

# Boston School Bus **UNION** **VICTORY**



**USW 8751, side by side with the communities  
it serves, beats Veolia/Transdev**

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# We Support the Boston School Bus Drivers

## USW 8751

### SAFETY FOR CHILDREN • JUSTICE FOR DRIVERS



Johnny McInnis, Pres. Black Educators Alliance of MA – speaking in support of USW 8751 at Solidarity Day, Feb 1, 2014

Mel King: "Which side are you on? Are you on the side of the greedy? Or are you on the side of love thy neighbor as thyself, which is the side that this struggle of the bus drivers represents." – Feb. 1

City Councilor Charles Yancey: "Thank you to the bus drivers for bringing these issues to the attention of the public because the company doesn't seem to care. We are here to say that our bus drivers care about the children of Boston." – Oct 8, 2013

For 40 years the Boston School Bus Drivers, USW 8751 have provided safe, on time professional transportation to the students of Boston.

These hard working women and men are parents themselves. They are members of our communities and together, in Local 8751, they have been an invaluable ally, providing vital support to our struggles for fully funded

equal, quality public education and against all education cutbacks.

USW 8751 has fought shoulder to shoulder with us in countless battles throughout the years from ongoing fights against segregation and discrimination to the successful fight to "Save Grove Hall Post Office" to virtually every struggle for justice in Boston—housing, jobs and equal access to city services.

They have stood firmly against racism, sexism and discrimination against the LGBT community, for the disability rights community, in support of our special needs student population and in defense of embattled community leaders. Local 8751 has a proud history of standing with workers and unions in Boston, nationally and throughout the globe.



Sandra McIntosh, Co-Chair, Coalition for Equal Quality Education

## The Boston School Bus Drivers have stood with us

### WE STAND WITH THEM!



Charles Clemons, TOUCH 106.1 FM: "Our bus drivers carry our future. It's time to reinstate our leaders – Say NO to Veolia!"



Minister Don Muhammad



USW 8751 united with Nation of Islam, MA, AFL-CIO Pres. Steve Tolman and City Councilors to save the Grove Hall Post Office. In Palestine at NE University



Tori Porell, Imr. Pres. of Students for Justice



Chuck Turner: "These leaders and this union have shown solidarity for decades with the community, from the Grove Hall post office to Bromley Heath workers. We must stand for Justice for the 4."

## Rehire fired leaders – No to Veolia Union Busting!

### DROP THE FRAME UP CHARGES AGAINST Grievance Chair & founder Steve Kirschbaum

Partial list of endorses: ■ United Steel Workers ■ Steven A Tolman, Pres, MA AFL-CIO ■ USW, L 8751 ■ IBEW L 2222, Myles Calvey ■ Rick Rogers, Sec-Treas, Greater Boston Labor Council ■ Pride At Work, AFL-CIO ■ San Francisco School Bus Drivers, UTU 1741 ■ San Francisco Labor Council ■ ATU, L 1555, BART ■ Troy Area Labor Council ■ Boston Boilermakers L 29

For information: BostonSchoolBus.org & Team Solidarity: tinyurl.com/KY09HYS



Garry Murchison, Steve Kirschbaum, Andre Francois & Steve Gillis



# **BOSTON SCHOOL BUS UNION VICTORY**

**USW 8751, side by side with the communities  
it serves, beats Veolia/Transdev**

*For our brother and comrade, Milt Neidenberg, mentor  
to Team Solidarity and the Boston School Bus Union  
since before day one, 42 years!*



# Table of Contents

## Article Page

Introduction	5
Boston school bus drivers: ‘Enough is enough!’ By Hannah Kirschbaum on October 16, 2013	8
Reasons to challenge Veolia By Betsey Piette and Joe Piette on October 16, 2013	11
Workers’ unity, struggle puts brakes on firing of School Bus Union 5 By Joe Piette posted on October 24, 2013	14
Boston bus drivers defend labor leaders By Monica Moorehead posted on October 29, 2013	16
Boston Solidarity Day: Reinstate fired bus union leaders! By Joe Piette posted on November 13, 2013	20
Workers pack Boston hearing, expose union busters By Tony Murphy posted on November 28, 2013	23
Solidarity Day II in Boston: Rehire school bus drivers! By Gerry Scoppettuolo and Steve Gillis Dorchester, Mass. posted on February 6, 2014	25
Racist Boston school plan protested by oppressed communities By Gerry Scoppettuolo posted on June 12, 2014	29
LGBTQ and bus drivers union solidarity By Garrett Dicembre & Gerry Scoppettuolo posted on June 17, 2014	30
Drop frame-up charges! Rehire four Boston school bus drivers! By Tony Murphy posted on July 7, 2014	31
Boston school bus drivers union puts Veolia on trial, Solidarity Day IV By Steve Matherly and Monica Moorehead	34
Solidarity Day VI in Boston: Hundreds demand ‘Drop the charges’ in anti-union frame-up By Workers World staff posted on October 7, 2014	36

Thank you to the many photographers: Joe Piette, Liz Green, Stevan Kirschbaum, Hannah Kirschbaum, Brenda Ryan, Sharon Black and others.

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<b>Article</b>	<b>Page</b>
Frame-up trial of Boston school bus drivers union leader turns into ‘Solidarity Day VII’	38
By Workers World staff posted on November 25, 2014	
Despite historic blizzard, bus drivers pack court for union militant	39
By Tony Murphy posted on February 2, 2015	
Boston union under siege	41
By Martha Grevatt posted on February 26, 2015	
Detroit youth: ‘I stand with Boston bus drivers’	44
By Joe Mchahwar posted on February 26, 2015	
Victory for Boston school bus drivers union; Kirschbaum acquitted as frame-up collapses	46
By Tony Murphy posted on March 6, 2015	
Boston school bus drivers vote in fired union leaders	48
By Brenda Ryan posted on May 4, 2015	
Veolia/Transdev – ‘Evil Corp’	52
By Terri Kay posted on August 17, 2015	
From Selma to Boston: ‘I’m fighting for the union!’	56
By Minnie Bruce Pratt posted on August 25, 2015	
Boston school bus drivers explain solidarity	59
By Martha Grevatt posted on November 22, 2015	
Historic union victory: Boston school bus drivers win back fired leaders, contract gains made	61
By Martha Grevatt posted on December 23, 2015	
TPP Caution Amidst Two Victories over Veolia	66
By Susan Koppelman	
Conclusion	71

# Introduction

**October 8, 2013.** At dawn on this day, the rank-and-file members of the Boston School Bus Drivers Union, United Steelworkers Local 8751, made a historic stand against the unfair and illegal practices of Veolia Transportation, Inc. On July 1, Veolia had taken over managing Boston school transportation from First Student. Grievances were piling up so fast that sixteen Unfair Labor Practices had to be filed before the school year started in September. Drivers were particularly infuriated by Veolia's demand on October 7 that every one of them — some with decades of service — had to reapply for their jobs.

On October 8, the drivers reported for work at all four bus yards; once there, they demanded Veolia meet with the union to discuss the company's repeated violations of their collective bargaining agreement. Veolia had signed an agreement on June 18 to adhere to the contract's terms and conditions and hire all drivers with their years of seniority intact.

The company did not respond to the drivers' request. Unknown to the drivers at the time, top officials from corporate headquarters had flown into town and were in all four yards that morning, directing Veolia's attack.

By 11 a.m., as then-Mayor Menino took to the TV to demand the firing of "renegade elements," the company delivered its response via top brass of the Boston Police Department. Later promoted for his actions that day, then Superintendent and now BPD Commissioner Evans ordered everybody at all four yards off the property under threat of arrest. Cops and company managers closed and padlocked the gates. Even thirty-year City Councillor Charles Yancey, a leader in the Black community, who had arrived at the Dorchester bus yard hours earlier and was attempting to get the company to sit down and talk, was singled out by corporate security, threatened with arrest and bodily pushed out of the Veolia HQ by armed stripes. An illegal lockout by Veolia had begun, an action expressly prohibited by the contract.

The drivers were engaging in "protected concerted activity" as defined under the National Labor Relations Act. They were in no way engaged in any kind of a strike. Yet within twenty-four hours, five union leaders were suspended from work indefinitely under the false allegation of leading a wildcat strike. In the first week of November, four elected union

officials — Recording Secretary Andre François, Vice President Steve Gillis, Grievance Chair and union founder Steve Kirschbaum and Chief Steward Garry Murchison — saw their suspensions converted to terminations, delivered by armed constables at their homes.

The fight was on, as the Boston government and its hired corporate guns tried to break a militant union, founded by revolutionary-minded workers in alliance with Boston's Black and immigrant communities, with its roots in the 1970s and 80s street and political battles against racists during the desegregation of Boston public schools. The union's school-house had been its eleven previous strikes that set the prevailing wage.

The hard-fought struggle to force Veolia to rehire the four leaders continued for over two years. This was a true David vs. Goliath battle, pitting a 900-member union against the global behemoth Veolia Transportation. In August 2014 the company was rebranded Transdev Services in a futile attempt to hide its crimes from the global labor movement and Boycott Divest Sanction struggle in solidarity with the Palestinian people. The membership of the Boston School Bus Drivers Union is 98 percent people of color, the majority of them Haitian immigrants.

USW 8751 faced a second uphill battle beginning June 30, 2014, the day the workers' labor agreement expired, when Veolia pressed trumped-up felony charges against union founder Kirschbaum. The charges were linked to a bus yard rally where he gave members an update on the contract negotiations and the fight to get the four leaders rehired.

This local, which has a track record of fighting and winning, beat those charges in March 2015. And in April 2015, boosted by the court victory, the Team Solidarity slate led by François and Kirschbaum swept the local's election with a wide margin of victory in every race. The fired leaders took the top positions — François president, Kirschbaum vice president, Gillis financial secretary and Murchison grievance chair.

Despite the collapse of its criminal case against Kirschbaum and the membership's show of support for the fired leaders, Transdev remained intransigent about rehiring the Four. Transdev, in which Paris-based Veolia retains a 40 percent stake, has emerged as an austerity enforcer in North America with 83,000 mass transit workers in 200 cities. Transdev has



subsidiaries in Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, India, Sweden, Finland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Germany, Ireland, the United Kingdom, France, Colombia, Chile and Morocco. Only under pressure from BDS activists did Transdev pull out of the West Bank in occupied Palestine.

The bosses could not imagine being beaten by a relatively small union of immigrant workers. In addition, the company could count on its friends at the Boston Globe to red-bait the union when prompted. Kirschbaum and Gillis are long-time members of Workers World Party.

**December 23, 2015.** After 27 months of termination, the president, vice president, financial secretary and grievance chair won reinstatement. At the same time, the union won its best contract ever!

Against Veolia/Transdev, a powerhouse of privatization, just how did the Boston School Bus Drivers Union finally win? That is a powerfully important question for today's labor movement, which has suffered so many setbacks, and for all working-class and oppressed people. This pamphlet, which contains a selection of articles from Workers World newspaper written in the heat of the battle and concludes with excerpts from a post-victory conversation on "harvesting the lessons," is an attempt to provide the answers.



# **Boston school bus drivers: ‘Enough is enough!’**

*By Hannah Kirschbaum on October 16, 2013*

Oct. 15 — Before the sun could rise over Boston on Tuesday, Oct. 8, the rank-and-file members of United Steelworkers Local 8751 were taking a stand against what they called the unfair and illegal practices of Veolia Transportation, Inc.

These school bus drivers reported for work at all four bus yards at their appropriate punch-in times, but refused to drive their buses until Veolia agreed to a meeting with the union to discuss issues regarding the company’s failure to adhere to terms and conditions of the signed collective bargaining agreement. The drivers stated they were engaging in protected activity, not a strike. Minutes turned into hours with no response from the company.

By 11:15 a.m., the company’s response was delivered. The drivers were ordered off the property at all four yards, and the gates were closed and padlocked. An illegal lockout had begun, an action expressly prohibited by the contract.

## **Background on unfair, illegal company practices**

Veolia assumed management of the Boston Public Schools’ transportation vendor contract on July 1. On June 18, in the midst of a transitional period prior to taking over management, Veolia signed an agreement that it would honor the union’s current contract and would operate under all terms and conditions.

Drivers say the company has consistently failed to honor the terms and conditions of that contract and in fact Veolia has engaged in a campaign to violate some of its most critical aspects. They say that the contract represents 35 years of collective-bargaining progress in wages, benefits, working conditions and drivers’ rights while on the job.

The workers have filed in excess of 50 individual and class action grievances against Veolia for violating the contract. They involve massive and chronic weekly payroll shortages, including not allowing workers to generate their own payroll documentation — a decades-long practice of time-stamping Daily Bus Reports; unsafe and impossible bus route problems, resulting in late student pick-ups, drop-offs and overcrowding of buses; unilateral changes to and failure to provide correct health, dental, sickness and accident, and long-term disability insurance benefits; failure

to provide efficient training for license renewal; failure to abide by and adhere to the grievance and arbitration process; use of GPS in violation of provisions of the contract and many more issues.

In addition to the individual and class action grievances, the United Steelworkers filed an Unfair Labor Practices complaint containing 16 charges against Veolia with the National Labor Relations Board on Sept. 13. However, on Oct. 7, the local union was informed by its International's attorney that due to the federal government shutdown, all related investigations, gathering of witness testimony, and any action on the union's demands were indefinitely suspended.

Many of the drivers and the rank-and-file leaders have told the media that this was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. USW Local 8751 Vice President Steve Gillis stated during a rally on Oct. 10, "Our drivers were denied their rights under the law to have the government act on their complaints and were forced to take matters into their own hands [on Oct. 8]. We demand that Veolia immediately stop their Unfair Labor Practices and honor the contract they signed."

When City Councillor Charles Yancey, a respected African-American community leader and 13-term Councillor, learned of the dispute between the drivers and Veolia, he personally went to Veolia's corporate office. At 11 a.m., Yancey, accompanied by Gillis and a delegation of drivers, attempted to request a meeting with Veolia to discuss the drivers' protest and issues. A group of Veolia managers refused to speak with Yancey and called the police to throw the group off the property. Boston police and company managers closed and locked the gate behind them.

That afternoon Veolia made a motion in the U.S. District Court of Massachusetts requesting an injunction ordering the drivers back to work. Judge George A. O'Toole Jr. denied their request, based on the fact that there was no credible evidence that the workers were "on strike" or planned a strike the following day.

## **Negative media and role of city officials**

For four days, from Oct. 8 to 11, the Boston school bus drivers' actions were headlined in the media — covered even before the Boston Red Sox and their postseason road to victory. Despite being at the four bus yards almost around the clock and making dogged attempts to interview bus drivers, most of the media delivered coverage that was negative and anti-union, with little regard for actual facts.

Besides not allowing neutral or pro-union commentary, the media focused on negative and slanderous comments by city officials. This is

noteworthy because the bus drivers are employed by Veolia, a private company, and not by the city of Boston, making them private rather than public employees.

City officials, Mayor Thomas Menino in particular, are well aware of the union's history and reputation of assertive advocacy for workers' rights. They viewed this dispute as a convenient opportunity to launch an unyielding, anti-union campaign. Press statements by officials delivered false reports about the drivers' issues. They also labeled union leaders "rogues" and "renegades," saying they selfishly risked the safety of Boston school children by refusing to drive. Mayor Menino went so far as to say that the drivers were "selfish, angry people who can't follow rules." They claimed that the union instigated an illegal strike while saying nothing about the company's lockout.

While acknowledging the federal court's ruling against an injunction, Menino called for the termination of all employees involved in "the strike." The Boston Public Schools issued daily robocalls to parents, fraudulently warning of impending problems caused by the "renegade element" of school bus drivers who were instigating "the strike," even after the lockout ended the next morning.

### **Veolia's bad faith negotiations: 'An injury to one is an injury to all!'**

Union leaders said that on Oct. 9, after the company ended its illegal lockout and finally agreed to meet with the union, the drivers returned to their runs in a show of good faith. Negotiations between Local 8751 and Veolia lasted approximately 10 hours that day.

Nevertheless, the parties were unable to come to an agreement on any of the 15 issues the union wanted to discuss. Instead, company management responded by delivering letters of suspension, with the threat of termination, to Local 8751 Vice President Steve Gillis and Grievance Committee Chairperson Steve Kirschbaum, and by threatening disciplinary action against an additional five union members. As of Oct. 15, three more drivers are being disciplined.

Despite a large, heavy-handed police presence of dozens of cops and under the watchful eye of the media, hundreds of workers rallied in support of the two suspended leaders at the Readville bus yard at 10:30 a.m. on Oct. 10. They came from all four city bus yards. The workers roared their support for several minutes before Kirschbaum, a founder of the union, and Gillis were able to give their speeches about what happened at the negotiations. Both men have decades of leadership in the union.

For this and other videos giving the workers' point of view, see the Team Solidarity Facebook page at [tinyurl.com/d5tntcg](http://tinyurl.com/d5tntcg).

As drivers from all four bus yards took the microphone, they vowed to stand as one with their leaders and to continue their just struggle until Veolia and the city of Boston respect their contract and their rights.

## **Reasons to challenge Veolia**

*By Betsey Piette and Joe Piette on October 16, 2013*

### **I. History of bribery, corruption and embezzlement**

Once part of the massive and financially troubled Vivendi Universal empire, in 2002 the company name was changed to Veolia to serve as the umbrella brand for its water, environmental services, energy services and transport divisions. In a further attempt to distance itself from Vivendi's notoriety, Veolia has established numerous small companies under different names in different countries.

The name changes did not put an end to the company's long history of graft and corruption. In 2002, one CEO was convicted and fined millions of dollars for fraud by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. Corruption, bribery and embezzlement appear to be part of Veolia's corporate culture. Veolia recently disclosed accounting fraud amounting to \$120 million in the U.S. from 2007 to 2010.

### **2. Contempt for workers and their unions**

Veolia has a history of treating its workers badly, often leading to strikes. Veolia likes to impose lower wages and reduce retirement, health care and other benefits; break contracts; enforce lower work standards detrimental to workers and the community; and reduce the workplace environment to levels below safety standards.

Contempt for workers' safety is just one of the issues leading to strike actions in several cities and countries. The lockout of protesting Boston school bus drivers was the third time Veolia had serious conflicts with workers in 2013, following strikes in Los Angeles and Finland. This global company has a long history of attempted union busting.

In 2012, after two years of failed negotiations, Veolia Transportation workers struck for 11 days in Phoenix and Tempe, Ariz., after the National Labor Relations Board found Veolia was negotiating in bad faith and



reneging on previously agreed issues. After failing to get Veolia to seriously negotiate for more than a year, workers in Florida struck for a day. A community campaign there finally forced Veolia out.

Internationally, Veolia's anti-labor policies have led to strikes in England, Canada and France. In Stockholm, Sweden, Nov. 18 has been declared as a day of protest against the anti-union policies of Connex, which is owned by Veolia Transportation. On Sept. 27, Connex fired a leader of a Swedish Union of Service and Communication Employees (SEKO) local for publicly criticizing the company's poor safety and working conditions.

