Oscar López Rivera

FREE AT LAST!

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

The long-awaited day finally arrived. Oscar López Rivera’s confinement ended on May 17 after he had spent the prior three months under house arrest at his daughter Clarisa López Ramos’s house. That was a requirement of former President Barack Obama’s commutation of his 70-year sentence for “sedition conspiracy.” Finally, Oscar could meet his people, face-to-face, freely. Finally, those people who joined in the claim for his release could hear his voice, clear and strong.

To publicly welcome him, dozens of people began gathering around 6 a.m. in front of the building where he lives with his daughter. The student choir from the University of Puerto Rico serenaded him with what has become a second national anthem, “Verde Luz.” The song’s lyrics include the verse, “For you I want to have the land free, with only one star.” It’s a hymn for Puerto Rican independence.

Then, at 11 a.m. in the Escambrón, in front of the sea for which he had been yearning for 36 years, Oscar began his first press conference, which was full of symbolism. He began by explaining his request that it be facing the sea, to highlight both its importance for the Puerto Rican archipelago and the role it could play in fostering the economy. This alluded to the measures to privatize goods and resources that the dictatorial Board of Fiscal Control, imposed by the U.S. Congress, wants to apply to the archipelago to pay off the illegitimate debt of more than $70 billion.

Oscar was dressed all in black, in mourning. He mentioned six reasons for this, which shows his great humanity and solidarity: because in prison he could never wear mourning after the death of comrades and loved ones, including the death of his mother; in solidarity with the LGBTQ community on the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia; in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement; for the love of his people; in solidarity with political prisoners in U.S. prisons including Puerto Rican Ana Belén Matos; and in solidarity with the students of the University of Puerto Rico, who have been on strike since March 28.

This national hero expressed important statements, ranging from his plans and objectives to his revolutionary political positions. His firm denunciation of the Fiscal Control Board made clear his position in defense of the people and against imperialism. “No solution coming out of the Fiscal Control Board is good for the people,” he said.

Continued on page 7

CHELSEA MANNING: ‘Here I am!’

SMASH RACISM

• ‘This generation’s Muhammad Ali’

• Mich. political prisoner to be freed

• Time to ramp it up for Mumia

• Stop immigrants dying in detention

China aids the developing world

Cuba honors U.S. gay leader

U.S. hands off Syria Editorial
The Boston branch of Workers World Party hosted activist and revolutionary John Catalinotto on May 19. Catalinotto, a managing editor of Workers World newspaper, is the author of “Turn the Guns Around,” a book detailing how U.S. soldiers during the war against Vietnam developed an anti-capitalist and anti-war revolutionary culture in forming a union called the American Servicemen’s Union. The book shows readers how a movement of anti-oppressive consciousness can stop colonialism through strategic activism. Other examples of people’s resistance were also heavily discussed, including the Paris and Portuguese uprisings of 1968 and 1974, respectively.

Catalinotto’s presentation focused on two crucial elements of what V.I. Lenin called revolutionary defeatism (i.e., supporting the defeat of one’s own “bourgeoisie in an imperialist or colonialist war); what has successfully shaken colonialism in the past; and how we can bring such actions into a modern revolutionary reality.

Catalinotto brought solidarity and hope to the meeting. Many of those attending had brought friends, family and coworkers. His words reminded all present that no system is too big to fail when met by solid, conscious organizing.

Activity at the meeting included sharing stories of their resistance to U.S. aggression, including Greg Lasser, a former member of the ASU, and Frank Neisser, an anti-war activist who was charged with treason for reporting U.S. troop movements to North Vietnamese fighters.

John Catalinotto and Diva Williams share their amusement about a 1969 GI letter comically reporting how GIs tried to get rid of an oppressive sergeant.

Activist Myia X paid tribute to international revolutionaries Malcolm X, Yuri Kochiyama and Ho Chi Min, all of whom had birthday anniversaries on May 19.

Workers World Party has been out in the streets defending the workers and oppressed here and worldwide. If you’re interested in Marxism, socialism and fighting for a socialist future, please contact a WWP supporter program.

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Kaepernick: ‘This generation’s Muhammad Ali’

By Monica Moorehead

Last October, Colin Kaepernick, the African-American former quarterback for National Football League’s San Francisco 49ers, was asked after a game why he was wearing a Muhammad Ali t-shirt. He said, “To pay homage. [Ali] fought a very similar fight and was trying to do what’s right for the people. … He is someone who helped pave the way for this to take place. He was a real pioneer in that idea.”

The “similar fight” Kaepernick referred to is the ongoing struggle against racist oppression, especially police violence, which he protested by taking a knee during national anthems at every 2016 regular season NFL game. Kaepernick remarked that he could not respect a flag of a country that did not respect the lives of Black people.

After Kaepernick’s symbolic protest demanding justice for Black and Brown victims and survivors of police brutality made national and international headlines, similar protests were carried out by teams and individual athletes in many sports on all levels — elementary, high school, college and professional.

Kaepernick paid homage to the Muhammad Ali who came to global prominence not only as the heavyweight boxing champion, but also as an activist who fought U.S. governmental repression against national liberation movements during the late 1960s. Ali was stripped of his boxing title and denied matches during his prime boxing years, 1967 to 1977, by the United States government for his refusal to be inducted into the U.S. military to fight in Vietnam.

Carrying forth Ali’s legacy

Dr. Harry Edwards is a sociologist, activist and founder of The Olympic Project for Human Rights. He attempted to organize a boycott of Black athletes during the 1968 Summer Olympics, where Black sprinters John Carlos and Tommie Smith refused to stand for the American flag during the playing of “The Star-Spangled Banner” to protest national oppression and white supremacy. Carlos and Smith, along with African-American football player Bart Starr of the Green Bay Packers, were disinvited from the Olympic Village.

