MUNDO OBRERO
WORKERS WORLD

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Victoria magisterio de Detroit
Racismo de Yale y Reparación 12

MAY DAY AROUND THE WORLD 9

To stop police killings

#Frisco500 occupy City Hall

By Dave Welsh
San Francisco

Inspired by the stamina of the "Frisco Five" hunger strikers, hundreds of chanting supporters occupied the rotunda and grand staircase inside City Hall for seven hours on May 6. Their demand, "We won't leave City Hall until the mayor fires Greg Suhr," refers to the top cop complicit in a string of police murders of Black and Brown people in the city.

Dubbed the #Frisco500, the protesters held their ground after the 8 p.m. closing time. Then, in a two-hour struggle, baton-wielding sheriff's deputies finally succeeded in shoving, hitting, poking, pepper-spraying and dragging them all from City Hall by 10:30. There were 33 arrests and many injuries.

Protesters cited Chief Suhr's long record of justifying the police killing spree, even in circumstances — as in the cases of Luis Gongora, Mario Woods, Alex Nieto, Kenneth Harding and Amilcar Perez-Lopez — where there was absolutely no justification for the use of lethal force.

Meanwhile, the Frisco Five — Cristina Gutierrez, her son Ilyich Sato, Ike Pinkston, Sellassie Blackwell and Edwin Lindo — were hospitalized after two weeks with no solid food. A day after the battle at City Hall, they decided to end their 17-day hunger strike, at the urging of their supporters, with a call to step up the struggle to end police impunity. "It started with five of us fasting outside the Mission Police Station. Now it's the #Frisco500," they said. "Up next is the #Frisco5000."

Four days earlier, 300 marched from Mission Station, led by the Frisco Five in wheelchairs pushed by medical students in white coats who'd been monitoring the fasters' condition. The marchers briefly took over the major intersection at Market and Van Ness, where a young Black singer gave a slow, moving interpretation of Sam Cooke's "A Change Is Gonna Come." By the time they reached City Hall, the crowd had swelled to nearly a thousand. A huge banner stretched across City Hall steps: "No Consequence, No Confidence. Stop Police Impunity." People chanted: "Back up, back up, we want our freedom, freedom. Racist-ass cops we don't need 'em, need 'em." Also, "How do you spell murder? SFPD" and "SFPD-KKK."

While the hunger strikers were upstairs in their wheelchairs, challenging the Board of Supervisors to take police murders seriously, people outside held a speakout. One said, "This has a long history. When the Black Panther Party was formed in Oakland, what were they doing? Trying to stop racist policing in the Bay Area." One person gave a possible reason for Democratic Mayor Ed Lee's inaction on the police: that he's under consideration to be ambassador to China if Hillary Clinton wins the election.

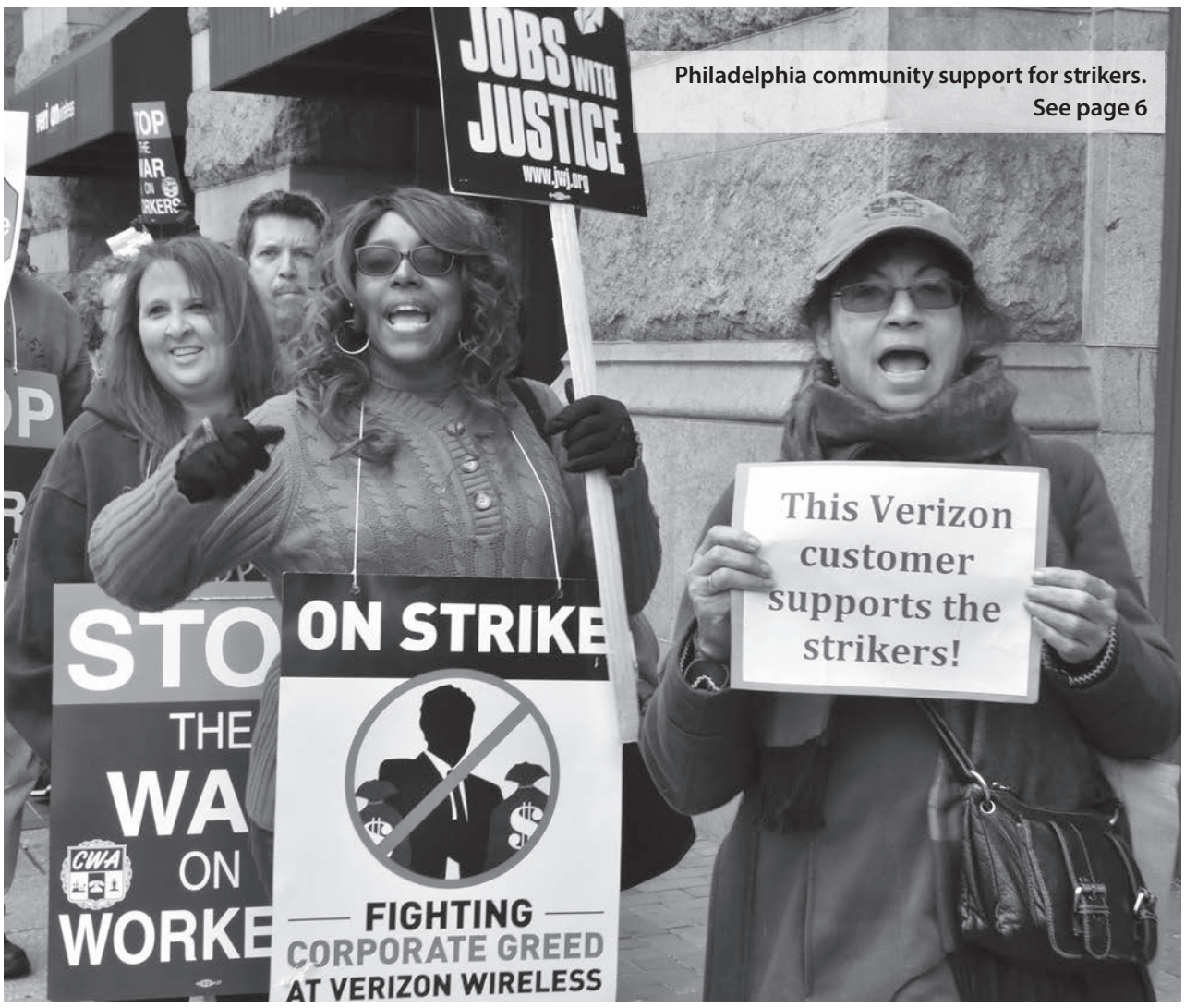
Art Sato, longtime jazz programmer at KPFA radio and father of one of the hunger strikers, said: "As a Japanese American born in a U.S. concentration camp, I want to say to my son, I'm proud of you. I'm proud of Asians for Black Lives." San Francisco-born, Filipino-American poet Tony Robles read a poem for the Frisco Five: "It took a hunger strike to make me feel alive in a city that feels dead. I'm proud to see the Frisco that I knew, once again."

The movement to fire Chief Suhr, stubbornly resist-

Continued on page 3

Sit-in at San Francisco City Hall.
PHOTO: GINA MADRID

Cross-country solidarity with Verizon workers



Philadelphia community support for strikers.
See page 6

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Tribute to Afeni Shakur 2

Baltimore vs police violence 3

Philadelphia jails children for life 4

What has happened to jobs? 7

Editorial: Solidarity with People's Korea 10

St. Denis 8 London 8 Greece 10 South Africa 11

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Panther 21 hero Afeni Shakur, presente!

By Lamont Lilly

Afeni Shakur

Afeni Shakur died at the age of 69 on May 2.

On April 2, 1969, 21 members of the Harlem Chapter of the Black Panther Party were formally indicted and charged with 156 counts of "conspiracy" to blow up subway and police stations, five local department stores, six railroads and the Bronx-based New York Botanical Garden.

By the early morning hours of April 2, mass sweeps were conducted citywide by combat squads of armed police. Law enforcement agencies, ranging from the CIA, FBI and U.S. Marshals to the New York State Police, worked simultaneously to coordinate assaults on Panther homes and community-based offices. After the raids, 10 Panther men and two Panther women were formally arrested, processed and quickly jailed. To anyone who supported radical politics in the late 1960s, there was no doubt that the indictment of the Panther New York 21 was a political and racist frame-up to not only "disrupt, discredit and destroy," but utterly dismantle the Black Panther Party from the inside out.

The absurd and excessive nature of such charges was clearly intended as a federal effort to pit chapters and regions against each other in a manner that would totally paralyze Panther party leadership. What these charges represented was a form of unprecedented legal repression, created as a structural alternative to break the party's stronghold, reputation and community base. For the Panthers who fortunately weren't murdered or assassinated, exiled or imprisoned, the courts became the ruling class's convenient and effective form of legal lynching, a straightjacket beyond the walls — a robbery of valuable time and resources.

Each member of the 21 was held on $100,000 bail, totaling over $2.1 million. It was not until January 1970 that the first Panther was able to post bail. That was 22-year-old Alice Faye Williams, better known as Afeni Shakur.

Self-appointed, Black anointed

In a grueling and tedious trial, Afeni Shakur (facing 300 years of prison time) daringly chose to be her own attorney in court, partly because financial resources were already razor-thin. Afeni, however, meticulously conducted her own legal research, her own interviews, as well as in-court cross examinations — fully realizing that "she would be the one serving, not the lawyers." She was the only Panther who served as her own counsel.

Here was a small-framed, impoverished Black woman from the backwoods of Lumberton, N.C., staring down a full team of New York state prosecutors — and outwitting a full cast of establishment-owned media outlets. Here was a single mother with no formal degree going legally toe to toe with COINTELPRO.

Despite the odds, after all the surveillance, warrantless wiretapping, infiltration and frame-ups, not one shred of state's evidence stood up in court. In their undying efforts to "discredit," it was revealed during the trial that the FBI had actually planted undercover infiltrators who, under oath, admitted their role as provocateurs.

Though the case of the Panther 21 was the longest trial in New York state history, on her own guts and wit, Afeni Shakur successfully secured her freedom. No money. No attorney. No privilege. Pregnant with her second child, Tupac Amaru Shakur. What Afeni was able to do in that courtroom was nothing short of miraculous. Magical. Mind blowing.

On May 12, 1971, after two years of legal proceedings, all 21 Panthers were acquitted of the charges. The jury needed a mere 45 minutes to see the truth.

Sister soldier, woman warrior

Afeni Shakur may have hailed from the Black Panther Party's esteemed Harlem Chapter, but her roots were in the Black Belt South. Viciously poor, but still mobile, her family moved to the Bronx when she was 11 years old. Her inquisitive affection for the Black Nationalist scene fit right in there.

Afeni first learned of the Black Panther Party at the corner of 125th Street and 7th Avenue while listening to BPP co-founder Bobby Seale deliver a speech. A dedicated soldier from the very beginning, Afeni always placed principle over profit, the people above her own individual desires. Black Panther Party member and New York 21 co-defendant Dhoruba Bin Wahad very warmly remembers Afeni as "the type of person that worked hard, who would stay up all night to get leaflets done."

Continued on the next page

WORKERS WORLD *this week*

★ **In the U.S.**

To stop police killing #Frisco500 occupy City Hall 1
Panther 21 hero Afeni Shakur, presente! 2
Detroiters to bank: Housing is a right! 3
Baltimore resistance to racist police attacks grows 3
Hundreds of youth serving life sentences 4
Justice for Jovan! 4
Workers Memorial Day fights for job safety 5
Palestinians speak of 'the Catastrophe' 5
No RE/MAX sales of Palestinian land! 5
Wide support for Verizon workers 6
On the picket line 6
Jobs, globalization and election promises 7
Gulf Coast faces spread of Zika 10
Detroit youth resist U.S. role in Syria 11

★ **Around the world**

Saint-Denis celebrates 10th anniversary of Rue Mumia 8
Sadiq Khan elected mayor of London 8
Millions celebrate International Workers Day 9
France: Workers battle anti-labor 'reforms' on May Day 9
Greek Parliament votes for new austerity 10
Behind internal struggle in South Africa 11

★ **Editorial**

Solidarity with People's Korea 10

★ **Noticias en Español**

Victoria magisterio de Detroit 12
Racismo de Yale y Reparación 12

MUNDO OBRERO WORKERS WORLD

Who we are & what we're fighting for

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

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

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

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

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Detroiters to bank: Housing is a right!

In her youth, Detroit resident Barbara Campbell was an associate of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Today, as a senior, she has become an anti-foreclosure activist. In a city that has become the country's foreclosure capital, Campbell is refusing to become a statistic.

Flagstar Bank has gone to court to have Campbell evicted from the home she purchased in 2006. After being diagnosed with cancer, she applied for a hardship-based mortgage modification. Campbell, who has had heart surgery, now has kidney failure and uses a wheelchair. She had been told to hold off on making payments while her application was being reviewed. Then the loan servicer, Nationstar, did an about-face, foreclosing on her home for failure to make payments. Since then, her home has been sold more than once, changing hands between Nationstar, Flagstar and Fannie Mae, which is owned by the federal government.

Campbell is fighting the eviction and is represented by the heroic people's lawyer, Vanessa Fluker.