### **3. Profits from privatization of water**

Veolia is the world's largest water privatization business, infamous globally for profiting at the expense of the environment and the public. Worldwide, consumers of Veolia's privatized water have experienced high prices, poor service, limited oversight and the discouragement of water conservation efforts in their communities.

Veolia has cost numerous municipalities millions of dollars in the cleanup of wastewater and untreated sewage dumped illegally into waterways; in damage to water treatment plants as a result of neglect; in injuries to workers; and in the unfair denial of pensions and other benefits. Veolia has been sued for breaking state contracts and overcharging residents. Globally, managers at Veolia-controlled plants have been charged with corruption, bribery, embezzlement, kickbacks and falsifying reports.

### **4. Environmental destruction**

Veolia has an extensive history of questionable environmental practices. In Indianapolis, the company's lack of safeguards led to a "boil water" advisory for more than a million people, forcing local businesses to close and school to be canceled for 40,000 students. In Kentucky, Veolia's cost-cutting led to diesel contamination of the water supply, after the company deemed that the equipment to remove the fuel was too expensive to operate.

In Illinois, a Veolia subsidiary operating a hazardous waste incinerator for more than 10 years was fined more than \$3 million for small explosions that released toxic chemicals, including carcinogenic dioxins, into the air. In Ohio, a Veolia Environmental Services plant housing several 200,000-gallon chemical tanks exploded in 2009, injuring workers and damaging more than a dozen homes.

Veolia Energy currently manages wastewater from hydraulic fracturing for natural gas and oil. This highly toxic byproduct of fracking contains

carcinogenic chemicals and has been found to be radioactive. Given Veolia's track record, its plan to discharge some of the water back to local waterways should be cause for considerable concern.

Veolia's privatization in Puerto Rico was considered a world-class consumer disaster. The British Environmental Agency listed Veolia as the second worst polluter in Britain. From Africa to Latin America and Asia to Eastern Europe, Veolia's drive to privatize water has left a trail of debt, destruction and growing opposition.

## **5. Profits from Israeli occupation of Palestine**

Veolia has operated bus lines through the occupied West Bank of Palestine, connecting illegal settlements to Israel. The Veolia buses used roads built on land stolen from Palestinians, while servicing only Israeli settlers.

While global pressure forced Veolia to sell off these bus lines in September, the company still operates light-rail services to illegal Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem, and owns and operates the Tovlan landfill in the West Bank, where it dumps refuse from Israeli settlements. Veolia also provides wastewater services to the settlements.

Veolia not only profits from apartheid in Israel. It has the largest commitment of any international company to Israel's occupation of the West Bank. ([corporatewatch.org.uk](http://corporatewatch.org.uk), October 2009)

## **Global communities dump Veolia**

Veolia's consistent profit-over-people practices have spawned "Dump Veolia" movements. In Escambia County, Fla., Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1395 assembled a coalition that included the NAACP, the Rainbow Coalition, Occupy Pensacola, churches, bus riders and disability rights groups, which succeeded in running Veolia out of town. In Indianapolis, New Orleans, Atlanta and other U.S. cities, as well as in Paris and cities in Belgium, Germany and Romania, communities have taken back their water and transport systems from Veolia and restored public control, improving operations and lowering costs.

# **Workers' unity, struggle puts brakes on firing of School Bus Union Five**

*By Joe Piette posted on October 24, 2013*

Boston, Oct. 23 — In an impressive display of strength and unity in the face of a state attack against a militant union, hundreds of Boston bus drivers, bus monitors and community supporters came out tonight in support of the School Bus Union Five: Andre François, Steven Gillis, Stevan Kirschbaum, Richard Lynch and Garry Murchison. Today's events put the Veolia transnational corporation on the defensive, thwarting its hell-bent plan to break the union by attempting to unlawfully fire these long-time, respected members of Steelworkers Local 8751, the Boston School Bus Drivers Union.

The first hit against Veolia's plans to terminate Gillis, Kirschbaum and the three other defendants was the legal brief presented to the corporation from the Steelworkers International legal defense team on Oct. 21. It reads in part: "As is explained herein, none of the named employees has engaged in any of the misconduct alleged against them inasmuch as the facts (as now known to the Union make clear that the events of October 8, 2013, amounted to an unlawful lockout by the Company and not a work stoppage by the employees and that, even if there were a work stoppage prior to the time when the Company locked the employees off the property, such work stoppage would have been a lawful Unfair Labor Practice strike in any event. Moreover, pursuant to the facts expounded herein, the five named employees did not plan or orchestrate any of the concerted activity that occurred on October 8 and thus have no culpability beyond that."

The 65-page document includes testimony, photos and other facts explaining that the company's Unfair Labor Practices were the real cause of the events on Oct. 8.

But the real power that made Veolia nervous today was the workers' strength. The company knew workers and community members would be gathering outside the meeting at the company's executive offices. That was why they announced early on that no one would be terminated today during the first disciplinary hearing against the Five. Another hearing is set for Oct. 28.

## **Strength of workers' power**

At the 3 p.m. start of the disciplinary meeting, the number of those gathered outside the building was understandably small because most

workers were on their buses until 5:30. Union leaders demanded that all five accused workers be present throughout the hearings.

When the company handed over three copies of the charges against Steve Gillis, union representatives demanded copies for every worker in the room, as past practices dictate. The company was forced to call a recess while that was done. The Five took the opportunity to walk out to the assembled crowd and hold the first of four or five rallies that took place over the next several hours.

Each time they walked out, Kirschbaum, chair of the union's Grievance Committee, gave a report to a steadily growing crowd. Veolia management personnel drove in and out of the gates as the meeting progressed in order to report to their bosses the increasing size of the rally.

By 7:15 p.m., the gathering, which had grown to more than 350 workers and supporters, was a virtual occupation of Veolia's corporate headquarters. As Kirschbaum walked out the door, some of the workers picked him up and carried him to a makeshift stage on the back of a truck. The rest of the Five joined him, as well as Boston City Councillor Charles Yancey.

Each member of the Five spoke during the last rally of the day. Kirschbaum reported that the disciplinary meeting would be continued on Oct. 28. Decisions have been delayed, but Veolia's attempt to fire the five union leaders is still on the table. Kirschbaum pointed out that the rank-and-file members' willingness to mobilize in support of the Five has put Veolia on the defensive.

Steve Gillis, USW local vice president, focused his remarks on the villainous role of the Veolia corporation as a worldwide imperialist pirate, more powerful than many governments. Through its four divisions Veolia does business in the trillions of dollars, has operations in 48 countries and employs more than 300,000 workers. It is trying to corner the world's water supply; is an energy monster that even uses fracking, which is known to destroy the environment; and runs apartheid bus lines and Israeli-settler-only garbage dumps in the occupied West Bank.

But, Gillis pointed out, the real, much stronger power is the power of the workers fighting for their rights in unity as a powerful workers' assembly.

François, Lynch and Murchison all thanked the assembled rank and file for demonstrating by their actions the time-honored motto: "An injury to one is an injury to all." The three thanked the workers for showing by their solidarity that they would not allow a single union leader to be sacrificed to Veolia's union busting. Then they told the workers they were living the

8751 motto: “Together we will win. Ansanb nou se yon fos. Todos unidos. De juntos somos forte!”

Councillor Yancey told the drivers and monitors: “You offered to do the afternoon run and pick up the children [on Oct. 8], but the mayor refused and locked the gates. The mayor sided with Veolia. You love the children of Boston. You deserve respect for the work you do. If you win, all of Boston wins. If you lose, workers all over lose.”

This reporter heard workers express a common belief: If the union leaders are terminated, workers wages and benefits will go next. They must stop the company’s plans. Hands off the School Bus Union Five!

## **Boston bus drivers defend labor leaders**

*By Monica Moorehead posted on October 29, 2013*

### **‘Union busting is disgusting’**

Boston, Oct. 28 — It was a true indication of what workers’ power means. A mass outpouring of workers at an hours-long rally tonight served notice to the notorious, union-busting transnational corporation, Veolia, that rank-and-file members of Steelworkers Local 8751, the Boston School Bus Drivers Union, stand prepared to defend their leaders and union by any means necessary.

Today Veolia held a second disciplinary hearing to try to illegally terminate five elected officers of Local 8751 — Grievance Chair Stevan Kirschbaum, Recording Secretary Andre François, Vice President Steve Gillis and Stewards Garry Murchison and Richard Lynch.

As the speeches, chants and drumming penetrated the hearing, the Veolia bosses were forced to initiate a stay on imposing any discipline against the Five — until a third hearing, scheduled to take place on Oct. 31 at 3 p.m.

No one had to be convinced that the bosses are dragging out the hearings in hopes that the union will tire of mobilizing in support of the Five.

The first hearing, on Oct. 23, had ignited the bus drivers and their supporters to rally against the fabricated charges brought against their leaders.

Team Solidarity — the voice of a rank-and-file coalition of school bus drivers from the Steelworkers, Teamsters and Amalgamated Transport unions — said in a public statement on Oct. 28: “Since taking over the Boston school bus management contract on July 1, 2013, Veolia has



committed numerous Unfair Labor Practices, violated nearly every term and condition of the drivers' employment contract, and engaged in actions designed to steal literally millions of dollars from drivers' paychecks — all with the goal of attempting to decimate this union of mainly Haitian and Cape Verdean drivers.

“In the process, Veolia has sacrificed student safety on the altar of profit, among other things creating routes designed by GPS-based software that result in massive lateness to school and to home, and refusing to pay drivers for all their time worked.

“On Oct. 8, when drivers engaged in a legally protected protest of Veolia's Unfair Labor Practices, including refusing to meet at the drivers' repeated requests, Veolia wrongly called the police and forcibly removed the drivers, illegally locking the gates and refusing to let the drivers back in to work. Boston Mayor Menino and Veolia then targeted the five union leaders for termination. Boston School Bus Drivers Union, United Steelworkers Local 8751 exemplifies what a labor union should be.”

As the Five sat in the disciplinary hearing, held at Veolia's corporate headquarters in the Freeport yard, bus drivers and their supporters started to gather in the early afternoon. They kept coming until the evening, when bus runs taking children home from school ended.

A truck was transformed into a makeshift stage. When there were breaks in the hearing, the Five came out and stood together in solidarity, giving words of encouragement and brief updates on what had happened.

One of the speakers early in the day was Myles Calvey, a leader of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers 2222, representing Verizon workers. Calvey spoke of the long-time relationship between his union and USW Local 8751 and the need for all workers to stick together.

Other speakers included out-of-town supporters Sharon Black from the Baltimore Workers Assembly and Eva Panjwani and Scott Williams, representing the youth group Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST from Durham, N.C., and Philadelphia, respectively. Black and Panjwani spoke on recent solidarity actions for the Boston drivers held at Veolia offices in their cities. Similar demonstrations took place in New York, Buffalo and Oakland. An action is scheduled for San Francisco on Oct. 30.

mYia X from the Women's Fightback Network compared the bus drivers' struggle to the heroic anti-apartheid fight led by women.

Ed Childs, a member of UNITE HERE Local 26, spoke on the history of racist segregation in Boston and the struggle to organize against Veolia and reactionary political forces that want to turn back the clock to resegregate the schools.

## **‘Solidarity is not a crime’**

While there was a virtual occupation of the Veolia headquarters during the first disciplinary hearing on Oct. 23, today’s rally was also an occupation but even more spirited and militant. The Five marched out of the hearings, united as one, to powerful cheers and fist pumps of hundreds of rank-and-file members and their supporters. They took the stage to make short statements, urging the membership to stay strong and united. Three women union leaders — Kiett Woody Baptiste, Chantall Casimir and Lela Roseboro — spoke in passionate defense of the Five and their union. Pat Scanlon spoke on behalf of the local chapter of Veterans for Peace.

Sandra McIntosh, coordinator of the Coalition for Equal Quality Education, speaking on behalf of the parents and students, extended solidarity to the union from the Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts. She told the crowd: “You are the most important people in my world because you carry the most important cargo in the world — our children. We give you our children and you bring them back to us each and every day. You deserve the respect, the pay and the solidarity you have coming to you. We are here from the community to support you.”

Larry Holmes, from the New York People’s Power Assembly and Workers World Party, told the drivers that they were an inspiration to all workers. He also sent a message to Veolia that “You will not bust us.” He ended his talk with a chant picked up by the entire rally: “What’s disgusting? Union busting!”

Stevan Kirschbaum, who co-chaired the rally, along with Team Solidarity leader and USW Local 8751 member Frantz Mendes, announced that two solidarity messages had come from Latin America — one from Edgar L. Sarango Correa, president of the Workers Confederation of Ecuador and current president of the Workers Unitary Front; the other from Edgar Páez, part of the national leadership of the National Union of Food Workers (SINALTRAINAL) of Colombia.

From the stage Kirschbaum recognized a delegation of Team Solidarity bus workers from Brockton Teamsters 653, as well as the entire negotiating committee representing school bus workers employed by the Eastern Bus Company.

He also brought to everyone’s attention solidarity from New York’s Amalgamated Transport Union Local 1181. In a vicious anti-union attack, Veolia has included in its “evidence” being used to “prove” the case for the termination of leaders, a video of USW 8751’s solidarity tour to support the 8,800 striking N.Y. school bus workers last February. The act exposes the true political character of Veolia’s campaign to punish this militant

union for daring to provide real solidarity in action.

In a statement release by Michael Cordiello, ATU 1181 president and business agent, the union states: “This union-busting action by Veolia Transportation is outrageous. Solidarity is not a crime. Standing up with the members for their rights is not a crime. We will join ranks to ensure that Veolia’s crime will not succeed, in Boston or any of its world-wide operations. Veolia: Hands off the Boston School Bus Union 5.”

Linda Jenkins from the Community Church of Boston was also greeted from the stage.

As outreach continues to grow in the community and the political movement for Round Three of the hearings set for Oct. 31, the bus drivers are fully aware of and prepared for the ongoing struggle to defend their union and the rights of all workers.

Earlier in the day, Ross Kochman, a sixth-grade teacher in the Boston Public School system, told WW: “The bus drivers have always supported the youth in BPS. I work with the youth and families of this city, and I think the bus drivers have been there for them, and I wanted to be here for the bus drivers.”

Charles Yancey, an African-American Boston City Councillor, informed USW 8751 Oct. 29 that he is preparing a City Council order demanding a hearing to investigate the actions of Veolia, BPS and Mayor Menino in the illegal lockout of the school bus drivers as well as allegations included in the Unfair Labor Practices charges now being heard before the National Labor Relations Board to determine if Veolia is in breach of their vendor contract with the city.

On Oct. 8, Yancey went to Veolia’s corporate headquarters to demand that the company meet with the drivers so that they may return to pick up the students. He was rudely ordered from Veolia’s corporate office and physically escorted from the property by Boston police.

# **Boston Solidarity Day: Reinstate fired bus union leaders!**

*By Joe Piette posted on November 13, 2013*

Nov. 9 — Solidarity Day for the Boston School Bus Union 5 drew hundreds of drivers from Steelworkers Local 8751, in addition to supporters from near and far today. An immediate measure of its success could be seen on the nightly television news. For the first time since Oct. 8, when the union was illegally locked out by Veolia Transportation, the workers' side of the story was finally revealed.

The day of solidarity started off with a rally at the Freeport Bus Yard on Hoyt Street for a boisterous crowd that kept increasing before it took off on a march to occupy the street in front of Veolia's corporate offices. More than 800 marchers walked, danced and raised their fists surrounding a mobile, truck-mounted sound system pumping out Haitian resistance music interspersed with chants of "Union! Union!"

The excitement rose perceptibly when the Haitian and African-American Buffalo Soldiers motorcycle contingent loudly drove into the middle of the people's assembly. After listening to more solidarity speeches, the still-spirited throng once again took over Dorchester Avenue on the way back to the Hoyt Street site, where drummers and chanters kept up their rhythmic sounds and were the last to leave.

The Nov. 9 rally, plus three other rallies at the Freeport Bus Yards on Oct. 23, 28 and 31 — each one attended by hundreds of drivers — as well as almost daily meetings of worker-organizers and a well-attended press conference on Nov. 8, combined to finally break through the wall of lies by the mainstream media. After a full month of misrepresenting the confrontation at Veolia Transportation as a "wildcat strike," newspaper and television news on Nov. 10 used the word "lockout" instead.

The first three speakers at the rally — Bishop Felipe Teixeira OFSJC, well-respected former City Councillor Chuck Turner and longtime City Councillor Charles Yancey — made the basic facts clear: Since July, Veolia has refused to follow numerous terms of the labor contract with the union, as required by law. When workers en masse demanded a meeting on Oct. 8 to settle pay, safety and other issues, the company refused and instead forced the workers out and locked the gates. The company's actions left tens of thousands of students without bus transportation.

Since then the company, which is hated worldwide for its environmentally dangerous and anti-labor policies, fired four leaders of USW

Local 8751: Grievance Chair Stevan Kirschbaum, Vice President Steve Gillis, Recording Secretary Andre François and Steward Garry Murchison. Steward Richard Lynch, the fifth suspended leader, was given a reprimand and told to return to work, raising questions about disparate treatment by the company. Some 864 workers were given disciplinary letters of warning this week. All five Veolia-targeted labor leaders chaired and spoke during the rally.

From the makeshift pickup truck stage next to Veolia's bus yards, Yancey said, "For elected officials including the mayor to condemn our school bus drivers without having the whole story — I think that is contemptuous." He ended with: "We must unify all workers in the city of Boston, must unify and support our school bus drivers and our school bus monitors at this time, because if Veolia is successful at busting this union, then who is next?"

Yancey filed a hearing order on Nov. 4 at the Boston City Council, calling for an investigation into Veolia's labor practices in the city of Boston.

## **Labor and community support**

Julio De La Cruz spoke for International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 2222 Business Manager Myles Calvey. The Verizon workers' union is hosting the Labor Committee to Defend the School Bus Union 5 in its offices. De La Cruz pledged his union's continued support "shoulder to shoulder" until the unjustly fired labor leaders are returned to work.

Maria Gianformaggio Gentile and Vinny Brutaro spoke for Amalgamated Transport Union Local 1181-1061, which made an extraordinary commitment of solidarity by organizing a busload of labor and community activists from New York City to attend the rally because "we're all in this together."

Sandra McIntosh, representing the Coalition for Equal Quality Education, of which the Black Educators Association of Massachusetts is an integral part, announced an important community speakout and press conference on Wednesday, Nov. 13 "to get the truth out" at St. Katharine Drexel Church, 517 Blue Hill Road, in the African-American community of Roxbury. That meeting is the next step in broadening necessary solidarity from the city's parents, especially in communities of color, to stop union busting by Veolia and city officials.

