

North Carolina

Public education workers
flood state capital

By Stephanie Lormand
Raleigh, N.C.

May 16 — Almost 20,000 teachers and supporters rallied today in North Carolina's capital to defend public education. The protest closed more than 42 school districts, affected about 67 percent of the state's public school students, and canceled classes for more than 1 million students.

The North Carolina Association of Educators called for the "March for Students and Rally for Respect" with the #ItsPersonal hashtag, asking teachers to "come to the first day of the General Assembly short session." Teachers responded by paying \$50 for a legally protected "personal day" and mobilizing to get to Raleigh.

Though the march permit included sidewalks only, people took to the streets by the thousands. They swarmed the former Capitol building, overwhelming the statues and monuments to the old guards of white supremacy. Their numbers wrapped around both sides of the current legislative building, from the front doors around to the back.

The crowd poured through the capital in a sea of red shirts, the emblem of education worker struggles popularized by the #RedForEd teachers of Arizona. Preceding today's action were massive education worker struggles in West Virginia, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Arizona, Colorado and Puerto Rico.

Mainstream media focused on the supposed primary motivation of North Carolina's movement as low teacher salaries. Low pay was certainly a factor, but both liberal and right-wing conservative politicians deliberately narrowed the rally into a single-line issue rather than admitting the statewide inequities of public school funding.

These politicians ignored facts like the state spending \$2,400 less per pupil than the national average. Funding shortages limit student access to school nurses, counselors and other support staff, while public school buildings continue to age with mold, termites and other unsafe conditions.

Above all, the politicians' focus on teacher pay erases the imperative to talk about how increased corporate benefits decrease money available for public education. North Carolina has lowered the corporate tax rate from 6.9 percent in 2012 to 3 percent. That is the lowest in the country, even before another planned drop to 2.5 percent in 2019. Nearly \$3.5 billion in potential revenue will benefit corporate interests instead of education.

North Carolina unites for public education

In this "right-to-work" (for less!) state, not so subtle threats have been made against those participating in

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Protesters call for the Philadelphia Orchestra to cancel trip to Israel.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

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Statement of Workers World Party

Stop war threats against Korea!

May 17 — Workers World Party (U.S.) condemns the threatening moves made by the Trump administration and the Pentagon that have deliberately undercut the momentum and planning for a June 12 summit meeting between the U.S. and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It is the U.S. government's actions and statements that have called into question the planned discussions to improve relations between the two nuclear powers.

At this very moment, the U.S. and South Korea are conducting joint military exercises simulating an invasion of the DPRK. Called operation Max Thunder, these exercises involve some 100 warplanes, including nuclear-capable B-52 bombers and F-22 Raptor stealth fighter jets.

Last month, similarly threatening U.S.-S.K. military operations — Foal Eagle and Key Resolve — took place despite efforts by the DPRK to decrease tensions by meeting with South Korean officials and inviting President Donald Trump to a summit with Kim Jong Un.

The U.S. calls its military provocations “defensive.” There is nothing defensive about them. They are taking place thousands of miles away from the U.S., on the very border of the DPRK, a country the U.S. ravaged from 1950 to 1953. While the Pentagon killed millions of Korean people in that war, it could not defeat the revolutionary government that had liberated the north from Japanese colonial rule at the end of World War II. But Washington has never agreed to end the formal state of war that continues to exist now, 65 years later.

Trump's appointment of John Bolton to national security adviser in late March was a sign that the White House was moving toward greater confrontation with the DPRK. Bolton is an unapologetic war hawk who has gone on record advocating a pre-emptive strike against the DPRK. Bolton has threatened the Koreans with the fate of Libya if it does not immediately denuclearize, and Trump has repeated his words. Libya gave up trying to acquire nuclear weapons on the promise of peace, but instead was invaded and dismembered.

But the DPRK is not Libya. It is a nuclear power and can retaliate if attacked.

On May 16, Kim Kye Gwan, first vice minister of For-

eign Affairs of the DPRK, released a statement saying: “If the Trump administration takes an approach to the DPRK-U.S. summit with sincerity for improved DPRK-U.S. relations, it will receive a deserved response from us. However, if the U.S. is trying to drive us into a corner to force our unilateral nuclear abandonment, we will no longer be interested in such dialogue and cannot but reconsider our proceeding to the DPRK-U.S. summit.”

In the interests of the people of the U.S. and Korea, we call on anti-war forces in the U.S. to urgently denounce this dangerous maneuvering by the reactionary Trump administration.

We must demand that the U.S. cease its hostile war “games,” sign a peace treaty with the DPRK, end its military occupation of South Korea and bring the troops home! □

Expanding Empire

The global war drive of big business and the forces that will stop it

Vince Copeland's “Expanding Empire” tells the story of U.S. imperialism from its beginnings in 1898 up to the Vietnam War. The pamphlet was written in 1969 during the Vietnam War and became one of Workers World's most popular titles. It went through several printings.

The purpose of the pamphlet was to show that the war was not caused by any particular politician. Rather it was a product of the capitalist system.

The same is true today. In the end, it all comes down to profits. “Expanding Empire” explains how the capitalists' insatiable greed for increased profit inevitably produces war. And it shows how the only way to prevent future wars is to destroy capitalism at its roots.



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www.workers.org/books



Workers World Party is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a multinational, multigenerational and multigendered organization that not only aims to abolish capitalism, but to build a socialist society because it's the only way forward!

Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the never-ending quest for ever-greater profits. Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, joblessness and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism.

The U.S. is the richest country in the world, yet no one has a guaranteed right to shelter, food, water, health care, education or anything else — unless they can pay for it.

Contact a Workers World Party branch near you:

National Office
147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl.
New York, NY 10011
212.627.2994
wwp@workers.org

Atlanta
PO Box 18123
Atlanta, GA 30316
404.627.0185
atlanta@workers.org

Baltimore
c/o Solidarity Center
2011 N. Charles St.
Baltimore, MD 21218
443.221.3775
baltimore@workers.org

Bay Area
1305 Franklin St. #411
Oakland, CA 94612
510.600.5800
bayarea@workers.org

Boston
284 Amory St.
Boston, MA 02130
617.286.6574
boston@workers.org

Buffalo, N.Y.
335 Richmond Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14222
716.883.2534
Buffalo@Workers.org

Chicago
312.630.2305
chicago@workers.org

Cleveland
P.O. Box 5963
Cleveland, OH 44101
216.738.0320
cleveland@workers.org

Denver
denver@workers.org

Detroit
5920 Second Ave.
Detroit, MI 48202
313.459.0777
detroit@workers.org

Durham, N.C.
804 Old Fayetteville St.
Durham, NC 27701
919.322.9970
durham@workers.org

Houston
P.O. Box 3454
Houston, TX 77253-3454
713.503.2633
houston@workers.org

Indiana
Indiana@workers.org

Madison
Madison@Workers.org

Los Angeles
5278 W Pico Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90019
la@workers.org
323.306.6240

Milwaukee
milwaukee@workers.org

Philadelphia
P.O. Box 34249
Philadelphia, PA 19101
610.931.2615
phila@workers.org

Pittsburgh
pittsburgh@workers.org

Portland, Ore.
portland@workers.org

Rochester, N.Y.
585.436.6458
rochester@workers.org

Rockford, Ill.
rockford@workers.org

Salt Lake City
801.750.0248
SLC@Workers.org

San Antonio, Texas
SanAntonioWWP@workers.org

San Diego
P.O. Box 33447
San Diego, CA 92163
sandiego@workers.org

Tucson, Ariz.
tucson@workers.org

Virginia
Virginia@workers.org

Washington, D.C.
P.O. Box 57300
Washington, DC 20037
dc@workers.org

workers.org/wwp

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Workers World
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New York, NY 10011

Phone: 212.627.2994
E-mail: ww@workers.org
Web: www.workers.org

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Editor: Deirdre Griswold

Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, LeiLani Dowell,
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‘Philly, don’t orchestrate apartheid’

Activists block street outside, disrupt concert inside

By **Betsey Piette**
Philadelphia

Pro-Palestinian activists who, since April 6, have staged weekly demonstrations denouncing the Philadelphia Philharmonic Orchestra’s plans to tour Israel upped the ante on May 19. They blocked traffic outside and disrupted the performance inside the Kimmel Center.

Over 100 demonstrators rallied and distributed fliers to orchestra patrons and passersby, addressing the massacres committed by Israeli Defense Forces, who have murdered over 111 unarmed Palestinian protesters in Gaza since March 30 and intentionally injured over 12,000 more. Concert goers were encouraged to hold up the back page of the leaflet, reading “Cancel the trip to Israel!” during the concert.

Many people entering the building gave the protesters a thumbs up. Rally organizers asked patrons to take selfies of themselves holding the protest sign during the performance. Two stops on the planned itinerary include orchestra members performing with Israeli soldiers at IDF bases.

Earlier actions by Philly Don’t Orchestrate Apartheid resulted in the removal of a planned visit with Miri Regev, Israeli minister of Culture and Sport, who had likened African asylum seekers to “a cancer,” then later apologized to cancer survivors for the association with Black people. She also posted a video of herself with Israeli soccer fans as they shouted genocidal chants at Palestinians.

Midway through the protests, about 60 demonstrators took over South Broad Street, fully blocking it for a while. Even after police cleared one lane, demonstrators continued to block southbound traffic throughout the rest of the protest. They held a 75-foot-long scroll with pictures, names and ages of dozens of Palestinians, including an 8-month-old child, murdered since March 30. Several activists staged a “die-in,” lying on the street, while others chalked body images on the

sidewalk outside the center.

Palestinian voice silences ‘Tosca’ performance

While police and Kimmel Center management focused on the protests outside, two activists entered the hall and disrupted the orchestra’s performance shortly after it began. In the brief silence between the initial applause and music director Yannick Nézet-Séguin raising his baton, a pre-recorded message from Palestinian activist Susan Abulhawa suddenly filled the auditorium, broadcast via a powerful portable speaker.

Abulhawa’s message: “You’re playing ‘Tosca,’ but you don’t even know what it means. You don’t know what it means to oppose power. You don’t know what it means to be powerless. What it means to have no voice in the world. To be slaughtered year after year while everyone just watches; and then to have the Philadelphia Orchestra go and celebrate your oppressors.

“Israel has shot over 12,000 human beings. Do you have any idea what 12,000 mangled bodies looks like, or what 60 murdered in a single day looks like? Every one of them had a life. They had family and people who loved them. You are complicit in this carnage. Every one of you going to play in celebration of Israel is complicit.

“Music does not exempt you from moral responsibility. Music ought to be a moral compass toward justice, not a way to cozy up to power and money. We Palestinians didn’t ask you to fight for us. All we asked is that you do no harm, that you don’t whitewash Israeli apartheid. If you think your collaboration with that murderous gangster state will blow over, then you sorely underestimate our pain; you underestimate our love for each other and our anger and resolve.”