On May 7, dozens of supporters picketed a branch of the bank, making it clear to Flagstar that Barbara Campbell is not alone. They chanted, "Housing is a right! Fight, fight, fight!" and "Dumpsters are for leaves, not the banker thieves!" — referring to the fact that, in Detroit, dumpsters are used to collect yard waste — as well as personal belongings during an eviction. The action was called by Detroit Eviction Defense. Members of the Moratorium Now! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions and Utility Shutoffs and several United Auto Workers locals joined the picket line. Campbell, who came to the protest with her son Garrett, thanked her community supporters.

Demonstrators held signs attacking Flagstar's claim to be a "community bank." Flagstar is owned by a Wall Street company that even Forbes magazine has labeled a "vulture investor." In 2014, the bank was charged by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau with "illegally blocking borrowers' attempts to save their homes." Flagstar paid penalties of $37 million and agreed to stop denying qualified homeowners a mortgage modification. This was a paper promise, as shown by their callous attempts to put a senior citizen with major health problems out on the street.

There is no end in sight to the foreclosure crisis, with tens of thousands in Detroit facing tax foreclosure and the banks continuing to steal people's homes. But the housing rights movement shows no signs of going away either.

— Report and photo by Martha Grevatt

Continued from page 2

Afeni was the kind of comrade who garnered respect from both the women and the men. As former Black Panther Jamal Joseph stated, "Afeni taught me more about being a man, more than any other man or woman." (nbcnews.com, May 3) As the only high school member of the Panther 21, Joseph very often looked to Afeni for guidance and leadership.

The name Afeni was given to her by a community elder from South Carolina, a descendant of the Yoruba tradition who chose the name Afeni meaning "lover of the people." And love the people is exactly what Afeni did. A dedicated community organizer, fearless warrior, activist, scholar, teacher and real-life revolutionary, Afeni Shakur gave her life to the people — to the full embodiment of Black Power, people power and, as the sisters say today, Black Girl Magic!

As we commemorate the mother of hip-hop's "Black Jesus," let us not forget the Black woman general who indubitably blazed her own legacy, who literally offered her life as a gift to the people and who taught her son, Tupac Amaru, to do the same. Farewell to the Black woman general who just joined Malcolm, Harriet, Ida. All power to the people! Black Power!

North Carolina-based activist Lamont Lilly is the 2016 Workers World Party Vice Presidential candidate. He recently served as a party organizer in Baltimore, Ferguson, Oakland, Boston and Philadelphia. In 2015, he was a U.S. delegate at the International Forum for Justice in Palestine in Beirut, Lebanon. He is currently working on a forthcoming debut publication, "Honor in the Ghetto" (Fall 2016). Follow him on Twitter @LamontLilly.

Resistance to racist police attacks grows

BALTIMORE Baltimore has become a national focus of protests against racist police murders and attacks. Here, Baltimore activists describe three recent events in which the Black community and its supporters mobilized in the fight to bring the police to justice.

On anniversary of rebellion, cops shoot 13-year-old

People gathered in East Baltimore on April 30 to demand justice for Dedric Colvin, a 13-year-old boy who had been shot two days earlier by plainclothes police officers. Colvin, who survived, was shot in the leg and shoulder during an encounter with police, who say he was carrying a basketball and a toy BB gun.

When his mother tried to assist her son, who was lying on the ground badly wounded, police responded by handcuffing her. They held her in the city jail before she was finally allowed to see her son at Johns Hopkins Hospital.

Protesters at the site of the shooting spoke out against police actions, opposing a "shoot first and ask questions later" policy when it comes to Black people in Baltimore. They contrasted what happened to Colvin with cases where police attempt to "talk down" white suspects. They also made it clear that police "were shooting to kill" in this case.

On the day after the shooting, Police Commissioner Kevin Davis blamed the 13-year-old and his mother for the police assault, questioning the boy's motives for walking in his own neighborhood with a basketball and a toy gun. Davis said the officers had "little choice."

After an hour of speeches about police brutality in Baltimore, activists led a march from the site of the shooting down Fayette Street to police headquarters. Chants of "Tell the truth and stop the lies! Our Black children don't have to die!" and "What do we want? Justice! When do we want it? Now!" rang out from the crowd. Many passing motorists honked and leaned out of windows to express their solidarity with the group.

This shooting occurred on April 28, the one-year anniversary of the Baltimore Uprising, which came in response to the police killing of Freddie Gray. One year later, many residents are left wondering what happened to the promises made to the community by police officials and local government. Protesters have said they are more committed than ever to fighting police brutality in Baltimore.

— Cody Webb

New medical report supports Tyrone West family's charge

Nearly three years ago, police in northeast Baltimore killed a 44-year-old African-American man. While the details surrounding the death of Tyrone West on July 18, 2013, are for the most part unknown, the story is all too familiar in the United States.

Police in an unmarked vehicle made West pull his car over merely for "suspicious activity." At some point, a struggle broke out in which the police attacked West with their batons, fists and pepper spray. The ordeal ultimately killed him.

In a typical cover-up, the medical examiner's report stated that West died from a heart attack due to summer heat and a "pre-existing heart condition" — not from excessive force by several police officers who beat him. The police who murdered him were then cleared of any wrongdoing and never charged with any crime.

There was one problem with this narrative: West's family says he was in good health and had no heart condition.

A recent independent review of the examiner's report by Dr. William Manion of Memorial Hospital in Salem County, N.J., says the evidence points not to a "bad heart" having killed West, but instead to "positional asphyxiation." He was suffocated. The family is calling for the body to be exhumed so another autopsy can be performed, this time independently of the police.

This new review of the case is the latest action in a long struggle by West's family for justice. Tawanda Jones, West's sister, has been a particularly active and visible fighter for her brother. For 146 weeks — on every Wednesday since West was murdered by the police — she has held a protest somewhere in Baltimore as part of a series of "West Wednesdays."

The murder of Tyrone West, as well as the complicity of the medical examiner and the ultimate lack of police accountability, is emblematic, on the one hand, of the war being waged by the police forces of the capitalist U.S. government against all nationally oppressed peoples. On the other hand, the tenacity and defiance shown by his family and other groups who have time and again taken to the

Continued on page 4

#Frisco500 occupy City Hall

Continiued from page 1

ed by the city's political establishment, is nevertheless gaining momentum. The California Federation of Teachers executive council has called for his firing and for the indictment of the police who killed Mario Woods. San Francisco Jobs With Justice has called for "new leadership" in the police department. There is also outrage over revelations of a second barrage of racist and homophobic text messages by city police.

Mayor Lee has been touting alleged "investigations" of police behavior, which have been ongoing for years without producing any visible reduction in police killings. Recently a three-person Justice Department delegation went to a meeting of the Justice 4 Mario Woods Coalition. Community members raked them over the coals for being "fake investigators" whose purpose was to whitewash the police murders and cool out the community. Minister Chris Muhammad, of the Nation of Islam, sharply questioned the DOJ emissaries, forcing them to admit they had no investigatory powers and were only in San Francisco to "do an assessment" of the situation.

The community is not placing much faith in paper investigations. Their focus is now on direct action to force change. As Alyssa, champion tweet journalist from the days of Occupy Oakland, tweeted from inside City Hall during the May 6 occupation: "I've been to a lot of protests … but never seen people hold so strong as tonight, nonviolent but strong and serious. So much respect for the #Frisco500." □

Hundreds of youth serving life sentences

Protest calls for ending 'death by incarceration'

By Joe Piette
Philadelphia

A rally on May 6 called on Pennsylvania to end the legal sentence "juvenile life without parole" (JLWOP), also known as "death by incarceration." The gathering took place in Philadelphia, which has sentenced more children to die in prison than anywhere else in the world.

The Mother's Day Rally to Restore Families & Communities and Bring Our Loved Ones Home drew close to 100 people in the Arch Street Methodist Church, who had been forced inside because of rain. Speakers included mothers of people serving JLWOP sentences, mothers who have lost children to violence in Philadelphia, prerecorded audio and written statements from people currently serving JLWOP, and other members of the Coalition to Abolish Death by Incarceration.

Patricia Vickers, Anita Colon, Ellen Melchiondo and Lorraine Haw exposed raw emotions as they described the pain of having their loved ones held in prison for decades until their eventual death. Kimberly King spoke as a mother doubly affected. Her eldest brother was given a mandatory life sentence without chance of parole 24 years ago. Her younger brother was later killed at 22. "I have forgiven, because in truth, no matter what happens to that young man who took my brother's life, it does not make the pain easier. It does not bring him back. And how can I very well condemn this brother when I ask for forgiveness for my brother?"

Kempis Songster, a 44-year-old serving a life sentence at Graterford Prison, spoke via phone to the rally. Imprisoned since the age of 16 after he was convicted of first-degree murder for stabbing another teenage runaway, he described how he has matured, taking advantage of every educational opportunity available to him in prison and mentoring other prisoners. "Some of us never stop looking for ways to express how deeply ashamed and sorry we are," Songster said. "What we bring to the table will never measure up to what we took from the table."

Melchiondo added, "I recently spent the day at Muncy [Women's Prison] at an event to honor the women serving juvenile life without parole, and I can tell you not one of them is irreparably corrupted. In fact, I don't believe it is humanly possible to predict that. Perhaps it is the city and the state that are irreparably corrupted."

School-to-prison pipeline

The United States is the only country that sentences people to life without parole for crimes committed before turning 18. Some 500 people sentenced to life in prison when they were juveniles are being held in Pennsylvania's prison system — more than in any other state. Philadelphia accounts for over 300 JLWOP sentences — more than from any other city.

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that mandatory JLWOP sentences are unconstitutional. The court's 2012 decision in Miller v. Alabama found that mandatory life sentences for children violate the 8th Amendment's prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment. In January, the Supreme Court clarified that the decision applies retroactively. Yet in Pennsylvania, people serving JLWOP are still waiting for relief from these unconstitutional sentences.

According to a March 24 report by The Sentencing Project, "Juvenile Life Without Parole: An Overview," the court emphasized several points in reaching its decisions. "Research on adolescent brain development confirms the commonsense understanding that children are different from adults in ways that are critical to identifying age appropriate criminal sentences. This understanding — Justice Kennedy called it what 'any parent knows' — was central to four recent Supreme Court decisions excluding juveniles from the harshest sentencing practices."

Another major issue leading to the court's decision was that "The life experiences of the approximately 2,500 people serving juvenile life sentences vary, but they are often marked by very difficult upbringings with frequent exposure to violence; they were often victims of abuse themselves." The report noted that a mandatory sentencing structure does not take into account "the family and home environment."

In 2012, The Sentencing Project survey of people sentenced to life in prison as juveniles revealed that 79 percent regularly witnessed violence in their homes, 32 percent grew up in public housing, 40 percent had been enrolled in special education classes, fewer than half were attending school at the time of their offense, 47 percent were physically abused, and up to 80 percent of girls reported histories of physical or sexual abuse. In addition to their backgrounds, the youth were forced to plead for fairness in a court system in which racial disparities plague the imposition of JLWOP sentences.

Among the 10 largest U.S. cities, Philadelphia has the highest deep poverty rate — 12.3 percent. Sixty thousand children live in deep poverty. Philadelphia public schools, where the vast majority are students of color, have been underfunded for decades, leaving massive class sizes and little to no funding for books, paper, school libraries, nurses, guidance counselors, art supplies and musical instruments.

Without a doubt, long-term poverty and lack of educational opportunities have not been adequately considered in sentencing so many Philadelphia youth to life in prison without parole.

"More than 100 of the Philadelphians serving JLWOP have been in prison for over 30 years," said Hakim Ali, of the Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration. "It's past time for our elected officials to implement the Supreme Court's decision."

CADBI is demanding that District Attorney Anthony Williams support resentencing those currently serving JLWOP under the third-degree murder statute, which now carries a penalty of 10 to 20 years in prison. It is asking Pennsylvania courts to facilitate fair and timely resentencing. CADBI requests that the mayor and City Council ensure that everyone eligible for resentencing gets adequate legal representation. It is also calling on the governor and the state legislature to abolish life without parole as a mandatory sentence for all people, regardless of their age. ☐

WW PHOTO: TOMMY CAVANAUGH

Rent-a-cops killed Jovan Blake, shooting him seven times.

Justice for Jovan!

By Andrea Bañuelos
and Tommy Cavanaugh
Rockford, Ill.

Dozens of family and community members marched in downtown Rockford on May 3 chanting "Justice for Jovan!" to protest the murder of Valentia Fresco, who went by the name Jovan Blake. The father of five children, Blake had a girlfriend with whom he had planned on building his life. Blake was gunned down by two Metro Enforcement officers on April 16 across from Auburn Manor while he was celebrating his 34th birthday.

According to witnesses, Jovan was tased, handcuffed and shot seven times. His last heard words were, "But I didn't even do nothing."

Metro Enforcement is an armed private security agency that patrols local housing projects and has earned the disdain of many Rockford residents throughout its history. Metro Enforcement officers chased Blake off the property that they are hired to patrol, making the legality of their pursuit extremely questionable.

While speaking outside the Rockford police station and county courthouse, Ellen M., a family friend who saw the scene after Blake was killed, said about the Metro Enforcement officers: "You tased him, handcuffed him and shot him seven times. You need to be locked up!" After the protest she said to WW reporters: "It was cold-blooded murder. ... If they go free, that sends the message that they can shoot and kill and nothing will be done."

