. But the message was sent.

What is also clear from these events is that U.S. imperialism and the Pentagon are the enemies of both the DPRK and the PRC. The Pentagon has been out for revenge against the DPRK because this heroic socialist country has fearlessly stood up to Washington, as firmly now as it did during the 1950-53 Korean War, when it rebuffed the mighty U.S. war machine.

U.S. imperialism is also opposed to the People’s Republic of China because — despite the growth of capitalist millionaires and billionaires inside the socialist country — the Communist Party of China and the People’s Liberation Army still stand as guardians of state-owned enterprises and economic planning, which are hallmarks of socialism.

Washington realizes that while U.S. imperialism is mired in economic stagnation and military and political crises around the globe, China is steadily growing stronger, both economically and militarily. It is building influence in Asia, Africa and Latin America through infrastructure projects that help the former colonies overcome imperialist-imposed underdevelopment.

At a moment when U.S. imperialism is off balance at home and abroad, the capitalist ruling class needs to keep their gangster-real estate president in check, so he does not add to Washington’s instability.

Despite all the attempts by the established ruling class to distance themselves from Trump, the capitalist government is the executive committee of the ruling class. Karl Marx said it long ago, and it still holds true today.

There are many ways that the bosses could get rid of him, given all the illegality of his family-enriching regime. Instead, the ruling class is responsible for keeping Trump in office and for every racist, reactionary thing he does. Trump is their representative as a class, and the masses must hold the capitalists accountable for every crime he commits against the people. □

## Capitalism at a Dead End

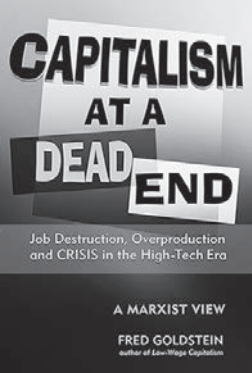
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# The real loan sharks

By Stephen Millies

The feds have arrested 10 “wise guys” for loan sharking in New York City’s Howard Beach, a neighborhood made notorious by the racist mob killing of African-American Michael Griffith in 1986. The gangsters allegedly hauled in \$26 million over 17 years. (New York Daily News, March 29)

That’s chump change. The REAL loan sharks made as much money in just 80 minutes last year. U.S. bank profits were \$171.3 billion in 2016, or \$468 million per day. (CNN Money, March 3)

This loot is stolen from all over the planet: Africa, Asia and Latin America are forced to provide a reverse blood transfusion for U.S. and European banks.

South Africa had to pay over \$8 billion a year on loans that had propped up the former apartheid regime. (Green Left Weekly, Dec. 10, 1997) President Nelson Mandela wanted to use that money for jobs, schools and housing, but the banksters took it instead.

Banks put Zimbabwe under a credit blockade because land stolen by white settlers has been turned over to African farmers.

Unpayable debts to foreign banks forced over 1.5 million people to leave Ecuador because the country’s currency was destroyed. (New York Times, April 3) The loan sharks at Salomon Smith Barney — now part of Citibank — were responsible. (AlterNet, Nov. 26, 2008) Ecuador’s progressive President Rafael Correa stopped this robbery.

Almost a tenth of Puerto Ricans have recently fled their beautiful island because of the U.S. colony’s debt crisis. (Financial Times, Aug. 25, 2016) U.S. banks are imposing cutbacks and wholesale firings of government workers as part of a debt payment scheme.

The real Dr. Evil — David Rockefeller — conspired with

other banksters to fire 10,000 teachers and 40,000 other public workers during New York City’s financial crisis in the mid-1970s. Greek workers are today being crucified by German and U.S. banks demanding austerity.

### Stealing homes is criminal

In the eight years from 2007 to 2014, 5.4 million houses in the United States were repossessed by financial institutions. (bobsullivan.net) Kicking children out of their homes is a crime — yet it happens every day in this country.

One of the first acts of the Cuban Revolution was to limit a family’s rent and utility payments to no more than 10 percent of their income. No child is homeless in socialist Cuba.

But at least 25,000 children are homeless in the capital of capitalism, New York City. Meanwhile, JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon got \$28 million last year. (Reuters, Jan. 10) That’s \$2 million more than what the Howard Beach bandits supposedly took over 17 years.

Dimon got as much money as 1,856 workers earning the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour — if they are lucky enough to work full time the entire year.

Detroit suffered a dry “Hurricane Katrina” because of foreclosures. Since 1980, Motown’s population has dropped by over 500,000 people. Deliberate deindustrialization, aimed at driving Black workers out of basic industry, was responsible for much of the earlier population loss. But the wave of foreclosures in the last decade pushed more people out.

Driving Black homeowners out of Michigan may have accounted for Donald Trump winning the state, although by less than 11,000 votes.

The whole world knows how children in Flint, Mich., were poisoned by lead pipes and dirty

water from the Flint River. Flint used to get clean water from Detroit. Acting for the banks, Michigan Gov. Snyder imposed a financial manager upon Flint who cut off the water supply from Motown.

The Detroit Water and Sewage Commission was pushed into crisis by banker skulduggery. According to Jerry Goldberg of the Moratorium NOW! Coalition, “Termination fees on interest rate swaps represent \$537 million of the \$1.1 billion borrowed for infrastructure repair and maintenance.” (WW, July 8, 2015)

So many people in Detroit had their water shut off in 2014 that the United Nations wanted to investigate. (CBS News, Oct. 20, 2014)

### Plastic robbery

Credit cards charging almost 25 percent annual interest is legalized loan sharking. Just in late fees, MasterCard, Visa and the rest of the thieves dealing in plastic make billions.

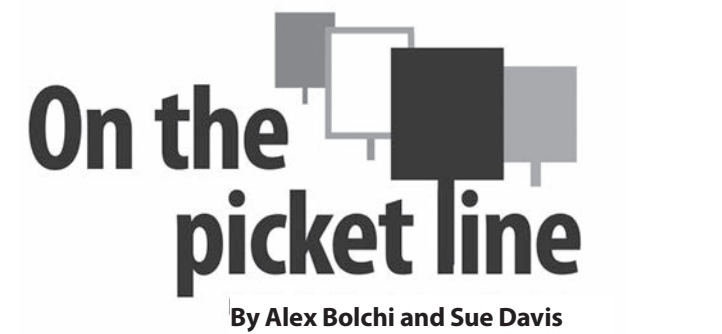
Banks even contrive to make money off EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer) cards that people have to use to access their benefits.

Many states allow lenders to make “payday loans” with annual interest rates of over 100 percent. Those Howard Beach wise guys should be jealous.

ATM fees are robbery. Why should you have to pay \$3 to access your own money? Reducing or eliminating ATM fees would be widely popular. Don’t count on Democrats in Congress to do anything about it.

Even worse off are poor people without bank accounts or credit cards. Banks often discourage small depositors.

In New York state, outfits cashing paychecks can charge \$2.07 out of every \$100. In other states, they can gouge even more money from the poorest workers. □



By Alex Bolchi and Sue Davis

## Racist, anti-worker Acosta to head Labor Department

Alexander Acosta became secretary of Labor on April 27, the last member of Trump’s cabinet. The son of anti-Cuba reactionaries, Acosta clerked for archconservative judge Samuel Alito before his appointment to the Supreme Court and was a blatantly anti-worker member of the National Labor Relations Board. His actions as assistant attorney general in the Justice Department under President George W. Bush also exposed him as a virulent racist. In an Ohio voting rights case in 2007, Acosta sided with Ohio Republicans who engaged in a racially motivated, illegal tactic known as “vote caging” — challenging the credentials of 23,000 mostly Black voters.

Kristen Clarke, executive director of the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, was “astonished” that Acosta would “lead a federal agency tasked with promoting lawful hiring practices and safe workplaces,” since a 2008 federal report “found actions taken during Acosta’s tenure politicized hiring decisions and violated Justice Department policy and federal law.” (Rewire, Feb. 16) But Acosta fits right in with other Cabinet members who head departments they ideologically oppose and want to destroy.

However, Aiesha Meadows McLaurin, a Burger King worker and Fight for \$15 campaign member, was quoted by Rewire as saying that activists will continue the fight to raise the minimum wage. “We’ll keep taking to the streets, standing up and speaking out until we win \$15 [per hour] and union rights for all.”

## Fight at Charter Spectrum continues

Over 300 members of the Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 3 picketed outside Charter Spectrum offices in Stamford, Conn., on April 25 in an effort to maintain health care and retirement benefits in their pending contract. The workers say Charter Spectrum’s proposed wage increases do not offset cuts in health benefits — a new \$3,000 deductible — and ending employer contributions to the pension plan. As Lance Van Arsdale, Local 3’s business manager, told the Stamford Advocate on April 25, Charter Spectrum is also penalizing workers for its own faults — disciplining workers for service problems caused by the company’s “old and faulty” equipment. These are among the many reasons why 18,000 in-house cable technicians have been striking since March 28.

## NY unions behind state ‘Medicare for All’ system

With Trump’s second attempt to eviscerate the Affordable Care Act already sliced and diced from both left and right, unions in New York state are supporting the New York Health Act, which would be a state-run, Medicare-style, single-payer system. It now has 30 co-sponsors in the state Senate and endorsements from more than 40 unions and labor groups, including the state’s largest health care union, 1199SEIU, and the New York State AFL-CIO and Western N.Y. Labor Federation. The New York State Nurses Association has been campaigning for such a system for more than 25 years.

Richard Gottfried, Assembly Health Committee chair and the bill’s sponsor, said the major reason that labor is behind the bill is that health care has increasingly become a flashpoint in union bargaining — the Charter Spectrum strike is a prime example. Being forced to focus on that, he noted, doesn’t allow enough leverage to negotiate for better wages and pensions and often results in larger deductions, higher copays and narrower networks. “As nurses, we look at the health outcomes. As union members, we look at the costs. On both sides, [the New York Health Act] is a much more effective and rational solution,” said Steven Toff, NYSNA director of state campaigns.