One protester who got inside reported that Nézet-Séguin then put his fingers in his ears, saying “la-la-la-la.” The demonstrator who played the recording was escorted from the hall, but another



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

The orchestra’s trip to Israel is meant to put a liberal veneer on Israeli apartheid and oppression of Palestinians.

stood to denounce the tour. Nézet-Séguin then slammed his baton on the podium and walked off the stage. As chants from outside of “Free, free Palestine!” could be heard, some musicians also began to leave, most likely expecting other disruptions. Video of the action can be found at vimeo.com/270993383.

Orchestra co-president Matthew Loden then told the audience that while dissent matters, “The sanctity of the concert hall should be respected.” (philly.com, May 19). But by agreeing to participate in a whitewashing tour of the racist, apartheid state of Israel, financed by the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia, a longtime proponent of Israeli Zionism, the orchestra no longer deserves respect.

Coverage of the action appeared online in the Philadelphia Inquirer, but Joe Piette, who handles media outreach for the PDOA coalition, noted that during seven weeks of actions, not one television station covered the boycott campaign. “These actions are linked to the brutal massacres weekly being carried out by

Israeli soldiers, which is world news, yet not one local TV outlet saw fit to cover it.”

As the protest continued outside, African National Congress representative Godfrey Sithole voiced the ANC’s consistent support for the Palestinian people struggling against Israeli occupation and apartheid. He reminded the crowd that campaigns like this succeeded in defeating apartheid in South Africa.

Abulhawa concluded the rally by expressing appreciation for the support of progressive African and Latin American nations for the Palestinian cause. She urged continued solidarity for struggles against white supremacy and state brutality, whether in Jerusalem or Philadelphia.

Activists gave notice they will continue calling out the outrageous refusal of the Philadelphia Orchestra to respect the global cultural boycott of Israel when it returns home. Iftar food was then served to those wishing to break their Ramadan fast together. For more information, visit phillydontorchestrateapartheid on Facebook. □

U.S. puts stamp of approval on Israeli murder of Gazans

By **Chris Fry**

Two side-by-side photos from May 14 were splashed across the front pages of newspapers around the globe and all forms of social media.

One showed Ivanka Trump, daughter of the U.S. president, unveiling a plaque at the newly opened U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem. Present were a champagne-glass-clinking gaggle of right-wing Israeli politicians, U.S. officials and fanatical Christian evangelicals. The last group explained the move to Jerusalem as the glorious prelude to the “second coming,” when all non-Christians — Jews included — will be annihilated and then consigned to eternal damnation.

The medieval Inquisition had nothing on these guys.

The other photo showed heroic medical workers rescuing injured, unarmed Palestinian protesters from murderous Israeli sniper fire and massive gas clouds along the illegal fence that the Zionist state has erected to imprison nearly 2 million people in Gaza.

At least 62 Gazans were killed on May 14 — one day before the anniversary of the Nakba, or the Catastrophe, when Palestinians were forcibly expelled from their homes by Zionist forces in 1948. The dead this time included six children and an eight-month-old baby named Layla Ghaben. More than 2,700 Palestinians have been wounded, half from sniper fire, since the protests began in Gaza on March 30, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry.

In moving the embassy to Jerusalem, the strategists for U.S. imperialism are far more interested in profits than they are in theology. They are somewhat leery of openly endorsing Israeli atrocities, which have sparked objections among some organs of the corporate media. A May 14 editorial in the New York Times opined: “Mr. Trump’s announcement that he was recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, and moving the embassy from Tel Aviv, swept aside 70 years of American neutrality.” It added that Israeli officials “are unconvincing when they argue that only live ammunition — rather than

tear gas, water cannons and other nonlethal measures — can protect Israel from being overrun.”

Myth of U.S. ‘neutrality’

Of course, Washington has never been “neutral” toward Israel. As of five years ago, it gave the settler state more than \$234 billion in aid, mostly military aid to purchase U.S. weapons, thus arming Israel to the teeth while at the same time filling the coffers of the U.S. war machine. (Haaretz, March 20, 2013) Democratic and Republican politicians are unified behind their support of Israel. Nearly all repeat the Zionist argument that the brutal killing of unarmed protesters in Gaza is necessary so that the racist settler state “can protect its borders.”

Black Agenda Report points out: “No fewer than 24 states have enacted bipartisan legislation to publicly identify and blacklist individuals or corporations that do business with individuals and entities publicly identified as BDS-friendly [the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement]. Similar legislation has been

introduced in a dozen more states and in the U.S. Senate. Israel trains thousands of U.S. police each year for hundreds of local departments — from big cities, universities and state cop shops to small towns and rural counties. It’s no wonder that U.S. corporate news media portrayed the latest Israeli massacre as a bizarre act of self-defense at Israel’s borders, as though the gun line around the world’s largest concentration camp, population 2 million, were an international frontier.” (May 17)

But now, the Trump regime has dropped any pretense of total support for Israeli atrocities by moving its embassy to Jerusalem and cancelling the Iran treaty. It is hoping that brute force will break any resistance to U.S. imperialism’s exploitation of the vast wealth in the region.

The Netanyahu government had chimed in its support for the Pentagon on April 30 by launching a massive missile attack against Syria. The Assad govern-

Haitian Unity Day cheered

By Workers World Boston bureau

Boston held its annual Haitian Unity Day Parade on May 20, celebrating the victory of the 1804 Haitian Revolution. This great uprising against settler-colonial chattel slavery led to the establishment of the first Black-led republic in the Western Hemisphere. Thousands of Haitians, Haitian-Americans and their supporters marched, along with a wide range of groups that included Haitian workers, students, Fanmi Lavalas Boston and United Steelworkers Local 8751, Boston School Bus Drivers. The march

began in Mattapan Square, long a cultural and social hub of Boston's Haitian community, and continued along Blue Hill Avenue, where the community cheered and danced from their porches. Workers World Party-Boston attended as part of a contingent organized by the Boston School Bus Drivers Union, which will soon enter contract negotiations. Union President Andre François, addressing the crowd from a sound truck, said: "We are here marching against deportations, mass incarceration and racism! You have already earned your permanent residence, come out and claim it!" □

WW PHOTO: STEVAN KIRSCHBAUM

Boston



Union women speak Organizing to keep TPS

By Phebe Eckfeldt and Sam Ordóñez
Boston

This is Part 2 of an April 28 conversation between Workers World and two union organizers who are leaders in a Harvard University coalition to save the now-threatened Temporary Protected Status for immigrants. Both migrated to the U.S. from El Salvador.

Doris is a leader in Service Employees Union 32BJ, representing custodians, and Marta is a leader in UNITE HERE Local 26, representing dining hall workers. The Harvard TPS Coalition is made up of members of UNITE HERE Local 26; SEIU 32BJ; the Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers, AFSCME Local 3650; the Harvard Graduate Student Union; and faculty and students.

WW: As you know, DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) has given 800,000 young immigrants, brought to the U.S. as children, the right to stay, study and work in the U.S. without threat of deportation. They have become known as "Dreamers." In September 2017, Trump and the right wing ordered an end to DACA. Why do you link TPS, DACA and all undocumented workers in your literature, speeches, signs? Why is this important?

Marta: I have always found that [those] three things — TPS, DACA, and the undocumented, who don't have anything — we're on the same level because

having TPS hasn't made us legal in this country, it's temporary and so is DACA. And those [undocumented] who are still behind us, still in the shadows, they can't speak. ... We try always to say TPS, DACA and all the undocumented, so that our voice can be stronger and so that our co-workers will say: "OK, they're not just fighting for one thing. They're fighting for everyone, for there to be a just immigration reform."

Doris: I think also that we are in a difficult moment and what matters the most is unity. We can't win this battle if we're only going with TPS. We need also the people with DACA and the people

Part 2

who don't have any documents to be together with us, so that we can grow and take to the streets and fight. They're also immigrant families just like us that have children born here. They have the right to watch their families grow up just like us. And the DACA kids ... many of their parents are undocumented. So I think that it's very important that we work on all three cases together so that we can all be in this country together. What we're fighting for is that there should be no separated families.

WW: Trump announced on May 4 that 90,000 Hondurans will no longer be protected by TPS, put in place for that country after Hurricane Mitch struck in 1998. They have 18 months to leave or make other arrangements to stay. What do you think about this?

Doris: This is the worst, terrible. They face the same issues as we do. They face murders and violence back home. Their families are in limbo. Hondurans come to the States [to work]; they are paid \$1 a day, which is a lot of money for them. Hon-



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duras has the worst economy. This has to be so, if they are coming to the States to work for \$1 a day!

WW: What would Trump's ending of TPS mean for you personally?

Doris: It would be a huge impact. It's even already affecting my family deeply because I have an 11-year-old daughter who calls me every morning to make sure I got to work, and every afternoon asking if I made it back. Because she hasn't understood that there isn't any risk yet, but in her mind there already is. The effect on my family has been traumatizing, my daughter is being traumatized. She's even been discriminated against at school. ... So — not just me but also my children. This country doesn't realize how it's hurting these kids, who are U.S. citizens, its own citizens and it doesn't even care.

WW: There's a new WWP pamphlet, "Every Struggle is a Woman's Struggle." What do you think of that title?

Marta: If a woman is suffering, we share her same pain. If a woman is abused, we feel it. Because a woman's

Continued on page 5

Haitians demand: 'Trump must go!'

By Steve Millies
Washington, D.C.

Haitians and their supporters rallied in front of the White House on May 19 to protest Trump's racism and deportations, despite a Secret Service attempt to shut the rally down. The protest in Washington's Lafayette Park was called by the 1804 Movement for All Immigrants, a coalition of many different organizations and individuals. 1804 refers to the year Haiti declared independence. The Trump administration is stripping temporary protected status (TPS) from hundreds of thousands of immigrants who have fled disasters in Haiti, El Salvador, Honduras, Nepal, Nicaragua and Sudan. Mass deportations are threatened. On Jan. 11, the eve of the eighth anniversary of the devastating Haitian earthquake, Trump, in a burst of disgusting imperialist malice, referred to Haiti, El Salvador and some African nations as "shithole" countries. The 1804 coalition was immediately organized and called a demonstration in New York City on Jan. 19. Despite the freezing weather, more than a thousand people marched across the Brook-

lyn Bridge to a Trump building on Wall Street. Among the demands of the 1804 coalition are that Trump apologize to the countries he so grossly insulted; permanent residency for all TPS holders; U.S. and U.N. reparations to Haiti; and a stop to police terror against Black and Brown communities. The coalition also denounced the U.S., Israeli and Saudi war and aggression against Iran and Syria. Buses came to the Washington rally from both Brooklyn and New Jersey. Co-chairing the rally were Ray Laforest, a union organizer, and Kerbie Joseph from the Party for Socialism and Liberation. Speaking across from the White House built by enslaved people, Marie Paule Florestal challenged Trump's racism and bigotry. Florestal, a teacher and union activist, was a key organizer of the event. Other speakers included longtime Haitian activists Florence Jean-Joseph and Georgette Delinois, as well as a representative of the United African Congress and Kim Ives of Haiti Liberté newspaper. Eugene Puryear of PSL described how Haitians not only fought for their own liberation from slavery, but also aided Simón Bolívar to liberate much of Latin America.

