

On heels of DA scandal

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

Scores of demonstrators brought afternoon rush-hour traffic in Philadelphia's Center City to a halt on July 7 as they took to the streets to demand justice for Pennsylvania political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. The hours-long march, with frequent stops for street speak-outs, followed a noon rally outside the Philadelphia district attorney's office.

As the protest snaked its way through busy city streets, it stopped wherever crowds were gathered, including outside busy restaurants where diners sat at sidewalk tables. Speakers took time to explain Abu-Jamal's case and to link it to the current struggles against racist police brutality and corruption in the DA's office. Several people, who had stopped to listen to speakers, joined in the march, swelling the protesters' ranks to nearly 100.

When protesters initially gathered at the DA's office, they were met with police barricades set up to keep them away from the doors. This approach seems to be a recent pattern in the wake of a scandal that has rocked the office. Just a week earlier, sitting DA Seth Williams suddenly pleaded guilty to a bribery charge and went directly to jail. Several signs carried by demonstrators addressed a decades-long history of corruption in the office, noting that "the Williams case is the tip of the iceberg."

Demonstrators were demanding the DA comply with a Common Pleas Court order, the second in just over a month, to release all files showing the involvement of former DA Ronald Castille in Abu-Jamal's case.

Castille was a senior prosecutor when Abu-Jamal was framed and convicted for the murder of a Philadelphia police officer in 1982. In 1989, he was the DA who argued to uphold Abu-Jamal's conviction



July 7 protest in Philadelphia. Pam Africa, a leader in the struggle to free Abu-Jamal, on the mic.

and death sentence. Years later, as a justice on the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, Castille twice refused to recuse himself from hearing Abu-Jamal's state appeals, ruling against him both times.

In June 2016, a landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision, Williams v. Pennsylvania, ruled that judges must remove them-

selves from any case they had a hand in prosecuting. There are now 14 Pennsylvania prisoners, including Abu-Jamal, who have filed appeals based on the ruling.

While the latest court order mandated the release of the files on July 7, protesters learned that a request for a week's extension was sent by the DA's office to

the court earlier that day. While the office claims it will comply with the judge's order, there is little reason to trust them, given the history of this case.

Activists pledged that they will continue taking the struggle to the streets and to the people until Mumia Abu-Jamal is released! □

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Tearing down the Bastille prison.



‘Border Patrol off buses and trains!’

PHOTOS: CAROLYNKRICK; CNY/SOLIDARITY COALITION

Under Interstate 81 in Syracuse, the Workers’ Center of CNY and the Rapid Response Team of CNY Solidarity Coalition say: ‘Border Patrol off buses and trains!’

By Minnie Bruce Pratt
 Syracuse, N.Y.

Trucks rumbled overhead on Interstate 81, and Greyhound buses rolled by, as more than 30 people protested the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Border Patrol’s racist profiling, harassment and detention at the Regional Transportation Center in Syracuse on July 8. Members and allies of the Workers’ Center of Central New York and the Syracuse Rapid Response Team shouted, “Border Patrol off buses and trains! iAmtrak, escucha! ¡Estamos en la lucha!” (“Amtrak, listen! We are in the struggle!”)

For the last 10 years, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, in conjunction with ICE, has hounded people of color passing through the RTC, demanding identification, at times detaining them illegally for hours, and, as happened recently, arresting people and dragging them off their bus or train.

In a pre-action statement, the protesting groups expressed outrage that U.S. police agencies use the RTC “as a place to profile and detain our immigrant neighbors as they attempt to see their families and earn their living.” The statement linked the detentions to U.S. wars, saying: “The current administration ... is also operating the ‘travel ban’ which targets Muslims who are twice terrorized by this brutal policy. The first time ... civilians in countries largely populated by Muslims are victimized by U.S. bombs.”

Because Syracuse is within 100 miles of the Canadian border, U.S. law allows the Border Patrol to treat the

city (and any others within that radius) as the functional equivalent of an international border. That means people traveling within the U.S. interior can be policed as if they are at the country’s border crossing.

That this policing is racist in execution is without doubt. As far back as 2008, Tomás, a Latinx traveller to Syracuse by Greyhound, witnessed what happened when the Border Patrol boarded his bus. In a Colorlines interview, he noted: “The Border Patrol agents questioned all the Hispanic, Middle Eastern and Asian passengers. They did not question any of the white passengers except some women who were wearing veils. Border Patrol had dogs with them and checked the whole bus. They even looked in the bathroom.” (June 12, 2008)

The RTC is not just a Central New York hub for Amtrak train and Greyhound, Trailways, Megabus and local Centro bus service. Because it links east-west routes from Boston to the Midwest, and north-south routes from New York to Canada, it is a crucial waystation.

Because of its location, Syracuse was the “great central depot” of the Underground Railroad in New York state in the 19th century, when thousands of people of African descent, seeking freedom from enslavement, journeyed north through the city on foot and by road, canal and railroad.

In this tradition, the Syracuse Rapid Response Team, part of the CNY Solidarity Coalition, said in its rally statement that it was protesting now “to demonstrate our determination to protect our neighbors and to put the government on notice.” □

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Oakland rally says 'Free Mumia!'

Supporters of Mumia Abu-Jamal gathered at Oscar Grant Plaza in downtown Oakland, Calif., on July 7 to demand that the district attorney's office open the books and comply with a court order to release documents related to former DA Ronald Castille's involvement in prosecuting Mumia. Castille is now a Pennsylvania Supreme Court judge, and his rulings on Mumia's appeal cases may be found to be a conflict of interest.

At the rally, emceed by revolutionary hip-hop and reggae artist Ras Ceylon and Gerald Smith of the Oscar Grant Committee, speaker after speaker spoke of Mumia's long and strong support for all political prisoners, and his political leadership, from behind the prison walls, for all kinds of people's struggles for justice and freedom. Attendees were hopeful that at long last, an opportunity to actually free him was close at hand.

— Story and photo by Terri Kay



Political prisoner the Rev. Pinkney 'FREE AT LAST'

By Koba Wright
Detroit

Activists here gathered on July 8 to celebrate a rare victory in the struggle against capitalist oppression. More than 150 supporters of the Rev. Edward Pinkney's struggle against the Whirlpool Corporation and the city government of Benton Harbor, Mich., filled the St. Matthew St. Joseph Episcopal Church in Detroit to celebrate Pinkney's release from prison.

The church was filled with joy, the smell of home-cooked food and soul music. When Pinkney walked into the room, he was greeted with a standing ovation and chants of "Free at last!"

Pinkney was imprisoned on trumped-up charges of falsifying signatures on a petition to recall the mayor of Benton Harbor, James Hightower. The case, which went to the Michigan Court of Appeals, concluded when the court decided no evidence was necessary to convict Pinkney, and that his past organizing work created suspicion of motive to forge dates on the petition. This grievous miscarriage of justice was merely a front to attempt to murder Pinkney, a Black man in his 60s, via incarceration.

A series of speakers from Michigan and national activist groups recited mes-



The Rev. Pinkney speaking to supporters on July 8

WW PHOTO: WORKERS WORLD PARTY DETROIT

sages of solidarity and victory, and a consistent refrain that the struggle continues despite the movement's success in freeing Pinkney.

Speakers delivered messages from Workers World Party Secretariat member Monica Moorehead; the United Steelworkers Local 8751, Boston School Bus Drivers Union; as well as various other supporters of Pinkney's struggle. Some compared his release to the freeing of other political prisoners, like Nelson Mandela.

Other organizations and speakers included Detroit water activist Monica Lewis-Patrick, We The People Of Detroit, the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization, the Detroit Active And Retired Employees Association, the Green Party, the Michigan Peoples Defense Network and the Moratorium NOW!, Michigan Emergency Committee On War and Injustice. Poets Wardell Montgomery and Dr. Glo-

ria Aneb House delivered verses on the past and present of the struggle in Michigan. Dorothy Pinkney, the Reverend's spouse, introduced him.

Pinkney's speech proved that prison bars, corporate corruption and SWAT teams could not break his spirit. His mood was uplifting, even as he recognized the fight still ahead. He detailed the ways the prison system tried to break him: constant harassment by prison guards; rotten, maggot-laced food; and false charges of smuggling that landed him in solitary confinement. The state took away his phone privileges for six months in an attempt to isolate him.

None of this stopped him from continuing to struggle, and even inspired him further. He beat the false charges of smuggling. He organized a hunger strike to win better food for the prisoners. The prison complied, and then shipped him

to a distant prison in north Michigan in a further attempt to break him.

Pinkney taught math and religion to his fellow prisoners, uniting them in the struggle — and in turn, they respected him enough to let him pick the TV programs to watch in the slammer rec room, he said with a laugh.

Pinkney ended his speech by calling for a new, stronger activism, and for communities to say no to the racist oppressive apparatus of the capitalist system. He peppered his words with call-and-response chants of "It's going down!"

"We have to learn to fight back," Pinkney said. "We have to say enough is enough. We gotta say that we won't allow this to happen in our community anymore. Whatever needs to be done, we're gonna do it, whether they like it or not! If you get in our way, we gonna run you over. This is the future of our children at stake. We've allowed these people to kick us around, bully us and do exactly nothing. It's time to change the way we do business, and we can do it!"

Activists fundraised to provide Pinkney with funds to get back on his feet after his imprisonment, and presented him with a generous donation at the end of the event.

"When you get love like this, it makes you want to fight," Pinkney concluded. □

'Defund OPD' challenges Oakland City Council

By Terri Kay
Oakland, Calif.

Allied campaigns for a "People's Budget," led by the Defund OPD (Oakland Police Department) and Refund Oakland coalitions, forced the Oakland City Council's "Conservative Caucus" to ram through their budget on June 29, using a legally questionable parliamentary maneuver. The council was up against a June 30 state deadline to pass a two-year budget.

Dubbed the "Conservative Caucus" by the Anti Police-Terror Project, council members Larry Reid, Annie Campbell Washington, Lynette Gibson McElhaney and Abel Guillen were at first unable to get the required two-thirds majority to pass their budget.

They faced a packed house of people demanding passage of a "People's Budget," an alternative budget proposed by Desley Brooks and Rebecca Kaplan, which, though far from perfect, put more money towards people's needs and was



WW PHOTO: TERRI KAY

derived in consultation with many community groups.

The Conservative Caucus, after a 20-minute recess, pulled several one-time-only expenditures from their proposal to allow passage of their budget with a simple majority. This parliamentary maneuver was strongly challenged by Brooks, who claimed it was an illegal move since the revised budget hadn't been formally "costed."

Cat Brooks of the AP-TP, who led a walk-out after the sham vote, summed it up with these words: "When we're in the streets, they tell us to work inside the system. When we work inside the system, we're

reminded that the only place we'll ever get justice is in the streets."

The Defund OPD campaign was launched a year ago by the AP-TP in response to the OPD rape scandal, when national and international headlines announced accusations that OPD officers had been involved in the sexual abuse of an underage girl. This was after the police killings of seven Black men in Oakland in 2015.

On its Facebook page, Defund OPD said: "Our mission is to reduce the Oakland Police Budget by 50% and reinvest that money into alternative non-police programs that can better protect and strengthen our communities. We envision free mental health clinics, trained mediators and social workers who are able to respond to emergencies, and EMS & Fire Departments that are not tied to the police force."