Edwards said in interviews that he is a Muslim and his opposition to the war. “The war I was fighting against endless racist atrocities. In the early morning of May 18, 1968, Richard Collins, a 23-year-old Black man scheduled to graduate from Bowie State University the next day, was stabbed to death while simply waiting at a Maryland bus stop. His attacker? A white supremacist and neo-Nazi belonging to the “All Reich: Nation” Facebook group. A Baltimore FBI agent had the nerve to question whether this horrendous murder was a “state crime” or not.” (fcwashington.com, May 22)

A 73-year-old special-needs Latinx child, Yonix Lopez, was put in handcuffs at his home by Detroit police on May 16 after being Tased by school officials for banging his head against a wall. Lopez is diagnosed with “attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder and another mood disorder.” The child was then sent to a mental hospital without his mother’s permission. She was denied the right to visit her son for nearly a week. (cm.com, May 19)

Acting head coach for the National Basketball Association’s Golden State Warriors, Mike Brown, who is African American, was nearly arrested by the California State Highway Patrol for trying to enter a gate at his own home arena before the May 16 playoff game in Oakland. The patrol was escorting the San Antonio Spurs, the visiting team, into the Oracle Arena when Brown was stopped and harassed.

Even as Brown kept telling the police that he was the Warriors head coach, a cop yelled at him, “I don’t care. You stop. (Mercury News, May 16) If this had been the Warriors head coach, Steve Kerr, who is white, the police would have responded very differently.

These recent examples of white supremacy’s help to define the legacy of Colin Kaepernick’s heroic protest, spurred on by the defiance of the great Muhammad Ali of the 1960s. Both continue to inspire millions of people in actively defending Black and Brown lives.

Release date set for Rev. Pinkney

By David Sole

The Michigan Board of Parole has announced that political prisoner the Rev. Pinkney had been a target for poisoning and harassment while he was being held in “maximum” security prisons across Michigan. During his time there, he broadcast the fact that a white police officer, Betty Shelby, was found not guilty on May 18 of fatally shooting yet another unarmed Black man, Terence Crutcher, in Tulsa, Okla. Crutcher’s murder was captured on videotape last October.

To help put into perspective how Black lives are dehumanized, Flyer Jones, a young Black man from Cincinnati, was sentenced to 19 years in prison, also on May 18, for multiple felonies, including wounding a police dog. Jones did not fatally shoot anyone.

Kaepernick is fighting against relentless racist atrocities. In the early morning of May 22, Richard Collins, a 23-year-old Black man scheduled to graduate from Michigan State University the next day, was nearly arrested by the American, was nearly arrested by the police. The “similar fight” Kaepernick referred to is the ongoing struggle against racist oppression, especially police violence, which he protested by taking a knee during national anthems at every 2016 regular season NFL game. Kaepernick remarked that he could not respect a flag of a country that did not respect the lives of Black people. After Kaepernick’s symbolic protest demanding justice for Black and Brown victims and survivors of police brutality made national and international headlines, similar protests were carried out by teams and individual athletes in many sports on all levels — elementary, high school, college and professional. Kaepernick paid homage to the Muhammad Ali who came to global prominence not only as the heavyweight boxing champion, but also as an activist who fought U.S. governmental repression against national liberation movements during the late 1960s. Ali was stripped of his boxing title and denied matches during his prime boxing years, 1967 to 1977, by the United States government for his refusal to be inducted into the U.S. military to fight in Vietnam.

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Although Kaepernick has gained millions of admirers, including NFL players, coaches, team owners and fans. Since his release from the 49ers following the 2016 season, he has not been signed by another NFL team.

Kaepernick has organized “Know Your Rights” conferences in the Bay Area, Chicago, New York City and other places to help bring about positive change for youth of color who are prime targets for “stop and frisk” harassment by the police and mass incarceration.

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Death at the hands of ICE

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta

Within 24 hours, two immigrants died in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody in Georgia.

First came the shocking news of the death of 27-year-old Panamanian national, Jean Carlos Jiménez-Joseph, found in a solitary confinement cell at the Stewart Detention Facility in Lumpkin, Ga., on May 16. He had been held in solitary for 19 days, following what prison officials described as “an act of desperation.”

Jiménez-Joseph is described by his family and friends as a talented musician and high school athlete, Jiménez-Joseph had lived most of his life in the U.S. He had lived in Atlanta for many years.

ICE took custody of him on March 2, following a conviction for motor vehicle larceny in Wake County, N.C., and brought him to the Stewart Detention Center, the for-profit prison operated by CoreCivic, formerly known as the Corrections Corporation of America. Stewarts is located in rural Lumpkin, Ga., and is the largest immigration detention facility in the U.S.

ICE policies limit the use of solitary confinement as a punishment to 14 days. However, in a complaint filed against ICE for the death of Vitaly Novikov, a 61-year-old Ukrainian refugee who first came to the U.S. in 1989 and became a permanent resident in 1998, his family’s lawyer argued that it was used regularly in the U.S. to punish immigrants.

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ICE’s order also gives permission for prison staff to forcibly restrain Novikov to take blood samples and conduct other medical tests. Stewart has released no further information about Novikov other than to confirm that there is a detainee on hunger strike.

These stories of incarcerated people highlight the ongoing prevalence of immigration laws since Trump’s inauguration as U.S. president.

Between May 21 and April 29, there has been a 75 percent increase in ICE arrests in Georgia and North and South Carolina compared to the same period in 2016. (Atlanta Journal Constitution, May 18)

Nationwide, the increase in arrests from 2016 is 38 percent. In 2017 so far, over 40,000 people have been picked up at their jobs, taken from their homes, arrested on the street without warning and taken into custody in advance of deporta- tion. (TIME, May 17)

Even ICE figures show that, among those arrested immediately after Trump’s inauguration, many of those working people had no criminal records at all, and another 25 percent had been convicted only of traffic offenses. (Washington Post, April 28)

“The human rights of tens of thou-
dands of immigrants are at stake, and ICE is using solitary confinement as a form of torture,” said Diego Navarrete, a legal director at the center.

Navarrete said that ICE keeps people in solitary confinement for up to 60 days, and that the agency prohibits families from visiting and communicating with those held in solitary.

ICE denies that solitary confinement is used as a punishment. It argues that solitary confinement is used as a way to protect itself and its facilities from people who may harm others.

