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Oscar López en Filadelfia • Mensajes de solidaridad 12

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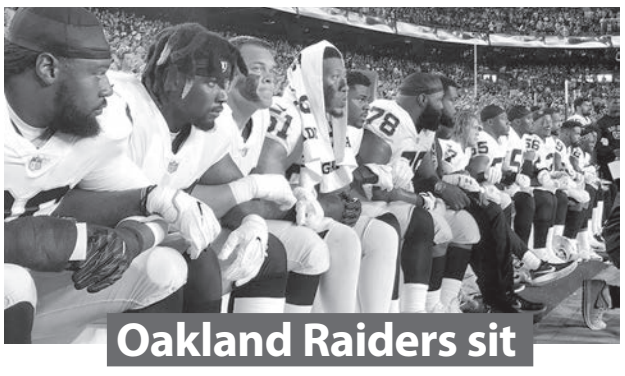
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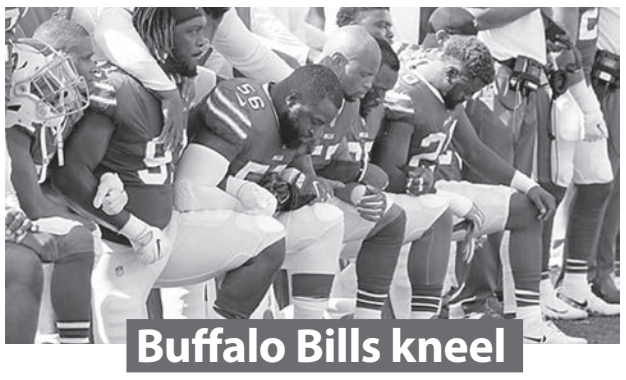
Buffalo Bills kneel

Miami Dolphins 4 Kaepernick

Racist rants backfire

Athletes resist Trump

By Monica Moorehead

Sept. 25 — In an unprecedented display of solidarity, over 200 National Football League players from the vast majority of its 32 teams knelt, sat, raised fists and/or locked arms, along with their coaches and staff members, during the U.S. national anthem at NFL games on Sept. 24. They were protesting — from a range of perspectives — Donald Trump's divisive, inflammatory, racist, anti-woman and anti-worker Twitter remarks made on Sept. 22. (newser.com)

Trump made an attempt on Sept. 25 to not only soften the blow of the protest but to also divide the protesters by expressing approval for those who locked arms, but not those who knelt.

Trump's bigotry caused a 2,000 percent spike in NFL protests a week after "NFL Sunday" on Sept. 17. That spike didn't include protests at the Sept. 25 Monday Night Football game between the Dallas Cowboys and Arizona Cardinals, with both teams locking arms.

Trump sparked righteous anger and outrage among players and nationally when he ranted Sept. 22 at a Republican rally in Huntsville, Ala.: "Wouldn't you love to see one of these NFL owners, when somebody disrespects our flag, to say, 'Get that son of a b—— off the field right now. Out. He's fired! He's fired!"

Trump's tirade was a follow-up to his attacks singling out Colin Kaepernick. In the NFL's 2016 season, the Black former San Francisco 49ers star quarterback took a knee during the national anthem to protest police brutality and other forms of social injustice. Kaepernick also called Trump a racist, someone who — along with Hillary Clinton — was not worth voting for. Kaepernick's actions reflect the truth that many vaunted Black NFL players have their own stories to tell of experiencing bigoted police violence at very young ages.

Trump's racist tirade focused on a league where at least 70 percent of the players are African American, but 83 percent of the fan base is white. No African Americans are majority owners of an NFL team, and there are no African-American CEOs or presidents in the league. (football.realgm.com)

That Kaepernick is currently unemployed — essentially "fired" — has led to calls for an NFL season boycott by supporters who say he is being white-balled by team owners. On the flip side, Kaepernick was just voted the NFL Players Association most valuable player for his charitable work in Black and Brown communities, especially for his Know Your Rights seminars that empower oppressed youth.

Continued on page 3

UNNATURAL DISASTERS

CUBA Socialist recovery underway 9

MEXICO Message to the people 11

PUERTO RICO Colonialism magnifies catastrophe 8

Trans student leader killed by cops 4

Resisting racism and fascism 6-7

Korea faces down U.S. aggression 10

The truth about Vietnam *Editorial* 10

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Named for her father

Ilyasah Al-Shabazz tours Malcolm X Library

By Gloria Verdieu
San Diego

Ilyasah Al-Shabazz, daughter of Malcolm X, visited the Malcolm X Library and Performing Arts Center in San Diego for the first time on Sept. 14. Shabazz came to the city for a speaking engagement at the Aztec Student Union Center at San Diego State University. The Rev. Shane Harris, local chapter president of the National Action Network, arranged for her to meet with the Friends of the Malcolm X Library and to tour the only public library in the U.S. named after her father.

The Friends of the Malcolm X Library, including this writer, its staff, members of the community and some of the local media were there to greet Shabazz as she entered the library. Cell-phone cameras were flashing as she began the tour, led by library branch manager Lavonda Shaw. First was a viewing of the bust of Malcolm X and portraits of Malcolm X and Betty Shabazz mounted near one of the library's entrances.

Cameras flashed as Shabazz observed the indoor fountain, which contains a quote by Malcolm X that reads: "I have often reflected on the new vistas that reading opened to me. As I see it today the ability to read awoke inside me some long dormant craving to be mentally alive." The group moved to the children's section, where Shabazz knelt and gave a high-five to a youngster using a computer. The tour ended in the Teen Center.

After the tour, Shabazz returned to the bust of her father, and took pictures with individuals and groups for nearly 30 minutes. The group then headed to the performance annex, where she spoke. One of the first issues that Shabazz addressed was about homeless people sleeping on the streets: "It is really surprising to me. If I lived here that would be something I would work on because I can't bear to see someone homeless."

Dr. Betty Shabazz spoke at library opening

Shabazz said she had not known what to expect. She added: "It's definitely heartwarming. It's beautiful. It's wonderful. I feel empowered. ... I am sure my mother was very happy about this library being named after her husband. I love my people, and I understand that you are a reflection of me and I am a reflection of you."

PHOTO: KIM PHILLIPS-PEA

Left to-right: Gloria Verdieu, Brenda DeFlanders, Apollo Olango, Carmen Miner, Ilyasah Shabazz, Rev. Shane Harris, Joan Conliffe and Johnnierene' Nelson.

It has been over 21 years since Dr. Betty Shabazz, Malcolm X's spouse, toured this library and was the keynote speaker at its opening in the Valencia Park community on Jan. 6, 1996. She commented then on the fountain, the children's reading tower and the computer stations that were wired for internet connections.

During an interview at that time, Dr. Shabazz said that she was tremendously pleased that a library had been named after her spouse nearly 31 years after his slaying in New York and that she was wondering why someone else hadn't thought of a library since so much of Malcolm X's transitional phase could be traced back to the library.

Present during the daughter's visit was Apollo Olango, brother of Alfred Olango, an unarmed Ugandan immigrant who was killed by El Cajon, Calif., police on Sept. 27, 2016. El Cajon is a suburb of San Diego. The Olango family has launched the Alfred Olango Justice and Unity Foundation to honor their beloved relative. As it continues to expand, the foundation's goal is to bring justice and unity to the world.

Ilyasah Al-Shabazz is a community organizer, social activist, motivational speaker and author based in New York City. Her official website is www.ilyasahshabazz.com.

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The U.S. is the richest country in the world, yet no one has a guaranteed right to shelter, food, water, health care, education or anything else — unless they can pay for it. Wages are lower than ever, and youth are saddled with seemingly insurmountable student debt, if they even make it to college. Black and Brown youth and trans people are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis.

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WORKERS WORLD
this week

★ In the U.S.

Athletes resist Trump 1
San Diego: Ilyasah Al-Shabazz tours Malcolm X Library 2
'Colonialism is a crime against humanity' 3
Protesters stand with Colin Kaepernick 3
Atlanta: Cops kill campus Pride leader 4
Cops, capitalism and the massacre of trans people 4
NYC: Who's the biggest slumlord? 4
San Diego: An epidemic hits homeless population 5
Michigan unions fight union-busting 5
Immigrant prisoners demand minimum wage 5
Hundreds protect cop killing of deaf neighbor 6
'No hate in the Bay!' 6
Chicago forum against fascist attacks 6
Coming down 'by any means necessary' 7
St. Louis protests expose brutal cops 7
Solidarity with St. Louis community 7
Cuba solidarity organizers to meet in Seattle 9
WWP/MO: Solidarity message to the people of Mexico ... 11

★ Around the world

Puerto Rico: Devastated by hurricanes, colonialism 8
Protesters demand sovereignty for Puerto Rico 8
Banks keep Puerto Rico in the dark 8
Cuba rebuilds despite U.S. blockade 9
France: Workers battle government's assault 9
U.S. continues threats against DPRK 10
Rallies denounce sanctions on Zimbabwe 11

★ Editorial

Vietnam: Truth and 'documentary' 10

★ Noticias en Español

'El colonialismo es un crimen contra la humanidad' 12
Mensaje de solidaridad con Mexico 12
Mensaje de solidaridad con Puerto Rico 12

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Oscar López Rivera in Philly

‘Colonialism is a crime against humanity’

WW PHOTOS: JOE PIETTE

By Christa Rivers
Philadelphia

“Colonialism is a crime against humanity.” These words, from Puerto Rican freedom fighter Oscar López Rivera, ring even truer in the aftermath of Irma and Maria. These hurricanes tore through and left behind vast destruction on Caribbean islands that continue to be ravaged by colonialism and imperialism.

López Rivera was speaking on Sept. 18 to a diverse crowd of over 200 people at Taller Puertorriqueño, a community and cultural center in North Philadelphia. He was the honored guest of the National Boricua Human Rights Network. When the former political prisoner entered the room, the crowd stood, erupting into cheers and began chanting, “Se siente, se siente, Oscar esta presente!”

A message was delivered from prisoners at Graterford Prison in Pennsylvania who wished to show appreciation to López Rivera. They told him that his example as a freedom fighter for the independence of Puerto Rico encourages their own struggles for liberation from the oppressive prison system.

López Rivera called for all political prisoners to be free. He also focused on the youth in the movement, calling them the future who will carry on the work we do now. He urged the young people in the crowd, “Dare to struggle, dare to win.”

Finally, López Rivera spoke about the effects of colonialism on Puerto Rico. As one of many colonies still existing in the 21st century, the island is being economically strangled by the United States. He noted that the debt crisis on the island is the direct result of colonialist exploitation by the U.S. government and the collaboration of the Puerto Rican government.

Repayment of the debt is being imposed on the Puerto Rican people, who have already seen 179 schools closed, pensions taken away and health care benefits cut.

Now, as the island is struggling with a total power outage and massive problems brought on by the hurricanes, the U.S. offers no support. This neglect is consistent with the long history of U.S. firms stealing resources from Puerto Rico and leaving the Puerto Rican working people to suffer.