The Refund Oakland coalition supported Defund OPD and called on the council to "reinvest in the working-class and communities of color that make it

great. How? By ensuring that tenants and long-term residents are protected, equity is a priority in the agenda and worker rights are enforced. It's time to prioritize public services, housing our residents with anti-displacement measures, and protecting our workers and artists who make Oakland the 'soul' of the Bay." Refund Oakland is a coalition of labor and community groups pushing for a "people's budget" to fund housing, jobs, youth programs and education. (Refund Oakland Facebook post)

Defund and Refund worked together over the past months in attending all budget hearings held by council members and challenging the status quo budget being put forth. Defund OPD launched a social media campaign using a sign that said "Less Cops, More ____." People were asked to fill in the blank with what they thought should be supported in a people's budget and to post pictures of themselves holding the sign.

AP-TP, with its Defund OPD group-

Continued on page 10

Fight for transit justice! Fight for socialism!

By Taryn Fivек and John Steffin
New York

The state of this city’s Metropolitan Transportation Authority in 2017 is criminal. Even as new subway stations are built in wealthy neighborhoods like Hudson Yards, a train derails in Harlem. While MTA executives spend money on WiFi, cell carrier services and flashing billboards doubling as maps, modernizing the signal system is put on the backburner. This has led to historic delays and the injury and deaths of MTA workers from Transit Workers Union Local 100, who courageously work to keep the system moving safely. Thirteen transit workers have died on the job since 2001, including construction flagger Louis Gray just last year.

In recent weeks, the riding public has been confronted with videos on social media that highlight the decay of the transit system: water pouring into train cars and onto subway tracks; commuters trying to claw their way out of a train that had been trapped underground with no lighting or air conditioning for over an hour. Many lines experienced delays and some saw total shutdowns due to derailments and other issues during the last week of June.

Who or what is behind the decisions that result in the degradation of our transit system? The argument favored in the media is that it’s the MTA workers. But it’s the workers themselves who risk injury and death in these conditions. In truth, these decisions are determined by the bankers who control the MTA, who care about profit over people, and whom we cannot expect to fix this crisis in public transport.

New Yorkers need transit justice: safe, reliable, accessible, free public transit and safe, well-paying working conditions for the tens of thousands who do the work. To get all these things, we need to fight for them, and ultimately for socialism. Unless there’s a struggle, the capitalists will let the already deadly transit system continue to decay, will continue to underserve poor communities of color and people with disabilities, and funnel money into police terror and luxury developments. The only way we have a chance is by fighting this rotten system that is designed only to extract the maximum amount of profit from the working class and oppressed.

Banks and the MTA

The MTA, which includes buses, subways and trains serving 12 counties in the New York metropolitan area, is a “public-benefit” corporation funded by bonds held by the richest banks in the world. The primary function of the MTA is not to help 11 million people commute every day; it is to help these bond-holding banks turn a profit. And they do so to the tune of \$1 billion every year through tax-free interest that the MTA pays on these bonds. The banks love these bonds because they are government secured. Regardless of whether the MTA has made enough money to pay back the bonds, the government will step in to pay back the banks. This may mean cuts to other government-funded services or hikes in fare prices. Whatever it takes to pay the banks. And so the banks see the MTA as a safe haven for their money, at a time when the economy is in crisis and profitable investment is hard to come by. Meanwhile, the MTA’s budget falls short by \$15 billion of the amount needed to undertake critical infrastructure improvements. The MTA’s only option to

close this gap is by raising fare prices to pay off the money they will need to borrow from banks to cover costs. The MTA’s fiscal arrangement with the 1% means that any improvements needed to the system will come right out of the pockets of the people who use the lines and keep New York’s economy going. This has resulted in the fare going up 55 times since 1948, when that fare was just 51 cents in today’s money. Make no mistake, if the transit system stops operating, then the profit-making machine grinds to a halt. This is why immediately after Hurricane Sandy, Brooklyn residents were packed into crowded buses that sent them over bridges into Manhattan as MTA workers plugged in extra days and hours, working tirelessly to pump water out of the tunnels, including Amtrak’s, to bring the system back to life. Meanwhile, residents in Red Hook went for weeks without electricity, heat and running water. The last transit workers’ strike in 2005 was ended in less than two days by city concessions. Workers hung up “Closed” signs in front of stations on Dec. 20 and the retail stores could not bear a slowdown at the height of the holiday shop-

New Yorkers need safe, reliable, accessible, free public transit and safe, well-paying working conditions for the tens of thousands who do the work. To get all these things, we need to fight for them, and ultimately for socialism.



ping season. Of course, the ruling class didn’t make these concessions without first attacking the workers with court injunctions and racist harassment. During the strike, billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg called TWU Local 100 President Roger Toussaint and the transit workers — who are predominantly Black and Brown — “thugs.” Public infrastructure and transit have been on the agenda of every politician running for mayor of New York since time immemorial, but it’s only when labor action and people power come knocking that the ruling class seems finally willing to listen to our demands. **Capitalist solutions won’t help workers and oppressed** The capitalist media express concern for the MTA — because the decaying system is hurting business. They cite examples of empty offices and workers late to important business meetings or to opening stores and restaurants. This is the only reason the bourgeoisie would have to intervene. They would be happy to lower conditions to just above open revolt because that’s how they would achieve the maximum profit.

Straphangers in New York can get a monthly pass for \$121. But most workers can’t scrape up the dough for a 30-day Metrocard that can be lost. New Yorkers getting an \$11/hour minimum wage would have to spend 11 hours of their monthly pay just to get to and from work. The ruling class would rather let private corporations like Uber, Lyft and the new privatized ferry service fill gaps for the largely white, gentrifying professional class in New York. People of color, the poor and the working class will continue to pay \$2.75 per trip for trains that are overcrowded, delayed or derailed, are heavily occupied by the NYPD, smell like piss and lack accessibility for people with disabilities in most stations across the five boroughs. The transit workers themselves will be forced to continue to work in dangerous and undignified conditions. The ruling class does not care about whether the rider is in a wheelchair, speaks another language or lives in poorer neighborhoods far from train lines. Those who cannot easily use the stairs are forced to bear the stench, standing air and snaillike slowness of ancient elevators or are confronted with broken escalators. Black and Brown people living up 54-year-old Darryl Goodwin, a Black MTA worker and member of TWU Local 100, because he allegedly was not able to move fast enough when they barked orders to let them chase a teenager accused of shoplifting into the subway system. It did not matter to these cops that Darryl Goodwin was a 27-year veteran of the MTA, a union member in good standing. It did not matter to them that he was overworked and underpaid. They slapped handcuffs on him and took him to jail because their mandate at that station was not to protect riders and workers, but to terrorize the working class and oppressed. New Yorkers will need to look elsewhere for solutions to what has become an increasingly miserable and deadly public transit experience. **Another world is possible** Last year, China announced that it would spend \$724 billion on transit infrastructure over the next three years. After the 2008 economic crisis, instead of approaching recovery with massive handouts to banks, as did the U.S., China decided to invest hundreds of billions into public transit. The daily ridership of the Beijing Metro went from 1.7 million to 9.9 million over the next 10 years. Instead of being greeted with killer cops, rats, dripping ceilings and late trains, straphangers enjoy state-of-the-art rollingstock, platform doors and other technologies that raise their quality of life. Fares are distance-based, and range between 44 cents for a short ride to only \$1.50 to travel up to 70 miles on the system. In Moscow, the Metro system was built by socialist labor in the 1930s. Many Muscovites volunteered their Saturdays to help put a working-class stamp on the most gorgeous system in the world, with marble, artwork and exquisite lighting making a worker’s commute a pleasure cruise instead of a nightmare like it is in New York. Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the stations are still staffed by dozens of workers whose job is to provide assistance, clean the platforms and run the kiosks for purchasing tickets that range between 83 cents and \$1, with 30-day passes costing straphangers a little over \$30. To say it is impossible to have a mass transit system that is free, clean, safe and reliable is to restrict our imaginations to a system that has made moving around New York a great challenge. **Conclusion** This dismal situation, however, is not new. Public transportation in the United States, throughout the entirety of its existence, has been stained with the blood of the working class and the oppressed — exactly because the history of the United States, including its infrastructure development, has been one of genocidal racist capitalism. The class composition of those who work the transit system — from those who dug the first tunnels to those who now clean the stations — has not changed. It’s Black and Brown people, migrants and poor whites — the same people who primarily use the system. We can expect things to improve only if we organize and fight. Even poorer countries have built terrific mass transit systems under socialism. We must fight for a transit system that makes possible the safety and dignity of everyone who uses the trains and buses — the public and the workers. “From the A to the Z, public transit should be free,” as Transport Workers Union founder Mike Quill once demanded. □

On the picket line

By Alex Bolchi and Sue Davis

Memphis sanitation workers finally get their due

Fourteen still-living Black workers who made history with the “I am a man” Memphis sanitation workers strike in 1968 — in which the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. played a decisive role before he was murdered — are finally getting their just rewards. After nearly 50 years, the city of Memphis is forking over a much-deserved \$50,000 grant to each worker.

Represented by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, the workers went on strike over low pay and bad working conditions after a malfunctioning garbage truck fatally crushed workers Echol Cole and Robert Walker on Feb. 1, 1968. Though the sanitation workers settled the strike by accepting Social Security benefits instead of a pension, the pension has since proved to be the better option. One of four strikers still working, 85-year-old Elmore Nickelberry, summed it up: “We should have had this a long time ago.” African-American pastor LaSimba Gray Jr. raised the demand for a grant to the mayor over a year ago. (USA Today, July 6)

NY Times workers walk out to save jobs

The classic divide-and-conquer labor strategy of the the Sulzberger family-owned New York Times was exposed June 28 when hundreds of workers walked out during a 30-minute “coffee break” to protest management’s austerity plan to restructure the paper’s editing process and eliminate half of the 100 jobs in the editing department. The Times claims it wants to cut the editing staff to free up money to hire more reporters.

While the walkout was called by the editing staff, it was joined by workers from other floors — represented by the News Guild of New York, Communications Workers Local 31003 — who walked out of the building together. “I’ve never seen anything like this,” tweeted a Times employee. “Each floor of the NYT newsroom is full of folks walking out in solidarity [against] the coming layoffs.”

During the past 18 months, management has called the editing staff’s work “low-value” and compared it to “dogs urinating on fire hydrants.” Meanwhile these editors — who ensure the quality and accuracy of articles by checking facts and sources; correcting confusing, misleading and inaccurate information; and catching grammatical and spelling errors — have been tested, inspected and forced to endure futile experiments as management tried to make the editing staff do more with less. The final insult was being told they would have to reapply and interview for jobs.

In a letter to management, the copy editors made a simple request: “We only ask that you not treat us like a diseased population that must be rounded up, inspected and expelled.” The letter noted: “Cutting us down to 50-55 editors from more than 100, and expecting the same level of quality, is dumbfoundingly unrealistic.”

Times reporters sent their own letter critical of the editors’ treatment to management. Calling the copy editors “their ‘safety net’ who save them and the Times from countless errors large and small,” they added: “Your plan adds insult to injury by requiring many longtime, highly skilled employees to apply and interview for a greatly diminished number of jobs in sessions that were instantly dubbed ‘death panels’ in the newsroom. Requiring them to dance for their supper sends a clear message to them, and to us, that the respect we have shown The Times will not be reciprocated.”

The News Guild has the backing of the NYC Labor Council. (Left Labor Reporter, July 3) The Council represents 1.3 million workers in 300 local unions from every trade and occupation, both public and private sector, in the NYC economy.

Beer drivers strike on Long Island, N.Y.

