

Coast to coast protests demand **ABOLISH ICE**

Reunite families

By Kathy Durkin

Hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated in more than 700 actions in large cities and small towns across the U.S. on June 30, the National Day of Action for Immigrant Justice. They denounced the Trump administration's war on im/migrants, especially the inhumane separation of children from their parents at the U.S./Mexican border. Demonstrators called for family reunification, an end to detentions and the abolition of the hated Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency.

Protests arose against the Trump administration's "zero tolerance policy," whereby all immigrants, including asylum seekers, are arrested, jailed and deported. Children are cruelly separated from their parents and detained.

Seeing young children in cages and hearing their plaintive cries for their parents has enraged sympathetic people and spurred them into action. Strong protests pressured the White House xenophobe in chief to announce an end to child separation policies on June 20. To him, the "visuals of caged children weren't good optics."

But, as MSNBC reported on June 29, over 2,000 youngsters are still separated from their parents. Shockingly, young children must appear before immigration judges alone, without guaranteed public defenders.

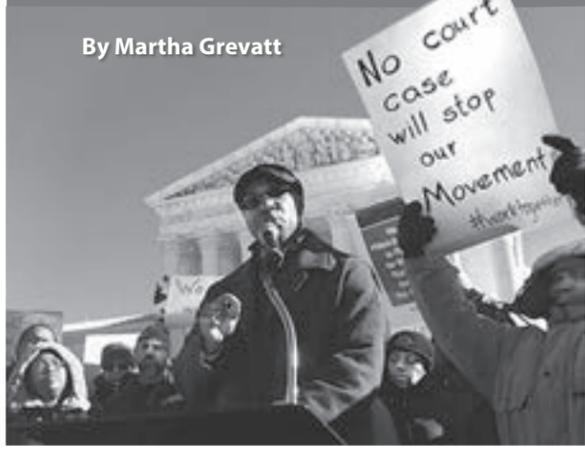
In Washington, D.C., thousands of people rallied June 28 to demand the reuniting of immigrant families and an end to detentions, deportations and ICE terror. Signs read, "Abolish ICE!" Nearly 600 activists, mostly women, were arrested as they occupied the Senate Office Building.

Families Belong Together initially called the June 30
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WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

JANUS DECISION & LABOR'S FIGHTBACK



By Martha Grevatt

June 27 — Today the Supreme Court of the United States delivered a major attack on organized labor, ruling in favor of Mark Janus, a 65-year-old white male child-support specialist who joined a lawsuit against American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees District Council 31 in Illinois. The closely watched case, Janus vs. AFSCME, centered around "agency" or "fair share" fees that public sector unions can charge workers in their bargaining units who choose not to join the union.

The court's decision overturns Abood vs. Detroit Board of Education, which allowed government bodies
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Rep. Waters, the Democrats and white supremacy



By Scott Scheffer
Los Angeles

At a rally here on June 24, U.S. Congressperson Maxine Waters came out hard against the vicious Trump “zero tolerance” policy on immigration, and specifically against taking children — often infants — from their families.

Waters also spoke in favor of making officials of the disgusting right-wing administration uncomfortable in public. She was responding to White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders being asked to leave a Virginia restaurant by the owner and workers, and Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen being driven out of a Mexican restaurant by protesters.

Rep. Waters’ words netted her a vile, racist and threatening response from Trump himself. Over the next several days her office received hundreds of threatening email and phone messages. Among these was a death threat considered so serious that Waters’ speaking engagements in Texas and Alabama had to be canceled.

Rep. Waters has served 14 consecutive terms in the U.S. Congress. Since 2013 she has represented a large portion of South Central Los Angeles, historically an African-American and more recently a Latinx area of LA.

Democratic Party leaders tout it as the “party of the people.” One would think they would have taken this opportunity to support her and connect to the thousands of voters who admire Maxine Waters for her principled positions against U.S. wars, her impassioned fights for the rights of the oppressed and now her courage in standing up to the latest Trump/Sessions crimes against migrants.

But the opposite happened, revealing the true character of the Democratic Party leadership. Nancy Pelosi, Charles Schumer and, yes, Bernie Sanders, immediately called for “unity and civility” in dealing with Trump and his right-wing coterie.

Pelosi, the powerful House minority leader, whose wealth ranks her among the top one-tenth of 1% of the U.S. population, tweeted: “As we go forward, we must conduct elections in a way that achieves unity from sea to shining sea.”

Schumer, the Senate minority leader, said of Maxine Waters’ having thrown down the gauntlet to Trump: “No one should call for the harassment of political opponents. That’s not right; that’s not American.” Schumer formerly served on the Senate Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees and Border Security.

Bernie Sanders, who identified himself as a socialist in the 2016 Democratic primary, climbed aboard the “let’s-be-civil” bandwagon by saying, “Our opponents have the right to go into a restaurant and have dinner.” Sanders’ remarks came just days after Rep. Waters’ speech and

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WW PHOTO: MINNIE BRUCE PRATT

Migrant rights rally, Syracuse, N.Y., June 30.



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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.

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NFL players extend hand of solidarity to migrants

By Monica Moorehead

The Trump administration, along with its racist, repressive arm, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, has created an unprecedented humanitarian crisis for millions of migrant families. Tens of thousands of people in many sectors of society have expressed both their righteous outrage and heartfelt solidarity with the families.

One of these sectors is the National Football League, the most popular professional sport in the U.S. Last September bigot in chief Trump used the epithet “sons of b—ches” about NFL football players who followed Colin Kaepernick’s lead in taking a knee during the national anthem to protest police brutality and racist oppression.

Two African-American NFL players, Joshua Norman, a cornerback with the Washington football team, and Demario Davis, a New Orleans Saints linebacker, traveled to San Antonio on June 27 to assist RAICES Texas (Refugee and Immi-

grant Center for Education and Legal Services). There, close to the U.S.-Mexico border, the two players helped to buy and pack clothes, medicines, food, water, toys and other vital supplies for at least 60 immigrant families, including children, who were recently released from detention centers.

Norman stated: “As a Black man in America, I know how this state treats minorities and people of color. I see it every day. Yesterday it was Muslims from certain countries, and today it’s immigrants. We don’t know who’s next. That’s why I’m here ... to lend a helping hand to the people on the front lines fighting back in the courtroom and in detention centers. Seeing what’s happening with the kids and their parents, I felt like I couldn’t stand idly by. I needed to take



NFL players Joshua Norman and Demario Davis “distributing supplies for migrant families recently released from detention in San Antonio, Texas.

action so I came out here with no questions asked and am here to help in any way I can. Packing backpacks all night last night was the best thing I’ve done all year.” (www.dailykos.com)

Through the NFL Players Coalition, Norman also donated \$100,000 to hurricane relief in Puerto Rico, and Davis works with poor children in Jackson, Miss. □

Bryant Arroyo: On the inside, speaking out

Part 2

On Hurricane Carter and Mumia Abu-Jamal

By Ted Kelly
SCI Frackville, Pa.

In his address broadcast from prison to the 2018 Yale Environmental Forum, Bryant continued:

“As we struggle to put people, and not corporations, in charge of our lives and governance, who seek real and sustainable victories toward that goal, it is vital that we link our dissent, our strategies and our vision, to their roots.”

He warns that any action that is “insufficiently informed by the history and worldview that brought us our present will greatly exhaust our energies and weakly reward our hopes. In the critical work of ending corporate dominance and building democracy, we must always be against the threat of de-radicalism.

“These strategies need to reflect an understanding of the current rule of law that puts we, the People, subordinate to the propertied few, organized in their corporate forms, and they must reflect our commitment to reversing that law.”

On the move

With this worldview, it should come as no surprise that Bryant has been a thorn in the side of prison officials. Highly litigious, never hesitating to issue a grievance when his rights are violated, Bryant also defends his fellow inmates as stridently as he defends himself. He helps them draft their own grievances, research statutes relevant to their cases and strategize for their parole hearings.

Since he has no shot at getting paroled himself, the Department of Corrections ironically has one less threat they can hold over Bryant’s head. Even so, for all his procedural confrontations with prison staff, Bryant has never once been sent to the Restricted Housing Unit — except to assist his fellow prisoners who were placed there. This is remarkable for 25 years and counting, given how impulsively guards throw prisoners “in the hole.” This torture method is even more egregious when one considers the severe lack of mental health resources in U.S. prisons.



Joe Piette, Bryant Arroyo and Ted Kelly

WWW PHOTO: BENJAMIN IRVIN

Educational materials for English language learners are nearly nonexistent. In a state where an increasing proportion of prisoners speak little to no English, Bryant is sometimes the only person on hand to translate. Bryant says the best tool he has at his disposal to help his fellow hispanohablantes [Spanish speakers] acquire more English is Workers World newspaper.

The back page of this newspaper — the Spanish Mundo Obrero section — is the key text in the ad hoc English as a second language instruction Bryant offers. There are over 300 imprisoned subscribers to Workers World in Pennsylvania, but some of them have access only to that one page.

For his fellow inmates, Bryant’s assistance means a renewed chance at winning their freedom. All this has led to prison officials wanting to get Bryant out of their jurisdiction whenever he makes too much trouble. He’s been transferred to several different cell blocks and even to other prisons.

In one move, he was sent back to SCI Mahanoy’s F Block, which is actually the first place he landed after his bogus conviction. One morning after the move, Bryant woke up in his cell and caught a

Part 2 of three parts of the story of Bryant Arroyo, a prisoner and political activist in SCI Frackville, where Kelly conducted this interview. As Kelly writes, this “was just one story. One story among millions.”

glimpse of a remarkably familiar figure. Though the man was unsteady on his feet from decades in the hole, stooped and shuffling past the cell door, there was no mistaking the wise eyes, that intelligent face and those long black dreadlocks.

Word got around quickly that Mumia Abu-Jamal was back among the general population after 30 years in solitary confinement. His new cell was next to Bryant’s.

Prisoners flocked to Mumia like they have to every prophet throughout history. But Bryant kept his distance at first. He did not want to overwhelm the revolutionary who had finally, miraculously, emerged from the hell on earth that is death row.

Their friendship was eventually born out of Bryant’s unflagging compassion. He started dropping F Block survival tips to Mumia: what to wear on your way to the shower, which days to keep your cell clean for inspection, who you can trust, who to avoid. A bond soon formed and before long the two could often be spotted in the yard walking long laps around the track, talking and theorizing.

The former Black Panther and Philadelphia radio journalist turned to Bryant and said, “You know, B, you got a great radio voice.” Normally, that alone would be a huge compliment coming from an orator like Mumia Abu-Jamal. But Bryant was floored for an entirely different reason.