A similar bill was introduced in California on Feb. 16. (Labor-Press, April 18)

## New York City agrees to pay

A crowd in red plastic raincoats cheered on April 4, Equal Pay Day, on City Hall steps at the news that the city had finally settled the Communications Workers Local 1180 lawsuit charging wage discrimination. Though the agreement must still be reviewed by the U.S. Justice Department, the case covers more than 1,000 women and people of color who hold the civil service title of administrative manager and 300 retirees. The settlement, upwards of \$250 million, will bring current employees in line with the \$93,000 salary target and compensate retirees for many years of wage discrimination. (Chief-Leader, April 14) □

## IOWA

# Workers resist attack on minimum wage

By Mike Kühlenbeck  
Des Moines, Iowa

A new Iowa law stripped away minimum-wage increases across the state the week of March 27 and set a dangerous precedent for Hawkeye State workers.

For the first time in over 20 years, the Republican Party dominates the state government. GOP lawmakers have already succeeded in passing a number of damaging anti-worker laws in the first months of the 2017 legislative session.

They introduced House File 295, a minimum-wage pre-emption law to roll back wage increases in Johnson, Linn, Polk and Wapello counties. HF 295 passed the Iowa Senate in a vote of 29 to 21 — with a unanimous vote from Republicans — and was signed into law by Gov. Terry Branstad.

HF 295 marks the first time a state has rejected a mini-

mum-wage increase already in effect. It also prevents future increases from taking place, eliminating local control from Iowa cities and counties. With the exception of Polk County, which was set to raise its minimum wage to \$8.75 on April 1, three Iowa counties had already increased wage minimums: Johnson County to \$10.10 an hour, Linn County to \$8.25 and Wapello County to \$8.20.

Not only does the bill reverse these increases, it even allows businesses to lower wages.

Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement organizer Bridget Fagan-Reidburn told WW, “We are outraged by our legislators’ continuous attack on workers — including lowering the minimum wage for close to 100,000 Iowa workers.”

These wage increases are a necessary minimum given the rising costs of living, as noted

by the Iowa Policy Project. The statewide minimum wage of \$7.25, which falls short of a living wage according to IPP, has not been increased since 2008.

Fagan-Reidburn said, “Because of the inaction at the Statehouse for the last nine years, supervisors in four counties saw the need in their communities and raised their local minimum wages.”

For months, Republican lawmakers called HF 295 a priority piece of legislation. It was supported by the Association of Business and Industry, the Iowa Restaurant Association and the Grocers’ Association, all of which, of course, stand to profit from such exploitation.

Despite their campaign rhetoric denouncing “big government,” the Iowa GOP supports big government when it furthers the interests of big business.

Executive Director of the

*Continued on page 6*



# LYNNE STEWART

## Celebrating the life of a ‘people’s lawyer’

By Dolores Cox  
New York

Hundreds of people gathered on April 22 at St. Peter’s Church in New York City to celebrate the life of Lynne Stewart. They came from around the country to honor this courageous advocate for the people, who dedicated her life to the cause of freedom and justice for all.

A number of descriptive adjectives are used by those who loved Lynne and admired her life’s work. She was a revolutionary, freedom fighter, friend, activist, poet, warrior, former political prisoner and speaker of truth to power. Lynne was known to all as committed, tenacious, uncompromising, sweet, precious, amazing, unflappable, tireless, fearless and radical.

There were several musical presentations at the celebration, including one by Lynne’s granddaughter, Serafina Brown, and poetry readings. Messages were read from political prisoners Mumia Abu-Jamal, Leonard Peltier, Jaan Laaman and the Rev. Edward Pinkney. Former Puerto Rican political prisoners Oscar López Rivera and Dylcia Pagán sent messages, his in writing, hers an audio tribute.

A highlight of the program was video and audio footage of Lynne speaking over the years. She explained that she gathered her strength from camaraderie with others and that she admired Mao, Che and John Brown, true revolutionaries who were guided by their love for the people. She discussed capitalist oppression, racism, militarism and state violence; grass roots organizing; and victories gained for, of and by people’s movements.

### ‘Go forth and do justice!’

Attendees heard Lynne stressing the need for solidarity, fighting white su-

premacy and making a commitment to the struggle. Expressing delight in seeing the political involvement of youth, Lynne asserted, “Go forth and do justice!”

Speakers referred to Lynne as the “steward” of the people. They urged support for other lawyers like Lynne. She was referred to as “a long-distance revolutionary” who defied injustice despite threats to her career and freedom. The “power of the powerless” was raised. It was stressed that the best way to honor Lynne is to continue her struggle, to fight and to win — and that we’re at our very best when we’re like Lynne.

Each tribute imparted memories of Lynne, showing gratitude for the impact she had on each person’s life and explaining how she inspired them. Bittersweet memories were shared of a life well-lived.

Ralph Poynter, Lynne’s spouse, was also praised for his steadfastness, strength, longtime dedication to the struggle and deep love for Lynne.

Betty Davis and Lisa Davis coordinated the program; Ralph Poynter and Mimi Rosenberg were the emcees. Speakers included the Rev. Lawrence Lucas, Rikers Island chaplain; New York state Assemblymember Charles Barron; Glen Ford, Black Agenda Report; Larry Hamm, Peoples Organization for Progress; poet Nat Turner; the Rev. Allison Moore, St. Mark’s Church; Pam Africa, International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal; Sara Flounders, International Action Center; and Jess Sundin, grand jury resister.

There were tributes by Bob Lederer, gay anti-imperialist; Cisco Torres, former political prisoner; Bob Boyle and Jill Shellow, National Lawyers Guild;



WW PHOTO: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

Lynne Stewart, with spouse Ralph Poynter, fight to stop the execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal in 2003.

Lamis Deek, Palestinian attorney; Sekou Odinga, Malcolm X Commemoration Committee and former political prisoner; and Chris Hedges, journalist. Video messages were contributed by Jeff Mackler, United National Antiwar Coalition; Ralph Schoenman, Taking Aim; Omali Yesheteli, African Peoples Socialist Party; and Clark Kissinger. A message was read from Larry Pinkney, Black Activist Writers Guild.

### From teacher to ‘people’s lawyer’ to political prisoner

In her early working years, Lynne was a school librarian and teacher. In the 1960s, she became actively involved in the struggle for community control of schools in oppressed communities. Growing awareness of police and judicial persecution of political activists inspired her to become a lawyer.

Over the years, Lynne represented hundreds of criminal defendants, many for free. Besides working as a lawyer and street activist, she was an early supporter of the struggle for lesbian, gay, bisexual,

transgender and queer rights. Throughout the 1980s, she represented many revolutionaries facing felony charges and teamed up with movement attorney William Kunstler.

Lynne was a lawyer for Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, an Egyptian cleric who was blind. He was falsely accused by the U.S. government of participating in a “terrorist conspiracy” in New York City and was convicted in 1995. While serving a life sentence, Sheikh Rahman died this February.

Lynne had issued a press release on Sheikh Rahman’s behalf. As a result, she was convicted of conspiring to “aid and abet terrorism” and given a 10-year prison sentence.

Imprisoned in 2009 at the age of 70, Lynne was then in remission from breast cancer. However, due to medical neglect, within three years the cancer returned and spread. Lynne won a medical “compassionate release” from Carswell Federal Medical Center on Dec. 31, 2013, with a prognosis of less than 18 months to live.

A video of Lynne and Ralph produced by Flavia Fontes was played, showing the day of her joyous release from prison. Smiling, she said, “Everyone should have a Ralph.” Footage also featured Lynne’s arrival the next day at Kennedy Airport in New York City. There, she repeatedly expressed her gratitude to everyone who gave her love and support.

Lynne beat the odds and survived for three years in freedom, continuing her lifelong commitment to fight for all victims of the racist, capitalist injustice system. She resisted until her last breath on March 7.

The slogan “Live like Lynne! Dare to struggle! Dare to win!” is true to its core. To continue her life’s work, see LynneStewart.org. □

## Banks, prisons grow rich on deportations

By Betsey Piette

While millions of migrant and refugee families struggle under a climate of fear fueled by widespread deportations, private for-profit prison companies and the major banks that fund them are cashing in on immigrants’ suffering.

Shares of GEO Group and CoreCivic Inc. (formerly Corrections Corporation of America as of late 2016) shot up 21 and 43 percent, respectively, following Trump’s election. Since then, CoreCivic’s stock price has risen 120 percent, while GEO has seen an 80 percent increase. CoreCivic and GEO control 85 percent of the U.S. private prison market.

The Trump administration’s crack-down on immigrants has been a boon to the for-profit prison industry, which operates over half of the “beds” in Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention facilities.

GEO made a hefty contribution to a super PAC for Trump during the election, while CoreCivic contributed millions to Trump’s inauguration. Shortly after being confirmed as Trump’s attorney general, Jeff Sessions overturned an Obama administration initiative to phase out government use of corporate-run prisons.

### Detention bed quotas = guaranteed profits

Since 2003, GEO has spent over \$3 million lobbying Congress, plus \$1 mil-

lion more in contributions to local and state political campaigns. CCA was also heavily involved in lobbying. These investments paid off in 2009 when a Democratic-controlled Congress passed, and Obama signed, legislation mandating that ICE maintain 34,000 detention beds at any given time.

This “detention bed quota” policy guarantees profits for the private prison industry. Since the federal government is required to pay for bed space whether or not it is used, ICE has come under increasing pressure to pursue a more aggressive deportation policy.

By 2015, CCA was making \$3,356 in profit per prisoner annually while GEO made \$2,135.

Just prior to Trump’s election, the number of people in detention was averaging 41,000 each day. Currently, the number of people held in detention centers is up to 80,000 a day. If Trump’s plans to deport 2 million to 3 million people in his first year are carried out, the American Civil Liberties Union estimates it would require construction of over 100,000 new immigration detention beds.