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The hard work of keeping the trains running

By G. Dunkel

New York

The 600,000 or so people who daily use the transportation hub at Penn Sta- tion here depend on maintenance-of-way (MW) workers. These people maintain the tracks so trains can operate safely. Workers at DirectTV, re- cently acquired by AT&T, are striking for their first contract ever. The action comes a little more than a year after the victori- ous Verizon strike by 39,000 members of the CWA and Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

CWA mobilized the strike, closing re- tail outlets for the entire weekend, over AT&T’s “failure to present serious pro- posals that invest in good jobs with a future.” (cwa-union.org) CWA has filed a charge with the National Labor Rela- tions Board about the company’s refusal to provide job sourcing information the union requested. Data on vacations, sick days, training, job transfers and benefits have also been illegally withheld by the company.

Because AT&T workers pay for part of their health care benefits, rising costs are eroding their earnings. They badly need an adequate pay increase to offset this burden. Instead, AT&T wants to increase employee contributions to health bene- fits. The meager raises offered to workers would be eaten up by inflation. AT&T has also forced retail workers to take what amounts to a pay cut when it unilaterally restructured its sales commission for- mula, which CWA wants to negotiate in the new contract.

CWA revealed that AT&T has sub- contracted 12,000 call center jobs since 2011. Workers in the Dominican Repub- lic, employed by third-party contractors, perform the same work as CWA members for a fraction of what U.S. workers make. CWA staff went to the Dominican Repub- lic to investigate and saw the union-bust- ing tactics Dominican workers face for trying to improve their situation.

Multi-billion-dollar behemoth vs workers

AT&T is number 10 — just after Gener- al Motors and Ford — on the Fortune 500 list of the biggest U.S. com- panies. AT&T makes about a billion dollars in profit every month. The more the company squeezes out of worker pay and benefits, the more AT&T profits. The telecommunication giant is poised to acquire media entertainment giant Time Warner, pending ap- proval by the Department of Justice.

CWA alerted union sup- porters in advance when and where to show up for picket line ac- tions. Many were outside AT&T stores, ready to show solidarity, as workers marched out of stores across the U.S.

At a Manhattan store, the line of strikers and family members grew to 150 in the first 10 minutes of the action, and kept growing. A multi- national crew of picket cap- tains led the crowd in chants like “We built it up, we take it down!” and “Every job a Union job!” A striker from the Bronx told Workers World proudly, “The Fordham Road store has been shut down completely since Friday. Not a single sac.” A crew from a Washington Heights store said theirs was open but only with managers.

These CWA Local 1101 members were joined by the

president of the Clerical, Administra- tion and Technical Staff (UCATS) Local 3892 at New York University, along with an editor of CWA 11810’s magazine, and members of the American Federation of Teachers and the Professional Staff Con- gress of City University of New York.

Nobody passing by attempted to enter the store as workers marched to three other midtown stores and back. More coordinated support actions took place during the weekend.

The union states that members “have vowed to do what they have to do if AT&T violates their rights or an open-ended strike becomes necessary.” (cwa-union.org)

Sara Catalinotto contributed to this article.

AT&T hit by coast-to-coast strike

By Martha Grevatt

At 3 p.m. EDT on May 19, 21,000 workers began stream- ing out of AT&T retail outlets across the U.S. These AT&T Wireless workers in 36 states and the District of Columbia were joined by almost as many striking wireline, call center, intern- et service and DirectTV workers in Nevada, California and Connecticut.

A strike was on, called by the Communications Workers.

The walkout of AT&T retail workers might be the largest retail strike in U.S. labor history. Workers at DirectTV, re- cently acquired by AT&T, are striking for their first contract ever. The action comes a little more than a year after the victori- ous Verizon strike by 39,000 members of the CWA and Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

CWA mobilized the strike, closing re- tail outlets for the entire weekend, over AT&T’s “failure to present serious pro- posals that invest in good jobs with a future.” (cwa-union.org) CWA has filed a charge with the National Labor Rela- tions Board about the company’s refusal to provide job sourcing information the union requested. Data on vacations, sick days, training, job transfers and benefits have also been illegally withheld by the company.

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The hard work of keeping the trains running

By G. Dunkel

New York

The 600,000 or so people who daily use the transportation hub at Penn Sta- tion here depend on maintenance-of-way (MW) workers. These people maintain the tracks so trains can operate safely. Signal maintainers are also needed. Oth- er workers provide information, sell tick- ets, clean cars and clean the station itself.

All these workers must confront the dilapidation of the 107-year-old Penn Station. Amtrak, which is controlled by the U.S. government, has been under- funded since it was founded in 1971.

Both New Jersey Transit and the Long Island Railroad are commuter railroads that use Penn Station, with a big increase in the number of passengers since 20 years ago. Their 1,200 daily trains make repairs difficult.

April 3 derailment

The key role that MW workers play can be seen in the April 3 derailment of a NJT commuter train carrying about 1,200 passengers. The train was in the middle of the train, which was traveling very slowly, came off the rails. This was the second derailment in less than two weeks.

Amtrak, demonstrating a reckless atti- tude toward worker and rider safety, lat- er admitted that a wooden tie had rotted and that it knew about the problem, but didn’t think it serious enough to replace. A multi-billion-dollar behemoth vs workers

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The hard work of keeping the trains running
Global poor, especially women, under attack

By Sue Davis

Health care for the poor is under attack globally as well as in the United States.

Trump’s expanded, deliberately misnamed global gag rule, “Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance,” was announced May 15. As Slate noted that day, “PLGHA [is] the sound you’ll make when you consider the cruelty written into its provisions.”

Under past Republican administrations starting with Ronald Reagan, the rule (officially the Mexico City Policy) only blocked U.S. funding for foreign organizations that provide abortion care, information about abortions and advocate for abortion legalization, amounting to $600 million annually. Now it will include health care dispensed by the U.S. Agency for International Development and departments of State and Defense, involving $8.8 billion earmarked for HIV/AIDS prevention, malaria and Zika treatment, maternal and child health programs as well as reproductive health and family planning. PLGHA will also affect men and children.