Washington, D.C.



WW PHOTO: SHARON BLACK

Gross insults and threats of deportation have inflamed the Haitian community. Calling Trump "just a human toilet spewing hate," Lee Patterson from Workers World Party-Baltimore demanded freedom for political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. He pointed out that the rally was being held on "the birthday of the great revolutionary leader Malcolm X — assassinated by COINTELPRO and the CIA." Patterson also called for freeing the MOVE 9 and Leonard Peltier. WWP members from Baltimore, Washington and New York City attended the event. Even though the 1804 coalition had a permit, Secret Service agents cleared Lafayette Park toward the end of the rally, suppressing the group's First Amendment rights. The power of the people forced the park to be reopened and the rally resumed. Berthony Dupont, editor of Haiti Liberté, was the final speaker. Stop the deportations! Reparations for Haiti! □

Gentrification drives homeless camp evictions

By Princess Harmony
Philadelphia

The U.S. opioid epidemic doesn't just take over lives. It takes over neighborhoods, as the Kensington section of Philadelphia can attest. The area has become a magnet for opioid addicts up and down the East Coast because of its potent heroin and now fentanyl.

A mark of this epidemic — compounded by unfair evictions and gentrification pricing people out of their homes — has been camps of heroin and other drug users along railroad tracks and under bridges. These camps act as homes, safe injection sites and gathering places for the homeless, addicted and downtrodden of the city.

Along with homeless people who gather at those locations, many Delaware Valley drug addicts congregate around the camps, making it easier for groups like Angels in Motion to provide them with basic necessities like food and water. The camps also make it easier to search for missing Delaware Valley addicts. Many times they can be found there.

City gives one-month eviction notice

The city posted notices at camps on April 30 giving one month for residents to leave. Why is Philadelphia so interested in eliminating these camps? On paper, it's all about public health. The needles, empty baggies and other drug paraphernalia strewn about are a serious problem that needs to be addressed. Yet camp residents ask why this can't be addressed without throwing them out of the only

"home" they have.

Many question the timing and real purpose behind the evictions. Philadelphia last evicted people from a homeless camp in 2017 when they attacked El Campamento, located along Conrail tracks in the city's Fairhill area. When everyone was evicted and the camp cleared, a developer announced plans to turn the area into luxury condos.

Is gentrification again propelling Philadelphia officials' sudden concern about drugs? Within walking distance of the camps are luxury suites with rent up to \$1,500 a month. The problem will only get worse as more condos are built and more "blighted" properties are flipped.

These camps are more important than people realize. They serve as a home of sorts for those who must eke out an existence working odd jobs or begging to support their addictions and their lives. People don't have homes to return to, but they have the camps, where they watch out for each other's things and for the most part care for each other. They have developed a comradeship worth respecting. If the camps are destroyed, all of that is destroyed.

But what does comradeship among drug addicts mean? It means that we stay alive another day. In general, it was drug users who pioneered harm reduction, allowing people to use drugs with less of a chance of dying due to addiction.

The camps offer safety. When a bad batch of heroin turns up hot with fentanyl, people warn each other.

The camps also provide a place to administer Narcan to people who overdose.

This won't save everyone, yet it means that some may live another day. That next day might be the day they decide to turn away from drugs and get help.

Meanwhile, the city's proposed safe injection site, not fully planned out and with no timeline for when it might open, is already facing opposition. The city government is again promising to house and treat addicts from the camps, but people aren't falling for that again. When they attacked El Campamento last year, there weren't enough treatment or respite beds for people displaced from the camp.

The 80 respite beds available in the city are already filled with people seeking help. If the planned May 30 eviction takes place, 187 more people will need help. Even now, people looking for a bed are being turned down for treatment, despite the city paying Community Behavioral Health billions for it.

People have called protests against the city's planned evictions on May 28 from

6 to 8 p.m. and May 30 from 8 to 10 a.m. Demands include halting the evictions; making CBH explain how they've spent money received for addiction treatment; having the city open up more respite beds; and getting CBH to allow more people to enter treatment.

Until the city can provide real resident and treatment alternatives, the camps must be defended. The camps are populated by people so beaten down by capitalism that they turn to a life of drugged fantasy. They don't want to be there, but they can't imagine having lives that won't lead them back to that place.

We have to defeat the attacks on the camp and defeat the gentrifying forces pushing more people out onto the streets. This is true not just in Kensington, but from coast to coast. Defend your local homeless camps, bring people the supplies they need to survive, and show them that they're in the position they're in because capitalism is at a dead end. □



One thousand people were arrested May 14 in civil disobedience actions at 39 state capitols across the United States. It was the kickoff to the Poor People's Campaign, initiated by Rev. William Barber II. In Michigan, several hundred protesters from across the state joined a rally in Lansing and then blocked streets in front of the State Capitol for several hours. The rally linked struggles for a living wage and against evictions, water shutoffs, Medicaid cutbacks and the myriad of other attacks on the poor.

— Workers World Detroit bureau

Organizing to keep TPS

Continued from page 4

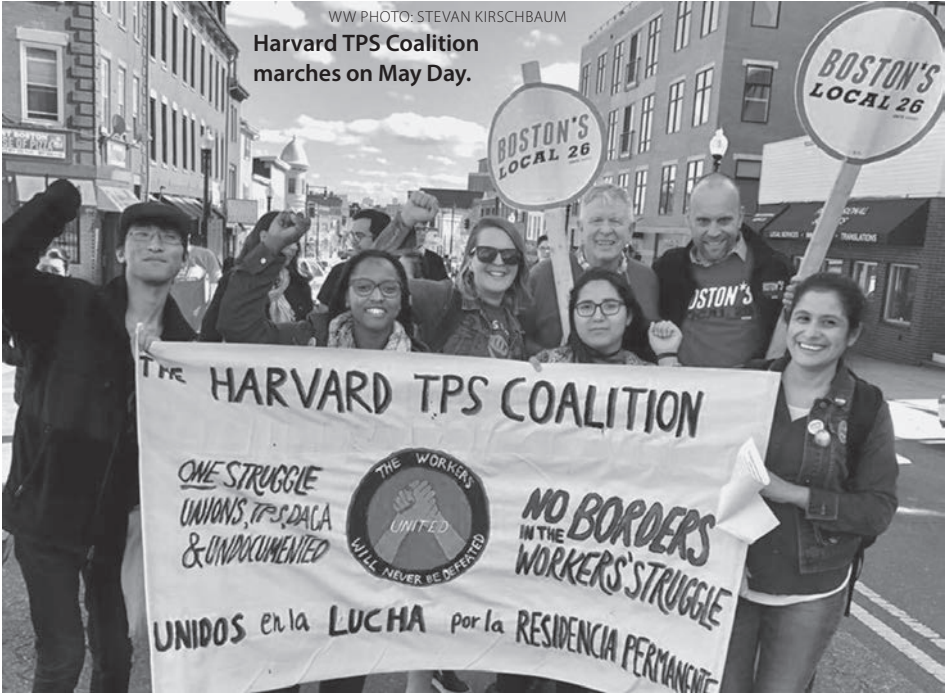
work is like a double work. We are mothers, wives, workers, activists, and we're reaching a level where we do the same work that men do. I work in a kitchen where I am the only woman. When I applied, the chef said to me, "I don't know if you can work here. We carry heavy things." I told him, "Look, you do your work, I'll do mine." Two years later, he apologized and said I do a better job than him. ...

I see the work that men do, and I say I can do better than that. So when I dedicate myself and say I can do it, I feel like we women are moving forward together, following the example of other women before us and being examples for the women behind us, and we're moving forward together.

Doris: As women, we are mothers

of men as well, so every problem in the world is our problem. We can't just say: "Oh well, that's a problem for men," because we're also mothers of men. So every problem that there is in the world, like the wars in Syria and Yemen, which I was hearing about on the radio, the problems here in this country, what's happening in Palestine. All these problems are my problems because they affect me, in the sense of the psychological trauma we're living through. ...

We can work, we even work twice as hard because what our spouses do is work, come home and sleep, but we have to work and take care of the kids. We take them to the doctor. We go to work even if we were up all night. So I think that the woman has grown a lot in these times, and now we're reaching a level that I would even say is above that of men. □



HONOR ALL WORKERS IN MAY! Build Workers World!

We marched on May 1, International Workers' Day, to:

- Honor workers all over the globe
- Invite all workers to come out of the shadows
- Celebrate workers' myriad contributions to our lives
- Unite in the struggle for our rights
- Claim our right to freedom from oppression and exploitation
- Say that capitalist greed, austerity and misery must be banished forever, along with the racism, sexism and anti-LGBTQ bigotry that the bosses use to divide us
- Affirm the need for a revolutionary socialist future

If this is your vision, then join Workers World newspaper in creating that future. Join us as we continue to build a strong, independent voice that speaks loud and clear for the workers and oppressed around the world. We need your financial

support to grow the paper from a modest 12-page printed weekly edition, with daily web updates, into a robust paper with color photos, widespread national distribution and greater online capability.

We established the Workers World Supporter Program 41 years ago so readers could help promote working-class truth needed to make revolutionary change. Members receive a year's subscription to WW, a monthly letter about timely issues and five free subscriptions to give others for a donation of \$75 a year. For \$100 you also get a new publication or book from World View Forum. For \$300 (\$25 a month) or more, you get your pick of five books.

Write checks to Workers World and mail them, with your name and address, to 147 W. 24th St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10011. Or donate online at workers.org/donate/; it's easy to set up monthly deductions. □

‘Pablo lives! Death to the gig economy!’

By Joe Piette
Philadelphia

About two hundred friends, co-workers and family members rallied here on May 19 to celebrate the life of Pablo Avendano. Despite persistent rain, speakers climbed onto a pickup truck parked near the site where he was killed at 10th Street and Spring Garden. They talked about why he was so loved in Philadelphia’s progressive activist community.

Avendano, 34, was riding a bike for food-delivery service Caviar on May 12 when he was struck by a car and then run over by another one during a heavy evening rainstorm. Pablo worked full time for Sparrow, a courier service, but was also working a night shift at Caviar to help make ends meet.

While some media and newspaper articles have made this tragedy into an issue about the need for protected bicycle lanes in the most-biked city in the U.S., others have raised the gig economy as the real cause of the Argentine immigrant’s death.

Avendano was one of millions of workers earning a substandard income from precarious employment. Trapped in a vicious circle, they are forced to moonlight using Uber, rent out their homes via Airbnb, or deliver food and other commodities using their own cars, bikes or homes in order to make ends meet.



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Memorial for Pablo Avenando, run over on his bike while delivering food.

Most of the new jobs that President Trump brags he’s been creating are “gig,” precarious or “sharing” jobs, which do not provide livable wages. Even though the companies might employ thousands of these workers, they are not entitled to weekly wages and benefits or covered by safety and other regulations. On the books of accountants and government regulators, they are treated as “independent contractors” and are forced to accept

piecework, low wages and few benefits in often dangerous conditions while wealthy executives and owners profit handsomely.

