

# WORKERS WORLD



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# Trial lifts lid on banks' looting of Detroit

By Kris Hamel  
Detroit

Something unexpected happened in the city of Detroit bankruptcy case in court on Dec. 18.

Judge Steven Rhodes adjourned the trial, which had been called to get approval for a settlement on "termination fees" that the city allegedly owes to Bank of America and United Bank of Switzerland. The banks claim they're owed the money because of a deal in 2006 involving "interest rate swaps." The fees would eat up money needed for retired city workers' pensions and other vital services.

Rhodes ordered the parties back to the table to come up with something better because it was clear that Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr had not established that the deal with the banks was in the best interests of the people of Detroit. Orr's undemocratic appointment by Republican Gov. Rick Snyder has rendered powerless the city government elected by the people of Detroit.

Under the deal EM Orr made with the banks, the city would have to pay Bank of America and UBS approximately \$200 million to \$230 million, or 75 percent of the termination fee for the swaps. This amount would be financed by a Barclays loan, which would then charge the city up to 8.5 percent interest.

This swap termination loan would be guaranteed by city income tax revenue. That means for the first four or five years after bankruptcy, the people of Detroit would be turning over 20 percent to 40 percent of their income taxes to pay off the banks for this deal.

The Detroit interest rate swaps were tied to pension obligation certificates the city had purchased in 2005 and 2006. Of these POCs, \$948 million was subject to a floating interest rate tied to the Libor index, which is set daily in London, and has since been exposed as fraudulent. Under the swaps, however, the city was obliged to pay the banks a fixed interest rate of 6.3 percent, while the banks were allowed to pay the floating rate. If the fixed interest rate was higher than the floating rate, the city had to pay the difference between the two amounts to the bank, and vice versa.



WW PHOTO: BRYAN G. PFIEFER

Detroit protesters outside of court Dec. 17

In 2008, after the crisis and the potential collapse of financial institutions caused by their fraudulent subprime mortgage lending practices, interest rates charged the banks by the U.S. Treasury went down to about 0 percent. In this way the federal government bailed them out with trillions of dollars of taxpayers' money.

The effect of this bailout was that the same banks which precipitated the crisis in Detroit and destroyed the city's neighborhoods with their lending practices, began in 2008 claiming a \$50 million yearly payout from the city on the interest rate swaps. These annual payments to Bank of America and UBS were a major factor in precipitating the crisis that led to Detroit's bankruptcy filing.

In addition, there were all sorts of "termina-

*Continued on page 5*



PHOTO: BILL HUGHES

**VEOLIA** Crapitalist of the year  
**BALTIMORE AND BOSTON** 3

**SAVING BLACK HISTORY**  
From Richmond stadium 6

**MASS INCARCERATION**  
And felony murder rule 7

## South Korean rail workers battle gov't



Strike by south Korean railroad workers, above, has sparked solidarity from unions all over, including in San Francisco. See page 8.

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## 'Rape insurance' law

# Michigan rolls back women's reproductive rights

By Martha Grevatt  
Detroit

Michigan has definitely been in the public eye recently. The biggest story, of course, has been the Detroit bankruptcy. But women's reproductive rights are also under attack — and by the same right-wing legislature that made it possible for Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr to take over Detroit, declare bankruptcy and take aim at city workers' pensions.

The state House of Representatives passed a bill on Dec. 11 that has become nationally infamous as the "rape insurance" law. The law says that private insurance plans available to individuals under the Affordable Care Act cannot include abortion coverage in the basic plan. To get coverage for this health care procedure, a woman — or a parent with a female dependent child — must pay extra for a special rider. In other words, women are being forced to plan ahead for an unplanned pregnancy.

The bill has drawn particular attention because there is no exception for rape. There is not even an exception for incest — also known as family rape. So a woman — who could be one of the 248,000 survivors of a reported rape each year or the hundreds of thousands who do not report the crime — must plan in advance for her worst nightmare coming true. If she does not wish to bear a child conceived through a rape, she must either set money aside for an abortion or buy special insurance.