This is why López Rivera called for decolonization, sovereignty and independence of Puerto Rico as the only way to end the abusive colonial relationship.

Following the hurricane disasters, across the island and throughout the diaspora, Puerto Ricans are working together to check on family members in unreachable parts of the island. On the island they are working together to clear roads, move debris and trees.

Puerto Rico’s colonial government is doing little, so the people are doing it themselves. They are showing the realistic possibility of life without this imperialist, colonialist government that has bankrupted the island and loaded enormous debts onto the people.

In cheering for López Rivera, the audience was supporting self-determination and liberation for the Puerto Rican people! □

Protesters stand with Colin Kaepernick

Activists held signs and chanted: “We march! Y’all mad! We sit! Y’all mad! We speak up! Y’all mad! We die! Y’all silent!” as they marched at a Stand for Kaepernick and Kneel for Justice rally outside the Philadelphia Eagles stadium at their first home game of the National Football League season on Sept. 24. More sports fans showed support with fist bumps and raised fists for Black Lives Matter than those who raised opposition to the demonstrators.

— Report and photo by Joe Piette

Racist rants backfire

Athletes resist Trump

Continued from page 1

NFL Players Association: ‘We will never back down’

In response to Trump’s latest racist attack, the NFL, whether as teams or as individual members, decided to show unity as a “brotherhood.” No one in authority publicly defended Trump’s statement, neither the NFL commissioner nor the owners, some of whom supported Trump’s campaign but were forced to distance themselves from his comments. At least half of the teams have issued statements condemning Trump’s attacks.

The Pittsburgh Steelers, Seattle Seahawks and Cincinnati Bengals stayed in their locker rooms during the playing of the anthem on Sept. 24. While that was a violation of NFL rules, as of now there are no announced plans to fine these teams.

The all-African-American offensive line of the Oakland Raiders, along with a majority of their teammates, sat during the anthem. Two-time Pro-Bowler Travis Kelce, a tight end for the Kansas City team, became the first prominent white NFL player to take a knee.

Travis Kelce takes a knee.

Millions have taken to Twitter to express their anger toward Trump, resulting in top trending hashtags, #TakeAKnee and #IamwithKap, referring to Kaepernick. Some of the Miami Dolphins wore #IamwithKap warm-up T-shirts prior to their game.

Seattle Seahawks defensive player Doug Baldwin, a teammate of NFL star Michael Bennett, who was abused by Las Vegas police in late August, stated in an open letter on Twitter: “I am not surprised by Trump’s comments. He has shown, from the beginning, his dehumanized nature. ... For all the hate and negativity that comes from Trump’s presidency, I am still hopeful for justice and love to win out.”

DeMaurice Smith, president of the NFL Players Association, announced firmly on Twitter: “We will never back down. We no longer can afford to stick to sports.”

Kaepernick’s impact transcends sports

Trump’s words resonated even beyond football. On Sept. 23, Oakland Athletics catcher, Bruce Maxwell, who is African-American, became the first Major League Baseball player to kneel during the anthem. The reigning Women’s National Basketball Association champions, the Los Angeles Sparks, refused to come out of their locker room Sept. 24 during the anthem before the WNBA finals’ first game with the Minnesota Lynx. Women volleyball players at Johnson C. Smith, a historically Black university in North Carolina, knelt before their match. Even legendary singer Stevie Wonder took a knee during a recent concert.

An entire football team of 8-year-olds in Belleville, Ill., inspired by Kaepernick, took a knee Sept. 20 to protest the recent acquittal of a racist cop for the murder of a young Black man, Anthony Lamar Smith, in St. Louis, sparking several days of protests there.

Some Black commentators are raising, and rightfully so, whether Kaepernick’s main message got lost in the Sept. 24 protests, as other critics accused “disrespect” for U.S. military veterans or the U.S. flag.

But the main takeaway is that Kaepernick’s heroic stance against racism, police brutality and social injustice will continue to educate and inspire many players to take action. This will strengthen the general movement to fight white supremacy. As sports commentary, Dave Zirin, wrote in his column, “For the NFL, it was ‘Choose Your Side Sunday’”: “Kaepernick lit the match.” (thenation.com, Sept. 24)

Kenny Vaccaro, a New Orleans Saints safety, who sat with other teammates during the anthem, said eloquently on Sept. 24: “I don’t think it is a fight against Trump. I think we need to focus on the real problem. The inequality, the police brutality, that’s the real problem. I think people are taking it as Trump vs. the League, Trump vs. the NBA, but it’s not about that. People need to see the bigger picture. Guys don’t really care about Trump. They aren’t sitting because of that. They are sitting from what Kap started, the movement he started and I think people need to realize that it has nothing to do with our military.” (si.com)

Trump disses the Warriors

Trump didn’t confine his attacks to the NFL but also pounded on the National Basketball Association’s Golden State Warriors. The morning of Sept. 23, he took to Twitter to disinvite the reigning NBA champions from visiting the White House, an annual tradition for both amateur and pro sports championship teams since the early 1960s.

When the Warriors defeated the Cleveland Cavaliers in June to win the NBA title, many of its players stated immediately that they wanted to boycott the White House, based on Trump’s racist and woman-hating views. They raised these objections two months before Trump defended the extreme violence of neo-Nazis and the KKK in Charlottesville on Aug. 12.

During the Warriors’ media day on Sept. 22, which officially opened the new season, Stephen Curry, the two-time league most valuable player, regarded by many as today’s most popular NBA player, reiterated his stance of not wanting to go to the White House: “We don’t stand for basically what our president stands for ... the things that he said and the things that he hasn’t said in the right terms that we won’t stand for it. And by acting and not going, hopefully that will inspire some change when it comes to what we tolerate in this country and what is accepted and what we turn a blind eye to.”

Curry also alluded to the attacks on both Kaepernick and Bennett as why he didn’t want to go to the White House.

On Sept. 23, the day the Warriors were to meet to make a group decision on the White House visit, Trump tweeted that due to Curry’s “hesitating,” the Warriors would not be welcome.

Characterizing Trump’s tweet as a “I will preempt you before you preempt me” retaliation, the Warriors’ progressive head coach, Steve Kerr, emphasized that the team most likely would have voted “no” to the visit. Kerr added: “How about the irony of ‘Free speech is fine if you are a neo-Nazi chanting hate slogans but not to kneel in protest’?” (@Warriors)

Legendary Cleveland Cavalier player LeBron James defended Curry and called Trump a “bum.” Other NBA players, past and present, who backed up Curry were Chris Paul, Bradley Beal, Robin Lopez, Earvin “Magic” Johnson and Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf, who was forced out of the NBA for bowing his head during the anthem in the 1990s.

“Hey @StephenCurry30, welcome to the club bro” was tweeted by Jemele Hill, the Black reporter for ESPN who categorized Trump as a “white supremacist” in early September. Trump has also demanded she be fired.

The Warriors’ Kevin Durant, the 2017 NBA’s Finals MVP, commented Sept. 24 on the football protest: “The NFL players are doing a great job of sending a great message. We stand behind them as athletes and we support them as well.” (csnbayarea.com)

Michele Roberts, the African-American executive director of the NBA’s Players Association, encouraged on Twitter: “Steph: consider this withdrawal a badge of honor!” □

Atlanta

Cops kill campus Pride leader

Scout Schultz

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta

Late Saturday night, Sept. 16, the life of 21-year-old Scout Schultz was cut short by a single bullet to the heart by a Georgia Tech campus police officer.

Schultz was a deeply politically conscious activist and president of the LGBTQ Pride Alliance at conservative Georgia Tech University.

Schultz identified as nonbinary and intersex and used "them," "they" and "their" as personal pronouns.

At an educational institution that has a dual reputation for intense academic competition and fraternity-style hard partying, many students can feel isolated. Gender nonconforming youth particularly feel the sting of disparaging comments and looks.

While Schultz was an accomplished student, a remarkable leader and was much loved and respected, they had suffered from depression and anxiety while trying to handle all the oppressions of their life under capitalism.

It now appears that Schultz called 911 and reported a person with a knife acting strangely, perhaps drunk, in a parking lot near their dorm. The physical description Schultz gave was of themself.

Four campus police responded to the call and came upon Schultz, walking aimlessly in the deserted parking lot. In their hand was a multiuse tool. The tool had a knife blade that was closed.

The video shows police positioned around Schultz, yelling orders to "drop the knife." As the student turned toward Officer Tyler Beck, standing behind the parking gate arm, some 20 feet away, the officer shot Schultz. Beck says he feared for his life.

Georgia Bureau of Investigation officials say three suicide notes were found in Schultz's dorm room.

On Monday night, Sept. 18, hundreds and hundreds of students, friends, family and community allies attended a very brief and sanitized candlelight vigil on the Georgia Tech campus. There was no mention by the speakers that the police had killed Schultz.

LGBTQ students express outrage

With the official ceremony over, out of the darkness came the anguished voices of other LGBTQ students who expressed outrage and anger over Schultz's murder, the lack of mental health resources on the high-pressure campus, and the overwhelming failure to recognize the needs of LGBTQ students for basic things like bathrooms and dorm assignments. Many called for action; others for love and communication.

A group emerged from the larger crowd with banners reading "Fightback" and "End Police Violence." After chanting for a while, they determined to march to the campus police station.

One hundred or more people, mostly Georgia Tech students, filled the street leading to the police building, followed by police cars.

As the crowd milled around the area, fireworks went off and flares were lit. When a police car erupted in flames, people scattered and ran, with police in pursuit, and some were tackled to the ground.

Three were arrested.

Vincent Castillenti, known as a Cop-Watch activist, 22-year-old Georgia State student Jacob Wilson and Georgia Tech student Cassandra Monden, a Black transwoman, were arraigned on Sept. 20 on a variety of felony and misdemeanor charges. Their bonds range from $20,000 to $107,500.

All are barred from the Georgia Tech campus, including Monden, a registered student. Wilson will be fitted for an ankle monitor and is to be confined to his home from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m.

Beck is on paid administrative leave and the GBI is in charge of the investigation to determine whether lethal force was justified.

Georgia Tech president, G.P. "Bud" Peterson, has publicly blamed "outside agitators" for the "violence" and there is a concerted campaign led by the Student Government Association and fraternities to "show love" to the campus police department.

None of these attempts to blunt the outrage over the murder of a mentally distraught student by an armed campus police force can alter the widening struggle against all forms of state repression and oppression. ☐

Cops, capitalism and the massacre of trans people

COMMENTARY

Scout Schultz leading a 2017 protest against proposed law HB51, requiring Georgia colleges to violate student confidentiality in campus sexual assault cases.

PHOTO: GEORGIA TECH PROGRESSIVE STUDENT ALLIANCE

By Devin Cole

Warning: This article contains a graphic depiction of a shooting death of a transgender person.

In the continuous war on transgender people, another life has been senselessly taken, this time at the hands of a particularly violent arm of the capitalist state: the police. On Sept. 16, Scout Schultz, a bisexual, intersex, nonbinary student and activist at Georgia Tech, as well as head of Tech's Pride Alliance, was shot dead by campus police officer Tyler Beck.