Both GEO and CoreCivic have been accused of widespread human rights violations. Charges against GEO include the company forcing tens of thousands of immigrants at a Colorado detention facility to perform slave labor. Its Karnes Family Detention Center in Texas, which houses mothers and children, saw repeated hun-

ger strikes over poor conditions.

In his Mother Jones article “My Four Months as a Private Prison Guard,” Shane Bauer documented what conditions were like in a prison run by CCA. The company faced so many charges of abuse and violations of prisoners’ rights that it lost four contracts to run prisons in the month of June 2013 alone.

### Wall Street bankrolls private prison industry

The rapid expansion of for-profit private prison detention centers was made possible through financial investments and loans from major banks. Bank financing allows these companies to profit off mass incarceration.

CoreCivic’s single largest investor is the Vanguard Group Inc., with shares valued at nearly \$600 million. Six banks finance most of the debt issued that makes it possible for CoreCivic and GEO Group to expand. While Bank of America, JPMorgan Chase, BNP Paribas, SunTrust and U.S. Bancorp have all extended revolving credit to for-profit private prison companies, Wells Fargo has financed the three largest private prison companies, including the Management and Training Corporation.

In 2011, a Tennessee divestment campaign pressured Wells Fargo to sell off shares with GEO Group. However, at the same time it steadily increased financing for CCA through a \$785 million line of

credit. In 2016, the city of Portland, Ore., and the University of California’s Board of Regents considered divesting from Wells Fargo due to the bank’s financing of for-profit incarceration.

### Wells Fargo investments in private prisons prompt calls to divest

In 2008, Wells Fargo purchased Wachovia Bank in a \$15.1 billion deal. A few years prior to the merger, under pressure from a campaign by Black communities in Chicago, Wachovia Bank issued a public apology for its historic ties to the slave trade in the Americas, which included owning enslaved Africans and accepting them as payment.

In September 2016, Wells Fargo’s shares fell by \$9 billion when it was revealed that bank employees were told to create \$185 million in fake customer accounts to collect fees and meet sales quotas. CEO John Stumpf responded by firing more than 5,300 employees. In October 2016, Stumpf resigned amidst calls that criminal charges be filed against him.

An even more recent call for divestment from Wells Fargo resulted from its financing of the controversial \$3.8 billion Dakota Access pipeline.

It is time for the global working class to unite against Wells Fargo and all the banks and Wall Street corporations that profit off our combined suffering. Let’s dedicate May Day 2017 to supporting immigrants! □



# Mumia hearing: ‘Too much justice’?

By Betsey Piette  
Philadelphia

**Bulletin:** As we go to press, Judge Leon Tucker on May 1 has ruled in favor of Mumia Abu-Jamal’s demand for discovery of the Philadelphia district attorney office’s files pertinent to his case. (See article below.) In other words, the DA’s office is being ordered to open up their files to Abu-Jamal’s attorneys. Judge Tucker ruled that the DA’s office is to turn over records to the attorneys within 30 days, with Abu-Jamal being given 15 days to file amendments to his post-conviction petitions. This is an unquestionable win for Abu-Jamal. However, it is likely that the DA’s office will appeal the ruling and find other reasons not to comply. It is now more important than ever that the movement be vigilant.

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A petition filed on behalf of political prisoner and journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal, seeking a new appeal in his decades-long case, was heard in the Pennsylvania Court of Common Pleas on April 24. Abu-Jamal was represented by Christina Swarns and Judith Ritter from the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. Philadelphia Deputy District Attorney Ronald Eisenberg represented the Commonwealth. Common Pleas Judge Leon Tucker heard the case. While dozens of Abu-Jamal supporters packed the courtroom, more demonstrated outside the Criminal Justice Center in downtown Philadelphia.

The basis for the new hearing was a 2016 U.S. Supreme Court precedent-setting decision, *Williams v. Pennsylvania*. The decision held that Terry Williams had been denied his due process right to a hearing free of bias. This was because Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Ronald Castille, who ruled on his appeals, also played a significant role in the case while Philadelphia district attorney. Attorney Christina Swarns argued that Castille’s name appears on every one of the state’s briefs filed against Abu-Jamal’s appeals. Castille was Assistant DA at the time of Abu-Jamal’s trial. Then in 1988 he was the Philadelphia district attorney during Abu-Jamal’s direct appeal. The defense had twice challenged Castille to recuse himself when Abu-Jamal’s appeals to the state’s Supreme Court came before Castille’s bench from 1995 to 2012.

**Appeal based on role of Justice Castille**

Swarns challenged the Commonwealth’s claim that Castille had “played no personal role” in Abu-Jamal’s case. He noted that the state had made the same arguments in the Williams’ case before a discovery motion filed on his behalf exposed that the DA’s office was lying. Abu-Jamal’s attorney asked Judge Tucker to rule on a discovery motion to review the DA’s records of the case. DA Eisenberg, a protégé of Castille, focused most of his arguments on trying to challenge the timeliness of the appeal and seeking to deny or minimize the extent of Castille’s involvement in Abu-Jamal’s case. Tucker eventually responded,

asking Eisenberg to explain just how the case could have moved forward without Castille’s approval. The DA ended his presentation by arguing about just how much access to due process Abu-Jamal should receive. He stated that granting Abu-Jamal’s case would “be a huge impact” on the higher courts. “At some point you just have to draw the line.” Swarns responded by pointing out that the Commonwealth’s concern cannot be about how long Abu-Jamal’s appeals process might take or that he would receive “too much justice.” She stated that at minimum Abu-Jamal was entitled to a review of the DA records on his case to determine the extent of Castille’s involvement. “If the review shows that Castille wasn’t involved, then we won’t need to be concerned about how much justice Mumia Abu-Jamal receives,” Swarns concluded. Tucker concluded the hearing stating that a decision would be made shortly. A lively press conference outside the court building followed the hearing. Abu-Jamal’s attorneys reported on what had happened. Other speakers, including Pam Africa and Suzanne Ross, addressed the need to widen support for Abu-Jamal.

**Young people lead march**

Monica Moorehead of Workers World Party called on the young people who have been in the streets fighting police brutality to get involved in the struggle to free Mumia and to raise his case at upcoming May Day actions.

“We need more young revolutionaries out here taking up the cause of Mumia Abu-Jamal. ... We need your energy and your revolutionary spirit. ... Your involvement could be the decisive issue to free Mumia.” Live streaming of the rally can be seen at [youtube.com/watch?v=QKomagCTiIE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QKomagCTiIE). The large number of youth helping lead the march that followed showed that they heard Moorehead’s call. Marchers circled City Hall and rallied in the cold and damp weather for hours. They held an indoor event, “Resistance Matters,” that evening at the Arch Street United Methodist Church. Speakers there addressed the legal issues, the victorious two-year struggle to get hepatitis C medications for Abu-Jamal and the ongoing fight over toxic water in Pennsylvania prisons and Philadelphia public schools. They also wished a “happy birthday” to Abu-Jamal, who turned 63 on April 24. Abu-Jamal was scheduled for execution in 1995 and 1999 but was saved by mass international protests. In 2012, after years of mass pressure, the courts removed him from death row and re-sentenced Abu-Jamal to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. Just weeks ago, supporters forced the prison system to provide Abu-Jamal with life-saving medicine for hepatitis C, after a two-year-long campaign in court and on the streets. This latest court proceeding was another battle in the 35-year effort to win justice and freedom for one of the world’s best-known political prisoners. □

# Movement power wins access to Mumia

By Suzanne Ross  
Frackville, Pa.

Ona Move! We did it again! The movement’s swift and forceful response got what we wanted and what we were entitled to: information about where political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal is being held in the “correctional system” and the opportunity to see him. During the night of April 26, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections suddenly removed Mumia from his cell at SCI Mahanoy. The move was so sudden that Mumia only had time to call out to another prisoner to let his supporters know before he was gone. The immediacy of movement pressure on the prison and the DOC regarding Mumia’s disappearance from our radar, and the volume of that response, forced the prison to meet our demand: tell us where Mumia is and allow Keith Cook, Mumia’s brother, and myself to see Mumia. Within minutes of Mumia’s return from Geisinger Hospital, where he had tests done April 28, he was brought to the visiting room and waited for us. Mumia had an endoscopy to assess whether his esophagus had deteriorated in any way. The DOC’s punitive hepatitis C protocol required “careful” monitoring but — no treatment! The latest test was to assess whether Mumia had esophageal varices — bleeding of the esophagus tantamount to death. The possibility of this warrants, according to the DOC, careful “assessment.” In Kafkaesque logic, the DOC had first refused Mumia treatment, was finally forced to provide it by a judge’s ruling, but now is still following its previous “protocol” declared by the same judge as “unconstitutional.” This pattern is in keeping

with the deliberate irrationality of how the DOC tries to maintain its control. Then, too, the DOC may be trying to show that they are monitoring Mumia to try to lighten their defeat in the face of our lawyers’ pursuit of compensation for Mumia for their incompetence, inhumanity and near killing of Mumia. Fortunately, Mumia’s esophagus shows no sign of deterioration, and he has no varices. I had called Mahanoy earlier in the day to try to locate Mumia. Dr. Steinhart, the infirmary director, would not give me any information, saying he could only give that to family members. I told him that I and Mumia’s brother, Keith Cook, would be at Mahanoy shortly, and that we would expect officials to give the information we wanted to Keith, clearly a family member. Our reception at Mahanoy could only have been generated by movement pressure. Given the usual prison milieu, our treatment felt positively regal. Within minutes of my arrival, Jane Hinman, the assistant to the superintendent, came out, greeted me graciously, and said the superintendent had asked her to let us know that we would be able to visit with Mumia. Soon after Keith arrived, the desk correctional officers, two of whom I’ve seen many times before, told us we would be processed within 20 minutes. They did not look at our IDs, and they literally rushed us in, assuring us that we would be the last to leave and that we would