Police officials and news reports have claimed Blake was armed with a gun, some even claiming he was armed with multiple guns. Yet no guns have been produced by the police nor any evidence shown to support claims that he was a threat. The coroner's office has confirmed that the cause of Blake's death was gunshot wounds, but has not said how many times he was shot or where on his body.

The names of the Metro officers have not been released, and they have not been charged in the killing. Family members are demanding charges be brought against them and plan to continue to hold demonstrations until justice has been delivered. Another protest has been called for 4 p.m. on May 13 at 618 E. State St.

Jovan Blake was another person of color whose life has been tragically cut short by racist police and vigilante terrorism that is characteristic of this rotten system of U.S. imperialism. Workers World Party expressed its condolences to Blake's family and stands in solidarity with their fight against this criminal system.

Justice for Jovan!

Baltimore resistance

Continued from page 3

streets inspire confidence that the people will eventually win justice for the victims of police brutality and overthrow this racist capitalist system.

— David Card

Justice for Aaron Winston!

"This is just wrong. I want justice for my son," said Renee Winston, mother of Aaron Winston, after his first trial hearing on May 3. Her call echoes the pain and resiliency of those Black folks resisting police forces that creatively mask feelings of anti-Blackness behind employment of Black officers, diverting attention from police impunity to "Black-on-Black crime" and blaming unarmed, innocent people. Her call illuminates the unjust workings of a white supremacist society only interested in living Black bodies when they are mute and exploitable for profit.

When a Black person survives an attack by a racist white police officer, it is defiance. Aaron Winston defied.

On Feb. 20 at the Power Plant Live! nightclub, Winston was asking a Baltimore police officer with whom he was friends why his companion was being removed from the club. A white police officer came from behind and forced Winston to the ground in what is known as a "take down." The attack left him with an arm broken in three places, held together only by screws.

After begging to be taken to the hospital, Winston was verbally harassed by officers before being seen by a doctor, given just enough time for surgery and then thrown in jail without pain medication. Winston was charged with two counts of second-degree assault, two counts of resisting arrest, failure to obey, obstructing and hindering, and disorderly conduct.

Winston has since been released, and is undergoing therapy. The Baltimore People's Power Assembly held a small picket line outside his first hearing on May 3. Winston was granted a jury trial, scheduled for June 9. Supporters of Winston will not be moved and are demanding that the officers who brutalized him be charged with assault, jailed and fired and that all charges against Winston be dropped immediately.

— Kira-Lynae Pindell

Workers Memorial Day fights for job safety

Minnie Bruce Pratt
Syracuse, N.Y.

April 28, Workers Memorial Day, commemorates workers killed, injured or made ill at their jobs. That day, Antonio Salinas chalked the outline of a fallen person on the pavement in downtown Syracuse. Salinas, a dairy farm worker from Mexico, was seriously hurt on a forklift last October at the Central New York business where he worked and lived. No longer able to do his job, he was evicted by the farm owner who denied the injury was related to his work.

Salinas, along with others from the Workers Center of Central New York (WCCNY), marked the day by leafleting other workers and making street art. Some bore signs: "We mourn the dead, we fight for the living/ Honremos a los muertos, luchemos por los vivos." (tinyurl.com/jpxodnl)

In Central New York in 2015, 42 workers died on the job, including Sean Tilghman, a sanitation worker who was hit by a speeding car and died instantly on the street. He was one of the 4,600 workers killed each year on their jobs in the United States, according to Occupational Safety and Health Administration data. That doesn't count the estimated 50,000 others who die from illnesses caused by their jobs. (tinyurl.com/zb7vaoo)

Dorothy Wigmore, with the Occupational Health Clinical Centers of SUNY Upstate Medical Center, has highlighted sobering facts about workplace injuries and deaths: Though headlines dramatize fatalities among police, sanitation workers, like Tilghman, die at twice the rate as cops and almost seven times the rate of firefighters. The top 20 low-wage U.S. jobs — mostly held by women — have 77 percent of reported job-linked injuries and illness. Over half of serious work injuries are not even reported.

Health and safety are where bosses often cut corners first. Estimates on injury numbers run low because only immediate "lost time" injuries are counted, but not others like repetitive-stress injuries to factory workers or illnesses like cancer caused by workplace toxins.

There are many hidden work-related injuries. Workers with the lowest wages, disproportionately Black and Latino/a workers, also have the highest hypertension rates. The growing "gig economy" means more bad health for workers, as "temps" are 50 percent more likely to be hurt at work than "regular" employees. (syr.com)

PHOTO: ROSA MEJIAS

Workers Center of Central New York demonstrates in Syracuse, April 28.

Migrant workers fight for workplace safety

Under capitalism, worker deaths and injuries are calculated by the bosses as part of the cost of "doing business." Employers don't risk much by endangering employees. Under OSHA penalties, the recent average employer cost for an injured worker was $2,148. For a dead worker? The median penalty to employers was $7,000. (tinyurl.com/hn36bkd)

Latino/a workers are 9 percent more likely to be killed or injured on the job, given higher rates of high-risk manual work. The AFL-CIO "Death on the Job" says 64 percent of Latino/a workplace deaths in 2014 were immigrant workers. (tinyurl.com/axw6cgf)

Organizer Nikeeta Slade at the WCCNY is particularly concerned about Mexican, Guatemalan and Honduran migrant workers, who are often reluctant to report safety violations for fear they will be forced to leave the country.

But WCCNY member Antonio Salinas is part of a growing movement of migrant and immigrant workers fighting for workplace safety. After his injury and loss of work, Salinas filed a medical appeal with workers' compensation. After months in a legal labyrinth he won the right to medical benefits and back wages. He says he is committed to fighting because "We come here to make a living, not to lose our life."

Crispin Hernandez and Saul Pinto, also of the WCCNY, exposed unsafe working conditions in Lowville at Marks Farm, which employed them as dairy workers. Their boss fired them for reporting him to OSHA. On Workers Memorial Day they received the "Health and Safety Heroism at Work" award from the CNY Area Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, for their courage. Speaking at a WC-CNY May Day celebration, Hernandez said: "I was trying to better conditions for myself and my co-workers. Unity makes power." (workerscentercny.org/blog-2)

On April 28, as workers across the U.S. remembered their fallen and injured comrades, striking Verizon workers walked the picket line in front of a Syracuse-area tech-support call center where almost 300 people are usually at work. They are members of the Communication Workers and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. Some do very dangerous jobs, including aerial and transformer installation. Call center workers' and telephone operators' jobs are ranked the third most stressful in the workplace. (tinyurl.com/gnxxp4p)

On the line, workers emphasized they're fighting for both a fair contract and safe working conditions. They told this reporter: "We are not striking just for ourselves. We are doing this for everyone." ☐

Palestinians speak of 'the Catastrophe'

By Dolores Cox
New York

Two Palestinians, 86-year-old Mariam Fathalla and 23-year-old Amena El-Ashkar, speaking at an event at New York University's School of Law on May 2, described what the establishment of the apartheid state of Israel has meant for Palestinians over the last 68 years. A third guest speaker, Umm Akram, was unable to attend due to imposed travel restrictions.

Palestinians call the 1948 establishment of Israel "the Nakba" — the Catastrophe! It marked the beginning of a nightmare that continues to this day.

Fathalla recalled what happened to her family in their Palestinian town of Al-Zeeb. On May 14, 1948, when she was 18 years old, they were forced out of their home and into the neighboring country of Lebanon. By the end of that year, their 4,000-year-old village had been leveled to the ground and half the people killed or expelled. Her father, who witnessed the murders, died at the scene of a heart attack. Some survivors later went insane.

Fathalla and other survivors of Al-Zeeb have spent their lives since then in Lebanese refugee camps.

Palestinians have suffered mass expulsions from their homeland, repeated bombings, massacres, discrimination, home demolitions, land confiscation, imprisonments and daily harassment and violence at the hands of the U.S.-supported government of Israel. Israel continues to raze Palestinian villages and forcefully remove the residents from their ancestral lands.

Fathalla said she has a moral obligation to speak out, so that Palestinian history will not be forgotten or erased. She ended her story with a wish to return to her native Palestine and live in peace. For decades, Palestinians have sought the right of return to their homeland. Some still possess the original keys to their homes.

The historic city of Hebron has become a ghost town, with nearly 10,000 homes demolished. Privileged Zionist settlers routinely invade and burn Palestinian homes at night, causing forced displacements. They also steal Palestinian crops, cut down their olive trees, kill their livestock and shoot holes in their water tanks. They receive immunity from the Israeli government.

Palestinian social life and visits to their friends are restricted by "military zones" that are closed to Palestinians. Palestinian mothers also lose children to killings by police and soldiers.

Amena El-Ashkar is the granddaughter and great-granddaughter of Nakba survivors. Born in a Lebanese refugee camp, she has known no other home. She is among 6 million Palestinians not allowed to live in Palestine who are citizens of no country. Presently, 150,000 refugees in exile are forced to live in Lebanese camps, she said. Palestinian refugees are also in Jordan, Syria, Gaza and the West Bank.

Visibly traumatized, El-Ashkar described what life is like in a refugee camp. Some live in shared tents with no privacy, electricity, adequate cooking facilities or toilets. Others are in dilapidated buildings on dilapidated streets. There is a high incidence of child mortality. A friend of hers recently committed suicide.

The Israeli government's continuing recruitment of Jews to Israel and the expansion of illegal settlements in occupied Palestinian territory has added to the ongoing misery of Palestinians. Settlers repeatedly commit acts of harassment and violence upon the Palestinians and their homes. Israeli police and soldiers offer no protection from the settlers, instead arresting and jailing the victims, including children.

El-Ashkar showed videos of refugee camps in Jordan, which she said are the worst. As many as 100,000 people live in one of these camps. Israeli checkpoints are everywhere and military forces continue to kill people.

Israel's invasion of Lebanon resulted in the deaths of women and children refugees. Undocumented Palestinians in Lebanon have no right to legal residence or to marry. Refugees are not allowed to attend public schools. If they are able to find employment, they are paid less than other workers. Registered Palestinian refugees, like herself, have ID cards but experience difficulties in leaving Lebanon due to legal and institutional barriers imposed by the Lebanese government. Palestinian refugees are stateless and fall under a "special category" of foreigners. In refugee camps, reconstruction materials and supplies have been restricted for the past 68 years.

El-Ashkar added that "the world has forgotten our oppression. We need the international community to care about Israel's ethnic cleansing and genocidal agenda. Palestinians living in the diaspora, along with their allies, must unite and give support. Resistance by any means is necessary. Palestinians see the only solution as being the right of return."

May 15 will mark the 68th anniversary of the mass expulsion of the Palestinian people from their homeland. They and their supporters will march to demand the right of return and celebrate resistance to colonialism. End the occupation! ☐

No RE/MAX sales of Palestinian land!

Speakers from two groups concerned with the rights of Palestinians spoke to the international shareholders' meeting of the RE/MAX company in Denver on May 5, asking them to set up a committee to investigate the practice by the company's Israeli division of selling land, houses and buildings stolen from the Palestinian people.

As 50 of their supporters marched outside the enormous international headquarters of the real estate firm, speakers from Code Pink and Heartland described how the company was building and selling homes on Palestinian land that is now restricted only to Jews, essentially building Jewish-only communities. RE/MAX sells properties within illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank.

RE/MAX International has condoned this practice and continues to profit from the sales of these Palestinian homes to Jewish-only buyers.

The demonstrators outside held signs saying, "No open house on stolen land," "Colorado for a just RE/MAX," "Demolishing Palestinian homes perpetuates violence" and "Profits from pain is inhumane."

Police threatened to arrest protesters if they went onto the massive RE/MAX property, but allowed them at the entrance, where they were visible to passersby on the busy street. According to spokesperson Saadia Behar from Jewish Voice for Peace, organizations responsible for the action also included Coloradans for Justice in Palestine, Friends of Sabeel, Code Pink and Heartland.

— Report and photo by Vivian Weinstein

FIGHT VERSUS VERIZON

Wide support for striking workers

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

Fifteen striking workers arrested at Verizon shareholders' meeting, Albuquerque, N.M.

PHOTO: CWA

May 9 — Workers on strike against communications giant Verizon are staying strong. On May 5, a militant National Day of Strike Action was held, with the multinational working class across the U.S. answering the unions' call with a groundswell of support and solidarity.

The 36,000 members of the Communication Workers (CWA) and International Electrical Workers (IBEW) unions are entering the strike's fourth week in nine Eastern and Atlantic Coast states. The workers perform demanding "wire-line operations" — installation, repairs and technical support for landlines, high-speed Internet and television services. Their nonstop call center work, every second monitored by Verizon, is rated the third most stressful job in the country. (tinyurl.com/zwtu5nk)

Workers hoisted signs reading "Verizon is Veri-Greedy," blasting the corporation's attempts to exploit them. CWA District 2-13 analyzed the company's proposed contract in detail. A 7.5 percent pay raise would be eaten up by rising out-of-pocket health care costs. Pensions, paid leave and disability benefits would be reduced. Call centers would be closed, jobs outsourced overseas and job security gutted by "flexibility" language allowing management to manipulate workers' hours and job assignments. (district2-13.cwa-union.org)

Verizon demands that workers accept "forced relocation" assignments, losing their jobs unless they take any assignment within 80 miles of their current job. This would have workers commuting to their jobs two to four hours a day, with additional transportation costs, as well as having to leave home before dawn and getting home too late to do more than say "good night" to their loved ones.