This tragic event is being portrayed as "suicide by cop." But it could have been prevented. Scout should still be here, and there should have been no tragic death of a transgender person suffering from a mental health crisis. In a haunting video released by a student who recorded the incident from their dorm room, Scout is seen approaching Officer Beck with what was later revealed to be a small multi tool with no blade extended. Beck, who had received no training in crisis intervention — the program teaching cops how to deal with a mental health crisis — told Scout to drop the knife. But they continued, telling Beck to shoot them. Beck, instead of attempting to disarm Scout, shot and killed them instead.

In 2017, 21 transgender people have been murdered, and Scout is not the first transgender person killed by police this year. On Aug. 22, Kiwi Herring, a Black transgender woman, was killed by St. Louis police after an altercation stemming from being harassed by a neighbor.

It is easy for reactionaries and "devil's advocates" to say, "Well, if they didn't want to die, they shouldn't have attacked the police." But it is more complicated than that.

We know that the police in the U.S. wage a perpetual war on transgender people. Since at least the 19th century, police have routinely arrested and abused transgender people on counts of cross-dressing, sodomy, solicitation, etc. This abuse continued into the 20th century and resulted in queer and transgender revolts such as the Compton Cafeteria Riot in California and the pivotal Stonewall Riots in New York City.

The key role of transgender defiance in these uprisings has been swept under the rug by the ruling class as well as by the rising of a gay elite, connected in their pro-capitalist, pro-imperialist pandering to the ruling class. We know that cops' perpetual assault on transgender people, like that of all cops who assault, rape and murder working-class people, is why this killer cop, Tyler Beck, is being defended.

This incident digs deeper into the issue of how transgender people are not only abused and mistreated by those "sworn to protect," but by a capitalist state that purposely neglects trans rights and trans people. Scout had survived a suicide attempt in 2015 and was attending counseling services. As of 2015, 41 percent of transgender people reported attempting suicide. (ustranssurvey.org)

It's no coincidence that transgender people within the U.S. face higher amounts of poverty, discrimination, harassment, violence and murder. All of this piled up together is enough to overwhelm anyone, and with the continued targeting of transgender people by the ruling-class powers in Washington, D.C., who are doing everything they can to crush the support network that trans people have built, it is understandable why mental health issues are surging in the trans community.

These issues are doubled for trans people of color, especially Black trans people, who are at many different oppressive intersections and suffer from higher rates of mental health crises.

As long as capitalism exists, then racism exists, sexism exists, transphobia exists, and on and on. As long as capitalism exists, it will need to try to turn oppressed people against each other and continuously expand by any means. That includes expanding its violent, militarized police force that continues to assault and kill members of oppressed groups who resist and revolt against the exploitative force of capitalism.

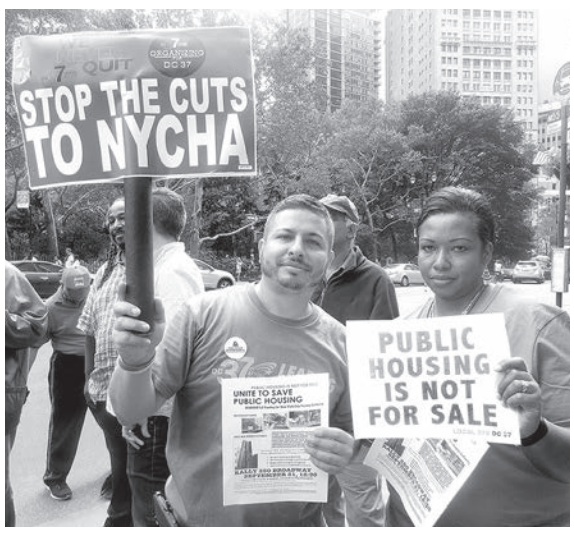
Even if that resistance exists at the same time with feelings of despair and dismay with oneself, as it did for Scout Schultz, we acknowledge Scout, like all martyred trans people, as a hero and a comrade. We go forward in our fight for liberation and socialism with them, and all other transgender people, in our words and actions.

Mesha Caldwell, Jamie Lee Wounded Arrow, JoJo Striker, Keke Collier, Chyna Doll Dupree, Ciara McElveen, Jaquarrius Holland, Alphonza Watson, Chay Reed, Brenda Bostick, Sherrell Faulkner, Kenne McFadden, Kendra Marie Adams, Ava Le'Ray Barrin, Ebony Morgan, TeeTee Dangerfield, Gwynevere River Song, Kiwi Herring, Kashmere Nazier Redd, Derricka Banner and Scout Schultz — ¡Presente!

Devin Cole is a Southern transgender organizer, president of Strive, operations director of Florida Transgender Alliance and a Workers World Party candidate member.

New York City

'Who's the biggest slumlord?'



A multinational crowd of protesters united for a Sept. 21 noon rally against the New York City Housing Authority at its downtown Manhattan office. Public housing tenants demonstrated in solidarity alongside workers from District Council 37, the city's largest municipal public employee union, with at least seven tenant groups present.

Shared demands included no privatization of NYCHA, no luxury housing on public land, stop outsourcing housing jobs and hire 1,000 more NYCHA workers. An activist with the group Rise Up for Renter Power led chants demanding "Hands off public housing!"

Speakers on the mike denounced the city's neglect of housing projects, their dire underfunding, and the projected layoffs of city workers who do maintenance and keep up the building units. The Trump administration and congressional plans for drastic cuts to public housing were exposed.

When those on the mike asked: "Who's New York City's greatest slumlord?" the crowd quickly shouted: "NYCHA!"

— Report and photo by Anne Pruden

San Diego

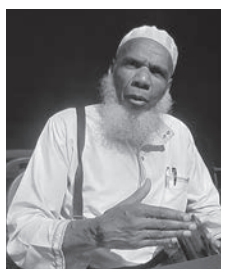
An epidemic hits homeless population

By Gloria Verdieu
San Diego

Hepatitis A is desolating San Diego's homeless population, which is the fourth-largest in the U.S. within a city. The county's Health and Human Services Agency reported that 16 people have died, and 421 individuals have been sickened by this disease. It is a viral disease that has symptoms of fever, fatigue, nausea, abdominal pain and sometimes leads to death. It can be treated and its spread prevented.

According to the Hepatitis Health Center, hepatitis A, B and C are distinct viruses that affect the liver. Hepatitis A is caused by drinking contaminated or unclean water, eating shellfish harvested from sewage-contaminated water, or coming into contact with an infected person's blood, stool or other bodily fluids. In early September, San Diego officials declared a public health emergency in this city because of hepatitis A cases.

Longtime San Diego resident Ibrahim Fardan lives in downtown San Diego and has spent much time observing the huge homeless population in this area and in other parts of San Diego County. Workers World had an opportunity to interview Fardan in Horton Plaza in the city's downtown area.



WW PHOTO: GLORIA VERDIEU
Ibrahim Fardan

Gloria Verdieu: What do you think about this outbreak of hepatitis A in San Diego, which is devastating the homeless population here?

Ibrahim Fardan: Well, they are saying that 16 people have died and over 400 are infected. I think that what the city is doing — putting in handwashing stations, opening up public bathrooms 24 hours a day, putting up a few tents for showers — are things that they should have done a long time ago. They knew this was coming for a long time. Also, they underestimate the numbers in the homeless population.

GV: Do you think the city of San Diego is doing all that can be done to prevent more cases and prevent the spread of this virus?

IF: They are doing more to harass the homeless. For example, they talk about washing the streets with bleach. I saw them spraying bleach on people's tents and on their belongings early in the morning without any warning.

Look at this courtyard: It is normally filled with homeless this time of morning, but homeless "monitors" are here whose job is to keep the homeless out. If they see you sitting for too long without buying anything, they come up to you and start asking questions and harassing you until you move on. They are doing more to get rid of the homeless, to make them disappear, than to help them.

GV: Where do they want them to go? Why don't the homeless go to the shelters to sleep, get food and hang out?

IF: The homeless are being pushed under bridges, into parks under trees, into the bushes and into residential areas where they are not wanted. The city wants the homeless to be invisible, especially to the tourists, because this is supposed to be "America's finest city." In some downtown areas, they are forced into such small spaces that they practically live on top of each other.

There are not enough rooms in the shelters for them, and some homeless people don't want to go to the shelters because they can't take their stuff into the shelters with them. If they leave their stuff in the streets, the police will confiscate all of it. I don't know what they have to do to get it back, but it is a big hassle.

Also, you have to qualify to go to the shelters. You just can't go and take a shower. You have to be registered, and there are a bunch of rules you have to follow to be able to get into a shelter. The police treat all homeless people pretty much the same. I see the police harassing Blacks, Mexicans, migrants and white homeless people. It makes no difference to them what color you are. So when we speak for the homeless, we must speak for all of them.

Also, what I am starting to notice is that there are more and more homeless youth. Some are students who are attending San Diego State University. I go to SDSU a lot, and I notice many of the students can't afford housing and they end up homeless. I was not aware of this.

GV: Is it true that a lot of the homeless are mentally ill or have some psychological issues?

IF: The homeless are the unseen, which causes some of them to react negatively to their situation. I've seen people walk over someone whose face was in a puddle of water on the ground. When people are treated this way, they react to their situation by talking or singing to themselves, and even acting crazy. Others respond by getting a routine, a daily schedule that includes steps to get themselves out of this situation.

In both cases, as their situations improve or they get into a program where there is hope of regaining their dignity, they begin to act more "normal." I've seen it happen with men, women and youth who found themselves in a homeless situation. Being homeless is a devastating, traumatic experience for most people. It's like having PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder]. People react or respond in all kinds of ways. That's just the way it is.

The homeless are being pushed out, walked over and crowded into smaller areas with no means of protecting themselves from diseases. The city should deal with the issues of shelter, affordable housing, job preparation, and provide counseling, programs for dealing with depression, health education, drug addiction and all of the issues affecting the homeless.

But the city extends the hours for the bathrooms, puts out handwashing stations and a few showers, washes the streets down with bleach, and calls for mass vaccinations of those who decide to show up. Yes, that's just the way it is. ☐

Michigan unions fight union-busting

WW PHOTO: MARTHA GREVATT
Lansing, Mich., Sept. 20.

By Martha Grevatt
Lansing, Mich.

The scene was a sea of red outside the Capitol Commons building in Lansing, Mich., on Sept. 20. Wearing red for "Solidarity Wednesday," members of United Auto Workers Local 6000 — the largest state worker union in Michigan — and other unions demonstrated outside a hearing of the Civil Service Commission. Inside, the hearing room was packed by workers angry about proposed rule changes that would impact collective bargaining rights when their contracts expire.

State law allows the unelected commissioners, appointed by governors, to set limits on what state workers are allowed to bargain for in contract negotiations. The new rules, approved by three of the four commissioners in a vote held immediately after the hearing, include gutting seniority protections and changing how overtime is assigned.