Mumia and his brother Keith Cook, April 13.

have at least a 2 1/2 hour visit. Mumia was in great spirits, relieved that he did not have the varices and that his esophagus had remained stable despite the cirrhosis he has contracted from the lack of hep C treatment under prison punishment. Again and again he waxed poetic about the strength and power of our movement. We were all convinced that the “graciousness” of the prison staff, on all levels, came from a decision not to provoke the movement any further. The state of Pennsylvania and its prison officials did not want trouble and knew they would have it

if they did not accommodate us. The three of us celebrated over a lunch of organic spinach salad and tried to assess the recent court hearing on a petition to overturn Mumia’s conviction. We ended with part of Assata’s famous quote, the mantra of young fighters today: “It is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win.” We have sure had some significant victories in the struggle for justice for freedom fighter Mumia Abu-Jamal. On to more victories! *Suzanne Ross is a former co-chair of the Free Mumia Coalition in NYC and works with International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal.*

## IOWA Minimum wage

*Continued from page 4* National Employment Law Project Christine Owens issued a statement on March 28 calling the Iowa Legislature’s decision “a new low in the callous, corporate-driven push to block living wages for the state’s lowest wage earners.” Iowa CCI, the Center for Worker Justice of Eastern Iowa, the Service Employees Union, the Iowa AFL-CIO and other groups are fighting against HF 295 and other anti-worker legislation. Fagan-Reidburn said, “We will continue to fight for a minimum-wage increase to \$15 per hour for all Iowans. We knew this would be a long-term fight, and we’ll continue to hold our politicians responsible to put people before profits and big-moneyed corporations.” □



# Prisons censor WW call for May Day strike

By Mattie Starrdust

Workers World Party and its editorial staff received notices on Feb. 22, March 31 and April 5 from the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC) that three issues of Workers World newspaper had been denied entry into all prisons in the state. The reason given for this outright censorship? In the DOC’s own words: “Information contained [in the publication] advocates global May Day strike.”

Throughout its history, Workers World Party has maintained close ties with political prisoners and prisoners of the ongoing U.S. war against Black and Brown and poor white workers. The Prisoners Solidarity Committee, formed in the late 1960s by Workers World Party and Youth Against War and Fascism, organized in the belief that prisoners are not “criminals” but oppressed peoples often driven by poverty to commit “crimes” of survival.

The PSC agitated for the release of imprisoned activists Angela Davis, George Jackson, Assata Shakur and other revolutionary figures, as well as Joann Little, who killed a white jailer in North Carolina when he attempted to rape her. When prisoners at Attica in upstate New York rose up and took control of the prison, they specifically requested that two members of the Prisoners Solidarity Committee enter the prison to witness their negotiations with the authorities.

For decades Workers World Party has championed the cause of imprisoned revolutionary journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal, framed for the 1981 shooting of a Philadelphia police officer. In 2011, thanks to pressure from the movement, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals overturned Mumia’s 1982 death sentence, and the state was forced to finally take Mumia off death row and return him to the general prison population.

The movement to gain freedom for Mumia continues, steadfastly supported by Workers World Party. In April, 2017, the Pennsylvania DOC finally caved in to mass pressure demanding lifesaving hepatitis C treatment for Mumia. This set an important legal precedent for all hep C infected prisoners in the state prison system.

The surviving members of the MOVE 9, also framed for police murder in connection with the state’s military-style assault

on the Philadelphia MOVE organization’s Osage Avenue home in 1978, have conducted years of study sessions on the attack using Workers World newspaper articles.

Certainly, Workers World Party is known among prisoners throughout the country, not to mention among prison wardens and secretaries of corrections. Now WWP’s call for a May Day global strike comes hot on the heels of a string of prisoner strikes and uprisings in at least 46 state and federal prisons in September 2016, and the more recent Vaughn Prison uprising in Smyrna, Del. This is the context for the Pennsylvania’s DOC eagerness to suppress any sign of dissent or resistance, including censoring Workers World newspaper.

At least one incarcerated subscriber in Pennsylvania was never informed by pris-

on officials as to why his weekly Workers World paper did not arrive. The prisoner states, according to a grievance filed by him and obtained by Workers World: “I was not notified by PA DOC nor Houtzdale [State Correctional Institution]. I was not given opportunity to appeal ban. [...] This is a systemic problem of censorship.”

An April 21 letter mailed to the Pennsylvania DOC from the Workers World Philadelphia Bureau challenges the censorship: “The reason for the denial is unwarranted, unjustified and spiteful. It is a crass attempt by the DOC to suppress all dissent and resistance, including legal, First Amendment protected speech. Please accept this letter as an official appeal of the decision to censor Workers World newspaper in Pennsylvania prisons.

“Please also review the decisions to

withhold notice from the inmates, as we believe these decisions have been made in violation of applicable laws and prisoners’ constitutional rights. Please also furnish all Workers World subscribers held in Pennsylvania prisons with the notifications to which they are entitled, and the chance to exercise their due process rights to appeal these decisions themselves.”

Workers World will use all available means to fight the Pennsylvania DOC’s heavy-handed, punitive and unconstitutional censorship. Subscribers and censors alike should know that no amount of suppression will ever be enough to put the lid back on the prison movement which, after a period of dormancy, has emerged stronger and more militant than ever.

Hands off prisoners’ free speech rights! Forward to the May Day Global Strike! □

## RAMONA AFRICA on MOVE and the 1985 bombing

*Former U.S. political prisoner Ramona Africa is the minister of communication for the MOVE Organization and a Philadelphia-based organizer with the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal. She is also the only living survivor of the 1985 MOVE bombing, when the FBI and Philadelphia police dropped two C-4 bombs on her organization’s home, killing 11 people. Read along as we discuss the history of MOVE and what it means to be a freedom fighter. This is Part 5 of a five-part interview by Lamont Lilly, the 2016 Workers World Party candidate for U.S. vice president.*

PART 5



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

**Ramona Africa:** It was not until they took me into custody and to the local hospital that I was looking for the rest of my family, but nobody came in. I’m in the hospital and wondering what was going on. I didn’t find out until I left the hospital and was taken to the police administration building [to the homicide unit]. Only then did I find out that there were no other survivors other than me and my young brother, Birdie Africa. ([tinyurl.com/kfypm5n](http://tinyurl.com/kfypm5n)) The police were contemplating charging me with the murder of my family.

**Lamont Lilly:** Are you serious? That’s ridiculous!

**RA:** Absolutely ridiculous! They charged me with everything they did: possession of explosives, arson, causing a catastrophe, attempted murder, simple and aggravated assault. But the charges and warrant they came at me with were all dismissed when I was able to challenge them in the pretrial. They eventually dropped those charges. Oh, and I forgot, they also threw in “terroristic threats,” which was ridiculous.

**LL:** So let me get this clear, Ramona. You survived two bombings, the bullets, the fire hoses, the tear gas. You’re out of the hospital, and the next thing you know you’re in the police department being charged with attempted murder and arson?

**RA:** Yep. Yes, I was. And that was another eye-opener for me because when all the charges and the warrants that they came at me with were dismissed, it seems like anything that came from these bogus warrants would have to be dropped as well. If their reasons for being out there were invalid, then how could anything that was a result of their presence be valid? But they were never going to drop all the charges on me.

**LL:** Did you serve time for any of those charges?

**RA:** Yes. I did. First of all, I had a \$4.5 million bail. \$4.5 million! I was in jail from May 13 of 1985 until May 13 of 1992 because I was convicted of “rioting,” if you can believe that. I was sentenced to 16 months and seven years. When my 16-month minimum was up, I was told by the parole board that they would parole me, but only if I agreed to sever all ties with MOVE. Sever all ties! And I wasn’t about to do that. Instead of being released at 16 months, I did the whole seven years. ([tinyurl.com/kty4waf](http://tinyurl.com/kty4waf)).

**LL:** Eleven people died May 13, 1985.

Excuse me — were murdered! You mentioned children earlier. How many children died in that bombing?

**RA:** Five children and six adults! And not one single official on any level was ever held accountable, ever charged with a single crime against MOVE. But yet, you have the MOVE 9 being called murderers and being imprisoned for 38 years, working on 39 now. Meanwhile, the people who murdered 11 of my family members — publicly on May 13 of 1985 — not one of them was ever held accountable.

**LL:** The last question, Ramona, is in reference to the current movement that we’re actually living with right now — the Movement for Black Lives. ([tinyurl.com/lrb9p5d](http://tinyurl.com/lrb9p5d)) As a new generation accepts the baton of mass resistance, freedom fighting and Black struggle, what words of advice would you share?

**RA:** The first and most important thing is to never stop. Don’t ever stop pushing and fighting. Don’t ever give in! Be consistent. Don’t allow yourselves to be disillusioned. Don’t allow anyone or anything to buy you off. Don’t allow yourselves to be compromised or co-opted — because trust me — they will try. You can definitely believe that!

This system will come at you with all kinds of things. All kinds! But if you fall for it, you’re done. You’re done, and that’s what they bank on. They bank on people flaring up for an instant and then fizzling out.

One last thing I really want the young people to remember: We do this work out of love, not hate. Love for life and the people. Long live John Africa! Long live the revolution! Ona move!

*Lamont Lilly was a 2015 U.S. delegate at the International Forum for Justice in Palestine in Beirut, Lebanon. He is also an activist and organizer in the Black Lives Matter movement.*

## Resistance greets firing of Tom Cat workers

By John Steffin  
New York City

The racist, anti-worker bosses at Tom Cat Bakery finally carried out the wishes of the repressive state on April 21 and fired over 30 workers who failed to show papers following the March 19 audit by the Department of Homeland Security. This is the first time in 11 years that an employer in New York City has collaborated with Immigration and Customs Enforcement. This escalation in state violence, however, was met with resistance.