There is also no exception for the health of the pregnant woman, unless her life is endangered.

The law makes no provisions for women who simply would choose to exercise their legal right to terminate an unwanted pregnancy. Some pro-choice activists are understandably concerned about referring to the Michigan bill as a "rape insurance" requirement. The bill would still be an infringement on women's reproductive rights if it did make exceptions for rape, incest and the health of the pregnant woman.

This was the third vote in favor of such a bill. The first two times, it was vetoed by Republican Gov. Rick Snyder when even he found it too extreme. This time, members of Michigan "Right to Life" collected enough signatures to place the law on the ballot. Rather than let the voters decide, the legislature opted to enact the bill themselves, which, as a voter-initiated bill, was now veto-proof.

The four state representatives who are women blasted the bill. Gretchen Whitmer came out as a rape survivor. Rashida Tlaib from Southwest Detroit, the first and only Arab-American in the Michigan State House, charged that "we spend more time and money oppressing women in this chamber than helping them thrive."

This law is by no means the first to restrict abortion coverage. Back in 1977, the Hyde Amendment, signed into law by President Jimmy Carter with the justification that "life isn't fair," took away abortion coverage for poor women on Medicaid. Only in 1993 was the law amended so that Medicaid could cover termination of pregnancies in cases of rape and incest.

Recent years have seen a spike in state laws that undermine reproductive rights. The record year was 2011, when 93 such laws were passed; 43 were passed in 2012. Extremists forced through bills in a number of states in 2013; over 300 were introduced. The laws include mandatory waiting periods; forced "education" on adoption options and anti-choice arguments; bans on abortions after 20 weeks and, in North Dakota, just six weeks of pregnancy; strict and hard-to-meet standards for abortion clinics; and laws similar to Michigan's restricting insurance coverage. Anti-women laws forced 90 clinics around the country to close in 2013.

This pattern is not happening in a vacuum. In Michigan and around the U.S., the same politicians who are passing laws against women are attacking voting rights, unions and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer communities. Only a mass movement that unites all these issues can stop this political steamroller from rolling over the rights of the people. □

**WORKERS WORLD**  
*this week...*

★ **In the U.S.**

Trial lifts lid on banks' looting of Detroit ..... 1  
Michigan rolls back women's reproductive rights ..... 2  
CeCe McDonald to be released ..... 2  
'Caravan for Justice' supports SuperShuttle drivers ..... 3  
Veolia's long history of union-busting activities ..... 3  
Small Supreme Court victory for unions ..... 4  
On the picket line ..... 4  
Organize for stable school busing ..... 5  
Detroit hotel workers picket for higher wages ..... 5  
Virginia struggle to defend Black history ..... 6  
Another link in the chain of mass incarceration ..... 7  
Solidarity from Seattle workers ..... 8  
Rally supports Korean railway strikers ..... 8  
A brief history of 'marriage,' part 26 ..... 11

★ **Around the world**

Popularizing legacy of South African leader ..... 6  
Anti-imperialist youth meet in Ecuador ..... 7  
German union takes on Internet giant ..... 8  
South Sudan: U.S./U.N. deepen intervention ..... 9  
CAR: Marches demand French troops out ..... 9  
British TV airs Snowden statement ..... 10

★ **Editorials**

Why not amnesty here? ..... 10  
The good news ..... 10

★ **Noticias en Español**

México: Reforma energética ..... 12  
Corea socialista ..... 12

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## **Bulletin** CeCe McDonald to be released

**CeCe McDonald**, the 24-year-old African-American transwoman who courageously defended herself and friends from a vicious, racist, anti-lesbian-gay-bi-trans-queer attack, will be released from jail in mid-January.

On June 5, 2011, McDonald, her roommate and some friends, all of them Black youth, were walking to the grocery store when a group of white adults outside a Minneapolis bar known as Schooner Tavern began to hurl racist and anti-LGBTQ slurs at them. As McDonald tried to get away with her friends, Molly Flaherty smashed a glass mug against her face and began throwing punches. The youth had no choice but to defend themselves.

