A threat to Title IX

Education Secretary DeVos attacks abuse survivors

By Sue Davis

Bulletin: Education Secretary Betsy DeVos is preparing to remove civil rights protections for students of color, reported EducationPost.org, Dec. 13. (tinyurl.com/ybx9lghh) This can only ramp up racial bias in regard to Title IX as discussed in this article.

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos’ proposed revisions of Title IX regulations, covering sexual harassment, assault and abuse in K-12 schools and federally funded colleges and universities, were designed to make it easier for educational institutions to avoid dealing with such issues and harder for survivors to bring charges against perpetrators.

That turns the original intent of Title IX upside down. Title IX is a landmark civil rights law passed in the Education Amendments of 1972 to prohibit sex discrimination in federally funded education programs. That’s why DeVos’ revisions are adamantly opposed by survivors’ advocates, women’s and LGBTQ rights organizations, and educational and legal groups.

But the proposed revisions align perfectly with the misogynistic stalking practices of DeVos’ boss. Predator-in-chief Donald Trump boasts about his sexist conquests, while current headlines delve into his payoffs silencing two mistresses. DeVos was doing Trump’s bidding when revamping Title IX regulations, published Nov. 16, after consulting so-called “men’s rights” groups which promote the myth of “false accusations.” DeVos’ predecessor called such cases “exceedingly rare.”

According to the National Women’s Law Center, more than 3 million students will be sexually assaulted in 2018; less than 10 percent will report that to administrators. More than 1 in 5 women, nearly 1 in 18 men and nearly 1 in 4 transgender and gender-nonconforming students in college are sexually assaulted annually.

During college, 62 percent of women and 61 percent of men experience sexual harassment. During grades 7-12, 56 percent of girls and 40 percent of boys are sexually harassed. In reporting harassment, women and girls of color, students who are pregnant, parenting, LGBTQ or gender-nonconforming are more likely to be ignored, punished or labeled “promiscuous.”

Proposed changes in Title IX rules

Two major changes in the regulations would make it harder to convict an assailant. (Source: The National Women’s Law Center, “Devos’s Proposed Changes to Title IX, Explained,” nwlc.org)

One change raises the standard for a case from “preponderance of evidence” to “clear and convincing evidence.” Preponderance is the standard used by federal courts in civil rights cases and all other types of student misconduct.

The other change radically upgrades sexual harassment from “unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature” to “unwelcome conduct on the basis of sex that is so severe, pervasive and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person access to the [institution’s] education program or activity.” This stringent definition would force a survivor to meet an extremely high test. Strict definitions of evidence allow institutions to address only the worst cases of sexual harassment and abuse. This may force survivors to suffer more before they seek help. Institutional responsibility for sexual assault or harassment is also limited to “school-sponsored activity” and doesn’t include online communication, though much informal student interaction occurs through school-provided social media sites.

Previously students could report abuse to a trusted teacher, resident advisor or coach. Now, only a Title IX coordinator with “the authority to institute corrective measures” or K-12 teacher who has “actual knowledge” of abuse can take action. That would let Michigan State
Inmates expose systematic abuse in Georgia jail

By Christian Noakes

Atlanta

Gwinnett County Sheriff Butch Conway and Lt. Col. Carl Sims currently face a federal lawsuit in response to widespread abuse of inmates. Plaintiffs are 75 current and former inmates whose testimonies have revealed systematic cruelty at the county jail.

Central to the lawsuit are restraint chairs used to strap down inmates’ hands, feet and heads. In one instance, guards strapped down a military veteran with PTSD after also stripping him of his clothes. Similar brutality has been meted out to several other inmates with physical and mental disabilities.

Another plaintiff, 26-year-old Shelby Clark, was severely beaten and partially blinded after guards hit her for having a mental breakdown—one hit her in the face several times. (tinyurl.com/yahku7dx)

Such inhuman tactics are used by the jail’s “Rapid Response Team,” which receives orders and direction from the police officers charged. According to one of the attorneys filing the suit on behalf of the current and former inmates, video evidence shows that there is no apparent reason for many of the jail’s violent assaults. Guards can be seen in some cases entering cells using “nonlethal” SWAT tactics on noncompliant victims—many of whom are then strapped down for hours.

In 26th murder of 2018, Black trans woman activist killed

By Martha Grevatt

Detroit

Kelly Stough, a Black trans activist, was found dead Dec. 7 in the Palmer Park neighborhood of Detroit. A Baptist minister, Albert Weathers, has been charged in the shooting. Stough’s murder is being treated as an anti-trans hate crime.