On May 1, International Workers' Day, Verizon cut off all health benefits to strikers. CWA issued a statement that "no striking member or family member will go without medically necessary health care during the strike" and pledged to pay the costs. CWA noted Verizon made a $4 billion profit off the workers' labor in the first quarter of 2016 alone and said the company's "heartless move" proved the strike's necessity. (tinyurl.com/zl9cmjo)

Thousands of workers rallied May 5 at over 400 protests supporting the strikers, who are holding the line for workers' rights. A wide spectrum of people participated, including those in states where Verizon workers aren't striking, workers in other unions, workers not yet represented by unions and community activists fighting for justice on many issues.

CROSS-COUNTRY SOLIDARITY

In **Albuquerque, N.M.,** union leaders organized a militant protest outside a Verizon shareholders meeting. Four days after Verizon canceled all striking workers' health insurance, the company's shareholders voted not to limit "golden parachute" severance payouts for management, even if triple the executive's base salary. In response, union members and community supporters dropped a 70-foot banner that read, "Verizon: Good Jobs, No Greed," across the busy Rio Grande Boulevard and lay down on the banner, blocking traffic. Fifteen people were arrested as 250 supporters continued to protest outside the meeting.

At a raucous May 2 unity rally in **Dewitt, N.Y.,** a suburb of Syracuse, striking workers taunted a giant blow-up rat with a sign proclaiming Verizon CEO Lowell McAdam "the biggest rat of all." McAdam had shown up in person at the call center picket line, attempting to intimidate the workers, which is a violation of National Labor Relations Board rules. Support at the rally included CWA and IBEW locals from Binghamton, Buffalo, Elmira, Syracuse and Utica, as well as members of the Teamsters, teachers, postal workers and office workers unions. United Auto Workers Local 624 retirees showed up — local legends because, even as the company closed their plant around them, they steadfastly refused a "last, best and final" offer because it lowered their wages to $15 an hour. Striking workers at the rally answered the insulting Verizon "last, best" offer they'd just received by flinging the letters down as trash in front of the Verizon building.

The **New York City** People's Power Assembly observed the National Strike Day of Action in Union Square in front of the Verizon Wireless store, handing out leaflets, picketing and shouting pro-union chants for two hours. Some shoppers turned back from going inside. At one point the PPA picketers entered the store, making clear to the workers inside that the protest supported their right to unionize as well as "wire-line" workers. Verizon Wireless workers at some stores have elected union representation, but Verizon refuses to acknowledge them. Management called cops in to remove the activists, but they did not budge until they were ready to move on to their next action. (from Tony Murphy)

In **Philadelphia**, members of CWA, Philadelphia Jobs with Justice and other activists came out on May 5 to picket the Verizon store near Jefferson Station on Market East, letting Verizon and passersby know its workers deserve fair pay and benefits. (from Joe Piette)

Workers came together in Huntington, W.V., to picket Verizon Wireless in solidarity with CWA and IBEW workers. Members of the Service Employees, Steelworkers and Letter Carriers unions took to the street. The Appalachian Workers Alliance took part as well.

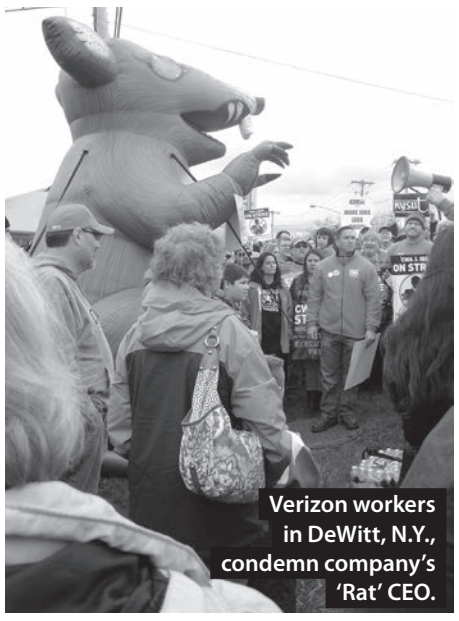
Scabs receive Southern hospitality — NOT

Picket lines, sponsored by CWA locals 2204 and 2201, are up in Roanoke, Lebanon and all over the rest of Virginia at Verizon call centers and tech sites. Despite injunctions and other challenges, both active and retired members are in good spirits, keeping the pickets strong. When it was learned scabs were staying at a Holiday Inn in Lebanon, Va., site of a call center and picket line, they didn't stay there long, after receiving a hearty southwest Virginia welcome! Many strikers are women, many of them African American. Union jobs at Verizon are some of the only jobs left with decent wages, benefits and safety conditions. And being union, these workers have anchored communities across Virginia for decades. (from Bryan G. Pfeifer)

Striking Verizon workers from CWA Local 2204 drove more than three hours on May 2 from southwest Virginia to a rally in Durham, N.C. Joining them in solidarity were members of Electrical Workers Local 150, the North Carolina Public Service Workers Union; "Raise Up for 15" low-wage workers; "Black Lives Matter for Deriante Miller" (Miller was a Black youth killed by an North Carolina state trooper); and campaigners against a new jail and for a People's Budget respecting the labor of city workers. (from Dante Strobino)

In Charlotte, N.C., a solidarity picket was organized at a Verizon store following a leaders' training session of members of "Fight for 15" from throughout the South. Many attending are part of the on-going Southern Workers School, busy developing workers' organizations in "right-to-work-for-less" states. Folks from the Charlotte CWA and IBEW locals helped organize and attended the rally. Picketers

Coninued on page 11



Verizon workers in DeWitt, N.Y., condemn company's 'Rat' CEO.

WW PHOTO: MINNIE BRUCE PRATT

People's Power Assembly in New York at National Day of Strike Action, May 5.

PHOTO: PEOPLES POWER ASSEMBLY NYC

On the picket

By Sue Davis

Calif. farm labor board rules in favor of Farm Workers

The full California Agricultural Labor Relations Board issued a unanimous decision April 15 decisively affirming the 2015 opinion by an ALRB administrative law judge who found the giant Fresno-based tree fruit grower Gerawan Farming guilty of committing numerous violations of California labor laws. The ruling set aside the 2013 election aimed at decertifying the Farm Workers from representing the fruit pickers and dismissed the decertification petition. Among labor law violations, the judge ruled that Gerawan became a principal party to the decertification, though employees filed it. Gerawan permitted anti-union signature gathering during work while prohibiting comparable pro-union activity; and Gerawan granted a wage increase during the campaign, a blatantly unfair labor practice, and unlawfully solicited grievances against the union. Gerawan vows to contest the ruling. Stay tuned. (Los Angeles Times, April 19)

Help Gerawan fruit workers protest pesticide spraying

After more than 15,000 supporters of Gerawan Farming tree fruit workers signed a petition urging California's Fresno County agricultural commissioner to quickly investigate a pesticide spraying incident on Feb. 22, the agency replied that the investigation could take two years! But the agency is supposed to protect the workers. Only days after the spraying of three pesticides by a neighboring farm did the workers learn that people should get medical help right away. But Gerawan sent the workers immediately back to the fields and only later that day, after they developed headaches, burning eyes and upset stomachs, were they seen by a doctor. The workers, who have been struggling since 1992 to be represented by the Farm Workers, ask supporters to sign their petition, action.ufw.org/2years, telling the agricultural commissioner to stop delaying and protect Gerawan workers. (ufw.org, April 13)

Strikers in Huntingdon continue West Virginia tradition of militant unionism.

WW PHOTO: DANTE STROBINO

'Don't cross that picket line,' say workers in Oakland, Calif.

WW PHOTO: TERRI KAY

t line

Uber drivers win settlement, but not employee status

Even though two class action lawsuits, decided April 21, awarded up to $100 million to about 385,000 Uber drivers in California and Massachusetts, the workers will still be erroneously classified as "independent contractors." That means Uber, a private company valued at $62.5 billion in December, which connects passengers to freelance drivers, does not have to pay the workers health benefits, Social Security, unemployment or workers' compensation if injured; paid sick or vacation leave; or other safety-net benefits. While the settlement will give drivers several thousand dollars each, that's peanuts compared to what the owners are raking in. So Uber is contributing to the labor trend of low pay, irregular hours and job insecurity — the same terms Verizon is demanding in its latest contract offer.

Two states increase paid family leave

California and New York recently increased paid family leave. Since 2004, California workers have received up to 55 percent of wages for six weeks of leave to care for a new child or a seriously ill relative. But the state found that low-paid workers couldn't afford to live on half their income. Starting in 2018, a new law raises the rate to 70 percent for the lowest paid workers who make one-third of the state's average weekly wage of $1,121. For other workers, the rate rises to 60 percent, up to the maximum weekly benefit of about $1,200.

In New York, which passed its first paid family leave law in April, workers can receive up to eight weeks' leave starting in 2018. The replacement rate is capped at 50 percent of the statewide weekly wage of nearly $1,300. In 2021, workers can take 12 weeks of leave capped at 67 percent of the statewide weekly average wage. But low-paid workers probably won't be able to take the leave at 50 percent nor for the full 12 weeks at 67 percent. "A higher replacement rate for a shorter time could … help more workers than a flat rate for a longer period," noted the April 20 New York Times.

In contrast, 185 other countries offer fully paid family leave: from two years in countries like Finland and Poland, to a year in Canada and Germany, to 18 weeks in Cuba and 12 weeks in Mexico. It'll take the overthrow of capitalism to bring the U.S. into the 21st century for paid family leave! □

Jobs, globalization and election promises

By Deirdre Griswold

The question of what has happened to jobs in the United States is of course of the utmost concern to millions of workers here. It has been proven in study after study that the percentage of decent-paying jobs has been steadily declining for a long time. And when — not if — the financial markets go through another crisis, the pressure on jobs and wages is sure to grow even more acute.

This fact is so broadly acknowledged that high-profile candidates in this year's presidential election have focused on it, knowing what they have to say will appeal to many voters. The Trump and Sanders campaigns are of course very different in their approach to this question — Trump stirring up chauvinism and hatred of "foreigners" whom he blames for the loss of jobs, Sanders calling for making it harder for corporations to move their manufacturing and assembly operations offshore.

Both, however, ignore the real reason behind the decline in jobs. A recent report verifies that manufacturing jobs are not just being moved to lower-wage countries, they are actually "disappearing." And it's not only in the developed imperialist countries.

In an April 26 New York Times article titled "The Mirage of a Return to Manufacturing Greatness," Eduardo Porter writes that mechanization of agriculture has eliminated millions of farm workers' jobs here. He adds, "In America's factories, jobs are inevitably disappearing, too. But despite the political rhetoric, the problem is not mainly globalization. Manufacturing jobs are on the decline in factories around the world.

"'The observation is uncontroversial,' said Joseph Stiglitz, the Nobel-winning economist at Columbia University. 'Global employment in manufacturing is going down because productivity increases are exceeding increases in demand for manufactured products by a significant amount.' …

"No matter how high the tariffs Mr. Trump wants to raise to encircle the American economy, he will not be able to produce a manufacturing renaissance at home. Neither would changing tax rules to limit corporate flight from the United States, as Mrs. Clinton proposes. …

"Over the course of the 20th century, farm employment in the United States dropped to 2 percent of the work force from 41 percent, even as output soared. Since 1950, manufacturing's share has shrunk to 8.5 percent of nonfarm jobs, from 24 percent. It still has a ways to go.

"The shrinking of manufacturing employment is global. In other words, strategies to restore manufacturing jobs in one country will amount to destroying them in another, in a worldwide zero-sum game.

"The loss of such jobs has created plenty of problems in the United States. For the countless workers living in less developed reaches of the world, though, it adds up to a potential disaster."

Don't dare mention the 'C' word!

The elephant in the room that none of the establishment political parties address is that capitalism has entered a stage when technology has become so advanced that human labor is being reduced to a minimum in many areas of the economy, from agriculture to mining to the manufacture and assembly of millions of different commodities — and even to providing services.

Just a few decades ago, the changes in the economy were hailed by bourgeois pundits as supposedly ushering in a new prosperity, in which blue-collar workers would be retrained to provide service jobs that machines couldn't handle. The promise was that everyone would become "middle class" — that is, relatively prosperous and able to find work in less dangerous, dirty and tedious jobs.

How quickly things change! Today, the lament is that this supposed "middle class" — in reality, the workers who earn a wage adequate to raise a family — is disappearing.

What has changed is not at all difficult to understand if we apply Marxism to the task. In fact, a number of books have been written on the subject, beginning back in 1986 with the publication of "High Tech, Low Pay" by Workers World founding chairperson Sam Marcy and continuing with "Low-Wage Capitalism" in 2008 and "Capitalism at a Dead End" in 2012, both by WW contributing editor Fred Goldstein. All three books apply a Marxist, class-struggle approach to understanding what is happening and how to fight in the interests of the working class. (See workers.org.)

'High tech, low pay'

Written at a time when the euphoria and promises of a better life for all through computer-driven technological change still permeated bourgeois economics, Marcy's book showed that the opposite was happening in the United States — that the introduction of high technology in many industries was already, even in the 1980s, pulling down wages and de-skilling much of the workforce.

Goldstein's books deal with what is now so apparent — the globalization of the production and distribution of commodities. That has brought hundreds of millions of workers into competition in a worldwide labor market just as the number of available jobs is shrinking.