Charles Clemons, of TOUCH 106.1 FM community radio, promised his continued solidarity with the bus drivers' struggle. Jean-Claude Sanon,



a Haitian community activist, explained Local 8751's importance to the Black community.

### **Popular word of the day: "VeolIAR"**

The energetic crowd marched to a second rally in front of the locked gates of the hated Veolia company's executive offices.

Milagros Cancel and Sara Catalinotto spoke for New York City's Parents to Improve School Transportation, a strong ally of ATU 1181. The word "VeolIAR," featured on Catalinotto's picket sign, was repeated often throughout the day from the stage.

Ed Childs spoke representing UNITE HERE Local 26. Brockton school bus drivers in Teamsters Local 25 expressed their support, describing Local 8751 as "family."

Seattle activist Susan Koppelman of Life Source spoke of Veolia's criminal and profitable destruction of Palestine's water infrastructure.

Imani Henry, a student during the battle to desegregate Boston's schools in 1974, expressed his thanks to the drivers who protected students of color from the violence of racist thugs.

Larry Holmes, representing the People's Power Assembly of New York City, spoke, as did Sharon Black from the Baltimore People's Power Assembly. They described solidarity actions for the School Bus Union 5 in New York; Baltimore; Buffalo, N.Y.; Raleigh, N.C.; and San Francisco and Oakland, Calif.

This writer reported on a solidarity statement issued by the Colombian Sinaltrainal union and their current hunger strike against the Nestlé Corporation.

Chantal Casimir, Kiett Woody Baptiste, Lela Roseboro and other members of Local 8751 gave impassioned speeches in defense of their union leaders. They represent just some of the rank-and-file leaders who must be given credit for keeping the pressure on Veolia, city officials and the propaganda arms of the ruling class, otherwise known as the Boston Globe, the Boston Herald and network television news.

# Workers pack Boston hearing, expose union busters

*By Tony Murphy posted on November 28, 2013*

If Veolia Transportation's union-busting crackdown on the United Steelworkers Local 8751 Boston school bus drivers' leadership was meant to intimidate the rank and file, it is having the opposite effect.

On Oct. 8, the company locked out the drivers after they held a legally protected protest of the company's many Unfair Labor Practices. Since then, an escalating struggle between Veolia and the drivers union has awakened the membership, whose majority Haitian and Cape Verdean workers have consistently turned out in the hundreds for raucous demonstrations, meetings and job actions.

The bosses at Veolia hoped that firing four of the union's leaders would put a chill on the union's militant activity. However, since the firings, the numbers at these actions have only gotten bigger.

This happened once again on Nov. 21 — when 300 drivers and their supporters packed Boston City Council chambers for a hearing called to investigate Veolia's breach of its vendor contract with the city.

Drivers sat in the aisles of the stadium-seating chamber and spilled into two overflow rooms. Boston City Councillor Charles Yancey, who called the hearing, commented that he had never seen so many people at a hearing.

The purpose of the hearing was to expose the fact that Veolia's contract with the city of Boston to manage the school bus system requires it to respect the terms and conditions of its contract with the school bus drivers union and maintain "harmonious labor relations." Failure to do so means it is in breach of contract with the city.

## Hearing recessed due to no-shows

The powerful turnout of the drivers stood in stark contrast to the absence of representatives of Veolia, Boston Public Schools and Boston's outgoing Mayor Thomas Menino. All of them were requested to be at the hearing by Councillor Yancey and Committee Chair Councillor Felix Arroyo, but they refused to attend.

These no-shows had, of course, been plenty involved in collaborating with Veolia to attack the union. The mayor held multiple press conferences saying the union's leaders should be fired, and BPS made multiple rounds of robocalls, day after day, falsely warning parents of an impending strike.

But they all evidently lost their nerve when faced with the prospect of sitting in a hearing across from hundreds of school bus drivers and their supporters from throughout the community.

Their absence did not go unnoticed by the elected officials who did attend the hearing — they included all Boston City Council members of color.

“I do not accept this letter,” said Councillor Tito Jackson, gesturing to the mayor’s letter explaining why he wasn’t attending.

The failure of city officials and Veolia reps to attend added to the political momentum of the evening, which put the company and its city collaborators further on the defensive in the struggle to reinstate the fired leadership of the union.

In a show of support for the drivers, Yancey pointedly did not close the meeting, but recessed it. This signaled that the council’s investigation into Veolia’s contract with the city would continue — and so would pressure on the bosses, BPS and the mayor to show up at future meetings.

## **Union members and supporters speak out**

Holding up large posters of Veolia executives locking the gates of the Freeport and Readville bus yards on Oct. 8, drivers used the hearing to ask key questions: Why was the notorious union-busting firm Veolia awarded the school bus contract by the city when its bid was not the lowest, as required by state law? And who gave the order to lock out the drivers on Oct. 8?

One driver, Kiatt Woody Baptiste, testified that Veolia switched the union’s disability insurance carrier, which had different policy terms. She was supposed to be out on disability, but the switch reduced her payments and forced her to get back behind the wheel while in pain.

What also came out at the hearing was Veolia’s constant violations of the contract. Union Vice President and Benefits Administrator Steve Gillis — one of the fired drivers — told the committee how violations by Veolia started the day after the notorious union-busting firm signed the contract.

These violations included attempts to reduce the drivers’ base pay by linking it to a GPS system and demanding that the workers reapply for their jobs.

Having workers reapply for their jobs is a tactic Veolia has used in other cities and signals an attack on the workers’ benefits. In 2010 in Phoenix, Veolia forced non-union workers at the city bus system to reapply

for their jobs and sign a waiver that they would not be eligible to recover their lost benefits.

Veolia's track record became a focus of the hearing in the public comments' section. Speakers took to the mike to detail Veolia's crimes in propping up illegal settlements in occupied Palestine; its privatization of water services that results in high rates and cutting corners on safety; and the high rate of cities, like St. Louis and Detroit, that have rejected the company due to its terrible profits-before-people management of essential services.

Many Boston residents voiced staunch support for the school bus drivers union, calling attention to its history as a union that fights not only for its members but for the community as well. The union has been active in anti-war demonstrations, the lesbian, gay, bi, trans and queer movement, Occupy encampments and the fight against the racist resegregation of Boston schools.

Sandra McIntosh, of the Coalition for Equal Quality Education, described how the union had played an active role in the fight to stop school closings and the various "zone plans" that were meant to dismantle busing.

This past March the BPS adopted a plan to return to racist, segregated neighborhood schools over opposition from the community. Billboards throughout Boston are playing a central role in promoting this scheme. Who is paying for them? Veolia Transportation.

## **Solidarity Day II in Boston: Rehire school bus drivers!**

*By Gerry Scoppettuolo and Steve Gillis  
Dorchester, Mass. posted on February 6, 2014*

In the Boston working-class neighborhood of Dorchester, hundreds of labor and community leaders and rank-and-file workers jammed the streets Feb. 1 in front of the headquarters of one of the planet's biggest conglomerate corporations, Veolia Transportation. Their voices, music and drumming filled the air with demands for "Union justice now!" and "Down with Veolia's union busting!"

The outpouring was so militant that even the Boston Globe, Fox News and other mainstream media could not ignore it.

The protesters answered the call for Solidarity Day from United Steelworkers Local 8751, the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, the Greater Boston Labor Council, City Councillor Charles Yancey, the Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts and dozens of community, labor and anti-war organizations to “Reinstate the fired leaders.”

Last June, the city of Boston deemed its new school bus management contract with Veolia “highly advantageous,” based on its promise to cut millions from drivers’ wages and benefits. In return, the city provided a unique, 50-cents-on-the-dollar kickback, a sweetener in “savings” to the company.

But when Veolia began shorting drivers’ pay and shredding the union contract in July, the drivers called it blatant union busting and fought back with 16 Unfair Labor Practice charges and more than 300 grievances. Informational marches, picket lines, bulletins and daily yard meetings followed, which put Veolia on notice that Local 8751 would vigorously defend its members’ rights and 40 years of contract progress.

On Oct. 8, one day after the company posted across-the-board paycuts and demanded the drivers re-apply for their jobs, the workers showed up for work and demanded the company meet to address the contract violations. Instead, Veolia called the cops, locked the gates and shut down operations. Then on Nov. 1, Veolia terminated Andre François, Steve Gillis, Stevan Kirschbaum and Garry Murchison — four officers of the local’s progressive and organizational leadership. The vast majority of the nearly 900 rank-and-file immigrant workers are from Haiti, Cape Verde, Vietnam and Latin America.

The case of the fired leaders and the local’s struggle to defend itself from this imposed austerity became a rallying point on Feb. 1. Solidarity Day brought out school workers and educators fighting budget cuts and demanding equal, quality education; postal workers and community residents campaigning to save postal services; telephone, food, commercial and hotel workers, themselves fending off austerity and waging campaigns to organize low-wage workers at international corporations like Walmart and McDonald’s; anti-war and political activists drawing connections between wars abroad and oppression at home from Boston to Palestine; and civil rights and community leaders inspired by the drivers’ struggle against racism and for economic justice.

## **Solidarity grows due to struggle**

To jump off the rally, Local 8751 militant spokeswomen, Chantal Casimir, Lela Rosboro and Kiett Baptiste, fired up the crowd. Bishop

Felipe Teixeira, a longtime labor and immigrant rights activist, called on Boston's political leaders to support those who service the city's children, not the 1% corporate elite.

Rich Rogers, from the Greater Boston Labor Council, came with the commitment of the 154-union federation to "Speak out against this injustice!" He said corporations that commit Unfair Labor Practices are not welcome in Boston: "They have a responsibility to honor the union contract. The city is paying for that contract, and it's wrong." City Councillor Charles Yancey called for an in-depth council investigation into Veolia's lockout and Unfair Labor Practices: "We are not going to tolerate anyone disrespecting our workers, particularly those workers who transport our precious children every day."

Steelworkers International Staff Representative Andrew Slipp called the drivers' fight "a noble cause" and vowed the International's full support until victory. Dumond Louis, president of Local 8751, laid out the members' ultimatum: "Veolia has a choice, either get it right, or we will get it right for Veolia. We will ask the city to get rid of Veolia."

Paul Kilduff, president of American Postal Workers Local 100 and a leader of the Coalition to Save Grove Hall Post Office, joined Ross Kiely, of Food and Commercial Workers Local 1459, in pledging their organizations' resources and total solidarity to force Veolia to reinstate the fired leaders and defend the drivers' contract.

Nancy Murray, from the Boston Palestinian Solidarity Committee, and Riana Good, from Jewish Voice for Peace, condemned Veolia for having run segregated buses in the occupied territories and dumping refuse of illegal Israeli settlers in the West Bank. The crowd cheered when they announced recent victories in the Dump Veolia campaign — from St. Louis to London to Richmond, Calif., to Massachusetts' Jan. 8 decision to cut off Veolia's \$4 billion commuter rail contract.

Tony Yovo, fired by Veolia from his job as a SuperShuttle driver at Baltimore-Washington International airport, outraged and inspired the crowd with greetings from the mostly West African drivers, who are staging militant actions to stop what he called "Veolia's wage slavery." "We'll be there!" was the overwhelming response to his request to bring Boston solidarity to Baltimore's Workers Assembly on Feb. 15.

Former Roxbury City Councillor Chuck Turner reminded the crowd of Local 8751's concrete solidarity with oppressed communities' civil rights and justice struggles going back four decades. Peoples Power Assembly National Organizer Larry Holmes captured the significance of the rally, stating, "All of Boston's low-wage workers are inspired by this struggle."



This is not just a Boston struggle or a U.S. struggle. We are in a global struggle against capitalism and austerity!”

Rally activists greeted Boston’s elder statesperson, Mel King, who waged a Rainbow Coalition campaign and nearly became Boston’s first African-American mayor in 1983, with rousing applause when the 85-year-old King surprised the crowd: “I could not not be here today. The school bus drivers have stood with us since 1974.”

Darrin Howell, a lead organizer of SEIU 1199’s low-wage workers campaign, called the crowd into the street for a march to Veolia’s barbed-wire-encircled office.

Bolstered by the marchers’ energy, other rally speakers included Johnnie McGinness, president of the Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts, and Sandra McIntosh, coordinator of the Coalition for Equal Quality Education, both of whom recognized the union’s historic role in fighting school segregation in Boston since 1974. They also commended the union’s efforts that helped defeat the 2009 resegregation “5-zone plan” and opposed the 2013 Boston Public School’s “walk to school” plan, which would deny students of color and poor whites access to the best schools outside their neighborhoods.

Litu Kabir described intolerable conditions in U.S. retailers’ sweatshop factories in Bangladesh and condemned Veolia’s attempts to privatize water supplies there and throughout Asia. Vanessa Matamoros, from Boston Bolivarians, inspired the rally with greetings from Venezuela, where the people have elected a workers’ president, Nicolás Maduro, a bus driver and union organizer.

Emily Royce, noting the huge rainbow flag flying from the union’s sound stage, read a statement by Pride at Work, the national AFL-CIO organization for lesbian, gay, bi, trans and queer union members: “We want to let you know that we stand with you in your current struggle and will do whatever we can to make sure that justice prevails for all of you. USW Local 8751 has always been there when the LGBTQ labor community has needed you and when we still need you.”

Other speakers included Moonanum James, co-leader of the United American Indians of New England; Judy Rouse, from UNITE HERE Local 26; and Justin Eivers, from Veterans for Peace. Charles Clemons, a popular radio commentator on TOUCH 106.1 and a strong supporter of the Local 8751, fired up the crowd. Three of the four fired drivers, François, Kirschbaum and Murchison, spoke. Gillis provided hours of sound from inside and outside his truck, which had been turned into a people’s stage with colorful signs.

Drivers and their supporters danced or marched back to the first rally site to a popular Haitian tune, whose words refer to the violent, U.S.-backed coup against elected liberation-theologist and Fanmi Lavalas candidate President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. They also proclaim the people's determination to "chase out the coco rats for good."

As the three-hour rally was winding down, Boston's newly elected mayor Marty Walsh, a former state representative and head of Boston's building trades unions, who campaigned with vocal support of Boston unions and progressive activists, issued his first statement about the conflict, which read in part: "I urge the parties involved to act quickly in this private matter to ensure that our students have reliable, safe transportation getting to and from school."

## **Racist Boston school plan protested by oppressed communities**

*By Gerry Scoppettuolo posted on June 12, 2014*

Hundreds of angry African-American, Latino/a and Haitian parents and Boston school bus drivers filled Roxbury's Madison Park High School on June 2. They were there to protest the unelected Boston School Committee's decision to end middle school bus transportation and place mostly children of color on public transportation buses.

Chanting "Fight, fight, fight! Transportation's a union right!" Najma Nazy'at, director of the Boston Youth Organizing Project, condemned the policy at a hearing convened only after the appointed school committee had already voted to end 40 years of bussing for more than 4,500 students. "The whole point is to save money by getting rid of the buses!" she shouted to the receptive and angry crowd.

Boston Public Schools, through its school bus contractor, the union-busting Veolia Corp., is seeking to eliminate school bus rides, return the school system to its pre-1974, racist, "neighborhood school" assignment plan, and bust the school bus drivers union, United Steel Workers Local 8751, as part of a strategy to rip away over 40 years of anti-racist progress in Boston.

In 1974, federal Judge Arthur Garrity desegregated the Boston school system using several remedies, including busing, to provide students of color access to better schools with more resources. Some of the bus drivers at the hearing this night safely drove students past stone-throwing, racist

white parents during that era.

Dozens of parents, teachers and supporters spoke against the policy, while no one voiced support. Ayele Shakur, representing the Boston branch of the NAACP, declared how unsafe the new policy would be to school children because the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority bus system has decided to install plexiglass barriers to protect bus drivers from the public.

Former bus union president, Garry Murchison, who was illegally terminated with three other union leaders last year, pointed out to the audience that young school children would be walking to and from buses in the darkness during parts of the school year, imposing yet another unsafe condition on them.

Union bus driver Grievance Committee Chair, Steve Kirschbaum, one of the illegally fired union leaders, brought the crowd to its feet when he exhorted, “In 1974, 25,000 of us marched in Boston to stop segregated schools. It’s time to put our marching shoes back on again!” Kirschbaum was among a core group of Workers World Party and Youth Against War and Fascism activists who organized the historic 1974 “Emergency March against Racism” that effectively stopped Boston’s racist school system.

The gathering ended with Boston City Councillor Tito Jackson pledging to work to have the Boston City Council veto the new school policy.

Boston’s communities of color mobilized the turnout at the meeting. Speakers were from the Coalition for Equal Quality Education, Mothers for Justice and Equality, Boston School Bus Drivers Union USW 8751, the NAACP, the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights and Justice, Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts, the Boston Youth Organizing Project, Jobs with Justice, the Boston Truth Coalition, the IWW and other groups and individuals.

## **LGBTQ and bus drivers union solidarity**

*By Garrett Dicembre & Gerry Scoppettuolo posted on June 17, 2014*

Boston — The \$15-and-a-union struggle sweeping the country rolled through the streets of Boston on LGBTQ Pride Day, June 14, as several union contingents paraded by hundreds of thousands of onlookers with banners and placards supporting the low-wage workers struggle and the Boston School Bus Drivers Union, United Steelworkers Local 8751.

The Stonewall Warriors float carried members of the embattled union and other rank and file from UNITE HERE Local 26 and Team Solidarity, with a banner paying tribute to the Bus Drivers Union: “Stonewall Warriors and the LGBTQ Community Support the Boston School Bus Drivers Union for 40 Years of Support” and “\$15 and a union!” For almost four decades the bus drivers union has secured many rights for their LGBTQ workers, years before these rights became law in Massachusetts. And Local 8751 has shown almost 40 years of support for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community.

Placards demanded the rehiring of the fired union leaders, along with a call to Boston’s Mayor Martin Walsh to do right by the bus drivers and stop the city’s racist attacks on Boston schools.

The crowds cheered as chants against poverty wages and union busting blared over the float’s sound system. Positive reception to the political messages sent by the contingent and its float showed support for raising the minimum wage, along with the right to organize a union. Hundreds signed petitions showing LGBTQ support for the bus drivers union and for rehiring the fired leaders. Signers of the petition addressed to Walsh expressed outrage at the city’s union-busting attempts. Flyers were passed out in mass for Solidarity Day III on June 30.

The Smedley Butler Brigade of the Vets for Peace marched in solidarity with the Stonewall Warriors with their own banner demanding justice for Chelsea Manning. In March, the Vets led their Annual St. Patrick’s Day Peace Parade in Boston which they started in 2011, after being banned, along with all LGBTQ groups, from the official parade. The peace parade united the Stonewall Warriors, the Boston Pride Committee, Pride at Work AFL-CIO, the Lavender Caucus of the Service Employees union and many other groups.

To see the petition, go to [ipetitions.com/petition/lgbtq-support-boston-school-bus-drivers](http://ipetitions.com/petition/lgbtq-support-boston-school-bus-drivers).