"Seniority is used in union contracts to promote fairness and efficiency. It is used as a way of avoiding individualized determinations that may say that they're based on performance but may be based on other issues such as the kinds of nepotism, cronyism and political considerations that the Civil Service Commission was designed to protect against," Ava Rose Barbour, associate general counsel for the UAW, explained. Unions fear the new rules will restore the old regime of nepotism and favoritism.

Big win for teachers

The Eastern Michigan University Federation of Teachers recently pushed back outrageous management demands that included a 25 percent pay cut for 700 full- and part-time lecturers and library staff. The new contract actually includes a pay increase, class load limits, job security protections and is "completely free of concessions."

EMUFT President Daric Thorne believes the open bargaining strategy was what secured the win. "We had members coming out to meetings all summer long, but we had a critical amount of people show up in early August, both members and people from the community and from other unions." Solidarity rallies drew many student supporters. Feeling the heat from the rank and file and their labor, student and community allies, management backed down.

The union includes veteran instructors who have taught at EMU for as long as 20 years. Without the new agreement, "they could fire us at almost any moment and they didn't have to hire us back," according to Thorne. (aft.org) ☐

Washington state

Immigrant prisoners demand minimum wage

By Jim McMahan
Seattle

After years of immigrant prisoners' protests and hunger strikes, Washington state is finally demanding that the Geo Group, operator of the Northwest Detention Center for immigrants, pay its prisoners the minimum wage. Attorney General Bob Ferguson filed a lawsuit Sept. 20 in state court against Geo, which pays prisoners only $1 a day — and sometimes just chips and candy. The Geo Group operates 140 prisons in the U.S. and had revenues of more than $2 billion in 2016, according to the Sept. 21 Seattle Times.

The government and corporate institution of slave labor in prisons is an issue for the 2.3 million prisoners in this country as well as the millions of former prisoners who worked under slave-labor conditions in the past.

Prisoners in the NWDC have launched a series of hunger strikes since 2014. Since the beginning of this year, hunger strikes have been almost continuous. Most prisoners are there for only immigration infractions, yet their imprisonment can lead to deportation.

Protesting Geo's $1-per-day minimum wage is one of the prisoners' main issues, along with inadequate food, poor medical care and mistreatment by the guards.

Ferguson was backed up at his press conference by Jorge Baron of the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, who spoke about prisoners' issues. The Northwest Detention Center Resistance and other allies have also expressed community solidarity with the prisoners' demands. Different organizations protest at the prison practically every weekend.

Prisoners do all the real work at the center: preparing meals and laundry and cleaning all the rooms. Ferguson's office said Geo's contract with the federal government requires it to follow state and local laws. These include the state minimum wage, which has risen from $7.35 to $11 an hour since 2005.

The just demand for the minimum wage for prisoners is an opportunity for all labor to show solidarity with immigrant labor. ☐

Oklahoma City:

Hundreds protest cop killing of deaf neighbor

Oklahoma City, Sept. 24.

PHOTO: BANBOSE SHANGO

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

Hundreds came out in protest in Oklahoma City on Sept. 24, outraged at the cop killing of their Latinx neighbor, Magdiel Sanchez, a deaf man who could not hear police orders.

Cops showed up at Sanchez's house on Sept. 20 pursuing a separate investigation. When Sanchez got up from his porch to see what they wanted, he had an implement in his hand, a pipe wrapped in some material. The cops immediately drew their weapons and shouted orders to "drop the weapon and get on the ground."

Nearby neighbors yelled repeatedly that Sanchez was deaf and could not hear. But the cops still fired to kill, with Sanchez more than 15 feet away.

During the week of Sept. 16-23, at least four people with physical or mental disabilities were known to be killed by U.S. police. (thenation.com, Sept. 22) A 2016 Ruderman Foundation study found that from one-third to one-half of the people killed by police from 2013 to 2015 had disabilities. The study commented, "Disability is the missing word in the media coverage of police violence." (rudermanfoundation.org/) ☐

March vs. white supremacy

'No hate in the Bay!'

By Terri Kay
Berkeley, Calif.

Against the backdrop of white supremacists making the city of Berkeley, Calif., their ongoing target in their campaign to confuse hate speech with free speech, community activists held a celebration of solidarity on Saturday, Sept. 23, in Berkeley, themed "No Hate in the Bay, March Against White Supremacy." Several hundred people rallied and marched over 2 miles through the city, stopping at several points which have become targets of right-wing harassment because of things like posting Black Lives Matter signs or simply being centers for LGBTQ activism, etc.

A surprise speaker was Chelsea Manning, who said: "Everyone told me I should be too scared to come. That's why I came to be with you." A speaker from the Arab Resource and Organizing Center and the General Union of Palestinian Students talked about harassment against her on campus by David Horowitz and other Zionists. Cat Brooks of the Anti Police-Terror Project said: "We don't cower in the face of fascists and police. We're linking up with resistance in every state."

Chris Oakes of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma stated, "If you fight against racism and fascism, you should also fight against colonialism and for Ohlone rights." A speaker from Anakbayan East Bay talked about the need for international solidarity, pointing out, "There's martial law in the Philippines right now and Muslims and Indigenous people are under attack." A speaker from Urban Shield pointed out that Berkeley is talking about "gang classification for Antifa, while right-wing Oath Keepers are allowed to have a booth at the Urban Shield expo."

A representative of the White Horse Inn, which serves the LGBTQ community, said they have been under right-wing attack, as did a speaker from the Alchemy Collective, who had windows smashed for having a Black Lives Matter sign in their coffee shop window. Cheryl Davila, a Berkeley City Council member, spoke against the militarization of police, saying "No to Nazis and no to the alt-right."

On Sunday, Sept. 24, the Berkeley Police Department arrested 11 people in connection with demonstrations related to a 20-minute appearance by fascist Milo Yiannopoulos at the University of California at Berkeley campus. Most were arrested related to new bans by the city against wearing masks and carrying anything which could be construed as a weapon. More demonstrations are planned Sept. 25, as the right-wing "Free Speech Week" continues. ☐

Berkeley, Calif., Sept. 23.

WW PHOTO: TERRI KAY

Chicago forum against fascist attacks

The forum "Struggle Against Fascist Attacks at Home & Abroad" was held here the evening of Sept. 18, convened by Anakbayan Chicago and the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines (ICHRP)—Midwest.

Held on the 45th anniversary of the declaration of martial law by Philippines dictator Ferdinand Marcos, convener speakers addressed the current martial law crackdown by the Duterte regime in the Philippines province of Mindanao. They exposed the even more widespread military repression against Muslim and Indigenous Filipinos, the regime's so-called drug war that has claimed the lives of over 12,000 victims, and the growing U.S. military support provided to the Duterte regime by the Trump administration.

In addition, a panel featured presentations by Father Primo Racimo, a Marcos regime martial law survivor and human rights activist; Jazmine Salas, Stop Police Crimes Committee; Danya Zituni, U.S. Palestinian Community Network; and Jo Monet, Workers World Party. The panel addressed fascist attacks in the U.S. against Palestinian and other human rights activists, murderous police violence against Black and Brown communities, brutal deportations of undocumented immigrants, and the growing fightback against white supremacy exemplified by the struggles to take down Confederate monuments in Charlottesville, Va., and Durham, N.C.

In a lively discussion, attendees pledged to build a broad solidarity movement against oppression and injustice here and worldwide.

— Jeff Sorel

Chicago, Sept. 18.

PHOTO: JESSICA ROJAS

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▶The Fight Against In

And more

Racist monuments in Durham, N.C.:

Coming down 'by any means necessary'

By LeiLani Dowell

Continuing the righteous struggle to take down monuments to racism and white supremacy, some 50 protesters rallied at a Sept. 22 meeting of the North Carolina Historical Commission in Raleigh, N.C. Among the agenda items was a proposal by Gov. Roy Cooper to remove Confederate monuments from the State Capitol in Raleigh.

Protesters wore hats and T-shirts with the slogan "Do It Like Durham," referring to the toppling of a Confederate statue at the Durham County Courthouse on Aug. 14. The activists held a rally both before and after the hearing and sat in for the packed meeting, which was moved from the commission's usual small meeting room to an auditorium in the State Archives.

When commission member Sam Dixon suggested that one concern was that the statues may be harmed or defaced, many people in the audience snickered loudly.

Several of the arrestees from the Aug. 14 action participated. Raul Jimenez said, "These statues have been in place for a long time representing hate, representing racism, representing the fact that the South fought for slavery, to keep slavery." (wral.com, Sept. 22)

Workers World Party member Qasima Wideman said, "We have the right to shape our own history, and we have the right to claim public space. Black people have the right to claim public space and feel safe." The arrestees, from both the Aug. 14 action and from an anti-Klan protest on Aug. 18, have court dates on Oct. 11 and Nov. 14.

Shortly after activists toppled the statue in Durham on Aug. 14, Cooper proposed to move three monuments from the Capitol grounds to the historic site of a Confederate battlefield some 50 miles south of Raleigh.

Dodging the issue, the commission voted at the Sept. 22 meeting to delay any decision on moving the monuments until April 2018, after a panel could be formed to study the "ramifications" of moving the statues.

In 2015, then-Gov. Pat McCrory signed a "Historic Artifact Management and Patriotism Act" after approval by the state's General Assembly. The law dictates that "objects of remembrance" such as Confederate statues may only be relocated "when appropriate measures are required by the State" to preserve them or in relation to construction needs.

Protesters in Raleigh, N.C., Sept. 22.

PHOTO: INDYWEEK/ERICAHELLERSTEIN

Moreover, the law states that monuments can only be moved to a location in which they will be afforded the same "prominence, honor, visibility, availability and access" as the previous location. The 11-member Historical Commission has sole discretion in the matter.

Regardless of the state's maneuvering, WWP member Dante Strobino said, "We're going to keep organizing until these statues come down, and they're going to come down by any means necessary." (newsobserver.com, Sept. 22) □

St. Louis protests expose brutal cops

By Lyn Neely

Fiery St. Louis protests continue nonstop despite brutal police violence against demonstrators that is drawing criticism from city officials, reporters and the community.

Protests first erupted on Sept. 15, immediately after the acquittal of a white cop, Jason Stockley, accused of murdering a young Black man, Anthony Lamar Smith. Stockley was released despite damning evidence against him.

During several days of protest, on Sept. 17, the following Sunday evening, police surrounded demonstrators in a move called kettling. Without warning they closed in, using excessive force and chemical weapons to arrest everyone, over 120 people.

The American Civil Liberties Union is suing St. Louis police for "unacceptable, unlawful and unconstitutional" behavior and for dispersing a crowd engaged in constitutionally protected assembly. The suit accuses police of ramming a police car into a dispersing crowd, the use of kettling, excessive force, chemical sprays, illegal arrests and destroying people's video footage of the cops' actions.

Mayor Lyda Krewson criticized police for derisively shouting "These streets are our streets," mocking a political slogan used by demonstrators: "Whose streets? Our streets!" However, protesters say that the mayor continues to take the side of the police. They are demanding that Krewson and the city address the racist behavior and escalating repression by city police.