Some 130 drivers and warehouse workers for beer distributor Clare Rose on Long Island, N.Y., have been on strike for almost three months. The workers, represented by Teamsters Local 812, went out April 23 to protest management’s “draconian” offer: a 30 percent pay cut and an end to pensions. The family-owned distributor of Budweiser, Heineken and craft beers to bars, delis and grocery stores on Long Island immediately brought in “permanent replacement workers” on April 25. The local responded by filing an unfair labor practices suit with the National Labor Relations Board.

Meanwhile, local businesses are boycotting scab deliveries, and the union’s strategy to push Anheuser-Busch to motivate the greedy company to the negotiating table has worked. Local 812 postponed a June 23 rally outside Busch’s Newark, N.J., brewery after Clare Rose agreed to reopen negotiations with a professional mediator. (In These Times, June 28) □

Workers strike big-business media for 16 weeks

For fifteen weeks, 1,800 International Electrical Workers Local 3 members have been out on strike at Charter/Spectrum Communications in the New York metro area. After working without a contract for two years, and after the communications mega corporation refused to bargain in good faith, workers walked out March 28. Spectrum completed acquisition of Time Warner Cable in May, in an overall cash and stock deal worth about \$71 billion.

Local 3 members struck over Spectrum’s attempts to pull out of the workers’ medical and pension plans. Another key issue is unfair penalization of workers over repeat customer service calls. The real problem is the cable company’s failure to update faulty equipment and its inflated promises to customers.

At one recent rally, striking workers held up pictures of out-of-state license plates on cars recently spotted at Spectrum worksites, indicating the company is using scab labor. This violates Spectrum’s franchise agreement with New York City, which mandates local hiring.



WW PHOTO: SUE HARRIS

IBEW Local 3 workers on strike picket line at Spectrum at 43 W. 23rd St., New York City, July 6.

Workers pictured here told WW that the strike was being “whited out” in local press coverage, as big-business news corporations side with Spectrum. At press time, Local 3 members remain on the picket line at Charter/Spectrum centers across New York City and in New Jersey.

Join them, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. See picket locations: tinyurl.com/woyv6ld.

—Story by Minnie Bruce Pratt

Michigan librarians win struggle vs. union busting

By Randi Nord
Westland, Mich.

Workers World newspaper recently interviewed one of the public employee librarians who won a fight for union representation in Westland, Mich., a suburb of beleaguered Detroit.

Workers World: Could you describe the Westland librarian struggle a bit?

Kristy Cooper: On March 3, five librarians were told their positions were terminated at the Westland Public Library, just two days after they had turned in union-intention papers. The library’s administration then hired three part-time “library associates,” with no benefits, to replace them. We later found out these people had the exact credentials as the terminated librarians — a master’s in library science. [The fired librarians] were not allowed to apply for these demoted positions. They were all initially told that they were laid off. But they were already budgeted-for because of a 10-year dedicated library millage passed by 71 percent in 2012, and the library has a \$2.5 million fund balance. The library’s board president claimed that the timing of their terminations was a complete coincidence.

The fact that it was an election year helped us a lot [in the campaign]. I created surveys for everyone running for city council and mayor for them to talk about what was happening at the library. This was the first time someone was running against the mayor in years. He was the person who appointed the library board in the first place.

[Then] suddenly there was an article in the local paper about the library board hiring an independent counsel from the city, and I was about to release the survey results. The mayor got the remaining board members to resign. Then the director resigned right after that. The next day, all of the librarians were then offered their jobs back. They are currently negotiating the terms of their return with the library’s new union, the SEIU [Service Employees], voted in by 27 to 5 in May.

WW: How do you think the Westland librarian struggle ties into the broader working-class struggle?



KC: I think it shows how often and easily the work people do is undervalued and treated as disposable, even when everyone who actually knows what they are doing would agree they are doing a good job.

I think it also says a lot about how little [the library administration] cared about the library’s patrons. When the librarians were terminated, several programs aimed at older or more vulnerable members of the population had to be immediately canceled, including the homebound delivery program, the adult literacy program, the job-seekers lab, all teen programs, all computer classes and the writing groups.

It also showed how little the Democratic Party actually cares about labor issues. Westland is run by Democrats and only two people from the Westland Democrat Club actually got involved to help us.

WW: Has the process caused you or others to change your political stance?

KC: I was already a socialist when this struggle began, but I would say the experience further radicalized me. I realized that working within the system was terribly inefficient, and I have now taken on a harder-line, anti-authoritarian position. Myself and several of the librarians involved have also been talking about how to decrease hierarchy in public library administrations and increase accountability. □

Striking workers in Haiti win solidarity in U.S.

By G. Dunkel

Confronting brutal heat, nasty cops and stubborn resistance from their bosses, workers in the Haitian textile trades came out by the thousands June 26 to demand that the minimum wage be raised from 300 gourdes (about \$4.71) a day to 800 gourdes (about \$12.71).

As well as demanding a wage increase, the workers and their unions are demanding social services.

The march began at the Port-au-Prince Industrial Park, then wound through the capital city to a rally in front of the Social Affairs Ministry.

“Social services mean subsidizing the food, rent, transportation, and education of the workers’ children,” Dominique St-Eloi, general coordinator of the National Central of Haitian Workers, told *Haiti-Liberté* June 28. “We talked to the Social Affairs Minister, who lied to us. He promised buses, and a subsidy of food and rent. Yet nothing has been done.” He added, “We are also going to work for the reintegration of more than 40 people who have been fired.”

The workers’ threat to walk out again on July 10-12 was reported in just-style.com, a website devoted to the clothing industry in the United States. When a significant portion of the production for brands and stores like Gildan Activewear, Hanes, Fruit of the Loom, Levi’s, Gap, JC Penney, Walmart and Target is affected, their owners want to know why and how to avoid these disruptions.

The Haitian government’s wage board has promised to increase the minimum wage to 335 gourdes per day. (AlterPresse, July 8) This will still keep the minimum below \$5 a day, the level that workers in the United States got in the 1950s. The workers intend to maintain their struggle even though the government made a slight concession.

Workers in Haitian textile — mainly young women under 25 — have trouble buying food (with enough calories to keep them working) and water and paying transportation costs that the Haitian government has just raised sharply. Most of the food bought in Haiti is imported and priced in U.S. dollars, but labor is paid in low-priced gourdes.



PHOTO: MILO MILFORT/HAITI LIBERTÉ

Thousands of workers surged through Port-au-Prince’s streets to demand a minimum wage hike to \$12.71 (800 gourdes) per day and better work conditions.

A group of activists is organizing a Rapid Response Network (rapidresponsenetwork.info) and attempting to send a Twitter and Facebook storm to the accounts of Jovenel Moïse, Haiti’s president, and Jack Guy Lafontant, its prime minister, as well as the workers’ direct employers: Willbes Haitian SA, MGA Haiti SA, Astro Carton d’Haiti

SA, Haiti Cheung Won SA, Textile Youm Kwang SA and Pacific Sports Haiti SA.

Striking in a small, poor country, where a vast majority of workers don’t have a steady job, is hard. But the Haitian textile workers have been in the streets on and off since early May in a courageous struggle for dignity and economic justice. □

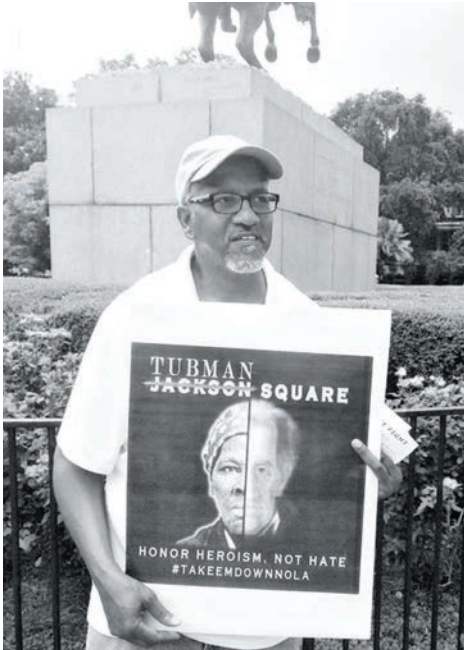


PHOTO: TAKE ‘EM DOWN NOLA

Malcolm Suber at protest demanding monument to Harriet Tubman replace that of Andrew Jackson.

Take ‘em Down NOLA led the struggle, holding city-wide forums and many mass militant demonstrations of thousands that resulted in getting the first four Confederate monuments removed from New Orleans. Malcolm Suber, spokesperson for that people’s organization and a longtime activist in the movement for Black liberation, spoke with Workers World managing editor John Catalinotto to give some of the background for the struggle last spring and future plans of Take ‘em Down NOLA

The monuments that were taken down, as well as those remaining, were all constructed in what we would call the Jim Crow era. Starting from the 1870s to the early 1900s, they constructed those statues throughout the South. Their placement was an effort by the white supremacist plantocracy — the rule of the plantation owners — to take back all the tremendous gains that were won by the newly freed African people after the Civil War.

In that era, slowly but surely, all the Civil Rights laws that were enacted during the post-Civil War period were chipped away. And the final crowning of the plantocracy coming back to power throughout the South was the attempt to enshrine that by building the statues to honor the “lost cause.”

Four statues were removed beginning in April and through May. They were of Gen.

Malcolm Suber interview Take ‘em down NOLA fights to remove ALL racist monuments

Robert E. Lee; Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard, the general who ordered the firing on Fort Sumter that began the Civil War; and Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy. The fourth, finally, was the white supremacy monument — what the white people in the city called the “Liberty Monument” — an obelisk that praised the assaults on the Reconstruction Government in 1874 here in New Orleans.

We still have more than 18 white supremacy monuments left in the city. The mayor and City Council say they are “tired of spending funds” and they intend this to be the end.

Take ‘em Down NOLA says this is just the beginning, an appetizer. We are fighting now for a resolution to remove all the white supremacy monuments and street names and public buildings named for the slavemasters. This is a struggle that will continue until we finish the main course.

Ruling-class resistance

Regarding why there was such resistance among the politicians, well, if you understand the politics of Louisiana and New Orleans, you know that the rich white people control all the major economic positions and most of the money invested in the politicians. None of the local politicians want to cross the hands that feed them.

All of the local white ruling class are descendants of the slave masters, whose accumulated wealth was stolen from the labor of the enslaved African people. What has really been telling in this whole experience has been that not one prominent white person in this city has made a statement in support of taking down or removing the monuments.

The most prominent rich white person, Frank Stewart, who says he speaks for all of them, said that they will continue to resist removal. In fact, they are circulating a petition to force the city government to restore the monuments that have been

taken down. Stewart is a big capitalist who owns the cemeteries in the city and is the second-biggest cemetery owner in the world, Frank Stewart Enterprises.

What New Orleans means for workers, immigrants

New Orleans’ economy now focuses on tourism. There are 80,000 people working in that industry. Their labor generates a great deal of capital for the hotel, motel and restaurant owners. But the majority of the Black working class is stuck in minimum-wage jobs: bussing tables, washing dishes, making beds in the hotels.

These vast differences result in a great deal of distance between the incomes of rich and poor — we are the second city in the country in the gap between rich and poor.

So the condition that the Black working-class people in the city face is to have to work two jobs to survive. Because of the gentrification after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, our rents have skyrocketed and people who want to keep a roof over their heads have to work two jobs.

New Orleans is the leading city in rate of incarceration in the entire world. Basically, the local ruling class has decided they are not going to create any jobs for the Black youth in the city and therefore have forced them to live lives of pushing drugs. Then the authorities put the Black youth in jail — they put them away and throw away the key.