Kelly Stough, who also used the name Keanna Mattel, was the 26th trans person known to have been murdered this year in the U.S. Nearly all of those killed were women of color.

Stough, who was 36 years old, had been an activist in her community. In 2015, after the killing of Amber Monroe, another Detroit trans woman of color, Stough told the Guardian: “The police are unaware with our struggle, so this year in the U.S. Nearly all of those killed were women of color.

The ruthless ruling class today seeks to wipe out decades of gains and benefits won by hard-fought struggles by people’s movements. The super-rich and their political representatives have intensified their attacks on the multinational, multi-gender and multi-generational working class. It is time to point the blame at—and challenge—the capitalist system.

People are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis. The workers world Widow World publishes 51 issues every year. This issue is number 51. Next week we’ll be taking our usual annual break and will be back the first week of January 2019. Enjoy the winter solstice while keeping warm and strong for the revolution! See you then.

— WW editorial staff

See you next year!

Join us in the fight for socialism!

Workers World Party is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party currently the vanguard of the imperialist beast. We are multinational, multi-generational and multi-gendered organization that not only aims to abolish capitalism, but to build a socialist society because it’s the only way forward! Capitalism and imperialism have poisoned the people of the world and the planet itself in the never-ending quest for ever-greater profits.

Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression. Attacks on im/migrants, minority, LGBTQ oppression and mistreatment of people with disabilities. It means joblessness, increasing homelessness and impoverishment and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism.

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

The ruthless ruling class today seeks to wipe out decades of gains and benefits won by hard-fought struggles by people’s movements. The super-rich and their political representatives have intensified their attacks on the multinational, multi-gender and multi-generational working class. It is time to point the blame at—and challenge—the capitalist system.

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After 1959, Workers World Party has been on the streets defending the workers and oppressed here and worldwide. If you’re interested in Marxism, socialism and fighting for a socialist future, please contact a WWP branch near you.

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Vol. 60, No. 51 • Dec. 20, 2018
Closing date: Dec. 19, 2018

Workers World

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Indigenous protest land grab in Chaco region

By Stephanie Trombley

Active tourists and environmentalists protested in Santa Fe, N.M., on Dec. 15, 2018, against the Bureau of Land Management’s illegal auctioning of 84,000 acres of sacred and fragile lands in the Greater Carlsbad region and the Chaco Canyons in New Mexico. The state is second only to Utah in numbers of acres on the block for lease sales for fracking and related energy operations.

The Chaco region has been home to Pueblo and Diné (Navajo) peoples for millennia. Chaco Canyon contains several ancient religious sites through much of its history. The region is under investigation to meet its duties under the National Historic Preservation Act. However, this does not mean the Pueblo’s living, knowledge of cultural sites and ability to identify the footsteps and fingerprints of their ancestors does not exist.” (Santa Fe New Mexican, Dec. 4)

The action on Dec. 5 was called by Pueblo Action Alliance and the Red Nation. For more information, see #NoNewLeases #ProtectChacoCanyon #FrackOffChaco #FrackOffNM #WaterIsLife #KeepItInTheSoil #CanDrinkOil.

Black trans woman activist killed

Continued from page 2

Friends and family have organized fundraisers to help with funeral costs. A gofundme appeal raised nearly $5,000.

In 2017, at least 29 trans people were murdered in the U.S. where the recorded number of murdered trans people has been over 20 every year since 2014, according to P.S.A. For percent of those killed have been Black and Brown. The average age women of color, the murder rate is 1 in 2,600, compared to 1 in 19,000 in the general population. (mic.com/unerased)

This appalling statistic does not take into account suicides, deaths from denial of medical care or deaths where the victim’s gender identity is not reported. Trans women of color also suffer a high rate of physical and sexual assault.

As Stough herself observed three years before she was murdered, the capitalist state is not going to help stop what has been called a form of femicide. People must organize to stop these racist, anti-trans lynchings.

Judge in Mumia appeal requests evidence of Castille bias

By Betsy Piette Philadelphia

Philadelphia Common Pleas Court Judge Leon Tucker filed an order on Dec. 7 giving 40 days to prepare a response to the Petition of Abu-Jamal and the Philadelphia district attorney’s office to provide input on former Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Ronald Castille’s potential retirement from his position, upon which the appeal is based. Lawyers must respond by Dec. 17 unless an extension is requested and granted.