When it’s raining, freezing or otherwise too dangerous to be on the roads is when many people are ordering food deliveries. Because fewer cyclists are willing to make deliveries at these times, Caviar gives pay incentives. Avendano worked in dark, wet

conditions on May 12, hoping to take advantage of the higher pay per delivery.

Avendano’s comrades are demanding that Caviar pay for all travel and funeral expenses for his family; reclassify riders as employees, not independent contractors; pay its workers a living wage, starting at \$20 an hour with health benefits, hazard pay and bike repair-and-maintenance reimbursement; and respect the workers’ right to organize a union.

Avendano’s partner, Anna Marie Drollet, told the gathering: “Pablo cared about what was happening in the world. He died because he was bringing food to people with money who were too lazy to go out to get their own.”

Area activist George Ciccariello-Maher said, “Pablo was a wage slave who died because the rich make more money by not paying higher wages and benefits. He was nothing to them.”

Friends have set up a fundraiser to help pay his death expenses at [gofundme.com/all-out-for-pablo](https://www.gofundme.com/all-out-for-pablo).

A press release signed by “Comrades and friends of Pablo Avendano” ends with: “Pablo was a lover of life, and a passionate fighter for workers’ rights as well as racial and economic equality. We honor his memory by upholding his commitment to making the world a better place by taking up his struggle as our own.” □

North Carolina education workers flood capital

Continued from page 1

today’s action by calling it “union-like activity.” Rep. Mark Brody referred to educators who choose to pay to exercise their First Amendment rights as “union teacher thugs.”

Indeed, even before the educators, custodians, bus drivers, city workers, parents and students from the towns of Manteo to Murphy County walked Raleigh’s streets, they looked after their own.

A network of educators and supporters — across the political spectrum and from religious conservatives to atheists — formed a community. They collected and distributed meals and organized child care options for their districts’ children in preparation for the May 16 action.

Personal donations went to groups for grants to support those from less wealthy counties — both children and educators — so they could travel to their legislators in Raleigh.

And though an all-white state legislature in 1959 banned public sector collective bargaining, May 16 was absolutely a union-like activity.

The NCAE is an educator union, one of the many state branches of the 3-million-member National Association of Educators. The North Carolina state law against collective bargaining in no way prevents North Carolina’s public workers from organizing and unionizing.

Resegregation in education — for profit

The North Carolina Legislature is Republican-dominated, but there is bipartisan support for capitalist schools-for-profit. That means teachers need to look deeper into why a “democratic” government seeks to prevent adequate education of children — a question nearly silenced by “This is what democracy looks like!” chants during the day.

The significantly quieter “Black Lives Matter!” chants from a largely white crowd also raise the critical need for an examination of racism and power in North Carolina public schools, where the

majority of teachers are white while half the children in their classrooms are students of color. (publicschoolreview.com/north-carolina)

For the past 10 years in North Carolina, a series of anti-public-school bills have been introduced and passed, designed to destroy free public education and produce uneducated workers. This legislation includes the existing private school voucher program that funnels money out of public schools. A bill introduced in 2017 would actually move public money for a student into a parent’s savings account. But it’s mostly corporations that benefit from for-profit charter schools in a state heavily influenced by efforts to privatize public education.

An advisory committee to the University of North Carolina system was stacked in 2015 with right-wing extremists, whose efforts seemed designed to resurrect the white supremacist education policies that maintained school segregation in North Carolina for more than 20 years after the original 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision of the Supreme Court. Then, this February at the state Capitol, a joint legislative committee began issuing proposals to “break up” school districts, seen as a precursor to resegregation.

The reason for these attacks isn’t complicated, based as they are on the old “divide-and-conquer” tactics used to keep workers oppressed and divided. In the 150 years since the Civil War ended, North Carolina has increased wages from the \$0 paid to enslaved Black laborers to a meager state minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour, with most workers of color still earning significantly less.

In 2013, right-wing legislators repealed migrant worker protections. In 2017 Republican legislators used transphobia to hide the fact that they were repealing anti-discrimination policies for LGBTQ workers through HB2. Poverty wages for female-dominated professions, such as public education at all levels, are considered to be “on the right track.” The school-to-prison pipeline is flourishing

as Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper found \$7 million to increase the number of “school resource officers,” aka cops, despite data-driven reports showing police bias in classrooms is the same as police bias in the streets.

The power of an educated, inclusive student population who learn about the weaponized oppression of capitalism threatens the very root of “democratic” politics. The power of those students graduating to be workers threatens the foundations of capitalism itself.

Art Pope and Koch brothers vs. public education

The attacks on public education should be no surprise, considering the deep involvement of Art Pope in North Carolina politics. Pope is the CEO and board chairman of Variety Wholesalers Inc. This is the parent company of low-wage, low-end retail stores found in rural towns across the state. In 2013, Pope wriggled into a role as budget director to former Duke Energy CEO, turned anti-LGBTQ governor, Pat McCrory. But long before that, he founded the John William Pope Foundation.

From this foundation, Art Pope funds hundreds of millions of dollars in grants to think tanks like the John Locke Foundation and the Heritage Foundation to wage a privatization war on public institutions.

Pope’s personal wealth buys a seat at the billionaires’ table. His ties to the right-wing Koch brothers create addition-

al influence that powers privatization, re-segregation and re-creation of racist Jim Crow government, hidden under the guise of “school choice.”

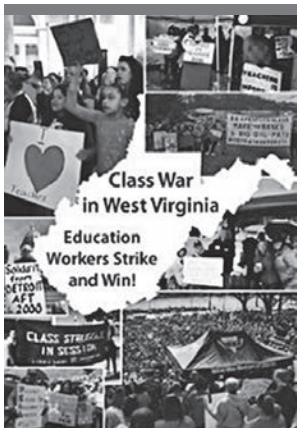
Organizations funded by Pope’s foundation publish misleading and faulty analyses that offer privatization and “school choice” as a cost savings. But this research is funded by the obscenely rich to justify their raiding programs created for the common good.

Pope campaign donations funded the election of people like Sen. Phil Berger and Rep. Tim Moore, men who direct their respective legislative bodies to serve capitalism and corporate interests, not the needs of working people, families and children.

But on May 16, despite the polarizing tactics and hateful rhetoric, teachers and public education workers shared a common goal and came together in what’s being called “the largest act of organized teacher political action in North Carolina history.”

Keeping up the mass, militant pressure — uniting workers and community — is imperative. In both Oklahoma and Arizona, where there were many days of public education protests, right-wing legislatures are reversing already-won gains by repealing tax-funding measures or using state-funding tricks to deny raises.

Education workers are teaching workers everywhere that mass actions are possible and necessary to every worker, every community, in every industry, in every state. □



New pamphlet – from the pages of Workers World newspaper now available free online

Class War in W.Va.: Education Workers Strike, Win

In West Virginia, famous for pitched battles between union miners and the coal barons, class war is raging. This time it’s teachers and all school employees on one side and right-wing capitalist politicians on the other. To quote the old labor song, “Which Side Are You On?” — “there are no neutrals.”

workers.org/book/class-war-in-west-virginia-education-workers-strike-and-win

On the picket line

By Alex Bolchi and Sue Davis

Historic strike victory for Colorado teachers

A momentous, 900-strong teachers' strike in an already historic year for teachers' strikes ended May 13 with a win. Teachers targeted the Pueblo City Schools District 60 (D60) Board of Education with demands for a 2 percent retroactive pay increase, better benefits and step increases for paraprofessionals. Last year Pueblo annual teacher pay averaged \$47,617 — not only below average teacher pay in Colorado (\$52,728), but national averages as well (\$59,660). (Denver Post, May 7)

After a neutral, third-party factfinder recommended a raise, the teachers and the Pueblo Teachers Association rejected an initial, nonretroactive offer by the D60 Board and struck on May 5. In an interview with NBC News, teachers spoke of crumbling infrastructure and classrooms without computers. Chants of "Education is our right, that is why we have to fight!" rang out at rallies. Pueblo high school teacher Julie Cain said that though Colorado is a wealthy state, it's one of the most starved for education funding, allotting only \$822 million annually.

After a week of striking, the teachers voted 495 to 62 to accept a two-year agreement with the 2 percent retroactive increase, better health care benefits and full pay for three strike days. They raised as inspiration the solidarity they felt from epic teacher strikes and walk-outs in West Virginia, Kentucky, Oklahoma and Arizona.

Chicago Tribune workers unionize

Contrary to the 171-year history of the anti-union Chicago Tribune, owner Tronc agreed on May 6 to cooperate with its newsroom workers after 85 percent signed cards to be represented by the Chicago Tribune Guild, an affiliate of The News Guild-Communication Workers. The CTG will have three bargaining units: Tribune workers, staff at six regional papers, and the design and production studio. (ABC7Chicago, May 6)

This amazing turnaround happened very quickly after an April 12 article in the Tribune announced that its newsroom staff had organized to win regular raises, advancement opportunities, better parental leave policies, a more diverse newsroom and a voice in the newsroom. One reporter stated that the workers had experienced downsizing and erratic corporate practices causing "chaos." According to its website, the CTG is now in a "status quo" period, so that Tronc "cannot unilaterally alter any work conditions without first negotiating with our bargaining units." Though TNG-CWA lawyers say they've never seen such quick recognition of a union, CTG believes Tronc bosses didn't want to "waste time and money" contesting a union election. (chicagotribuneguild.com, May 6) Way to go CTG! Stay tuned.

#TimesUp for sexual harassment in the sky

More than 3,500 flight attendants from 29 U.S. airlines participated in a survey between Feb. 27 and March 26 of this year, with 68 percent reporting sexual harassment during their career. One in three experienced verbal abuse — from nasty to crude — while one in five reported physical abuse — from groping to humping. Only 7 percent had reported abuse to the airline.

"The time when flight attendants were objectified in airline marketing and people joked about 'coffee, tea or me' needs to be permanently grounded. #TimesUp for the industry to put an end to its sexist past," said Sara Nelson, president of the Association of Flight Attendants-Communication Workers, which conducted the survey. One of the primary reasons, Nelson stressed, is that flight attendants are first responders, whose authority is undermined in emergencies if "they are belittled and harassed." The union is calling for the entire industry "to step up to combat harassment and recognize the impact it has on safety," while also demanding adequate staffing levels that protect both workers and passengers. (afacwa.org, May 10)

Support Maria Isabel Vasquez regulation to prevent heat illness

The United Farm Workers is asking for help in remembering Maria Isabel Vasquez, a migrant worker from Oaxaca, Mexico, who was two months pregnant when she died of heat exhaustion in 2008. May 14 marked the 10th anniversary of her death while tying grape vines in nearly 100-degree heat at West Coast Farms east of Stockton, Calif. The workers said the strict foreman didn't allow them a long enough break to get a drink from a water cooler 10 minutes away. (NPR, June 8, 2008) Weeks after her death, her aunt, uncle and fiancé organized a four-day pilgrimage to the state capitol in Sacramento and eventually helped pass the Heat Illness Prevention Regulation. Now, the UFW is asking you to sign a petition to rename the HIPR the "Maria Isabel Vasquez Jimenez Heat Illness Prevention Regulation." Help memorialize a fallen young worker; enshrine her name into law: ufw.org/10thannivmivj/. □

Strike looms at AT&T Midwest



WW PHOTO

Workers picket AT&T headquarters in Detroit, May 19.