Dean Schmitz, who by all accounts had been one of the



main instigators of the incident — and specifically targeted McDonald for being trans — was stabbed with scissors and died on his way to the hospital. Schmitz, who had a swastika tattooed on his chest, not only had been affiliated with white supremacists but had also been convicted multiple times for domestic violence and assault.

Despite a strong public campaign to have the charges dropped, McDonald potentially faced decades in prison for murder. On June 4, 2012, as part of a plea agreement, she was sentenced to 41 months for second-degree manslaughter.

An official statement from McDonald and her support committee will be posted before her release. For more details on McDonald's release, see facebook.com/freecece.mcdonald.

— Report by Imani Henry

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# Says no to humiliation of workers 'Caravan for Justice' supports SuperShuttle drivers

By Steven Ceci  
Baltimore

Despite a massive show of airport police, who ejected them from the SuperShuttle holding lot, 35 decorated cars made their way to the Baltimore-Washington International Airport loop on Dec. 21 to conduct a "Caravan for Justice" in support of SuperShuttle drivers.

The action was held in honor of Nelson Mandela and was called by the Baltimore and Maryland "We Deserve Better" Workers Assembly, with the support of Food and Commercial Workers Local 1994. The SuperShuttle drivers have been actively organizing with the UFCW to improve their working conditions. Two have been fired.

SuperShuttle is owned and controlled by Veolia, a multibillion-dollar international corporation that has distinguished itself as a racist, union-busting company, most recently in Boston. It pays its drivers less than the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour.

The drivers want to join UFCW Local 1994 to protect their rights as workers. They desperately need this because Veolia has created a company system of indentured servitude that has impoverished these workers, who are mainly immigrants from West Africa.

Veolia makes drivers lease vans — from a company also owned by Veolia — and pay a \$35,000 fee, payable in installments over a 10-year period at 15 percent interest. These installment payments are just one of the deductions from the pay-out to the drivers. They are also charged operating expenses: fees to the airport authority, dispatch fees, insurance fees to a company owned by Veolia and franchise fees. These fees total between \$1,200 and \$2,100 per week. Most drivers can't break even under such a system; in some cases, the drivers end up owing SuperShuttle after working long hours.

Veolia has worked out an "evil system," as one worker described it. The company claims the drivers are not workers but owners, though Veolia owns and controls almost every aspect of their working lives — forcing them to buy insurance owned by Veolia, determining a dress code, carrying out random and unannounced inspections, forced drug testing and much more, including hiring and firing.

Veolia has been able to avoid paying unemployment insurance, payroll taxes, sick leave or any other benefits. The company actually makes more money from the drivers' fees than from customer fares. Recently, however, the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation has ruled that SuperShuttle drivers are indeed employees, so SuperShuttle must pay unemployment.

This is a system of humiliation and near slavery. Once these drivers have spent long hours of backbreaking work and signed for loans to pay the original fee, they feel too deeply invested to actually leave.

To illustrate the humiliating treatment they receive, SuperShuttle drivers are the only drivers not permitted to use bathrooms inside the terminals and must leave airport property. The hotels are also closed to them. No bathroom or waiting facilities are available for drivers in the holding lots, even though they must stay in their vehicles both winter and summer to maintain their places in line. There is

no holding lot at Dulles Airport in Washington itself, but there is one at BWI. The drivers have a trailer there but no bathroom — only a portable toilet.

Many drivers have been terminated for speaking out. As outrageous as it sounds, the company refuses to allow the drivers to sell or transfer their franchises even when they are very sick. This happened to one driver who had his legs amputated due to diabetes and to another who was being treated for multiple myeloma, a form of cancer.

## Drivers threatened for speaking at rally

At a rally held before the caravan drove through the airport loop, UFCW Local 1994 representative Amy Millar co-chaired and introduced Tony Kokou Yovo, one of the fired drivers, and Patrick Lacefield, another driver. Millar explained that in all her years as a union organizer, she had never before seen this level of abuse and exploitation.