On the morning of April 21, four community members and activists chained themselves to the delivery trucks at Tom Cat Bakery, stalling production for over an hour. Nearly 200 activists then picketed the bakery and vowed to intervene, if necessary, in any ICE raids. Several of the workers under threat spoke at the protest



WW PHOTO: TARYN FIVEK

Tom Cat Bakery picket line.

and shared their stories. Many of them had worked at the factory for a long time before the audit, upwards of 16 years, and have deep ties to the community.

The deportations, and now firings, of immigrants are generating massive political energy in migrant communities, which may culminate in the May Day general strike, the likes of which haven’t been seen since 2006. The Tom Cat workers, shortly after the firings, confirmed that they will participate in this year’s May Day strike in New York City. □



# Massive general strike displays people power

By Addison Gaddis

Brazilian workers held a general strike on April 28. Business as usual could not possibly proceed as 35 to 40 million people took the streets of Brazil to protest President Michel Temer's austerity reforms. Temer took power in May of 2016 after the elected president, Dilma Rousseff, was impeached in a process that many say was illegitimate.

Rousseff is from the center-left Workers' Party (PT), while Temer is from the center-right Democratic Movement Party of Brazil (PMDB). While the Rousseff government was accused of corruption, Temer is currently also embroiled in a massive corruption scandal. Nearly one-third of his ministers are implicated in a graft scandal. And while Rousseff's government still at least paid lip service to being pro-worker and pro-working class, Temer's austerity measures, in contrast, constitute a direct attack upon the Brazilian working class.

The austerity measures include extension of the working day and the working week, reduction of the required lunch break time, raising the minimum retire-

ment age to 65, pension reductions, lower pay for outsourced workers and lowering the restrictions on outsourcing, and no longer requiring bosses to extend benefits to workers hired for 240 days or less. These policies aim to further destabilize the precarious and low-wage workforce of Brazil, and the workers, with good reason, are outraged.

The general strike shut down transit, airports, auto manufacturing plants, petroleum refineries and banks across the country. All over Brazil, in rural and urban areas, militants from the Landless Workers Movement (MST) and the Homeless Workers Movement shut down highways. The streets were filled with drumming and chanting while the airports, bus stations and train terminals remained empty.

In the city of Rio de Janeiro, demonstrators torched eight buses, facing police repression in the form of tear gas and rubber bullets. A representative of the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL) was tear gassed onstage at a rally at the Plaza Cinelandia. In response, organizers called for a rally there on May Day to protest police repression.

In the city of São Paulo, nine MST demonstrators were arrested for blocking highways. An estimated 70,000 people took the streets. Demonstrators were blocked from marching on Michel Temer's residence. In the city of Goiânia, an estimated 30,000 people took the streets, and a youth was hospitalized in a coma after being battered in the head by a riot cop's baton.

All across the country, the numbers are staggering: 150,000 in Belo Horizonte, 20,000 in Curitiba, 30,000 in Salvador, 50,000 in Fortaleza, 50,000 in Belem and so on. How was the working class able to mobilize so widely and effectively?

**Unions, left parties united in action**

There are many answers. First of all, there was a broad base of support. The strike was endorsed by the PT, the party that had previously held the presidency since 2002, as well as a diverse range of left parties, including the Socialist Party of Brazil (PSB), the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB), the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB), the Free Homeland Party (PPL), the United Socialist Workers Party (PSTU), the Democratic Labor

Party (PDT), the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL), the Sustainability Network (REDE), the Green Party (PV) and apparently dissidents from PMDB.

Along with the involvement of political parties, there was mass support from organizations advocating for youth, workers, women and Black people. Leonardo Steiner, the general secretary of the National Conference of Bishops in Brazil, expressed support for the strike, stating, "It is fundamental that we listen to the population in their collective manifestations."

And, perhaps most importantly, all the major unions of the country supported the strike as well: CGTB, Forza Sindical, UGT, Unified Workers Central, National Struggles Coordination (CSP-Conlutas), Nova Central, Intersindical and CSB.

The government and its lackeys unsurprisingly decried the strike as ineffective. But this is a transparent lie. The strike was effective because the country was shut down. The strike serves as a powerful reminder to the ruling class: without the workers, they have nothing! Fora Temer! Proletários do mundo, uni-vos! All power to the people! □

# U.S. threatens to expel 50,000 Haitians

By G. Dunkel

Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly will decide on May 23 whether to extend the "temporary protected status" of 50,000 Haitian refugees who came to the U.S. after the 2010 earthquake. The TPS for Haitians is set to expire on July 22.

Washington had granted Haitians TPS in 2010, less than two weeks after an earthquake devastated the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince, leaving 200,000 to 400,000 Haitians dead and tens of thousands of homes destroyed.

Granting TPS is a declaration by the U.S. that conditions in a particular country are so life-threatening that Washington won't send people back to that country and will let those immigrants legally live and work here. The TPS status usually lasts for 18 months; the declaration for Haitians has been repeatedly extended up to now.

The acting head of Citizenship and Immigration Services, James McCament, recommended to Secretary Kelly that the TPS should be removed for Haiti because "over all, circumstances in the country have continued on an upward trajectory since the 2010 earthquake." (New York Times, April 30)

However, even the Times editorial recognized McCament's statement as nonsense. In 2016, Hurricane Matthew devastated southwest Haiti, the country's major food-producing area. It destroyed 175,000 homes, killed tens of thousands of livestock, wiped out crops and flattened plantations, many of which take years to become productive.

Before Hurricane Matthew hit, infected troops of the U.N. military occupation force called Minustah introduced cholera into Haiti. At least 10,000 Haitians have died of this disease and hundreds of thousands have been sickened.

The government's recommendation to lift TPS for Haitians coincides with that to remove the TPS granted to Liberians, Guineans and Sierra Leoneans due to the 2014-16 Ebola epidemic in those countries. When taken together, these recommendations condemn the administration for obvious racism.

The uncertainty over Haitians' status is causing a lot of anxiety in that community. Especially in New York, New Jersey and Florida, where many members of the Haitian diaspora live, there have been meetings where alternatives have been discussed. The weekly newspaper Haiti-Liberté covered one such "know your rights meeting" in its April 26 issue.

It has taken a while for a reaction to this deportation threat by the Trump administration to develop in the Haitian community. During his election campaign, Trump attempted to court Haitian support, since Haitians were aware of the

great damage that Bill Clinton and Hillary Clinton's actions had produced in Haiti.

Nana Brantuo, policy manager for the Black Alliance for Just Immigration, told the Bay View National Black Newspaper on April 26: "Considering the current Haitian migrant crisis on the U.S.-Mexico border along with the trials — post Hurricane Matthew — that continue to impede the progress of Haiti's national development, stripping 50,000 Haitian nationals of TPS status prioritizes them for removal and raises major concerns around the readiness of Haiti to handle such a large number of deportees."

While conditions in Port-au-Prince might have recovered to the same deplorable level where they were before the earthquake, southwest Haiti is still reeling from Hurricane Matthew. Haiti remains in crisis, and should not have to cope with 50,000 additional deportees expelled from the U.S. □

## Gabriela celebrates 'Ten years of serving the people'

Special to Workers World  
New York City

The New York Chapter of Gabriela (General Assembly Binding Women for Reforms, Integrity, Equality, Leadership and Action) — formerly known as Filipinas for Rights and Empowerment — held its 10th anniversary celebration on April 29 in Manhattan with talks, videos, spoken word, music and dance. The room was decorated with beautiful banners and placards highlighting Gabriela campaigns since 2007.

This mass women's group, founded in the Philippines in 1984, has chapters all over the world, including in U.S. cities from New York to Los Angeles. Its name is in honor of Gabriela Silang, a revolutionary Filipina leader who fought against Spain's brutal colonial rule in the Philippines in the mid-1700s.

A keynote address was given by Monica Moorehead, a co-coordinator of the



Gabriela members, April 29.

International Working Women's Day Coalition in New York City, which was honored with a Modern Day Gabriela Award, along with our groups.

Moorehead stated, "Wherever Gabriela has a presence, they never hesitate to ex-

press solidarity with the struggles on a local and national level, be it Black Lives Matter, Standing Rock, Fight for \$15 and, of course, the plight of migrants. Gabriela has a clear understanding of the global role of the class struggle inside the bel-

ly of the beast, especially the struggle against white supremacy and its connection to worldwide struggles, including in the Philippines, where the struggle for worker and peasant liberation from U.S. imperialism is at such a high level." □

WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD



# PUERTO RICO ON THE MOVE

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Even before International Workers’ Day — May Day — a very important advance had been made in Puerto Rico: unity in action. Trade unions and movements ranging from students, environment, women, LGBTQ and other sectors were actively promoting a National Strike on May 1.

Social organizations used all means at their disposal: social networks, radio announcements, awareness-raising demonstrations and concerts in shopping malls and other open spaces, street theater, stickers, distribution of informative flyers, painting on walls and more. Groups of young people came to offices employing many people to inform them of the danger threatening the country.

The general slogan was a call to the people: Join the struggle!

This May Day, Puerto Rico will not simply commemorate the Chicago martyrs. No! It will be a day to pick up the flag of struggle! Now at stake in the Puerto Rican archipelago is the very life of its people, and those people have decided to fight back. They refuse to allow their lives and the future of generations to be mere collateral in a commercial transaction.

### What is the struggle?

The fight is against a perfect storm of attacks at all levels against the working class. It is a struggle against the attempt of big capital to destroy Puerto Rico and rebuild it for capital’s benefit.

In 2016 the U.S. Congress passed the PROMESA Law (Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act), imposing an unelected Fiscal Control Board (referred to as the “Junta”) that automatically became the real, dictatorial government over Puerto Rico. The Junta has already implemented many measures outlined by the International Monetary Fund and contained in the 2015 Kruger Plan. Both the FCB/Junta and the Kruger Plan are the result of the capitalists’ interest in imposing austerity measures to ensure payment of an illegitimate and odious public debt of \$74 billion.