## **Drop frame-up charges! Rehire four Boston school bus drivers!**

*By Tony Murphy posted on July 7, 2014*

The city of Boston and the Veolia Corporation have responded to the Boston school bus drivers union show of strength at its June 30th Solidarity Day III demonstration with an outrageous set of trumped-up charges against one of the union leaders: driver and union founder Stevan

Kirschbaum.

With contract negotiations taking place, these frame-up tactics reflect Veolia's frustration that the union has refused to crumble despite a 10-month campaign against it.

In 2013, Veolia's firing of four leaders of United Steelworkers Local 8751 — Andre François, Steve Gillis, Garry Murchison and Kirschbaum — was accompanied by a corporate media campaign attacking the union. That campaign — starting with a lockout by Veolia that the media falsely called a strike — was meant to isolate the union and pave the way for the outrageous gutting of the union contract, which the company is now attempting at the bargaining table.

The most recent Solidarity Day demonstration — in which 500 marched to demand the reinstatement of the four, a just contract and an end to Boston's racist austerity cuts in public education — showed that this attempt to isolate the union has been unsuccessful.

On June 30, when the union contract was set to expire at midnight, several hundred rank-and-file union members were joined by local City Council people, union officials and the drivers' rock-solid coalition of allies for a spirited demonstration through the streets of Dorchester, Mass. The Solidarity Day protesters chanted "No contract, no work!" and "Veolia, we say no, union busting's got to go!"

African-American City Councillor Charles Yancey told the crowd of mostly bus drivers, "You deserve support from the public, the parents, the teachers and every union in the city of Boston. You've demonstrated your integrity, you've demonstrated your strength — and you've negotiated great contracts for school bus drivers."

The rally ended with an impromptu union membership briefing in the Freeport bus yard drivers room. The union leaders advised both the company and Boston Public Schools' representatives that the union members were asserting their contract rights to "access to the property" to conduct union activity — namely, a critical briefing on that day's contract negotiations, with expiration of the contract just hours away.

The strong rally and the militant meeting held on Veolia's premises showed unequivocally that the union has allies and was willing to fight.

The response of the city of Boston and Veolia was an outrageous and viciously dishonest set of charges against Kirschbaum, the union grievance chair and an elected member of the negotiating committee.

While the meeting in the drivers room was attended by a hundred members who had participated in the preceding rally, and despite the

fact that meeting room doors were not locked, Kirschbaum alone has been charged with breaking and entering, assault with a dangerous weapon, trespassing and malicious destruction of property.

That these trumped-up charges are nothing but pro-company, union-busting lies was obvious to anyone who attended that meeting on June 30.

But the charges have given the city and Veolia the ability to renew the campaign to isolate and demonize the union.

## **Power in class unity**

The bosses are all too conscious of the fact that the expiration of the contract means the school bus drivers can legally strike. This and the embrace of Solidarity Day III by the leaders of Boston's organized labor has compelled them to try to obliterate any potential increase in solidarity with the union.

Solidarity Day III was endorsed by the Massachusetts AFL-CIO. Rich Rogers, of the Greater Boston Labor Council — who spoke in February at the union's Solidarity Day II rally — showed up again on June 30 to speak and show support. "One thing I know from many years of knowing Local 8751: There's no quit in this union," Rogers said from the stage. "And we're behind it 100 percent!"

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 2222 Business Manager Myles Calvey — whose union has been providing material and moral support for Local 8751 — said, "This is a fight for all of organized labor. Local 2222 and the AFL-CIO cannot allow this union busting to stand!"

One of the rally's most powerful speakers was Joe Carlson, who represented the United Steelworkers International and who served for decades as the staff representative for Local 8751. "The union showed me Veolia's concession demands," he told the crowd, "and I'm telling you — I haven't been so pissed off in a long time!

"Forty years of improvements and Veolia thinks it can take them all back in one day! That's not going to happen on the Steelworkers' watch," Carlson vowed. "Veolia has to learn what the word 'respect' means!"

Anyone who saw Veolia's concession demands would be outraged. The company is proposing insulting, below-inflation hourly wage offers that amount to pay cuts; requiring the use of global positioning systems in order to further reduce wages; cutting health insurance; gutting long-term disability; and abolishing many past practices the union has won over its 40-year existence.

These demeaning demands represent a racist attack on a majority-Haitian, immigrant-workers' union that has supported so many other unions and struggles over the years.

Whether it was fighting to keep Grove Hall post office open, helping oppose austerity cuts in public education, marching in the annual lesbian, gay, bi, trans, and queer Pride parade or taking a stand against U.S. wars and U.S.-backed war crimes, members of Local 8751 have consistently acted in the broader interests of their class in addition to the interests of their union.

On June 15, hundreds of marchers in Boston's Pride march signed a petition backing the union for its 40 years of solid support for Boston's LGBTQ community.

Charles Clemons, of TOUCH 106.1, Boston's African-American-based radio station now being harassed by the federal government, said what many in the crowd were thinking: "My sisters and brothers' problems are my problems — and we're going to solve these problems together! Unity is more powerful than a nuclear bomb!"

The frame-up charges against Kirschbaum are an attempt to prevent the solidarity and sympathy that already exist for the union from spreading.

The members of the union's Team Solidarity are calling on all supporters to help pack the court for Kirschbaum's arraignment on July 14 at 8:30 a.m. — at Dorchester Court at 510 Washington St. — and to endorse the call to drop the frame-up charges. For more information, go to the Team Solidarity Facebook page.

## **Boston school bus drivers union puts Veolia on trial for Solidarity Day IV**

*By Steve Matherly and Monica Moorehead*

On July 14, over 150 school bus drivers, elected officials, community supporters and political allies occupied the steps and chambers of the Dorchester District Court in Dorchester, Mass. to demand the dismissal of the outrageous frame-up charges against United Steelworkers Local 8751 founder and Chair of the Grievance Committee Stevan Kirschbaum.

The Boston police stated in its report that the union's Solidarity Day III June 30 rally that ended in a break room in Veolia's Freeport Bus Yard involved violent, illegal entry. But the members simply exercised their contract right stated in Article 15 to hold a union negotiations briefing in this room. The front gates and doors were unlocked and opened. The



drivers room was used by the members throughout the day and evening until all had left at the close of Solidarity day. Veolia Management's unsuccessful attempts to prevent "union activity" in the Drivers Room constitutes yet another violation of the union contract and Unfair Labor Practices under the National Labor Relations Act. People's lawyer Barry P. Wilson told the crowd after the arraignment that the charges are entirely false. They are just another Veolia/City union-busting tactic.

Kirschbaum was served with a summons on July 3. He was not arrested on the four felony charges of assault and battery with a dangerous weapon, trespass, breaking and entering to commit a felony and malicious destruction of property.

Having Kirschbaum in the dock in Dorchester District Court for an arraignment was meant to be the coup-de-grace of Veolia's campaign to crush Local 8751. However, the judge — who could have arrested Kirschbaum or set a high bail — released him on his own recognizance.

The prosecution then sought a restraining order to keep Kirschbaum off Veolia's bus yard property in an effort to prevent him from performing his union duties to the membership. This was denied. Attorney Wilson filed a Motion to Dismiss and remand the case to the clerk magistrate, which will be heard at the Sept. 15 pre-trial hearing.

The militant courthouse turnout of rank-and-file members inside and outside the court by this mostly Haitian, Cape Verdean and African-American local was accompanied by supporters like City Councillor Charles Yancey; former City Councillor Chuck Turner; TOUCH 106.1. Radio's Charles Clemons; and Sandra McIntosh from the Coalition for Equal Quality Education. Also present were two other leaders of the union, Andre François and Steve Gillis.

Gillis, François, Kirschbaum and Garry Murchison were illegally fired by Veolia, a French-based, union-busting transnational, last October.

Activists traveled from all over the country, including New York, North Carolina, Virginia and Pennsylvania, in support of this militant union, which has consistently expressed its solidarity with other workers and oppressed peoples here and worldwide, including occupied Palestine.

Union members are now calling the day's show of strength "Solidarity Day IV," following June 30's Solidarity Day III, which saw 500 march against Veolia's union busting.

There will be more coverage and analysis in future WWs.

To view the video of Solidarity Day IV, go to [youtu.be/IEzQkcfYFK4](http://youtu.be/IEzQkcfYFK4)

# Solidarity Day VI in Boston: Hundreds demand 'Drop the charges' in anti-union frame-up

*By Workers World staff posted on October 7, 2014*

Dorchester, Mass. — It was the second pre-trial hearing for Stevan Kirschbaum, a founder of United Steelworkers Local 8751 of Boston's school bus drivers and chair of the union's Grievance Committee.

As with the first court hearing in this saga of company repression versus union militancy, his fellow drivers, other unionists and supporters from the community once again packed the courtroom here on Oct. 6. Some 300 turned out to show they completely reject the bogus charges filed against their brother by the multi-billion-dollar transnational Veolia Corp., which holds the contract to run Boston's school buses and has been trying to undermine their union.

Team Solidarity, the voice of the militant umbrella group called United School Bus Union Workers, which has brought together bus workers from several cities in the Greater Boston area, had called for packing the court on this Solidarity Day VI to demand that the anti-union, frame-up charges against Kirschbaum be dropped. The call for solidarity was heeded. The overflow crowd, mainly school bus drivers who came originally from Haiti and Cape Verde, packed the courtroom, including sitting on the floor, and also held a picketline outside the courthouse in Dorchester, Mass.

Kirschbaum had been hit by Boston police with four bogus felony charges in early July. The charges were issued after a June 30 rally and march in the school bus yards demanding that Kirschbaum, along with three other union leaders — Andre François, Garry Murchison and Steve Gillis — be reinstated to their jobs as drivers following their illegal firing by the France-based Veolia conglomerate last November. Veolia is notorious for union-busting and privatizing tactics, here and worldwide.

Inside the courtroom, the Veolia/Boston police frame-up began to unravel. The court dismissed two of the felonies: breaking and entering and malicious destruction of property. People's lawyers Barry Wilson and John Pavlos provided a militant and defiant defense, pounding away at the lies by the state and Veolia, revealing them to be fabrications and an outrageous frame-up.

Not a shred of credible evidence was provided by the prosecution. Veolia supplied fraudulent and falsified documents. Veolia and the state

once again tried — but failed — to get a court order barring Kirschbaum from the bus yards. It was an obvious effort to deny the membership their representation rights, since Kirschbaum hears and acts on many grievances by the workers.

Attorneys Wilson and Pavlos argued expertly for the dismissal of all the charges. The judge refused their request, however, and scheduled the trial on the two remaining charges for Nov. 24. The demonstrators then marched from the courtroom and held a fiery occupation, picket and rally in front of the court.

As the hated union-buster and general manager of Veolia, Alex Roman, and his assistant manager left the court, they got a taste of justified anger as the workers and their supporters booed Roman and chanted “Union!”

The workers vowed to continue the struggle until all the charges are dropped, the four illegally fired union leaders are reinstated, and a just contract is won.

“Pack the court house Nov. 24!” Rehire the 4 illegally fired USW 8751 leaders! Contract Justice NOW!



# Frame-up trial of Boston school bus drivers union leader turns into ‘Solidarity Day VII’

*By Workers World staff posted on November 25, 2014*

Dorchester, Mass. — The fighting members of Boston School Bus Drivers, Steelworkers Local 8751, and their supporters from the community, labor and the political movement staged a virtual occupation of the Dorchester District Court on Nov. 24 at the scene of the continuing anti-union frame-up trial of USW 8751 Grievance Chair and founder, Stevan Kirschbaum. People packed the courtroom and hallways, and picketed and rallied on the courthouse steps.

Team Solidarity — “the Voice of United School Bus Union Workers” — even conducted briefing rallies inside the courthouse in “Occupy Wall Street” style.

The militant legal team of people’s attorneys Barry P. Wilson and John Pavlos brought the Team Solidarity fightback approach right into the court proceedings. The defense attorneys’ tactics shocked the prosecution when they introduced a “mass witness” list, issuing subpoenas to numerous enemies of the union, including Veolia’s management, Boston Public Schools and the Boston police.

Kirschbaum’s attorneys also presented a detailed, thorough and compelling motion to dismiss the case, effectively taking on Veolia, Boston Public Schools and the Boston police. The attorneys even called out the Suffolk County District Attorney’s office for its apparent complicity in union busting, since the office had gone ahead with a prosecution in the face of fraudulent and fabricated evidence and government witnesses’ false statements.

A media alert issued Nov. 24 by Team Solidarity states: “The defense motion to dismiss argues that, in the face of evidence in the DA’s possession that would exonerate Kirschbaum, the Suffolk County DA’s office ‘can have no good faith basis required to continue its prosecution with respect to the remaining trumped-up charges’ — and those should therefore be dropped. Failure to do so would amount to acquiescence and complicity in the abuse of court process for union-busting aims. ...

“The campaign against the school bus drivers’ leader is transparent given his role in the union. He is a 40-year veteran union leader and founder; the grievance committee chair responsible for processing virtually

all disputes at all four bus yards; a chief negotiator for the union in the current collective bargaining; and one of the four illegally fired union leaders.”

The state tried but failed to exclude 38 defense witnesses. Wilson and Pavlos pounded away at the frame up in their compelling arguments on their motion, which included photos, video, a conspiratorial text stream (exculpatory evidence obtained from the state and potential witnesses).

As part of Wilson’s presentation, he denounced Veolia’s global reputation as an oppressor and union buster from Boston to San Francisco to the Arab world, a political defense of a motion not usually heard in this court.

The judge stated that he will rule on the Motion to Dismiss within two weeks and set the next trial date for Feb. 2, 2015, at 9 a.m. Chants of “Drop the frame-up charges! Rehire the Union Four!” “Veolia, we say no! Union busting has got to go!” and “No contract, no work!” reverberated from the courthouse step to the halls and court rooms inside. It was clear that the rainy weather did not dampen the spirit of the determined rank and file.

The day closed with a militant rally featuring updates from people’s lawyers Wilson and Pavlos and wonderful solidarity messages, including those from Sister Pam Africa, MOVE Minister of Confrontation and leader of the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal; Brother Charles Clemons of TOUCH 106.1; Monica Moorehead and Teresa Gutierrez from Workers World Party; Boston Teachers Union Building Rep. Herculano Fecteau; Garry Murchison; Samir Stanley; Andre François; Steven Gillis; Max Chris Perkins; and Brad Holhut of the International Workers of the World. Later in the afternoon Clemons aired an exclusive interview with Sister Pam Africa. All out for the Feb. 2 trial! Drop the frame-up charges.

## **Despite historic blizzard, bus drivers pack court for union militant**

*By Tony Murphy posted on February 2, 2015*

Boston, Feb. 2 — A record-breaking snowstorm has shut down streets, schools and airline flights throughout the Northeast. With 34.1 inches of snow since Jan. 27, this is now Boston’s snowiest week since modern weather records began in 1891, according to the Weather Channel.

This did not stop 75 people from packing the courtroom to overflowing at Dorchester District Court today. It was another powerful show of support for the Boston School Bus Drivers Union and its founder Steve

Kirschbaum.

Getting around in Boston is not easy today. But the militant school bus drivers, 95 percent of whom are Haitian, Cape Verdean and African American, turned out, along with community supporters. All wore bright yellow stickers supporting United Steelworkers Local 8751. Members of the Disabled People's Liberation Front made the difficult trip through the snow via wheelchairs to support the union.

Forced by subpoena to appear were the bosses of the school bus company, Transdev (formerly Veolia), who sat glumly waiting to be called for the frame-up case they are responsible for.

However, the snow prevented jury selection from taking place today — leading the judge to postpone it to March 3. But before that happened, 21 witnesses for the defense were ordered to appear for the next court date. The prosecution is calling two witnesses.

The 21 witnesses were among over 100 people who were present at an impromptu indoor union rally last June 30. They will testify that the charges against Kirschbaum — trespass and a serious felony “assault with a dangerous weapon” (a table) — are 100 percent false. The nonexistent case is motivated by the desire of the Boston city establishment to break the fighting school bus drivers union — a desire that also drove the illegal firing of four union leaders in 2013.

The progressive, fightback record of this union was shown by the many community supporters at the trial and afterwards at an indoor courthouse rally. Longtime allies of Local 8751 — former City Councilmember Chuck Turner; Sandra McIntosh, of the Coalition for Equal Quality Education; and Lisa Owens, one of the founders of the youth activist group Free My People — were joined by new supporters such as Jackson Tsung. He is with a group of activists who shut down Boston's I-93 in protest of racism a few weeks ago. His trial will be on Feb. 20 in Somerville District Court.

Martha Grevatt, a United Auto Workers supporter who traveled from Detroit with three youth activists to attend the trial, spoke to the rally about growing national support for the Boston School Bus Drivers Union. A recent resolution was passed by United Steelworkers Local 1299, representing workers at Great Lakes Steel.

This was on the heels of a resolution passed by the Alameda Central Labor Council and donations from the Massachusetts Nurses Association and Food and Commerical Workers Local 1549.

Veolia/Transdev and its Boston political backers hoped in July that they could derail the growing support for this community-based social union with the repressive power of the state. Since then, the union has not

only continued to fight the attack on its members but also jumped into the national uprising against police brutality with both feet.

Local 8751 formally endorsed and donated \$1,000 to Boston Black Lives Matter. The two groups collaborated on a January protest against Boston's Mayor Martin Walsh. Today, both supporters and the union's class enemies could not help but be impressed that — in the midst of a blizzard paralyzing much of the region — the union packed the court with rank-and-file members and political supporters. Local 8751 fights on.

## **Boston union under siege**

*By Martha Grevatt posted on February 26, 2015*

### **Drop the bogus charges!**

“There's no such thing as neutral. You have to be on one side or the other. In Harlan County there wasn't no neutral.”

This is how Florence Reece, spouse of National Miners Union organizer Sam Reece, described life in the Kentucky coal fields in 1931.

Sheriff J.H. Blair sent his deputies to the Reece family home looking for Sam, who had learned the law was after him and escaped. The deputies instead terrorized Florence and her children. Incidents like this were commonplace in mining country throughout the 1930s.

After the gun thugs left, Florence Reece composed one of labor's most beloved anthems: “Which Side Are You On?” Set to the music of a familiar hymn, the song pointedly states, “If you go to Harlan County / There is no neutral there / You'll either be a union man / Or a thug for J.H. Blair.” The chorus then repeats the question, “Which side are you on?”

With the trial of Boston union leader Stevan Kirschbaum on trumped-up felony charges beginning March 3, this question is as relevant as ever. The union of Boston school bus drivers, Steelworkers Local 8751, is in the crosshairs of the entire ruling-class establishment. There are no neutrals there.