By Kris Balderas Hamel

May 21 — The Communications Workers executive board authorized a strike on May 11 of 14,000 workers covered by AT&T's Midwest and Legacy T contracts. The AT&T Midwest contract covers workers in Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin, while the Legacy T workers are nationwide. The workers involved include both technicians and call center customer service employees. The strike authorization means workers can walk out at any time.

Issues include job security, health care and retirement. A report issued by the CWA on April 25, titled "AT&T Jobs," notes that AT&T reaped profits of \$29.5 billion in 2017, compared to \$13 billion the previous year. (tinyurl.com/yb-kemtu5) This massive increase resulted from a \$20 billion boost from Trump's Tax Cuts and Job Cuts Act of 2017, with an additional \$3 billion jump in profits anticipated in 2018.

Despite this massive tax bonanza, AT&T announced plans to spend just \$1 billion in capital projects and pay a paltry bonus of \$1,000 to its workers. That amounts to a one-time \$200 million expenditure or 7 percent of the company's annual tax bonanza.

According to the report, AT&T has closed 44 call centers and laid off thousands of workers since 2011, leading to the destruction of 16,000 call center jobs nationwide. In Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin and Illinois, the company has laid off 2,300 workers over the last three years. Much of the customer service work has been outsourced to low-wage contract workers, many outside the U.S.

In Michigan and Ohio, AT&T closed four call centers in the past two years. In 2011, over 1,000 people worked at these centers, located in Detroit and Port Huron, Mich., and Cleveland and Columbus, Ohio.

The story of the Port Huron call center speaks volumes about the treatment by corporations like AT&T of workers who were once employed in decent-paying union jobs.

The customer service workers at Port Huron, who had been employed in the call center before 2004, were paid a living wage of over \$32 an hour. Many were women with high school diplomas. AT&T and its predecessors had been their

primary employer after leaving school.

However, in approximately 2010, AT&T began a second, lower-tier wage scale for customer service workers. Instead of paying them \$32 an hour and above (\$34.70 in 2018), the starting pay was \$10 per hour, with a maximum of \$20 an hour after six years on the job. While some sales commissions were added to the base wage, it was nowhere near what the seniority workers were being paid.

Because workers hired prior to 2004 were guaranteed the higher wage for their lifetime, the company began a campaign to drive out the seniority workers. They made their jobs miserable, limiting calls to Port Huron to "retention" calls — the last calls by angry customers determined to switch to another company. Not only did the workers have to deal with irate customers all day long, but they were written up if they did not sell them new products.

On-the-job harassment for these seniority workers became so miserable that many began suffering from stress-related ailments. When they were forced to use the Family Medical Leave Act to survive and maintain their jobs and mental health, management initiated a policy of targeting FMLA users to run them out of AT&T, in violation of federal law.

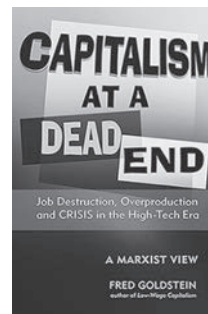
Many of these workers, despite knowing they would never again earn a comparable wage, took early retirement, were terminated or just plain resigned because they no longer could stand management's job pressure.

The Port Huron call center went from approximately 600 workers in 2009-10 — the largest employer in the city — to 50 workers in 2017 when the center was finally shut down. The remaining 50 workers who stuck it out were transferred to Detroit, where the call center was shuttered this year.

The bourgeois media might sometimes cover the just and long overdue struggles of low-wage workers, but the mistreatment and driving out of older workers, formerly in decent-paying union jobs, is an often overlooked aspect of the introduction of low-wage capitalism across the country.

If a strike occurs, the AT&T workers need and deserve the solidarity of the entire working class against this huge, rich, horrendous multinational corporation. □

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



Capitalism at a Dead End

Job destruction, overproduction and crisis in the high-tech era

For more information on these books and other writings by the author, Fred Goldstein, go to

LowWageCapitalism.com

Available at all major online booksellers.

VENEZUELA

Maduro wins election by landslide

By Andrew Mayton and John Catalinotto

With an overwhelming 68 percent of the votes cast, President Nicolás Maduro was re-elected president of Venezuela on May 20 for a six-year term, starting at the end of the year.

Despite Maduro’s clear and clean election, Venezuela and its Bolivarian government were immediately denounced by U.S. imperialism and its reactionary allies in Latin America and Europe. On the other side, the Cuban, Bolivian and Salvadoran governments congratulated Maduro, and the Chinese and Russian governments recognized Maduro’s victory and called for no intervention against his government.

Speaking from the balcony of the Miraflores Palace, Maduro said, “It has been a heroic, beautiful, popular victory forged in the struggle.”

“I’m the president of all the Venezuelans,” he added. “I call for a dialogue process. Permanent dialogue is what Venezuela needs.”

“The revolution is here to stay!” Maduro later told the crowd, promising to prioritize the country’s economy and socioeconomic development during his new term and fight off imperialism — the external forces that tried to derail the country’s election. (TeleSur, May 20)

Report from Caracas

Reporting from Caracas on May 20, Workers World correspondent Andrew Mayton wrote: “We are in the midst of the Venezuelan presidential elections, and working people all over the world are on the edge of their seats waiting for the results. The U.S. ruling class has already declared they will not recognize the results, and the State Department is looking to implement oil sanctions.

“The U.S. ruling class wants to paint the election as illegitimate. But to the contrary, the Venezuelan government has invited delegates from all over the world — the U.S., Canada, several Latin American countries, Syria, Palestine and many more — to observe the elections



WW PHOTO: ANDREW MAYTON

The real problem the U.S. imperialists have with Venezuela’s election is that it empowered workers, like these people checking IDs at the polls.

and learn all about the electoral process. Among the many organizations invited was Workers World Party.

“The National Electoral Council (Consejo Nacional Electoral or CNE) took this delegation to see the assembly, programming, quality check and shipping of the electronic voting machines. The CNE gave presentations on electoral law and how it has changed since the 1999 constitution. Then the delegation visited several polling centers all over Venezuela.

“The electoral process is completely transparent and accountable, far more than what we have in the United States. Perhaps just as important, polling centers are more accessible than ever, often located right within everyone’s neighborhoods — there are over 34,000 polling centers for the over 20 million registered Venezuelan voters.

“Polling centers are overseen and audited by representatives of any and all of the political parties that are participating in the election.

“Be prepared for the wave of anti-Ven-

ezuela and anti-Maduro propaganda that the U.S. ruling class will push, and be prepared to bring your solidarity for the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela to the streets. U.S. hands off Venezuela!”

Even before the voting took place, U.S. imperialism showed its hostility by declaring the election illegitimate and refusing to recognize its results. All sectors of the U.S. corporate media denounced Maduro’s election as fraudulent — without any evidence.

A New York Times article on May 21, for example, called attention to the admittedly low turnout without mentioning that Maduro still received a significantly higher percentage of the total eligible voters than either Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton got in the last U.S. presidential election.

Other countries whose regimes also refused to recognize the Venezuelan election include Peru, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Santa Lucia, Canada, Colombia, Honduras, Costa Rica and Guatemala. The irony is that Honduras’ regime resulted from a military coup

and electoral fraud, Brazil’s and Paraguay’s from a judicial coup, and Mexico’s from open electoral fraud.

Solidarity with Venezuela

From the other side of the class barricades, TeleSur reported that Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel Bermudez said in a letter to Maduro: “The Bolivarian and Chavista community has demonstrated once again its determination in defending the legacy of Chavez, who you represent worthily.” Diaz-Canel added that the Cuban government will be supportive and offered solidarity regarding any new challenges faced by Maduro’s government in the new six-year presidential term.

Former President and Cuban Communist Party chief Raúl Castro Ruz also congratulated Maduro.

Bolivian President Evo Morales tweeted: “The sovereign Venezuelan people have triumphed again before the coup plotters and interventionism of the North American empire. The free peoples will never submit. Congratulations to brother Nicolás Maduro and the brave people of Venezuela.”

“The parties involved must respect the decision of the Venezuelan people,” said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang at a press conference in Beijing.

Alexánder Schetinin, director of the Latin American Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry, said: “We regretably have to note that in these elections, in addition to the two traditional participants, that is, the Venezuelan people, the electors, on the one hand, and on the other the candidates who presented their programs ... there was a third participant, the governments that openly called for a boycott of the vote.”

Schetinin also added that Russia is often accused of meddling in other countries’ elections, but in Venezuela’s case, some countries have meddled indiscriminately.

Mayton and Mundo Obrero/WW editor Berta Joubert-Ceci were in Venezuela observing the elections as part of an international delegation. □

MAY DAY

Haitian workers march for living wage

By G. Dunkel

Inflation is a cruel blow in Haiti, where the per capita income is \$350 a year (\$409 in urban areas), and the daily minimum wage is only \$2.50 for workers in the textile industry. Workers throughout Haiti know that life is getting harder, and it’s difficult just to feed themselves and their kids.

On May Day, workers organized a panopoly of protests throughout the country: marches, conferences, sit-ins and town-hall-style meetings. They not only demanded an increase in the daily minimum wage to \$15, but brought up vital issues that must be addressed — transportation, social security, flagrant corruption, and the dignity and rights of women.

Unions held a big march to Champ de Mars in the heart of Port-au-Prince, the capital city, where the government was holding a festival of “labor and agriculture.” Festivals honoring workers were organized in many locations, especially in Jacmel, where it has become a tradition. On the road to Pétionville, the Autono-



PHOTO: ISABEAU DOUCET

mous Center of Haitian Workers organized a symposium on the critical issues of social security and social protections.

A coalition of labor unions, farmers’ associations, religious youth and others marched for two hours through Ouananthe, a major city on the Dominican border. Stopping at every public office and institution, they loudly demanded an increase in the minimum wage and improvements in social security, health care and transportation.

Only a small proportion of Haitian workers have a steady job. Their unions took to the streets on May 1 to support the

needs of all workers in Haiti. The organizing spilled over into Flag Day, May 18, when unions marched with their own demands, despite the government’s promotion of patriotic fervor.

Two significant incidents marked the previous week. In Cap Haitien, Haiti’s second-largest city, someone set off tear gas during a “conference/debate” over corruption at the Café Trio Cultural Center. One person died and many were injured in the crush to avoid asphyxiation. In Bleck, a small town in the far southeast, 14 cops showed up with a local landlord to kick farmers off land they and their ancestors had lived on for 200 years. A brawl broke out after a young boy was killed. The cops had to flee when the people seized their weapons and burned their cars.

Washington plays nefarious role

U.S. interference in Haiti’s internal affairs started before it gained independence from French colonialism in 1804. Under orders of President George Washington, the U.S. delivered “foreign aid” to the slave masters attempting to crush the Haitian Revolution. After the peo-

ple’s victory, President Thomas Jefferson imposed a blockade on Haiti that lasted until 1862 — when the U.S. finally recognized the nation. U.S. Marines later occupied Haiti from 1915 to 1934.