The FCB counts on the unconditional collaboration of the current Puerto Rican government, under Gov. Ricardo Roselló, whose Partido Nuevo Progresista actively promotes statehood. Roselló is a colonial governor on his knees, submissive to the empire’s demands. A toothless legislature has endorsed all criminal measures coming from La Fortaleza, the governor’s palace, almost without amendments.

The PNP government presented a devastating Fiscal Plan to satisfy the appetite of the bondholders, and the FCB approved it. The government submitted the most destructive measures to the Puerto Rican Legislature for approval. The plan will significantly increase the people’s cost of living while cutting salaries and services. In other words, it’s the obscene strangulation of a people.

The legislature quickly passed the measures without a public hearing, behind closed doors. The first law was the 2017 privatizing Act No. 1, designed to amend the Public-Private Partnerships Act. According to economist Argeo Quiñones, “the concept of PPPA in Puerto Rico has been distorted.” (cb.pr, Feb. 10)

Instead of being a union of efforts between the public and the private sectors, PPPA allows the sale of profitable public properties so private capital can grab windfall profits in the millions. Profitable

public possessions are being bankrupted and sold “at firesale prices.” (cb.pr, Feb. 10)

The legislature also approved “labor reform” through the Law of Transformation and Labor Flexibilization (Act No. 4 of 2017), under the pretext of stimulating the economy. This law affects new workers in the private sector, pitting them against current workers. As its name gloomily indicates, the law represents a loss of rights workers had won, such as the eight-hour day, one of the achievements commemorated on May Day. For new workers, the law cuts wages, vacation and sick days; allows less time to claim compensation after dismissal; reduces the Christmas bonus; and extends workers’ probation period.

Also passed was the Single Employer’s Law (Act No. 8), affecting the public sector. This establishes the government as a single employer with “flexibility” to move workers from one agency to another, even to the private sector. Workers who are moved would lose protections won under collective bargaining agreements, as well as their accumulated employment time.

### Law of Compliance deals final blow

The final blow was passed April 27: the Law of Compliance with the Fiscal Plan of the Government. Losses to the working

class include: disregard of collective bargaining agreements; limiting holidays to 15; loss of payment for sick days or unused holidays; no paid over-

time; immunity of government officials and bosses from damages; reassignment of employees without prior consultation.

While the FCB cut income for the whole working class, it imposed more taxes in all categories: sales, services, permit applications, etc. Traffic fines will increase by 70 percent and tolls increase. Subsidies for municipalities are cut or suspended, a highly detrimental measure because municipalities care directly for the needs of the residents. Allocations will be lost for various programs, from art, culture and sports to security and programs for the protection of women.

Other cuts include \$1 billion from health care, reduction of pensions by 10 percent and closure of hundreds of schools. A cut of more than \$600 million is imposed on the budget of the only public university, the University of Puerto Rico.

This institution, with 11 campuses throughout the island, is public and therefore offers the poorest sectors of the population the opportunity to obtain quality education at low cost. It also contributes to Puerto Rican cultural development as a center of democratic debates on various topics. It’s a source of economic growth in small cities. Unlike private universities, it contributes to Puerto Rico’s development by preparing professionals oriented to serving the needs of the country, not enhancing their “market value.”

UPR is a research center that serves not only Puerto Rico but various agencies in the U.S. For example, many UPR graduates are actively recruited by NASA. The UPR is the very future of

the country, and its destruction would devastate the country.

### Student strike

Students and faculty of the UPR understand their university’s importance. The Río Piedras Campus — the largest one — has been on indefinite strike since March

28. Democratic assemblies have been held in which up to 10,000 students have participated. Now eight of the 11 other campuses have joined the strike — a continual mobilization that has attracted the support of the Puerto Rican Association of University Teachers (APPU), other unions and multiple social organizations.

The students are struggling not only for public education. They are struggling for the entire people and against the FCB/Junta and the destructive measures driven by the government. The students demand the debt be audited, which the government and the FCB have prevented, even going so far as eliminating the Board for the Independent Integral Audit.

“Audit the debt” has become the battle cry, as the debt is known to have been contracted by corrupt means. Both Puerto Rican electoral parties, alternating in government, have been guilty, along with U.S. banks and financial agencies such as Santander, Wells Fargo, UBS and others. The original plan to establish the FCB was presented under the previous administration, the Partido Popular Democrático.

The government accuses the demonstrators of being “delinquents.” The students respond by saying, “We are citizens, not criminals.” The government has stepped up repressive measures, appointing Hector Pesquera, a former Puerto Rican police chief who worked for more than 25 years at the FBI, as head of a new Department of Homeland Security. The government knows very well that nefarious measures which strangle the people will arouse great opposition, not just from students, and is preparing to criminalize protest.

The consequences of these measures are unimaginable. States in the U.S. are already stealing workers and specialized personnel from Puerto Rico. Along with the brain drain of scientists to NASA and hospital centers, U.S. departments of education are going to Puerto Rico to recruit teachers for New York, Texas, Florida and elsewhere. The city of Baltimore went to Puerto Rico to recruit cops!

As the archipelago of Puerto Rico is emptied of its most valuable resources, huge tax-exempt incentives encourage U.S. millionaires to move there. Meanwhile, cuts are said to be necessary, yet millions are available for “consulting.” U.S. “experts” are recruited to “restructure” the island. Roselló appointed Julia Keleher, a Philadelphia-based consultant, as Secretary of Education, with a salary of more than \$120,000 for six months. Another



PHOTO: THE NEW DAY

person brought from the U.S., Andrea Bonime Blanc, is paid \$750 an hour as the FCB ethics officer!

### What role for Puerto Rico?

Why use these attacks to destroy Puerto Rico at this particular time? As a colony, Puerto Rico has served the empire’s interests and needs as they evolved. Geographically, Puerto Rico’s location has been useful to U.S. military interests. The island has also served as a huge sugar plantation and a center for pharmaceutical production, oil refineries and technology. Now, when capitalism is in its declining phase, what role will Puerto Rico be forced to play?

In response to this question, Luis Pedraza Leduc, of the Union Coordinator and ProSol UTIER (UTIER Solidarity Project), offered this analysis to Workers World-Mundo Obrero:

“I believe that the debt issue was used to one, effectively cash in on and two, to restructure the government through a giant project to privatize energy, water, roads and land. This project in the Caribbean is part of U.S. political interest in a nearby market, which also involves their interest in Venezuela and Cuba.

“I believe that the economic model does not necessarily need a colonial government, but rather the penetration of capital in various forms: PPPs (Public-Private Partnerships), loans, bonds, technical advice and opening markets to capital. Puerto Rico will be the showcase of capitalism.”

When the attack is so monumental, that is not the time to go on the defensive and answer one attack at a time.

It is time to go on the offensive so that the people decide. And when there is an attempt to criminalize the Resistance, it is necessary to expose, stronger than ever, U.S. crimes against the Puerto Rican people.

Unite our forces! And as our national hero, Don Rafael Cancel Miranda, says, “We will reach the goal sooner on our feet than on our knees.”

Active solidarity for the Boricua People in struggle!

Audit the debt and jail the guilty!  
No to repression of the movement!  
Long live the workers’ struggle!  
Long live free Puerto Rico!



## El capitalismo n un callejón sin salida

Fred Goldstein utiliza las leyes de la acumulación capitalistade Marx, y la tasa decreciente de ganancia, para demostrar por qué el capitalismo global ha llegado finalmente a un punto de inflexión.

For more information on these books and other writings by the author, Fred Goldstein, go to [LowWageCapitalism.com](http://LowWageCapitalism.com)

Available at all major online booksellers.





# WORKERS WORLD editorial

## Defend science and the environment

Workers World newspaper supported and Workers World Party members participated in both the Earth Day March for Science on April 22 and the Climate March a week later. We stand with those who fight Trump and his cohorts’ attempts to ruthlessly slash crucial scientific research, like the cuts to the Environmental Protection Agency that will only increase the devastating impacts of global warming.

As Marxists, we recognize that scientists are workers and that math and science are essential to understanding and fighting against the insatiable and destructive capitalist drive for profits. Scientists are also fundamental to constructing a “people before profits” society that puts the health of the planet and all of its people first.

On Earth Day, the March for Science mobilized thousands of people at more than 600 locations around the globe. There were marches and rallies from Portland, Maine, to Ketchikan, Alaska; from Helsinki, Finland, to Santiago, Chile. Scientists from all fields — researchers, teachers, nurses, doctors, journalists, including Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous women, men and LGBTQ people — rallied and marched to protest the systematic campaign to erode, defund and discredit science itself by Trump and his big-business backers.

Just one week later, more than 250,000 gathered in Washington, D.C., for the Climate March, enduring record 90-degree-plus temperatures. Gathering at Capitol Hill, the protesters marched down Pennsylvania Avenue. As they passed the Trump hotel, they shouted “Shame!” and “We will not go away, welcome to your 100 days!” Sister marches were held across the globe.

The day before the march, Boss Trump forced the Environmental Protection Agency to take down its site devoted to the science of climate change. The Trump austerity budget is designed to strip billions of dollars of funding for a whole array of medical, climate and educational research, while fattening the Pentagon budget and giving huge tax breaks to the banks and oligarchs.

For Workers World, promoting science also means promoting the social science of Marxism. We cite here from Frederick Engels’ work “Socialism: Utopian and Scientific,” published first in 1880 — 137 years ago.

“Active social forces work exactly like natural forces: blindly, forcibly, destructively, so long as we do not understand, and reckon with, them. But, when once we understand them, when once we grasp their action, their direction, their effects, it depends only upon ourselves to subject them more and more to our own will, and, by means of them, to reach our own ends. And this holds quite especially of the mighty productive forces of today. As long as we obstinately refuse to understand the nature and the character of these social means of action — and this understanding goes against the grain of the capitalist mode of production, and its defenders — so long these forces are at work in spite of us, in opposition to us, so long they master us, as we have shown above in detail.