### **Class struggle in Boston**

This historic union, one of a kind in the belly of the beast, has not gone unnoticed by the international capitalist class. The union's will to struggle has put it in a life-or-death situation with Veolia, one of the largest transnational corporations in the world.



Immediately after the illegal lockout of the bus drivers on Oct. 8, 2013, without bothering to get the union's version of the events, the ruling establishment launched a red-baiting attack. Employing Cold War McCarthyite rhetoric, the Boston Globe assailed Kirschbaum for his activism, radicalism, militancy and anti-racism, and his Workers World Party affiliation.

The paper's diatribe portrayed him as "polarizing" and "menacing, narcissistic and dangerously disruptive." The then-mayor, Thomas Menino, attacked Kirschbaum as a "bully" and part of a "rogue element" within the union. But the workers all come to listen and applaud when Kirschbaum speaks at the almost daily rallies at the bus yards. And at each court appearance, co-workers come out in force to show Kirschbaum their solidarity and support.

After the bogus charges were filed, the Globe ran more libelous, "guilty until proven innocent" attacks on Kirschbaum and the union and chastised Local 8751 for "filing dozens of grievances, coddling its lunatic fringe, and ranting about injustices in far-off lands." With no evidence, the charges — including the two that were subsequently dropped — were presented as fact. In this way, through its subservient corporate media mouthpiece, the ruling class laid bare its true agenda: To get rid of the "troublemakers" and the "reds." To behead the leadership of this militant, anti-racist, class-conscious union. To stop Local 8751 from setting an example of real social unionism. And to break the school bus drivers union once and for all.

The new mayor, Marty Walsh, has done nothing to defend the drivers, despite labor's backing of his election campaign. His attacks on the community, with whom the drivers have solidarized themselves for 40 years, include employing prisoners to shovel snow for 20 cents an hour, misusing school bus drivers to transport police officers during a Super Bowl celebration, trying to force all middle school students off school buses and onto public transit, and firing a city worker for participating in Black Lives Matter.

### **'Don't let red-baiting break you up'**

The Globe's base appeal to anti-communism calls up the ghosts of Sen. Joseph McCarthy and Congressperson Martin Dies. Dies originally formed the House Un-American Activities Committee to break the back of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, whose drive to organize the vast industrial working class was in no small part led by members of the Communist Party and other leftists. The Dies Committee, started as a reaction to the wave of sit-down strikes that peaked in 1937, had a rough start, and in fact Dies, a Texas Dixiecrat, was defeated by the CIO's Political

Action Committee. The Dies Committee was revived after the post-World War II strike wave.

Communists were driven from union leadership positions when they refused to sign “loyalty oaths” stating they were not members of the Communist Party. The union-busting Taft-Hartley Act made it illegal for CP members to hold union office. By this time, the CIO leadership had embraced anti-communism. Eleven unions that refused to abide by this provision of Taft-Hartley were expelled from the CIO. Only two — the United Electrical Workers Union and the International Longshore and Warehouse Union — still exist today.

Civil rights organizations that collaborated with the CIO in organizing drives among oppressed workers were driven out of existence during this period. Among them were the National Negro Congress, the Congress of Spanish-Speaking Peoples and the Committee for Protection of the Foreign Born.

The red purge had a devastating and lasting effect on the U.S. labor movement. With the anti-capitalist forces driven from leadership, the movement lacked an anti-racist orientation as well. Thus, when A. Philip Randolph organized the 1963 March on Washington, best known for the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I have a dream” speech, only Randolph’s Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and the United Auto Workers supported the march from organized labor. The UAW, however, having cleansed itself of reds, was slow to bring Black workers into top leadership positions.

## **Side with the school bus drivers**

In these times, Local 8751 is a rarity, a seeming throwback to a bygone era. But the bosses fear this union. The bosses are treating it as such a threat because if this local union’s example spreads, the capitalist class is in trouble.

Imagine all over the country, as in Boston, organized labor uniting with Black Lives Matter, with the Dreamers, with the best elements of Occupy Wall Street, and with the communities in motion for justice. These actions make real the slogan, “Workers and oppressed peoples of all countries unite!” That is the embryo of social revolution.

In the song “Talkin’ Union,” the late Pete Seeger sang that “If you don’t let red-baiting break you up / And if you don’t let stoolpigeons break you up / And if you don’t let vigilantes break you up / And if you don’t let race hatred break you up / You’ll win.”

Harlan County 1931. Boston 2015. There are no neutrals there.

Which side are you on?

# Detroit youth: 'I stand with Boston bus drivers'

*By Joe Mchahwar posted on February 26, 2015*

Boston is hundreds of miles from Detroit, but the fight of Steelworkers Local 8751 to beat the union-buster Veolia Corp. matters to workers and youth here.

The school bus drivers union was created in 1978, but their story really begins in 1974 with the struggle to desegregate Boston schools. When desegregation began, racists organized anti-integration protests drawing thousands. They infiltrated parent-teacher organizations to get the numbers out.

Anti-racists mobilized, weakening the racists. This led up to the 20,000-strong 1974 National March Against Racism. Some of the march organizers went on to form the union. When the racists saw their mass base diminished, they attacked buses full of children while police watched. You can imagine that one would have to be very courageous to be a school bus driver, especially as a person of color.

That legacy lives on today in the struggle-oriented social unionism of the school bus drivers, 98 percent of whom are people of color, with the majority Cape Verdean and Haitian.

The drivers struggle hard, not only for themselves but for the global working class. They have a long history in the anti-war movement, calling for an end to the Israeli occupation and the right of self-determination for the Palestinian people. Their union was one of the first to have a rights clause for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people, and showed its solidarity with a float in last year's Pride march. Of course the union has united with the "Black Lives Matter" movement. The school bus drivers have fought against every form of division imposed on the working class. The union affords workers one of the highest standards of living among bus drivers in the U.S.

The union's will to struggle has put it in a life-or-death situation with one of the Earth's largest transnational corporations, Veolia.

Veolia is a beast with a thousand heads, created by an imperial decree of Napoleon III in 1853 to supply water to the French public. Its very inception was a historic act of privatization! Today, Veolia makes more profits off of water than any other corporation. Veolia handles waste management, energy and transportation — traditionally public-sector industries. Veolia is a hired gun used to privatize and bust unions. In the apartheid state of

Israel, Veolia runs segregated buses.

Veolia's tentacles even stretch deep into the propaganda consumed by billions worldwide. It owns several of the biggest television channels and film studios around the globe. Universal Music Group is an appendage of Veolia that rakes in over 30 percent of the entire music industry's profits globally. Until recently, Veolia owned Activision Blizzard, one of the largest video game companies in the world, known for its very popular, ultra-violent and racist war video games.

## **Stop Veolia's attacks!**

This is what the school bus drivers are up against. Since Veolia took over in 2013, the workers have been under ceaseless attack. Veolia agreed in writing to honor the union contract in place, but has flagrantly violated it at every turn. On Oct. 8, 2013, rank-and-file workers along with their leadership legally demanded meetings at bus yards about pressing issues. Veolia illegally locked them out. The company called this a wildcat strike, a lie parroted by the media.

Veolia suspended, and in November fired, four union leaders — Vice President Steve Gillis, Recording Secretary Andre François, Grievance Chair and union founder Steve Kirschbaum, and three-time former local president and steward, Garry Murchison. Since then, more union members have been unjustly fired.

At a demonstration on June 30 dubbed "Solidarity Day III," workers gathered at a bus yard to demand contract justice and that the fired leaders be reinstated. The police asked them to leave, but workers quoted contract language allowing such gatherings. In spite of this, Steve Kirschbaum was served with four felonies on July 4: assault and battery with a dangerous weapon, trespassing, breaking and entering and malicious destruction of property. These charges — two of which have been dropped — are wholly false, as dozens of witnesses will testify. In contrast, the prosecution has just two witnesses.

Kirschbaum's trial was scheduled for Feb. 2. A massive blizzard hit Boston that day, yet over 75 people came out in support. I was part of a solidarity delegation from Detroit with two other youth activists and a longtime UAW militant.

The struggle of the Boston school bus drivers and Detroit are linked, not only by racist national oppression but in the struggle against Veolia. Following some 30,000 water shutoffs, Veolia has become a consultant in the push to privatize the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department. Like the courageous school bus drivers, we have to struggle to win.

*Joe Mchahwar is a member of Detroit FIST and Workers World Party. This article was adapted from a talk he gave at a Feb. 21 public forum on the struggle legacy of Malcolm X. Mchahwar has been to Boston twice to help in the effort against Veolia.*

## **Victory for Boston school bus drivers union; Kirschbaum acquitted as frame-up collapses**

*By Tony Murphy posted on March 6, 2015*

Dorchester, Mass. — The campaign to rehire and win justice for four Boston school-bus drivers, illegally fired by the notorious union-busting Veolia Corp., got a big shot in the arm on March 5. After only ten minutes of deliberation, a jury voted unanimously to acquit union leader Steve Kirschbaum of all charges brought by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

In October of 2013, the notorious union-busting company Veolia, hired by the city to operate school transportation, fired four of the union leaders — Grievance Chair Kirschbaum, Recording Secretary Andre François, Steward Garry Murchison and Vice President Steve Gillis — after locking out the workers and falsely claiming that the union had conducted a “wildcat strike.”

The frame-up charges were brought after a June 30, 2014, rally of hundreds of school bus drivers was held to demand the rehiring of the four. The action ended with an indoor rally in the drivers’ break room. Veolia managers provided false statements to the Commonwealth to make it look like they had been attacked by Kirschbaum and that the premises had been violently entered.

The charges, while totally made up, were serious. They initially included three felonies: breaking and entering to commit a felony; malicious destruction of property; assault and battery with a dangerous weapon; and trespassing.

The courtroom victory was the result of an eight-month people’s mobilization that included six pack-the-court rallies; national call-in days to both the district attorney and the mayor; and weekly bus yard rallies organized by the local. People’s lawyers Barry Wilson and John Pavlos skillfully and passionately tore the frame-up apart and successfully turned the tables on Veolia and the political establishment, putting the union busters on trial.

School bus drivers and community supporters of the union packed the court for three days, transforming the inside of the courthouse into a de facto union hall. During lunch breaks, the drivers held militant picket lines outside the building with placards saying “Drop the Charges” and “No Contract, No Work!”

Dorchester District Courthouse truly became the gathering place for the political movement, as Brock Satter, with the Mass Action Against Police Brutality; Sandra McIntosh, of the Coalition for Equal Quality Education; Chuck Turner, former City Councillor; Herculano Fecteau, with the Boston Teachers Union; Tony Van Der Meer, of the Africana Studies Department at UMass; and Moonanum James, co-leader of the United American Indians of New England, all showed up to support the union.

City Councillor Charles Yancey gave updates to the overflow crowd outside the courtroom, and for two of the three trial days, I-93 protester Tsung attended. Tsung was part of a demonstration in January that blockaded the interstate highway, and was one of the activists arrested in solidarity with “Black Lives Matter.”

The verdict was not just a victory for this political, social union — which fights for its members and also marches with the Black Lives Matter movement; resolutely defends lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer rights; and stands with Palestine — but a victory for the movement as well.

## **Union busters pushed back**

What happened in court was a defeat for the union busters, a setback for Boston’s 1% and a blow to the city’s entrenched racist forces, who want to resegregate public education.

From the moment the four bogus charges were filed against Kirschbaum in July 2014, it was clear that they were part of the union-busting campaign being waged against the local — a campaign exemplified by the November 2013 firing of Kirschbaum and the three other union leaders.

The evidence was so obviously manufactured that in October the judge dismissed the first two charges. On March 5, a working class jury of six — including two union members — took almost no time to put the remaining two charges to rest with a not-guilty verdict.

In fact, it was Veolia and its co-conspirators in the city administration who were put on trial. Witness testimony and Kirschbaum’s legal team showed that the events in question and the illegal firings that prompted the June 30 rally had everything to do with the fact that the contract was expiring that day at midnight — and that, in violation of the contract, Veolia had attempted to prevent the union from holding a meeting.

The not-guilty verdict — which has so thoroughly discredited the version of events put forward by Veolia managers — can only help the campaign to rehire the Four. Those in the Boston establishment who were holding their breath over this trial and hoping to see one of the union's leaders convicted are now facing a renewed, re-energized, fighting, militant union that is not afraid to take things to the next level.

Those who know this local also know that its members intend to fight, not only to rehire the Four, but also to deepen the Black Lives Matter movement and the struggle against racism; to stop the school closings announced by Mayor Walsh; to defend public school transportation by keeping middle school students off the subway and on school buses; and to defend the righteous I-93 protesters and their First Amendment rights. UNION!

## **Boston school bus drivers vote in fired union leaders**

*By Brenda Ryan posted on May 4, 2015*

Boston — In a stunning victory, the militant, fighting rank and file of the Boston school bus drivers union, United Steelworkers Local 8751, voted in the full slate of Team Solidarity candidates, led by four illegally fired leaders, on the union's Executive Board.

The April 30 election was the largest voter turnout in the history of the local and resulted in an unprecedented landslide vote by more than 3 to 1 for the Team Solidarity ticket. The membership sent a clear message to Veolia/Transdev, the union-busting school bus management company, as well as to Boston Public Schools and Mayor Marty Walsh, that they will fight and win a just contract and the rehiring of their leaders. They will also unite with the communities they serve to struggle for equal quality education.

The new executive board-elect of the 850-strong union, whose members are largely Haitian, Cape Verdean and African-American, includes President Andre François, long-time chief steward; Vice President Stevan Kirschbaum, a founder of the local; Treasurer Georgia Scott, veteran of the 1965 Civil Rights battle on Pettus Bridge in Selma, Ala.; Financial Secretary Steven Gillis, the outgoing vice president and benefits administrator; Recording Secretary Claude "Toutou" St. Germain, a Fanmi Lavalas activist; Grievance Committee members Garry Murchison, a three-term past president, Frantz Mendes, two-term president, and Richard



Laine; Trustees Frantz “Fanfan” Cadet, Fred Floreal and Judy Long; Guide Chantal Suffrant Casimir; Guards Adriano Barbosa and Ludnay Pierre; and Accident Review Committee members Jerome Samir Stanley, Kathy Moore and Robert Salley. Murchison led the local’s last five-week strike in 1991, which ended with a 48-hour occupation of the mayor’s office.

Veolia illegally fired François, Gillis, Kirschbaum and Murchison in November 2013, following a company-ordered, police department-enforced lockout on Oct. 8, 2013, which occurred after the local requested an emergency meeting. The lockout occurred in the midst of a three-month fight with the new company over wage theft, its refusal to honor the drivers’ long-standing contract and Veolia’s illegal demand — because it’s in violation of the contract — made the day before, that even 40-year veteran drivers must file new hire applications.

A small clique of business-minded, company-inspired opponents, including the local’s current president — who bowed out during the election campaign — tried to turn the membership against Team Solidarity’s fighting slate. They bombarded members with the message: “Don’t vote for the people who were fired. They won’t do you any good.”

The climax of year-long bargaining over a new concessionary contract was the company’s divisive campaign that included pushing a “final” proposal with no amnesty for the fired leaders and using false “retro-pay” payroll documents produced by management. But the members voted for the new board based on their personal experience with Team Solidarity’s leaders, who have filed hundreds of their grievances, administered and defended their benefits, and fiercely fought for them and the union’s survival during the nearly two years since Veolia and the mayor’s office began their union-busting assault.

## **Campaign intensifies to reinstate the Four**

In the campaign’s final week, opponents led a barrage of red-baiting, vicious lies and attacks on the union’s political work. The day of the election, the company copied and its collaborators handed out, an article from a Zionist website with photos of Kirschbaum and Gillis that linked their support for Palestinian rights with the Boston Marathon bombing.

The company stooges attacked the active support of Team Solidarity for the Black Lives Matter movement and political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal; for their solidarity with Cuba; for their opposition to every imperialist war from El Salvador and Nicaragua in the 1980s to Afghanistan, Iraq and Yemen; and for traveling to Venezuela, Colombia and Haiti in support of workers and socialist movements fighting U.S.-sponsored coups and

death squads.

Nevertheless, Kirschbaum and Gillis, two well-known socialists, had the backing of the membership. The vote for them and the whole slate of revolutionary-minded candidates is a barometer of Local 8751's general class consciousness. It is, in a much smaller arena, analogous to socialist labor leader Eugene Debs getting a million votes for U.S. president while in jail for opposing World War I. And it brings a tremendous surge of rank-and-file power to the fight against Veolia and its austerity-driven sponsors.

"The air-pressure needle reads like a tornado is coming," Gillis said of the workers. The union is now intensifying its battle to get the four leaders reinstated. Thousands of leaflets are being distributed throughout Boston, asking people to call Mayor Walsh and demand that he order their rehiring by Veolia — which changed its name to Transdev in the wake of publicity over its international union-busting actions and its infrastructure support for the brutal occupation of Palestine.

The mayor's vendor contract with the company gives the city the sole authority to settle all grievances. Walsh can order the immediate reinstatement of the Four with full back pay.

With this election, Team Solidarity has moved from an opposition faction within the local to become the governing body-elect, with a clear mandate to carry forward its militant fightback program.

In addition to demanding the rehiring of the leaders, the local now will intensify activities to unite with the communities against the Boston Public School's massive budget-cutting campaign and raise demands for equal quality education for BPS's predominantly students of color. The mayor's appointed School Committee has voted austerity that calls for closing schools, further privatization through charter school expansion, cutting back summer programs for at-risk youth and nutritional offerings systemwide, kicking middle school students off school buses, as well as reductions in union staff and services throughout the system.

## **Two-year battle with Veolia**

Veolia, a Paris-based global conglomerate, took over management of Boston school bus transportation on July 1, 2013. Despite signing an agreement to honor all terms and conditions of United Steelworkers Local 8751's existing contract, the company soon violated nearly every article regarding wages, benefits and working conditions. In August 2013, the Steelworkers filed 18 Unfair Labor Practice charges with the National Labor Relations Board. And on Oct. 7, the company tried to force the drivers to fill out new hire applications.

A critical moment in the battle with Veolia began on Oct. 8. At 5 a.m. that morning, the drivers reported to work and demanded a meeting with the company to discuss the company's total failure to honor the union contract. Veolia's top management and Boston school administrators were for the first time on site at the bus yards before sunrise. Management refused to meet for hours and then called in the police, locked the gates and evicted the drivers and City Councillor Charles Yancey, threatening them all with arrest for trespassing.

The workers' request for a meeting was legally protected union activity and the company's lockout was a violation of the contract and federal law. Veolia then falsely alleged that the members had gone on a wildcat strike, a claim that was trumpeted by former Mayor Thomas Menino, the BPS administration and the Boston media. Veolia then singled out and fired the four union leaders.