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After Trump announced his gag rule on Jan. 23, Dutch Minister Lilianne Ploumen set up an international fund for contraception, abortion and health education to fill the gap. (WW article, Feb. 2) Representatives from more than 50 countries attended a one-day “She Decides” conference on March 2 in Brussels, aiming for pledges of $600 million. Meanwhile, global reproductive choice group Marie Stopes International estimates the rule will cause 6.5 million unintended pregnancies, 2.2 million abortions, 2.1 million unsafe abortions and 21,700 maternal deaths. (cnn.com, March 2)

National assault on abortion, contraception

Misogynist in chief Trump is stacking the Department of Health and Human Services with virulently anti-choice hats topped by Dr. Thomas E. Price, secretary of Health and Human Services with virulently anti-choice hat topped by the Supreme Court in 2016. (WW article, July 7) Before that, Yoest was vice president of the Family Research Council, classified as an anti-LGBTQ hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Teresa Manning, a former lobbyist for the National Right to Life Committee and legislative analyst for FRC, was appointed deputy assistant secretary for Population Affairs on May 1. That office administers the Title X program, providing contraceptive, Pap tests and other preventive services for 4 million low-income women. (WW article, April 6) Manning told National Public Radio in 2009, “Contraception doesn’t work.”

“This is the fox guarding the hen house, and women with low incomes will pay the price,” said Dawn Laguens, executive vice president of Planned Parenthood. “It is a cruel irony to appoint an opponent of birth control to oversee the nation’s only federal program dedicated to family planning.” (Huffington Post, May 1)

Both Yoest and Manning allege abortions cause breast cancer (a scientific untruth) and want to make them illegal, with no exceptions for rape, incest or preserving a woman’s health and life. Yoest believes embryos have legal rights and opposes intratissue development and Plan B (morning-after pills) due to their “life-ending properties” (another medical lie). Manning calls abortion “legalized crime.”

All this flies in the face of current statistics. The U.S. is at an all-time low for abortions and teen pregnancies and a 30-year low for unintended pregnancies, thanks to the Affordable Care Act’s provision of family planning as a preventative service.

Trump, in his ilk only like “alternative facts,” which allow them to kowtow to the religious right and his racist, bigoted base.

But working-class women of all ages, nationalities and genders won’t go back. Proud and determined, women will continue to resist oppression.

Midwest meeting exposes U.S. imperialism

By Jeff Sorel Chicago

An enthusiastic audience attended a May 19 forum in Chicago on combating the U.S. war drive from the Middle East to the Philippines.

Randi Nord, a Workers World Party member from Detroit and journalist with Geopolitics Alert, spoke on Yemen. She characterized the horrific war in Yemen as an effort by the United States and its proxy, Saudi Arabia, to suppress a broad-based popular movement struggling for sovereignty and democracy.

Kousay Ahmad, a representative of the Syrian American Will Association, described the widespread support for the democratically elected government of Bashar al-Assad in Syria and how the Syrian army and its Russian supporters are protecting civilians from terrorist carnage.

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Joe Mshahwar, a young Syrian-American activist with the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice and WWP in Detroit, explained the historical background and genesis of the war in Syria and why the U.S. has unleashed terrorist groups to destroy the most democratic and secular state in the region.

Edmund Nuhau, from Anakbayan Chicago, linked these struggles in the Middle East to the struggle for national liberation and democracy in the Philippines.

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The OAS head cancelled his appearance, apparently afraid of being confront- ed by Chavistas and supporters, and the picketers declared a victory.

The action was called by the Alberto Lovera Bolivarian Circle and endorsed by the International Action Center, Workers World Party, Cuba Solidarity, Alianza PAIS, Libre Resistencia Hondureña, Pastors for Peace, Answer Coalition, International Concerned Family & Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, and Cuba and Venezuela Solidarity Committee.

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‘Almagro no! Hands off Venezuela!’
Chelsea Manning finally free!

By L.T. Pham

Chelsea Manning was released on May 17 from a military prison after serving seven years of her 35-year sentence. Former President Barack Obama commuted Manning’s sentence in January due to unending pressure for her freedom from activists around the world.

A former U.S. intelligence analyst, Manning turned over several hundred thousand files to WikiLeaks, a well-known whistleblower website. She was sent to solitary confinement because of her actions and was sentenced to 35 years in prison for leaking classified information. Manning’s actions exposed the U.S. military’s war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Manning was found guilty of 20 counts and sentenced to 35 years in a Virginia military prison. However, President Obama commuted her sentence following Manning’s years of successful hunger strikes and the growing public pressure to free her.

Manning is a leader in the LGBTQ rights movement and has become a symbol of courage and resistance. She continues to fight for the rights of all political prisoners, including Mumia Abu-Jamal and Leonard Pierre, known as ‘the Black Panther Party’s most wanted fugitive.’

Manning’s release is a huge victory for the LGBTQ rights movement and a symbol of hope for all political prisoners around the world.

Oscar López Rivera

Oscar López Rivera, a Puerto Rican independence activist, is another person who has been held in a federal men’s prison. He has been imprisoned for 40 years for his role in the struggle for Puerto Rican independence.

López Rivera was one of the leaders of the Young Patriots Organization, a group that fought for Puerto Rican independence. He was sentenced to 55 years in prison in 1978 and has been on hunger strike for 21 years, demanding his release.

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López Rivera is a symbol of the struggle for independence and freedom. He has inspired generations of Puerto Ricans to fight for their rights and freedom.

International greetings

Former Palestinian political prisoner Ra’ama Dideh greets Oscar López Rivera in Chicago, May 18.

PHOTO: TELSUR / TWITTER / JUSTICE4RAMEA

https://twitter.com/raamaaDideh/status/874019761949820672

https://twitter.com/jackiechanaka

https://twitter.com/Public_Art_360/status/984571519487950848

http://www.sansur.org

http://oscarlopezrivera.org

https://twitter.com/justicia4ramae

Critical moments

The physical presence of Oscar in the movement occurs in the most critical moments for Puerto Rico.

The struggle in this period will decide whether the Boricua nation — Borikén, by its Taíno name — will remain and advance toward its sovereignty, or if it will revert to the “Puerto Rico” — a name the U.S. gave when it assumed control — thus making it openly a backyard for speculation by foreign capital, primarily from the U.S. which is swindling Puerto Ricans.

This population will only provide servants for all political prisoners who have taken a stand against U.S. imperialism. Her release comes at a time when political development within the U.S. indicates that the ruling class is vying for yet another war — while the anti-war movement fights to make a comeback to oppose U.S. intervention and militarism in Syria and Venezuela, among several other countries the U.S. preys on.