“But when once their nature is understood, they can, in the hands of the producers working together, be transformed from master demons into willing servants. The difference is as that between the destructive force of electricity in the lightning in the storm, and electricity under command in the telegraph and the voltaic arc; the difference between a conflagration, and fire working in the service of humanity. With this recognition, at last, of the real nature of the productive forces of today, the social anarchy of production gives place to a social regulation of production upon a definite plan, according to the needs of the community and of each individual.”

The production of goods and services in today’s capitalist society is a cooperative endeavor of millions of people, created and enhanced by centuries of scientific, mathematical and technical research. But the capitalist social structure rules over this productive system “blindly, forcibly, destructively” in its mad drive for more and more profits.

For Marx and Engels and all revolutionary socialists, then, math and science are tools for the workers and oppressed not only to overturn this rotten system, but also to reorganize production “upon a definite plan” that fulfills human needs. □

## Climate marchers say ‘Stop climate change, end capitalism!’

By Kris Balderas Hamel

While some corporate-owned media predicted that “protest fatigue” might beset climate marchers, especially those who had been on the March for Science one week earlier, the April 29 actions drew crowds all around the United States. The date coincided with Trump’s 100th day in office. Numerous demands were made to keep and expand the many environmental protections he and his administration are bent on destroying.

Protesters marched in record heat — 95 degrees — in Washington, D.C., and in blizzard conditions in Denver. Dire warnings that time is running out to reverse the damage caused by climate change also called on people to “rise up” and stop the devastation.

Organizers say the D.C. march drew 200,000 participants, more than expected, despite the intense heat. Some 50 calls for medical assistance were made by marchers.

More than 375 other marches took place in the U.S., and many more worldwide. Workers World Party members and friends organized militant, anti-war, socialist-oriented contingents in several marches around the country. Following are reports from activists in several cities.

### Indigenous peoples lead the way

Led by a contingent of Indigenous people from around the U.S., thousands marched through Washington, D.C. The march began at the Capitol and circled the White House, ending at the Washington Monument, where a rally opened with Native speakers acknowledging the Water Protectors at Standing Rock in North Dakota.

Raising many issues besides climate change, Workers World Party members led a boisterous anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist contingent with banners proclaiming “System change, not climate change — Stop capitalist pollution with socialist revolution” and calling on marchers to resist imperialist war against Syria, north Korea and Venezuela.

The WWP contingent chanted “No hate, no fear, immigrants are welcome here!” and “Money for jobs,



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE  
Ron Whyte, Christa Rivers, Pam Africa, Charles Whalen and Regina Brave.

not for war — Hands off Korea!” It swelled during the day, drawing others who were against capitalism. Many marchers stopped to talk and take pictures next to the WWP banners.

One middle-aged African-American resident of D.C. told activists how her mother was a socialist until the day she died and took her daughter to many marches. A young African-American man from Connecticut joined the contingent with a handmade sign reading “Stop capitalism — It is killing our planet.”

### Against Big Oil and pipelines

At least 5,000 people in Denver braved 28-degree weather with blowing snow during the People’s Climate March. Young and old activists understand not only that oil, gas and methane are heating the planet, but that oil pipelines crossing the land cause danger to congested human communities and water supplies. The oil companies are taking back the last remaining lands of Indigenous peoples by using the courts and so-called “democratic” government to profit, no matter the cost to the people.

Colorado state government caters to the wishes of the oil companies. They advertise how safe and controlled their operations are, yet huge amounts of methane are poisoning the air. A methane explosion on April 27 in Firestone, Colo., blew up a house, killing two people. Nothing remained of the structure, which was vaporized. Anadarko Petroleum immediately closed down 3,000 wells, yet said there was no danger.

In Philadelphia, hundreds of environmentalists, Standing Rock supporters and others concerned about global warming marched with banners and homemade signs. WWP member Morgan Robinson spoke at the beginning rally at City Hall, focusing on the need to oppose imperialist wars and the world’s worst polluter of greenhouse gas emissions: the Pentagon.

Organized by Philly with Standing Rock #NoDAPL, the march was followed by a panel discussion featuring Grandmother Regina Brave and Charles Whalen, Lakota activists instrumental in the resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline; Pam Africa of MOVE; Christa Rivers of WWP; and Ron Whyte of Deep Green Philly.

### ‘Communities will lead the change’

The climate change march in Portland, Ore., was 3,000 strong, led by people of color, those from low-income communities, and rural and tribal people. “Our communities must lead the efforts to address climate change,” said march organizers.

Speakers addressed intersecting issues facing frontline communities in the struggle for climate justice. These included housing, transportation, clean energy, access to green spaces and food, and the struggles for workers’ rights, immigrant rights and the rights of other marginalized communities. The crowd agreed that those facing environmental racism and injustice must be at the center of the struggle for climate action.

March organizers were OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon and the Oregon Just Transition Alliance. The OPAL statement said: “Climate change is only a symptom of much deeper crises that are happening worldwide — the ecological crisis, economic crisis, and the crisis of empire. These crises come from the current dominant economy, created by a system that only works for a few [and] which relies on exploitation and extraction of resources. We must create a system that works for everyone, based on cooperation, close communities, and regenerative processes.”

### ‘No wall! Love the Earth!’

Thousands gathered at the San Diego County administration building demanding the Trump administration take action on climate change. The People’s Climate March banner was raised in the front entrance as the crowd cheered. After a rally came a march beginning and ending at Waterfront Park. People carried signs, drummed, danced and chanted “Rise up! No wall, resist! Love the Earth! All children deserve clean air!”

Andre Powell, Viviana Weinstein, Joe Piette, Lyn Neeley and Gloria Verdieu contributed to this article.



PHOTO: VIVIANA WEINSTEIN



WW PHOTO: DAVID CARD





Roanoke, Va.



Philadelphia



Los Angeles



Milwaukee

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

PHOTO: RON GOCHER

New York City



WW PHOTO: GREG BUTTERFIELD



Baltimore

BALTIMORE, WW PHOTOS: SHARON BLACK



Portland, Ore.

WW PHOTO: LYN NEELEY



Boston



Raleigh, N.C.



Detroit



Syracuse, N.Y.

CHICAGO, WW PHOTO: JEFF SARLES; SYRACUSE, NY, PHOTO: GARY WALT

Chicago

Continued from page 1

marily from the poorer workers and farmers of Europe. Now, they come from all over the world, but mostly from Latin America.

#### Trump hate-mongering backfires

Certainly, none of this is lost on Donald Trump and his billionaire cronies, who use anti-immigrant venom as a wedge to bust up the fightback potential of today's working class. He knows that immigrant workers are key to many struggles against blood-sucking bosses like himself, and he is using the power of

the state to try to isolate them and sow terror and retreat in their ranks.

Instead, his vicious attacks on immigrants and so many others have aroused whole layers of the population. Since the election, and especially since Trump's inauguration, literally millions have come out into the streets to defy his hate-mongering efforts to turn back the clock.

This May Day reflected all that. The marches and rallies resonated to a wide range of issues confronting workers, students, the unemployed, the homeless, people of color, women, LGBTQ people and

those dismayed by environmental destruction, endless imperialist wars abroad and the militarization of oppressed schools and communities.

As a hand-lettered placard carried in one of the huge women's marches in January said: "Yuck! Too many issues to fit on this sign." May Day covered them all. It was also the place to raise all these monumental issues within the context of building the broadest united front of resistance based in the working class and led by the most oppressed.

International Workers' Day has always been aimed against capitalism and the tiny fraction of the population that now controls half the wealth in the world. That May Day is finally being embraced once again by workers in the U.S., especially by the young who will shape our future, is bringing comfort and hope to our sisters and brothers on every continent.

Reports of many May Day marches will appear in the next WW.





Primero de mayo en la Universidad de Puerto Rico (UPR.)

## PUERTO RICO EN MARCHA

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

Un día antes del Día de las y los Trabajadores —el Primero de Mayo— en Puerto Rico ya se ha logrado un avance importantísimo: unidad en acción. Los sindicatos, y toda una gama de movimientos estudiantiles, ambientales, de mujeres, lgbt, y otros sectores, han estado activamente promoviendo el Paro Nacional del 1 de mayo.

Han usado todos los medios a su alcance: redes sociales, anuncios por la radio, manifestaciones de adhesión en los centros comerciales, teatro callejero, conciertos de concientización, pegatinas, distribución de volantes informativos, pintadas en paredes, etc. Grupos de jóvenes acuden a oficinas donde hay congregadas muchas personas para informarle al pueblo del peligro que corre el país. La consigna general es un llamado al pueblo: ¡Únete a la lucha!

Porque este Primero de Mayo en Puerto Rico no será uno de celebrar la victoria de los mártires de Chicago, no; será uno de retomar esa bandera de lucha porque lo que se juega ahora en el archipiélago boricua es la propia vida de su pueblo, y ese pueblo ha decidido luchar. No se resignan a que sus vidas y el futuro de generaciones sean una simple colateral en una transacción mercantil.

### ¿Cuál es la lucha?

La lucha es contra una tormenta de ataques a todos los niveles contra la clase trabajadora. Podría resumirse como la lucha contra el intento del gran capital de destruir el archipiélago de Puerto Rico y reconstruirlo para su beneficio.

Desde que el Congreso de EUA pasó la Ley PROMESA (Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act) el pasado año imponiendo una Junta de Control Fiscal no electa que se convierte automáticamente en el real gobierno dictatorial de PR, se ha ido avanzando en aplicar muchas de las medidas delineadas por el FMI contenidas en el Plan Kruger de 2015 que se presentó bajo la pasada administración del PPD. Tanto el Plan Kruger como la JCF son el resultado de los intereses capitalistas por imponer medidas de austeridad que aseguren el pago de una deuda pública ilegítima y odiosa de \$74 miles de millones.