Many protesters caught in last Sunday's "kettle" were knocked down and cuffed. Cops removed their goggles and sprayed them directly in their face. Several people who were not demonstrating were arrested and complained that they could not escape.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported that an undercover police officer, unrecognized by other cops, was knocked down, cuffed and hit several times. The mayor is asking for an investigation into how cops treated that officer. (Sept. 23)

Drew Burbridge, a visiting filmmaker, didn't hear cops telling the crowd to disperse. He was caught in the kettle, pushed to the ground, grabbed and dragged away. He reported being sprayed with chemicals, knocked unconscious for 10 to 30 seconds and pepper-sprayed again when he came to. The mayor has not so far asked for an investigation into his case.

Police attacks on protesters continue, Sept. 23.

PHOTO: ASHLEY YATES@BROWNBLAZE TWITTER

U.S. Air Force Lt. Alex Nelson, who lives in the neighborhood, was trapped in the kettle, kicked in the face and blinded by pepper spray before being dragged away and arrested. The Associated Press reports that Nelson said, "I hear the police say it was their street, but it's literally my street. I have coffee on that street, and I own property on that street." (Sept. 23)

Prosecutors claimed that minutes before fatally shooting Smith five times on December 12, 2011, Stockley announced his intent "kill this motherf**ker, don't you know it." They say Stockley planted a gun in Smith's car which was covered with DNA from Stockley, but none from Smith.

The St. Louis demonstrations echo the 2011 Ferguson protests that helped give rise to the Black Lives Matter movement. In Ferguson, just 15 miles from St. Louis, protests erupted after the acquittal of another white cop, Darren Wilson, for the killing of unarmed teenager Michael Brown. □

Y NATIONAL CONFERENCE
9

Durham, Aug.14
s
United Movement Against All Forms
upremacy, Led by Trump Regime

7
PHOTO: ALICE LOAIZA

Class Issues
Relief
mperialism and Occupation Continues

Solidarity with St. Louis community

The Anti Police-Terror Project held a rally on Sept. 20 at Oscar Grant Plaza in Oakland, Calif., in solidarity with the Black community of St. Louis and the family of slain Anthony Lamar Smith. Community members spoke out, including civil rights attorney Walter Riley, who said: "Cops don't own the streets! We can't accept that chant." Cat Brooks of APTP explained, "We've got to show solidarity whenever these things happen. The 'I am Oscar Grant' signs in Egypt re-energized Oakland."

— Report and photo by Terri Kay

PUERTO RICO

Devastated by hurricanes, colonialism

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

As of Sept. 25, two weeks after Hurricane Irma and five days after yet another deadly storm, Hurricane Maria, hit the archipelago of Puerto Rico, the total damages inflicted on this U.S. territory-colony are still not known.

Images shared on social media show vast devastation: collapsed houses, rooftops gone, trees and electricity poles downed, vegetation gone, as if a fire had engulfed the previously lush foliage. The pictures of entire neighborhoods flooded remind us of the terrible scenes showing Hurricane Katrina's effect on New Orleans: Some neighborhoods have just been wiped out. The impact on the mountain regions is still not accounted for. No area has been spared, as shown in aerial views presented on some news websites.

Bridges, roads and other infrastructure were destroyed, further complicating the isolation of entire cities that have not been able to communicate with the rest of the country. The whole country has been without electricity for days. There's no safe water, either, due to the need for electricity to power the pumps. Telecommunication is almost nonexistent. Only a few radio stations can broadcast, most of them AM.

Cellphones are mostly useless now, since only a few spots have a signal. For example, cars line up on the Teodoro Moscoso Bridge in the San Juan area in order to access the limited signal available there.

Even the government cannot communicate with its own agencies throughout the country. The now-privatized mobile network depends on electricity. Most of its facilities do not have backup generators, which the formerly public PR Telephone Co. used to have. This, together with fallen towers, has caused a communications desert at a very critical time. Amateur radio aficionados and satellite phone users are trying to compensate for this lack of connection.

The desperation of families not knowing about the fate of their loved ones is relieved by a spontaneous network of social media — particularly through Facebook — and the available radio stations, which together operate as a connecting link, passing information between Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico and those in the diaspora.

The lack of electric power and also of vital medical supplies has shut down small hospitals and health facilities. After the Medical Center in Rio Piedras got its electricity back, it was set up as the main health service hub.

Crisis aggravated by colonial status

Electricity is a major problem in Puerto Rico. For years, several bourgeois government administrations have tried to privatize this vital state industry. Only the people's struggle, particularly the fightback of the workers in the UTIER union, has prevented complete privatization.

However, the PR Electric Power Authority (AEE in Spanish) has reduced its workforce by half in the last few years and has failed to maintain the infrastructure, letting it deteriorate in order to make the people accept its privatization as the only way to prevent repeated power outages and higher electricity bills.

This cost cutting is in order to "repay" a $9 billion "debt" in municipal bonds, which is AEE's share of the more than $73 billion of illegitimate "public" debt the government is expected to pay to Wall Street bondholders.

In addition to payments on the bonds issued, recent policies imposed on the AEE by the U.S. through the consultant firm Alix Partners have reduced the inventory of materials needed for the generation of electricity, without taking into consideration the fact that, in extreme weather, AEE would be unable to receive these materials via shipping.

Because Puerto Rico is a three-island colony that used to be self-sufficient in agriculture but whose economy has been destroyed and instead developed to satisfy its master's hunger for profits, it depends on shipping, mostly from the U.S., to receive 85 percent of its food and supplies. Being a colony, it is subject to criminal U.S. impositions like the Jones Act, which requires all shipping to Puerto Rico be in U.S. vessels, with U.S. personnel, making it the most expensive in the world.

As a consequence, Puerto Rico cannot receive aid from other countries that have offered crucial help, like Cuba and Venezuela.

Only the people can save the people

Before any government help arrived in many communities, neighbors were reported to be helping themselves in an

Continued on page 11

Protesters demand sovereignty for Puerto Rico

By Johnnie Stevens
New York

The struggle for sovereignty for Puerto Rico was the theme of an all-day protest Sept. 19 across from the United Nations. New and longtime activists in the Puerto Rican diaspora and friends were present to rally, chant, raise flags and exchange information with people from many other nations facing or overcoming colonial oppression.

New York City, Sept. 19. WW PHOTO: JOHNNIE STEVENS

The occasion was the 72nd session of the U.N. General Assembly with its 198 member countries. The demand was that the U.S. comply with resolutions that the U.N. Special Committee on Decolonization has already passed — 36 times! — on self-determination for Puerto Rico.

Damage from Hurricane Irma limited participation from the Florida-based Unión Patriótica Boricua, which was inspired to call the rally by the winning of freedom for Puerto Rican political prisoner Oscar López Rivera in June. The threat of Hurricane Maria hung over the Caribbean as the rally progressed.

Despite this, 100 people came out on a work and school day for a spirited, nonstop picket line. They kept up militant chants mainly

Continued on page 11

Banks keep Puerto Rico in the dark

By Jerry Goldberg

Since 2007 approximately 75 percent of the $9 billion to $11 billion in bonds issued by Puerto Rico's Electric Power Authority (AEE in Spanish), allegedly to repair and maintain the electrical infrastructure, has instead gone to pay debt service, termination fees on interest rate swaps, and fees to financial advisers on the $9 billion in bonds owed by the utility.

The effects of this usury on AEE, as well as other sectors of the Puerto Rican economy, left the electric company in complete disrepair even before the recent hurricanes. For much the same reason, the people of Puerto Rico now face at least six months with no electricity. The debt service imposed by the banks and financial institutions has led to huge increases in electricity rates for the poor.

What follows is a brief summary of this usury practiced by finance capital. These facts are taken from a report titled "Wall Street's Power Grab in Puerto Rico," prepared by the Refund America Project of the Action Center on Race & the Economy. This report and others on the austerity imposed on Puerto Rico by the banks can be found at refundproject.org/#puerto-rico.

AEE's bonds are triple exempt, meaning that investors don't pay state, local or federal taxes on them, which means they are considered great investments for financial institutions.

A June 2015 study by the Puerto Rico House of Representatives' Small and Medium Businesses, Commerce, Industry and Telecommunications Commission found that of more than $11 billion in AEE bonds issued between 2000 and 2012, only $2.7 billion was dedicated to capital projects. One hundred sixty-five million went to financial "advisors" for fees, and the rest, more than $8.5 billion, went to interest payments and to refinance earlier debt.

More than $2 billion of the proceeds from AEE bonds from 2007-13 was allocated to paying older debt and debt-related fees such as capitalized interest, lines of credit and swap penalties. Rather than being used to fund infrastructure improvements, the bonds were used primarily to make interest payments on debt and pay off previously issued bonds and interest rate swaps. Only about 31 percent of bond revenues since 2007 were allocated to AEE's construction fund to upgrade and repair infrastructure.

Cancel the debt

The banks underwrote bonds that pushed final maturity of the debt beyond the Puerto Rican Constitution's 30-year limit.

Banks like JP Morgan and Chase collected at least $65 million in termination penalties on interest rate swaps connected to AEE bonds. These banks underwrote the original bond deals that included the toxic swaps — giving them multiple paydays on the same bonds. This is at least a conflict of interest and potentially a violation of securities law.

AEE bonds with a principal of $822 million issued in 2010 were underwritten by Citigroup and JPMorgan Chase. At least a quarter of the bond proceeds was designated to repay a line of credit with these institutions.

The ratings agencies Standard & Poors, Moody's and Fitch gave AEE positive investment grade ratings for major bond offerings as late as 2013, despite knowing that AEE did not have revenues sufficient to cover the debt. They did so because they are funded by the banks who pay them to rate the bonds.

Wall Street pressured AEE into an unfair debt restructuring when it was clear AEE was heading to a default on the bonds. This pending default was precipitated in part by the same bond agencies, which had fraudulently rated the bonds investment grade, downgrading AEE's investment grade in 2014.

Hedge funds like Blue Mountain Capital, Oppenheimer Funds Inc., Mass. Mutual Life Insurance, Goldman Sachs and Franklin Resources purchased the bonds for 50 cents to 60 cents on the dollar. They then pushed AEE into a restructuring agreement that allows for automatic rate increases for AEE customers when energy use declines due to people being unable to afford their electricity or leaving the island entirely.

When Puerto Rico filed to restructure its debt under the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act (Promesa) in May, the $9 billion in AEE debt was not included in the filing. After Gov. Ricardo Rosello took office this year, he negotiated a revised restructuring agreement with an effective repayment rate of 85 percent on the bonds, despite the fact that Puerto Rico could afford to pay only about 25 percent of the existing public debt.

Further fleecing AEE and the people of Puerto Rico, financial "advisors" like Alix Partners were paid enormous fees, way over the norm and twice the original estimates for their involvement in the restructuring.