Team Solidarity immediately launched an intense campaign to rehire the four and get a just contract. It held near-weekly picket lines and seven Solidarity Day rallies that turned out thousands of union and community supporters, including the Massachusetts AFL-CIO and the Steelworkers International. After a rally and drivers' break room briefing June 30, 2014, the date of the contract's expiration, Veolia managers and the Boston Police Department concocted frame-up felony charges against Kirschbaum, including breaking and entering, trespassing, and assault and battery with a dangerous weapon.

For eight months Team Solidarity mobilized support for Kirschbaum, holding pack-the-court rallies, national call-in days to the district attorney and mayor, and weekly bus yard rallies. Team Solidarity's defense team exposed the absurdity and political motivation of the perjured charges during a three-day trial, and on March 5 a jury returned a unanimous verdict to acquit Kirschbaum after only 10 minutes of deliberation.

During the trial, the prosecutor — whose closing arguments were scripted verbatim by Veolia's attorney — asked a union member if Kirschbaum did a good job fighting for the membership. She replied, "Perfect."

Witness after witness conveyed the uncompromising, relentless commitment of the local. This union has fought for the membership and stood in solidarity with every movement for justice since its formation in the 1970s, when it was on the front lines opposing school segregation and defending students of color from years of violent, racist attacks.

Milt Neidenberg, a decades-long steelworker, Teamsters retiree and ally of Local 8751 since its founding, told Workers World: "Local 8751's fight against Veolia and Boston's power structure is part of a growing,

increasingly active, broadening labor movement, such as the national strikes by low-wage workers from Walmart to McDonald's demanding \$15 and a union. Veolia is one of these global giants, whose primary business tactics specialize in union busting as essential to its drive to lower workers' pay [in order] to increase corporate profits and stockholder dividends, which for the 1% now dwarf many nations' economies.

"Veolia low-bids while promising governments a hired gun to privatize transportation, energy, water and environmental resources and waste management," Neidenberg continued. "That's why Scott Walker, Wisconsin's 'Right to Work' governor and Wall Street's Republican presidential nominee, just entered talks with Veolia to privatize his state's water supply. The results are everywhere: War with the unions and service cutbacks and rate hikes for the public. Local 8751's historic electoral sweep for Team Solidarity, a mandate for social unionism, points to the promising potential for waging a successful workers' counter-offensive. It's time for all to step up to their defense and win a victory for all."

In the U.S. transportation field alone, Veolia has attacked rapid transit unions in San Francisco — where two replacements were killed on the tracks during two Veolia-forced strikes in 2013 — as well as Pensacola, Fla.; Phoenix; Las Vegas; Baltimore; Denver; Seattle; Racine, Wis.; and smaller cities from coast to coast. Amalgamated Transit Union International President Larry Hanley termed that "a path of destruction" and "management train wreck" in his June 2013 report on Veolia. Now is the time for the militant social unionism of Local 8751 to be taken up around the country. Their victories show the power of militant resistance.

To join the fight, go to [TeamSolidarity.org](http://TeamSolidarity.org) and "Team Solidarity — The Voice of United School Bus Workers" ([tinyurl.com/KY09HYS](http://tinyurl.com/KY09HYS)) on Facebook.

## **Veolia/Transdev – 'Evil Corp'**

*By Terri Kay posted on August 17, 2015*

As the Boston School Bus Drivers Union, Steelworkers Local 8751, move into a crucial stretch of their struggle to rehire their four fired leaders, and for a just contract and safety for Boston's school children, Workers World newspaper here examines their primary opponent, Transdev Services Inc., formerly Veolia Transportation Services.

This notorious corporation has earned the wrath of progressives throughout the world, from those seeking justice for Palestine, including the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, to environmentalists,

anti-privatization activists, and fighters for labor and the rights of disabled people.

While the Boston Public Schools management and Mayor Marty Walsh should have ultimate control of their contractor, Transdev/Veolia, this evil corporation's actions in its two-year battle with the school bus drivers raise questions about whether this is a case of "the tail wagging the dog."

To investigate more about Veolia's tactics, WW reached out to others across the country who have had run-ins with Transdev/Veolia.

First, this WW reporter talked to Chris Finn, president of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1555, comprised of Bay Area Rapid Transit workers. BART workers were forced into a strike in 2013. (See "Two workers die as BART management operates trains during strike in California" at workers.org)

**Workers World:** Why did BART management engage Thomas Hock of Veolia on their negotiating team during negotiations for the BART contract?

**Chris Finn:** BART has a notorious history of labor relations. Despite a concessionary contract in 2009 following the start of the Great Recession, and both managers and members of the Board of Directors acknowledging they would need to reward the workers in 2013 for their role in helping the agency's financial state, BART hired Tom Hock in October 2012, writing that they determined well before negotiations began that they would need to engage in "traditional" bargaining practices, which is the adversarial form, compared with what is known as Interest Based Bargaining.

An independent consultant hired by the BART Board of Directors to look into what went wrong with the 2013 negotiations stated in the 225-page public report that Hock was one of the main problems and that he knew and informed management early on that the position they took would cause a strike. ATU had representatives from around the country come to the Bay Area to discuss the role of Tom Hock in causing public transit strikes when he was at the table.

The strikes were Unfair Labor Practice strikes, based on a growing number of ULPs. Hock's strategy was to force a strike and try to outlast the union. There were no attempts to bargain and reach resolution.

**WW:** What role did Hock play during the negotiations?

**CF:** He was the chief negotiator for BART. He wasn't initially hired for that role. He was hired supposedly as a consultant to assist, but they ended up moving their own head of Labor Relations to the side and upping Hock's contract to take over as chief negotiator. Even when he was sent

back to Cincinnati, he attempted to prevent BART from negotiating an agreement with the unions and ending the strike.

**WW:** What was the outcome of your struggle?

**CF:** BART ended up receiving a lot of bad press and being seen as having lots of problems. They received a 225-page report outlining the main problems with BART negotiations. We ended up with a four-year contract. Hock was gone by then. He was sent away before negotiations were concluded. We had three federal mediators there and had the framework for a deal while Hock was out of town for a few days. When he came back, he piled on a few concessions that were guaranteed to cause a strike, which was what precipitated the second strike when the two fatalities occurred. He left at the beginning of the second strike to go to Cincinnati and BART finished it without him, though he was still attempting to prevent them from settling.

We also had a bunch of “last best final offers” — at least six, maybe more, all trying to provoke a strike, loaded with major concessions.

## **Stop Veolia Seattle**

Workers World also reached out to Susan Koppelman of Stop Veolia Seattle, where Veolia has had the contract for MetroAccess Paratransit service for disabled and elderly people since 2008. At that time, 140 drivers represented by ATU Local 587 either lost their jobs or were forced to take pay cuts.

The initial low-bid contract represented an annual \$1 million cost savings to the county, but after the first year costs went up. For the last four years, the county has paid at least \$7 million more per year. (See Koppelman’s article, “Pressure mounts on executive Constantine to take action on Veolia,” in the March 26 South Seattle Emerald.

**WW:** How has Veolia/Transdev earned the wrath of so many people worldwide?

**Susan Koppelman:** Veolia and its subsidiaries and spinoff companies like Transdev — which is 50 percent owned by Veolia and 50 percent owned by a French financial institution — have a horrendous track record of violations to human rights, labor rights and the environment globally.

Dating back to an imperial decree of Napoleon III, some of the first contracts this company held were providing public services to the French colonies, so there’s a direct line between the founding of the company and Veolia’s role in occupation, colonization and imperialism today.

Veolia is the largest privatizer of public water services in the world. Repeatedly Veolia has been found guilty of overcharging residents for water, while criminally underinvesting in water infrastructure, jeopardizing public health and safety.

In 2010, Paris ended its contract with French multinational Veolia and was able to lower the cost of water to consumers while also increasing investment in the public water infrastructure, proving that alternatives to privatization are not only viable but are greatly preferential.

However, in the same year that Paris was successful in escaping Veolia's corporate stranglehold over their public water supply, the residents of Tucumán province in Argentina found their sovereignty and control over their public water supply undermined by the World Bank's defense of Veolia, which then went by the name of Vivendi.

In 1996, consumer groups in Tucumán took action to halt Vivendi's escalation of the cost of water to residents in the poor province. But the World Bank's International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes ultimately ruled that the company had "a right to make a profit" and awarded the company \$105 million in damages, an amount nearly equal to 10 percent of the public debt of Tucumán province.

Trade agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership will only tip the scales further in favor of massively powerful corporations. It is imperative that we continue to take on corporate giants like Veolia and work for trade agreements that protect the rights of residents and the environment and maintain water as a public trust that cannot be sold to the highest bidder in the hopes of achieving racial and economic justice.

We must not allow corporations like Veolia to come in and profiteer from natural disasters or ongoing military occupation, like they have following Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and in Palestine.

**WW:** How did you come to learn about the Boston school bus drivers' struggle against Veolia?

**SK:** [It was] after I was already active in campaigns against Veolia for a number of years. I had the honor of meeting some of these incredibly strong and courageous drivers in the neighborhood where my grandmother grew up and where my father was born. I'm inspired by their epic stand for justice against these corporate bullies, and pray that the fired workers will have their jobs reinstated immediately.

## **Oppose Veolia from Boston to Palestine**

Dalit Baum, American Friends Service Committee's Middle East Peace education director and co-founder of Who Profits from the Occupation, a



research center, gave additional input. She explained how the BDS movement supporting Palestine had successfully forced Veolia to sell off most of its companies supplying water and transportation services for illegal settlements in Occupied Palestine.

However, the company still owns interests in Jerusalem's light-rail service, which provides exclusive Israeli-only transportation to the illegal West Bank settlements.

Whopfits.org reported in September 2013, "Veolia is still involved in the occupation; in transferring waste to Tovlan landfill in the oPt [occupied Palestinian territories] through a subsidiary and in the light train through its shares in CityPass and Connex Jerusalem." It further states that Veolia Environnement, through its subsidiary Transdev, still holds a 5-percent share in the CityPass Consortium, and Transdev fully owns Connex Jerusalem, which operates the trains.

The USW Local 8751 bus drivers, with a mostly Haitian and Cape Verdean workforce, regularly show solidarity with other workers. This militant local supports the Black Lives Matter movement, as well as the struggles for rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people and for people with disabilities. Importantly, these workers stand with the Palestinian people and oppose Veolia's role on their occupied lands.

It is time now for everyone to stand with this fighting union local in its final push for justice for its members and the schoolchildren of Boston.

For more information, see Facebook Team Solidarity at [tinyurl.com/pwk3ptb](https://tinyurl.com/pwk3ptb), [TeamSolidarity.org](https://TeamSolidarity.org) and [workers.org](https://workers.org).

## **From Selma to Boston: 'I'm fighting for the union!'**

*By Minnie Bruce Pratt posted on August 25, 2015*

*Georgia Scott of Steelworkers Local 8751, Boston School Bus Drivers Union, spoke on Aug. 21 with Workers World reporter Minnie Bruce Pratt about the drivers' ongoing struggle against union-busting corporate giant Veolia/Transdev. The company has illegally fired four union leaders and flagrantly violated contract conditions, resulting in almost 700 union grievances.*

*Scott, the treasurer of Local 8751, has been first a bus monitor and then a bus driver for 20 years. In 1965, when Scott was only nine years old, she participated in the historic "Bloody Sunday" march for voting rights over the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Ala., where she was born.*

**Workers World:** How does Selma connect to your struggle today as a bus driver?

**Georgia Scott:** This is the same struggle as 1965 in Selma. Schools were limited — all Black, all white. The education system did not work for people of color. We didn't have the books, the tools we needed. There were places we weren't allowed to go because of our color, like in the movies, in restaurants. There were neighborhoods we weren't allowed to go into. The purpose of the movement was to give us the same rights as all the other people.

I didn't really understand a lot of what was happening, but I saw the segregated schools, the segregated parts of town. I didn't understand Selma was as big as it was, and I was born there!

Right now in Boston our children can go to school where they need to go to meet their needs. I did not have that opportunity growing up. Veolia cutting back on the buses, that will limit our children, their safety and their choices of education. The fight in Selma is the same fight as now.

**WW:** How do monitors and drivers help keep the children safe?

**GS:** The children get to know me, tell me if there is something going on at school or home. If there's a fight on the bus, I'm the one who stops the fight. I am the one who is supervising. I am the one who will stop the child from being harmed.

A camera is not going to protect the child. It's me. I'm the one who will protect the child. That's the most important piece of our work, the monitors and the drivers. We are the safety zone for the children.

**WW:** Why is this union a social justice union — fighting also for other people, marching with people for Palestine, for LGBTQ rights and so forth?

**GS:** I think we are all born with the will to resist. For me it comes with being born and raised in Alabama. My mother was on that bridge too, and I learned from her.

I also think for this union it goes back to the 1974 busing struggle [against segregation] when the drivers were transporting our children into South Boston where they weren't wanted. The drivers that came on board had the mentality of standing firm and being strong, knowing that the things going on were wrong.

This union is based on listening, going out into the community, listening to the parents, building on that, and needing to struggle.

**WW:** Some in the union are from Cape Verde and fought for liberation from Portuguese colonization, and many in this majority Haitian union are

part of the struggle against imperialism in Haiti with Fanmi Lavalas.

**GS:** Our strength could also be we are a mixed group of people, from all walks of life. We've had different struggles. From being in the union, I've learned how to fight.

Sitting at the table with Transdev in particular — I call it Trans-devil! — I'm looking across the table at one of them with a smirk on his face. He is dealing with thousands of children. There is nothing funny about talking about children on the street corner, and then boxing drivers in about the children's safety.

So when I see that smirk, my feeling is I have to fight this guy, and I need to be around people who know how to fight this guy.

**WW:** How is Veolia/Transdev changing the way it computes your pay?

**GS:** The hours we are paid for are the hours listed as the time it takes to drive a route — the flat rate.

The flat rate, before Veolia put in the telematics system, was computed by experienced people who knew the specific routes on the road. They knew how long it really took to drive that particular route.

Arbitration ruled against the use of GPS for the creation and re-evaluation of flat rates, but the company is still illegally using it every day.

Now that the company is using GPS to compute the flat rate, the time they allow on routes is shorter and impossible. It doesn't allow for fire trucks, accidents, emergencies on the bus. Or enough time to stop, get the child across, take a seat, get a seat belt on. They allow half a minute for that.

We have to be able to take care of whatever is going on, and be paid for that. For instance, last year it was so cold, there was ice inside my bus. I told dispatch I was not going to move until I warmed the bus up for the children.

But management said to me "Oh no, just go, put the kids on, and go" — in a bus with ice inside!

I said no! I'm saying no to a lot of things this company is ordering.

**WW:** I heard Veolia/Transdev tried to make the drivers reapply for their jobs when the company took over.

**GS:** Most of us, 95 percent, did not do the new hire application — one of the first things the company asked for. We said we are not new employees, the company is new. If anyone should do a new application, it should be the company — and if they had applied to us, they would not have gotten the job!

**WW:** Why do workers need a union?

**GS:** My brother is still in Selma. He's 57 years old, worked at a hospital in the kitchen, in and out of the freezer. He developed arthritis, and the doctor put him on medical leave. The company fired him. Twenty years on the job. No union, no support, no protection!

Now he's working at a laundry. I went home and rode out to his workplace to have lunch with him. My brother told me he almost could not get away to go out with me. The company policy is: "You can't have people coming here on the job."

That's what these big corporate conglomerates want, to control us. They've got the power and the money.

They've got the money. We've got the people.

One person standing alone has no power. All of us together, that's our strength.

I know the importance of the union. This is not just about Boston. It's going on in the rest of the county, and it's a global issue.

So I'm going to fight for the union!

*For more information, go to [workers.org](http://workers.org) and search for "Boston school bus drivers step up the fight."*

## **Boston school bus drivers explain solidarity**

*By Martha Grevatt posted on November 22, 2015*

United Steelworkers Local 8751, the Boston School Bus Drivers Union, continues to fight a two-year battle to get four of its elected leaders reinstated after being fired. At the same time, the union is fighting for a just contract, the resolution of 700-plus grievances and many Unfair Labor Practices, and safe transit for the city's children, their precious cargo.

Yet the union never fails to stand up when racism raises its ugly head. Workers World spoke to two union stalwarts, Bobby Traynham and Samir Stanley, whose "solidarity in action" included representing Local 8751 at the October "Justice Or Else" march. Stanley is a 32-year driver, multiterm chief steward and Team Solidarity member of the Executive Board serving on the Accident Review Committee. Traynham is a rank-and-file Team Solidarity leader with 37 years behind the wheel and a long-time member of Workers World Party.

**Workers World:** What does the word “solidarity” mean to you?

**Bobby Traynham:** It means that you support a person if they are having a hard time. Solidarity forever, that’s what I say. You make workers know that and make them feel better. We had a sound truck going around the neighborhood for City Councillor Charles Yancey. We knew he was having a hard time because the bourgeoisie was giving a lot of money to [his opponent] Ms. Campbell. [The bosses’ favorite won the election.] We gave a lot of support to Chuck Turner [a former city Councillor who served time on trumped-up federal charges]. He was under the gun. He didn’t have no solidarity in City Hall; they voted against him. Yancey was the only one who stuck with Chuck. The local was behind him. I was in court every day. Now Chuck’s in the forefront of the negotiations for the fired drivers.

**Samir Stanley:** That’s a good question. I would be in solidarity with probably any group that believes in fairness and justice and equality for humanity. Local 8751 shows solidarity for most organizations that support equality, anti-racism, housing, and for those that don’t have a voice, and labor period. One of the main things is better wages and jobs for workers. McDonald’s workers walked out for better wages. That is one of the most consistent things that we have fought for.

**WW:** Why did Local 8751 send a delegation to “Justice or Else”?

**SS:** I think that is easy, because they support what “Justice Or Else” stands for, which is equality and justice for those who don’t have it.

I was at the original [Million Man March], so for me the experience was overwhelming. You have to be a Black American to understand what it feels like to be among a group like yourselves that has been portrayed so negatively: your culture, your food, your education, etc. So to not see any of those things at all at a massive rally is a thing to behold. The Million Man March was the highlight of my life. The rally this year was similar to but not equal to that experience. It was like coming home again.

To deal with the problem you have to deal with the root. I feel that this country has a problem: that is racism. It might not be at the top of your agenda, but for a person that’s dealing with it, it’s at the top of the list. When it comes to the root, the inception of America, you have the taking of the land of the original people that were here. Then you have the immigrants coming onto the land. Then you have the involuntary immigrants, the Black people. If those three entities are not addressed, then the fight against racism is not a real fight. That event, that shows Black people in a positive light, was not aired. Events like this show that the fight on racism is far from being done.

**BT:** I wanted to be there. This is the 20th anniversary of the Million Man March. I went 20 years ago. That was the highlight of my life to see one million Black men. There was a whole lot of youth at this year's one. I met kids from Texas and I talked with them about 20 years ago. It was good to see young people watch our backs. One of the biggest things was the Native Americans and they highlighted them speaking about their struggle. Also parents talked about their kids being shot down by police. I expected more from the Nation of Islam about boycotting the holidays. I was disappointed that Minister Farrakhan pulled back. He did not clarify what the "else" was in "Justice or Else."