“Mu had no way of possibly knowing this, but my father was an AM radio jockey for WLAN. When I was a kid, I did impressions of him all the time.” While telling the story, Bryant breaks into a flawless parody of classic Spanish-language morning radio tags: “Buenos días, estás escuchando a 93.7 Ramón y Lucci. No toques esa esfera ...”

It seems fated that Bryant Arroyo would cross paths with Mumia Abu-Jamal and adopt him as his mentor. One of Bryant’s biggest heroes was Rubin “Hurricane” Carter, the heavyweight boxer who won his freedom after being falsely imprisoned for 20 years. He had hoped to meet him one day, but this dream was never realized when Carter died of prostate cancer in 2014. “But Mu got to meet him,” Bryant says. “Hurricane went to see Mu. That’s just as good.” □

Detroit

LGBTQ Pride forum



WWW PHOTO: JERRY GOLDBERG

Workers World Party-Michigan had a packed house for its 2018 LGBTQ Pride forum on June 16. Tom Kalish, chairing, reported on the successful table at the Motor City Pride festival where over 120 young activists signed up to learn more about socialism. Tyler Vosgerchian gave a history of the struggle for LGBTQ rights.

Kris Hamel provided a tribute to Leslie Feinberg, summarizing his great contributions to the transgender movement. Jamie Smedley contributed a history of the Stonewall Rebellion, relaying a talk by Sylvia Rivera. Gem Zero explained the discriminatory treatment faced by LGBTQ people in obtaining affordable housing. □



WW PHOTO: JOHN STEFFIN

Janus decision and labor's fightback

Continued from page 1

to require employees to pay their share of the cost of representing them — as long as the money was not used to support political candidates or “ideological” positions.

The 1977 Abood decision stated that, because public sector unions are legally obligated to represent members and non-members alike, charging agency fees did not violate the First Amendment. Since then the National Right to Work Committee and other right-wing groups have continued to finance cases that raised bogus “free speech” issues in an effort to reverse Abood. Up to this point they were unsuccessful. Their Trump card in Janus was recent appointee Justice Neil Gorsuch.

Even before today's ruling, agency fees could not be required in the 28 “right-to-work” states. In the 22 other states, the ruling now affects 5.2 million public sector union workers. Essentially all public workers in the country will now be forced to work under open shop conditions — meaning “free-riders” can avoid contributing to the union, cutting into union power.

The original plaintiff was not Janus but Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner, who sued to have the agency fees declared illegal. Three state employees, including Janus, joined the case. Janus became the lone plaintiff after a court ruling that the governor could not sue because he was not a union-represented employee, and later the other two state workers dropped out.

Janus is no accidental activist simply trying to keep a few extra dollars in his paycheck. In his own words, he was “forced to support a government union as a condition of employment” and argues: “This is a gross violation of my First Amendment rights to free speech and freedom of association. ... What is unfair and unconstitutional is forcing me and millions of other American workers to pay to advance policies we oppose.” (Chicago Sun-Times, June 24)

But the only “policies” these fees can legally pay for are better pay, benefits, working conditions, and fair treatment on the job.

Violation of workers' rights

The high court's outrageous ruling has deemed it a First Amendment violation for the state of Illinois to make Janus pay the union that negotiated his \$70,000-a-year salary and benefits.

As AFSCME explained before the decision, “If fair share fees are struck down, employees who benefit from the gains that the union makes will not have to pay anything toward the cost of that representation. If the billionaires and corporate CEOs behind this case get their way, they will take away the freedom of working people to come together and build power to fight for the things our families and communities need: everything from affordable health care and retirement security to quicker medical emergency response times.” (AFSCME.org)

Studies show that when workers have unions, the inequality gap between women and workers of color — including large numbers of public sector workers — is reduced compared to white male workers. Is this the “speech” that Janus and his well-funded backers object to?

Had Janus lost the case, he still would not be out of pocket even a penny. The Chicago-based Liberty Justice Center and the National Right to Work Legal and Defense Foundation represented Janus pro bono. The latter, a tax-exempt nonprofit, is the legal arm of the National Right to Work Committee. Founded in 1955, its first president was former Congressman Fred Hartley, co-sponsor of the notorious union-busting Taft-Hartley Act. Other officers were leaders in the John Birch Society. Current funders include prominent right-wing donors such as the Koch brothers, the Bradley Foundation, the Coors Family and Walmart.

Not a death sentence for labor!

AFSCME and other government unions are rightly worried that the loss of agency fee income will push them into a major financial crunch, limiting their ability to adequately represent members. But unions aren't throwing in the towel.

While SCOTUS has dealt organized labor a heavy blow, the surge of education worker strikes — many of them illegal — has demonstrated the resilience of those workers already in a compulsory open shop. These strikes have all been in states that ban agency shops — that can represent workers in the public sector — as well as banning union shops — where union membership is a condition of employment — in the private sector. Some of these states even bar public workers from collective bargaining.

The victories gained since the education workers' strike wave began in West Virginia have been of major significance. Some have gone beyond typical bargaining issues such as pay, benefits and seniority. Strikes have pushed back the expansion of charter schools and Teach for America and have boosted school funding.

When workers are presented with this evidence of struggle and victory, it may not be hard to win over those not currently union members to the need to join a union.

For public and private sector workers alike, the union is their first line of defense when faced with aggressive, anti-worker bosses and their friends in high places — including the highest court in the land.

An immediate response to the Janus ruling came from the United Electrical workers union: “Public workers will continue to organize and defend our rights to decent living and work standards despite court decisions and laws forbidding ‘fair share’ fees.”

The UE statement continued: “Vocal and militant actions by UE public-sector members and locals around the ‘right to work’ South show the possibilities available to public workers to continue to defend and improve their working lives.” (ueunion.org) Numerous other union statements are echoing this optimism.

Narrow business unionism and class collaborationism could be casualties of Janus if unions are given no choice but to return to class struggle unionism of past decades. That's what it took to win the right to organize in the first place.

This week the Supreme Court also upheld Trump's xenophobic, Islamophobic immigration ban and undermined reproductive rights. Earlier this month the court allowed businesses to discriminate against the LGBTQ community under the cover of religion.

A united, militant mass movement can turn back Janus and all of these temporary setbacks.

Grevatt is a 30-year United Auto Worker Fiat Chrysler worker and serves on the executive board of UAW Local 869.

The Professional Staff Congress-City University of New York called a “day-of” demonstration in New York's Foley Square to protest the anti-worker Janus decision by the U.S. Supreme Court on June 27. The PSC-CUNY, supported by many other public service and private unions in NYC, including the Hotel Trades Council (also pictured here), expressed their commitment to public sector unionism by picketing outside the federal and state courts. Teachers and school workers, on their first day of vaca-

tion, brought family members in support.

The 500-strong picket included private sector unions, among them Communications Workers Local 1180, Laborers and other building trade workers fresh from a #CountMeIn march; Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union; Taxi Workers Alliance; Union of Clerical, Administrative and Technical Staff; and graduate workers from private universities represented by the United Auto Workers, plus writers, actors and stagehands from the Broadway theater industry.

— Report by Sara Catalinotto

Labor in motion against ICE

By Sara Catalinotto

The terrorist tactics of Immigration and Customs Enforcement come from the top, but can be disrupted in the workplace, especially if unions put muscle into the fight against raids and deportations. Recent examples are presented below, by industry, to get readers thinking about what more can be done.

Transportation

Flight attendant Hunt Palmquist announced via the Houston Chronicle on June 19 that after witnessing ICE agents taking migrant children to “relocation” in Texas by plane, he decided to never work another flight that separates families. Palmquist vowed to “immediately remove myself from the trip due to the nature of this unconscionable act by my government, and my employer's complicity.” He added, “I have told my story to many of my flight attendant colleagues and they have pledged to do the same.”

The next morning, major U.S. airlines — American, United and Frontier — each released statements and tweets distancing themselves from the practice. American Airlines “requested the federal government to immediately refrain” from using its planes to transport separated children. Were they afraid of “optics” or of a job action by their unionized workforces?

Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1700 represents Greyhound bus drivers. The local shares articles such as “Greyhound Should Just Say No to the Border Patrol's Bus Sweeps” on its social media.

Technology

On June 19, Microsoft workers put out an open letter against the corporation's \$19.4-million cloud computing contract with ICE, saying, “As the people who build the technologies that Microsoft profits from, we refuse to be complicit.” By the middle of June 21, there were 300 employee signatures. Coverage of this incident said various employees were considering leaving the company. (tinyurl.com/yc9fvfwy)

Food industry

After ICE attacked and detained 140 of 2,800 workers represented by the Retail

Warehouse and Department Store Union on June 19 at Ohio Fresh Mark plants, the national union funded legal and financial aid for the family members of those workers.

“Our union will not stand for violence against immigrants; we will not stand for tearing families apart; and we will not stand for the terrifying tactics of the Trump administration. The RWDSU is committed to assisting workers affected by this ICE raid and will continue to fight against any and all heartless attacks on immigrant workers seeking to provide for their families,” said Stuart Appelbaum, RWDSU president.

The plants had recently been denounced for Occupational Safety and Health violations. (tinyurl.com/y9hrhe6p)

Building trades

Painters Local 456 launched Alianza Laboral Worker Resource Center in the southeast Nashville, Tenn., Latinx community, to reach im/migrant workers who otherwise face abusive tactics like wage theft. Among the workplace hazards about which the center holds trainings are ICE raids. According to organizer Rosa Ponce, employers can deny entrance to agents lacking a warrant,

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PHOTO: NATIONAL NURSES UNITED

Outraged nurses march against border detention facilities in El Paso, Texas, on June 19.

On the picket line

By Sue Davis

Hundreds of LA caregivers march for higher wages

Hundreds of in-home care workers marched through downtown Los Angeles June 26 to the County Board of Supervisors meeting to demand higher wages, at least a \$1/hour raise. The day before, the board had approved a \$31.4 billion budget without an increase for the 170,000 in-home supportive services (IHSS) workers, mostly older women of color, many of whom are im/migrants. The IHSS caregivers earn \$11.18 hourly and provide care — bathing, meals, transportation, tracking medications and household tasks — so that more than 206,000 seniors and people with disabilities can stay in their homes and live as independently as possible.

Large groups of caregivers, members of Service Employees Local 2015, packed the boardroom June 26, wearing vivid purple T-shirts with the union logo. One IHSS worker, who cares for an 84-year-old woman who can't walk on her own, challenged the board: "I just want to invite you — all the supervisors — to come and work a day in our shoes. Then maybe you'll realize how much we need that raise." (mynews1a.com, June 26)

San Diego hotel workers demand better pay

Hundreds of hotel workers and supporters marched through downtown San Diego June 27 over a contract dispute and briefly blocked the driveway entrance of the Marriott Marquis on Harbor Drive. The demonstration was among many UNITE HERE held that day in cities across the country, including Los Angeles, San Francisco and Boston.