Yovo explained his case and how he was targeted unjustly by Veolia. He thanked everyone for their support. Lacefield was

overcome with emotion as he explained how he was threatened with firing if he participated in the action and how the drivers were "corporate slaves" who need worldwide support.

Daniella Longchamp, a youth and low-wage worker from the Workers Assembly, told the drivers that the group supported their struggle. She compared their abuse to human trafficking and the "worst of capitalism" and spoke about the case of the Boston school bus drivers, who are also fighting the Veolia corporation.

Other speakers included UFCW Local 1994 Secretary Treasurer Yvette Cuffie; Josh Ardison, UFCW organizer; Maryland State Delegate Jeff Waldstreichler; former City Councilwoman Belinda Conaway; legislative candidate Andrew Platt; and the drivers' attorney, John Singleton.

Sharon Black, a representative of the



WW PHOTO: SHARON BLACK

Supporters say Veolia treats drivers like 'corporate slaves.'

Workers Assembly and co-chair of the rally, stated, "There is a new low-wage workers movement, from Walmart to McDonald's. The SuperShuttle workers are part of this. They need and deserve our support."

"Today's rally and caravan far exceeded our expectations. We thought about 10 cars would show up, given the fact that today's action is the weekend before Christmas and that we had about a week to organize the caravan. But we thought the issue was so crucial and the need to act as quickly as possible on behalf of the fired drivers called for an immediate response. And today we have an astounding 35 vehicles and about 70 participants." □

## Veolia's long history of racist, anti-worker, union-busting activities

By Gerry Scoppettuolo  
Boston

It seems obvious now. When Thomas Hock, the vice president for labor relations of Veolia Transportation, signed a contract with the Boston Public Schools that brought the company to Boston last June to run the city's school buses, this racist, union-busting company had one purpose and one purpose only: to destroy the region's predominantly Black school bus drivers' union. Local 8751 of the United Steelworkers is the most militant, progressive union in Boston.

Veolia's lockout of the school bus drivers during a protected labor meeting on Oct. 8 and the subsequent firing of four of 8751's top leadership in early November totally exposed its racist, anti-union agenda. But, it turns out, this is just the tip of the iceberg, given the company's long history of anti-labor activity.

So egregious is the anti-worker history of Professional Transit Management — now wholly owned by Veolia — that since 2005 the National Labor Relations Board received 47 complaints against PTM. Moreover, Hock has been involved in negotiations that resulted in seven strikes since 2001.

So wide-ranging is Veolia's anti-labor record that the Service Employees union and the Amalgamated Transit Union have each published well-documented research on Veolia that captures in great detail the company's virulent hostility to people who drive buses and their unions.

Several times PTM has been ordered by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to correct its unlawful, racist behavior. For example, in 2007 PTM was ordered to pay \$450,000 to six transit workers in Colorado Springs, Colo., for racial discrimination. Nancy A. Weeks, supervisory trial attorney in the EEOC's

Denver field office, which brought the suit, noted: "The egregiousness of the threats and racial and national origin harassment in this case is stunning. We are pleased that the minority employees at Springs Transit have been compensated in some way for the terrible treatment they endured."

In another case currently before a U.S. District Court of Appeals, Marilyn Shazor, an African-American woman, was employed by Hock and Veolia as chief executive officer of Cincinnati Metro, the bus system of the Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority. She says she was unlawfully terminated in August 2010, replaced with a white male, and intentionally defamed by PTM and Hock, when they publicized untrue statements about the reason for her termination.

In a discrimination case currently in mediation, the Disability Rights Legal Center filed a lawsuit against Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority and its contractor, Veolia Transportation Services Inc., alleging disability discrimination against people who use wheelchairs on fixed-route buses. The lawsuit alleges that the MTA and Veolia consistently failed to comply with long-standing regulations that require bus drivers to ask nondisabled people to move from designated wheelchair locations to allow people requiring such accessibility features to use them.