It has a deleterious effect on the working class in terms of disruption and being able to build a wholesome community among our people.

After Hurricane Katrina, many Mexican and other Central American workers came for work in the reconstruction of New Orleans. The immigrant population went from about 3 percent before 2005 to around 12 percent at this point.

Many of these immigrants are day laborers, who have been victims of wage

theft. There is an organization of day laborers that we in Take ‘em down NOLA have been working with for quite some time. We have much solidarity with our immigrant brothers and sisters and we have shown it by holding demonstrations of solidarity with the day laborers and against building a wall on the border with Mexico.

Role of Mayor Mitch Landrieu

Regarding all the attention to the NOLA mayor’s speech in May, we have to recognize that he did make the initial motion that he would take down four monuments. But we said, well, if you are going to have a discussion about removing the symbols of white supremacy, why stop at the four? Don’t just do a partial job. Do the whole job.

We had many community meetings demanding that the city take down the monuments. The city government decided in December of 2016 to have them removed, but immediately the Monumental Task Committee, representing the white ruling class, filed suit to try to prevent them from coming down. And we frankly had to push and prod and push and prod the mayor to carry out the decision of the City Council and bring down the monuments.

We said if this mayor were really sincere about his lovely words — and it was a moving speech, but there was a big difference between words and deeds on his part. We don’t think that he is a sincere champion of the struggle against white supremacy, and we’re going to push and prod him until we get all the monuments down.

Take ‘em down NOLA’s next move is to fight to get an ordinance passed that declares that New Orleans is going to be a city free of white supremacy-public monuments, based on the principle of being anti-racist and anti-white supremacist. We’re pushing to get that passed and we will continue our public agitation to take down the Andrew Jackson statue. It’s the most prominent Confederate monument left standing and the most popular among white supremacists, and if we can

Haiti & Bastille Day

By Stephen Millies

July 14 is Bastille Day. On that date in 1789 tens of thousands of poor people in Paris attacked a hated prison called the Bastille and began the French Revolution. The continual intervention of poor people in the cities and countryside — particularly in Paris — drove the revolution forward.

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels — the founders of communism — lived in that revolution’s afterglow. Lenin and the other leaders of the Russian Revolution studied the French Revolution. Lenin became chairperson of the Council of People’s Commissars, a term derived from the French “commissaire.”

Even the terms “left” and “right” derive from the French upheaval. When the National Assembly met in 1789, the supporters of the king seized the right portion of the chamber and forced revolutionaries to sit on the left. They did this because of an ancient prejudice against left-handed people.

The French Revolution started in Europe, but it belongs to the world. And there would have been no French Revolution without Haiti.

Capitalist riches from enslaved workers

The French Revolution was a capitalist, or bourgeois, revolution. It swept away all the old feudal rubbish, like the remnants of serfdom, that oppressed people. Even the formation of a national market, a necessity for capitalism, had to be fought for.

The capitalist class or bourgeoisie was not a new class. It began its rise centuries earlier in merchant trading. Its earliest attempts to challenge the old feudal order, usually under the guise of religious differences, were thrown back with bloody reprisals.

The Bourbon kings and the big nobles of France were aristocratic parasites who feasted while millions lived in rags. They were symbolized by Queen Marie Antoinette, who, when informed that people had no bread, exclaimed, “Let them eat cake!” referring to the burnt remnants of bread caked inside communal ovens.

During the 1700s, the Bourbon monarchy was increasingly challenged by the bourgeoisie. Its ideologues, led by Voltaire, questioned everything and led the great intellectual movement known as the Enlightenment. Voltaire campaigned against executing people on “the wheel,” a torture device to which people were tied while their bodies were broken, sometimes just for allegedly mocking a religious procession.

But what gave the bourgeoisie its newfound confidence to oppose the monarchy were the profits flowing into its coffers from the labor of people held in slavery.

As C.L.R. James pointed out in his classic “The Black Jacobins”: “Nearly all the industries which developed in France during the eighteenth century had their origin in goods or commodities destined either for the coast of Guinea or for America. The capital from the slave-trade fertilized them; though the bourgeoisie traded in other things than slaves, upon the success or failure of the traffic everything else depended.”

The livelihood of 2 million to 6 million people in France — out of a total population of 25 million — depended on slavery and products grown by enslaved people. France’s possession of Haiti meant it owned the richest colony in the world. Its trade employed 24,000 French sailors on 750 ships.

While Britain had an export trade of 27 million British pounds, the French were close behind with 17 million. The wealth produced by the Haitian people in slavery accounted for nearly 11 million pounds alone.

Liberty seized by enslaved people

The French bourgeoisie declared “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity” as the watchwords of their revolution. This is still the motto of France today.

But most French capitalists never wanted to abolish slavery or to grant liberty to Black people kidnapped from Africa who were worked to death in Haiti, Guadeloupe and Martinique.

At that time conditions were such in Haiti that the average life expectancy for a Black person on the island was 21 years. Then, news of the French Revolution reached Haiti and created a political ferment as it became known to people in slavery.

Dutty Boukman, an African originally enslaved in Jamaica, started a revolt in August 1791. Over 1,800 plantations were burned. Boukman was eventually killed, bravely fighting. But new leaders like Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines arose. The rising of Haiti’s enslaved people could not be stopped, and it found support among the French poor.

“The Blacks were taking their part in the destruction of European feudalism begun by the French Revolution,” James wrote, “and liberty and equality, the slogans of the revolution, meant far more to them than to any Frenchman.”

‘The aristocracy of the skin’

While the French Revolution was a bourgeois revolution, it was poor people in the cities and countryside who fought for it. In Europe, there was as yet no modern working class because there were no big industries. The Industrial Revolution had just started in Britain a few years before with the first cotton spinning machines.

Haiti was different. As James pointed out, “Working and living together in gangs of hundreds on the huge sugar-factories which covered the North Plain, they were closer to a modem proletariat [working class] than any group of workers in existence at the time.”

The French poor hated aristocrats and royalty like Marie Antoinette. But it was the “aristocracy of the skin,” as it became known, that became the most hated. Poor people in Paris found it detestable that people could be enslaved, branded and sold like cattle just because of their skin color.

James wrote, “In these few months of their nearest approach to power [the French poor] did not forget the Blacks. They felt towards them as brothers, and the old slave-owners, whom they knew to be supporters of the counter-revolution, they hated as if Frenchmen themselves had suffered under the whip.

“It was not Paris alone but all revo-

lutionary France. ‘Servants, peasants, workers, the laborers by the day in the fields all over France were filled with a virulent hatred against the ‘aristocracy of the skin’ [James was quoting a supporter of slavery]. There were many so moved by the sufferings of the slaves that they had long ceased to drink coffee, thinking of it as drenched with the blood and sweat of men turned into brutes.”

As the French Revolution went forward, those bourgeois political leaders who opposed radical measures became known as Girondists. They were named for the region surrounding the French port of Bordeaux. Like Liverpool in England, Bordeaux’s economic life depended on the slave trade.

The opponents of the Girondists were known as Jacobins. Most schoolbooks slander Jacobins like Maximilien Robespierre or other radicals like Jean-Paul Marat as bloodthirsty “terrorists.”

But most of the Girondist leaders who talked so grandly about liberty didn’t want to abolish slavery. It was only when Robespierre and the radical Jacobins were in power that slavery was formally ended in all French possessions by the decree of Feb. 4, 1794.

This was a historic measure by France’s National Convention, but it only confirmed the freedom that had already been seized by the enslaved people themselves.

Defending the revolutions

The French Revolution was opposed by all of feudal Europe and by Britain, its commercial rival. Like the Russian Revolution more than a century later, France was invaded on a dozen fronts. The Duke of Brunswick, commander of the Allied Army (principally Austrian and Prussian), issued a manifesto threatening the destruction of Paris.

Although Britain bankrolled some of the armies invading France, its own army was absent. That’s because it was invading Haiti. This move was a disaster for the British ruling class. “By the end of 1796, after three years of war, the British had lost in the West Indies 80,000 soldiers including 40,000 actually dead,” wrote James.

If the British army that invaded Haiti had marched on Paris along with other European powers, the French Revolution might have been crushed. By defending their own freedom in a battle with British invaders, the Haitian people also defended the freedom of 25 million people in France.

“It was the decree of abolition, the bravery of the Black [people], and the ability of their leaders, that had done it,” wrote James. “The great gesture of the French working people towards the Black slaves, against their own white ruling class, had helped to save their revolution from reactionary Europe. Held by Toussaint and his raw levies, singing the Marseillaise and the Ça ira [two revolutionary songs], Britain, the most powerful country in Europe, could not attack the revolution in France.”

In “A History of the British Army,” J.W. Fortescue concluded that people who had been enslaved “had practically destroyed the British Army.” He admitted that “the secret of England’s impotence for the first six years of the war may be said to lie in the two fatal words, St. Domingo [the old name for Haiti].”

Two centuries of revenge

After the French Revolution, the radical Jacobins were overthrown and many were executed. Napoleon Bonaparte eventually seized power and became a military dictator.

Napoleon defeated one European feudal army after another. But he couldn’t conquer Haiti. Napoleon sent an army to Haiti commanded by his brother-in-law, Charles Leclerc, and Toussaint Louverture was kidnapped and died in a French prison.

But as Leclerc wrote to a French government minister: “It is not enough to have taken away Toussaint, there are 2,000 leaders to be taken away.” Leclerc died in Haiti knowing he was defeated. (Aldon Lynn Nielsen, “C.L.R. James: A Critical Introduction”)

Despite massacres that included drowning a thousand Black people at a time, as well as public burnings and hangings, the French army suffered a worse defeat than the British. Out of 34,000 French troops, 24,000 died.

Dessalines declared Haiti’s independence on Jan. 1, 1804. But the world capitalist class has never forgiven Haiti for its revolution. U.S. slave masters had nightmares about leaders in the mold of Dessalines, like Nat Turner who led an 1831 uprising of enslaved people in Virginia. Haiti is still deliberately kept the poorest country in this hemisphere by the United States and other capitalist countries.

But the Haitian Revolution changed history forever.

Tear down the walls

French capitalists use Bastille Day to glorify French colonialism. But socialist revolutionaries should celebrate Bastille Day by demanding that the more than 2 million prisoners locked up in U.S. bastilles be freed, starting with Leonard Peltier, Mumia Abu-Jamal, Dr. Aafia Siddiqui and the MOVE 9.

Bastille Day should also be celebrated because of the Iraqi Revolution that overthrew the U.S.- and British-backed monarchy on Bastille Day — July 14, 1958. Capitalists never forgave Haiti’s revolution and haven’t forgiven Iraq’s people for taking over their own oil. The Pentagon has invaded Iraq twice and still occupies it.

The U.S. capitalist class is as obsolete and useless as the French aristocracy was 228 years ago. Capitalists want to take away health care, privatize Social Security and cut wages even further. A socialist revolution is needed just to stop capitalism from cooking the earth.

The multinational working class in the United States will be forced to rise, as the French and Haitian masses did. An absolutely necessary requirement for success is that millions of white workers, part of this multinational class, break with racism. They need to see, and will see, that they are being used as political cattle by the wealthy and powerful, like Donald Trump, who actually despise them.

Tear down the Bastilles! Down with the aristocracy of the skin! Reparations for Haiti!

Source: C.L.R. James, “The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution.”

get that taken down the others will probably follow in order.