**WW:** Why did the drivers attend the WW conference?

**BT:** I think most of the drivers went because they love Workers World. They talked about it to other workers when they got back. All the workers were asking what happened. For three or four days we explained. Freeport Yard [one of four bus yards where Traynham works] supports the party. The thing we got to do, we got to recruit. After the contract is settled we can recruit.

I was born in a place in West Virginia they call Redstar. So I was made a communist from the beginning. I don't know what I'd be doing if I had not entered Workers World. I took to it right away. When I met the party, I got rid of all my vices, drinking beer and whisky and smoking. The party is probably why I am still alive. I am going to pay a debt to Workers World as long as I live. That's what I'm doing.

## **Historic union victory: Boston school bus drivers win back fired leaders, contract gains made**

*By Martha Grevatt posted on December 23, 2015*

Dec. 22 — After more than two years of hard-fought struggle, the militant, fighting rank and file of the Boston School Bus Drivers Union — United Steelworkers Local 8751 — have won a historic victory against global giant Veolia/Transdev, one of the most notorious capitalist union busters, and Boston Public School bosses, Boston Mayor Marty Walsh and their media mouthpieces.

Four fired union leaders, out of work since October 2013 on bogus charges of leading a wildcat strike, are going back to work. Transdev bosses were bound and determined that the four would never return. But at 4 p.m. on Dec. 18, after a marathon 25-hour negotiating session, Veolia and

city bosses signed comprehensive settlement agreements with the union that reinstate President Andre François, Vice President Steve Kirschbaum, Financial Secretary Steve Gillis and Grievance Chair Garry Murchison.

In addition to reinstatement of the Four with full seniority rights and a substantial monetary payment, the local won a contract with economic justice and the protection of 40 years of the collective bargaining process. The contract will be fully retroactive on all wages, pensions and benefits.

The workers will get an immediate 5.5 percent raise and collectively more than \$1.7 million in back wages, going back to the contract expiration date in 2014. Retirement, which will now be after 30 years' service with no age requirement, has substantial increases in severance payment and benefits. There are other gains too numerous to list.

The set of agreements also protects the previously union-run pension plan, which was under attack, and allows the union to immediately enter into grievance settlement directly with the city, without Veolia's interference, for nearly 700 grievances resulting from three years of Veolia's contract violations.

The union/job security guarantee with the city, which mandates that any future company or the city must accept the workers and the full union contract, is extended to 2019. Local 8751 beat back the introduction of radio chip-implanted tracking badges and the use of biometric technology to spy on workers and also successfully fought to get as much union protective language as possible to restrain the newly introduced spy cameras on the buses, which have become a most regrettable fact of transportation work life. The union plans to continue the battle against the cameras in alliance with the parents and community in the next period.

## **Solidarity with Team Solidarity**

This long struggle was led by the fighting Team Solidarity, whose François-Kirschbaum slate swept the union elections in April 2015, after political frame-up charges against Kirschbaum fell apart in court. The whole rank and file was ready to walk out at a moment's notice if necessary. "Will strike if provoked" was the slogan on the back of the Team's popular T-shirts and hoodies.

Team Solidarity was not fighting in isolation. The struggle to rehire the four union leaders brought in many allies who know Local 8751's consistent and principled activism against racism and austerity as well as its internationalism and labor solidarity.

Boston school bus drivers, who are 98 percent Haitian, Cape Verdean, African-American, Latino/a and other workers of color, battle racism on



and off the job every day. They won the support of Boston's most prominent labor and Black community activists, who, seeing the racist, union-busting character of the attack on a majority-Black union, coalesced together for the first time to win justice for the fired leaders.

The last 25-hour session accurately reflected the forces in this historic battle. On the union side were the fired four, the Team, lawyers and staff of the Steelworkers International, and community leader Chuck Turner via phone. On the management side were Veolia's local, national and international bosses, including the infamous Thomas P. Hock, whose think tank has been breaking transit unions for 40 years; the top brass of Boston Public Schools; and Mayor Walsh and his staff and chief financial officers. The Team was able to keep them from leaving the hotel where the negotiations occurred and made them stay up all night.

## **Red-baiters crushed**

This was truly a fight to defend the historic leadership role of Workers World Party in the union, which WWP members helped found four decades ago. The Veolia bosses and the city bourgeoisie made it clear that their chief and most critical goal was to drive the reds out of the union, jail them and send a message to the rank and file and the union movement as a whole that radical union activism is a thing of the past.

Immediately after the alleged wildcat — which was really an illegal lockout on the part of Veolia — the Boston capitalist media ran vicious red-baiting articles attacking Kirschbaum for being a member of Workers World Party; Gillis is also a member. But the bosses messed with the wrong union — and the wrong revolutionary, multinational, working-class party.

Workers World Party sent delegations from around the country to help with organizing ongoing community support and solidarity. Fundraising efforts made it possible for the four fired leaders to survive more than two years without a paycheck.

The union, knowing they had the full support of Workers World comrades, literally beat back every onerous condition the bosses attempted to attach to the reinstatement settlement, including outrageous restrictions on political organizing, contract concessions and selling out the backlog of grievances.

Once the agreements were signed, all that was left was for the membership to ratify the contract. This happened tonight at a mass, standing-room-only union meeting. The vote was unanimous. That means the next day, two days before Christmas, the fired leaders could go back to work.

With both the rank and file and the community behind them, and buoyed by the solidarity of WWP, Local 8751 beat the odds and delivered a stunning blow to the racists, red-baiters, union-busters and austerity-mongers in the Boston political establishment and the hated Veolia Corp. that they employed to carry out their attack.



*Steve Gillis, Andre François, Steve Kirschbaum, Garry Murchison*



# TPP Caution Amidst Two Victories over Veolia

*By Susan Koppelman*

## **Congratulations to the Boston School Bus Drivers Union, United Steelworkers (USW) 8751, on their victory against Veolia/Transdev!**

Last year saw another huge victory against Veolia. In August 2015, Veolia pulled out of its last ventures in Palestine and Israel after years of being one of the main profiteers of Israeli apartheid. The victory is only short of complete until Veolia pays reparations. After selling first its apartheid bus lines; then part of its shares in the apartheid light rail, which connects illegal Israeli colonies to Jerusalem; followed by the sale of the its illegal landfill in the occupied Jordan Valley and its water and sewage ventures in Israel and the settlements; and then finally its remaining shares in the apartheid light rail – Veolia became the first major victory for the movement for Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions against Israel. In the years prior, the BDS movement achieved many smaller victories which together are responsible for costing Veolia more than \$20 billion dollars in lost contracts and for pressuring Veolia to ultimately pull out of Palestine and Israel completely.

The Boston School Bus Drivers Union has consistently been in solidarity with the Palestinian liberation struggle. “Team Solidarity” has been building power among the working class through a 40-plus-year commitment to racial justice, disability justice, LGBTQ rights, local struggle and anti-colonial/anti-imperial struggle including solidarity with Palestine – not just in words but by consistently showing up in the streets, joining picket lines, packing court rooms, walking out with students and teachers, and standing with the local community.

The BDS National Committee has expressed ongoing solidarity with the Boston School Bus Drivers Union and all who continue to struggle against Veolia’s public endangerment, union-busting and pocketing of public funds. These two 2015 victories against Veolia, austerity, and apartheid show us that when we build solidarity together we are strong.

## **Privatization jeopardizes public health and safety at home, just as it does abroad**

French corporate giant Veolia is the largest privatizer of water in the world and has long been a target of water justice activists for low-bidding on public water contracts, driving up costs, reducing service, under-investing in public infrastructure, contractual noncompliance, false reporting, turning public investment into private profit, jeopardizing public health and safety, poisoning entire populations, and covering up its own and government failures.

Veolia and Suez – another French company and the world’s second largest water privatizer – have pointed to their operations in France to encourage cities worldwide to privatize public water service. But water privatization has been a disaster in France. From 1985-2009 water bills went up 265 percent, even while the private companies weren’t maintaining the infrastructure as required. They were recklessly cutting costs and jeopardizing public health and safety at home, just as they do abroad. They declared profits of six to seven percent but in actuality their profits were much higher. In 2010, Veolia and Suez lost the Paris contract they shared 50-50 for water supply and billing. The very first year after Paris returned the water contract to public management, there were savings of 35 million Euros and the cost to consumers was reduced by eight percent. According to Food and Water Europe, “Paris is one of more than 40 French municipalities and urban communities that reclaimed public control of their water systems over the past decade to reduce prices and improve services.”

Veolia has lost these battles where activists have been organized and united. But there is reason for grave concern, looking at Veolia’s relationship to authoritarian state actors, all of the harm Veolia caused just in 2015, and how free trade agreements serve to further limit civilian recourse to corporate and state accountability.

## **Veolia plays role in state crimes against the poor, mostly Black and Brown folks**

Veolia continues to win lucrative contracts and work with government actors to privatize resources and to solidify new laws and trade policies where they will have more power and be able to make more profit with less accountability. This is terrifying, given Veolia’s track record of public endangerment and fraud, and that Veolia is a lead union-buster brought

in by governments to enforce racist austerity measures against the poor. One aspect of the Boston struggle deserving of more attention is how Veolia was rewarded for union-busting. The four union leaders were fired by Veolia Assistant General Manager of the Boston contract, Jonathan Sanders – who shortly later resigned, changed his name to Jonathan Steketee, and in a blatant conflict of interest was appointed Transportation Director of Boston Public Schools, a position he still holds.

Veolia's role in the failure, cover-up and worsening of the Flint lead poisoning crisis and Legionnaires Disease outbreak has made it the target of a lawsuit by the state of Michigan. Flint's Emergency Manager awarded Veolia a \$40,000 contract to address Flint's water quality issues. On March 12, 2015 Veolia released a report stating "The review of the water quality records during the time of Veolia's study shows the water to be in compliance with State and Federal regulations, and, based on those standards, the water is considered to meet drinking water requirements."

General Motors had stopped using water from the Flint River nearly six months earlier because the water was corroding engine parts. There is reason to believe the Veolia tests should have shown high levels of lead in the water supply, as shown by contemporaneous city and independent tests. Veolia is tied to other failures of the undemocratic Emergency Management system forced on twelve cities or school districts in Michigan, including Flint and Detroit. Cities are governed by high paid outside managers appointed by the Governor who have the power to overrule local elected officials. Residents who are impacted are predominantly Black.

With the creation of the Great Lakes Water Authority, which took power away from Detroit and gave white suburbs a bigger say, Veolia was brought in as a consultant and conducted a peer review of the Detroit Water & Sewerage Department. Activists in Detroit, who include Detroiters Resisting Emergency Management, Peoples Water Board, Moratorium Now! Coalition and We the People of Detroit, are vocal on Veolia's role in the water cutoffs that began in April 2014, when Detroit contracted with Homrich, a demolition company, to carry out 70,000 shutoffs in 730 days.

Families are having their water cut off for outstanding bills of \$150, while a golf course, stadiums and other corporate enterprises have owed \$30 million for water and never had their access threatened. Today 91,000 people in Detroit are without water, and water shutoffs continue for a third

summer in a row with one in five people at risk of losing service.

The cost of water in public housing in Detroit is many times that in rich white suburbs. Residents who do not pay their utility bills get kicked out of public housing, and the city sells the emptied lots to developers.

Meanwhile the notorious Michigan Department of Environmental Quality allows Nestlé, the largest water bottling company in the world, to pump up to 400 gallons of water per minute from aquifers that feed Lake Michigan, while paying next to nothing and receiving tax breaks from the state. This is how privatization and austerity work.

### **Veolia is a caution story against the Trans-Pacific Partnership**

The same month that Flint switched over to the Flint River – without basic textbook precautions to prevent lead pipe corrosion – tests found that Veolia negligence was responsible for poisoning 3.6 million people in Lanzhou, China with extremely high levels of Benzene in the public water supply.

Residents who sued Veolia for the cost of medical treatment and bottled water were denied compensation. “Su Kehong, deputy head of the court, admitted that Lanzhou Veolia’s lack of regulatory supervision led to the tap water crisis, but the court rejected the claims because the company had adopted remedial measures to deal with and compensate for the pollution, such as apologizing to the public, publishing water quality testing data, and cutting down water charges on locals.” (Xinhua News Agency, Nov 27, 2015.)

In 2010 a World Bank court ruled that the poor province of Tucuman, Argentina had to pay a Veolia subsidiary US\$105 million in damages (an amount nearly equal to ten percent of the public debt of Tucuman province) because corporations have a right to make a profit off the supply of public water.

The Veolia subsidiary had raised the cost of water 95%. Meanwhile there were severe water quality problems and other areas of contractual non-compliance and 37.8 percent of the population had no ability to pay for water. Seven small cities formed a coordinating committee and established a consumer organization to provide legal support for a resident-organized payment boycott.



But the World Bank's International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes ruled that the poorest province of a poor country had to pay a dishonest and incompetent international corporate state actor nearly twice as much as they paid before – for water that had become polluted and was running brown.

The local government was overruled and found not to have jurisdiction over the cost of public water in their province. Veolia was not held accountable for the poor water quality or for failing to fulfill its contractual obligations.

Under the Trans-Pacific Partnership, we the people – being occupied by the corporate police state – will have even less recourse.

Private corporations like Veolia who profit from public investments in basic services, like water, transportation and trash, will have more legal protections to get away with mass poisonings of entire populations and other crimes. Even when the corporation is violating its end of the contract, it will have increased legal protection to set whatever salaries they want and to embezzle in other ways. Public municipalities will increasingly foot the bill.

It's time that we as a community come together and get real about corporate power, how it impacts our individual and collective struggles, and strategize to beat it!

The Boston School Bus Drivers Union, the BDS movement and Indig-enous activists are at the forefront of this struggle.

Solidarity, forward!

# Conclusion

The following discussion of the Boston School Bus Drivers Union's historic victory is from a special February 14, 2016, conference call between members of Team Solidarity of USW 8751 and members of Workers World Party.

## **'A gravity-defying victory': Larry Holmes First Secretary, Workers World Party**

The big question before us is how on earth were the Boston School Bus Drivers Union able to compel this incredible, gravity-defying victory in the present global environment — where capitalism is so strong and so concentrated that the odds of workers winning in any given struggle are, at best, challenging — especially a relatively small local of about 900 members — United Steelworkers Local 8751.

Workers World Party's role was important. And the reality of the union's long history in the struggle against racism — its ties to the Black community, and leaders and organizations in the Black community in Boston — was indeed an important factor. And there was solidarity — solidarity from those outside the union, whether from other unions or other progressive people.

Solidarity is a complex issue. Certainly there was a lot of solidarity on paper and financial contributions, necessary when you have four people who are not getting salaries for two years. But there is a difference between a union passing a resolution supporting another union — a good thing, on the one hand — or a union sending ten or twenty workers to join a picket line.

There are different levels of solidarity. In this capitalist crisis and concentration, solidarity — more material forms of solidarity, as opposed to symbolic forms of solidarity — will become more and more necessary.

But any trade unionist, any militant worker, looking at what happened in Boston, might ask themselves: How did this union, this local, often at odds with its international, often at odds with the union hierarchy — how did it take on a monstrous, multibillion-dollar transnational corporation that prides itself on its expertise in decapitating and busting unions — take it on and prevail?

How is it that this company could not separate a handful of leaders from the rest of the union? One would think that, in these days, the rank and file might hang on and support the leaders for a little while, a few

months, a half-year, maybe a year, but two years! Day in, day out, months, coming through on everything!

What was most decisive — though not the only factor — is the fact that the Boston School Bus Drivers Union is not a union where a few people represent the workers. It is a rank-and-file union; it is a union where the workers run the union. They are empowered by it, and this is unusual in the U.S. — unusual in many places, but very unusual in this country. Many trade unionists will tell you that, in most instances, union leadership and union staff become separated from the rank and file, even well-meaning, progressive union leaders and staff. Months and years and decades go by, and they have very little contact and very little political and social interaction with the rank and file. If workers come to a couple of meetings a year, even a small percentage of the total of the union, that's significant. Sometimes workers forget they are even in a union, and that reflects their relative alienation from the leadership of the union.

But the Boston School Bus Drivers Union is the opposite of that. It's a different kind of union, and that takes work, not only one meeting a week in a yard, but meetings every day, especially if the union's under attack. This is important in how to analyze what was decisive in this victory. Other unions are not like that. When the company comes down, the union and the workers are not prepared, and then the company prevails, usually quite easily, no matter how much symbolic solidarity the union gets.

But when you have a union like this union, where through hard work, concentrated day-in, day-out work, you have a union of the workers, not just for the workers with a few people far away who exert power. That is a big lesson from this victory. I hope we can share this revolutionary way of organizing that's the antithesis of "business unionism."

**'If you stick together and you don't waver':**

**Andre François**

**President, USW Local 8751, and one of the Four**

There's no other solidarity than this since I've been born, since I've been working, You've been there with your money, you've been there in person, you've been there with your ideas. And I couldn't thank you enough for your solidarity. All I can say is that I guarantee it's going to stay with me until the day I die. I'll take that to my grave. I'll tell my children about it, I'll tell my grandchildren about it. I went from being a fired worker, a fired recording secretary and unemployed, to being an employed

union president because you gave solidarity and help.

It's a victory that we will take back to the school — that we were able to pull it off without a strike. That says a lot in this day and age. You don't have a strike, and you have a struggle like that. Right now, Boston Public School administration has actually let the company know, "Once you failed to get rid of these drivers, now you have to work with them." That's a real testament on how strong and tough you can be if you stick together, and you don't waver for this long.

### **'Building a movement': Chuck Turner** **Former Boston City Councillor and community activist**

Firstly, if Team Solidarity — and the Four who were fired — had not stayed together, had not continued to do the work that was necessary to keep the membership together, if they had not been willing to make the tremendous sacrifices that they made, it would have been impossible for the victory to have happened. So the willingness of people to sacrifice and endure and persist is to me a driving force in the victory.

Secondly, USW 8751 is a different type of union. The leadership are workers, and the workers are leaders. While the Four who were fired are seen as Team Solidarity, the reality is that the union is Team Solidarity. That solidarity, combined with the sacrifices, courage and persistence of the Four, created the momentum that enabled the victory to take place.

The third factor is that not only had this union throughout its history focused on the needs and concerns of its members, it has recognized its members are part of a larger community under siege. The union has been in solidarity, not only with its own members, but in solidarity with the community. There are innumerable struggles that we could talk about — from coming together with the community to save a key post office, to the coming together with workers in other unions, to the struggle around education. Because the bus drivers got very involved in organizing around education — not just the question of jobs, but the question of the quality of education, the actions of the school administration that were not in the best interests of our children. The bus drivers did the work over the decades of creating the bond of support with the community. That meant when there was this crisis, there was a level of support in the community, despite all the attempts by the city and Veolia to break down that relationship.