Para esto, la JCF cuenta con la incondicional colaboración del gobierno de turno de Ricardo Roselló, del partido PNP que promueve activamente la estadidad. Un gobernante colonial arrodillado y sumiso frente a las exigencias del imperio. Acompañado por una legislatura sin dientes que ha avalado casi sin enmiendas, todas las criminales medidas que surgen de la Fortaleza — casa del gobernador.

En una larga pero rápida serie de presentaciones por el gobierno de un Plan Fiscal que satisfaga el apetito de los bonistas, un devastador Plan finalmente fue aprobado por la JCF. Para cumplir con este plan, el gobierno ha sometido las más devastadoras medidas y proyectos de ley que aumentan significativamente el costo de vida del pueblo, a la vez que recortan salarios y servicios. Es decir, la obscena estrangulación de un pueblo.

Estas leyes ya han sido aprobadas rápidamente por la Legislatura de PR sin

ninguna vista pública, y con reuniones a puertas cerradas. La primera, presentada a pocos días de asumir su puesto de gobernador, es la privatizadora Ley 1 para enmendar la Ley de Alianzas Público Privadas (APPs). Según el economista Argeo Quiñones, “la idea de las APP en Puerto Rico “se ha desvirtuado”, (cb.pr, 10 de febrero) pues en lugar de tratarse de una unión de esfuerzos entre el sector público y el privado, se ha convertido en una venta de bienes públicos rentables para recibir un pago millonario de golpe.

Entonces, bienes públicos rentables están siendo llevados a la bancarrota para luego venderse “a precios de quemazón”. (cb.pr, 10 de febrero)

Luego aprobaron la reforma laboral, la Ley de Transformación y Flexibilización Laboral (Ley Núm. 4 de 2017), con la excusa de estimular la economía. Pero como su nombre tenebrosamente indica, esta ley que afecta a trabajadoras/es nuevos en el sector privado, representa un retroceso y la pérdida de derechos adquiridos, como el de las ocho horas, uno de los logros que se conmemoran el Primero de Mayo. Trae además entre otras imposiciones, la reducción de salarios y de días de vacaciones y enfermedad, menos tiempo para reclamar compensación luego de despido, disminución del bono de navidad, y la extensión del período de probatoria, además de dividir las/os trabajadoras en una misma empresa.

La próxima ley en aprobarse fue la Ley 8 del Empleador Único que afecta al sector público. Esta establece al gobierno como empleador único. Facilita la flexibilidad del gobierno para mover a las/os trabajadoras de una agencia a otra, que podría ser incluso hacia el sector privado. Las/os trabajadoras movidos perderían la protección que tenían bajo los convenios colectivos, además del tiempo acumulado, entre otros beneficios y derechos.

Pero es la última ley aprobada el pasado 27 de abril que da la estocada final: la Ley para el Cumplimiento con el Plan Fiscal del Gobierno. Entre las pérdidas para la clase trabajadora están: dejar sin efecto convenios colectivos; limitar días feriados a 15; se pierde pago por días de enfermedad o vacaciones no utilizados; no se pagarán horas extras; el gobierno y los funcionarios tendrán inmunidad por daños o perjuicios; el patrono podrá reasignar sin consultar al empleado, etc.

Mientras se recortan los ingresos a toda la clase trabajadora, se imponen más impuestos en todas las categorías: de ventas, de servicios, de solicitud de permisos, etc. Aumentan en un 70 por ciento las multas de tráfico y aumentan los peajes. Se recortan o suspenden los subsidios para los municipios. Esta última medida es altamente perjudicial porque son los municipios quienes atienden directamente las necesidades de sus residentes. Se perderán las asignaciones para diversos programas, desde arte, cultura y deportes, hasta seguridad y programas de protección de la mujer.

Otros recortes son: Mil millones de dólares a salud; reducción del 10 por ciento en pensiones; reducción de jornadas laborales y cierre de cientos de escuelas.

Y el golpe mortal, la imposición de un recorte de más de \$600 millones al presupuesto de la única universidad pública,

la Universidad de Puerto Rico (UPR).

La importancia de esta institución, que tiene 11 recintos a través de la isla, no es solamente que es pública y por lo tanto ofrece la oportunidad de obtener una educación de calidad a bajo costo a los sectores más pobres. Contribuye además al desarrollo cultural boricua; es un centro de debates democráticos sobre diversos aspectos; es fuente de economía en ciudades pequeñas; contribuye a la preparación de profesionales para el desarrollo de PR, orientada al servicio y las necesidades del país, no por su valor en el mercado — a diferencia de las universidades privadas. Es un centro de investigación que sirve no solo a PR, sino a diversas agencias incluso en EUA. Por ejemplo, muchas/os graduados de la UPR son activamente reclutados por la NASA. La UPR es el futuro mismo del país, y su destrucción sería la destrucción del país.

### Huelga estudiantil

Así lo entiende el estudiantado y la facultad de la UPR. Por eso desde el 28 de marzo, el Recinto de Río Piedras — el más grande - ha estado en huelga, ahora indefinida. Han celebrado asambleas democráticas donde han participado hasta 10,000 estudiantes. Otros recintos se han sumado, 8 de los 11. La huelga es una constante movilización que ha captado el apoyo del sindicato de profesoras/es de la misma UPR, la Asociación Puertorriqueña de Profesores Universitarios (APPU), de otros sindicatos y de múltiples organizaciones.

Pero no solo están luchando por la educación pública. Su lucha es la lucha por el pueblo. En contra de la JCF y las destructivas medidas propulsadas por el gobierno. Exigen que se audite la deuda, a lo que el gobierno — y la JCF - se ha negado eliminando incluso la Junta para la Auditoría integral independiente. Auditar la deuda se ha convertido en el grito de batalla, pues se sabe que la deuda se contrajo por medios corruptos donde ambos partidos que se alternan en el gobierno han sido culpables. Además de bancos y agencias financieras como el Santander, Wells Fargo, UBS y otros.

El gobierno acusa a las/os manifestantes de “delincuentes”, a lo que el estudiantado responde diciendo “somos ciudadanos, no somos criminales”.

El gobierno sin embargo, ha aumentado las medidas represivas, llegando incluso a nombrar un ex jefe de la policía de PR que había trabajado por más de 25 años en el FBI, Héctor Pesquera, como jefe del nuevo Departamento de Seguridad Nacional.

Sabe muy bien el gobierno que las nefastas medidas que estrangulan al pueblo despertarán un gran oposición, no solo de estudiantes, y se está preparando criminalizando la protesta.

Las consecuencias de todas estas medidas son inimaginables. Se seguirá el robo de trabajadoras/es y personal especializado por diferentes estados de los EUA. Aparte del robo de científicos por la NASA y centros hospitalarios, hay una proliferación de Departamentos de Educación que van a PR a reclutar maestras/os, entre ellos, desde Texas, de la ciudad de Buffalo en NY, de Florida, etc. ¡La ciudad de Baltimore fue a reclutar policías!

Pero mientras se vacía la isla de boricuas, se incentiva la residencia de millonarios de los EUA por medio de enormes incentivos de exención contributiva.

Otro aspecto que hay que señalar es la contratación obscena de “consultores” o “expertos” de los EUA. Roselló nombró como secretaria de educación nada menos que a Julia Keleher, una consultora oriunda de Filadelfia con un sueldazo de más de \$120,000 por seis meses. No solo es la secretaria de educación, sino que también será la asesora de reestructuración de ese mismo departamento.

Otros contratos recientes que son bofetadas al pueblo - cuando se dice que hay que hacer recortes pero se encuentran millones para consultorías - son la contratación de Natalie Jaresko, nacida en Chicago de origen ucraniano, quien fue empleada del Departamento de Estado para intervenir en la economía de Ucrania. Ahora es la directora ejecutiva de la JCF. A estos contratos se añade el de otra estadounidense, Andrea Bonime Blanc, con un sueldo de \$750 por hora como ioficial de ética de la JCF!

La pregunta queda del por qué ahora de estos ataques para destruir a Puerto Rico. Como colonia, PR ha servido los intereses del imperio según variaban sus necesidades. Desde la situación geográfica de PR para los intereses militares de EUA, como enorme plantación azucarera, como centro de producción farmacéutica o de refinerías petroquímicas, o de tecnología. Ahora, en esta fase cuando el capitalismo está en su fase decadente, ¿cuál será el papel que quieren de PR?

Workers World-Mundo Obrero le preguntó a Luis Pedraza Leduc, de la Coordinadora Sindical y ProSol UTIER (Proyecto de Solidaridad de la UTIER).

**WW-Mundo Obrero:** Por qué piensas que EUA ha lanzado este enorme ataque a PR en estos momentos? ¿qué interés tienen para PR ahora?

**Luis Pedraza Leduc:** “Creo que el tema de la deuda se aprovechó para (1) efectivamente cobrar y (2) reestructurar el gobierno mediante un proyecto gigante de privatizar energía, agua, carreteras y tierras. Este proyecto en el caribe tiene un mercado cercano dentro de los intereses políticos que son Venezuela y Cuba.

Creo que el modelo económico considera que no necesita de un gobierno colonial necesariamente, sino de la penetración del capital de formas diversas, APP, préstamos, bonos, asesoramiento técnico y abrir mercados al capital. PR será la vitrina del capitalismo”.

Cuando el ataque es tan monumental, no es hora de pelear a la defensiva ataque por ataque. Es hora de la ofensiva de la forma que el pueblo decida. Y cuando se quiere criminalizar a la resistencia, hay que exponer más fuerte que nunca, los crímenes de EUA contra el pueblo boricua. Unir fuerzas. Y como dice nuestro héroe nacional Don Rafael Cancel Miranda: “Se llega más pronto a la meta de pie que de rodillas”.

**¡Solidaridad activa para el pueblo boricua en lucha! ¡Viva la lucha obrera! ¡Auditoría integral de la deuda y cárcel a los culpables!**

**¡No a la represión del movimiento!**

**¡No a los recortes de la UPR!**

**¡Viva PR libre!**