People can go to the webpage (takeemdownnola.org) to keep up with our activities. We are planning to have an anti-white-supremacy-monuments conference here in March of 2018. People should look for the final plans, which should be ready by the end of July. □

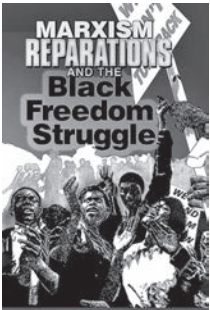
MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper. Edited by Monica Moorehead.

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GRAPHIC BY SAHU BARRON

Russia: a target, not a superpower

By Sara Flounders

The corporate media’s constant use of Cold War terminology to describe the meeting of the U.S. and Russian presidents as a meeting of the “two superpowers” masks the present relationship of forces.

U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir V. Putin met at the Group of 20 summit on July 7 in Hamburg, Germany.

Old preconceptions and terms must be challenged in order to have an accurate view of the present international situation. Russia today, as a capitalist country, is not even a fifth-rate economic power.

The Russian economy is smaller than the economy of Brazil, south Korea or Canada. According to World Bank and International Monetary Fund measurements, Russia now ranks 12th globally in its gross domestic product. This measurement is the market value of goods and services.

Today’s Russian Federation is a vastly different state — socially, politically, economically and militarily — from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of even 27 years ago.

It is important to understand what Russia is today in order to understand the real intent of the constant Russia baiting in the media.

In stockpiled nuclear weapons from the Cold War, the U.S. and the Russian Federation may have somewhat even nuclear firepower — more than enough to incinerate the world in one launch.

But U.S. military expenditures are estimated at 36 percent to almost 50 percent of total global military expenditures. Russia’s expenditures are 4 to 5 percent of the global total.

The Pentagon maintains more than 800 military bases around the world and 300,000 troops stationed outside the U.S. Russia has a naval base in Syria and a few communication centers in former Soviet Republics.

The U.S. Navy has 19 aircraft carriers, each of which includes jet aircraft, helicopters, destroyers and nuclear subs. Russia has one 27-year-old carrier propelled with oil-fired boilers rather than a nuclear reactor.

Russia’s resources a target

Russia is a target of U.S. imperialism because of its vast resources. Eighty percent of Russian exports abroad are now in raw materials, primarily gas and oil. The petroleum industry in Russia is one of the largest in the world. It is the largest exporter of natural gas. Coal, iron, aluminum, precious metals, lumber and cereals are other major exports.

This makes Russia’s economy especially vulnerable to global commodity swings and drastic downturns.

There is an insatiable drive to control Russia’s great wealth by the largest banks and corporations. All currents of the U.S. and Western imperialist ruling class are desperate to have unlimited access to this great stream of profits, which they had fi-

nally laid their hands on just a few years ago. Remember: Imperialism’s very survival depends on expansion and profit.

Photo ops, handshakes and reports of cooperation at the G20 meeting do not change or lessen U.S. imperialism’s desperation to hammer down any form of resistance to its global domination. Any country attempting independent development is immediately targeted.

There is an irresolvable contradiction between the need of the majority of countries in the world to develop their productive forces and the need of Wall Street to maintain its place at the center of the world economy. However, Washington’s position is clearly slipping, despite daily military threats that assert its global dominance.

New Russian capitalists

Privatization campaigns of the 1990s facilitated the transfer of significant Soviet-era wealth to a relatively small group of Russian business oligarchs. These pirates were willing to make the most corrupt deals with the West to maintain their stolen wealth.

As long as Russian politicians and privateers were totally compliant with the devastating looting of the country, they were showered with glowing media coverage. The Group of 7, the largest imperialist countries, invited Russia to join.

The problem for the new capitalist oligarchs is that when the Soviet state was overthrown, there was no room for a new capitalist power in the global economy. All the banks and multinational corporations aggressively moved in to take advantage of the chaos.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, U.S. imperialism and the Western imperialist powers expected to have totally free rein to loot Russia at will. For almost 15 years they did have a free hand. The results in Russia were devastating.

Cost of capitalist restoration

Seumas Milne, a British journalist with the Guardian News, summarized Stephen F. Cohen’s book, “The Failed Crusade,” on this transition to a capitalist economy. Cohen is professor emeritus of Russian studies at New York University and Princeton University.

“In the most cataclysmic peacetime economic collapse of an industrial country in history ... [u]nder the banner of reform and the guidance of American-prescribed shock therapy, perestroika became catastroika.

“Capitalist restoration brought in its wake mass pauperization and unemployment; wild extremes of inequality; rampant crime; virulent anti-Semitism and ethnic violence; combined with legalized gangsterism on a heroic scale and precipitous looting of public assets. ...

“By the late 1990s, national income had fallen by more than 50 percent. ... The market experiment has produced more orphans than Russia’s [20 million-plus] wartime casualties, while epidemics of cholera and typhus have re-emerged, millions of children suffer from

malnutrition and adult life expectancy has plunged.”

The 1990s was a downhill slide from “a centralized, publicly owned economy to ... robber-baron capitalism. ...

“For developing countries, in particular, the destruction of the second superpower — which had championed the anti-colonial movement and later the third-world cause — largely closed off the scope for different alliances and sources of aid and sharply increased their dependence on the West.”

NGOs as Western missionaries

Into the economic chaos and social dislocation came not only Western bankers, stockbrokers, real estate schemers and speculators. Every major corporation, including Rockefeller, Ford and the Soros foundations, religious groups and the U.S. Agency for International Development lavishly funded nongovernmental organizations.

These NGOs set up staffs and funded schools, religious organizations and publications to promote capitalist values, Western “democracy” and civil society and to glorify competition and private property. They wrote property laws and textbooks and were thoroughly enamored with Western capitalism.

The Yale Center for the Study of Globalization reported: “There are at least 600,000 registered non-governmental, non-commercial organizations operating in Russia” in 2005.

Forces in the Russian Duma, the elected assembly, began a nationwide government campaign against foreign-funded NGOs. In 2012 USAID was kicked out of Russia. The “foreign agent” law put 33 percent of Russia’s NGOs out of business in 2013.

NATO expansion

The bankers’ policy was about subjugating and recolonizing not only Russia but all the countries of the former socialist bloc, including the countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Republics.

In order to lock this violent and chaotic transformation in place, the U.S.-commanded military alliance, NATO, was expanded to include every East European country and former Soviet Republic, right up to the borders of Russia. In 2013-14 this untenable absorption came to a crisis over U.S. and German attempts to totally seize Ukraine.

During the years of violent transition to a capitalist economy, the Ukraine had still maintained deep economic ties and extensive trade with Russia, but it also had increasing ties to the European Union. The EU, however, would not settle for sharing Ukraine with Russia. A total break was demanded by the bankers.

U.S. and EU seizure of Ukraine

When Ukraine President Viktor Yanukovich was negotiating about Ukraine’s entrance into the EU, the EU refused to allow Ukraine to continue trading with Russia. It also demanded that Ukraine join NATO. This meant that the Crimea, the home of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet and only warm water port, would be handed over to NATO.

To carry out a coup against the elected Ukrainian government, the Euro-maidan movement, led by neoliberals and fascists, received enormous Western support and funding. The reactionary movement seized the center of the capital, Kiev, and held it for three months. U.S. and West European media and politicians poured into the encampment with unanimous support.

Despite Russian and Ukrainian government efforts to negotiate, and a Russian pledge of debt cancellation and new funds, the elected Ukraine government was labeled “corrupt” and overthrown by a fascist gang, which seized government buildings on Feb. 22, 2014.

Faced with the loss of its only warm water port, Russia took control of the small peninsula and the Russian port in Crimea.

Fearing a wave of privatizations and quick industrial shutdowns that have come with every step of capitalist restructuring, the workers’ movement in Eastern Ukraine, the industrial heartland, seized factories and communication centers in self-defense against the fascist coup in Kiev.

The result was that Russia lost a major trading partner. Its sphere of economic relations became much smaller, and it faced an all-out effort at economic strangulation.

Banks and sanctions

Economic sanctions imposed by the U.S. and EU at this time were specifically designed to hit Russia in its energy sector, where the country is most vulnerable.

Suddenly no U.S. oil company could do business with Russia, nor could any companies sell drilling technology to access oil and gas reserves. The sanctions restrict access to Western financial markets. U.S. banks cannot issue long-term loans to Russian businesses for energy-focused projects.

Russian state banks are now excluded from raising long-term loans in the EU. The U.S. also put sanctions on Russian banks, banning U.S. companies from receiving or loaning money to them.

All this was intended to force the new capitalists around Putin to break with his policies and to submit to a total takeover to protect their own profits.

Russia is now on the defensive, and since 2014 it’s been clear that the imperialists’ plan is total dismemberment. Strengthening the state sector under Putin and tightening controls on foreign-funded NGOs and on capital flight out of the country were a matter of economic survival.

Defense of Syria

The U.S.-led effort to overturn the government in Syria threatens to take another major trading partner away from Russia. Russia’s only naval facility on the Mediterranean is in Syria.

The appeal of the Syrian government to Russia for assistance, after four years of war, tens of thousands of mercenaries and funded extremist forces, and a year of U.S. and 10 other countries bombing Syria, has now led to daily confrontations.

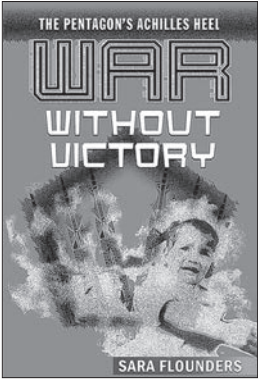
There is a broad agreement that if U.S. plans succeed in overturning the government in Syria, following the overturns that have occurred in Iraq and Libya, then Russia and Iran are undeniably next on the list.

Russia’s assistance to Syria is of a defensive character. Self-defense is a critical link in the global axis of resistance based not on ideology, but necessity. Without Russian help, Syria would have fallen.

But with significant Western funding for development blocked, new avenues have opened. Russia is increasingly relying on China for loans, is now providing 60,000 tons of wheat per month to Venezuela, and has canceled Cuba’s \$30 billion Soviet-era debt.

The growing web of trade and economic relations among economic formations like BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China

Continued on the next page



WAR WITHOUT VICTORY

by Sara Flounders

PentagonAchillesHeel.com

“By revealing the underbelly of the empire, Flounders sheds insight on how to stand up to the imperialist war machine and, in so doing, save ourselves and humanity.”

— Miguel d’Escoto Brockmann,
President, U.N. General Assembly, 2008-2009;
Foreign Minister of Nicaragua’s Sandinista government.

Available at online booksellers.

G20 protests in Hamburg

Save climate, stop war, welcome immigrants!

By John Catalinotto

The recent meeting in Hamburg, Germany, of the so-called Group of 20 — that is, the heads of state of the 20 countries with the largest economies — became the focus of two nights and three days of protest in this industrial and port city on the Elbe River. Forces gathered from all of Europe, including many people born in the global South.

By July 8, when the G20 meeting was ending, some 76,000 demonstrators — by the organizers’ hard count — were marching through Hamburg’s streets. These tens of thousands showed up despite two nights when 20,000 German cops, fitted out like an infantry assault battalion, waged a war of aggression against a more militant wing of the protesters — and against anyone who was in the way of the cops’ charges. (See [Jungewelt.de](#) special on the G20.)

German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s strategy of police intimidation, and the cops’ actions, seemed to backfire. According to some reports, they aroused solidarity with the victims of police brutality and anger at the cops.