What drives this new stage of capitalism is what has always driven capitalist innovation: the competition for profits. With the new technologies available, the biggest capitalist monopolies that have the means to introduce labor-saving devices on a massive scale — robots, computer-driven assembly lines, GPS tracking devices, etc. — can undercut their competitors by shedding labor.

In Marxist terms, this means a greater investment in constant capital, i.e., plants, equipment, raw products — and a smaller investment in variable capital, i.e., wages. Wages are "variable" depending on the class struggle, or how much the bosses can squeeze out of the workers. But wages cannot fall below the actual cost of reproducing the workers themselves — or the workers will either die or rebel. And, as Marxism shows, it is from human labor that the capitalists extract their profits.

More dead capital, less living capital

The rise of modern capitalism has seen a huge shift in the composition of capital, that is, the percentage of constant or dead capital (equipment, materials, plants, etc.) versus variable, or living, capital (wages). More than a century ago, the amount of capital needed to set up a factory or other business was not so great in relation to the amount spent on workers' wages. In other words, it didn't take a lot of capital to go into business, and once the company was up and running it earned more than enough to pay wages.

Today, however, it takes a hell of a lot of money to start up most businesses. Let's look at one such business for a minute, for it tells us a lot about how capitalism functions today.

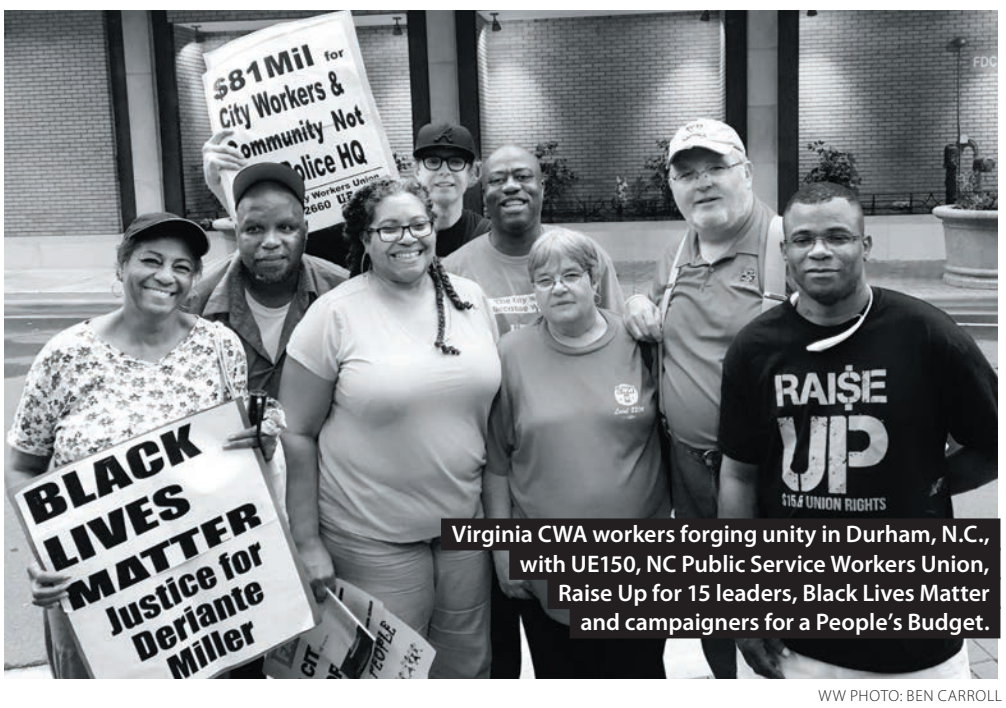
Just a decade ago, a teenage undocumented immigrant from Mexico named Jordi Muñoz made it to San Diego, Calif. Muñoz is a computer genius, a self-styled nerd who was able, practically on his own with very little formal schooling, to invent a workable drone. He picked up much of his knowledge by going online and discussing with the "open source" community how to program various things.

Muñoz didn't have any money, but his technical expertise was so impressive that he got financial backing to start producing drones and set up a company called 3D Robotics. Eventually, rich people invested more than $100 million in his company, and today it is manufacturing nonmilitary drones in the U.S. and Mexico. Muñoz, of course, must feel very happy that his incredible talent has helped produce jobs for his fellow Mexicans.

But here's the kicker to this "success story." This company, now valued at more than $3 billion, has created jobs for about 60 people in Mexico and 90 in the U.S.

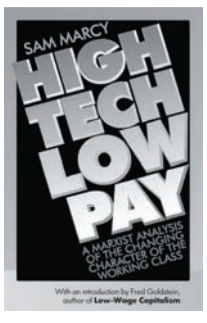
Sixty Mexican jobs! Compare that to the many millions of Mexicans in farm families who have been uprooted because they couldn't compete with low-cost, mechanized U.S. agriculture, which has flooded their country since the NAFTA trade agreement went into effect in 1994.

Next: Why exploiting fewer workers leads to a declining rate of profit. There's only one way out, but it's not popular on Wall Street. □



Virginia CWA workers forging unity in Durham, N.C., with UE150, NC Public Service Workers Union, Raise Up for 15 leaders, Black Lives Matter and campaigners for a People's Budget.

WW PHOTO: BEN CARROLL



HIGH TECH, LOW PAY **A Marxist analysis of the changing character of the working class** by Sam Marcy
This prophetic book, written in 1986, shows why high technology under capitalism is NOT a path to the "middle class." Instead, what could benefit everyone leads to lower wages and layoffs for the workers. Marcy, a longtime organizer, discusses various forms of fightback.

CAPITALISM AT A DEAD END **Job destruction, overproduction and crisis in the high-tech era** by Fred Goldstein

Lowwagecapitalism.com Available at online major booksellers

Saint-Denis celebrates 10th anniversary of Rue Mumia Abu-Jamal

By Betsey Piette
Saint-Denis, France

Back on April 30, 2006, the Paris suburb of Saint-Denis took a courageous and principled stand in naming a newly constructed street after U.S. political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, who was on death row in Pennsylvania at that time. That defiant act sparked a frenzy of efforts to remove the sign, led by the Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police with backing from U.S. corporate media and politicians. Their reactionary campaign continues to this day.

However, this April 30 Saint-Denis Mayor Dedier Paillard, along with other city officials and residents, marked the tenth anniversary of their historic act of resistance to racist state pressure, gathering in front of the slightly battered but clearly visible marker for Rue Mumia Abu-Jamal that has defied all efforts to tear it down. They were joined by representatives from other cities in France that had named Abu-Jamal an honorary citizen. Nine members of a delegation from the U.S. also participated in the ceremonies.

Following the street commemoration, a lunch and artistic performance were held at a nearby school, where the U.S. delegation presented Saint-Denis with a commemorative plaque.

Participants in the delegation included Abu-Jamal's brother, Keith Cook, also an activist with the NAACP in North Carolina; the Rev. Renee McKenzie of the Church of the Advocate, a historic Black church in Philadelphia strongly engaged with the struggles of Black people; Estela Vazquez, first executive vice president of Local 1199-SEIU, the major U.S. hospital workers' union; Marylin Zuñiga, a young teacher whose third-grade class sent Mumia get well cards when he was near death in 2015, resulting in her immediate firing after pressure exerted by the FOP; Betsey Piette with the anti-police brutality group, the Philadelphia Racial, Economic, and Legal Justice Coalition and Workers World Party; Johnnie Stevens, with the International Action Center (NYC), a community organizer and videographer; Alma Pendleton with the Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition (NYC); Nyle Fort, minister, organizer and scholar based in Newark, N.J., and a student in Religion and African-American Studies at Princeton University; and delegation coordinator Suzanne Ross, representing the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

A majority of the 100,000 people living in Saint-Denis are immigrants and people of color. One can hear languages from 130 different nations. At a welcoming reception for the U.S. delegation on April 29, the mayor said: "We hear here the echoes of all struggles, including Palestine. The naming of this street is not just an act of resistance, it is an act of struggle."

Saint-Denis has a long history of naming its streets after individuals who have contributed to the global fight against colonialism, racism and imperialism. The city has a Rue Amílcar Cabral and a Rue Nelson Mandela. However, said Paillard: "It is very rare for the city to name a street after someone who is still alive. Having this street for Mumia helps our city take a stance in the struggle for liberation of all people."

Paillard noted that the last 10 years have been marked by extreme political changes in France, including cuts in education and recent attacks on workers' longstanding rights. The street-naming ceremony came just days after hundreds of thousands of French workers, students and youth took to the streets on April 28, for the fourth time in two months, to demand that the government withdraw a new labor law that would eliminate the 35-hour work week and other benefits.

U.S. delegation visits street named after Mumia.

Protests in most major French cities included a one-day general strike that shut down thousands of worksites, schools and universities. The day after the Saint-Denis ceremony, an estimated 84,000 to 100,000 workers and students flooded the streets of Paris and other French cities on May Day — International Workers' Day. The French Parliament is slated to officially begin discussing the new law on May 3.

The law would have a particularly egregious effect on workers in Saint-Denis. Many are under 30, and most make half the average wage found in other areas in France. With growing gentrification over the last 15 years, more than a quarter of Saint-Denis' population can't afford housing in Paris. In response to this crisis, Saint-Denis has created "social housing" for 80 percent of its residents so they can remain in the city.

"We can't stop the 'free' market but we can keep control of space and grounds to prevent market speculation," Paillard told the delegation. In the last 12 years, Saint-Denis has also added six more schools, including the one where the commemorative lunch was held. Under French law the municipality is responsible for education facilities while the state pays for teachers' salaries — severely underfunding those in Saint-Denis.

The tenth anniversary embodies the international solidarity that time and again has proved critical to winning victories in the struggle, including Abu-Jamal's release from death row in December 2011. It contributes today to the fight to demand that the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections provide Abu-Jamal and other Pennsylvania prisoners with desperately needed medicine to cure hepatitis C.

French supporters of Abu-Jamal have sent over 3,000 petition signatures to support the demand that Abu-Jamal get the medicine he needs. Petitions are still being collected and can be signed online through www.iacenter.org/mumiahepc-sign. Signed petitions will be delivered to Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf in Harrisburg, Pa., at a date to be determined.

The example set by the people of Saint-Denis is one that speaks to the global power of oppressed peoples to struggle against all odds, knowing that without struggle there can be no victory. It is with this understanding that the fight must continue until Mumia Abu-Jamal, an innocent man, ultimately wins his freedom from prison. □

Voters reject Islamophobia and racism as

Sadiq Khan elected mayor of London

By Carl Lewis

Sadiq Khan, a center-left member of Britain's Labor Party and a first-generation son of immigrants from Pakistan, has been elected mayor of London, becoming the first Muslim mayor of a major Western capital. Khan comes from a working-class family; his father was a bus driver for 25 years and his mother was a seamstress.

The 45-year-old politician is among the 2.7 million British residents classified as "nonwhite British." Soon after receiving his law degree he worked with progressive legal groups as a human rights attorney. Most of his cases challenged discrimination, police repression, and brutality against people of East Indian and West Indian origin.

Sadiq Khan ran against Zac Goldsmith of the British Conservative Party (Tories), who is a son of the billionaire financial tycoon James Goldsmith. Zac Goldsmith inherited $350 million from his father's estate. Goldsmith and the Conservative Party implemented and ran a racist and anti-Islamic campaign against Khan, attempting to link him to radical Muslim extremists.

These attacks encouraged the fascist British National Party, as well as the "Britain First Movement," to whip up more racism as well as outright intimidation and physical attacks against Muslims. Some 816 Islamophobic incidents were reported to have been committed by white males in London between July of 2014 and July of 2015. The "vast and overwhelming majority" were attacks against women and children between the ages of 14 and 45, who were singled out for wearing traditional Muslim clothing, including the hijab worn by Muslim women. (AFP, May 7)

In reality, Khan is a moderate left-of-center social democrat in the Labor Party. It's true he supported Jeremy Corbyn, who has real credentials for left positions against imperialist wars and against the occupation of Palestine, in Corbyn's successful bid to become leader of the Labor Party last September. Khan has since distanced himself from Corbyn.

Khan's 80-page "Manifesto for All Londoners" calls for a freeze on transportation fares, which earned him the support of the transport union (TSSA). He also promises to build 50,000 more rental units in an overcrowded and high-priced housing market. On the flip side, he has not been supportive of the oppressed Palestinian people or the campaign for boycott, divestment and sanctions against the racist apartheid state of Israel, nor is he very critical of Western intervention in Syria.

Conservative attempt to defeat Khan backfires

On April 30, Khan soundly defeated Goldsmith and his racism, winning over 1.3 million votes to Goldsmith's 1.0 million. No sooner had Goldsmith lost, shattering the eight-year reign of Tory control over London, than the Conservative Party was scrambling for damage control. The Tories started blaming Goldsmith as an individual for their election debacle in a campaign that was drowning in fear-mongering, racism and Islamophobia.

This is similar to what the establishment Republican Party in the U.S. does. It heaps hypocritical scorn and ridicule on Donald Trump's racist and anti-immigrant extremism, even though the Republicans have peddled the same reactionary ideas for decades.

Conservatives couldn't wait to do mea culpa on the British communication networks. According to the May 7 edition of Politico, Conservative Deputy Mayor Roger Evans said that "attempts to link Khan to extremists had been foolish and would need quite a lot of work to repair."