Tucker took final arguments on Dec. 3 from attorneys for Abu-Jamal and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Both agreed there was not enough “new evidence” to support the appeal. The judge’s new request is very important that in that it asks for opinions on how the application of the Judicial Conduct code applies to Abu-Jamal’s case and how it fits into the Williams case.

The question of possible judicial bias extends to Castille’s activities on capital cases. Tucker is the former district attorney — but while he was running for election as a judge or a judge.

Castille’s focus on ‘police killers’

Tucker is considering the broader argument that due process requires an unbiased judge to hear the appeal. Arguments add this second legal basis to the appeal and how it fits into the U.S. Supreme Court.

Evidence also surfaced of DA Castille’s conduct in the face of evidence of significant prosecutorial misconduct. According to the Grand Jury’s report, the conviction of Daniel Faulkner. He also filed a motion requesting that Justice Castille not hear the appeal. Castille claimed that he had “personal” involvement in a critical decision against the Federal Community Defender Organization that represented Williams.

Tucker is requesting opinions on how this code of conduct applies to Abu-Jamal’s appeal and how it fits into the U.S. Supreme Court’s current inquiry into the conduct of a PA Judicial Conduct on Court requiring recusal if there was an appearance of bias or bias, paralysis can be applied by SCOTUS in a case where the new evidence was not presented.

Attorneys added this second legal basis to the appeal and how it fits into the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1996 Abu-Jamal appealed his post-conviction challenge to his death sentence and death penalty conviction. Judge Sabo to the PA Supreme Court over his 1982 conviction by a mostly white jury for the 1981 shooting of police officer Daniel Faulkner. He also filed a motion requesting that Justice Castille not hear the case.

The ground for requesting the Castille was compelling. Castille oversaw the trial was fair and that evidence against him was compelling. Castille oversaw the trial was fair and that evidence against him was compelling.
Calif. mental health care workers’ strike wins solidarity

From Dec. 10 to 15, the 4,000 members of the National Union of Healthcare Workers (NUHW) went on strike in the cities where they work. This was the first strike in U.S. history: (Chicago Tribune, Dec. 10) Teachers shut down 15 schools where they teach more than 7,000 students, who are 90 percent Latinx. These educators, who earn up to $13,000 less than their counterparts in the Chicago Public School system, work for Acero, formerly known as the UNO Charter School Network, which went union five years ago. Acero teachers demanded— and won—equal pay for equal work with CPS educators, class size reductions with penalties if violated, management commitment to comply with teacher staffing levels, sanctuary school protections in contract language and equal pay for equal work when Acero educates CPS students. This is a victory for every educator who sees children getting short-changed by privatization and charter operators putting their business models over the needs of our students,” said Chris Baehrend, chair of the CTU Charter Division.

Strike Victory at Chicago Charter Schools!

Nearly 500 Chicago Teachers Union-represented teachers ended a successful five-day strike and won a tentative contract in the unlikeliest of places—a charter school network. This was the first strike by charter teachers in Chicago history! (Chicago Tribune, Dec. 10) Teachers shut down 15 schools where they teach more than 7,000 students, who are 90 percent Latinx. These educators, who earn up to $13,000 less than their counterparts in the Chicago Public School system, work for Acero, formerly known as the UNO Charter School Network, which went union five years ago.

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Successful national hotel strike ends in 8 cities

San Francisco, the eighth and final city in the 7,700-worker strike at 20 Marriott hotels across the U.S., reached a settlement when UNITE HERE Local 2 workers voted Dec. 16 to ratify a four-year contract. This settlement marks the end of the largest multi-city hotel industry strike ever, with workers making huge financial sacrifices to win the strike. It was nine weeks after seven UNITE HERE affiliates, voting Dec. 16 in the New York Times that rules of cross examination are needed. She argues this will counter the racial bias that permeates every aspect of U.S. society. Bazelon runs a pro bono clinic where her students advocate for low-income women workers' rights to see patients with depression, bipolar disorder and other conditions. On Dec. 12, Kaiser, the country’s largest nonprofit healthcare maintenance organization, currently provides coverage for about 8.8 million Californians. The company makes record profits—$2.6 billion since the beginning of 2018—and their executives get huge pay raises. Kaiser says making sure that its hospitals and clinics are fully staffed. Patients often wait more than a month to be seen because there’s only one full-time mental health clinician for every 3,000 Kaiser patients. Management has refused to hire enough mental health therapists since 2015. (NUHW, Nov. 20)

That’s why there’s a critical condition every day of the year,” said NUHW President Sal Rosselli. (Daily Democrat, Dec. 11) As demonstrators rallied with chants and signs—“Care delayed is care denied!”—members of other unions and locals showed solidarity as workers fought the good fight to end the access crisis!