The people of Puerto Rico have every right to demand that the debt to the banks and financial institutions be canceled and that these robbers be forced to fund the reconstruction of the island and its infrastructure. ☐

Cuba rebuilds despite U.S. blockade

PHOTO: PERIODICO26.CU

Venezuela's first Hurricane Irma aid to Cuba is mattresses, water supplies and canned food. Armed with rubber boots and gloves, 68 U.S. activists will join the Che Brigade in Cuba on Oct. 1. Their voluntary work includes hurricane clean-up.

By Chris Fry

Revolutionary Cuba's record of mobilizing to defend its population from natural disasters was put to the test when, starting on Sept. 8, Hurricane Irma ravaged more than 200 miles of its north coast for three days. Hitting with 185-mph winds, Irma devastated the provinces of Camaguey, Ciego de Avila, Sancti Spiritus, Villa Clara, Matanzas and Havana.

With Irma originally forecast to narrowly miss the island, the socialist government and its popular organizations placed more than 2 million people, including 14,000 tourists, into shelters in government buildings, schools and even mountain caves.

The Guardian newspaper reported on Sept. 13: "The week before the storm hit, the island's pharmaceutical industry was instructed to put other medicines on hold so as to manufacture and distribute hydration salts.

"Tons of extra flour were distributed to state bakeries in the days before the hurricane struck. Authorities cut gas and electricity before the storm hit, but bakers in Havana's Vedado district worked through the night, using a petrol generator and sometimes even firewood to keep production going."

Ten people were killed by the worst storm to hit the island since 1932. In Ciego de Avila province, a storm surge of 16 to 23 feet was recorded. (cnn.com, Sept. 9) Thirty-six-foot-high waves crashed over Havana's Malecón seawall and sent rivers of seawater through wide swaths of the city.

The storm severely damaged Cuba's electrical network, water supply system and large parts of the island's agricultural sector. It damaged 4,000 buildings, partially or totally destroying 1,200.

Because of the U.S.'s 57-year unjust blockade imposed on Cuba, the country has inadequate resources to build sufficiently sturdy homes, let alone reinforce existing buildings enough to withstand these terrible storms — storms made more powerful by imperialist-spawned global warming. It will take time and tremendous effort to rebuild.

Displaying international solidarity

Yet in a tremendous show of international solidarity, Cuba has already dispatched 750 doctors and other medical personnel to other hard-hit island nations in the Caribbean impacted by hurricanes Irma, Jose and Maria. To combat earlier disasters, Cuba sent hundreds of medical professionals to Haiti after the 2010 earthquake and to Liberia to help control the 2014 Ebola outbreak.

Cuba's offer to send medical assistance to New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 was rejected by Washington.

Hours before Hurricane Irma struck Cuba, Trump renewed part of the U.S. blockade against it for another year. U.S. imperialism has refused to offer any kind of assistance to Cuba. And several days after the hurricane, on Sept. 19, Trump slandered the Cuban government in the U.N. General Assembly, calling it "corrupt" and "destabilizing." He said that the U.S. will not lift its sanctions until Cuba undergoes "fundamental reforms," which means, of course, regime change and the restoration of capitalism.

The Cuban Foreign Ministry posted a statement denouncing and protesting Trump's attack as "disrespectful, unacceptable and meddling statements." (reuters.com, Sept. 20)

Although the Cuban government has created a special bank account to accept donations for hurricane relief, the blockade makes it difficult or impossible for people to donate, even from outside the U.S. The U.S. government has fined European banks for conducting financial transactions with Cuba, which has hampered previous donation efforts.

Venezuela was the first country to send humanitarian aid to Cuba. Bolivia, China, Japan, Russia, Panama, Vietnam and Colombia, among others, have also sent assistance. (periodico.cu, Sept. 19)

"During a speech to the United Nations General Assembly on Friday [Sept. 22], Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez said he wanted to express 'profound gratitude for those who have offered to assist Cuba' and offered to help hurricane victims in neighboring Caribbean islands to 'the extent of our modest possibilities.'

"'I want to convey the testimony of the people of Cuba, who are currently carrying out a colossal effort to recover from the severe damages caused by hurricane Irma to housing, agriculture, the power system and other services,' Rodríguez said." (miamiherald.com, Sept. 22)

It will be a critical task for activists in the U.S. to provide the best aid to Cuba in the face of the Trump regime's hostile attacks against its people. Now is the time to use every effort to end the U.S. blockade once and for all. □

Cuba solidarity organizers to meet in Seattle

By Cheryl LaBash

The National Network on Cuba, a U.S.-Cuba umbrella organization that promotes solidarity with revolutionary Cuba, has scheduled its 2017 national gathering in Seattle for Oct. 21-22. The Saturday and Sunday NNOC meetings will be held in the Washington State Labor Council building, 321 16th Ave. S, Seattle, at the junction with South Jackson Street.

The hosting member organizations — Seattle/Cuba Friendship Committee and the U.S. Women and Cuba Collaboration — plan a public rally at the New Hope Baptist Church, 124 21st Ave., Seattle, on Saturday evening, Oct. 21.

This meeting comes at a critical time for anyone alarmed by the warmongering and interventionist words coming out of the White House. It will provide an opportunity to speak up against the genocidal U.S. blockade of Cuba, the continued restrictions on travel to the island and occupation of Guantánamo by the U.S. naval base and notorious prison.

Some popular organizations have shown support for normalization of U.S. relations with Cuba. For example, at its July convention, the Washington State Labor Council passed a resolution to end the U.S. blockade of Cuba, joining other labor organizations in this call. (tinyurl.com/y8avsf7c)

Organizations and individuals can amplify their voices by asking their city council or state legislature to pass resolutions or make other official statements like those done in Hartford, Conn., Helena, Mont., Sacramento, Calif., and elsewhere (to view a model resolution, see tinyurl.com/ybyl7qjq).

Although only member organizations can vote, visitors who are interested in learning more about Cuba and NNOC activities are welcome to attend the Seattle meeting. There is a sliding scale registration fee for all attendees.

More information about the NNOC and its member organizations, bylaws and how to join can be found at tinyurl.com/ya2d3ssr or by writing to nnoc20012002@yahoo.com. □

France

Workers battle government's assault

By G. Dunkel

In September, three major protests have taken place against President Emmanuel Macron, whose party, Forward the Republic (LREM), is trying to abolish protections that French workers have won over decades of struggle.

All the major unions representing truck drivers, even those who had not participated organizationally in earlier demonstrations, have called for an unlimited national strike starting Sept. 25. The action will include blockading fuel depots. Such a strike has the potential of bringing France's economy to a halt.

Before the protests began, Macron issued a statement from Athens, where he was on an official visit, claiming that "the protesters are lazy slackers who don't want to build the French economy." He indicated that the government would not be swayed by protests, since "democracy is not made in the streets."

Over 500,000 French workers struck and came out into the streets in over 400 cities and communities on Sept. 12 to demand a labor code that recognizes "their right for social justice and progress," according to the General Confederation of Workers (CGT), the union which called the protest.

Thousands march in France.

The CGT is the oldest large union confederation in France with millions of members in all sectors of the French economy. The Sept. 12 call was also supported by the smaller union confederations, Solidaires and the United Federation of Trade Unions (FSU).

Two other major French labor confederations, Workers Force (FO) and the French Confederation of Democratic Labor (CFDT), abstained from organizationally participating in these demonstrations, although they do not support the new labor law the government is imposing.

Many members of the prior-mentioned unions did participate — especially members of FO, which has a militant history and has worked closely with the CGT. Entire FO locals and sub-confederations like the metal workers openly marched with the CGT and called on the FO executive council to endorse the struggle.

'Our power versus theirs'

The right-wing press in France characterized the CGT protests on Sept. 12 as a failure because they brought out only 500,000 workers, not enough to cause the government to back down. These media emphasized the disunity among the unions and ignored the joint actions in the streets.

The protests on Sept. 21 and Sept. 22 were smaller, with only 200 declared strikes and tens of thousands of workers, youth and retirees out in the streets. The CGT felt that these actions helped keep pressure on the government and morale up among the militants.

The day after Macron signed executive orders putting a new labor law in place, FI, the political party led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, brought about 150,000 people out in Paris to protest the law. FI, which received nearly 20 percent of the vote in the presidential elections this year, had as its main slogan that the new labor law was a "social coup d'état."

Some major left-wing parties, like the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) and the French Communist Party (PCF), sent delegations to the FI protest but were critical of the FI's attempt to recruit centrist and right-wing parties to the coalition against the new labor law. (L'Humanité, Sept. 22)

Even though the new labor law is going into effect, the struggle against it is certainly going to continue. As a construction worker told L'Humanité on Sept. 12, "If the law isn't on our side, then it becomes a matter of our power versus theirs." □

WORKERS WORLD editorial

Vietnam: Truth and 'documentary'

The Public Broadcasting Service documentary series on the Vietnam War has provoked angry and insightful responses from anti-war and anti-imperialist commentators — and rightly so.

However, many will see this series as the definitive "history," especially of the 1960-1975 period. It may become a frame of reference for many youths interested in the history of U.S. imperialism and its revolutionary opponents.

Those who went through that period of genocidal war against the Vietnamese, which provoked anti-war solidarity against the U.S. imperialist government, have the responsibility — some would say, the duty — to fight for an account of the war that exposes the U.S. government's complete criminal brutality. We must make it harder for today's Washington regime to wage war.

Workers World first commented on this series before its release, based on its makers' statement that it would be "something all can embrace." After viewing the first three of 10 episodes, there's no need to retract a single word of our comment.

An understanding of the role of U.S. imperialism and how Washington used its military and economic power after World War II helps dissect this "documentary."

From 1945 on, Washington and Wall Street were the center of the imperialist world, whose domination over the colonies was soon challenged by national liberation struggles in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

In Europe, British and French imperialism were weak. German and Japanese imperialism had been nearly destroyed. It was the specter of communist-led workers' uprisings and the mere existence of the Soviet Red Army that motivated the U.S. and Britain to start the Cold War.

In every class battle of that period, the U.S., the Pentagon and the CIA opposed any gain by the workers — whether in France, Italy or Greece after World War II or Portugal in 1974.

In every struggle for national independence and sovereignty of the colonies, the U.S. allied with the colonial power against national liberation.

In Korea, the U.S. waged a brutal war against the revolutionary north. In Kenya and Malaya, it backed Britain. It overthrew the nationalist Mohammed Mossadegh in oil-rich Iran in 1953 and Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954. It pushed out Kwame Nkrumah from Ghana and was behind the murder of Patrice Lumumba in Congo. It supported apartheid South Africa and fascist Spain. And this is just the short list.

Thus, it is either naive or extremely cunning to suggest, as the early episodes of the Vietnam "documentary" do, that the U.S. policymakers and presidents of that period were well-meaning people who through some blunders — or perhaps because they saw Vietnam in Cold War terms — wound up being entrapped in a brutal and losing war in Indochina.

The war with the Soviet Union, with "communism," was part of the war the imperialist U.S. ruling class waged then and still wages against the working class and oppressed peoples on a global scale. They feared the communists would seize the means of production, which the bosses called "their" property — although they never spent a day working in it. When workers take over the means of production, the imperialist ruling class can no longer exploit their labor. Of course, the U.S. rulers hate communism — and they were ready to blow up the world to protect their domination over it.