There is a difference between the G20 and the G7. The latter gathers the heads

of the imperialist states that colonized the world in the 19th and early 20th centuries and that still exploit labor and land worldwide through their domination of banking, commerce, information, propaganda and especially military power. The G7 includes U.S., Japanese, German, French and British imperialism, along with junior imperialist partners Canada and Italy. These are the imperialist powers responsible for war, climate destruction and worldwide exploitation.

The other 13 countries in the G20, whatever their own inhabitants think of their governments, don’t play the same role in the world, nor do they have a similar monopoly of power. A protest that lumps them all together, then, lacks political clarity.

The July 8 protest’s main demands were for a more stringent restriction of the use of fossil fuels to reduce climate change than provided by the Paris accords, an end to war and war threats, protection of migrant rights and a more just economic policy.

A close reading of hundreds of photographs of the July 8 march through Hamburg revealed an array of demands. “The crisis is called capitalism; Let’s fight together; Another world is possible,”



PHOTO: GABRIELE SENFT

Hamburg, Germany, July 8.

read one big banner.

In one photo, Black and white demonstrators were shown holding placards reading, “Defend human rights; Stop expulsions” in German and “Stop the war against migrants” in French. Other banners displayed the latter slogan in German and English, adding “Refugees are welcome here.”

A banner with a picture of Che Guevara read, “Solidarity is the tenderness of the people” and “Together for a just world.”

The German Communist Party carried

a banner reading: “Peace, Jobs, Solidarity; Fight imperialism!”

While the U.S. president, noted for his overt Islamophobia, misogyny, U.S. chauvinism and pullout from the Paris climate accords, was singled out in these photos less than might be expected, one placard read, “Donald Dump is a Trashist,” and a large banner read, “Women’s March against Trump and the G20.”

More than one banner read, “Capitalism kills.” That’s a succinct start to a struggle for socialism. □

Macron & French proletariat’s radical tradition

By Jim Carey

France will be celebrating its 228th Bastille Day on July 14. This event commemorates the seizure of that notorious political prison by Parisian workers, a major event that led to toppling the Ancien Régime under King Louis XVI and the establishment of the first revolutionary European republic.

The new French President Emmanuel Macron should take the day to reflect on his country’s radical heritage and put some serious thought into his projected “reforms.”

A neoliberal ‘Hail Mary’

The recent French election drew worldwide interest from both the neoliberal es-

tablishment and various international fascists, with the former praying for a Macron victory and the latter cheering for far-right Front National candidate Marine Le Pen. The corporate media have happily reported Le Pen’s embarrassing defeat and the parliamentary majority won by Macron’s new La République En Marche! party.

But actual voters in France didn’t seem interested. While Macron does have the parliamentary support to back his policies, what’s not being discussed in depth is that this “victory” was won in an atmosphere of apathy.

Macron and En Marche! won their “mandate” with the lowest voter turnouts in over 30 years. Despite assurances from imperialist media that Le Pen was no more, she still won 33 percent of the presidential vote, almost double that of her more openly racist and anti-Semitic father in his 2002 run. Le Pen also won six more seats in the National Assembly, an increase from two to eight. Front National may be down, but it is unlikely to be out, especially if Macron keeps his neoliberal promises.

‘Outsider’ as insider

Macron was sold as an outsider by the pro-neoliberal global media. But even a fleeting glance at his record shows this is a ridiculous notion. The En Marche! Party may be just over a year old, but Macron isn’t an unknown who suddenly appeared and swept the people of France off their feet.

Prior to entering public life, Macron was hard at work in the chambers of the powerful Rothschild & Cie Banque. Not one of the world’s largest banks, and certainly red meat for conspiracy-prone supporters of fascists like Le Pen, the bank is still proof of Macron’s close ties to the world of global capital. Macron left the bank in 2008, but not for any altruistic reason. Instead his knowledge of the finance sector helped him in his new position as finance minister under French President François Hollande.

President Hollande was a member of France’s Socialist Party, but the “social-

ist” label is certainly not accurate for this neoliberal-oriented political party. Upon his election in 2012, Hollande consistently proved to be an enemy of the working class, including his compliance with European Union austerity requirements issued by Brussels.

Hollande initially promised to reduce the ratio of France’s borrowing to its gross domestic product by increasing taxes on businesses, primarily large corporations. But by the time Macron was appointed finance minister in 2014, the new austerity plan included making widespread cuts to public programs, from state and local budgets of the previously robust social security system.

The damaging policies that Minister Macron helped enact under Hollande were the groundwork for President Macron’s future plans.

Macron’s continued march toward austerity

Macron has plans that are familiar to anyone who understands the usual strategy of neoliberal technocrats: the government staying true to the ideas of “economic growth” by catering to corporations from the technology and financial sectors.

But that enticement will play out as subsidies and favoritism toward the most wealthy, perhaps even banks fleeing post-Brexit Britain after causing that country’s 2008 economic collapse and forcing austerity there as well.

This grand scheme will be occurring as Macron tries to implement plans to gut French spending for social programs that keep even the bourgeoisie safe. The new government has promised to further cut welfare programs and to change the labor laws to reduce unions and workers’ negotiation power to the level of the individual. Macron has also pledged to cut unemployment — while firing 120,000 government employees.

If Macron does go through with this neoliberal blueprint, he should remember one key point: The people of France, especially in Paris, don’t take attacks like these lying down.

The people’s revolutionary heritage

Macron’s victory was far from the media’s portrayal of a “mandate” by the people. There are other new voices demanding real change, including the left La France Insoumise party, which won 17 seats in the National Assembly, more than twice the eight seats the far-right Front National’s won.

While the new, true socialist voice isn’t enough by itself to counter the presidential agenda, there is another force that is a reliable source of resistance: the French workers.

The people will likely turn out to be Macron’s greatest opposition. This is the lesson that should be drawn from the popular uprising by the citizens of Paris and their victory at the Bastille on July 14, 1789. From that day forward, the French people have lived in a continuous cycle of revolutions that changed their country. From the First Republic of 1792, the July Revolution of 1830, the Paris Commune of 1871 through resistance to Nazi occupation during World War II, the French people have let the ruling class know when they’ve had enough.

Three examples have happened in just the past decade and a half. First, under Macron’s old boss Hollande, Paris was set ablaze last year by uprisings that followed months of mass protests over proposed neoliberal changes in the labor laws, leading to a strike by French transportation workers.

Second, a series of militant uprisings have occurred in the suburbs of Paris where people suffer rampant unemployment and live in desperate poverty, while extreme racism, vile Islamophobia and police brutality target residents, many of them immigrants, from countries formerly colonized by France.

Third, in 2003 the people of France participated in one of the largest global mobilizations against the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Where did the estimated 200,000 marching in Paris end this iconic act of global solidarity against imperialist war? At the site of the Bastille, of course. □

and South Africa), Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) and the Chinese One Belt One Road proposal are all signs of growing efforts among many targeted countries to fight isolation and resist imperialist dismemberment.

During discussion about global warming at the G20 meeting, it was the U.S. colossus that appeared increasingly isolated.

Sole superpower status has not benefited population

Military expenditures continually drain every needed social program in the U.S. But they are extremely profitable for the largest corporations, such as DynCorp International, Boeing, Lockheed Martin and Raytheon.

According to the World Health Organization, U.S. life expectancy, ranked 31st globally, is one of the lowest in developed countries. It is the same for basic education; at 38th, the United States ranks behind every major industrialized country.

The measures for infant mortality, maternity care, housing and infrastructure reflect the true cost at home of U.S. imperialism’s determination to loot the world. □

DPRK statement on missile test

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (north Korea) released a statement July 7 on the country's test-firing of an intercontinental ballistic missile, the Hwasong-14, which succeeded on its very first trial.

Hailing the event as "a brilliant victory achieved by the army and people of the DPRK in their more than half-a-century-long anti-imperialist, anti-U.S. showdown," the ministry said this heroic deed "provided a reliable guarantee of peace and stability of the Korean peninsula and the region. However, the U.S. is condemning the DPRK's test-fire as a 'global threat' and is scheming to increase the international sanctions and pressure on the country to the top notch."

The statement continues: "The DPRK makes it clear once again that its development of inter-continental ballistic rocket is an option taken to defend itself by completely terminating the hostile policy and nuclear war threat of the U.S. which have lasted for decades.

"There are several nuclear weapons states in the world today, but the U.S. is the one and only country that makes it its daily business to impose constant nuclear threat upon the DPRK.

"The issue of the DPRK's nukes and ballistic rocket is an issue confined to the DPRK and the U.S., and the test-fire of the inter-continental ballistic rocket conducted by the DPRK this time is a 'gift package' addressed to none other than the U.S.

"No other ICBM state had been more transparent than the DPRK in the development and test-fire of inter-continental ballistic rocket.

"The DPRK officially announced that it would commence the development of inter-continental ballistic rocket as it was the inevitable choice for the country to cope with ever-increasing nuclear threat from the U.S. and opened to public the entire process of combustion test and static firing test of the engine and the actual test-fire of the rocket, and even sensitive information such as tactical and technical data and specifications.

"That is because the DPRK's inter-continental ballistic rocket is an unquestion-

Oakland

'Defund OPD'

Continued from page 3

ing, had led an action at the June 26 City Council budget meeting, when the Conservative Caucus had originally planned to push through their budget. After declaring during public comment that they wanted to lock down a people's budget, supporters locked themselves to the gates between public seating and the council dais.

The packed council chambers then erupted as hundreds of people stood up chanting "Defund OPD!" and "Get up! Get down! There's a housing crisis in this town!" Council President Larry Reid led the council out of chambers as the audience declared victory in having shut the budget proceedings, and the council meeting, down. Reid briefly returned after the people had filed out, forced to officially adjourn the session. □

able nuclear war deterrent which is fundamentally different from the military equipment for aggressive war developed in strict confidence by the U.S. with the wild ambition to dominate the world by means of surprise attack on other nations.

"Nonetheless, the U.S. is branding the DPRK's legitimate and righteous measure for self-defense as a 'global threat' and calling for 'global action' against it. This is an explicit illustration of Trump's 'America First Policy' that seeks its own interests by sacrificing others.

"The mugger's mentality that tries to engage the entire world in opposing a sovereign state for the reason that the state incurred its displeasure will never find acceptance among any sensible people and independent countries.

"The complete success in the test-fire of inter-continental ballistic rocket Hwasong-14 significantly enhanced the efficiency of the DPRK's nuclear force as a war deterrent, thereby more reliably ensuring peace and security in and around the Korean peninsula.

"Now that the DPRK's ability to strike the very heart of the U.S. at any given time has been physically proved, the U.S. would find it more difficult to dare attack the DPRK.

"Herein lies the world historical significance of the measures taken by the DPRK that has strengthened the powerful nuclear war deterrence in every dimension in pursuance of the new line of simultaneously developing the two fronts in the face of persistent pressure and sanctions by the hostile forces.

"And this is the only way to defend oneself and safeguard the dignity of the nation in the present hostile world where the law of the jungle prevails.

"It is high time the U.S. completely reoriented its strategic viewpoint on the DPRK, and it should give up its hostile policy against the latter and put a definite end to its nuclear threat and blackmail without further delay.

"As has been declared by respected Supreme Leader Comrade Kim Jong Un, the DPRK will neither put its nukes and ballistic missiles on the negotiating table in any case nor flinch even an inch from the road of bolstering its nuclear force unless the hostile policy and nuclear threat of the U.S. against the DPRK are thoroughly eradicated.

"The U.S. will receive more 'gift packages' of different sizes from the DPRK in endless succession, as it tries harder to destroy, by means of sanctions and pressure, the overall national power and strategic position of the DPRK which have been drastically boosted."