Education Secretary DeVos attacks abuse survivors

Continued from page 1 and Penn State, with perpetrators like Larry Nassar and Jerry Sandusky, respectively, off the job. But the new rules automatically exempt religiously affiliated institutions from Title IX, which would have to give the requested access. Of course, students may not know until it’s too late that they won’t be covered by rights conveyed in Title IX—but it’s not too late that they won’t be covered by rights conveyed in Title IX.

Lawsuits may offer students “supportive measures” to help them stay in school, such as counseling or modified work and class schedules, but only offer “mutual” restrictions on contact between parties. If an institution believes transferring a perpetrator from classes would pose an “unreasonable burden,” then the current model would make changes, imposing a burden on them.

Institutions can now propose mediation, often used to resolve peer conflict—both sides have responsibilities they can’t promise. But mediation is never appropriate for resolving sexual assault cases, which is why it’s previously been prohibited.

Will cross examination eliminate racial bias?

The most controversial aspect of the proposed rules is allowing sexual assault survivors to be cross-examined by an advisor for the accused, while an advisor for the survivor may cross-examine the accused. Such confrontation, even if the two sides are in different rooms or participate via videoconference, could intensify the survivor’s trauma, forcing them to drop the case or deter them from initially reporting.

Lara Bazelon, a University of San Francisco law professor, contends in her Dec. 5 op-ed in the New York Times that rules of cross examination are needed. She argues this will counter the racial bias that permeates every aspect of U.S. society. Bazelon runs a pro bono clinic where her students advocate for low-income women workers' rights to see patients with depression, bipolar disorder and other conditions. On Dec. 12, Kaiser, the country’s largest nonprofit healthcare maintenance organization, currently provides coverage for about 8.8 million Californians. The company makes record profit—$2.6 billion since the beginning of 2018—and their executives get huge pay raises.

“The we have long over-sexualized, over-criminalized and disproportionately punished black men,” writes Bazelon. “It should come as no surprise that, in a setting in which protections for the accused are greatly diminished, this shameful legacy persists.” Bazelon contends that cross examination is in line with a Michigan court ruling last August which found that a public university must give the requested access for students—both victims and survivors—in an opportunity to cross-examine the accuser and adverse witnesses in the presence of a neutral fact-finder.

But when is cross examination impartial? Will it go beyond “he said, she said?” Will due process promote fairness and justice? That depends on who is administering each case and what biases they bring to the proceedings. The current Trump administration’s abysmal racist record hardly inspires confidence that the rules are being implemented to counter racism.

Voice your views before Feb. 28

The proposed changes to Title IX regulations are not final. There is a public comment period from Nov. 29 to Jan. 28. The Department of Education must incorporate all comments into the final rules.

The NWLC objected to the timing of the 60-day period, which included finals, holidays and winter breaks. On Nov. 26 co-signed by 125 organizations and 231 individuals requesting a 60-day extension. The letter urged the DoI to “schedule public hearings at school districts and college campuses throughout the country to encourage additional input from students, teachers, administrators and advocates” so “those most affected are given the opportunity to engage and give the Department the benefit of a robust rule-making process.”

The Seattle Times reports the University of Washington has scheduled discussions on three campuses Jan. 14-17, Victor Balta, a UW administrator, was concerned about the timeframe. “The key here is timing of public harassment, which might create an erosion of trust and confidence” in student views of UW. (Nov. 29)

Comments should be posted on regulations.gov under the title “Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance.”

The National Women’s Law Center suggests two ways to submit comments: 1) Send a prewritten statement (tinyurl.com/y9y2v5szu). It’s urgent to submit comments before the Feb. 28 deadline.

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‘Yellow Vest’ protest against transit fare hikes

By Tony Murphy

Chanting “Together we can make history/in every warehouse, in every city,” nearly 900 workers and supporters rallied in support of East African workers here on Dec. 14. The workers have stunned the county by forcing industry giant Amazon to negotiate with their demands, a first-of-its-kind achievement.

The Dec. 14 protest took place on a Friday afternoon at the Amazon Fulfillment Center in Shakopee, nearly half an hour from downtown Minneapolis. The rally was timed so that workers walking out after their shift could directly join with jubilant supporters on the picket line.