Manning’s freedom should serve as a torch to keep our movement’s fire going.

In celebration of this victory, we continue to raise the banner for freedom for all political prisoners, including Mumia Abu-Jamal, Leonard Peltier, Ky Peterson — a black transgender man sentenced to 20 years in prison for defending himself against sexual assault. And we say Free! for the countless Black and Brown LGBTQ people forced into prison systems that are concentration camps for the poor.

The U.S. empire has constructed its prison system to suppress workers and oppressed people who dare blow the whistle on the heinous crimes of this system, who dare to resist by leaking military intelligence or by fighting back against the police. The system that held Manning in a male prison to delegitimize her gender identity is not simply a system lacking moral conscience or compassion. It is a very calculated system attempting to legitimize its attacks on workers and oppressed people by further alienating sectors of the working class from each other.

The movement refused to play into the military’s divide-and-conquer strategies vis-a-vis transphobia. Instead, the movement fought to free Manning and stayed strong for years to ensure her safety, well-being and the ultimate release of this people’s hero.

Now as we celebrate Manning’s freedom, we remember the legacy of transgender revolutionary fighters such as Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera and Lea. Fredricks showed us that the struggle for transgender liberation is inseparable from the struggle against capitalism and white supremacy; that no world is safe for transgender people so long as the U.S. empire is able to wage war, exploit workers and displace the oppressed; that there is no true vanguard to the working class without the leadership, bravery and determination of transgender people.

Commitment is strong, hopeful

Despite the exposition of the harsh Puerto Rican reality, Oscar’s message was one of hope and commitment to the struggle. He outlined his plans. First, he will complete his hectic travel schedule — the next day to Chicago where he lived since adolescence, and then back to Puerto Rico in 24 hours to go to San Sebastián, where he was born. In addition, he will visit several cities in the United States, including New York, where he will make a presentation before the United Nations Decolonization Committee.

He will also be present on June 11 at the Puerto Rican Day Parade in New York. His appearance has been the subject of right-wing criticism. The Goya Company, whose products are heavily consumed by the Latinx community, has withdrawn its support of the Puerto Rican Day parade. This withdrawal has informally prompted a boycott campaign directed at that firm by many activists who fought for Oscar’s liberation.

After these trips, he said he wants to have dialogues with the people, listening to their concerns, and thus be able to work for decolonization and independence more effectively.

International greetings

An important part of Oscar’s message was gratitude to the people who waged a united struggle for his liberation, even though they held different ideological perspectives.

But special thanks went to the governments of Cuba and Venezuela, and he also mentioned individually each of the Cuban Five.

Oscar received calls and messages from President Nicolás Maduro of Venezuela and Raúl Castro from Cuba. The message from Fernando Gonzalez, one of the Cuban Five, was especially moving, as they shared the same cell for four years. With respect to Venezuela, and in response to hostile questions from the media accusing him of defending President Maduro, Oscar responded that it is U.S. intervention that is guilty of violence in Venezuela and that is why he demands that the U.S. stop its interference there.
Imperialism is worried that China's huge global infrastructure projects could challenge the U.S.-led world order.

China builds new type of globalization

By Sara Flounders

The People's Republic of China hosted a summit May 14 called the “One Belt, One Road” initiative, also known as the New Silk Road Project. This project involves ports and coastal infrastructure from Southeast Asia to East Africa and the Mediterranean.

The project plans a network of trade routes with new rail lines, ports, highways, pipelines, telecommunications facilities and energy centers linking countries on four continents. It includes financing to promote urban planning, potable water, sanitation and food development. China is calling it the “plan of the century.”

China describes the project as a revival of the ancient Silk Road with 21st-century technology. It is projected to be 12 times the size of the U.S. Marshall Plan, which rebuilt Western Europe after World War II.

Major corporate media around the world are covering the gathering signals the end of the American Century — the U.S. claim to be the world’s sole superpower. Numerous analysts suggest the project could shift the center of the global economy and challenge the U.S.-led world order.

Former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense Charles Freeman described the OBOR project as “potentially the most transformative engineering effort in human history. China will become the center of the global economy as it becomes the world’s largest economy. The ‘Belt and Road’ program includes no military component, but it clearly has the potential to upend the world’s geopolitics as well as its economics.” (NBC News, May 12)

In a May 13 article, “Behind China’s $1 Trillion Development Plan: America’s ‘Grand Canal’ Order,” the New York Times predicted: “The initiative ... looms on a scope and scale that rivaled the modicum of history, promising more than $1 trillion in infrastructure and spanning more than 60 countries. Mr. Xi is aiming to use China’s wealth and industrial scale to create a new kind of globalization that will dispense with the rules of the aging Western-dominated institutions. The goal is to forge a global economic order, drawing countries and companies more tightly into China’s orbit. It is impossible for any foreign leader, multilateral or otherwise, international banker to ignore China’s push to remake global trade. American influence in the region is seen to be waning.”

U.S. infrastructure is collapsing

Meanwhile, the U.S. infrastructure is literally falling apart — roads, bridges, dams and schools have been given an overall D+ grade by the American Society of Civil Engineers. In infrastructure, including schools, hospitals and wastewater treatment plants, is at a 30-year-low.

President Donald Trump, with his “America First” campaign slogan, pledged to rebuild the country’s broken infrastructure. But since becoming president, his administration has instead been cutting taxes on the rich while increasing the military budget. Meanwhile, the U.S.-initiated Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, which was designed to exclude China, has failed. China’s OBOR project has generated enormous interest because U.S. imperialism has run aground and left China to develop the country, except weapons sales and military bases.

Weapons quickly become obsolete, leaving only debt and underdevelopment. Where U.S. infrastructure projects are in place around the world, they are focused on building and maintaining a vast high-tech network of 800+ military bases and servicing an armada of aircraft carriers, nuclear submarines and destroyers. Each base is an expense to itself and an attack on the sovereignty of the host country. U.S. foreign aid ranks near the bottom, but China has supported all developed countries, amounting to less than 1 percent of the federal budget. It is largely military aid to Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, Egypt and Pakistan.