So there it is. The Koreans dare to speak truth to power. They don't use the kind of honeyed "diplomatic" language that is intended to prettify and conceal the brutal policies of a predatory imperialist power.

For this they are viciously attacked by the U.S. capitalist media and politicians of all stripes, who never say an unkind word about the 7,000 nuclear warheads stored by the Pentagon or the more than half a TRILLION dollars stolen every year from the people of the U.S. in order to feed the military-industrial-banking complex.

Thank you, Korean comrades, for your courage to tell it like it is.

— **Deirdre Griswold,**
Editor, Workers World

Chicago

Trans Liberation #NoJusticeNoPride



PHOTO: LOVE & STRUGGLE PHOTOS

On June 25, the Trans Liberation Collective led a coalition of accomplices to shut down the Chicago Pride Parade for fifteen minutes, demanding an end to the parade as it exists in its current form, and for a celebration to take its place to bring Pride back to its roots, honoring trans women of color and recognizing the police as an oppositional force to queer and trans liberation. TLC groups included the BTGNC (Black, Trans, Gender Nonconforming) Collective, Black Lives Matter Chicago, Jewish Voice for Peace, Assata's Daughters, the Pilsen Alliance and others.

Pilsen Alliance created puppets of Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera to march along with the group of protesters, visibly bringing them into the space and centering their legacy as the mothers of Pride. A statement from organizers declared: "Trans people are the vanguard of the queer liberation movement. We demand more resources, facilities, funding, and access for Black and Brown trans people in Chicago!" A full list of TLC demands, including solidarity with other freedom struggles, is at tinyurl.com/y6vscnqy

— Report by Erica Anna

Big turnout against hate in Berkeley



By Terri Kay

More than 200 people turned out for a public forum dubbed United Against Hate in Berkeley, Calif., on July 7. The forum was organized in response to numerous attacks, centered in Berkeley but spread throughout the Bay Area, by right-wing extremists and Zionists. Many of the attacks have targeted Muslims and Palestinians in particular.

Forum speakers included Tur-Ha Ak, Anti Police-Terror Project; Lara Kiswani, Arab Resource and Organizing Center; Judith Mirkinson, National Lawyers Guild San Francisco Bay Area chapter vice president; and Daniella, AF3IRM and Northern California Anti-Racist Action. Moderator Sara Kershner explained how Identity Evropa and the Traditionalist Workers Party, among others, have been targeting the Bay Area and are explicitly white supremacist.

Ak talked about how Berkeley Mayor

Jesse Arreguin has received thousands of death threats, to the point where he had to hire a security detail, but has yet to even put out a press release about it. Ak charged that the Berkeley Police Department is complicit with the alt-right. People were urged to attend Arreguin's state of the city address on July 9 to hold him accountable for letting the alt-right in and for renewing the contract for Urban Shield, a program promoting the militarization of police forces.

Kiswani highlighted the cases of Rabab Abdulhadi, a San Francisco State University professor targeted by Zionists and under intense harassment, and Reem's Bakery in Oakland, Calif., where Zionists have targeted Reem Assil's new venture and have attacked her, the workers and the bakery.

The forum organizers are calling for a march on Aug. 5 and asking for court support on Aug. 10 for Eric Clanton, an Antifa activist facing trumped-up charges. □

Venezuelan independence celebrated

By **Stevan Kirschbaum**
Boston

The Consulate General of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Boston, led by acting Consul General Omar Sierra, hosted a Celebration of Venezuelan Independence on July 7 at the Community Church of Boston. The evening began with a meal of traditional Venezuelan delicacies and music.

Representatives from several Latin American and Caribbean consulates joined a packed hall of supporters and solidarity activists, including representatives from the U.S.-Venezuela Solidarity Committee Boston; United Steelworkers, Local 8751, Boston School Bus Union; the July 26 Coalition; the Boston Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador; Fanmi Lavalas Boston; Workers World Party; Bishop Filipe Teixeira; as well as activist leaders from Puerto Rico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Mexico, Peru and more.

In the keynote address, Sierra gave a detailed update of current events as well as a history of the Bolivarian Revolution. He reported on the well-orchestrated and financed right-wing attempts to overthrow the democratically elected government of President Nicolás Maduro. This criminal campaign of terrorism has included shootings, stabbings and setting government supporters on fire, as well as wholesale economic sabotage targeting food, transportation, etc.

In discussing Venezuelan history, Sierra gave special recognition to the deep bonds of solidarity with Haiti, dating back to Haiti’s 1804 successful slave revolution and the Haitian people’s indispensable concrete solidarity to Venezuelan military and political leader Simón Bolívar. On July 29 at 4 p.m. at Encuentro 5, 9 Hamilton Place, the U.S.-Venezuela Solidarity Committee will present “Affirming Life in Venezuela, Seeds of Solidarity” featuring Omar Sierra and Jorge Marín.



Misoginia de Trump, pilar del capitalismo

Continua de página 12

en gran parte negra, es de 7.9. Compare eso con la tasa de Cuba de 4.3 en 2016. (Ministerio de Salud de Cuba, 1 de enero) ¿Por qué la diferencia? Cuba es un país socialista revolucionario que nacionalizó las grandes haciendas y negocios, muchos de propiedad EUA, a partir de 1960, para poder brindar atención médica universal y educación gratuita, luchando por erradicar todas las formas de racismo y chovinismo contra las mujeres y las personas LGBTT. Pone sus recursos donde está su política de principios, a pesar del bloqueo de Washington.

Mientras que sólo el socialismo revolucionario puede sentar las bases para acabar con todas las formas de opresión, incluyendo el odio a las mujeres, mucho puede ser y ha sido ganado bajo este sistema a través de la lucha. Cuando esta escritora investigó la brecha salarial en 1970, era de 59 centavos por dólar.

Pero es esencial recordar que nuestros reñidos logros pueden ser revertidos por reaccionarios como Trump y su banda de guerreristas y billonarios si no seguimos luchando. Ellos controlan el estado, por lo que la destrucción de éste tiene que ser nuestro objetivo final mientras luchamos por acabar con el sexismo, el racismo, los ataques contra LGBTT y todas las formas de explotación y opresión. □

Pictured (l-r) are Local 8751 Recording Secretary Claude “Tou Tou” St. Germain and President Andre François, Omar Sierra, Local 8751 steward Robert Traynham and Vice President Steve Kirschbaum. Local 8751 has sent union solidarity delegations to Venezuela, participated in welcoming President Maduro to Hostos College in New York City and has gone on record denouncing the U.S./CIA role in destabilization, coup attempts and the funding of right-wing violence.

U.S. imperialism: Hands off Venezuela!



Serbian autoworkers strike Fiat Chrysler

By **Martha Grevatt**

Over 2,000 autoworkers have been on strike against Fiat Chrysler Automobiles in Kragujevac, Republic of Serbia, since June 26. They are demanding pay increases of 38,000 dinars to 45,000 dinars, roughly equal to \$360 to \$427, and an end to indiscriminate firings. Last year, an entire shift of workers was laid off, affecting not only the laid-off workers but also those in the plant who then had a higher workload. Additional demands center on lack of paid maternity and long-term illness leave and the failure of FCA to pay a negotiated bonus in 2016.

The strike has been successful, with only 250 white-collar workers staying in the plant. Fiat, in violation of Serbian labor law, is refusing to negotiate.

Jugoslav Ristic, chair of the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions, which represents a majority of the striking

workers, says the Kragujevac strike was inspired by a recent strike. Workers in Kragujevac at Magneti-Marelli, an Italian auto parts supplier that FCA took over in 1967, struck for and won wage parity with workers in the FCA assembly plant.

Kragujevac has for years been labeled “Serbia’s Detroit.” It had been nearly destroyed during the 1999 U.S.-NATO war on the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia and its subsequent breakup, foreign auto companies took over the country’s auto industry.

The struck plant, first opened in 1955, manufactured vehicles with Fiat, Zastava and Yugo brand names. It was nearly destroyed during the 1999 war. Fiat purchased in it 2008. Since then, FCA has used the threat to move work from Ita-

ly to Serbia, where wages are lower, as a club against Italian unions to force them to agree to concessions.

The Regional Solidarity Council, comprised of unions in all the republics of the former Yugoslavia, as well as a group of FCA plant shop stewards in Italy, have sent messages of support. “We can and we must say no to [FCA CEO Sergio] Marchionne,” the Italians declared.

Marchionne is disliked by FCA workers everywhere, from Europe to Latin America, to the U.S. and Canada. “Hell no, Sergio” was a slogan members of the United Auto Workers came up with during a “Vote no” campaign that defeated a concessionary national contract in 2015.

Grevatt is a 30-year UAW FCA worker.

Letter to the editor Travel challenge to Cuba

The first time I heard about Cuba was from my Dad, when I asked him why his cigar was more special than the others he would smoke with his pals. The second time was in the form of the Che Guevara T-shirt, which by the mid-2000s had already become a clichéd joke.

When I told a relative about my upcoming trip there, she explained her personal vendetta against Fidel Castro, who she blamed for ruining her 1959 summer vacation. Others want to talk about the old-timey cars. Personally, I’m interested in seeing if the economic woes of the Cuban people are as bad as the U.S. news media makes them out to be.

These anecdotes exhibit common tropes of how people in the U.S. view their Caribbean neighbor. The cigar represents the decadent Havana nightlife that existed in the American psyche prior to the Revolution. El Che represents the heroism of the Cuban Revolution, an ideal which, when confronted by the fact that Comrade Che and Company were real people who inhabited the real world, leaves over-idealistic communists feeling betrayed. The ruined vacation represents the animosity U.S. patriots and certain Cuban expats feel toward Fidel Castro. And the cars represent the idea that Cuba is simultaneously past its prime and stuck in time.

As a Communist myself, Cuba represents a model of “actually existing” socialism along with China, Vietnam and north Korea. These countries have adapted to the end of the Cold War in separate ways, but, in my opinion, Cuba has retained the most similarities to the old Soviet-style planned economies.

I can read about the USSR of old and the Cuba of today, but that cannot compare to seeing it. I am very curious and excited to see how a planned economy plays out on the ground.

There’s a good chance that once I return to the U.S., I’ll have lost my health coverage, but I’ll still be able to buy over-

the-counter medicine from any convenience store. Compare that to a country with universal health care and some of the best-trained doctors in the world, but with critical shortages in over-the-counter medicine.

I know that like all tropes, none of these impressions of a country come anywhere close to representing the truth. But it’s a good idea to take account of symbolic baggage in an attempt to leave it at the door.

By this time next month, I will have joined the 27th Friendshipment Caravan to Cuba. This is a project of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization/Pastors for Peace. IFCO was founded by progressive churches in 1967 to practice an activist form of Christianity. In 1992, it organized the first caravan to protest the so-called Cuban Democracy Act, which updated the U.S. blockade against the country.

During the Cold War, Cuba was able to receive aid and goods from the USSR, but afterwards the country was left to fend for itself and suffered severe shortages of essential goods. The caravanistas delivered 15 tons of humanitarian aid, including powdered milk, medicines, Bibles, bicycles, and school supplies. This aid increased year after year, despite often being detained and fined by U.S. officials.

In a brave act of defiance, IFCO has refused to apply for an official license to deliver aid, recognizing that these licenses are really an attempt to manipulate the Cuban government into accepting “regime change.” The caravanistas have continued this direct action even after the Obama détente, which made travel to Cuba easier for U.S. citizens.