Workers took turns expressing their grievances with the corporate giant to the eager crowd of supporters. Chants such as “Amazon, hear our voice!” and “We’re people, not robots” were conducted in English as well as Somali, Amharic and Oromo.

The struggle waged by the workers from East Africa at the Shakopee facility constitutes the first time that U.S. workers have brought Amazon management to the negotiating table, according to the Nov. 20 New York Times. The story of Khadra Kassim, who was pregnant when she was injured while performing her duties at Amazon, has been widely reported, including in the Times. While the media correctly reported Kassim was turned away by management, they had not put in place adequate Somali-language communication. She was also turned away because she was a “new hire,” as the company-provided health insurance only activates after a worker has passed a probationary period arbitrarily set by management.

Kassim pointed out at the rally that she has not been given work since September due to other work-related injuries. Amazon has not helped her with those either.

The Minneapolis protest, organized by the Awodd Center, represents a new stage in the burgeoning movement for collective bargaining rights in the U.S. The Awodd Center described the protest as “a place for the East African Community to learn, defend our rights at work, and build East African worker power.”

Fighting for health care

Health care is one of the key issues for the East African workers who have to hope someone will help them carry their children up or down stairs. Older riders or anyone whose walking is impaired continually struggle up and down the steep stairs at the city’s many elevated lines. Since the 7 train in Queens is a series of elevated lines, the location of the hearing in Queens was an opportunity for protesters to highlight the line’s daily mishaps and serious problems. The 7 train will be the one most affected by the arrival of Amazon, whose executives were actually told by MTA President Andy Byford that Queens was a “transit wonderland.”

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Fighting for health care

Health care is one of the key issues for the East African workers who have to hope someone will help them carry their children up or down stairs. Older riders or anyone whose walking is impaired continually struggle up and down the steep stairs at the city’s many elevated lines. Since the 7 train in Queens is a series of elevated lines, the location of the hearing in Queens was an opportunity for protesters to highlight the line’s daily mishaps and serious problems. The 7 train will be the one most affected by the arrival of Amazon, whose executives were actually told by MTA President Andy Byford that Queens was a “transit wonderland.”

Chants such as “Amazon, hear our voice!” and “We’re people, not robots” were conducted in English as well as Somali, Amharic and Oromo. The struggle waged by the workers from East Africa at the Shakopee facility constitutes the first time that U.S. workers have brought Amazon management to the negotiating table, according to the Nov. 20 New York Times.

The story of Khadra Kassim, who was pregnant when she was injured while performing her duties at Amazon, has been widely reported, including in the Times. While the media correctly reported Kassim was turned away by management, they had not put in place adequate Somali-language communication. She was also turned away because she was a “new hire,” as the company-provided health insurance only activates after a worker has passed a probationary period arbitrarily set by management.

Kassim pointed out at the rally that she has not been given work since September due to other work-related injuries. Amazon has not helped her with those either.

The Minneapolis protest, organized by the Awodd Center, represents a new stage in the burgeoning movement for collective bargaining rights in the U.S. The Awodd Center described the protest as “a place for the East African Community to learn, defend our rights at work, and build East African worker power.”
When cops are ‘just doing their job’

Perhaps you saw the horrifying video last week of cops brutally tearing a 1-year-old baby out of his mother’s arms in a Brooklyn food stamp office, while bystanders yelled in protest. And Jazmine Headley did her job in a Brooklyn food stamp office, while bystanders yelled in protest.

The smear tried to reduce her to “unfit mother,” just as assigned to them by the repressive state. Because the police are not paid to be friends of poor people, working-class people, people of color, LGBTQ people, women or any gender-oppressed people. They are never, ever really around to help those in need.

No, the cops are everywhere for one reason, and one reason only—to keep us in line, to keep us quiet and obedient, to threaten, to beat, to kill, to do whatever it takes to protect the property of the rich and the laws of an unjust state—and to keep those of us bound by oppression from rising up.

The cops were “just doing their job”—terrorizing Headley for demanding her rights.

The cops were “just doing their job” protecting Big Business property rights by enforcing a warrant on a struggling mother who only maybe had committed a “crime of survival” against a multimillion-dollar corporate credit card company. The ruling class has hired cops to do the job of protecting this rotten system.

And Jazmine Headley did her job in fighting for herself and her child.