U.S. interference didn’t leave with the Marines. In 2011, WikiLeaks and Haiti Liberté exposed how intensely the U.S. manipulated Haiti’s internal affairs in 2009, when the Haitian Parliament unanimously passed a bill raising the daily minimum wage to \$5.

This caused great consternation among U.S. corporations like the Gap, Disney and Old Navy and companies from Hong Kong, South Korea and Macao, which had invested in Haiti’s garment industry to supply U.S. brands. Under the direction of then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the U.S. State Department quickly and aggressively pressured the Haitian government to lower textile workers’ daily minimum wages to \$2.50.

This year’s May Day activism showed that the Haitian people continue to oppose U.S. imperialism’s interference in their political and economic affairs, as they demand a living wage and other improvements in their standard of living. □

Capitalism, Cuba and human rights

By Cheryl LaBash

Scarcely one month apart, the U.S. and Cuba each released a review of human rights.

On April 20, the U.S. State Department released its “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices.” This is the U.S. government’s take on human rights in other countries — many of them devastated by U.S.-instigated, regime-change chaos, bombardments or economic sanctions. The report doesn’t mention any of this country’s well-known internal and external human rights violations, pointing only at those in countries it deems foes. The report unsurprisingly singles out Russia, China, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and Iran.

Cuba submitted to the U.N. a thorough overview on May 16 documenting its advances in, and defense of, human rights. This is Cuba’s third such review since the 2006 formation of the U.N. Human Rights Council’s country-by-country periodic review.

For nearly 60 years, the U.S. has violated the human rights of the Cuban people, including through the ongoing genocidal U.S. economic, commercial and financial blockade of Cuba. Since 1992, the majority of the globe’s countries have opposed this violation of Cuba’s rights through U.N. General Assembly votes. In 2017 the vote was 191 to 2, with only the U.S. and Israel supporting the blockade.

Capitalism promises, socialism delivers

What Cuba’s recent report to the U.N. shows is that socialism, even in an underdeveloped and blockaded country, can deliver what capitalism only promises.

In the report’s introduction Cuban

Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parilla emphasizes how far Cuba’s socialist revolution has come in just 60 years. He contrasts living conditions today to those endured from 1898 until 1959, the year the Cuban Revolution toppled the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship:

“From the time of the U.S. military occupation, which severed our independence, under the governments it imposed, 45 percent of children did not attend schools; 85 percent of the people lacked running water; farmers lived in abject poverty without ever owning the land they tilled and immigrants were brutally exploited.

“In Cuba, workers and farmers had no rights. Extrajudicial execution, enforced disappearances and torture were recurrent. Discrimination based on the color of the skin was brutal; poverty was rampant; and women and girls were even more excluded. The dignity of Cubans was tarnished and Cuba’s national culture was trampled upon.

“The Cuban Revolution led by Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz transformed that reality and continues to strive to improve the quality of life, well-being and social justice for all of our people, thus implementing all human rights.

“That willingness to protect human dignity, provide equal opportunities and ‘conquer all the justice’ has remained unchanged and unswerving until today.” (www.minrex.gob.cu)

A look at how human rights are defended and implemented in Cuba reveals how thoroughly U.S. capitalist propaganda trumpets “human rights” as a politically loaded code phrase, usually as a pretext for U.S. domination, intervention and aggression.

The State Department’s report claims that the U.S. “promotes and defends” the inalienable rights with which every person is endowed. However, these rights are defined under capitalist legal systems.

As the great novelist and master of irony Anatole France once wrote: “The law, in all its majestic equality, forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread.” Now, of course, according to the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2010 Citizens United ruling, corporations have those “inalienable” rights, too.

Redefining ‘human rights’

In contrast, the recent election of the new Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel Bermudez demonstrated that an election process without capitalist domination is not only possible, but profoundly democratic.

There was input and institutional representation from all of Cuban society — unions, small farmers, women, students. There were no advertisements or campaign contributions, no special status awarded to those elected. What they receive is extra work at the same pay as their regular job, with accountability to their mobilized constituency.

What about the right to a free education and universal, quality health care or to be secure in your home without fear that a landlord or bank will evict you? Those are not rights under capitalism, where getting so many of life’s necessities depends on the ability to pay, to have to scramble and fight for them.

But free education and universal health care are rights in Cuba, guaranteed and accessed by all — as is the right to vote. There are no gerrymandering or

confusing voter registration issues to restrict access to the ballot in Cuba. Everyone is automatically registered when they become 16 years old.

Even after hundreds of years of colonial exploitation and slavery, followed by decades of U.S. domination, Cuba’s human rights achievements in the last 60 years are noteworthy. Yet the Cubans themselves say they are not perfect and have much more to strive for and achieve.

In the report Cuban Foreign Minister Rodriguez Parilla writes: “The strengthening of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba, and its extraterritorial implementation, causes deprivations and continues to be the main obstacle to the economic and social development of the country.”

Tragically illustrating his point was the May 18 crash of the Boeing 737 aircraft at Havana’s Jose Marti International Airport. The ongoing U.S. blockade is without a doubt responsible for the loss of the 111 lives.

Because of the blockade, Cuba is barred from directly buying anything made by a U.S. corporation or containing U.S.-owned or made components. To obtain what is needed for national transportation, Cuba must go through third parties to lease aircraft. Not only is this at great additional expense, but it also means that Cuba does not have ultimate control over engineering or safety aspects.

This recent tragedy is yet another example of how the U.S. blockade of Cuba is more than unjust — it is deadly. It’s another reason for people in the U.S. to raise our voices and demand the end of the U.S. blockade. □

Detroit ministers host Cuban church leader

By Tyler Vosgerchian
Detroit

The Rev. Joel Ortega Dopico, president of the Cuban Council of Churches, and Gail Walker, executive director of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization/Pastors for Peace, met with political and religious leaders here on May 15.

IFCO has been a progressive voice in the religious community for 50 years. In 1988, its founding director, the late Rev. Lucius Walker Jr., founded Pastors for Peace a day after Walker survived a first-hand terrorist attack by Nicaraguan contra forces.

Pastors for Peace Friendship Caravans began in 1992 to confront the U.S. blockade of Cuba, educating U.S. grassroots communities about the brutality of U.S. policy through action. Now, that work is continued by Walker’s daughter, Gail, who arranged for Rev. Ortega Dopico to come to the U.S. and visit with religious communities across the country.

Rev. Ortega Dopico was born in 1971 in Cárdenas City in the province of Matanzas, Cuba. He studied at the Evangelical Theological Seminary of Matanzas and became a Presbyterian pastor in 1997. From 2004 until 2012, he served as head of the seminary.

He became vice president of the Cuban Council of Churches in 2008 and its president in 2018, playing an important role in the steps toward normal relations between the U.S. and Cuba.

Rev. Ortega Dopico spoke at a meet-



WW PHOTO

Gail Walker; Rev. Joel Ortega Dopico; Mike Shane, Moratorium NOW; Tyler Vosgerchian; Rev. JoAnn Watson and Cheryl LaBash with Detroit City Council Testimonial Resolution welcoming Cuban Council of Churches representative.

ing of the Council of Baptist Ministers of Detroit at the invitation of Bishop Larry London. There, he rubbed shoulders with Democratic hopefuls seeking the endorsement of the influential ministers. Rev. Ortega Dopico made sure that both politicians and preachers heard his message of social and economic liberation.

Later, at City Hall, Gail Walker and Rev. Ortega Dopico met with the Rev. Horace Sheffield Jr. and his daughter, Detroit City Council President Pro Tempore Mary Sheffield, who, with her staff, presented a declaration from the City Council to the visitors. Also attending were former council member the Rev. JoAnn Watson and Felix Sharpe, former director of the Michigan Department of Be-

havioral Health. At the meeting the benefits for both Cuba and Detroit of lifting the U.S. blockade of Cuba were discussed. Council member Sheffield agreed to work with U.S. graduates from the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) and Doctors4Detroit about encouraging young Detroiters to apply to Cuba’s free medical school.

The last stop on the tour was a public meeting at St. Matthew’s and St. Joseph’s Episcopal Church, where Father Kenneth Near introduced Rev. Ortega Dopico to a crowd of Detroit activists. The pastor gave a speech addressing local conditions, testifying that the only solution to the problems plaguing Detroit is Cuban-style socialism. To him, the Christian message is inseparable from the message of national and economic liberation. (See the full speech at tinyurl.com/yca46lex/.)

IFCO/Pastors for Peace will be returning to Detroit in June as part of their annual Friendship Caravan to Cuba, which activists from Detroit and Grand Rapids will be joining. Gail Walker will speak and “Dare to Dream,” a documentary about U.S. students at ELAM, will be shown on June 29 at 7 p.m. at the Horace L. Sheffield Jr. Center, 12048 Grand River, Detroit. □

What is Cuba saying?

**Don't depend on U.S. media.
Get the truth about Cuba,
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WORKERS WORLD

editorial

#LongHotSummer

Let's make this a long, hot summer for the bigots and the bourgeoisie.

This is the summer for strikes, for mass demonstrations, for making the bank buildings and paid-for legislative offices too hot to hold the financiers and the politicians who are wrecking our lives.

It's not only their blowhard bluster and racist rhetoric. Yes, Trump said something horrifying, once again, actually calling im/migrant people "animals" and thereby invoking, yet again, centuries when enslaving human beings of color was supposedly justified by that word.

Such words are the distillation of ruling-class actions, orders, laws. All over the U.S. in the last few weeks, Immigration and Customs Enforcement has arrested and jailed hundreds of immigrant workers for the "illegal" act of trying to feed themselves and their families. And the administration's planned revocation of temporary protective status would expel 300,000 legal immigrants, some after having been in the U.S. for 30 years.

Overwhelmingly, this administration is targeting Black and Brown people to "purge" from the U.S. in an act paralleling Ku Klux Klan campaigns of the 1920s to "clean up the nation."

Let's remember that the Klan also policed women, beating and whipping those who tried to lead independent lives. This week's misogynist verbal battering came from the Texas lieutenant governor, who blamed the mass-shooting deaths at a school there on women having abortions.

Never mind the contradiction that most of the shooters involved in these U.S. massacres are white men, young and old — including the recent Texas shooter — who have a history of domestic abuse, stalking and hatred toward women.

The attacks on women continue as the Trump administration advances new "gag" rules to exclude Planned Parenthood from federal family planning. This service group provides care for more than 40 percent of 4 million Title X fed-

eral patients, many poor women of color.

We could go on and on with the list of attacks — on poor people, LGBTQ people, people with disabilities, people in unions.

But the essential question is: How do we stop the attacks?

The only method of change the system offers is "vote."

But the so-called "democratic" voting process is endlessly manipulated, short-circuited, withheld and bought outright to serve the purposes of Big Banking, Big Business and Big Guns. Electing candidates from either of the corporate parties is ultimately ineffective. Meanwhile, problems facing workers multiply.

Instead, working people have the ability to exercise actual power. They can bring a company, an institution — or the entire economic system — to a halt.