Today's ruling class also nurtures a strata of spies, generals and intellectuals who will battle communism. One of the worst aspects of the PBS documentary is that it gives voice to these U.S. strategists, from Gen. William Westmoreland and John Negroponte — the butcher of Central America — to Leslie Gelb and lesser actors in the imperialist machinery of death and lies.

The documentary does expose the U.S. presidents and their cabinet officers and generals for telling one lie after another to sell the war to the U.S. population. It also gives voice to some Vietnamese revolutionaries and fighters who fought to free their country. This is one small part we can embrace, but it's not enough.

To reiterate, however, it is not enough to rate the series' pluses and many minuses. Our job is to battle for an anti-imperialist explanation of this important part of global class-struggle history. The PBS documentary has reopened the discussion, and we will continue to fight for class truth about this criminal war. □

U.S. continues threats against DPRK

By Deirdre Griswold

To borrow a phrase from LeBron James, "U Bum!" would be an appropriate response to Donald Trump's latest round of threats and racist insults hurled at the leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Kim Jong Un was being relatively restrained when he called Trump's behavior "mentally deranged." He was responding to the U.S. president's Sept. 19 speech to the United Nations General Assembly, which drew gasps of disbelief from the assembled diplomats when Trump threatened to "totally destroy North Korea."

Has this sunk in with the people of the U.S.? That the person who supposedly has his hand on the nuclear button is talking like a 1920s Chicago mobster, crudely threatening war with a country that now has nuclear weapons to defend itself?

The problem is not just Trump, of course. The Pentagon says that on Sept. 23, U.S. B-1B bombers and F-15C fighters flew along the coast of the DPRK above the demilitarized zone for the first time. And the U.S. government has imposed a new round of sanctions on the DPRK meant to paralyze its economy.

None of this will deter the DPRK from developing the means to defend itself from a U.S. attack. In fact, just the opposite — Trump has confirmed that the Koreans can expect nothing but further hostility from the U.S. ruling class and therefore they must strengthen their country's defense by any means necessary.

The foreign minister of the DPRK, Ri Yong Ho, answered Trump in a speech to the U.N. General Assembly on Sept. 23, the same day that U.S. warplanes were flying along the coast of his country. Ri told the assembly:

"The most rampant violation of international justice can be seen on the Korean peninsula.

"Unprecedented acts of injustice such as imposing harsh sanctions on a victim for the reason that the victim chose to stand up to the offender are openly committed in the name of the U.N.

"The essence of the situation on the Korean peninsula is a confrontation between the DPRK and the U.S., where the former tries to defend its national dignity and sovereignty against the latter's hostile policy and nuclear threats.

"The United States is the country that first produced nuclear weapons and the only country that actually used them, massacring hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians. It is the U.S. that threatened to use nuclear weapons against the DPRK during the Korean War in the 1950s and first introduced nuclear weapons into the Korean peninsula after the war.

"The U.S. started large-scale joint military exercises against the DPRK during the Cold War period and further increased their scope and aggressive nature after the Cold War, staging the exercises several times a year by mobilizing more of nuclear strategic assets.

"What else could be a bigger threat than the violent remarks such as pouring 'fire and fury,' 'total destruction' coming from the top authority of the world's biggest nuclear power?

"The very reason the DPRK had to possess nuclear weapons is because of the U.S. and it had to strengthen and develop its nuclear force onto the current level to cope with the U.S."

U.S. imperialists underestimate DPRK

Trump expresses in the crudest terms the miscalculations of an imperialist power that once had a monopoly on nuclear weapons. It was unthinkable to his class of billionaires that a small country like the DPRK could recover from the total destruction wrought by the U.S. war of 1950-1953, rebuild its economy and become a nuclear power.

It tries to explain the DPRK's astounding progress by calling its leaders "dictators" and its people "robots" who have been forced to do their bidding. In fact, the DPRK's spectacular development has been made possible by the tremendous enthusiasm of its workers, farmers and intellectuals for building an independent socialist society free from colonial and imperialist oppression.

The DPRK has been able to marshal its resources because of this. So many countries that have suffered under colonialism and then imperialism cannot provide the bare essentials of life for the people because their economies continue to be looted by the rich capitalist powers.

Despite blockades, sanctions and war threats, the DPRK has achieved a high level of technological development — and its development of a nuclear deterrent is a testament to this. The Korean system of free education has produced experts in all the sciences. They have a strong spirit of self-reliance and their nuclear achievements are a source of great pride.

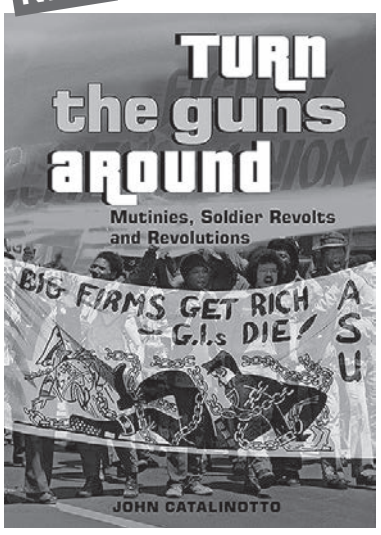
The U.S. has never apologized for annihilating two Japanese cities with atomic bombs. If it can claim it was justified in actually using such horrendous bombs in August 1945, when Germany had already surrendered on May 7 and the world war was clearly coming to an end, how can it in any honesty excoriate the DPRK for developing such weapons to defend itself?

No wonder the people of the DPRK are now elated that their scientists have achieved success in producing nuclear weapons and the missiles that can deliver them. It should lift from their shoulders the terrible possibility that they could be attacked at any time by the world's most fearsome military power. The ball is now in the court of the people of the U.S., who must struggle — in our own interests as well as those of the Korean people — to make sure that never happens. □

TURN THE GUNS AROUND

Mutinies, Soldier Revolts and Revolutions

NEW



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

"If schools in the United States really wanted to impart historical truth, Catalinotto's 'Turn The Guns Around' would be required reading. He tells the true story of this epoch. Few participants know more about the massive GI rebellion against the Vietnam War, the anti-war veterans' movement or the history of soldier revolts from the Paris Commune to the Portuguese coup."

– **Pvt Larry Holmes** *GI resister and organizer for the American Servicemen's Union 1972-74.*

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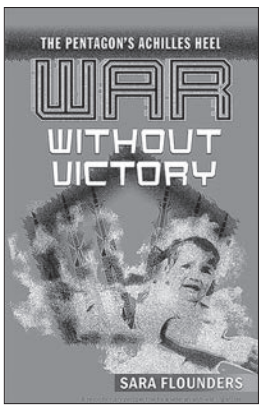

WAR WITHOUT VICTORY

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.

Rallies denounce sanctions on Zimbabwe

By Johnnie Stevens
New York City

On a weekday afternoon, dozens of people demonstrated on Sept. 21 in Dag Hammarskjöld Park across from the United Nations to support Zimbabwe. At that time, Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe was speaking inside to the General Assembly.

Like Cuba, Iran, People's Korea and Venezuela, the African country has been attacked by U.S. economic sanctions.

Under the leadership of President Mugabe, Zimbabwe's people have retaken land stolen by European colonial settlers. Millions of acres have been turned over to those who work the land.

That bold action has inspired others in Africa and enraged the banksters of Wall Street and London. Zimbabwe refuses to be intimidated. In his speech to the General Assembly, President Mugabe called Trump "a giant gold Goliath."

WW PHOTO: JOHNNIE STEVENS

At the rally, Omowale Clay of the December 12th Movement (D12) denounced the sanctions against Zimbabwe as a form of war and compared them to those against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Venezuela. Dr. James McIntosh of the Committee to Eliminate Media Offensive to African People (CEMOTAP) emphasized the need of oppressed people to have their own media.

D12 Chairperson Viola Plummer also spoke in defense of President Mugabe. Among other speakers was Workers World Party First Secretary Larry Holmes.

In addition to calling this action, D12 also organized a demonstration on Sept. 16 where people marched through the streets and went in support to Zimbabwe's U.N. mission. ☐

Solidarity message to the people of Mexico
from Workers World Party/Partido Mundo Obrero

The members of Workers World Party reach out to the brave Mexican people who are suffering the terrible consequences of a 7.1 magnitude earthquake that took place on Tuesday, Sept. 19.

We echo the many messages and expressions of solidarity issued from different parts of the world. The people of Mexico are not alone.

With much sadness we have seen the harrowing images of buildings and other collapsed structures and the increasing number of fatalities — from children whose lives have been prematurely mowed down, to people of all ages.

Since our party is in the very belly of the violent and cruel empire that is the United States, we are filled with much anger that the evil, fascistic and warlike administration of this country has failed to demonstrate the necessary humanity for the brotherly people with whom it shares its only border to the south, and whose southwestern territories were stolen from the Mexican people. As Mexican migrants in the United States have said in their slogans: "We did not cross the border, the border crossed us."

It also fills us with indignation that Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto, instead of putting energy into ending corruption and punishing the criminals, above all by seeking and punishing to the full extent of the law those responsible for the disappearance of the 43 students of Ayotzinapa, is instead giving Mexico's support to Trump's warlike policies against the sister Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

But the people residing in Mexico who are now suffering this tragedy are giving the world lessons in solidarity and cooperation. These are also lessons in sovereignty. Rescue brigades from trade unions, students and other organizations have taken up the difficult and sad task of removing debris in search of survivors.

The people of different communities have organized themselves to do what is necessary to provide help in all possible ways. They are demonstrating the great strength of the Mexican people, the people who have produced giants like Emiliano Zapata. This is also proof of what people are capable of when they unite.

We are committed to raise our voices to provide the necessary assistance from here in the United States and we will collaborate with efforts being carried out by the migrant communities residing in the various states where we have a presence.

A strong embrace of solidarity from our struggle.

Teresa Gutiérrez and Berta Joubert-Ceci,

For the National Committee of Workers World Party/ Partido Mundo Obrero

Puerto Rico devastated by hurricanes, colonialism

Continued from page 8

organized way.

One message that appears in many reports, both in regular commercial media as well as from individuals using social networks, has been the extraordinary capacity of resilience and cooperative work shown by the people. In photos, even small children can be seen clearing fallen tree branches from the roads.

The overall sentiment expressed is that even though they lost their material possessions, the people feel lucky they are alive, describing the hurricane experience as something apocalyptic. In fact, it is the worst hurricane to hit Puerto Rico since 1928.

Message after message has been an uplifting "Puerto Rico will be stronger." This is a very welcomed statement at a time when the criminal Fiscal Control Board appointed by the U.S. Congress to pay the wealthy bondholders has been imposing austerity measures that are suffocating the population with layoffs, increased taxes, cuts in health and education, and attempts to privatize the energy sector.

The important step now is for this effort of unity in action to be translated into political action for the liberation of the Puerto Rican nation.