## A pattern of attempted union busting

Hock/Veolia's union-busting strategy reveals a pattern of bad faith bargaining or refusal to bargain, spying on employees, making coercive statements, and illegally firing or punishing employees for engaging in union activities. Here are a few recent examples.

**San Francisco:** At the same time they were competing for the Boston

school bus contract earlier in 2013, Hock and Veolia received \$399,000 for a few months' work negotiating for Bay Area Rapid Transit against its workers, represented by SEIU 1021 and ATU Local 1555. These negotiations provoked a strike on July 1. After that, Veolia earned thousands of dollars by contracting with BART to shuttle passengers during the strike. This action brought a complaint that Hock/Veolia violated the district government's conflict of interest policy — "using their position to influence government decisions in which they have a reason to know they have a financial interest." (keepbartrunning.com, Nov. 20)

**Phoenix:** In hearings before the National Labor Relations Board in 2012, Veolia was found to have engaged in "regressive, bad-faith, and surface bargaining," among many unfair labor practices, which forced a strike by Phoenix bus drivers represented by ATU Local 1433. Veolia subsequently agreed to a settlement promising to cease all illegal activities, but continued its illegal conduct. Only after Veolia was threatened with a federally mandated default settlement did the company back down and agree to a deal with its employees, ending the strike.

**Las Vegas:** Bus drivers accused Veolia of retaliation and firings of union employees and of refusing to furnish its existing union, ATU Local 1637, with information needed to conduct negotiations. Again, federal authorities intervened. The NLRB ordered Veolia "to cease and desist from refusing to bargain collectively" and to stop "interfering with, restraining or coercing its employees in the exercise of their right to self-organization." (East Bay Express, July 10, 2013)

**Pensacola Fla.:** In October 2011 after

Continued on page 5



# Organize for stable school busing

By Sara Catalinotto  
New York

Relatives and supporters of New York City school bus riders ended 2013 expressing their determination to gain improvements for children and workers, despite the destructive chain of events set in motion by the billionaire class.

A year ago, a four-week school bus drivers' strike was provoked when billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg and his Department of Education appointees put out bids without Employee Protection Provisions on 1,100 school bus routes.

Since school busing is contracted out to private companies that go into and out of business, the basis of stability is to have drivers and attendants with years of experience follow the contracts from one company to another. EPPs enforce seniority hiring, along with benefits that make it worthwhile for workers to stick with busing despite such stresses as long days, hostile bosses, clueless routers and city traffic.

The warning from 8,800 strikers was: "You get what you pay for." Parents and the union charge that while most of the 2,200 school bus workers laid off in June remain unemployed — they run out of benefits at the end of December — low-wage companies are not properly training or retaining new hires.

## Effects of Atlantic Express bankruptcy

On Dec. 5, corporate busing giant Atlantic Express entered the last stage of

bankruptcy. AE could not compete profitably in bidding with non-union companies that pay half as much.

AE had unilaterally imposed a 7.5 percent wage cut starting in March 2013, but that was later ruled illegal by federal courts. Then AE tried to bully New York City workers into a new contract which would ratify the cutback and others, and also let the company forget about paying back tens of millions of dollars it had withheld for work already performed.

According to a letter AE gave to workers, approval of that contract was a condition cited by Wells Fargo bank for extending credit to help the company survive till June. On Dec. 4, the "no" vote at the bus yards was overwhelming. As the winter break began, AE abandoned some 1,500 New York City school bus routes — and many more across five states.

Parents to Improve School Transportation (PIST) went into action, alarmed at the prospect of 2,000 layoffs that would affect at least 35,000 general and special education students on Jan. 2. This is on top of the recurring chaos caused each September by unrealistic bus routes.

School bus parents from various neighborhoods and organizations signed a letter to the newly elected city administration, called a press conference and projected a larger public meeting for Feb. 8.

The letter to incoming Mayor Bill de Blasio (available as a link at schoolbook.org) demands that the city respect the civil rights of school bus riders with

disabilities, resolve the Atlantic Express crisis, investigate conditions at non-EPP companies, and restore EPP in all route contracts that have not yet taken effect.