Marriott has 44 properties in San Diego County, with more than 11,000 hotel rooms. "We believe they need to set the standard for the best wages, the best benefits, and they don't," said Brigitte Browning, president of UH Local 30. Contracts have expired or are expiring for workers in the Marriott-owned Westin San Diego Gaslamp Quarter in Horton Plaza, and Local 30 representatives say the two sides are still far apart.

Among the marchers was Karen Betancourt, who has delivered room-service meals at a Marriott for four years. "We love our job," she said. "We love this property. We just want to make enough money to live here." Having to work two jobs to make ends meet, Betancourt is paid minimum wage supplemented by tips, but she doesn't get enough hours to qualify for health insurance.

"What we want is very simple," said Chris Guerra, who sets up tables at the Westin. "To work just one job and be able to own our houses. If they take care of us, we'll take care of them." (San Diego Union-Tribune, June 27)

UE Local 228 members arrested at 'People's Hearing' in N.H. state house

As part of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival, United Electrical Workers Local 228 members rallied in the New Hampshire state house in Concord on June 11 to demand a living wage and end "the assault on the rights of organized workers." (The state abolished its minimum wage in 2011.) Members of Local 228, who work at the National Visa Center in the U.S. Department of State, helped occupy the Governor's Executive Council Chamber and held a People's Hearing where workers aired their grievances and demanded redress. Local President Bill Ladd testified that the local had been able to boost workers' earnings substantially since its founding in 2016.

After state troopers announced at 5 p.m. that the building was closed, 10 Local 228 members continued to take testimony. When they refused to leave, they were arrested and charged with criminal trespassing. (Union Victories!!, June 15) But that didn't stop the local from protesting. On June 28 union members marched with the slogan "Janus won't stop us." (Facebook: UE Local 228)

Money for education, not for war, demands Chicago Teachers Union

Delegates in the Chicago Teachers Union unanimously passed a resolution June 6 titled "Unjust Wars of Aggression Leave All Children Behind." After noting that public schools in working-class communities and communities of color in Chicago and throughout the U.S. "are consistently underfunded" and the federal government could end that underfunding if education were a priority, the resolution states that Trump's budget increases military funding by \$80 billion and describes the many countries like Venezuela where the U.S. has a war agenda. The CTU wants the federal government "to renounce use of a nuclear or other pre-emptive strike on Iran, North Korea or any other country and to prioritize peace and social spending [instead of] military expansion and war-mongering." The resolution ends by proclaiming that "the Chicago Teachers Union will support and participate in mobilizations and other actions ... to stop a ramp-up to war" and will work for quality education for all students. □

The Laundromat Campaign Laundry Workers Center exposes workplace abuse

By Toni Arenstein and Mary Owen
New York City

The Laundry Workers Center launched a new campaign on June 28 against the exploitation, marginalization and unsafe working conditions of New York City's predominantly Latinx, immigrant laundromat workers, with a successful protest and walk-in at an East Harlem laundromat.

"The Laundromat Campaign is a multifaceted, women-led campaign to transform the retail laundromat industry for the better," states the center's website.

Joined by supporters and accompanied by the Rude Mechanical Orchestra, the LWC led a march of about 50 protesters through pouring rain and into a large laundromat on East 116th Street. There, laundromat workers spoke, the LWC presented the workers' demands — and the owner's son agreed they would abide by the law.

"For many years the employer has allegedly violated the rights of workers," read the LWC's campaign leaflet. "After nine months of organizing and training, the laundromat workers in Harlem have decided to stop exploitation and abuse in their workplace."

Employer violations include not paying the minimum wage or overtime, paying salaries monthly, making illegal salary deductions, discrimination, long hours with no breaks, failure to provide safety masks or gloves, and forcing workers to buy their own toilet paper.

The facts on working conditions

The successful action came just two days after the LWC issued its groundbreaking "Report on Working Conditions in the Retail Laundromat Industry: New York City 2018." The report is available online in English and Spanish at tinyurl.com/yd7dpx7.

Since 2012, the LWC has recovered \$2 million in back wages from unscrupulous employers. The center has organized migrant workers who face harassment, low pay, and unsafe, unhealthy workplace conditions. The LWC has fought for a New York and New Jersey minimum wage and other laws to uplift these low-wage workers.

The LWC's new report continues this effort, summarizing three years of work by trained LWC members and organizers who logged observations at 100 laundromats throughout New York City and administered 99 surveys about working conditions in English and Spanish to workers at 78 unique retail laundromats.

Who are the laundromat workers?

The LWC study found that "86 percent of surveyed workers identified as female. About one in ten (13 percent) identified as male and 1 percent identified as a different gender identity." Ninety-nine percent identified as people of color, including 74 percent who identified as Latinx and 17 percent who identified as Black. Seventy-nine percent are immigrants, and for 66 percent, Spanish is their primary language.

"We also found there are many Asian work-



PHOTO: ERIC MC GREGOR

ers," said LWC Organizing Coordinator Rosanna Rodriguez at the June 26 release of the report, hosted by the Worker Institute of Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations. She indicated the LWC would be looking to reach out to them as well.

A pattern of employer violations

LWC members gathered important information about where and how laundromat workers do their jobs by looking at the physical workplace (size and services offered) and evaluating workplace responsibilities (washing/drying/folding clothes, cleaning and customer service).

They also documented apparent employer wage-and-hour violations. Seventy-seven percent of surveyed workers work more than 30 hours per week. Yet 1 in 5 who reported an hourly wage make only \$10 per hour or less (a violation of New York state's minimum wage law), with only 3 percent earning more than \$12 per hour.

Thirty-six percent of surveyed workers indicated they were underpaid, or not paid at all, for overtime work. Thirty-one percent said they received neither sick time nor other time off, 15 percent reported they are not allowed to take breaks, and 78 percent said there was no breakroom.

Harassment and other hazards

"Our research finds that laundromat workers are subjected to high levels of harassment, with more than half of workers (54 percent) reporting some form of harassment," the report states.

The majority of workers (86 percent) identified customers as the source of the offensive conduct, which is not uncommon in other service industries. That includes insults or put-downs (44 percent), racial slurs (25 percent), offensive jokes (23 percent), threats or intimidation (16 percent), physical assaults and sexual harassment (6 percent) or other harassing conduct (2 percent).

In addition, 99 percent of workers reported exposure to at least one workplace hazard such as bleach and other chemicals, soiled clothing, repetitive movements, heavy lifting, and slippery or hazardous floors. As a result, respondents reported work-related muscle pain (54 percent), allergies (27 percent), skin conditions (21 percent), emotional and mental health challenges (16 percent), respiratory problems (12 percent) and other issues (10 percent) such as bed bugs, cuts and burns, and hair falling out.

A call to action

"Laundromat workers know best what they need to create a safe, equitable work environment," says the Call to Action at the end of the LWC report.

Among recommendations for laundromat workers are safety and health training on workplace hazards, free employer-provided protective gear, workplace safety plans and violence prevention programs, and ergonomic workspaces to prevent physical injuries. Above all: Organizing! "In 1881, African-American laundresses organized a strike of 3,000 workers and won a wage increase, and we can organize the same way," said Rodriguez. □



PHOTO: ERIC MC GREGOR

Coast to coast protests demand Abolish ICE, re-unite families

Continued from page 1

demonstrations. In solidarity with migrant families, hundreds of groups mobilized and participated, including Workers World Party and the newly formed Fight for Im/migrants and Refugees Everywhere.

Here are highlights of demonstrations that WWP and FIRE joined.

A FIRE delegation, comprised of activists from many states, joined protests in Texas border towns to support im/migrant families. Hundreds of local residents joined the June 30 demonstration in the city of **McAllen**. It was the first protest for many, whom the migrant crisis motivated to participate in this intergenerational, multinational, multigendered action.

The day's action took place outside a U.S. Border Patrol station. ICE and the Department of Homeland Security dominate McAllen, the site of the U.S.'s largest detention center.

Youth organized and emceed the rally, and in the open mic session, welcomed FIRE speakers Richard Kossally, Gabby M., Lizz Toledo and John Parker. After they spoke, someone made a sign reading, "No one is illegal on stolen land!"

The delegation talked with local Brown Berets and Poor People's Campaign organizers. Many demonstrators signed FIRE's mailing list, some interested in establishing a FIRE chapter centered in McAllen.

— **Nat Heathman, Gabby M., John Parker, Lizz Toledo**

Two days earlier, 3,000 people joined a statewide demonstration in **Brownsville**, a border entry point, gathering across the street from the federal courthouse where detained migrants appear before judges. Signs called for ICE's abolition.

Activists from the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas along the Mexican border joined that protest, which was organized by the American Civil Liberties Union. Members of La Unión del Pueblo Entero (LUPE) formed a circle and passed around a microphone to discuss the issues.

People then marched around the courthouse. They tried to storm the courtroom to show solidarity with the migrants inside, but police only allowed a small delegation to enter.

— **Gloria Rubac**

In the **Greater Fort Worth** area, 500 people at the Tarrant County Courthouse

demanding justice for migrant families. Rally speakers called for ICE's abolition and the reuniting of families. After marching to the Fritz G. Lanham Federal Building, the crowd heard wrenching stories from people who had been harmed by ICE and by police cooperation with that inhumane agency.

The crowd greeted by phone a woman who, while unable to attend, wanted to tell her story:



McAllen, Texas

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

ICE separated her family. Demonstrators cheered her on, telling her that many people support her right to be in the U.S. and seek a better life for herself and her family.

— **Kent Allen Halliburton**

East Coast

Some 15,000 people marched in **Boston** to protest the criminal treatment of migrants. They rallied outside the JFK Federal Building, site of the immigration court. Mahtowin Munro of United American Indians of New England emphasized that no human being is illegal on stolen land. Other speakers represented the Student Immigrant Movement and the Matahari Women's Center.

Marchers to Boston Common chanted, "Abolish ICE!" There, a key speaker was Doris Landaverde, an organizer with Service Employees Local 32BJ and the Harvard Temporary Protected Status Coalition. Steelworkers Local 8751, Boston School Bus Drivers, and FIRE provided sound.

Cosecha and the Student Immigrant Movement rallied at Wellington Common Park. Afterwards, the crowd marched to the South Bay Detention Center, chanting, "P-O-L- I-C-E! ICE and cops are family!"

There, undocumented immigrants told their stories. The Justice4Siham campaign and FIRE Boston members spoke. Protesters chanted, "We see you!" to detainees, who banged their fists on the windows, waved and thanked the crowd.