Workers can win real concessions the way the striking teachers and school workers have done all spring — walk out and refuse to work. The bigger the numbers and the longer the walkout, the more likely concessions can be wrung out of the system.

But note this: In Oklahoma, after the education workers went back to the schools and classrooms, the legislators simply reversed their vote and canceled some of the wins.

We need to win change that cannot be taken away with the next bought-and-paid-for legislative vote or the next racist, anti-woman or anti-LGBTQ campaign designed to split the solidarity of workers and oppressed peoples.

There is a difference between winning concessions and overturning oppression.

Let's make this a long, hot summer for the bigots and the bourgeoisie. A summer when they hope longingly for the end — and instead see the foreshadowing of their own end, as everywhere masses of working and oppressed peoples build connections and lay a foundation for lasting social revolution in our time. □

Railroad workers hold rolling strikes



Striking railroad workers at protest outside Gare de l'Est. (At center, WW managing editor John Catalinotto.)

By John Catalinotto
Paris

May 14 — At 4 a.m., railroad workers who have been on strike since early April began a day-long demonstration at the Gare de l'Est — one of the main long-distance train stations here — to punctuate their demands.

The government of President Emmanuel Macron, a banker at the top of the French state, has been waging a fierce attack against the rights of all workers, mainly protections for their jobs. Past workers' struggles have made it difficult for French capitalists to fire workers.

As in nearly all the imperialist countries — the U.S., Western Europe and Japan especially — conditions for the working class have deteriorated since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the globalization of the economy. A smaller part of the working class is in unions, and many of the old manufacturing plants have closed as they became less profitable than factories in lower-wage countries.

Macron's attacks are directed especially at the workers in the public sector, that

is, those employed by the government. Among them are the railroad workers, or cheminots, and they are fighting back.

At the current time the unions' tactics are to strike two days and then go back to work for three days. This is open ended and disrupts train traffic, which is essential to travel in France much more so than in the U. S.

Today's demonstration saw some hundreds of workers, accompanied by smoke devices and lots of noise, gather and march around the large station in Paris. Guarding the station were some riot police, wearing armor and carrying shields as if ready for a big battle.

This Workers World reporter met with a group of railroad workers who were friends of the group Pole for the Renaissance of Communism in France. They were optimistic about the struggle. "I think we are going to win," said one and all.

The workers greeted Workers World Party's presence because of the letter of support that WWP's unionized workers had sent last month, which was read to workers' meetings. International solidarity is an important part of all struggle in this globalized economy. □

Soviet victory over Nazis honored

By Sam Shipman
Seattle

For the third year in a row, at least 500 marchers took to the streets here on May 6 to celebrate the anniversary of the Soviet Union's defeat of Nazi Germany on May 9, 1945.

The event started with a rally at which Soviet war veterans spoke about the need to remember the contributions of the 27 million Soviet citizens killed in the war and the country's heroic resistance to German fascism. They then walked through the crowd alongside old Soviet GAZ-67s (jeep-type vehicles), receiving red carnations along the way. Over half the crowd held photos of their ancestors with the words "World War 2 Hero."

The song "The Sacred War" played as a woman dressed in a Soviet officer's uniform called out the battle cry "Ura, tovarishchi!" through a megaphone and the crowd responded "Ura."

Members of Workers World Party in Federal Way, Wash., marched near the

front of the crowd with a line of Soviet hammer-and-sickle flags to pay tribute to the socialist struggle against fascism. The crowd sang iconic wartime songs like "Katyusha" and "The Red Army Is the Strongest."

The march came to an end at Seattle Center, next to the Space Needle, where people gathered, took photos and thanked the war heroes. A concert featured traditional Russian folk music and dances.

Victory Day in Seattle showed the feelings of pride and sorrow with which Russian-Americans remember the sacrifices made by their families in defeating the fascist threat. It also combated the liberal narrative and fearmongering that establishment politicians in both the Democratic and Republican parties are trying to build against Russia and Russian-Americans.

One example of this hostile environment came on March 26 when the Trump administration expelled 60 Russian diplomats and closed the Russian Consulate in Seattle. □



North Carolina school workers and community unite to fight right-wing legislation and demand economic justice, May 16, Raleigh.

Toronto, Canada

After 12 weeks, university still on strike

By G. Dunkel
Toronto, Canada

Over 3,000 contract instructors at York University in Toronto, Canada, have been walking picket lines since early March. Their strike affects nearly 50,000 students.

Up to half of all courses offered are taught by contract instructors, the Canadian term for adjuncts. The university administration made a decision to continue as many courses as possible despite the walkout. But being short just one credit can keep a student from graduating.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees 3903, which represents the striking contract instructors and teaching assistants, has charged the York administration with being unwilling to bargain. York's administration insists on binding arbitration — submitting disputes to a third party that makes a final decision — which the union has rejected. Overwhelming majorities of the union have also voted down contract proposals, which York insisted had to be voted on.

Including the current dispute, York has had five strikes over the last two decades, with both CUPE 3903 and York's faculty union walking out.

While there is some dispute over pay, this is not the focus. Contract instructors at York make an average of \$7,665 Canadian (\$5,994 U.S. dollars) a course, according to the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario. This is much higher than the average adjunct pay at public universities in the United States.

The basic issue in this strike is that contract instructors have no job security. They are hired semester by semester. According to the April 15 *Globe and Mail*, the number of contract instructors rose by 135 percent between 2003 and 2013, while the number of tenure appointments — posts with job security — increased by only 20 percent.

Canadian public employees have the right to strike. What generally happens during a lengthy strike in Ontario, how-

ever, is that the provincial legislature passes a bill forcing the workers to return to work. In this case, it is unclear whether such a return-to-work bill would pass, as Ontario's parliament is currently dissolved because elections are scheduled for early June.

The Canadian corporate media emphasize the problems this strike is causing for York students. They report how students are losing time and money, putting their lives on hold because they can't finish their degrees. Media propaganda against the strike has so far failed to take hold and the public blames management.

For example, the York University Faculty Association, which struck for seven weeks in 1997 over pension reforms and pay equity, issued a press release May 2: "Since last week, non-confidence [with the administration] votes have passed at council meetings at Glendon College, the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Environmental Studies, the Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies, the York University Graduate Students' Association, and a number of departments and student associations."

Richard Wellen, YUFA's president,



On strike since March, contract instructors want job security.

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

was quoted as saying: "Without a doubt, these votes reflect a growing sense of frustration with York's approach to labor relations during the current strike." He added: "In all my time at York, I have never seen so much public opposition to

the administration."

As shown by video clips on CUPE 3903's website, student groups marching in support of their teachers have raised the demand for free public higher education. □

Gaza massacre ignites protests

Worldwide demonstrations erupted after the Israeli massacre of unarmed Palestinian protesters in Gaza on May 14. Palestinians were asserting their right to return to their homeland and have been trying to breach the Israeli apartheid walls that confine 1.8 million Palestinians to a small strip of land under the most intolerable conditions. Here are a few reports of protests:

New York: Palestinians say, 'We will never surrender our right to return'

Hundreds of Palestinians and supporters joined a May 14 rally and march through the Arab-American community of Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, in solidarity with

the Great March of Return in Gaza. The protest was also part of the Day of Rage against President Donald Trump's relocation of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem in violation of international law.

The action took on an emergency character in response to the Israeli massacre of more than 60 protesters in Gaza earlier in the day.

Community members came out with their whole families, and solidarity activists came from across New York City. Palestinian flags were hung from many homes and businesses in a show of support. The demonstration was called by the NY4Palestine coalition.



At the opening rally Nerdeen Kiswani of Within Our Lifetime said, "We, the Palestinian people, will never surrender our right to return to the lands and homes stolen from us 70 years ago" when the Zionist settler state of Israel was created. Several Palestinians spoke of the pain their families experienced when driven from their homes during the Nakba, or the Catastrophe, and of their determination to end Israeli occupation.

Bill Dores of the International Action Center reminded the crowd: "Every tank, every sniper rifle, every gas canister used by the Israeli occupation forces is paid for by U.S. imperialism. That means we have a great responsibility." Expressing the unity of the Filipino and Palestinian struggles, Mike Legaspi of Bayan-USA declared: "Solidarity is our greatest weapon."

Dozens of Palestinian flags flew during the 2.5-hour march through the community. Signs declared, "Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine" and "Stop the U.S.-Israeli war against Palestinians." Marchers chanted, "Not another nickel, not another dime, no more money for Israel's crimes" and "There is only one solu-

tion — Intifada, revolution!"

The action, uniting Palestinians, anti-Zionist Jews and people of many nationalities, encouraged people to come out for a mass protest on May 18 beginning at 3 p.m. at Times Square, Seventh Avenue and 42nd Street in Manhattan.

— Photo and report Greg Butterfield



Solidarity with Great March of Return

Hundreds of people rallied and marched May 14 in solidarity with the Palestinian Great March of Return. Protesters advanced from Thomas Paine Plaza, past City Hall, and ended at the Kimmel Center, home of the Philadelphia Orchestra, which plans to perform in Israel in June. The seventh weekly "Don't Orchestrate Apartheid" protest of that tour took place May 19 at South Broad and Spruce Street.

— Photo and report Joe Piette



International support for Palestine

In France, people are demonstrating solidarity with the Palestinians as part of the wave of worldwide support for the Great March of Return. Some hundreds of people came out on May 15 to the square at St. Philippe du Roule in central Paris to protest the Israeli massacre. A larger demonstration was held on May 16 at the Place de la Republique.

— Photo and report John Catalinotto
For more on the current Palestinian struggle, see tinyurl.com/y8vfhpnc/.

U.S. puts stamp of approval on Israeli murder of Gazans

Continued from page 3

ment's "crime"? Enlisting Iranian support against U.S.-backed rebels trying to carry out regime change in Syria.

World condemnation of Gaza murders

Around the world, voices loud and clear supported the Palestinian people. From New York to Cape Town; from Albany, N.Y., to Detroit; from Brussels to Halifax, thousands marched in protest of the Israeli atrocities and Trump's complicit support.

Young Jews from the group IfNotNow blocked traffic in front of the Trump International Hotel in Washington, D.C., for two hours on May 14 as they erected an "Embassy of Freedom" to protest the embassy move. Rebecca Hornstein, a rabbinical school student from Philadelphia, said, "Moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem puts the U.S. stamp of approval on the ongoing evictions and dispossession of Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the ongoing violence directed at Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank — all of which are counter to Jewish values." (mondo-weiss.net, May 14)

In Israel itself, more than 600 protest-

ers blocked the roads in the center of Tel Aviv for more than two hours. "Artwork created by some students at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem was banned from being displayed at an international science conference by an Israeli minister after the students showed support for Palestinian protesters killed on the Gaza border." (*Newsweek*, May 17)

Other governments denounced both the embassy move and the Gaza atrocities. South Africa, with the infamous apartheid regime's 1960 Sharpeville Massacre burned into its memory, removed its ambassador to Israel. The autocratic Erdogan government in Turkey, which Trump has showered with praise, withdrew its ambassadors from both Israel and the U.S. Even the brutal Saudi Arabian monarchy, immersed in a devastating Pentagon-supported war against the people of Yemen, denounced Trump's embassy move and Israeli attacks.