Goldsmith himself even came up with the charge — spread by his campaign leaflets and intended to foster inter-religious tension between Muslims and Hindus — that Khan would target the Hindu Indian community with a host of taxes on their businesses.

With the imperialist powers oppressing, superexploiting and creating misery in most of the former colonies, migrations of millions of people to the imperialist centers are inevitable. It is often the only way for them to survive.

As the crisis of world capitalism deepens, as it has sharply since 2008, the ruling classes in the imperialist countries often incite racism with anti-immigrant legislation proposals. They promote vile, anti-foreign propaganda aimed at getting the working class to blame immigrants for the crisis.

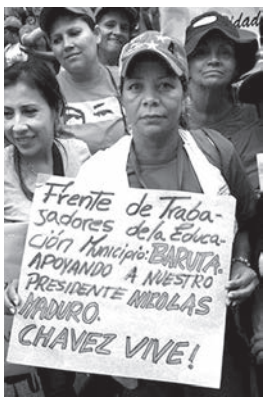
Their goal is to create an anti-foreign frenzy that will keep the working class divided and confused. Revolutionary parties must fight against racism and anti-immigrant discrimination which is most often directed against people of color, who are the most exploited.

The election of Sadiq Khan has much broader implications than simply a positive judgment on his personality or on the election itself. It is a strong sign that the most vile racism and xenophobia has been rejected by a majority in the British capital. Let it be a step toward building working-class unity. □

Millions celebrate International Workers Day

Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Labor unions in Seoul, south Korea.



Left, Venezuela. Above, Cuba.

By Kathy Durkin

May 1 was the 130th anniversary of International Workers Day. May Day was born out of the workers' struggle in the United States for the 8-hour day in 1886. Its militant legacy has been commemorated for years around the world.

The millions of workers around the globe who took to the streets this year showed that the class struggle is alive and well. Organized and unorganized workers, immigrants, youth, retirees, socialists and other progressive forces marched and rallied. They protested against local companies and global corporations that are squeezing the workers in their "race to the bottom."

From Indonesia to Bangladesh, and South Africa to Mexico, workers demanded livable wages and improved working conditions. Many workers objected to their government's pro-corporate policies and obstruction of their right to unionize. In Turkey, the Philippines and elsewhere, activists fought for the right to demonstrate in the face of state repression.

However, in Venezuela and Cuba, masses of people turned out to support their pro-worker governments, laud their leaders and celebrate their gains.

Capitalist globalization deepens economic exploitation and inequality, impoverishment and unemployment — conditions which have forced millions of workers to travel to wealthier countries to find jobs. Often these migrant workers then face racism, abuse, starvation wages and terrible working conditions.

Workers decry corporate greed

Migrant workers in Taipei, **Taiwan,** joined thousands in labor unions on May 1 to denounce corporate greed and call for a higher minimum wage and shorter workdays. Chen Li-Jen of the Taiwan Petroleum Workers Union explained, "Hard-working laborers are being exploited by consortiums." (Daily Mail, May 1)

Jakarta, **Indonesia**, was the site of a march by tens of thousands of low-paid workers who called for higher wages, and improved working conditions.

In Dhaka, **Bangladesh**, one week after commemorating the Rana Plaza disaster, where 1,138 garment workers died in 2013, thousands of workers celebrated May Day outside the city's Press Club. In addition to calling for safer jobs, their main demand was for the unfettered right to unionize. That same day, two construction workers died at work in Dhaka.

The Korean Federation of Trade Unions brought out at least 30,000 workers in Seoul, **south Korea**, despite police attempts to block them, to demand better wages and working conditions, and an end to "temporary" labor and "easy layoffs." Outside City Hall, activists and unionized workers chanted, "Let's fight together to end the evil bill!" referring to the anti-labor legislation being pushed by the ruling, right-wing Saenuri Party.

Rallies were held throughout the **Philippines**. Protesters called for better wages and retirement benefits, lower taxes and an end to contract labor, privatization of social services and imperialist intervention. In Manila, activists struggled with police while trying to reach the U.S. Embassy; others danced around a burning effigy of President Benigno Aquino III at a rally near the Presidential Palace.

Police in Istanbul, **Turkey**, fired tear gas, pepper spray and water cannons at activists who defied a ban and tried to march to historic Taksim Square to show their opposition to the repressive, rightist government. Police arrested 52 people. As thousands celebrated this workers' day in the Istanbul neighborhood of Barkirköy, police arrested members of the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party, who chanted, "Long live Kurdistan!"

Thousands of revolutionary socialist youth, workers and seniors, including Red Army veterans, marched through central Moscow, **Russia,** holding up red banners and flags. An Anti-Imperialist Action contingent carried flags of countries struggling against U.S. imperialism.

In **France**, workers continued their two-month-long protests against anti-labor legislation that is before Parliament. The CGT labor union reported that 70,000 marched in Paris.

Build solidarity with refugees!

The crisis of refugees is the worst since the end of World War II. Tens of thousands of desperate people are fleeing wars and occupations in the Middle East and North Africa that are led or backed by the U.S. They then try to reach European countries; while most populations have been friendly, far-right forces foment anti-immigrant hostility — and governments are putting up barriers.

In Berlin and Hamburg, **Germany,** thousands of people turned out to commemorate May Day and to show solidarity with migrants. Unions called for all to oppose xenophobia and "far right extremism."

In **Britain**, Jeremy Corbyn, leader of that country's Labour Party, addressed a rally of thousands in London and emphasized that his party opposes racism and anti-immigrant bigotry. "We stand in solidarity against the growth of the far right in Europe." (Daily Mail)

On the Iberian Peninsula, thousands of workers in Madrid, **Spain**, called for higher pay and workers' rights. Red banners flew in Lisbon, **Portugal**, in a march organized by labor unions with similar demands.

COSATU marks 30th anniversary

The Congress of South African Trade Unions, aiming to make participation easier for the lowest-income workers, organized 15 separate rallies, totaling more than 300,000 people, all across **South Africa** to celebrate its 30th anniversary. COSATU leaders said their goal is to unionize the unorganized 9.7 million workers. Those at the rallies affirmed that they want militant struggles and collective bargaining to defend their rights, as well as alliances with community organizations and other progressive groups.

In Latin America, hundreds of thousands of workers, students, teachers and farmers marched for improved wages, working conditions and services. In **Mexico**, thousands of union members marched in Mexico City. Others, in the city of Puebla, opposed labor reforms. Thousands more took to the streets in **Peru**, calling for a higher minimum wage of US$450 a month.

A rally in São Paulo, **Brazil**, supported President Dilma Rousseff, who is facing an undemocratic, parliamentary "coup." Speaking to tens of thousands of supporters, she warned workers of coming right-wing attacks by forces that seek to "privatize everything."

Workers cheer Venezuelan, Cuban leaders

Venezuela's working class came out en masse on the streets of Caracas to show support for President Nicolás Maduro. Carrying pictures of Maduro and the late President Hugo Chávez, participants lauded the many gains for workers achieved through the Bolivarian Revolution

Maduro confirmed the good news that the national minimum wage and pensions would be increased by 30 percent and condemned U.S. intervention against this sovereign nation and the extension until 2019 of U.S. sanctions imposed against Venezuela's leaders. Venezuela's president called on the workers to rise up if he is ousted by the U.S.-backed right wing.

In **Cuba**, that island nation north of

Continued on page 11

Workers battle anti-labor 'reforms' on May Day

By Betsey Piette
Paris

Upwards of 100,000 workers and students took to the streets of Paris and other cities across France on International Workers Day, just three days after 170,000 workers held a one-day general strike on April 28 against proposed labor "reforms" that would remove protections and benefits workers have won over decades of struggle.

Two hours after the demonstrators set foot off Paris' Bastille Square, police chose to confront around 200 youthful protesters near the front of the march, blocking the way. In full riot gear, including shields and clubs, cops launched tear gas and stun grenades at the marchers. The youth responded with bottles and rocks.

After two hours of confrontation, police withdrew, letting marchers proceed toward the Place de la République, where students and young workers have held ongoing "Up All Night" ("Nuit Debout") occupations since March 31. France's President François Hollande's proposed labor reforms would make it even harder for students and younger workers entering the workforce to secure full-time work.

The labor changes, currently being debated in the National Assembly of France, would also abolish the current 35-hour maximum workweek, remove protections against excessive overtime and facilitate layoffs.

Contingent of undocumented workers in Paris march.

WW PHOTO: BETSEY PIETTE

Workers along the parade route held their ground against police disruptions. Massive contingents organized by the General Confederation of Workers (CGT) carried signs opposing the labor reform. The Communist Workers' Party of France (PCOF) and the New Anti-Capitalist Party also had large contingents.

The working class in France showed its international character throughout the march. A large contingent of undocumented workers marched within the CGT ranks. Further back, banners reflected the struggle of workers from Latin America and Africa.

A delegation from the U.S., in France to observe the tenth anniversary of the naming of a street for political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, also participated with their banners. Across France, May Day marches took place in 300 other cities.

The growing and unrelenting struggle against the anti-labor bill appears to be having an impact. While the government has softened some provisions of the bill, it reportedly still lacks enough support to be adopted by France's National Assembly, where a vote is scheduled for May 19.

Piette was part of the Mumia Abu-Jamal delegation.

WORKERS WORLD

editorial

Solidarity with People's Korea

There seems to be an unwritten law among the colonizers and imperialists that the peoples they have attacked the most must be insulted the most.

U.S. history is replete with examples. None is more repugnant than the universally offensive treatment heaped on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by the U.S. political establishment and media.

Since occupying the south of Korea in 1945, the imperialists have tried to defeat the Korean people's efforts to build socialism and overcome the poverty and devastation they inherited from decades of Japanese colonial rule. From 1950 to 1953, the Pentagon launched one of the most unequal wars in history against the DPRK. But the Korean Revolution succeeded anyway in the northern part of the peninsula. Showing incredible morale and bravery, the newly liberated Korean people in the DPRK under the leadership of the legendary Kim Il Sung and the Workers' Party fought the invaders to a standstill and then rebuilt their country.

So the imperialists, while still occupying the south and holding annual "war games" that threaten the DPRK with both conventional and nuclear weapons, have intensified their insults against the leaders of north Korea.

Workers World totally rejects this war propaganda offensive. It stands in solidarity with the DPRK, its people and leaders, in defense of their sovereignty and social system.

A momentous event has just taken place in Pyongyang, capital of the DPRK. Starting on May 6, the Workers' Party of Korea held its 7th Congress to chart the next phase of its development. The Secretariat of the National Committee of Workers World Party sent the following solidarity message to the First Secretary of the WPK:

"Dear Comrade Kim Jong Un,

"Workers World Party sends comradely greetings to the Workers' Party of Korea on the occasion of your party's 7th Congress.

"Many years have passed since the great revolutionary struggles that liberated the northern half of Korea from the colonial oppressors and their puppets, and all that time the Workers' Party of Korea has remained true to its commitments.

"Despite the strident hostility of the imperialist ruling classes, your Party has organized the people of the DPRK into a strong, educated, sincere force for building socialism that refuses to be intimidated. It has dealt firmly with those who would return all of Korea to the days of vassalage to international finance capital. It has guided the building up of the advanced scientific foundations of the economy and defense, and thus neutralized the constant war threats of the imperialists.

"We are sure you have much to celebrate in this remarkable Congress of your Party. The Korean revolutionaries have shown the world that a determined and politically conscious people can take on any challenges and succeed when imbued with the spirit of unity, courage and independence."

Since this was written, the news from Pyongyang is that Kim Jong Un has been elected chair of the Workers' Party of Korea and is stressing the policy of "byungjin," which means the simultaneous buildup of both economic and military strength, including nuclear weapons. As the U.S. has threatened the DPRK with nuclear attack ever since the 1950 war, the development of such weapons by the Koreans can only be seen as a necessary defensive measure. Ever since 1953, the Koreans have asked for negotiations to end that war with a peace treaty, and the U.S. has refused.

All progressives must continue to demand that Washington abandon its futile attempts to overthrow the DPRK and sign a peace treaty NOW! □

Despite massive general strike

Greek Parliament votes for new austerity

By John Catalinotto

Responding to a sudden new attack of austerity programs, unions in Greece called a two-day general strike and mass demonstrations beginning on May 6 that saw hundreds of thousands of workers walk out and take to the streets. Despite the strong strike and protests, the Greek Parliament voted to approve the hated new austerity measures on May 8.

This current class struggle is a continuation of the battle between the Greek workers and the big European banks, allied with the Greek rich.

Workers, especially in the public sector, closed schools and universities and kept public transportation to a minimum by stopping railways, trams and subways in the capital. Even by May 9, ships and ferries were still at anchor in the ports.

Water and electricity services as well as telecommunications were handled by a minimal workforce, and only emergency health care services were maintained. Journalists also joined the general strike, so no newspapers were published over the weekend, and newscasts on radio and television were limited to two reports, dealing only with the strikes, at noon and in the evening.

A coalition of the Syriza and Anel parties, which won last September's elections, leads Greece's government. Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras of Syriza had first been elected in January 2015 by voters who believed his party would fight austerity. However, working with the European Union, the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank and the European Stability Mechanism, these parties agreed on new cuts that especially hurt the working and poor people of the country.