Twenty activists from Cosecha, IfNotNow and other organizations were arrested for sitting on detention center steps.

— **Sam Ordóñez**

In **Buffalo, N.Y.**, hundreds of people went from the federal court building to the ICE detention center to demand the racist attacks stop. Students, community activists, retirees, local immigrant rights groups and labor unions participated.

— **Garrett Dicembre**

A muffled roar rumbled through the hot, empty streets of downtown **Syracuse, N.Y.**, as 500 people chanted, "Abolish ICE!" as they went from Perseverance Park to briefly block the doors of the local ICE office on Clinton Street. There, a banner was hoisted over the entrance reading: "ICE kidnaps migrants here! Abolish ICE!" After hearing speeches, people moved to block the garage entrance where ICE vans take away kidnapped migrants.



Syracuse, N.Y.

WW PHOTO: MINNIE BRUCE PRATT



Buffalo, N.Y.

WW PHOTO: ELLIE DORRITTE



Boston

PHOTO: HAROLD ROTHMAN

The multinational, multigenerational and multigendered crowd was organized by the Syracuse Immigrant and Refugee Defense Network in conjunction with the Workers' Center of Central New York, New York Immigration Coalition, Syracuse Peace Council, Palestine Solidarity Collective, Syracuse Child Care Collective, Syracuse Tenants United, Indivisible Syracuse, ISO-Syracuse, Democratic Socialists of America and others. Security was provided by Service Employees 1199 members and the New York Civil Liberties Union.

— **Minnie Bruce Pratt**

People finishing the service at the Episcopal Church of the Messiah in quiet **Rhinebeck, N.Y.**, joined others outside on the lawn. Over 200 people condemned the U.S. government's mistreatment of migrants, asylum seekers and their children.

In **Kingston**, a small city 100 miles north of New York, a few hundred people gathered on the City Hall lawn for a bilingual Spanish-English rally. A favorite placard slogan was "Nobody leaves Mid-Hudson!" which was also the defiant name of one of the organizing groups. Planned Parenthood was another key organizer.

— **John Catalinotto**

Over 100,000 people marched across the Brooklyn Bridge in **New York City**. WWP, FIRE and People's Power Assembly members marched with a left coalition of groups in the migrant movement, including the



Philadelphia

WW PHOTO: BEN CARROLL



Kingston, N.Y.

WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO



New York City

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL



Washington, D.C.

FIGHTING FOR IM/MIGRANTS & REFUGEES EVERYWHERE

FIRE: Live from the U.S./Mexico border

The FIRE delegation (Fight for Im/migrants and Refugees Everywhere) reported live from the U.S./Mexico border to a June 28 Workers World forum in New York City. WWP Secretariat members Sara Flounders and Monica Moorehead commented from NYC. This is a lightly edited transcript.

Sara Flounders: This is a moment of crisis for millions of migrants around the world — adults and children — forced to flee their homes because of poverty, violence and wars imposed by the U.S. and European imperialists. That's why we're launching a new national organization to amplify the struggle of migrants and refugees: FIRE — Fight for Im/migrants and Refugees Everywhere.

FIRE's goal is to connect all the issues that face workers here in the U.S., and build the greatest unity to create a broad movement that will take direct action against the horrific crimes of ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] and the Border Patrol.

A FIRE delegation of eleven activists is on the border tonight in Brownsville, Texas. Their goal is to mobilize activists, primarily young LGBTQ people of color and working-class organizers, to travel to the border, learn about the struggle there, do support actions and eyewitness tours, and then come back and help organize resistance.

Speaking live from the Border are FIRE delegation members Teresa Gutierrez from New York City, Gloria Rubac from Houston, John Parker from Los Angeles, Joe Piette and Steph Davies from Philadelphia, and Nat Heathman from Boston.

Gloria Rubac: Today, a few miles from the Mexican border, we participated in a demonstration, "Families Belong Together," in Brownsville at the very tip of the state. It was a huge demonstration, at least by Texas standards, with 1,000 people who came on buses from Houston, San Antonio, Austin, Dallas, Laredo, as well as people living here in the Rio Grande Valley.

The participants and the protest's sponsors were extremely diverse: United We Dream, the South Texas Civil Rights Project, the Children's Defense Fund, National Domestic Workers Alliance, Rio Grande Equal Voice Network, We Belong Together, Fuerza del Valle, Proyecto Azteca, La Unión del Pueblo Entero (LUPE) and the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] Border Rights Center.

Tonight our delegation is going to a vigil for Claudia Patricia Gómez Gonzáles, the Guatemalan Indigenous Maya-Mem woman who was murdered [May 23] by the Border Patrol. The vigil is in San Juan, about 4 miles from here. Tomorrow morning we're speaking at a community college to a class we were invited to.

Then Saturday, June 30, like everywhere, there will be demonstrations here — one in McAllen and one in Brownsville.

We hope to also take our delegation to the South Texas Human Rights Center in Falfurrias, where the Border Patrol has a checkpoint. When migrants cross the border, since they know where the checkpoint is, they go inland to go around. Every year probably hundreds of people die on the inland ranches because of the heat.

Until Houston activists opened this human rights center, the ranchers would find the dead, their bodies, their bones, throw them in a plastic trash bag, and then the county would put them in a cemetery, taking no information on what they were wearing, tattoos, whatever — and no DNA. We found out that was illegal, so now we have forced them to document, to take DNA. We are working with patholo-

gists and anthropologists from one of the universities to match the people with families, wherever they might be.

Families look forever to find out why they have not heard from their missing loved one — the person who has crossed the border. So this identification is important, even if the person has died.

John Parker: At today's rally a freelance journalist told me that this area of the Valley experiences some of the highest homelessness and unemployment. This is where some of the first maquiladoras [U.S.-owned, low-paying factories] started across the border in Mexico. There is a long history of repression here, and people are angry and fed up. There is a lot of humidity and heat in the air today, amplified by the heat of the rage of people fed up with the situation.

Shocking things are coming to light, things that happened in previous U.S. administrations. Folks are not going to be willing to have the same old solutions. There's a lot of talk about "we need to go vote" and sometimes organizers steer things in that direction. But a lot of people, including at this demonstration, won't accept that. People are calling for the abolition of ICE, but the Democrats are saying they are just going to "reform immigration." People aren't going to accept that.

I think one of the reasons our banner was so popular at the protest is that FIRE is making a militant call, including for the abolition of ICE.

People know the causes of migration and immigration are U.S. economic and military wars — in Central and South America, in Libya, Iraq, Syria — that these are causing the refugee crisis. And the border is tied to the attacks by police in the U.S. on Black and Brown people. In fact, one of the chants today was "No justice, no peace, no racist police!"

Nat Heathman: At the rally today, yes, there were a lot of liberals there, but also there were people with more militant politics. We can be proud of how we represented FIRE.

Steph Davies: It was an impressive crowd today and a very striking event. The

organizational leadership was definitely trying to keep things in a more liberal, moderate direction, with the speakers talking about voting. But once the momentum of the people built and the crowd had control of the situation, how powerful their politics were! It was a striking overture for FIRE's launch. It showed that conditions are in place for change because people want to abolish ICE, people want to prosecute the crimes that are being committed against migrants.

Joe Piette: Today, first there was a rally, and then the marchers lined up in twos and converged on the courthouse where deportation hearings were happening. The crowd surged to the doors, but the lead organizers urged them back. There is militancy here.

There were some workers' organizations, including the Fuerza del Valle and the Texas teachers' union. Evidently, last week they organized their own rally. It's an important development to have workers here.

Yesterday, a few of us protested during the execution of Danny Bible in Huntsville, Texas. [Ed.: Since 1976, Texas has executed more than one-third of the national total of prisoners victimized by capital punishment.]

Teresa Gutierrez: What FIRE aims to do is be the left flank of the movement supporting migrants who are under attack.

We don't want to leave the issue in the hands of liberals. We don't want to fight the liberals — they are doing important work, taking cases and saving lives. What we do want to do is influence the movement, and not have the movement's direction determined by liberal politics.

Some speakers today gave militant talks, about fighting back, taking it to the next level, and got great applause — but they also got great applause when they said, "Register to vote in the November elections."

But we know that there are tens to hundreds of thousands of people fed up with the Democratic Party machine, who know that the November elections are nothing to set their sights on, that Demo-

cratic President Obama was the deporter in chief, that the Democrats always sell out the struggle.

Here in the Valley is a conservative place, where it is hard to fight back, and the police are all over the place. FIRE came to a demonstration and people took our militant literature and talked to us. It really speaks to what people are ready for.

FIRE can be the left flank of this movement.

FIRE can expose what it means that a white supremacist, wannabe Nazi is at the head of the government. We are going to take that on.

FIRE needs to continue to push the momentum that exists for abolishing ICE and link this to abolishing the police. This would make a tremendous contribution to the class struggle.

FIRE should raise the death in ICE custody of Roxana Hernández, the trans sister who crossed the border in a caravan from Mexico, and link her case to that of Antwon Rose, the African-American youth who cops killed in Pittsburgh.

FIRE should equally push to close both the migrant detention centers and close U.S. prisons.

Monica Moorehead: This is such an important crisis that the international working class is facing. Trump as a white supremacist representative of the ruling class is attempting to divide the working class by targeting migrants. We must do everything we can to be the left flank of this movement, to show that independent fightback is the only way to fight the crisis and unite our class. To call for abolishing ICE along with the police, as part of the oppressive class apparatus, and also unite with the other people of color being targeted — Muslims, Black people, Indigenous people. We are all workers, fighting together. □

To contact FIRE:
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NY, 10011, or call **212.633.6646**. □



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

FIRE delegation with Eddie Camales of South Texas Human Rights Center (second from left) in Falfurrias, Tex., June 30.

Supreme Court: Fake abortion clinics have license to lie

By Sue Davis

June 26 — The Supreme Court today handed the well-funded, well-organized, reactionary, Christian, anti-abortion network a bouquet of red roses with its decision on California's Reproductive Freedom, Accountability, Comprehensive Care and Transparency (FACT) Act.

The court in a 5-4 ruling, written by Justice Clarence Thomas and supported by the other four conservative justices, affirmed the so-called First Amendment rights of "crisis pregnancy clinics" (CPCs) and gave them permission to continue lying to and emotionally bribing, manipulating and coercing mostly poor women, often women of color, to keep unplanned pregnancies.

The case, National Institute of Family and Life Advocates (NIFLA) vs. Becerra (California's attorney general), was brought in 2015 by NIFLA to defend approximately 200 such CPCs in the state of California. The state had then just passed a law that required the centers to make specific disclosures to their patients or in their advertising.