On Dec. 17, dozens braved freezing rain to hear these demands explained. Speakers included attorney Norman Siegel, who recently issued a report on NYC violations of busing rights; school bus parent Carin van der Donk, who has a child on an AE bus; incoming Public Advocate Letitia (Tish) James; and Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1181-1061 President Michael Cordiello. Milagros Cancel, of Bronx PIST, and Comité Timón spoke in Spanish; and Gloria Brandman, of the Movement of Rank & File Educators, spoke as a 35-year special education teacher. City Council members Mark Weprin and Melissa Mark-Viverito also spoke. This writer, a PIST founder, chaired and led chants of "Bus drivers need jobs, kids need short routes" and "Safety for children, justice for workers."

Through the combined efforts of parents and ATU 1181, school bus concerns were covered in the English — and Spanish-language media before and after the Dec. 17 gathering. That same night, the Department of Education issued its weekly email to school principals, which included a letter to parents about the chance of a bus shortage on Jan. 2. It promised subway Metrocards — which are useless for those who need



PHOTO: FIST NYC FACEBOOK

School bus parents and unionists rally outside Education Department on Dec. 17.

school busing the most.

As of this writing, school bus parents and workers consulting DOE's website say that many — but not all — AE routes have been transferred to unionized companies with EPP. Some were rearranged so inefficiently — routes in one borough assigned to bus yards in a distant borough, etc. — that student lateness and employee attrition are sure to increase. The impact on field trips is unknown.

Bloomberg's DOE promoted union busting and austerity at the expense of school bus riders. New Yorkers hope things can change with his departure, but Wall Street is still a factor. A united front of the education, labor and disabled movements, powered by those most affected, can accomplish much — not by merely hoping, but by continuing to organize. Contact [pistnyc@gmail.com](mailto:pistnyc@gmail.com) or 347-504-3310. □

## Trial lifts lid on banks' looting of Detroit

Continued from page 1

tion events" built into the swaps that allowed the banks to terminate the deal while the city would still be liable for the interest projected over the 25-year term of the swaps. Among the termination events were downgrading the city's bond rating, which occurred in 2009 and made borrowing more costly, and naming the emergency manager.

Similar interest rate swaps foisted on public entities became losing deals for many cities throughout the United States. A report published by the Service Employees union in February 2010 noted that \$1.25 billion in swap payments for that year were draining the treasuries of city and state governments across the U.S. (This report can be found at [detroit-debt-moratorium.org](http://detroit-debt-moratorium.org).)

## Finance capital versus the people

The Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions & Utility Shutoffs has consistently exposed how these usurious swaps — a form of predatory lending to the city treasury — were perpetrated by the same banks that destroyed Detroit's neighborhoods and drove more than 200,000 people out of the city through their racist, subprime lending practices and subsequent foreclosures. The coalition won a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit filed in February 2013 and obtained copies of the city's bond documents that verify this perspective.

At the court hearing on Dec. 17, municipal retiree and Moratorium NOW! activist David Sole, whose pension is now threatened, was represented by people's attorney Jerry Goldberg. Goldberg

grilled Kenneth Buckfire, the Emergency Manager's banker, on these issues. Goldberg's questioning and Buckfire's responses exposed how Orr and Buckfire never for one moment considered the banks' deliberate role and possible criminal actions in the destruction of Detroit.

In the face of this testimony, even Judge Rhodes, the same judge who approved the attack on city retirees' pensions in the bankruptcy process, could not immediately rubber stamp the deal. (A link to Goldberg's questioning of Buckfire can be found at [preview.tinyurl.com/ltabpc8](http://preview.tinyurl.com/ltabpc8).)

At the hearing on Dec. 18, Rhodes ordered the banks and the city of Detroit to enter mediation. On Dec. 24, the banks and the city announced a new deal that reduced the swap termination fee by \$35 million. But those objecting to the swap fee are continuing to fight this new deal. A continuation of the trial is scheduled for Jan. 3. Leaders of Moratorium NOW! say there will be a demonstration and pack-the-courtroom action beginning at 8:30 a.m. that day.