Our job is to build unstoppable forward momentum against racism, sexism, capitalism—and to resist, resist, resist.
By Rémy Herrera
Paris

Dec. 15—In his brief Dec. 10 television address, French President Emmanuel Macron outlined the measures aimed at calming the popular anger of the “Yellow Vests”: 1) the pay of workers receiving the minimum wage (SMIC) would increase by “100 euros per month” starting January 2019; 2) a bonus “which will have no tax or charge” would be paid at the end of 2019 to “all employers who can”; 3) the payment of overtime would again be tax-free; and 4) the increase in the general social security tax (CSG) would be canceled in 2019 for retirees receiving less than 2,000 euros ($2,268) a month.

Despite the brevity and technicality of the remarks, it didn’t take the French very long to calculate what they were going to gain in this case: almost nothing! The president performed one of his theater scenes—for which his spouse [an acting teacher] has been training him since he was 16 years old.

However, this communication included a hypotential solo in a guilty tone, something to which Macron, usually so scornful, had not accustomed his fellow citizens. Presidential arrogance decreased in tone, but not his incredible talent for sleight of hand!

Between threats of increased repression and overlapped compassion, Macron the magician pulled out of his hat a thin bouquet of faded flowers: four measuring spoons that made the French look like beggars and served as a pretext for the dominant media to shout out for an end to the mobilization of Yellow Vests.

Concessions concede little

The reasons:

1. The 100 euro increase in the SMIC will mainly come from the automatic legal increase of 25 euros, which will buy two take-out meals at McDonald’s, with ice cream, and the rest from the payment of an activity bonus that was already planned. Clearly, this increase was budgeted for the year 2019; in reality its introduction is just moved up by a few months.

2. Very few workers will be affected by the other bonus, called “exceptional,” because its payment is left to the good will of the bosses. Only large firms will be able to pay it, certainly not small and medium-sized enterprises. As this bonus is exempt from “social security contributions,” the bosses can give it will even gain in doing so rather than increasing salaries!

3. The tax exemption for overtime pay was already planned for 2019. It restores a system set up by former President Nicolas Sarkozy. On the contrary, what should have been proposed is to shorten the work week to share work with the unemployed and part-time or precarious workers. Of course the bosses should also pay the millions of overtime hours already worked by workers, but still not paid by employers (or the government).

4. As for the so-called “helping hand” to pensioners, we are being lied to once again.

After having seen their retirement pensions reduced over the past 18 months—though Macron had sworn during his election campaign to protect them—not only will pensioners gain nothing (what was announced was the waiver of an additional tax). Above all, they will lose more purchasing power, since the increase in the value of pensions as of January 2019—plus 0.3 percent—will not even compensate for the rate of inflation—plus 2 percent—expected for 2019.

This false generosity of a “president who listens to the French” is therefore in the end nothing more than a hidden deepening of the logic of neoliberal austerity. Private sector wages are still not rising; civil servants’ salaries remain frozen; unemployment benefits continue to be cut.

Basically, who are the “great forgotten” in the presidential speech? The rich! Big business and stock shareholders are rubbing their hands: No new contributions will be asked of them. The wealth tax is not restored!

The torrents of public money offered as gifts to transnational corporations through the “tax credit for competition and employment” (CICE), without any guarantee of productive investment or job creation, are not slowed down! And the “return” of the donation of State and public services, pension systems, social protection of citizens ... are not being challenged!

Three days before the president’s announcements, the French Senate had voted to reduce the “exit-tax,” a mechanism for taxing unrealized capital gains when wealthy taxpayers transfer their home outside France in order to benefit from more advantageous taxation abroad.

And just three days after the speech on Dec. 10, the management of the Ford automotive group confirmed its decision to close its Blanquefort plant, on the outskirts of Bordeaux, and to lay off more than 850 workers—who had accepted wage cuts in recent years to, they were told, “save the company.” Everything has changed so that nothing changes.

Union demonstrations strong

What reasons would there be for the Yellow Vests and all the workers to stop fighting? On Dec. 14, a day of action, striking workers took to the streets—right at the call of the CGT (General Confederation of Labor), FO (Workers’ Force), FSU (Unitary Trade Federation) and Unions Syndicale Indépendante! This member of the Dutch SUD (Democratic Unitary Solidarity) was a member drew thousands of people in Paris and several other large cities in France to support the immediate increase of wages and pensions, and the defense of social protection. Contingents from high schools joined the mobilization.

The next day, Dec. 15, was “Act V” of the Yellow Vests’ mobilization. It took place in a particular context: that of a terrorist attack which occurred a few days earlier in the streets of Strasbourg, killing five people and imposing a moment of meditation in the country—and the postponement of a motion of censure presented by the left against the government in the National Assembly.