As part of the testimony the California legislature heard before formulating the law, women aired their many negative experiences at CPCs, and clinicians discussed problems imposed when pregnant women who want to have a child don't receive essential prenatal health care right away.

The law stipulated that centers licensed to provide medical services had to post notices to inform patients that they could obtain free or low-cost abortions by calling the phone number of the state agency that would connect them to state licensed abortion and reproductive health care providers. The unlicensed centers had to post 29-word disclaimers in advertisements — in some cases in up to 13 languages — that their services do not include medical help.

NIFLA argued that both requirements violate the First Amendment for licensed centers because requiring such information conflicts with their anti-abortion message and singles them out in a "gerrymandered" fashion. And for unlicensed centers because requiring such extensive disclosures would make it "almost impossible to spread their anti-abortion message."

According to a 2010 NARAL Pro-Choice California investigation of clinics in the state, 41 percent of counties did not have an abortion provider (that number



Women protest in Washington, D.C., on June 26.

is lower now), while 91 percent had at least one CPC. The majority of CPCs are located in rural areas, and those CPCs in urban areas tend to target primarily low-income women of color.

Of the centers investigated, 70 percent wrongly advised clients that abortion increases the risk of breast cancer, while 60 percent incorrectly claimed that condoms are ineffective in reducing pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. (Rewire.News, March 20)

Concluding that both kinds of CPCs "are likely to succeed on the merits of their claim that the FACT Act violates the First Amendment," the Supreme Court reversed the 9th Circuit Court's ruling in favor of California and sent the case back to lower courts for new proceedings in light of today's ruling. A vigorous defense and new tactics to fight back are definitely in order.

Minority opinion affirms: Women need 'informed consent'

Justice Stephen Breyer wrote the dissenting opinion, joined by the three liberal justices, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan. Breyer contended that both requirements for notices would pass constitutional muster. As for the licensed centers, he argued that if a state can require a licensed clinician to notify a woman seeking an abortion about adoption as an alternate option, why can't the state also require a pregnancy center to tell a woman about abortion?

As Breyer summarized in his dissent: "[W]hat is sauce for the goose is normally sauce for the gander." With that, he was arguing for "informed consent," a long-time requirement for women's health care services, which originated with the publication of "Our Bodies, Ourselves" in the early 1970s.

As for unlicensed centers, he said it was "self-evident that patients might think

they are receiving qualified medical care when they enter facilities that collect health information, perform obstetric ultrasound or sonograms, diagnose pregnancy and provide counseling about pregnancy options or other prenatal care." Breyer noted the requirement that unlicensed facilities provide disclosures in multiple languages would not be unconstitutional or impose an "undue burden"

when only two languages — English and Spanish — would be required in "the vast majority of California's 58 counties."

History of 'crisis pregnancy centers'

Even before the Supreme Court legalized abortion with the Roe v. Wade decision in 1973, evangelical Christians and Catholics opposed to abortion began "sidewalk counseling" outside clinics to dissuade women from having abortions. When that wasn't effective, abortion adversaries began setting up fake clinics near hospitals and licensed health clinics (to confuse potential clients) and in poor Black and Brown neighborhoods.

Many women, desperate for convenient, low-cost health care, do not know the difference between a CPC and a licensed abortion clinic. Some CPCs offer free pregnancy tests and ultrasounds, while staff dress in scrubs and provide individual counseling. Clients receive false information like having an abortion could prevent them from having a later pregnancy, that it causes breast cancer or may lead to suicide. One woman told HuffPost that she was grilled about her sex life, including when she lost her virginity, and she came away feeling ashamed and ridiculed.

Today there are about 2,700 CPCs in the U.S., compared with about 800 reproductive health care clinics that provide abortions as well as cancer screenings and other routine gynecological care. There are also women's clinics that provide routine reproductive health care and basic check-ups, but not abortions.

In some states such as Texas and North Carolina, fake clinics receive state funding. A May 24 Rewire.News article reported that fake clinics in Texas outnumber abortion providers 10 to 1 and 50 have been receiving state funding since 2005. An April 26 article in Rewire.News detailed that the North Carolina legis-

lature has (illegally) directed \$400,000 annually for the current year and the next from its federal Maternal and Child Health block grant to the Carolina Pregnancy Care Fellowship, an umbrella group of "faith-based" centers, which according to their bylaws are expected to abide by "biblical principles."

Linking struggles is needed now

A number of news sources have noted that this conservative 5-4 ruling, like others issued this spring, would not have happened if the Republican-controlled Senate had not refused to consider President Obama's liberal nominee, Merrick Garland, to replace archconservative Justice Scalia who died in February 2016.

Instead the racist, sexist, white supremacist reactionary in the Oval Office was able to appoint anti-worker, anti-people-of-color, anti-women, anti-LGBTQ Neil Gorsuch to the court, who has indeed done the Trump administration's right-wing bidding in case after case this spring.

But the conclusion to draw from this is not to feel depressed or defeated by this series of court-imposed losses for the 99%, but to be mindful that the Trump administration functions at the bidding of the 1% — the ruling class made up of bankers and corporate magnates who are pulling his strings. That's how patriarchal capitalism functions.

And the ruling class is oblivious to, in fact ignorant of, the dialectical materialist law that repression sparks resistance.

As the broad anti-people Trump agenda continues to be revealed — from white supremacist rage and murder in Charlottesville last summer to today's merciless, heartless catastrophe of immigrant family separation at the border — the peoples' movement has now been emboldened to take to the streets all over this country and the world in resistance.

In the past few years reproductive justice advocates have become bolder and more vocal and visible as they have become Blacker and Browner. Protecting and promoting families is one of the core human rights at the heart of the reproductive justice movement. Now is the time to link arms in resistance with allies in the struggle to counter our common enemy and defend the human rights of all working and oppressed people.

Davis is a longtime reproductive justice activist and author of the pro-choice novel "Love Means Second Chances."

Star player: 'U.S. soccer is a rich white-kid sport'

By Monica Moorehead

Hope Solo is a former goalkeeper for the U.S. women's national soccer team, a two-time Olympic gold medalist and a World Cup soccer champion. Solo is also white. So when she spoke, at a Hashtags sports conference in New York City on June 28, on why the U.S. soccer team did not qualify for the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia, her answer shocked many.

She stated that U.S. soccer is a "rich, white-kid sport." Then she explained: "We have alienated the Hispanic communities. We have alienated our Black communities. We have alienated the underrepresented communities, even rural communities. ... No wonder why we are not qualifying for the World Cup when

we have alienated a huge population of really talented youth soccer players." (sportingnews.com)

This is not the first time that Solo has spoken about inequality in her sport. When she attempted a bid for the presidency of the United States Soccer Federation earlier this year, Solo accused the eventual winner of the election, Carlos Cordeiro, of not promoting pay parity between female and male soccer players.

She said, "He was part of a federation that generated millions of dollars off the backs of its players, and much of it off the back of its women's players, who have been the economic engine of this federation for years, yet [we were] treated like second-class citizens." (sportingnews.com)

When she and her teammates brought a wage discrimination lawsuit to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission against U.S. Soccer two years ago, Solo said of the women's team, "We are the best in the world, have three World Cup championships, four Olympic championships." Yet, the men "get paid more to just show up than we get paid to win major championships." (The Nation, April 5, 2016)

Solo's recent comments struck a nerve by exposing the racist, elitist nature of U.S. soccer. Within the U.S., discrimination rules in the world's most popular sport, while winning



Hope Solo (second from left) celebrates a victory with teammates on the U.S. women's national soccer team.

teams from around the world are comprised of talented players from so many oppressed countries and nations. □

Rights groups resist as Court upholds biased ‘Muslim ban’

By John Catalinotto

During its last sessions, the U.S. Supreme Court exposed its reactionary bias by deciding against workers, women and the Muslim religion. The court’s majority tried to cover this up with constitutional verbiage, but even its own minority answered this fraud. Justice Sonia Sotomayor’s dissent skewered the decision upholding the president’s “Muslim ban” of March 6, 2017.

The Islamophobic ban, which had been shot down by a federal judge in Hawai’i last year, is what led to this judgment. It bars entry into the U.S. by citizens of Iran, Somalia, Yemen, Syria and Libya. All these countries have a large majority of Muslim citizens. They are also countries where hostile U.S. policies and outright wars have created conditions forcing people to leave.

The order also bars entry to citizens of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and some Venezuelans who support the independence of their country from U.S. domination. While there is little doubt that Washington is also hostile to these individuals, they were included in the same travel ban as camouflage.

What Sotomayor argued, and was joined by Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, was that during his election campaign and throughout his time in office, Donald Trump has ranted against Muslim people at every opportunity, thus exposing his bias against that religion. She also tore apart the majority’s attempt to disguise the ban as necessary for “national security.”

“Ultimately,” Sotomayor wrote, “what began as a policy explicitly ‘calling for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States’ has since morphed into a ‘Proclamation’ putatively based on national-security concerns. But this new window dressing cannot conceal an unassailable fact: the words of the president and his advisers create the strong perception that the proclamation

is contaminated by impermissible discriminatory animus against Islam and its followers.”

There’s no doubt that this presidential order is one more wave in a torrent of repression and terror against all immigrants unleashed by the xenophobic president. Meanwhile, Democratic Party leaders are doing nothing to stop him. And now SCOTUS has again exposed itself as an enemy of the people. This is a joint ruling-class attempt to divide the working class on race and religious lines in order to weaken its struggle against exploitation and oppression.

Islamic organizations ready to resist

So far, organizations defending the rights of Muslims in the U.S. have reacted not with despair but with a call to struggle. More important, they are joining with migrants and others under attack from the administration.

Omar Jadwat, director of the Immigrants’ Rights Project of the American Civil Liberties Union, said: “It is ultimately the people of this country who will determine its character and future. The court failed today, and so the public is needed more than ever. We must make it crystal clear to our elected representatives: If you are not taking action to rescind and dismantle Trump’s Muslim ban, you are not upholding this country’s most basic principles of freedom and equality.” (Fresno Bee, June 29)

Basim Elkarra, director of the Council of American-Islamic Relations—California Sacramento Valley/Central California, said: “The Trump administration has an anti-family agenda — and the Supreme Court just endorsed it. This ban has already caused tremendous suffering for countless families and entire communities. By upholding it, the justices are keeping spouses apart from each other and separating children from their parents. ...

“The Muslim ban is part of President Trump’s larger, un-American war on immigrant families, including his adminis-



Protest of anti-Muslim travel ban decision at the U.S. Supreme Court, June 26.

tration’s inhumane separation of children and parents at the border. We will continue organizing, mobilizing and defending Muslim communities from bigoted policies — whether they are endorsed by the Supreme Court or not.”