For example, the new austerity package includes another hike in the value added tax — a type of sales tax — to 24 percent. It reduces the amount of income exempted from taxes, while charges that workers must pay for pension insurance were raised for the 14th time since the crisis started six years ago. Currently, a third of workers in Greece are unemployed.

The Tsipras government moved the vote in Parliament to May 8 to try to slip the austerity measures through before meetings with European Union finance ministers in Brussels on May 9. The EU ministers may demand even harsher cuts.

Tsipras cynically defends the current measures as "social reform" in this new betrayal. His grouping within Syriza succeeded in purging the party's left wing before last September's election. All remaining Syriza representatives voted for the new package.

The striking unions include the All-Workers Militant Front — which is close to the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) — and also the more social democratic union confederations. Together, they represent 2.5 million workers. The unions denounced the new austerity program as "a guillotining of the pension system." The two different union groups held separate marches and rallies through downtown Athens, the capital, and kept up protest actions throughout the weekend.

KKE Secretary General Dimitris Koutsoubas said that two worlds were clashing head on in Greece: "On the one hand, the world of work of wage earners, all those who suffer and bleed for years, and on the other side the world of wealth, in incredible abundance, the world of corruption." The dispute "will be decided on the street," continued Koutsoubas, adding that what was necessary was "a further uprising, a mobilization of the people, organized massive and powerful strikes, and demonstrations across the country."

Quotes and strike report from a May 7 article in the German daily newspaper Junge Welt by its Athens correspondent Heike Schrader.

Gulf Coast faces spread of Zika

By Lyn Neeley

With no national funding or coordinated prevention plan to stop it, the Zika virus is starting to sweep through the Gulf Coast states.

Scientists have now confirmed that the virus can cause microcephaly — underdeveloped head and brain — in a fetus. It is also linked to Guillain-Barre and other neurological disorders, and can be spread through sexual contact as well as by mosquitoes.

Zika is usually spread by a particular type of mosquito, Aedes aegypti. Dr. Anne Schuchat, deputy director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, believes that Aedes aegypti is now present in about 30 states.

"We think there could be hundreds of thousands of cases of Zika virus in Puerto Rico, and perhaps hundreds of affected babies," Schuchat predicted. Puerto Rico has already reported nearly 600 locally acquired cases, including 56 pregnant women and five cases of Guillain-Barre syndrome.

States surrounding the Gulf of Mexico are expected to be the hardest hit, especially Florida and Texas. Similar to Brazil and Puerto Rico, these states have conditions ripe for the proliferation of mosquitoes: warm, moist climates; crowded, low-income neighborhoods; and stagnant water collecting in garbage dumps and drainage ditches.

Pregnant women in these states also have to face reactionary laws and practices that limit abortion and contraception.

The Obama administration has requested $1.9 billion to prepare for Zika. Republicans are stalling, indicating they might approve only $1.1 billion. That puts the financial burden on local governments. The majority of counties in the South are impoverished and not prepared for the Zika onslaught. There is no coordinated plan for what is now being called an international emergency.

Right-wing anti-abortionists invite disaster

Like Brazil, where abortion is illegal, Southern states have harsh anti-choice laws. In Brazil, nearly 1,000 babies have been born with microcephaly since the Zika outbreak last October. Mothers of these children, most living in poverty, face a lifetime of caring for children disabled by this devastating condition.

In Texas, 18 out of 36 abortion clinics have been shut down since 2013 as a result of the state's anti-choice HB2 law. Researchers from the Texas Policy Evaluation Project (TxPEP) found that more than 25 percent of women seeking abortions in Texas now live at least 139 miles from the nearest clinic. Long distances, loss of a work day, plus money for childcare and transportation, put women, especially poor women, in a tough situation.

The TxPEP study surveyed 400 women seeking abortions and found that 32 percent "spent more than $100 on expenses beyond the cost of an abortion. Thirty-seven percent who lived far from a clinic did not get the abortion they wanted."

The study also found that "between 100,000 and 240,000 women of reproductive age living in Texas tried to end their pregnancy on their own." (thinkprogress.org, March 30)

Florida, with the most confirmed cases of Zika, as well as Alabama and Mississippi, all have laws similar to those in Texas. One law even prevents state funding for reproductive health clinics if they offer abortions. Other laws also decrease access to contraception at a time when the virus is believed to spread more quickly through sexual transmission than was previously thought.

The United Nations has called for countries hit by the Zika virus to loosen anti-abortion policies and provide access to birth control. "But no U.S. lawmaker — let alone health organization — has mentioned Zika's looming threat to areas lacking sufficient abortion access on their own soil." (thinkprogress.org)

Zika virus and neurological syndromes

Evidence for the Zika-microcephaly link has been accumulating since October 2015, when cases in Brazil were found to have risen from 163 per year to nearly 1,000 over six months. Polynesia had a surge of microcephaly after its Zika outbreak in 2013.

It was later shown that the Zika virus could cross the placenta and reach the fetus. (Lancet, March 15) Zika was found in the amniotic fluid surrounding microcephalic babies and in the brains of stillborn fetuses. (New England Journal of Medicine, March 10) The virus was found

Continued on the next page

Behind internal struggle in South Africa

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Two opposition parties in South Africa — the Democratic Alliance and the Economic Freedom Fighters — are seeking ways to not only gain votes in the upcoming local elections but also discredit and bring down the African National Congress government.

An impeachment vote against President Jacob Zuma on April 5 failed in the Parliament, where the ANC controls 62 percent of the seats. The Constitutional Court ruled unanimously on March 31 that Zuma should pay back some state funds used for upgrades to his Nkandla residence. The ANC government accepted the high court's decision and agreed to comply with its orders.

However, in a separate decision, a South African court ruled "that the decision by prosecutors to drop a corruption case against President Jacob Zuma seven years ago was irrational and should be set aside, opening the way for the 783 charges against him to be reinstated." (Bloomberg, April 29)

This latest decision has encouraged the opposition to renew calls for Zuma's resignation. The president says he has no intention of resigning, and it appears that the majority in ANC leadership structures are supporting him.

Local elections scheduled for August

Local government elections scheduled for August will be a political test for both the ruling ANC and the opposition in Parliament.

At present the Democratic Alliance, a party advocating greater reliance on neoliberal policies, controls approximately 22 percent of the seats in Parliament. The Economic Freedom Fighters, headed by former ANC Youth League leader Julius Malema, has 6 percent.

Malema and other former ANCYL leaders were expelled from the ANC in 2012 after being accused of indiscipline and corruption. Malema and his comrades formed the EFF and ran candidates in the 2014 elections.

The EFF has called for the nationalization of South African agricultural land and mines. It has demanded that Zuma resign. EFF members of Parliament voted in a bloc with the DA in the failed impeachment resolution. On several occasions EFF MPs have been forcefully removed from Parliament due to disruptive tactics.

In an April 24 interview with Al Jazeera, Malema told the Qatar-based satellite network that the EFF would "run out of patience very soon and we will remove this government through the barrel of a gun." Malema went on to say, "We will fight. We have the capability to mobilize our people and fight physically."

ANC spokesperson Zizi Kodwa replied: "These remarks are a call to violence, are inflammatory, treasonable and seditious and should be treated with extreme seriousness. They also are in clear violation of the Electoral Code and the Charter on Elections Ethics signed by a number of political parties — including the EFF, last week." (iol.co.za, April 25)

Kodwa told the Citizen newspaper, "We have opened a case of high treason against Julius Malema in his personal capacity as well as the EFF, following his reckless comments about being prepared to remove a democratically elected government using undemocratic means and force. We are doing this on behalf of all South Africans to defend and protect our hard-won freedom and democracy." (April 26)

In the Citizen article, Congress of South African Trade Unions President Sdumo Dlamini, a close ally of the ANC, described Malema's latest remarks as reckless. COSATU spokesperson Sizwe Pamla emphasized: "In any other situation, it would be easy to say that Malema's statements can be ignored, but given the various coalitions making calls to topple the ANC government, this is something that must be taken very seriously by law enforcement."

U.S. accused of regime-change agenda

The government has accused the U.S. State Department of being behind a regime-change agenda in the country. ANC Secretary General Gwede Mantashe said earlier in the year that the U.S. Embassy was recruiting and coordinating opposition forces bent on overthrowing the government.

These events are taking place amid an ongoing global capitalist economic crisis that has driven down the prices of export commodities and prompted a large drop in the value of the national currency.

The views of the two main allies of the ANC government, COSATU and the South African Communist Party, will be critical leading up to August when local elections are held. Both COSATU and the SACP have come out in support of the ANC for local offices.

A May Day statement from the SACP reads, "Let us defeat the strategic agenda of imperialism and monopoly capital. Let us consolidate and accelerate a second radical phase of the National Democratic Revolution. ... Let us close ranks on the basis of a strategic program and active organization and mobilization focused on the needs and aspirations of the workers and poor of South Africa. To do that — we must say NO to the politics of money; No to the politics of factions; No to the politics of gate-keepers; and No to the politics of personal ambition and opportunism." (sacp.org.za) □

Detroit youth resist U.S. role in Syria

By Tom Michalak
Detroit

On May 6 at downtown's Hart Plaza, Detroit FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together) held a counterdemonstration in defense of the sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic.

The FIST action was an answer to global events organized by the so-called #Allepoisburning campaign, which supports the intervention of U.S. and NATO forces and the misnamed Free Syrian Army in the Syrian war. The campaign falsely claims people in the Syrian city of Aleppo are being killed by President Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian Army.

At their protest, anti-imperialist activists loudly chanted slogans denouncing U.S./NATO and their allies for fueling the five-year conflict in Syria. They fiercely opposed any further imperialist involvement in any capacity.

Not forgotten are the imperialists' intervention in and subsequent obliteration of Libya as a functioning society. It is clear that the U.S., NATO and states subservient to them have no intention of bringing anything but destruction to those countries they intervene in and conquer. The same holds true for Syria.

WW PHOTO: KRIS HAMEL

Some of the 'NO to U.S. intervention in Syria' protesters, May 6.

As the Syrian Arab Army, with assistance from forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation, among others, continues its advance in liberating areas held by various armed groups, a globally coordinated and so-called "grassroots" movement that is imperialist backed and funded and directed by nongovernmental organizations, has sprung up virtually overnight.

Claiming solidarity with people in Aleppo, these right-wing demonstrators concealed the fact that the bulk of the territory held by opposition forces in the city belongs to Jabhat al-Nusra, the al-Qaida affiliate in Syria. They obscure the fact that the Syrian government is fighting Western-backed terrorists who are attempting to tear apart one of the last remaining independent, secular, pluralist Arab republics.

In Detroit, even when the #Allepoisburning demonstrators outnumbered the anti-imperialists at least 3 to 1, the latter remained militant and determined to defend a banner calling for a halt of U.S./NATO/Israeli attacks on Syria. A verbal and potentially physical confrontation was maintained with resolute defiance, even in the face of overwhelming numbers within arm's reach.

Just a short drive from the two clashing events in downtown Detroit is the city of Dearborn, with the largest Arab population in the U.S. Since the beginning of the conflict, many sizeable demonstrations in support of the Syrian government have occurred in that city, with nothing comparable in favor of U.S. imperialist intervention. □

Continued from page 10

to attack developing brain cells in fetal nerve tissue. (Cell Stem Cell, March 29)

The findings are a breakthrough for scientists who can now focus on developing a Zika virus vaccine and preventing widespread infections. A possible vaccine could be ready to test by September.

Zika is also linked to Guillain-Barre syndrome, in which the immune system attacks nerve cells, causing weakness and possibly paralysis. Encephalitis, myelitis and acute disseminated encephalomyelitis (ADEM) may also be Zika-related. ADEM is an autoimmune syndrome that attacks the brain, spinal cord or central nervous system, causing weakness, numbness, loss of balance and vision. (Reuters, April 11)

Cuba, by contrast to Puerto Rico, has only nine confirmed cases of Zika. Abortion there is legal, free and available upon request. A sovereign country building socialism, Cuba emphasizes public health, so everyone is covered. □

Fight versus Verizon

CWA/IBEW picket line joined by Workers Center of CNY and Palestine Solidarity Collective members, Syracuse, N.Y.

PHOTO: VANI KANNAN

Continued from page 6

got out leaflets to cars and street traffic at rush hour. The rally was highly visible, with a great response from passersby, including some who joined the action for a short time. (from Ben Carroll)

CWA Local 9415 and supporters from the community picketed a Lakeshore Avenue Verizon Wireless store in a crowded Oakland, Calif., shopping district. Passersby were very supportive, with a number of drivers honking in solidarity. Picketers held a banner and signs as they distributed flyers and talked to shoppers about the strike. Other Bay Area pickets were held in Berkeley and San Francisco. (from Terri Kay)

Boston workers and activists are holding a monster "I Stand with Verizon Workers" lunch-hour march near downtown City Hall on May 11. Striking IBEW Local 2222 has been a rock of support for community and other union struggles, including the successful two-year fight against mega conglomerate Veolia/Transdev carried out by the Boston School Bus Drivers, Steelworkers Local 8751.

Benji Pyles also contributed to this report.

International Workers Day

Continued from page 9

Venezuela and across the Caribbean Sea, hundreds of thousands of people of all ages, led by 40,000 teachers and students, marched to Havana's Plaza de la Revolución on May Day, under the banner of "For Cuba: Unity and Commitment." Some 2,000 international guests attended.