U.S. wars have resulted in great profit for U.S. corporations while massively destroying vital civilian infrastructure in developing countries. The Pentagon’s new clear arsenal and the Pentagon’s new $4 trillion in foreign currency reserves. Its granaries are full and there are surpluses in cement and steel.

In 1949, when the revolution led by the Chinese Communist Party took power, China was an underdeveloped, war-torn country with a largely illiterate, majority peasant population. Western and Japanese imperialist powers had looted and carved up China for their own profits. Breaking their hold was the first step in liberation, but China was deeply impoverished.

After nearly 30 years of heroic efforts to modernize the economy based on the organization and efforts of the masses, the Chinese Communist Party in 1978 opened the country up to some form of capitalist ownership and foreign capitalist investment.

This still risky policy has continued for nearly 40 years. It has allowed Chinese millionaires and even billionaires to develop and spread corruption. Foreign capital, ever hopeful of totally overturning the Chinese state, invested because China has used a part of its significant reserves to establish the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. The AIIB plays a central role in encouraging trade and economic cooperation, not only in the Asian region but globally. The AIIB was adopted by a majority of the World Bank and other international financial institutions.

A road map for the future is from a Chinese perspective. China’s growing economic influence in the world is part of a revolutionary process to overthrow the capitalist world order. The necessity of revolution is seen clearly in the Chinese economy. China has developed and spread corruption. Foreign capital, ever hopeful of totally overturning the Chinese state, invested because China has used a part of its significant reserves to establish the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. The AIIB plays a central role in encouraging trade and economic cooperation, not only in the Asian region but globally. The AIIB was adopted by a majority of the World Bank and other international financial institutions.

The AIIB is seen as a counter to the U.S.-dominated World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

Socialist planning to overcome underdevelopment

China’s past decades of development and economic transformation and its current surpluses are what make these new global plans possible. China has an estimated $4 trillion in foreign currency reserves. Its granaries are full and there are surpluses in cement and steel.

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China is diversifying.

China has used a part of its significant reserves to establish the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. The AIIB plays an essential role in encouraging trade and economic cooperation with other countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America. This Chinese initiative is seen as a counter to the U.S.-dominated World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

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U.S. gay activist honored in Cuba

By Bob McCubbin

From its initiation in 2007, Cuba’s yearly International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia has marked the serious, ongoing effort of the country’s National Center for Sex Education (Centro Nacional de Educación Sexual or CENESEX) to eliminate the vestiges of sex/gender prejudice in Cuba, the harmful residue of 500 years of first Spanish and then U.S. colonial domination.

Mariela Castro Espin, the daughter of Cuban President Raúl Castro Ruz and Cuban revolutionary leader Vilma Espín, is the founder and director of CENESEX and a member of the country’s National Assembly. Castro Espin used the occasion of the 10th International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia on May 12 to present U.S. gay activist the Rev. Dr. Troy Perry with a CENESEX award in recognition of his lifelong efforts in the struggle for LGBTQ liberation.

As a spiritual leader, Perry has, for many years, acted in strong opposition to the homophobic and transphobic positions of the world’s major patriarchal religious organizations. His Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, originally a gathering of 12 people in his Los Angeles living room, now encompasses over 300 congregations in 16 countries, safe spaces which meet the spiritual needs of many LGBTQ people. Perry was an early advocate for marriage rights for same-sex couples and performed such marriages long before they were legal in the U.S.

‘End the U.S. blockade now!’

Perry described the award ceremony at Havana’s Karl Marx Theater on his website: “By the time the 10th Cuban Gala Against Homophobia and Transphobia started, over 4,000 people were present. … The program started with music and then my introduction was made and I spoke for ten minutes on my journey in [U.S.] America as a gay man and drew a parallel between the LGBTQ community in both our countries in the 1960s when gay men were arrested and sent to prison.”

He continued that following the presentation of the award “was the most beautiful experience of entertainment from the LGBT community I have ever witnessed! Ballet dancers from the National Cuban Ballet Company, a Flamenco dancer, who tore down the house! Jazz musicians, the choir and dancers from the Santería religion, drag performances, and numerous songs by Spanish vocalist, Falete, and more.”

In a statement to the press before leaving for Cuba, Perry denounced the murderous blockade that the U.S. imposed on Cuba soon after the revolutionary overthrow of the Batista dictatorship. “I am still saddened that the government of my country, the United States of America, still has not lifted the embargo against this wonderful country and its people. I call, again, for our government to make that change now!” (PR Newswire, March 7)

In the Introduction to her highly informative book, “Rainbow Solidarity in Defense of Cuba,” Workers World Party leader and internationally known transgender activist Leslie Feinberg wrote: “The history of the Cuban Revolution is a process from which we who have not yet made our revolutions have a great deal to learn about the struggle for sexual liberation, based on concrete historical conditions.” And while we continue to mourn the long illness and ultimate loss of our beloved Comrade Leslie, the process she alludes to continues, and continues to inspire a new generation of LGBTQ revolutionaries.

McCubbin is the author of “The Roots of Lesbian and Gay Oppression,” a Marxist analysis first published by Workers World Party in 1976, before the progressive movement in general was able to embrace a consistently supportive view of the first-wave Gay Liberation movement.

General strike brings Greece to a standstill

By G. Dunkel

Even though there have been many general strikes in Greece in the past 10 years, the one on May 17 stands out as one of the most successful. Some workers, like the sailors who run the ferries, struck the day before, the day of and took their time going back to work the day after.

Relying on its parliamentary majority, the Syriza government rammed through a harsh, draconian austerity program the day before, the day of and took their time going back to work the day after.

The sailors who run the ferries, struck the day before, the day of and took their time going back to work the day after.

According to the organization dianeos.gr, nearly 1.5 million Greeks — 15 percent of the population — currently live in “extreme poverty,” with just enough income to survive, which means pay for food and shelter. (nyurl.com/lqob84y)

PAME, the All Workers Militant Front, which is closely associated with the Greek Communist Party (KKE), was very active in getting its members and supporters out to demonstrations that re-inforced the strike on May 17. According to the French newspaper Le Monde, 12,000 people came out in Athens, 8,000 from PAME, and then PAME members started marching in Thessaloniki, Heraklion, Larisa, Giannina, Chania, Volos, Agrinio, Karditsa and Rodos — basically all over Greece, including islands in the Aegean, as well as in its two largest cities.