An article in the New York Times business section on Dec. 24 heralded this renegotiation as cracking the bankruptcy code's special "safe harbor" for interest rate swaps. The article was accompanied by a picture of a Moratorium NOW! demonstration outside the courthouse, implicitly crediting the demonstrations for forcing the banks back to the table.

Organizers say it is the mobilization of the people, not the machinations in the courtroom, that will stop the robbery of the working class and the destruction of cities and neighborhoods by finance capital. All out Jan. 3 in Detroit to continue to press the struggle forward! □

## Detroit hotel workers picket for higher wages



"The poverty-level wages paid to workers at the Fort Shelby Doubletree Hotel are unacceptable," charged UNITE HERE Local 24, which held a spirited picket on Dec. 20. The local has been picketing the nonunion downtown Detroit hotel on a regular basis. Several similar hotels have been targeted for their unwillingness to meet with the union and for their inferior wages and benefits. Union housekeepers typically earn two to four dollars an hour more than what these high-end hotels pay their workers.

— Report and photo by Martha Grevatt

## Veolia's long history of racist, anti-worker, union-busting activities

Continued from page 3

refusing to bargain in good faith, Veolia hired 200 scab workers to try to replace union bus drivers who struck for one day. ATU Local 1395 filed numerous charges against Veolia with the NLRB, and the community organized a coalition that included the NAACP, Rainbow Coalition, Occupy Pensacola, churches, riders and disabled groups that forced the county to

terminate its contract with Veolia.

Pensacola is not the only city to dump Veolia after community pressure. City governments have terminated contracts with Veolia in Grand Rapids, Mich.; Indianapolis, Ind.; Rockland, Mass.; San Diego, Calif.; St. Louis; and Paris, its hometown, as well as several other cities in France. (Labor Notes, December 2012) □

## Virginia struggle to defend Black history

# 'No stadium in Shockoe Bottom!'

Special to Workers World  
Richmond, Va.

Charleston, S.C.; New Orleans; England's Liverpool; Senegal's Goree Island — all these places played major roles in the U.S. slave trade and all have museums that tell those stories.

But here in Richmond, Va., once the capital of the slavery-defending Confederacy and for decades the center of this country's internal slave trade, a small group of "developers" and a compliant mayor are proposing to use the city's former slave-trading district as the site for a new commercial baseball stadium.

The result has been Richmond's biggest community battle in decades.

In the 30 years before the Civil War, up to 350,000 people of African descent were sold from Virginia to plantations in the deep South. Their unpaid labor enabled the United States to supply three-quarters of the world's cotton — the raw material for textile production, capitalism's first major industry. The profits made were as enormous as the suffering they rested on.

With its strategic location on the James River and its increasing importance as a railroad center, Richmond became the primary market for this buying and selling of human beings. The trade was concentrated in Shockoe Bottom, home to 40 to 50 auction houses, a half-dozen slave jails and scores of service businesses.

Because of the massive nature of this enterprise, the majority of Black people in North America could likely trace some ancestry to Shockoe Bottom. This truly is ground worth preserving.



Community protests plans to build baseball stadium at site of former slave jail.

PHOTO: THE VIRGINIA DEFENDER

But this is where Mayor Dwight C. Jones is proposing to build a baseball stadium for the Flying Squirrels, the AA farm team of the San Francisco Giants.

Tearing down the present stadium would open up prime real estate to commercial development. And building a new stadium in Shockoe Bottom would increase the value of residential and commercial property there, much of it owned by a developer who a decade ago went to prison for bribing a member of the City Council.

The mayor promises the \$200 million development proposal would bring in up to \$187.6 million in new tax revenue over the next 20 years. But first the city would have to commit \$80 million for the new stadium and infrastructure improvements, a serious public debt for this majority-Black city with a 26 percent poverty rate.