There's a word that gets misused and not understood but there was a love — and there continues to be an outpouring of love — that is a recognition of our need to be together, to appreciate each other, to stick together with each other, that the union leadership has shown throughout its history. It's that spirit of love that the solidarity has been built around and that has enabled a tremendous victory, not only for the rights of workers — and particularly Black workers — but for the example that through solidarity and loving relationships we can overcome even the greatest of odds.

The struggle that's going on in 8751 is tremendously important to the workers and the community and needs to be duplicated across the country. At the same time I have to recognize, as a person who is 75 and has been active in the community, delivering service to Black people and people in general throughout my life, the reality is that the majority of people of my race are not in unions and not employed.

So that raises a very serious question: In addition to organizing our workers who are in companies and in unions, how do we begin to develop a movement around the issue of our unemployment? And how do we put ourselves to work? Because the reality is Black people cannot look to the capitalist system to employ those of us who have been robbed of our labor for the last 400 years.

How do we begin to think about building a movement that will put ourselves back to work so that future generations will have some likelihood of work? At this moment there are millions of us who are unemployed across the country and have no realistic expectations of a job or being in a union. There are 900,000 of us who are in prisons who are going to be coming back to communities where the official unemployment rates are 20 or 30 percent.

While we have to focus on organizing our workers who are in the unions and on building unions, we also have to recognize that, for liberation for ourselves as a people, we have to build among those who are unemployed strategies for putting ourselves to work, because we certainly cannot look to the capitalists to do that.

## **'The workers' first line of defense':**

**Steve Kirschbaum**

**Vice President, USW 8751, and one of the Four**

8751 is very, very interested in playing whatever role we can play, as Chuck was able to do, with the Boston Workers' Alliance and other efforts

to deal with workers coming out of prison and being denied employment. This is organizing to organize the unorganized. We need to take a page out of what was done with the unemployed marches and other efforts in the 1930s. I think this is critical for both the Team and the Party to pay very serious attention to.

This victory was not really a three-year victory. It was decades in the making, and it was a resounding confirmation of militant, class-conscious, politically active unionism, which some call “social unionism.” We take to heart what other revolutionaries — Lenin, Trotsky, Sam Marcy and others — have said: That the unions are the workers’ first line of defense not just for a contract, not just for a grievance, but for all those ills of capitalism that affect our class.

At first when we were fired, the Tea Party commentators in the bourgeois press and others red-baited us; they talked about our support for Cuba, Presidents Chavez and Maduro in Venezuela, General Giap in Vietnam. They quoted from remarks we’d made at Workers World conferences about GPS technology representing Homeland Security’s incursion into the workplace. That was an indication from the enemy that this was really a political struggle, a calculated campaign to drive out of USW Local 8751 those “red” political forces who had founded the local and had been in the local for 40-plus years.

One of the main reasons for our victory was solidarity with and from the community, rock-solid alliances based on the fact that the union had been so much a part of all the struggles of the community, particularly communities of color, and the political movement over the decades in Boston.

Those alliances are also recognition that 8751 itself is of the community. Our local is now 98 percent people of color, mostly from Haiti, mostly immigrant workers and a large percentage of women. Local 8751 is a snapshot of the insightful description of the changing character of the working class in Sam Marcy’s book “High Tech, Low Pay.” When I first started driving the buses in 1974, there were a handful of oppressed workers driving buses and only two women. The successful fight, since the 1970s, to provide good union jobs for workers in the oppressed communities and for women represents one of the most significant achievement for the politically class-conscious local leadership.

We all have to broaden the definition of solidarity. Yes, we had a rock-strong rank and file who were loyal, militant and defiant. I remember one scene at the end of one of the trials, when the head of the corporation was leaving the court and was chased by a hundred workers. If it wasn’t for the

cops, I don't know what would have happened to him. My Haitian brothers and sisters said: If this was Port-au-Prince, we know what would have happened to him! That's the kind of power we have in the rank and file.

And, yes, we have sought to broaden the view of solidarity, to join with the Anti-Veolia national and worldwide movements, the Boycott Divest Sanction (BDS movement in support of the Palestinians, the Black Lives Matter movement, the anti-war movement and all the other political movements.

We are trying to live the trade union legacy of the founders of Workers World Party. We call it "old-school unionism," employing the fundamentals: militant mobilization and reliance on the rank and file; building solidarity with the community and engaging the union in all struggles of the "workers and oppressed;" fighting racism, sexism, LGBTQ oppression, discrimination against people with disabilities, fighting poverty and war. For example, I'm very proud of the fact that the language we won in the new contract guarantees no discrimination against our trans sisters and brothers. This language was drafted in consultation with leaders from the movement, bringing their voice to the negotiating table.

Our struggle provided a virtual strategic and tactical "clinic" regarding how to address the many challenges facing labor militants: dealing with a global corporate monster; a viciously anti-union bourgeois state (cops, courts and City Hall); vicious austerity cuts; class collaborationists in the local leadership; the non-struggle trade union bureaucracy ("labor lieutenants of capital"); and so forth.

We believe the rich lessons of this victory are worthy of study by our movement. Our successful battle provides concrete confirmation that you can fight back and you can win. Our enemies may have the money, but we have the people and we have the power!

### **'For a union to remain strong':**

**Garry Murchison**

**Former President, USW 8751, Grievance Chair, and one of the Four**

In Local 8751 are a group of people who do exactly what our members do. We don't hold executive positions and sit in an office all day. We actually get out in the field, we participate, we have conversations with our



members, we have yard meetings. We don't act as if we are an Executive Board — we are bus drivers, irregardless.

But in other unions that has seemed to change, and what's more, that's what we need to get back to — to drop back down to the workers' level, instead of acting as a position just for the position. But if you act as if the position is better than the people you are representing, then you are no better than the company that is trying to harm your members. So the lesson from that is this: In order for a union to remain strong, no one can buy you out. In order for a union to remain strong, no one can sell you. Why? Because right is right and wrong is wrong.

### **'A class-struggle approach':**

**Steve Gillis**

#### **Financial Secretary, USW 8751, and one of the Four**

Those of you who graciously came to Boston to fight the court case against Local 8751 know the way that we won was to employ a class-struggle approach. We organized hundreds of people, even on some of the most snowbound days of the year, when everything in the city was closed except Dorchester District Court. We got people to court in a way that had never been seen in the city of Boston. We packed the court, we subpoenaed our bosses, we subpoenaed the general manager of the corporation, we subpoenaed a government official. The Veolia guy who is now in charge of school transportation — we made him sit in the hallway for three days while picket lines and demonstrations went on inside and outside. We put the company on trial, in effect, at Dorchester District Court, and the working-class jury, after a three-day trial, took less than 10 minutes for a verdict of “not guilty.” It was obvious to them, as it was obvious to us, as it is obvious to hundreds of million of people around the world, that this corporation and this government, with its austerity plan, are guilty of crimes. It is not us!

In the last couple of weeks, while performing my duties as administrator of the members' 401(k) pension plan and also being in the yards, it's been an additional task to try to figure out what to do about the wage theft that's also coming from the entire system. These recent weeks have seen the capitalist system begin a huge collapse in its financial system and in its system of oil production, which is at its base.

We've seen hundreds of thousands of layoffs happening in this period, and we hope some of the lessons from the Boston school bus drivers'

victory will be able to bring to our class an understanding of how to fight that. The victory that we've had can be very useful to anybody else in this country or around the world who is fighting the same kind of government-austerity monster that Veolia is. It's almost the epitome of the corporate Pinkerton hired gun! This is a corporation of international criminal proportions.

But we can see how this colossus is something of a monster with feet of clay, and we can spread the lessons of victory and be of assistance in organizing a broad struggle to overthrow this system that is targeting us every day.

## **Boston, Cuba and 'revolutionary will':**

**Monica Moorehead**

### **Workers World Party 2016 presidential candidate and member of the Secretariat**

The duty of every revolutionary party is not only to support those who are on the front lines against corporate greed and union busting, [and oppose] those who are promoting racism and inequality, but to help get the word out, to help elevate a union like 8751 with the rest of the union movement that's so much on the defensive in the struggle against austerity. In terms of the role that Veolia is playing in all of this, the struggle of the union is one example of the struggle against austerity worldwide, whether it's what's going on in Flint, Detroit, everywhere in this country and around the world, whether it's Greece, Africa, the Caribbean. We know the struggle against capitalism knows no borders.

I want to raise Cuba especially — a country with little to no resources — that was still able to defeat the U.S., the most powerful imperialist country in the world, because Cuba had revolutionary leadership — which USW Local 8751 most certainly has. What the Cuban revolution has shown us is that no matter how poor you may be in terms of economic development, if you have the revolutionary will, you can take whatever resources you have, whatever little material resources you may have, and prioritize those to meet the needs of the population.

That's what the Cuban revolution is all about, and that's what Workers World Party did in our own small way in this struggle. We understood the importance of the 8751 struggle against Veolia, that it had ramifications not just for this particular union, but for the whole labor movement, whether the workers were organized or unorganized. What we tried to do was pull

together our resources, whether human resources or material resources, to show our solidarity with this tremendous struggle over the last few years and throughout the decades that this union has been in existence. We were inspired by revolutions like the Cuban revolution—which is like a rank-and-file country where people are so inspired and part of the revolutionary process.

**'The people are still resisting':  
Claude "Toutou" St. Germain  
Recording Secretary, USW 8751,  
and representative of Fanmi Lavalas**

Finally we got the Four back, but the struggle is not over. We still have a long fight with this monster company. But today I would say we are in a very good position with this company.

And the struggle we are in today seems like it is not a different struggle than the people of Haiti are in right now. We really need the same spirit we give the struggle in Boston, in Local 8751, to carry to victory the people in Haiti now, to hold the fight, and win that battle.

I remember 1990 when we had our first elected president in Haiti. After the seven months he had in office, there was a coup d'état by the Army, by the capitalists of the U.S. We stood up, all the Haitian nation, stood up against that coup d'état, against everybody who was involved in that coup—the United States, France, Canada. And since then the struggle's still on; the people in Haiti have kept fighting. The political party Fanmi Lavalas was in the fight to have the masses get involved in politics and social things as well.

In Haiti right now, the people are still in the street. The people are still resisting, they still resist capitalism, they still resist the collaborators of capitalism, they still resist. They don't want to give up the fight. They don't want to give up the right to have a good election. They don't want to give up the right to have food. They don't want to give up the right to an education. They don't want to give up the right to good health. They don't want to give up the right to be free in their country and be part of their country. The bourgeoisie of Haiti, the oligarchy of this country, don't want the masses to get involved in the political area of this country. That's still a big struggle, not only to get the power, but also to have freedom for the masses to get involved in the real life of the country. The fight is still on today. Right now, they are still in the streets, claiming that the elections

be fair, honest, democratic. If they aren't, the people will continue in the streets to make things be right.

The victory we had in Boston should be the victory of everyone, not only for those of us bus drivers in Boston. As a local, we seem like we are small, but we are not small, because we stood up in every fight, everywhere, for years. We're traveling everywhere. If there was some kind of struggle, we were there to fight that.

I believe that when we say, "An injury to one is an injury to all," that's a true thing. Because we've been standing with everybody. That's why when we are fighting that fight against Veolia, we see so many people with us.

The people everywhere should stand with the people in Haiti to make a victory for the whole world. Not only for the people in Haiti, but for the whole world to see exactly how we can make things happen everywhere.

I think people power is the freedom for people to be together and to claim and to fight for the rights they need to have. I think that's going to remain our major battle in this struggle here. The right to form a union, the right to be together, the right to have a demonstration in the streets. That should be part of the struggle to get our freedom.

## **'Our future': Milt Neidenberg**

### **Founding member, Workers World Party**

I so appreciate the precious word of solidarity. Because solidarity and unity — building the bridges, tearing down the walls of oppression and racism — is the main factor that goes with class-consciousness and militancy.

How important it was that Team Solidarity swept the elections! Yes, it was years and years of hard work, day in and day out in the ranks, meetings at all the yards, the dozens of solidarity marches with the help of the Party. But that was years and years that the Boston mayors and bourgeoisie also red-baited our leaders and those who associated with them. But compared to years ago, the red-baiting, the anti-communist attacks didn't play; they didn't work. So the feeling of communists working with this splendid union is a classic example of our future.

The ruling class right now is in a crisis, \$18 trillion of debt and heading into another recession deeper than 2007. Listen to their debates, they argue, they insult each other. I've never seen a period like this, and I've been in the movement sixty-five years. That's one reason, not the main, why the

drivers got such a wonderful contract — the internal confusion, including in Transdev.

And why was it in this period of deep austerity, unemployment and givebacks in labor contracts that USW 8751 got a good contract? The workers were able to make the company fear that if they didn't get a good contract, they were ready to strike. The school bus drivers had it printed on their T-shirts: a coiled cobra with the slogan "Will strike if provoked." They were so well-organized and ready that Transdev thought they'd better settle.

Now we go forward. It's social unionism, it's class struggle, it's unity and solidarity in the working class. Now we'll start to move while the ruling class is in disarray. Hope, unity, solidarity, sensitivity to the national question and self-determination!

On to socialism!



*Milt and Rosemary Neidenberg, founding members of Workers World Party and decades-long advisers to Team Solidarity—the Voice of United School Bus Union Workers.*

**END**

**RACISM  
& ALL  
BIGOTRY**

**TEAM SOLIDARITY**

**UNITED SCHOOL BUS UNION WORKERS**

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supports  
SEGREGATION  
from  
BOSTON to  
PALESTINE**

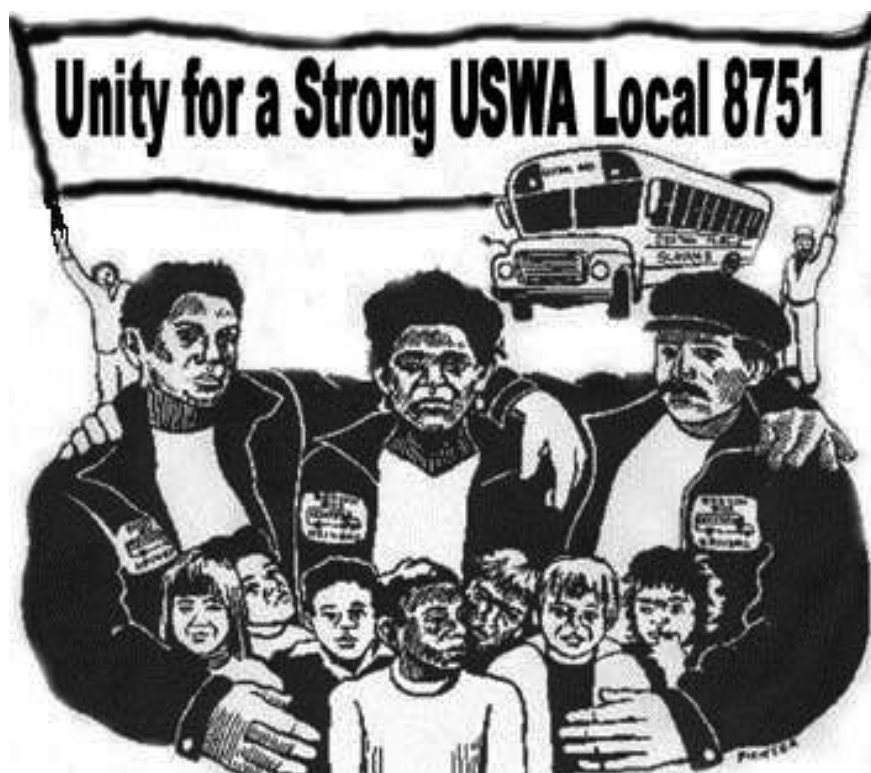
**TEAM SOLIDARITY**

[tinyurl.com/kyo9hys](https://www.tinyurl.com/kyo9hys)

**USW TASKFORCE**  
Local 8751



**WILL STRIKE IF PROVOKED**



graphic by Dave Fichter







President  
Andre François

Vice President  
Steve Kirschbaum



Financial  
Secretary  
Steve Gillis

Treasurer  
Georgia Scott

Recording Secretary  
Claude 'Toutou' St. Germain



Gary Murchison

Frantz Mendes

Rick Laine



Fred Floreal

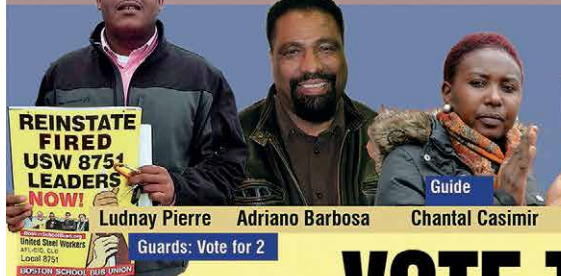
Trustees: Vote for 3

Judy Long

Frantz 'Fanfan' Cadet



Grievance Committee: Vote for 3



Ludnay Pierre

Adriano Barbosa

Chantal Casimir

Guide

Guards: Vote for 2



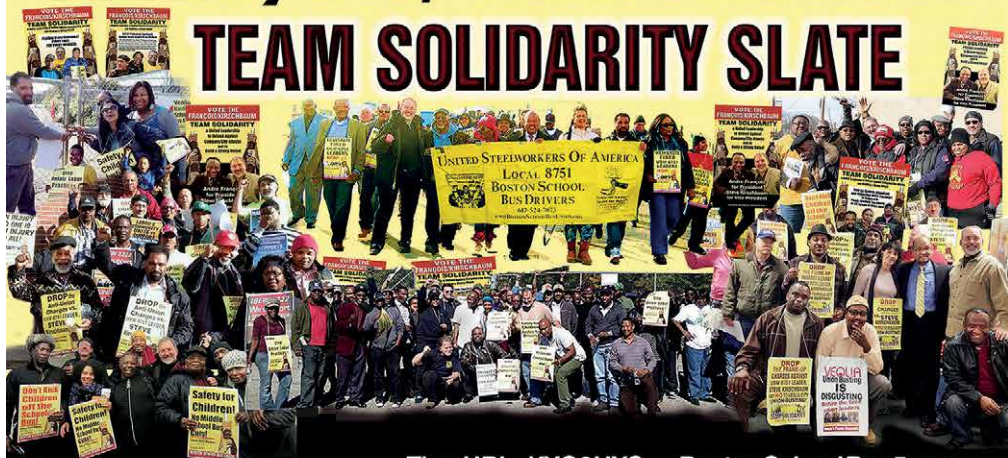
Jerome 'Samir' Stanley

Kathryn 'Kat' Moore

Robert  
'Rob'  
Salley

Accident Review Committee:  
Vote for 3

# VOTE THE FRANÇOIS/ KIRSCHBAUM TEAM SOLIDARITY SLATE







Team Solidarity - the Voice of United School Bus Union Workers

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