As a recent leaflet distributed by Puerto Rican activists in Philadelphia, titled "What help do we need from the United States? **REPARATIONS AND INDEPENDENCE**," reads:

"IT IS TIME TO PAY. What we need now is for the U.S. to repair the damage it has done to us. Here are some examples: for the forced sterilization of our women; for the contamination of waters, air and soil by petrochemicals, coal, pharmaceutical and military plants; for the destruction of Vieques and Culebra by the U.S. Navy; for the death of thousands of young people in wars with which Puerto Rico had nothing to do; for the imposition of a merchant marine that does not let us trade with other countries.
For these and many other reasons we demand: Cancel the odious debt! REPARATIONS NOW! Sovereignty with Independence! No criminal Fiscal Control Board!"

Joubert-Ceci is a Puerto Rican woman from the southern city of Ponce who, as of the writing of this article on Sept. 25, has not yet been able to communicate with her relatives on the island. ☐

Protesters demand sovereignty for Puerto Rico

Continued from page 8

in Spanish, with singing, drumming and traditional instruments that caught the attention of everyone in the area.

At different points in the day, the gathering was joined by students from Mexico, activists from Black Lives Matter, supporters of Palestine and performance artists in the battle against New York City's colonizer Columbus statue.

Participants gave out flyers to passers-by explaining the United States' colonial hold on Puerto Rico, from the 1898 invasion to the 2016 Promesa (Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act), which, in effect, calls for closing schools and hospitals, selling off beaches and cutting workers' wages — all to make sure foreign banks can collect $70 billion of so-called debt.

Endorsers of this effort included the Oscar-Mandela Committee, Partido Nacionalista de Puerto Rico (New York and Puerto Rico), Partido Independentista de Puerto Rico, Pro-Libertad, the Indian Community House, the International Action Center, Workers World Party, the Rev. Luis Barrios, Labor Against Racist Terror and United American Indians of New England.

In the aftermath of the two storms, many of these same activists are now collaborating to collect donations and material aid for Puerto Rico at community locations such as the El Maestro Center in the Bronx.

On Sept. 21 at a solidarity rally for Zimbabwe, a statement from that country's president, Robert Mugabe, was read by revolutionary Viola Plummer, expressing "condolences to the people of Puerto Rico and other nations devastated by natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes" and concluding that the world "demands more, not less solidarity."

Long live internationalism! ¡Que viva Puerto Rico libre! ☐

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WW/MO FOTOS: JOE PIETTE

Oscar López en Filadelfia

‘El colonialismo es un crimen contra la humanidad’

Por Christa Rivers
Filadelfia

“El colonialismo es un crimen contra la humanidad”. Estas palabras, del luchador por la independencia puertorriqueña Oscar López Rivera, suenan cada vez más verdaderas después de Irma y María. Estos huracanes atravesaron por el Caribe dejando atrás destrucción en estas islas que están siendo arrasadas por el colonialismo y el imperialismo.

López Rivera habló el 18 de septiembre a una multitud de más de 200 personas en Taller Puertorriqueño en el norte de Filadelfia. Fue el invitado de honor de la Red Nacional Boricua de Derechos Humanos. Cuando el ex prisionero político entró en la sala, la muchedumbre irrumpió en aclamaciones de pie y comenzó a cantar, “Se siente, se siente, Oscar está presente!”

Otro participante a la reunión público entregó un mensaje de prisioneros de la prisión estatal de Gratersford en Pensilvania que deseaban mostrar su aprecio a López Rivera. Le dijeron que su existencia como luchador por la independencia de Puerto Rico fomenta sus propias luchas por liberarse del sistema penitenciario.

López Rivera pidió que todas/os los presos políticos sean libres. También habló de las/os jóvenes en el movimiento, diciendo que ellas/os son el futuro y que el trabajo que hacemos ahora será llevado a cabo por ellos. Dijo a las/os jóvenes en la multitud: “Atrévanse a luchar, atrévanse a ganar”.

Por último, López Rivera habló sobre los efectos del colonialismo en Puerto Rico, que como una de las muchas colonias que aún existen en el siglo XXI, la isla está siendo estrangulada económicamente por Estados Unidos. La crisis de la deuda en la isla es el resultado directo de la explotación de este gobierno colonialista y la colaboración del gobierno en Puerto Rico.

El pago de la deuda está siendo transferido al pueblo puertorriqueño, que ya ha visto 179 escuelas cerradas, las pensiones retiradas y los beneficios de salud cortados.

Ahora, como la isla está luchando con cortes de energía y otros problemas causados por los huracanes, los EUA no ofrece ningún apoyo. Está claro que los Estados Unidos tienen una relación colonial con Puerto Rico, donde las empresas estadounidenses han robado recursos del pueblo puertorriqueño mientras los Estados Unidos han gobernado la isla y el pueblo trabajador de Puerto Rico ha sufrido.

Es por eso que López Rivera llamó a la descolonización, soberanía e independencia de Puerto Rico como la única forma de poner fin a la abusiva relación colonial.

Después de los desastres de huracán, a través de la isla ya través de la diáspora, las/os puertorriqueños están trabajando juntos para buscar a miembros de la familia en las partes inalcanzables de la isla. En la isla están trabajando juntas/os para despejar carreteras, mover escombros y árboles.

El gobierno colonial de Puerto Rico está haciendo tan poco, así que la gente lo está haciendo por sí misma. Una vida sin este gobierno imperialista y colonialista que hace fracasar una isla y empuja la deuda sobre el pueblo, es posible.

En su apoyo a López Rivera, la audiencia estaba apoyando la autodeterminación y la liberación de las/os puertorriqueños. □

WORKERS WORLD PARTY
PARTIDO MUNDO OBRERO

Mensaje de solidaridad con

Mexico

La membresía del Partido Workers World-Mundo Obrero se une al dolor del valiente pueblo mexicano que sufre las terribles consecuencias del terremoto de gran magnitud – 7,1 en la escala Richter - el pasado martes 19 de septiembre.

Hacemos eco de los múltiples mensajes y expresiones de solidaridad emitidas desde diferentes lugares del mundo. El pueblo de México no está solo.

Hemos visto con mucha tristeza las desgarradoras imágenes de edificios y otras estructuras colapsadas y el creciente número de víctimas fatales – desde niños y niñas cuyas vidas han sido segadas prematuramente, hasta mujeres y hombres de todas las edades.

Estando nuestro partido en las mismas entrañas de ese imperio violento y cruel que es Estados Unidos, nos llena de mucho disgusto el hecho que la mala, fascista y guerrerista administración de este país no haya demostrado la necesaria humanidad para ese pueblo hermano con el cual comparte su única frontera hacia el sur y cuyos territorios fueron robados al pueblo mexicano, tal como expresan las consignas de las y los migrantes mexicanos en Estados Unidos: “Nosotras/os no cruzamos la frontera; la frontera nos cruzó a nosotras/os”.

Asimismo también nos llena de indignación que el mandatario mexicano Enrique Peña Nieto, en vez de poner todas las energías en terminar con la corrupción y la impunidad, sobre todo buscando y castigando con todo el peso de la ley a los responsables de la desaparición de las/os 43 estudiantes normalistas de Ayotzinapa, comulgue con las políticas guerreristas de Trump en contra de la hermana República Bolivariana de Venezuela.

Pero ese pueblo mexicano que sufre ahora una tragedia más, está dando al mundo lecciones de solidaridad y cooperación entre sus residentes. Lecciones de soberanía. Brigadas de rescate de sindicatos, estudiantes y otras organizaciones se han dado a la dura y triste tarea de remover escombros en busca de sobrevivientes. El pueblo se ha organizado en diferentes comunidades para hacer lo necesario para brindar toda la ayuda posible. Esa es una muestra de la gran fortaleza del pueblo mexicano, del pueblo de gigantes como Emiliano Zapata. Es también una prueba de los que son capaces los pueblos cuando se unen.

Nos comprometemos a elevar sus voces para que se brinden las ayudas necesarias desde acá en Estados Unidos y colaboraremos con los esfuerzos que está llevando a cabo la comunidad migrante residente en los diversos estados donde tenemos presencia.

Un fuerte abrazo solidario desde nuestras trincheras.

Teresa Gutiérrez y Berta Joubert-Ceci,
Por el Comité Nacional del Partido Workers World-Mundo Obrero □

Puerto Rico

Desde las entrañas del imperio, las y los miembros del Partido Workers World-Mundo Obrero enviamos un fuerte abrazo solidario al pueblo borincano que enfrenta en estos momentos las devastadoras consecuencias del poderoso huracán María.

Este huracán, el más potente y peligroso desde que el huracán San Felipe de categoría 5 en la escala Saffir-Simpson en el Atlántico ocasionara 300 muertes a su paso en el 1928, llega al archipiélago en las peores circunstancias políticas y sociales en la historia de esa nación.

Hemos visto con mucho dolor las escenas de inundaciones y catástrofes ocurridas apenas a unos días tras el paso del huracán Irma. Vecindarios enteros bajo agua, peligrosos cables del tendido eléctrico caídos poniendo en peligro la vida de quien toque las aguas electrificadas, edificios con ventanas y puertas rotas, techos volados, e innumerables destrozos que aún no se han podido cuantificar por la falta de comunicación existente.

La falta de servicio eléctrico con la consecuente repercusión en todas las áreas que dependen de ese crucial servicio para su mantenimiento, como el agua y la refrigeración de alimentos y ambiente tan importantes en una tierra subtropical donde las temperaturas han sobrepasado los 90 grados Fahrenheit en los últimos días.

Abrazamos y nos solidarizamos con toda y todo boricua que fuera de fronteras físicas, compone esa nación, separados solo por la crueldad del proceso colonizador del imperio. Compartimos la angustia de esas familias que intentan saber de la situación de sus seres queridos en el archipiélago pero que por la falta de comunicación viven con esa atormentada espera de noticias.

Esta desgracia se ha visto aumentada por los procesos de privatización de algunos sectores como la comunicación tan esencial en estos momentos. Las privatizaciones nunca benefician al pueblo; todo lo contrario. Un ejemplo es la telefonía, que en manos ahora de la empresa Claro, solo depende del servicio eléctrico para su funcionamiento, quedando por tanto el pueblo incomunicado. Esto contrasta con la Telefónica de Puerto Rico que cuando estaba en manos del estado contaba además con generadores de emergencia que demostraron durante el huracán Hugo, que la comunicación podía mantenerse sin el servicio eléctrico.

Desde acá ayudaremos en todo lo que podamos para aliviar la enorme carga impuesta por la naturaleza y por la mano de los criminales en Wall Street y de los gobiernos, tanto el de Puerto Rico en connivencia con la criminal Junta de Control Fiscal impuesta ilegítimamente por el Congreso estadounidense, como por el actual residente fascista en la Casa Blanca.

Nuestro más fuerte abrazo solidario para el pueblo puertorriqueño.

Desde el imperio cruel y asesino,
Berta Joubert-Ceci y Teresa Gutiérrez,
Por el Comité Nacional del Partido Workers World-Mundo Obrero □