Trump and Netanyahu are counting on the storm of worldwide protest dying down in short order so they will be able to carry out their lethal program of conquest and oppression. We must not let that happen. □



El 20 de mayo Nicolás Maduro fue reelecto presidente de Venezuela con 68 por ciento del voto.

Entrevista a Rosa Marques

‘En Brasil recrudeció la represión y vulneración a los derechos’

Por Jorge Marchini

Colaborador del Centro Latinoamericano de Análisis Estratégico (CLAE)/Rebelión

Rosa Maria Marques, es profesora titular del Departamento de Economía y del Programa de Estudios de Pos-graduados en Economía Política de la Universidad Católica de Sao Paulo (PUCSP) y ex presidenta de la Sociedad Brasileña de Economía Política (SEP) y de la Asociación Brasileña de Economía de la Salud (ABRES). El fuente original del artículo es Tiempo de Crisis. (tiempodecrisis.org)

Jorge Marchini.- ¿Cómo está la situación de Brasil luego de la prisión de Lula?

Rosa Marques.- Si observamos lo que viene sucediendo desde el golpe de 2016 con la destitución de Dilma Rousseff, la prisión del Lula constituye sólo un momento más del avance de la derecha en Brasil. Desde entonces hemos visto no sólo congelar el presupuesto del gobierno federal por veinte años, la eliminación de derechos de los trabajadores y la puesta a la venta de lo que aún quedaba de patrimonio estatal, destacándose los de empresas clave como Petrobrás y Eletrobrás, así también una escalada de la violencia y de todas las formas de intolerancia.

El asesinato de Marielle Franco (concejala del PSOL de la ciudad de Río de Janeiro, el 14 de marzo) y su chofer, Anderson Gomes, llevó a las calles a decenas miles de personas en luto y lucha. La conmoción fue de tal magnitud que las manifestaciones que siguieron a su muerte pueden ser comparadas con las del primer semestre de 2017. A pesar de ello, la violencia y las expresiones de intolerancia de todos los tipos parecen haber recrudecido. Es como si la muerte de Marielle hubiera sido un momento de clivaje, de punto sin retorno, que pusiera al descubierto los últimos velos que mantenían el odio no totalmente revelado.

Los ejemplos de este recrudecimiento no faltan: las ejecuciones que ocurren en las periferias, en las favelas y en los lugares del campo donde el conflicto por la tierra es más agudo, resultando en la muerte de trabajadores e indígenas; los ataques a la caravana de Lula, en el sur del país, que no se han restringido solo a huevos y piedras, en tanto los protofascistas hicieron uso de explosivos para bloquear su paso y dirigieron balas a sus vehículos; los actos de intolerancia manifestados en las calles, antes dirigidos a lesbianas, gays, bisexuales, transexuales (LGBT) y negros, ahora son también contra inmigrantes.

Más recientemente, vimos con qué brutalidad los manifestantes de la educación infantil de Belo Horizonte fueron tratados, así como los estudiantes de la Universidad Nacional de Brasilia. Podríamos seguir la lista.

En el ejercicio de esta violencia, se encuentran grupos de individuos, milicias y fuerzas policiales regulares, haciendo más

complejo el entendimiento de lo que es el aparato represivo actual del Estado en el país, de su extensión y transfiguración.

En ese marco, la prisión de Lula era necesaria y previsible. Se trata de la judicialización de la política. El gran capital, principal articulador del golpe de 2016, no promovió la retirada de Dilma para ver a Lula volver al Palacio da Alvorada (sede presidencial).

Condenado sin pruebas, está atrapado en celda aislada y no puede comunicarse con nadie, con la excepción de sus familiares y abogado. A cualquier otra persona se la ha negado la autorización de visita: incluso a personalidades como Pérez Esquivel, Leonardo Boff y la propia Dilma Rousseff, y hasta a su médico personal.

A pesar de estar incomunicado, él sigue frente a las encuestas en relación a cualquier otro carrera para la carrera hacia las elecciones presidenciales en octubre próximo. Sin embargo, no se sabe si Lula podrá ser candidato. En el escenario político, y paralelo al marco de recrudecimiento de la represión y de la vulneración a los derechos democráticos y civiles, se ensaya el lanzamiento de varios candidatos.

Nadie puede, con certeza, decir qué pasará. En el lado de la extrema derecha, Bolsonaro registra significativo apoyo y, hasta el momento no parece afirmarse una candidatura más “al centro”. La novedad, en términos de precandidatura, queda con el PSOL, que presenta al líder del Movimiento de los Trabajadores Sin Techo (MTST), Guilherme Boulos, y Sonia Guajajara, indígena que representa a varias etnias organizadas.

La presencia de Sonia introduce la discusión del ecosocialismo en el debate de los presidenciables, con una crítica profunda a la experiencia de los gobiernos Lula y Dilma, tanto en el trato de las tierras indígenas, como en la postura con relación a los agronegocios y al desarrollo de grandes proyectos, como la usina de Belo Monte, en el estado de Pará.

Jorge Marchini.- ¿Realmente ha comenzado la recuperación de la economía brasileña luego de años de caída?

Rosa Marques.- En las últimas semanas el mercado ha revisado hacia la baja la previsión de crecimiento de la economía brasileña en 2018. En ese momento, se prevé algo en torno al 2,7 por ciento. Necesitamos ver lo que sucederá hasta octubre, pues, al tratarse de un año electoral, puede haber mucha inestabilidad. De cualquier forma, no hay nada que indique que estamos viviendo un nuevo ciclo de expansión.

Los principales indicadores de la economía siguen presentando pésimo desempeño: bajo nivel de la inversión privada y caída continua de la inversión pública; un elevado nivel de desempleo (13,6 por ciento) y una caída del ingreso medio de los trabajadores. El crecimiento esperado, provocado especialmente por el aumento de la producción agrícola y el

crecimiento de las exportaciones, es, por lo tanto, frágil y no suficiente para garantizar una recuperación.

Jorge Marchini.- Medidas drásticas, como las reformas laboral y previsional, son defendidas por buena parte del establishment como necesarias “luego de años de populismo”. ¿Qué opina?

Rosa Marques.- Para responder a esas cuestiones, hay que recordar que, en Brasil, el gran capital ya estaba libre de obstáculos y se beneficiaba de total libertad incluso antes del golpe de 2016. Esa libertad fue principalmente resultado de medidas realizadas durante el gobierno Fernando Henrique Cardoso, pero que no fueron revertidas en los gobiernos de Lula y Dilma que, en algunas áreas, hasta se profundizaron, tal como ocurrió con la salud. A pesar de todo, había un mercado que no tenía, hasta entonces características adaptadas a las condiciones de la reproducción del capitalismo globalizado y “financiarizado”.

Este era el mercado de trabajo. Su legislación, que definía las condiciones de la fuerza de trabajo y los trabajadores del mercado formal, no estaba de acuerdo con aquella defendida y practicada (cuando no enfrentaba la resistencia de los movimientos organizados) por las empresas internacionalizadas. De este modo, el conjunto de leyes que garantizan los derechos de los trabajadores, llamado Consolidación de las Leyes Laborales (CLT), pasó a ser considerado un obstáculo para la integración al mercado internacional.

Al analizarse desde el punto de vista del gran capital, asociado o no al capital internacional, era completamente insuficiente permitir el libre acceso a la producción y circulación de mercancías y del capital: era necesario que ello fuera acompañado por la alteración de las condiciones de su reproducción, lo que necesariamente implicaba la gestión de la fuerza de trabajo. En ese contexto, asume importancia impar la reforma laboral promovida por el gobierno Temer y su propuesta de reforma de la seguridad social.

La reforma laboral se llevó a cabo con el fin de conceder seguridad para el capital en general, pero principalmente al extranjero. Es para el capital que está interesado en comprar o participar en áreas públicas ahora puestas a la venta mediante procesos de privatización o de levantamiento de prohibiciones legales existentes. Así, el sentido general de la reforma laboral es conceder garantía jurídica para que el gran capital internacional, principalmente el financiero, pero asociado al capital industrial y comercial, complete la integración de la economía brasileña a la economía mundial. De esta forma, el costo del trabajo estará controlado, de modo que el capital aquí instalado pueda competir con el de otras economías en las que es muy reducido.

Los cambios introducidos por la reforma acaban con garantías laborales. Este siempre fue un problema para los empresarios, ya que afirmaban que dificultaba

la estructura de costos en la contratación de fuerza de trabajo. Ello porque, en general, la justicia acababa por imponer el cumplimiento de la ley, lo que generaba un pasivo laboral de valor muchas veces imprevisible. A partir de la reforma, el costo de la fuerza de trabajo es calculable, pudiendo ser estimado de antemano.

Y el nivel de ese costo, con la aplicación del conjunto de cambios, y sin considerar el pasivo laboral, tiende a ser menor que el actual. Este será el resultado, entre otros, de la introducción de la supremacía de lo acordado en forma particular en relación a lo legislado y de la creación de diversas modalidades de vínculos, de las cuales la más perversa es, ciertamente, la del trabajo intermitente. En términos de gestión de la fuerza de trabajo, lo que veremos es que las empresas tenderán a mantener un núcleo duro de trabajadores y, en caso de que la demanda por sus productos aumente, contratar a nuevos empleados valiéndose de las diferentes formas de contratación refrendadas por la reforma.

Otro aspecto de la reforma, que es muy importante, se ha aprobado que la tercerización pueda ocurrir en cualquier actividad, del sector privado y público, sea ella medio o fin. En el caso específico del sector público, ese cambio viene al encuentro del objetivo de reducir el Estado. En el plano de las alcaldías, ya ha ocurrido la contratación de empresas mediante licitación principalmente en el área de la educación.

La reforma de la seguridad social, como todo el mundo sabe, está en espera, pero seguramente entrará nuevamente en la agenda del Congreso después de las elecciones y/o en 2019. La aplicación de la propuesta inicial del gobierno tenía cuatro objetivos básicos: a) el de “armonizar” los regímenes previsionales entre los servidores públicos en los tres niveles de gobierno y el de los trabajadores del mercado formal privados sean estos rurales o urbanos; b) exigir como criterio para la jubilación la edad; c) aumentar significativamente el tiempo de contribución; y d) el reducir el valor de la jubilación.

Esa propuesta enfrentó amplio rechazo, pues rápidamente la población entendió de qué forma afectaría su condición de vida tanto en la vida activa como cuando fuera jubilado. Por eso mismo, esa propuesta fue modificada a lo largo del tiempo en que permaneció en tratamiento del Congreso. A pesar de ello, su pilar permanece en la última versión: el de introducir la edad como criterio de la jubilación y el de reducir el valor del beneficio. Es innecesario decir que la propuesta de reforma de la seguridad social es uno de los aspectos de la aplicación del nuevo régimen fiscal vigente en el país.

Jorge Marchini es profesor titular de Economía de la Universidad de Buenos Aires.

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