The Macronian regime responded to the fifth demonstration of the Yellow Vests like a circus tamer trains a beast: by beating it with a stick and a whip — after the tiny terror attack on Monday evening. The deployment of police forces was impressive: one police officer every 50 demonstrators in the country. In Paris there were even two police officers per demonstrator. Dozens of Paris metro stations were closed, and several slogans were chanted against the “system set up by former President Nicolas Sarkozy. On the contrary, what should have been proposed is to shorten the work week to share work with the unemployed and part-time or precarious workers. Of course the bosses should also pay the millions of overtime hours already worked by workers, but still not paid by employers (or the government).”

Herrera is a Marxist economist, a researcher at the Centre national de la Recherche scientifique (CNRS), who works at the Centre d’Économie de la Sorbonne, Paris. WW staff translated this article.

Europe: A powder keg?

By Filipe Diniz

This opinion article was published Dec. 13 in Avante, the newspaper of the Portuguese Communist Party. It succinctly describes the growing inequality and poverty in Europe—both East and West—since the end of the Soviet Union. It was translated by Workers World Managing Editor John Catalinotto with permission of the author.

In the European Union of 28 countries (EU28), 138 million people (23.5 percent of the population) were at risk of poverty in 2015. This risk affects both workers with jobs (12.9 percent in 2017) and the unemployed (32.7 percent).

The increasing precariousness of labor relations means that the risk of poverty for workers between 18 and 25 is 24.5 percent; while for workers between 55 and 64, it is 8.8 percent.

The risk of poverty for full-time workers is 8.1 percent; for part-time workers 15.8 percent.

In the EU, those in the highest quintile, or fifth of the population, are paid five times what those in the lowest quintile are paid.

In the EU28 in 2017, 8.4 percent of families were unable to adequately heat their homes; 30.9 percent could not afford one week of holidays per year; 8.4 percent could not afford a quality meal even every other day; 9.3 percent had arrears on housing expenses since 2003; 7.8 percent of households had great difficulty sustaining themselves; 6.6 percent had no freedom of enjoying any leisure activity.

Also, 26.5 percent of EU28 households had to make heavy payments for rentals and mortgages; 8.5 percent had no means to travel by public transport; 25.5 percent were unable to replace used clothes with new ones; 30.1 percent had no access to the Internet (with the exception of emergency services); 8 percent of families lived in unhygienic conditions, in rooms made of concrete or lime plaster; 13 percent of families lived without electricity, 19 percent without gas; 22 percent of families were unable to pay their rent or mortgage; 25.5 percent of families had no access to basic health care; 28.7 percent of families had no food—yet 45 percent of the EU28 population was unemployed, and 35 percent had no access to basic education.

It is really unnecessary to go to Eurostat [the source of all the above numbers] to see the extent of the existing economic and social divide. Exploitation, poverty and inequality exploded after the fall of the Soviet Union. Capitalism was justified by the specter of communism and the end-all. But the alternative will arise precisely from the insoluble conflict between capitalism itself and from the unstoppable struggle of the workers and the peoples.
Por Ted Kelley

Tijuana, México

Una delegación de solidaridad orga- nizada por Fight for Immigrants and Refugees Everywhere (FIRE, siglas en inglés) viajó a México del 6 al 9 de diciem- bre para reunirse con organizadoras/es de la caravana y brindar ayuda humani- taria a las/os niños que más temían ayudar. Las familias que se encuentran abandonadas en la frontera con Estados Unidos, la delegación de FIRE se unió a las/os activistas de Border Veterans, una orga- nización para veteranos/os del ejército de EUA que fueron deportados, Veterans for Peace de EUA y también con grupos de iglesias locales y miembros de la comunidad para llevar los suministros que tan necesitados son para las/os niñas y niños de Tijuana como en el cercano Barretal, el campamento de refugiados más grande para solicitantes de asilo en México.

FIRE se reunió con caravanas en Barretal poco días después de que las lla- vías terrenales atrajan el campamento, inmediatamente se vio la casa vacía entra- tiendo, las mantas y la ropa de las/os resi- dentes. Las temperaturas caen en picado durante la noche, por lo que la humedad, combinada con el intenso frío, dificulta aún más las condiciones para las/os 4.000 a 5.000 migrantes en Barretal.