Need for solidarity

CAIR joined with those protesting the government’s immigration policies on June 30 while pressing their own demands. Many of the existing pro-migrant-rights groups recognize the attack on Muslims as part of the attack on all migrants. Many of the signs carried by the June 30 marchers brought up the need to defend Muslim rights and strike down the ban.

This attitude of solidarity could also be seen among the descendants of World

War II internment of Japanese people by the U.S. government, which also used the pretext of “national security.” In an act scaling the pinnacle of hypocrisy, SCOTUS reversed the 1944 U.S. v. Korematsu court decision that upheld the internment of people of Japanese origin.

Karen Korematsu, the daughter of the Japanese-American man named in the 1944 case, said, “For the Supreme Court to overrule my father’s Supreme Court case in this way, I feel like, dishonors him and all the civil rights work he did over the years.” (Time magazine, June 28)

The administration and the Supreme Court have taken brutal steps to oppress migrants, but the reaction of the people shows that these steps have aroused attention to the growing need to build solidarity with those targeted. □

Labor in motion against ICE

Continued from page 4

“but the general contractor is not going to refuse to let ICE in unless we’re organizing and having these conversations with the boss.” (tinyurl.com/yagax6ds)

Health care

National Nurses United members have bolstered rallies against ICE/private prison collusion, notably at Texas marches to border detention centers. Bonnie Castillo of NNU covers these actions in medium.com.

Castillo cites NNU board member Martese Chism, who went from Chicago to protest in El Paso, saying, “I felt compelled to come here ... because today is June 19, the day that Texas freed the slaves, and so I’m here to tell [our government] to do the right thing and free the children.”

Castillo adds that “NNU’s RN Response Network disaster relief program — for volunteers to be on standby for providing first aid to detained immigrant children and families — netted over 900 sign-ups in just a few days.”



From the pages of Workers World newspaper

Learn more. Available online without charge. Find it at: workers.org/books

WW SUPPORTER PROGRAM

Continue defense of Cuban Revolution

On July 26, 1953, Cuban revolutionaries stormed the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba, Cuba. Less than six years later, Fidel and his guerrillas ousted the U.S.-backed dictatorship, marching into Havana in early January 1959.

That same year, Workers World newspaper began to publish. After more than a decade of anti-communist reaction in the U.S., the Cuban Revolution helped revive interest in revolutionary socialism. The more outrageous the anti-Cuba propaganda in the corporate press, the harder Workers World has worked to tell the truth about this great victory over U.S. imperialism.

In 1961, when the U.S. announced that it was breaking diplomatic relations with Cuba, WW’s first editor, Vince Copeland, led a protest inside the United Nations, his booming voice proclaiming the U.S. “speaks for the bankers, not the people.”

In the early 1990s, Cuba endured great economic hardships after the Soviet Union fell and the U.S. tightened its blockade. Workers World helped build the Peace for Cuba International Appeal to end the blockade, the travel ban and all intervention against Cuba.

Despite the choking blockade, the Cuban Revolution only grows stronger and

more respected as it sends life-saving medical teams all over the world. As the Trump administration increases its hostility to the socialist country, Workers World remains dedicated to defending revolutionary Cuba. Donations from WW supporters have helped get our pro-Cuba writings in print, distributed and posted at workers.org.

We invite you to join the 41-year-old WW Supporter Program to help us continue to publish articles in solidarity with workers and oppressed peoples worldwide and in opposition to U.S. wars. The newspaper is a source of anti-racist, anti-sexist, pro-LGBTQ news and working-class truth, while it supports immigrants, opposes Islamophobia and helps build pro-socialist campaigns.

To join, 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 at workers.org/donate/. Supporters who contribute \$75 a year receive a year’s subscription, a monthly letter and five free subscriptions. Sponsors who contribute \$100 also get a book published by World View Forum. Sustainers who contribute \$300 or more receive five books. Thanks for your help in building the revolutionary press in the U.S. □

These union nurses are alerting the medical field that the trauma of separation, on top of war and violence experienced in home countries and during the journey to these borders, is a long-term public health crisis. (tinyurl.com/ycf7djhx)

Labor-community organizing

Many Fight for \$15 formations and unions — International Longshore Association, Service Employees International Union 1199 Healthcare Workers and 32BJ SEIU, for instance — are engaged with the new Poor People’s Campaign, which marched on Washington on June 23. Speakers there added the crimes of ICE to their list of injustices that Martin Luther King Jr. called out 50 years ago: racism, capitalism and militarism. Twitter footage of the march that day shows working-class crowds chanting, “Rise up my people, my condors and eagles! No human being will ever be illegal!” Condors and eagles refer to the Indigenous cultures of South, Central and North America.

The fact that working people — in industries capable of servicing ICE logistically, industries which employ many migrants and others — are openly opposing the racist “zero tolerance” program provides hope that we can ultimately organize to withhold our labor on a mass scale and stop ICE.

Catalinotto is a member of the Workers World Party Labor Fraction.

WORKERS WORLD editorials

An upset for the establishment

When Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez won the Democratic Party primary vote in a district covering parts of Queens and the Bronx, N.Y., which is usually considered a shoo-in for Democrats in the upcoming general election, it was a wake-up call — in many ways.

Ocasio-Cortez, a 28-year-old teacher of Puerto Rican heritage, describes herself as a “democratic socialist.” She told an interviewer before the vote: “I’m a candidate that doesn’t take corporate money, that champions Medicare for all, a federal jobs guarantee, the abolishment of ICE, and a green New Deal.” She has also spoken out strongly against Israel’s oppression of the Palestinians.

Her opponent was Joe Crowley, a buddy of rich donors, chair of the House Democratic Caucus and the Queens Democratic Party, who had been routinely elected to the House every two years since 1998.

So this was an amazing upset in a district nailed down for decades by the Democratic Party establishment.

What will happen next? If she makes it into the House, which seems taken for granted now — although we should remember “It’s never over ‘til it’s over” — Ocasio-Cortez will have the opportunity to really shake things up. No one in the House or the Senate, including Bernie Sanders, had called for abolishing Immigration and Customs Enforcement before she won the primary. None took a strong stand in defense of Palestine, even after the recent massacre in Gaza.

She will also face the intransigence of a party that speaks in the name of the people, but is as much a creature of the billionaire ruling class as the Republicans are.

She will have to be a brave person in a den of thieves.

We cannot predict how all this will

play out. But one thing is clear: The people who voted for her want a big change, and they’re not at all afraid of the word “socialist.”

They are confirming what polls have shown for quite a few years now, but the corporate media have studiously avoided mentioning: More people in the U.S. have been telling pollsters that they favor socialism than prefer capitalism. That is a huge change from the past.

Capitalism has become a dirty word for many as this economy turns millionaires into billionaires and workers into paupers.

Generally, “democratic socialists” do not prepare the people for revolutionary struggle, the kind that would truly break the capitalist rulers’ hold over the wealth of society and the means of production. Whether here or in Europe, they spread illusions that real change can come through the “democratic process” — even though that process is overwhelmingly bought and paid for by the ruling class, and has all kinds of tricks to disenfranchise the workers, especially those most oppressed.

But history has shown that to reach the point of really being ready to chuck the system onto the garbage heap of history, the mass of people need to see with their own eyes that there is no easy way to do it — that it takes organization, mobilization and revolutionary leadership.

If Ocasio-Cortez is able to stick to her program once she’s surrounded by the slick compromisers in Congress, she could help show people that capitalism always works to corrupt the political process supposedly “of the people, by the people and for the people.” She could be part of the process of people understanding why they need to mobilize independently of the system’s political machinery. □

Rep. Waters, the Democrats and white supremacy

Continued from page 2

widespread media coverage, and left no doubt about whom he was criticizing.

Not one of these “leaders” — not even “socialist” Bernie Sanders — denounced Trump for his white supremacist response or threat against Rep. Waters. And none of them have denounced the death threats against her. In contrast, members of the Congressional Black Caucus have rallied around her.

The Democratic leaders are signaling to the corporate class that, though the party may try to appeal to people of color by occasionally mouthing the right words, it is really a party of and for capitalism. The Party leaders are saying they will reject any sign of genuine militancy in the workers’ struggle, the Black struggle or the struggle for migrant rights.

For Pelosi and Schumer it was more important to placate the capitalist class than to call out Trump’s white suprema-

cy. As for Sanders, he has previously taken positions that have disappointed his followers, but this is a striking cave-in. He has chosen not to close ranks with an important, leading Black congressperson who is being subjected to a racist attack. Instead, he’s asking for acceptance from a party leadership that has sabotaged and ignored him.

In fact, the Democrats’ “fear of socialism” was in clear evidence when Pelosi stated there is no “ascendant socialism” in the Democratic Party after the astounding primary victory of democratic socialist Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez in the 14th Congressional District in New York City.

The Democratic leadership will try to stifle the fightback that Maxine Waters expresses and that many of Sanders’ supporters aspire to as well. Their treatment of Rep. Waters and their inaction against Trump’s white supremacy reveal their true character. □

Supreme Court: Myths and reality

Every kid who attends school in the United States is taught that the Supreme Court is one of the pillars of democracy, part of the system of “checks and balances” regulating the presidency and Congress.

Trouble is, like the racist fable of the “first Thanksgiving,” it’s pure myth.

In reality, the Supreme Court is a supremely undemocratic institution — its unelected members appointed for life, tasked with defending the interests of the minuscule class of big capitalist owners of high finance and industry from any challenge to their rule over the vast majority.

The U.S. Supreme Court has been doing its job with a vengeance lately. In the last week of June, it upheld Donald Trump’s racist ban on travel from five Muslim-majority and two anti-imperialist countries, Venezuela and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. It gave its blessing to anti-abortion “counseling services” posing as reproductive rights clinics which lie to women. And it sided with bosses in the Janus case, striking a heavy blow against public employee unions and the whole labor movement.

At the end of the court’s term on June 27, longtime Justice Anthony Kennedy announced his imminent retirement, thus opening the court for a replacement while Republicans have a majority of both houses of Congress. Coming after the string of attacks on workers and oppressed people, Kennedy’s announcement deeply alarmed many progressives, who fear Trump’s next pick will give the Supreme Court an unbeatable ultra-right majority.

Kennedy seems an unlikely object for progressive mourning. A Reagan appointee, he put forth right-wing, racist and anti-worker positions over the years. As the Supreme Court and the U.S. political establishment shifted dramatically to the right after his 1988 appointment, Kennedy at times appeared more moderate, compared to the ultra-right headed by Chief Justice John Roberts. But though

he sided with the more liberal wing of the court in defending baseline reproductive rights and upholding the right of same-sex marriage, Kennedy continued to help whittle away at people’s basic rights on many fronts.