The masses of people honored the Revolution's leader, Fidel Castro, on his upcoming 90th birthday, and carried posters bearing his picture, and photographs of President Raúl Castro and revolutionary Che Guevara. They denounced the U.S. blockade and its plans to destabilize progressive governments in Latin America, and demanded the return of the illegally U.S. occupied Guantánamo Naval Base. □

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El pueblo apoya a la Revolución Cubana.

Maestros de Detroit exigen y logran sueldo mientras luchaban

Por Abayomi Azikiwe

En la tarde de hoy 3 de mayo, se anunció por los medios de comunicación que las/os maestros de Detroit se anotaron una victoria en respuesta a sus dos días de paro cuando el administrador de emergencias de las Escuelas Públicas de Detroit, Stephen Rodas, cedió y aceptó pagar los salarios que se les debía a las/os maestros durante los meses de verano. La batalla continúa para conseguir los fondos adecuados para una educación de calidad para las/os jóvenes de Detroit; para detener que los fondos públicos sean desviados a pagar los servicios de la deuda; y para restaurar el control local de las escuelas públicas de Detroit a esta ciudad de mayoría afroamericana.

Al igual que ayer, miles de miembros de la Federación de Maestros de Detroit llamaron hoy diciendo que estaban enfermas/os, cerrando así el sistema escolar. El paro fue en respuesta a un anuncio hecho por el administrador de emergencias de las Escuelas Públicas de Detroit, Stephen Rhodes, diciendo que no habían fondos para el EPD después del mes de junio de este año. Rhodes es un juez federal ahora retirado, que presidió el proceso de bancarrota de la ciudad de Detroit en el 2014. Esto significa que muchas/os de los maestros mal pagados y sobrecargados de trabajo de Detroit - quienes estiran sus salarios durante todo el año escolar a pesar de no trabajar durante los meses de verano - están trabajando ahora por nada.

Miles de maestras/os y otras/os trabajadores de la educación rodearon la sede del EPD en el área del Nuevo Centro a partir de las 10 de la mañana en los dos días. Gritaban consignas como ¿"Qué pasó con el dinero"? y ¡"Si no pagan, cerrarlo"!

Estas acciones representan una continuación de protestas anteriores donde las/os maestros llamaron la atención sobre las condiciones deplorables dentro del distrito escolar. El sistema de educación pública de Detroit ha estado bajo alguna forma de control estatal directo o indirecto desde 1999. El distrito ha perdido 150.000 estudiantes desde entonces.

La crisis educacional impuesta por las corporaciones se refleja en la falta de útiles escolares y el deterioro de los edificios con techos con goteras, moho, hongos y otras condiciones inseguras. Muchas escuelas carecen de una ventilación adecuada, y la temperatura en los edificios está o muy caliente o muy fría. La crisis también se refleja en la apertura de decenas de escuelas charter en Detroit, privando al sistema escolar de los fondos que desesperadamente se necesitan.

Por otra parte, la disminución de la matrícula del EPD, en parte como resultado de la epidemia de desahucios y ejecuciones hipotecarias de la última década que forzó la salida de más de 200.000 personas de la ciudad, se ha traducido en el cierre de más de 200 edificios escolares. Muchas de estas escuelas abandonadas han sido objeto de vandalismo y despojadas de cobre, hierro, ladrillo, aparatos eléctricos y otros materiales, convirtiéndose en manchas en los barrios, facilitando aún más el subdesarrollo y el deterioro de comunidades de Detroit.

Los servicios de la deuda tienen prioridad sobre la educación

Cuando el estado de Michigan tomó el control del EPD en 1999, el distrito tenía un superávit de $93 millones, con al menos otros $1,5 mil millones en fondos de bonos aprobados por las/os votantes para mejorar los edificios escolares y otras obras de infraestructura. En la actualidad, los informes indican que el EPD tiene una deuda de $3,5 mil millones, con porciones sustanciales debidas a los bancos y tenedores de bonos.

Las protestas llegan cuando el gobierno estatal en Lansing está debatiendo proyectos de ley para dar "fondos" a las escuelas públicas de Detroit. El proyecto de ley aprobado por el Senado del Estado establecería dos distritos, uno con $515 millones en fondos para ser utilizados sólo para pagar los servicios de la deuda y un segundo con $200 millones para financiar las operaciones. El proyecto de ley eliminaría la actual Junta Escolar elegida de Detroit y la sustituiría por una junta esencialmente impotente, cuyos funcionarios y superintendentes serían nombrados por una comisión designada por el reaccionario gobernador y envenenador de aguas de Flint, Rick Snyder, así como el alcalde de Detroit Duggan.

Sin embargo, la reaccionaria Cámara del Estado ha rechazado este proyecto de ley, debatiendo en vez uno que limitaría la financiación escolar a $500 millones - ¡Solo los servicios de la deuda serían pagados! - y con provisiones que contienen ataques punitivos contra los derechos de las/os maestros de Detroit. El proyecto de la Cámara elimina cualquier supervisión de las escuelas charter, las cuales han proliferado en Detroit a pesar de su fracaso en la educación de las/os estudiantes de Detroit.

En los últimos dos días se ha revelado que la deuda real para las Escuelas Públicas de Detroit - deuda acumulada bajo la dirección de varios gestores de emergencias designados por el Estado - es mucho mayor de lo anunciado previamente, lo que requiere al menos $800 millones para cumplir con las demandas inmediatas de los acreedores. Además, un informe salió a la luz indicando que los gestores de emergencias utilizaron ilegalmente aproximadamente $40 millones para gastos operacionales de los fondos federales destinados a necesidades especiales de las pensiones de maestras/os.

Una de las demandas de las/os maestros en huelga es una auditoría de los fondos escolares para dar cuenta de cómo se produjo la enorme deuda bajo la gestión de emergencias. Es absolutamente criminal que en una ciudad donde las escuelas se caen a pedazos y las necesidades para una educación de calidad de las/os niños de Detroit son tan grandes, que más fondos escolares puedan ser utilizados para pagar el servicio de la deuda a los bancos e instituciones financieras que educar a las/os estudiantes.

Más ataques a Detroit

Los fondos federales de vivienda, supuestamente destinadas a mantener la estabilidad en los barrios ayudando a las/os residentes con el pago de las hipotecas, los sobre-evaluados impuestos a la propiedad y las infladas facturas de agua, en cambio se están utilizando para derribar casas y negocios vacantes. El gobierno federal está investigando irregularidades en los gastos para la demolición coordinados por la Autoridad de Banco de Tierras de Detroit.

El Grupo de Trabajo de Remoción de Deterioro de Detroit, que identifica viviendas y otras estructuras para la incautación y demolición, está presidido por el multimillonario Dan Gilbert, jefe de Quicken Loans. El papel de Gilbert representa un claro conflicto de intereses. Gilbert actualmente está siendo demandado por el Departamento de Justicia por el mal uso de cientos de millones de dólares en fondos de la Administración Federal de Vivienda a través de sus operaciones de financiación de bienes raíces.

Mientras tanto, Gilbert anunció el 27 de abril que él y otros inversores capitalistas han creado un plan para construir un estadio de fútbol en el centro de Detroit. Gilbert, que es dueño de Rock Ventures LLC, del equipo profesional de baloncesto Cleveland Cavaliers y de otras empresas, es un elemento importante en la reestructuración de la ciudad de Detroit dirigida por el sector bancario. Él y el ejecutivo Arn Tellem, de los Detroit Pistons declararon sus planes para el proyecto de mil millones de dólares en el sitio de la fallida cárcel del Condado de Wayne. Los informes noticieros desde 2014, cuando se paralizó la construcción, decían que se perdieron $150 millones en el proyecto de la cárcel nueva debido a excesivos costos y a la corrupción.

Durante 2015, Gilbert hizo conocer claramente su oposición a la construcción de la cárcel en el centro de la ciudad. En cambio, el banquero y arriesgado empresario imaginaba un estadio para ligas mayores de fútbol con 25.000 asientos y otros negocios, incluyendo restaurantes, hoteles y una torre de oficinas comerciales.

Un artículo publicado el 27 de abril en el Detroit Free Press declaró: "El plan de estadio de fútbol pide la reubicación de la actual cárcel del condado de Wayne, el edificio de Justicia Frank Murphy y las facilidades de Detención Juvenil del condado de Wayne a Mound Road (lejos del centro). Gilbert ha estado tratando de comprar al Condado, el sitio sin terminar de la cárcel; recientemente ha ofrecido $50 millones. El Condado, que ya ha gastado $150 millones de dólares en el detenido proyecto no aceptó la oferta".

Gilbert y sus cohortes capitalistas no quieren que la cárcel esté en el centro de la ciudad, ya que interfiere con su visión de la ciudad, que está siendo diseñada como un parque de recreación para habitantes de suburbios y turistas, mientras que los barrios son destruidos por los mismos bancos y otras fuerzas capitalistas. ☐

Reparaciones y las raíces racistas de Yale

El brutal asesinato de nueve afroamericanas/os en la histórica Iglesia Metodista Episcopal Africana Emanuel en Charleston-Carolina del Sur en junio del año pasado por un racista que blandió símbolos confederados, provocó un movimiento nacional para retirar las banderas y estatuas confederadas y quitar los nombres de los propietarios de esclavos de lugares y edificios.

Uno de estos ricos propietarios de esclavas/os fue John C. Calhoun, un graduado de Yale en 1804, a quien la Universidad de Yale honra al haberle dado su nombre al Colegio Calhoun. Como consecuencia de la balacera en Charleston, estudiantes de Yale comenzaron una petición para eliminar el nombre de Calhoun y consiguieron más de 1.500 firmas. La petición dice: "Al igual que el despliegue oficial de la bandera de la Confederación en Carolina del Sur, el Colegio Calhoun representa una indiferencia a siglos de dolor y sufrimiento de la población negra".

Para quien no sabe cuán podrido era Calhoun, a principios de 1800, fue la voz nacional más viciosa promoviendo la esclavocracia, incluso llamando a la esclavitud un "bien positivo". Y él era poderoso además de rico; fue representante y senador de Carolina del Sur, secretario de estado y vicepresidente bajo John Quincy Adams y también Andrew Jackson. Una de sus principales "contribuciones" fue ser el autor de la doctrina que permitía a los estados esclavistas hacer caso omiso de cualquier ley federal que inhibiera la esclavitud.

En cara del Underground Railroad (Corredor Oculto de esclavas/os), dirigido por héroes como Harriet Tubman, Calhoun creó la Ley de Esclavos Fugitivos de 1850. Esta ley permitía a los dueños de esclavos localizar y volver a esclavizar a quienes se habían escapado al Norte.

Desafiando a sus estudiantes, el presidente de Yale Peter Salovey, anunció el 27 de abril que la escuela se negaba a remover el nombre del supremacista blanco del colegio residencial.

En un momento en que incluso la Legislatura de Carolina del Sur está de acuerdo en retirar la bandera de la Confederación de la Cámara Legislativa, ¿por qué una universidad de Nueva Inglaterra de la 'Ivy League' [N de T: colegios considerados los mejores del país] se niega a borrar el nombre de este monstruo racista? La única razón lógica es que conceder esta parte del pasado de Yale abre la puerta a un nuevo examen de la totalidad del enredo histórico de la Universidad de Yale y su enriquecimiento con la esclavitud.

La Universidad de Yale lleva el nombre de Elihu Yale, un funcionario de la Compañía de las Indias Orientales a finales de 1600, que hizo una fortuna con el comercio de esclavos del Océano Índico. El decano Holloway de la universidad de Yale, señaló el año pasado que "En su fundación y durante sus primeros 150 años o más, sí, Yale, como tantas otras instituciones de la época, fueron cómplices en el saqueo debido a que sus finanzas estaban entrelazadas con la economía global de esclavos". (yaledailynews.com 30 de marzo de 2015)

El trabajo no remunerado de millones de esclavas/os africanos durante siglos fue central para la acumulación de capital de muchos actuales bancos, compañías de seguros, empresas e instituciones elitistas como la Universidad de Yale. Esta acumulación, con valor actual de billones de dólares, se intensificó sobre todo después de la invención de la desmotadora de algodón por otro graduado de Yale, Eli Whitney. Continuó a través del período de la aparcería, el motor económico de Jim Crow, forzado por el brutal régimen de terror del Klan.

Este legado racista continúa de mil maneras hoy, con las políticas de los gobiernos y las empresas por igual sobre vivienda, educación, prisiones, e incluso de aguas limpias, diseñadas para saquear la riqueza producida por la comunidad afroamericana.

Durante años ha habido un creciente movimiento de reparaciones exigiendo un retorno de esta riqueza a las comunidades afroamericanas donde estaban y de donde se extrajeron con tanta crueldad. La administración de la Universidad de Yale y todos sus patrocinadores de Wall Street quieren evitar cualquier cosa que podría abrir la puerta a la justa reparación de la riqueza.

Workers World – Mundo Obrero apoya la justa demanda de las/os estudiantes de Yale para cambiar el nombre de su colegio. Pero eso es sólo el comienzo. La campaña electoral 2016 del Partido WW-Mundo Obrero incluye la demanda de ¡reparaciones ahora! Esa deuda debe ser pagada por las instituciones ricas como la Universidad de Yale y todos sus aliados de Wall Street. ☐