Sin embargo, cuando la delegación de FIRE llegó al campamento el 6 de diciem- bre para trazar calzadas limpias, tuvieron, jalonear las redes y un terco perro, el espíritu del campamento ya habia mejo- rado. La música resonaba en una máquina portátil de las/os migrantes con niños, algunos jóvenes bailaban y jugaban fútbol, y se hacían preparativos para un pequeño festival para las/os niños. La caravana está compuesta casi exclusiva- mente por familias jóvenes, con muchas/os niñas y niños pequeños y bebés entre ellos. “Están viendo a toda una generación de personas desplazadas”, le dijo un organizador hondureño llamado Dani a la dele- gación de FIRE. “Y es una gran generación. He conocido aquí a muchas/os futuros cantantes, músicos, artesanos y activistas.”

“Quiero agradecer a aquellas/os en los Estados Unidos, a aquellos que han trabajado para que la delegación de FIRE no se vea obligada a estar en la frontera de Tijuana cuando se llama su número, su registro se anula y deben comenzar el proceso nuevamente. Si se acepta la solicitud inicial, se les permite cruzar a los Estados Unidos. Sin embargo, deben pagar una fianza de varios miles de dólares para convertirse en un brazalete en el tobillo para que puedan ser rastreados por el Servicio de Inmigración y de Control de Aduanas. Las autoridades de los Estados Unidos niegan automáticamente las solicitudes de asilo a cualquier persona que haya sido deportada previamente de los Estados Unidos, así como a las personas conde- nadas por ciertos delitos en su país de origen. Si una persona que fue deportada anteriormente intenta solicitar el estatus de asilo con sus hijos, lo más probable es que las/os niños queden bajo la custo- de para cualquier delito, incluso si los adultos son “removidos” de manera sumaria. Según la ley actual de los EUA, las/os personas cuyos reclamos se rechazan no se enviarán a la frontera con México, sino al país de origen del cual huyen.

Por lo tanto, las familias se enfrentan a un conjunto de circunstancias que no pueden superar. Pueden quedarse cerca de la frontera de Tijuana, subsistir con la ayuda de una organización benevolente, o pueden regresar a su país de origen. En los campamentos de refugiados mejor abas- tecidos y arriérranse a perder su turno para una entrevista de asilo. Aunque las/os trabajadores en México han estado recibiendo a sus vecinos/os centroameri- carienses, la mayoría de las/os migrantes están aumentando debido a las condiciones desesperadas y la falta de servicios sani- tarios y de salud en el campamento. El alcalde de Tijuana Juan Manuel Gastelum, similar a Trump, dijo que “la gente no está segura de cuándo será su próxima comida. Está claro que la policía, que está en la frontera, se ha visto inmundo al hilo de la violencia en Honduras, Julio, uno de los solicitantes de asilo en este cam- pamento, explicó que tienen hambre y hay escasez de suministros. Cuando se le pre- guntó si el gobierno local estaba brindando asistencia, dijo que las autoridades mexi- canas son simplemente otros brazos del gobierno de los Estados Unidos que coo- peran completamente con la Aduana y la Patrulla Fronteriza de los Estados Unidos. En una pequeña plaza inmediatamente fuera de la frontera había una docena de jóvenes mexicanos que acaban de cruzar, uno solamente, en una semana antes, la plaza estaba repleta de caravanas y montañas de 10 pies de altura con cadenas de suministros. La ciudad de Tijuana luego ordenó que la plaza fuera desocupada para construir allí un nuevo centro. La ciudad invirtió $300,000 para convertir la plaza en un mercado de huevos y la plaza fue desocupada. La caravana estaba en camino de Tijuana el día después de la nominación de la candidata presidencial, Héctor López y su esposa Lupita eran miembros de la comunidad que había estado comiendo comida calientes para las/os migrantes en la plaza poco antes de que la policía los despejara; más tarde, se apresuraron a escuchar todos los suminis-istros que pudieron. "Helen" dijo Lupita, "Aquí está nuestra luchadora por la libertad más joven".

Los delegados y activistas de FIRE que trabajan con veteranos deportados de EUA se solidarizaron en la frontera de Tijuana. La caravana, liderada por Blanca de los Veteranos de la Frontera, una luchadora por la libertad más joven, está a la vanguardia de los esfuerzos de defensa y solidaridad con los Estados Unidos, y el gobierno de los Estados Unidos por su resistencia al imperialismo. En el caso de la caravana, la solidarización con las/os caravanas y ha sido fundamental en los lineamientos de suministro y seguridad en BBV. Mientras él dice esto, Ulloa es salado por una joven que lleva a su hija de dos meses.

"Ah!" Dice Ulloa. "Aquí está nuestra luchadora por la libertad más joven".