The panic accompanying Kennedy’s retirement shows a fundamental misunderstanding of the court and its role as an institution defending the capitalist system and the billionaire ruling class.

Ultimately, it’s not who sits on the court that matters most. It’s the state of the class struggle.

When the workers and oppressed are on the move and fighting back, the Supreme Court can be forced to grant concessions — sometimes substantial ones — regardless of who sits on it.

That was the case when the court, faced with a rising fightback movement of African-American people, ordered desegregation of schools in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, during the depths of the Cold War anti-communism.

In 1973, a Supreme Court stacked with reactionary Republican appointees was forced to recognize women’s right to choose in the historic *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion. That victory was won by the rising women’s liberation movement and its allies in the Black, Puerto Rican, Chicano, LGBTQ, anti-war and other movements.

Many workers and oppressed people are understandably worried by the prospect of a Trump Supreme Court appointment. But history shows that the answer is not panic, or desperate pleading with Democrats to bargain for a “lesser-evil” reactionary appointee acceptable to all ruling-class factions.

The answer is to build a militant, independent struggle to defend im/migrants, the movement for Black Lives, women’s and LGBTQ people’s rights, and the rights of all workers.

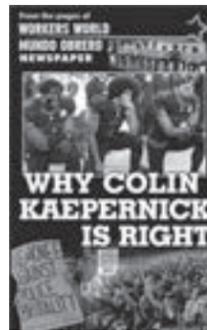
Or as labor martyr Joe Hill — a victim of the Utah version of the Supreme Court — told fellow workers before his execution in 1915: “Don’t mourn — organize!” □

Learn more. Available online at: www.workers.org/books

WHY COLIN KAEPERNICK IS RIGHT

Articles from Workers World/Mundo Obrero

Excerpt: ‘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.”’



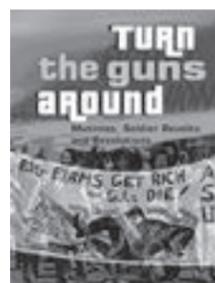
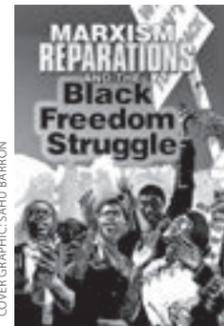
MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper.

Edited by Monica Moorehead. Includes:

Racism, National Oppression & Self-Determination • Black Labor from Chattel Slavery to Wage Slavery • Black Youth: Repression & Resistance • The Struggle for Socialism Is Key • Domestic Workers Demand a Bill of Rights • Black & Brown Unity • Harriet Tubman, Woman Warrior • Alabama’s Black Belt: • The 1965 Watts Rebellion

Available at major online booksellers.



Turn the Guns Around John Catalinotto Mutinies, Soldier Revolts and Revolutions

Weaving together GI letters, interviews and first-hand narratives with historical research, the author brings to life GI resistance in the Vietnam War era, shows its relation to capitalist state power and highlights why breaking the military chain of command is an essential step to ending oppression around the globe.

Available at online booksellers

Abolish ICE, re-unite families

Continued from page 6

the International Action Center and the Party for Socialism and Liberation.

Protesters called for an end to family detention. For many years, there has been a struggle to close the Berks County Detention Center, located 70 miles outside Philadelphia.

Speakers expressed solidarity with the struggles of immigrants and refugees worldwide, including the Palestinian people. One speaker received an enthusiastic response when explaining that U.S. imperialism causes migration and displacement. Many speakers stressed that building a fighting movement is the way to win justice. After the rally, hundreds of people marched to the regional ICE office.

— Ben Carroll

South

Some 7,000 people converged on downtown **Raleigh, N.C.**, to march and rally. Co-hosting organizations included El Pueblo Inc. and North Carolina Asian Americans Together.

Speaker Eva Panjwani, who mentioned FIRE, denounced the racist, classist rhetoric used to dehumanize immigrants and stressed that U.S. imperialism causes people to leave their homelands. At the front of the march, the WWP contingent's banner read: "Abolish POLICE! End Border Militarization #ChingaLaMigra!" The protest ended at Bicentennial Plaza outside the North Carolina General Assembly.

Martha Hernández, a Latinx mother, immigrant and beloved community organizer with Comité de Acción Popular, condemned ICE and police department collaboration, citing the 287(g) delegated authority program implemented in Wake County. Hernández emphasized the importance of working-class unity to combat the "cimmigration" system and capitalism.

— Myles Flowers

An Immigrants Rights Vigil was held in First Ward Park in **Charlotte, N.C.**, to condemn U.S. immigration policy. Indivisible Charlotte, Action NC, Comunidad Colectiva, Charlotte DSA, the Latin American Coalition, Shining Stars Academy and the Coalition for Cultural Compassion planned the event.

Speakers condemned Trump's family separation policy and migrant detention camps, and some called for abolishing ICE and demilitarizing the border.

Imam Yahya Ederer, representing the Muslim Community Center of Charlotte, condemned the U.S.'s genocidal history: "This country was founded on class warfare and racism. ... Natives that lived here were genocidally taken out by white Europeans. ... We can change the future."

State Congressperson Alma Adams compared migrants in detention centers to Nazi concentration camp prisoners. She recited Martin Niemöller's words about the Nazis targeting group after group until he himself was detained.

— Enzo Niebuhr

Several thousand people descended on **Atlanta's** City Detention Center in solidarity with detained immigrants, some of whom looked out from their cells through small slits.

Atlanta



PHOTO: STEVE EBERHARDT

Then the crowd, which stretched for blocks, marched through the city. Calls rang out to abolish ICE and unite families. At the Richard B. Russell and Martin Luther King Jr. federal buildings, speakers included Latinx and Muslim activists keen on uniting their struggles.

Returning to the detention center, a dedicated group of protesters established an encampment outside. To many, the ACDC is a testament to the brutality of U.S. immigration practices. In 2017, Atul Kumar Babubhai Patel, a detainee there, died after gross medical neglect.

Many participating organizations demonstrated earlier in the week to denounce the Supreme Court's ruling upholding the anti-Muslim travel ban and to oppose inhumane treatment of migrants.

— Workers World Atlanta bureau

Midwest

Over 2,000 people demonstrated in downtown **Cleveland** on the national day for im/migrant rights called by Families Belong Together.

There have been two major workplace raids in northeast Ohio during the current wave of ICE terror. One of the raids was conducted on Corso's Flower and Garden Center in Sandusky where ICE dragged away 114 workers.

A number of children whose parents were arrested at work and detained spoke at the rally of the fight to release them. To show solidarity with the families, twitter #LosNinosDeCorses.

— Susan Schnur

Multiple actions took place in **Chicago** against ICE, family detention and the criminalization of immigrants. On June 29, people in the Pilsen neighborhood heard testimonies by people whose loved ones had been detained or deported. Speakers from the Pilsen Alliance, Comité de Justicia por Ayotzinapa and the Arab American Action Network called for ICE's abolition, dissolution of borders and an end to U.S. imperialism. Afterwards, the crowd marched to Cook County Jail.

On June 30, over 60,000 Chicagoans congregated in Daley Plaza to support persecuted immigrants and demand an end to family separations. Forces advocating the abolition of ICE and the police formed a contingent comprised of youth of color — who were drumming and leading chants — socialist organizations and militant immigrant rights groups. They exposed the role that municipal administrations play in the deportation machine; ICE leases jails from suburban governments to house people slated for deportation. Demonstrators called for freeing everyone held captive in Illinois.

— Kaitlyn Griffith

Chicago



WW PHOTO: KAITLYN GRIFFITH



Raleigh, N.C.

WW PHOTO: WWP DURHAM BRANCH



Charlotte, N.C.

PHOTO: NICK ROBINSON



Madison, Wis.

WW PHOTO

West Coast

WWP also joined protests in **Minneapolis, Milwaukee and Madison, Wis.**

Thousands in **San Diego** rallied at downtown Waterfront Park, condemning the racist immigration policy of Washington's capitalist government. WWP members held a banner reading, "Abolish ICE! Open the Borders!" and distributed hundreds of copies of WWP newspaper. People in four other cities in this large county also staged protests.

— Bob McCubbin

Tens of thousands poured into the streets of **Los Angeles**, many from the city's huge Latinx migrant communities. The largest crowd gathered at City Hall at a rally called by groups including the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights. Hundreds of signs called for family reunification and ICE's abolition.

Congressperson Maxine Waters got the greatest response. She has received death threats after calling for people to confront Trump administration officials over their zero tolerance policy and separation of migrant families. Singer John Legend encouraged everyone to join the movement.

The ICE Out of LA Coalition demonstrated at the mayor's residence. Also, hundreds of people gathered outside the federal detention center, which imprisons many immigrants. In a moving scene, protesters held signs and chanted messages of solidarity while detainees rapped on their cells' glass windows in acknowledgement.

— Scott Scheffer

Thousands turned out in California's Bay Area, with the largest event in **San Francisco**, beginning at Dolores Park in the Mission district and ending at the Civic Center. Signs read, "Abolish ICE!" "Queers for Open



San Diego

WW PHOTO: BOB MCCUBBIN

Borders!" "From Palestine to Mexico, Racist Walls Have Got to Go!" and "No human being is illegal!" Heart-breaking signs mentioned separated loved ones.

Over 1,000 people rallied at the **Richmond** Detention Center, where 200 people are in ICE custody. Cat Brooks, African-American

candidate for mayor of Oakland and Anti Police-Terror Project leader, spoke: "I stand here as a Black woman who knows what it feels like to have the boot of white supremacy on my neck. This is state terror. This is an American concentration camp, not a jail."

Hundreds rallied at the Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Park in **Berkeley**. Another rally took place at Lake Merritt in **Oakland**.

— Terri Kay

About 10,000 people rallied at the **Seattle-Tacoma** Federal Prison where 200 migrants, mostly women, are jailed. One-third of them have been involuntarily separated from their children. The crowd shouted, "Shame! Shame!" Women from the Latinx community chanted: "No están solas! You are not alone!" to reach their sisters inside.

Maru Mora Villapando, Northwest Detention Center Resistance coordinator, won a temporary reprieve from an ICE court on June 26. The agency had tried to silence her by ordering her deportation. That day, 250 people rallied outside the court in solidarity with her.

Afterwards, they marched to the federal courthouse and joined another 250-person rally opposing Trump's anti-Muslim travel ban, organized by the Council on American-Islamic Relations, One America and other groups.