Speaking in Athens, General Secretary of the KKE Dimitris Koutsoumpas said, “The class war is now in progress, it is a marathon, not a rifle shot in the air. The class war must be a daily and continuous one. The harsh anti-people measures, the Fourth memorandum along with the previous memorandums must be thrown in the dustbin of history and the only ones who have the authority to do this are the Greek people, the labor-people’s movement.”

PHOTOS: FACEBOOK - REV. TROY PERRY AND CENESEX
Rev. Troy Perry and Mariela Castro Espin, top. Scenes from Cuba’s 10th Celebration of the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia in Santa Clara, Cuba.

PHOTOS: FACEBOOK - REV. TROY PERRY AND CENESEX
Rev. Troy Perry and Mariela Castro Espin, top. Scenes from Cuba’s 10th Celebration of the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia in Santa Clara, Cuba.
The action of U.S. warplanes bombing a Syrian government military convoy near the town of al-Tanf on May 18 marks a sharp escalation of the U.S. campaign to overthrow the elected Syrian government and to dismember the country. It must be protested by all who oppose U.S. imperialism's aggression.

With bloody irony, the Pentagon claimed it attacked the Syrian government convoy because the Syrian trucks had entered “an established de-escalation zone.” (latimes.com, May 18) The convoy had moved within 18 miles of a U.S. military base, where U.S., British and Norwegian soldiers were occupying Syrian territory, along with a group hostile to the Syrian government called the “Army of the Revolution’s Commandos.”

The Pentagon set up this base without permission by the Syrian government, which constitutes a de facto invasion of the country.

A Syrian official said, “This brazen attack by the so-called international coalition exposes the falseness of its claims to be fighting terrorism.” (aljazeera.com, May 19) He added that the “Syrian army was fighting terrorism and no one else had the right to decide which areas it can carry out operations.” (cbsnews.com, May 19)

The Russian government called the U.S. attack a breach of Syrian sovereignty.

The air attack took place as President Donald Trump left the U.S. to visit Saudi Arabia. The first thing Trump did when he arrived in the kingdom was to sign a $120 billion weapons deal, and an additional $250 billion in “other investments” with the Saudi regime.

“Donald’s, we will all win!” declared a state of emergency. (The president of the Supreme Political Council, Saleh al-Sammad, declared a state of emergency because of the large number of displaced Syrian civilians. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has said that there have been 11,000 cases of diarrhea confirmed in Yemen, with many of them related to cholera. At a press conference in Geneva on May 10, UNICEF spokesperson Christoph Boulierac said that 130 people had died from cholera and that a third of those cases involved children.

This disease results from the contamination of drinking water and lack of sanitary conditions. With the daily bombing and shelling of civilian populated areas by the Saudi Arabian and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) forces, the basic infrastructure of the country has been seriously damaged.

U.N. reports reveal that its agencies and partners are supplying diarrheal disease kits, oral rehydration salts and water treatment tablets to residents in the affected areas. Nevertheless, the disease’s spread is more widespread than the previous epidemic during October 2017. Approximately 7.6 million of the 27 million people in this most impoverished country in the region reside in areas designated as high risk for cholera infection.

The targeting of civilian areas, electricity sources, health care facilities, water supplies and food storage centers indicates that the U.S.-backed military intervention is aimed at forcing the people of Yemen into submission to Riyadh, Washington and London.

The Pentagon supplies intelligence coordinates, refueling technology and military hardware for the Saudis, who carry out the war.

Trump visit to reinforce militarism

In his first trip to the Middle East, President Donald Trump is seeking to maintain the firm alliance between U.S. imperialism and Riyadh. The war against the Yemeni people has escalated since Trump took office.

Direct bombings and a deadly commando unit raid on a village in Yemen after a week in the region illustrated the expansionist program of the Trump presidency.

U.S. coordination and support for the airstrikes and ground assaults are part of the expansionist program of the Trump presidency. The U.S.-backed military intervention in Yemen is designed to wage a proxy war against the Islamic Republic of Iran. The U.S.-created Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula movement has denied that it receives direct military and economic support from Tehran. Meanwhile, the coalition of U.S.-Saudi allied forces continues its relentless attacks on Yemen. Official estimates of deaths since the bombing and ground campaign that began in March 2015 range from 5,000 to 12,000 people.

Meanwhile, the war has created the monumental health crisis that worsens week by week. The ongoing Saudi bombing and shelling by the Saudi-GCC coalition and their allies have destroyed the ports, preventing the distribution of medical supplies and food. A May 16 article from the UN News Center reported the difficulties in distributing aid in “the embattled district of Taiz in Yemen, with a military contract worth over $100 billion. Conditions surrounding the weapons consist of both arms sales and maintenance services. This is only the initial phase of the program, which will eventually be valued at $300 billion.”

Deadly strikes intensify

Many people are being killed in daily airstrikes and ground operations in Yemen. In response, the forces allied with the Ansarullah and the military units of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh are inflicting casualties on the U.S.-backed units.

Saudi fighter jets carried out four bombing raids in the Serwah district of Mokha province on May 17. Armed groups aligned with the Saudi-GCC coalition launched artillery missiles into numerous neighborhoods of the same district.

The destruction was evident, with damaged homes and other structures. Later on the same day, 23 people, including women and children, died as a result of U.S.-backed airstrikes against the Ansarullah and the military units of the exiled regime of ousted Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, along with cam sondos from Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other states. The popular forces are quite capable of retaking territory and eliminating threats.

According to a May 17 report from Saba News, based in Yemen, “The army and popular forces destroyed a military vehicle of the Saudi-paid mercenaries in northern Midi desert ... and shelled groups of the mercenaries in the same desert.” They then attacked a commercial building in Sugami and gatherings of Saudi soldiers in the region.

Trump’s visit to Saudi Arabia dovetails with the expansion of U.S. imperialism’s war on Yemen, Syria, Iran, Hezbollah and Palestine. The objective of the White House and its surrogates is to stifle the alliance of revolutionary anti-imperialist forces throughout the Middle East in favor of pro-Western organizations and states.
In 1980, Sam Marcy, founder of Workers World Party, wrote the book "Generals over the White House," attacking the relationship of the Carter administration to the Pentagon and the utter dependency of the capitalist economy on military spending. This chapter is taken from that book, slightly edited for space, that sounds eerily familiar today, despite the differences in personalities and the politicians occupying the White House. The entire book can be read at workers.org/marcy/80/summary/index.htm.