Now that Trump has started to reverse some elements of the U.S.-Cuba thaw, we are unsure of what sort of response we can expect from his State Department. But we are sure that we will challenge it!

—Tyler Vosgerchian



PHOTO: JOE CATRON

Pentágono amenaza expandir guerra contra Siria

Por Sara Flounders

Mientras el peligro de una seria conflagración en Siria sigue creciendo, el silencio de los medios corporativos y el establecimiento político es ominoso.

Estados Unidos ha lanzado decenas de miles de bombas sobre Siria y enviado miles de soldados estadounidenses a la región. Las grandes potencias mundiales ya están involucradas.

El gobierno de Donald Trump amenazó con una escalada peligrosa el 26 de junio cuando el secretario de prensa Sean Spicer afirmó que las fuerzas del gobierno sirio estaban planeando organizar un ataque químico y Washington haría que Siria pagara un alto precio.

El anuncio fue hecho sin una pizca de evidencia. En vez, alegaban vagamente que la inteligencia EUA había “identificado posibles preparativos” para un ataque químico. Éstos muy familiares, después del falso pretexto para la invasión de Irak en 2003.

La declaración de la Casa Blanca fue seguida inmediatamente por un tuit de la Embajadora de Estados Unidos ante las Naciones Unidas, Nikki Haley: “Cualquier otro ataque hecho al pueblo de Siria, Assad será el culpable, pero también Rusia e Irán”. Expresando que a pesar de sus ataques con bombas y pese atraer a otros 10 países a la guerra, el plan de Washington para el cambio de régimen ha fracasado.

Siguiendo la declaración de la Casa Blanca, un grupo contrarrevolucionario, Failaq al-Rahman, acusó al ejército sirio de usar cloro gaseoso contra sus combatientes en las batallas al este de Damasco. Los militares sirios inmediatamente negaron estos cargos, calificándolos de fabricados.

El grupo que hace esta acusación es un ex recipiente de ayuda y equipo mil-

itar EUA afiliado al Ejército Sirio Libre, otro cliente de Washington. Afirmaron que más de 30 personas sufrieron asfixia resultado de un ataque en Ain Tarma, un suburbio de Damasco.

El grupo, aliado a las fuerzas de al-Qaida, ha estado luchando contra el gobierno sirio y las fuerzas rivales de la oposición en un caótico conflicto interno en un enclave insurgente en Ghouta del este. Miles de cohetes y proyectiles de mortero han sido disparados desde ese enclave hacia Damasco en los últimos años.

No sólo las facciones contrarrevolucionarias en Siria luchan entre sí, sino que también los departamentos del gobierno de EUA están en desacuerdo. Según Fox News, el 27 de junio, “varios funcionarios del Departamento de Estado que normalmente participan en la coordinación de dichos anuncios le dijeron a Prensa Asociada que fueron sorprendidos completamente por la advertencia, que no parecía haber sido discutida de antemano con otras agencias de seguridad nacional”.

El secretario de Defensa británico, Michael Fallon, dijo que EUA no había compartido ninguna evidencia de amenaza de un ataque con armas químicas.

Crece autocensura de los medios

Los principales medios de comunicación corporativos dieron cobertura a los cargos infundados contra Siria. Pero las preguntas y la controversia estaban ocultas dentro de los artículos.

Suprimido por los principales medios corporativos en EUA y Bretaña fue una exposición publicada el 25 de junio, un día antes de la declaración de la Casa Blanca, por el premiado periodista de investigación Seymour Hersh.

Hersh disputó la afirmación de EUA de que el gobierno sirio había lanzado un ataque de gas sarín en abril. Según Hersh,

sólo la publicación alemana, die WELT, estaba dispuesta a publicar el hecho de que Trump había ignorado los informes de inteligencia de las agencias EUA cuando ordenó un ataque de misiles “Tomahawk” contra la base aérea siria el 6 de abril.

Hersh no es ni revolucionario ni periodista de izquierda. Nunca ataca al imperialismo EUA en general. Pero sus revelaciones cuidadosamente calibradas, generalmente divulgadas en las principales publicaciones estadounidenses y británicas, han criticado actos atroces en las guerras EUA, como la masacre en My Lai, Vietnam, en 1969.

Los principales medios de comunicación estadounidenses y británicos publicaron sus revelaciones sobre Korean Air 007 en 1986, la exposición del arsenal nuclear de Israel en 1991 y el bombardeo del presidente Bill Clinton contra la fábrica farmacéutica Al Shifa en Sudán. En 2004, informó sobre la tortura sistemática de cientos de detenidos en la cárcel de Abu Ghraib, en Irak.

Las revelaciones y análisis de Hersh han ganado el Premio Pulitzer, el Premio Polk y el Premio Nacional del Libro. Sin embargo, tuvo que ir a Alemania para publicar su última revelación.

Que ninguna de las principales publicaciones estadounidenses o británicas lo toque muestra un amplio apoyo de la clase dominante a los niveles más altos a una guerra continuada y ampliada de EUA contra Siria. Esto también fue demostrado por el aplauso general de los políticos republicanos y demócratas, así como los medios corporativos cuando Trump lanzó el ataque del 6 de abril. Lo describieron como “presidencial”.

Fue el primer elogio desde la elección por parte del senador demócrata Chuck Schumer y la líder demócrata de la minoría de la Cámara, Nancy Pelosi.

Frustración con el éxito del gobierno de Siria

La nueva acusación de un “potencial” ataque con gas se produce en medio de la creciente frustración estadounidense después del fracaso de años de esfuerzos encubiertos por derrocar al gobierno soberano de Siria.

La ayuda encaminada a través de Arabia Saudita, Turquía, Qatar y los Emiratos Árabes Unidos a decenas de miles de fuerzas mercenarias y reaccionarias tampoco ha logrado derribar al gobierno de Damasco.

La guerra ha desplazado casi a un tercio de la población siria y creado millones de refugiadas/os. Pero el éxito del gobierno sirio muestra que se beneficia de la profunda determinación de millones de sirias/os para mantener a Siria como un estado secular y soberano.

En septiembre de 2014, la administración Obama comenzó el bombardeo directo de Siria, alegando que estaba persiguiendo al grupo Estado Islámico (EI). El gobierno sirio se ha opuesto sistemáticamente a esta intervención militar directa y a la pasada intervención encubierta.

El Pentágono luego atrajo a Bretaña, Francia, Turquía, Australia, Arabia Saudita, Emiratos Árabes Unidos, Qatar, Jordania y Marruecos a su campaña aérea. Después de un año de bombardeos, el gobierno sirio apeló a Rusia para apoyo aéreo.

Israel también ha aprovechado todas las oportunidades para bombardear las fuerzas del gobierno sirio, la última, el 1 de julio.

Nuevas provocaciones

En mayo, militares EUA atacaron a las fuerzas terrestres sirias cerca del cruce de Al Tanf en la frontera entre Irak y Siria. Los sirios participaban en una

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Misoginia de Trump, pilar del capitalismo

Por Sue Davis

Cuando el presidente Donald Trump criticó la apariencia y la inteligencia de Mika Brzezinski, co-anfitriona del programa de MSNBC “Morning Joe”, señaló los dos tipos de viejas censuras contra las mujeres.

Aunque su ataque fue inmediatamente denunciado - por mujeres de ambos lados del Congreso y por grupos de derechos de mujeres - Trump no hubiera alardeado de su repugnante odio a la mujer si el patriarcado no fuera uno de los pilares del capitalismo.

Desigualdad de la mujer en EUA

Ejemplos de desigualdad de la mujer en EUA comienzan con la brecha salarial. Las últimas estadísticas muestran que las mujeres ganan 80 centavos por cada dólar que un hombre blanco gana, aunque las mujeres (y los hombres) de color ganan aún menos. El Instituto de Investigación sobre Políticas para la Mujer estima que no será hasta 2059 que las mujeres blancas alcanzarán paridad salarial, mientras que las negras esperarán hasta 2124 y las latinas hasta 2248. ¡Obsceno robo!

Eso significa que todas las empresas, corporaciones y tiendas por igual, roban

por lo menos 20 centavos de cada dólar que gana una mujer. Según las últimas estadísticas del Departamento de Trabajo, a partir de 2010, las mujeres representaban el 47 por ciento de la mano de obra total de EUA: 72 millones de trabajadoras, o 58,6 por ciento de las 123 millones de mujeres de 16 años o más.

No es de extrañar que la clase dominante no quiera una legislación que garantice una amplia licencia de progenitores, cuidado gratuito de niñas/os y cuidado de salud universal. No es de extrañar que uno de los principales medios que las mujeres tienen para el control de sus vidas - el control de la natalidad - está en las barricadas. No es de extrañar que las transexuales de color sean las víctimas de ataques transfóbicos y asesinatos. No es de extrañar que “cada nueve segundos una mujer en EUA es agredida o golpeada”, informa la Coalición Nacional Contra la Violencia Doméstica, mientras Trump planea recortar sus fondos. No es de extrañar que el capitalismo EUA aplique su poderío militar para intimidar al resto del mundo a que cumpla su mandato, afectando desproporcionadamente a las mujeres y sus hijas/os.

El uso y el abuso del poder y el control son parte integrante de la sociedad

de clase capitalista, ya sea en la sala de juntas o en el dormitorio, ya sea por medio de leyes fiscales que favorezcan a los ricos o con salarios bajos que mantienen a los pobres en pobreza, ya sea la policía asesina o un puño brutal en la casa. No se puede separar el patriarcado - el privilegio de los hombres sobre el derecho a controlar a la mujer como su propiedad privada - del capitalismo, que mantiene el poder a través de la propiedad privada.

La lucha continúa

La nominación de Eric Dreiband por Trump el 29 de junio para dirigir la División de Derechos Civiles del Departamento de Justicia es otro ejemplo de su misoginia. Al igual que todos sus nombramientos al gabinete y varios departamentos - que se oponen a la premisa misma de su cargo - Dreiband ha pasado su carrera corporativa oponiéndose a los derechos civiles. No sólo representó al arzobispo católico de Washington, DC, en el caso 2014 de la iglesia contra el beneficio de control de natalidad de la Ley de Asistencia Asequible, sino que defendió a la Universidad de Carolina del Norte en una demanda relacionada con HB 2, la discriminatoria “ley del baño”.

Dreiband “tiene vocación de ir contra

las mujeres y los derechos LGBT”, dijo Jesselyn McCurdy, subdirectora de la oficina legislativa de la Unión Americana de Libertades Civiles. Vanita Gupta, ex jefa de la División de Derechos Civiles, dijo: “Quien lidere la joya de la corona” del DOJ debe tener una profunda y perdurable fe en las leyes de derechos civiles de nuestra nación ... derechos por los que la gente ha muerto”. Llamado Dreiband “lamentablemente no cualificado” porque no tiene experiencia en “derechos de voto, reforma policial, vivienda, educación y crímenes de odio”. (Rewire, 29 de junio)

En todas las escalas internacionales de medición, ya sea la representación de las mujeres en el gobierno, los niveles de vida, la longevidad o la mortalidad infantil, EUA está cerca del final de la lista de 40 naciones industriales.

Tome la mortalidad infantil. Un informe de nbcnews.com el 21 de marzo señaló que la tasa de muerte por cada 1.000 nacidos vivos en EUA disminuyó de 6,9 en 2005 a 5,8 en 2014 - una disminución del 15 por ciento, según el Centro Nacional de Estadísticas de Salud. Pero es una vergüenza nacional que la tasa en la capital de la nación, una ciudad

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