— Jim McMahan

Cleveland



WW PHOTO: SUSAN SCHNUR

Bay Area



PHOTO: ALICE LOAIZA



South Bay, Boston, 30 de junio.

PHOTO: MOVIMIENTOCOSECHA

Bryant Arroyo: Desde el interior de una prisión

Incluso desde los confines de una institución correccional estatal en la zona rural de Pensilvania, Bryant Arroyo está en movimiento. Solo en los últimos meses, ha hablado en la Universidad de Harvard y en el Colegio Haverford, testificó en una mesa redonda en Filadelfia sobre las condiciones de las prisiones, y fue el orador principal en el Foro Ambiental de Yale.

Por Ted Kelly

“¡Estoy de gira!”, Exclamó Bryant en una de nuestras recientes conversaciones telefónicas.

Esa conversación, como todos los discursos que ofrece en vivo desde una cabina telefónica de la prisión, se interrumpe de manera intermitente con un monótono mensaje pregrabado: “Esta es una llamada del Departamento de Correcciones de Pensilvania...”.

Las llamadas se desconectan después de quince minutos. En el evento de mesa redonda en Filadelfia, Bryant solo pudo responder una pregunta del grupo antes de cortarse la llamada. Es por eso que su discurso de Yale fue pregrabado y subido a PrisonRadio.org, donde se pueden escuchar muchas de sus charlas. Cada grabación contiene una voz que es reflexiva y deliberada al enunciar una oratoria altamente poética.

En persona, Bryant es enérgico y hablador. Su comportamiento jovial no está restringido por ese uniforme marrón que se ve obligado a usar. De vez en cuando hace una pausa.

Fue durante una de esas pausas, mientras hablaba de las “distracciones y divisiones” que impiden que nuestra clase se organice, que Bryant se acerca y puntualiza:

“Odio decírtelo, pero tú también estás en prisión”.

No se está refiriendo al hecho de que Joe Piette y yo estamos sentados con él en la sala de visitas de SCI Frackville, donde Bryant está cumpliendo una sentencia de cadena perpetua sin libertad condicional por un crimen que no cometió. (Él todavía está luchando para revocar esta condena injusta).

Nos sentamos en la cámara repleta de prisioneros junto a sus visitantes. Algunos almuerzan con sus hijos y nietos. Otros están sentados en silencio, frente a una pared en blanco, juntos, los brazos entrelazados con los de su cónyuge. Es un domingo por la mañana. Estos seres queridos entregan las llaves de su auto y billeteras, vacían sus bolsillos y cruzan voluntariamente el umbral cercado que separa a los “libres” de aquellos en cautiverio.

La persona que vinimos a ver es un puertorriqueño que creció en Lancaster, Pensilvania. Su padre era dueño de una bodega que les fue arrebatada por los acaparadores de tierras cuando Bryant era un niño. Su familia quedó batallando por una fuente constante de ingresos. Cuando se suponía que estuviera en décimo grado, Bryant había abandonado la escuela para buscar trabajo.

Habla apasionadamente sobre las lecciones que su padre le enseñó sobre los clientes de la tienda de comestibles, muchos de los cuales eran desesperadamente pobres, con discapacidades y ancianos. “Los tratamos con respeto cuando entran en esta tienda”, insistía

el padre de Bryant, independientemente de los antecedentes de la persona. “Les servimos a ellos y ellos nos sirven”, decía, señalando la lámpara en el techo, un recordatorio de cómo se pagaban las facturas.

Bryant no duda en nombrar a las personas que crearon las condiciones de indigencia y miseria en su comunidad. Bryant los llama “los invasores corporativos”.

Cuando dice: “Odio decírtelo”, está hablando sobre el poder en nuestra sociedad. El pueblo no lo tiene. Los invasores corporativos nos lo han arrebatado.

Raíces de la lucha

Habiendo pasado un cuarto de siglo tras las rejas, Bryant Arroyo sabe lo que es experimentar impotencia. Él es uno de las 2,2 millones de personas que están encarceladas en este momento por el gobierno de los Estados Unidos y, por lo tanto, es miembro del sector más oprimido de la clase trabajadora en este país. Él describe la posición del prisionero como “completamente indigente”.

Este es un claro eco de la plataforma política de que “las cárceles son campos de concentración para los pobres”, que resuena de un momento de la historia en que el Partido Workers World-Mundo Obrero mantenía activo un Comité de Solidaridad con Prisioneros. Este comité era tan organizado y respetado entre los reclusos que en septiembre de 1971 fue invitado a enviar un representante al patio de la prisión de Ática para ayudar a los rebeldes a negociar sus demandas.

Es un evento que el Primer Secretario del PWW-MO Larry Holmes describió como “el momento de la Comuna de París del Movimiento de Liberación Negra”. Las demandas de Ática incluían el derecho a un sindicato, capacitación vocacional, escalas salariales, una semana laboral de horario limitado, atención médica y compensación por lesiones – en realidad ser considerados trabajadores. “Este es un problema de clase”, decía la declaración de Ática.

En su discurso al Foro Ambiental de Yale, Bryant comenzó:

“Mientras luchamos para poner a las personas, y no a las corporaciones, a cargo de nuestras vidas y gobernanza, que buscamos victorias reales y sostenibles para alcanzar esa meta, es vital que vinculemos nuestra disidencia, nuestras estrategias y nuestra visión a sus raíces”.

Advierte que cualquier acción que esté “insuficientemente informada de la historia y la cosmovisión que nos trajo a nuestro presente, agotará nuestras energías y recompensará débilmente nuestras esperanzas”. En el crítico trabajo de terminar con el dominio corporativo y construir la democracia, siempre debemos estar en contra de la amenaza del des radicalismo.



Joe Piette, Bryant Arroyo y Ted Kelly

FOTO: BENJAMIN IRVIN

“Estas estrategias deben reflejar una comprensión del estado actual de derecho que nos pone a nosotros, las personas, subordinadas a los propietarios, organizados en sus formas corporativas, y deben reflejar nuestro compromiso a revertir esa ley”.

En movimiento

Con esta cosmovisión, no debería sorprendernos que Bryant haya sido una espina para los funcionarios de la prisión. Altamente litigioso, sin dudar en denunciar un agravio cuando se violan sus derechos, Bryant también defiende a sus compañeros reclusos tan estridentemente como se defiende él. Él los ayuda a redactar sus propios reclamos, investigar estatutos relevantes para sus casos y elaborar estrategias para sus audiencias de libertad condicional.

Como él no tiene ninguna posibilidad de obtener la libertad condicional, el Departamento de Correcciones tiene, irónicamente, una amenaza menos que pueda mantener sobre la cabeza de Bryant. Aun así, a pesar de todos sus enfrentamientos procesales con el personal penitenciario, Bryant nunca ha sido enviado a la Unidad de Reclusión Restringida, excepto para ayudar a sus compañeros de prisión que fueron puestos allí. Esto es considerable que haya ocurrido por 25 años, dado cuán impulsivamente los guardias arrojan a los prisioneros “al hoyo”. Este método de tortura es aún más atroz si se tiene en cuenta la grave falta de recursos de salud mental en las prisiones de Estados Unidos.

Los materiales educativos para los estudiantes de inglés son casi inexistentes. En un estado en el que una proporción cada vez mayor de prisioneros habla poco o nada de inglés, Bryant a veces es la única persona disponible para traducir. Bryant dice que la mejor herramienta que tiene a su disposición para ayudar a sus compañeros hispanohablantes adquirir destrezas en inglés es el periódico Workers World-MO.

La última página de este periódico, la sección de español Mundo Obrero, es el texto clave de la instrucción ad hoc de inglés como segundo idioma que ofrece Bryant. Hay más de 300 suscriptores a

WW-MO encarcelados en Pensilvania, pero algunos de ellos solo tienen acceso a esa página.

Para sus compañeros reclusos, la asistencia de Bryant significa una oportunidad renovada de ganar su libertad. Esto ha llevado a que los funcionarios penitenciarios quieran sacar a Bryant de su jurisdicción cuando causa demasiados problemas. Ha sido transferido a varios bloques de celdas e incluso a otras prisiones.

En una ocasión, fue enviado de vuelta al bloque F de SCI Mahanoy, que fue el primer lugar donde llegó después de su falsa condena. Una mañana después de la mudanza, Bryant se despertó en su celda y vio a una figura familiar. Aunque el hombre caminaba inestable por décadas en el hoyo, encorvado y arrastrando los pies tras la puerta de la celda, no había duda por los ojos sabios, esa cara inteligente y esas largas rastas negras.

Se corrió la voz rápidamente de que Mumia Abu-Jamal estaba nuevamente entre la población general después de 30 años en confinamiento solitario. Su nueva celda estaba al lado de la de Bryant.

Los prisioneros acudieron a Mumia como lo han hecho con cada profeta a lo largo de la historia. Pero Bryant mantuvo su distancia al principio. No quería abrumar al revolucionario que, final y milagrosamente, había salido del infierno en la tierra que es el corredor de la muerte.

Su amistad finalmente nació de la infatigable compasión de Bryant. Empezó a arrojar consejos de supervivencia del Bloque F a Mumia: qué ponerse en el camino a la ducha, qué días mantener su celda limpia para la inspección, en quién puede confiar, a quién evitar. Pronto se formó un vínculo y, en poco tiempo, los dos a menudo podían ser vistos en el patio caminando, hablando y teorizando.

El ex Pantera Negra y periodista de radio de Filadelfia se volvió hacia Bryant y dijo: “Sabes, B, tienes una gran voz de radio”. Normalmente, eso solo sería un gran cumplido por parte de un orador como Mumia Abu-Jamal. Pero Bryant fue sorprendido por una razón completamente diferente.

“Mu no tenía manera de saber esto, pero mi padre era un jockey de radio AM para WLAN. Cuando era un niño, lo imitaba a él todo el tiempo”. Mientras cuenta la historia, Bryant rompe en una parodia impecable de las etiquetas clásicas de radio en español de la mañana: “Buenos días, estás escuchando a 93.7 Ramón y Lucci. No toques esa esfera...”

Parecía predestinado que Bryant Arroyo se cruzara con Mumia Abu-Jamal y lo adoptara como su mentor. Uno de los héroes más grandes de Bryant fue Rubin “Hurricane” Carter, el boxeador de peso pesado que ganó su libertad después de haber sido encarcelado por error durante 20 años. Había esperado encontrarse con él algún día, pero este sueño nunca se realizó pues Carter murió de cáncer de próstata en 2014. “Pero Mu lo conoció”, dice Bryant. “Hurricane fue a ver a Mu. Eso es igual de bueno”.

[En la segunda parte: ‘El primer ambientalista prisionero en el mundo’]