Following up on his bellicose proclamation of the so-called Carter Doctrine, in which he threatened to make the American Pacific as virtual American Alaska to be defended with "all the force necessary," President Jimmy Carter has proposed an unprecedented peacetime defense budget—a budget that projects a most dangerous turn towards military brinkmanship.

The goal of President Carter's proposed defense budget," said the Wall Street Journal of Jan. 29, 1980, "is reminiscent of the Cold War of the 1950s rather than the efforts of the 1970s. It has been recognized almost universally in the bourgeois camp as a break with the moderate policies of the past ten years. The new militarization envisioned by the Carter defense program, unlike the thirties, is on top of a recession, the worst in which the U.S. has ever experienced, and it follows the myth that only a mild recession was coming. They fully confirmed that the serious capitalist crisis which has already been steadily worsening is definitely more, so much of the capitalist economists are predicting that it will be of considerable mitigation.

Of course, increased military production can stimulate and absorb a good deal of the basic industrial apparatus of the country, especially if the government is prepared to order it, and it follows the general mobilization of the whole national economy. However, it should be noted that military production if it is relied on as the means to be used for the recession, as it has been in the U.S. for more than three decades, like any other capitulation, it only turns into a chimera and becomes a devastating depressant. What is true about drugs in general is also true in the field of political economy.

Unlike the 1930s it was, of course, the huge military program that the U.S. embarked upon in the early thirties that ultimately pulled this country out of the most devastating economic collapse it has ever experienced. There are, however, vast differences between the early thirties and today.

There were at that time millions upon millions of unemployed. Industry and commerce were stagnant, some at a virtual standstill. There was not much of a standing U.S. army or navy. There was no universal military service as yet. It is true that the end of World War I marked a rationalization over the past three decades for the swollen defense budget.

"The end of the first world war, the end of the industrial complex is back in business," said the New York Times on Jan. 20, 1980, in its business and finance section. "The tension between Israel and its neighbors, the threat from China and the defense industrial multi-billion dollar market the deficit in the economic and ecological crisis, higher inflation, a larger federal budget deficit, a strong stock market and an end to recessionary expectations."

The Wall Street Journal of Feb. 1, 1980, was even more explicit in its front-page headline. "Military spending rise," it said, "will soften recession, many economists say."

"Even before the Pentagon decides," said the Journal, "how and where to spend its billion-dollar defense budget, it is expected to be bolstering workers and building inventories in anticipation for contracts. A few companies say they already have contracts or orders for defense construction.

The business correspondent of the Christian Science Monitor was equally environment and social services are of no importance to this group the Department of State and its adversaries, thereby vastly enriching the military-industrial complex. Iran and several satellites have acquainted with the problems of the military adventures, for which there has been no profit, and have been induced to buy high-priced, sophisticated weapons in abundance and could pay for them in good currency, gold or oil. It is only when the Iran is not able to buy weapons, instead of merely dumping them on reluctant allies or satellites.

"Cranking up the war machine in the very midst of a world-wide economic crisis will make the U.S. into a capitalist system. Cranking it up again in a period of hyperinflation and world-wide capitalist stagnation will operate as a depressant instead."

Of course, it is always possible to gain an initial spur in a segment of industrial production, and the broader non-defense sector of the U.S.

"Congress in hands of the military"

"Notwithstanding all that has been said about the continuing encroachment of the military into all phases of civilian life, it is clear that the military will have the final say in all matters concerning the political, economic and military direction of the U.S. government!" isn't it a fact that Congress, and in particular its powerful Appropriations Committee in the Senate and the Ways and Means Committee in the House, wield vast authority, since they have the power of the purse?

"It is, they, together with the president, who carry the war-making authority. They are currently located for the military, without which no military establishment could develop on such monstrous proportions as today or prosecute a war. In that sense they are not the final authority."

"Now listen to an old-line, conservative, Southern Democrat, speaking in January 1980, about how the U.S. government has made up. Sen. Allen Ellender of Louisiana said that the major purpose of the military is to maintain the status quo and that the U.S. military "is a special case of commodity production. The wealth of those nations in which the military production prevails," wrote Karl Marx in his opening chapter of Capital, "presents itself as an immense accumulation of commodities."

The products of the military-industrial complex enter into the process of capitalist production not as commodities in general but as commodities sui generis—they are commodities of a particular type. While they are use values in the narrow economic sense, their broad sociological significance is that of a cancer which tends to consume the entire bodily politic. The process of capitalist production and growth in the final analysis can mean that the capitalists, in order to re-"prime their profit, must produce a useful commodity. If not, it is pointless to employ the very process of capitalist reproduction."

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¡Proletarios y oprimidos de todos los países, uníos!

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

Oscar está ya junto al pueblo

Por Jim McMahon

Manifiestantes contra oleoducto cierran bancos

Decenas de activistas de 350Seattle cerraron 13 bancos Chase en Seattle el 8 de mayo en alianza con los pueblos indígenas. La acción fue una confrontación con JPMorgan Chase y otros bancos para detener su financiación del oleoducto Keystone XL, que se extendería desde Alberta, Canadá hasta los Estados Unidos, transportando millones de litros de arena bituminosas canadienses.

Líderes indígenas han señalado que el petróleo de arenas bituminosas utiliza tres veces más energía para extraerlo que el petróleo regular, siendo así una causa del calentamiento global. El Keystone de 1,700 millas cruzaría el inmenso acuífero de prensa local, nacional e internacional. Una vez en el terruño borincano, quie-nere hacer lo que llamó su peregrinaje. Ir a todos y cada uno de los 78 municipios de Puerto Rico, lo que ha sido objeto de criticas, y los otros tres oleoductos que salen de las arenas bituminosas. A pesar de repasar la dura realidad borincana, la visita de Oscar fue uno de esperanza y compromiso con la lucha.

Manifestantes contra oleoducto cierran bancos

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