The proposal's finances have drawn widespread criticism, but it's the potential government-sponsored desecration of a sacred site that has really motivated opposition.

"At its heart, this is a struggle by the oppressed for the right to self-determination," said Ana Edwards, chair of the Sacred Ground Historical Restoration Project, which is playing a leading role in this struggle. "It's about process, the right to know, interpret and tell our stories of injustice and liberation, from before slavery times right up to today."

The past year has seen street protests, vigils and public meetings. Council district hearings on the issue have become battlegrounds for community opponents and business supporters.

More than 2,100 people have signed a

petition opposing a stadium in Shockoe Bottom. Three dozen Virginia scholars have signed an anti-stadium statement. The Richmond branch of the NAACP and other Black community groups have come out against the plan; not one Black organization has expressed support for it.

When Mayor Jones, a Baptist minister and head of Richmond's Democratic Party, formally unveiled the proposal on Nov. 11, nearly 100 people protested. "Virginia mayor proposes ballpark near slave cemetery, market," read the headline on a Reuters dispatch carried worldwide, including in Africa.

The plan does provide for memorialization of three slavery-related sites in the Bottom. However, to be located on a narrow strip of land wedged between a highway and the railroad tracks, they would be overshadowed by the stadium.

Community advocates are instead calling for the creation of an eight-square-block Sacred Ground Memorial District, which would include those three sites and eventually a museum exploring Richmond's role in the domestic slave trade. The district would be just large enough to prevent a stadium from being built there.

Momentum to stop the stadium is growing daily, but winning support for the memorial district — and setting up a governing body that would honestly tell the stories of what happened in Shockoe Bottom — will take even more effort.

Those outside Richmond can help by signing and promoting the online petition posted at [www.shockoebottom.blogspot.com](http://www.shockoebottom.blogspot.com). The website includes background material as well as updates on the progress of this struggle. □

## 'MANDELA: LONG WALK TO FREEDOM'

# Popularizing legacy of South African leader

By Abayomi Azikiwe  
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

The film "Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom" is based upon an autobiography of the same name released by Nelson Mandela in 1995, during his second year as president of South Africa.

In the book's introduction, Mandela reports that he started to write his life story while detained at Robben Island prison in 1974. He later smuggled out a preliminary draft of the manuscript, but it was not completed until his release and ascendancy to the leadership of the first non-racial government in South Africa, led by the African National Congress. Mandela shares that after his release from prison in 1990 he was so consumed with reorganizing the ANC into a political party that he had very little time for writing. He led negotiations for the transfer of power from the racist Nationalist Party and won the 1994 elections.

Mandela's death on Dec. 5, 2013, resulted in what was perhaps the most widely covered series of memorials and eulogies in media history. "Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom" continues this process, and will of course be subjected to various interpretations and assessments of the film's accuracy and the artistic depiction of his legacy.

Starring as Mandela is Idris Elba, an African-British actor who was born in London in 1972 of parents from Ghana and Sierra Leone. Elba won a Golden Globe award for his performance in the BBC One series "Luther," and has appeared in nu-



merous films, including "American Gangster" (2007), "Daddy's Little Girls" (2007) and "Prometheus" (2011). Elba's posture and voice in the film are very reminiscent of the South African leader's.

Naomie Melanie Harris does a fine job in portraying Winnie Nomzama Madikizela-Mandela, Mandela's second wife and comrade in the ANC. Harris is a Caribbean-British actor born in 1976 to parents from Jamaica and Trinidad, both former British colonies. She has had a distinguished acting career, portraying Selena in the post-apocalyptic film "28 Days Later" and Tia Dalma/Calypso in the second and third installments of the "Pirates of the Caribbean" series. She also co-starred

in the 23rd James Bond film, "Skyfall."

### Lacks important aspects of Mandela's life

Although the film lasts for two hours and 19 minutes, it leaves out important aspects of the rich history of Mandela's life and merges several distinct phases of the struggle against European settler-colonialism.

It takes the viewer from the birth of Mandela in 1918 in the village of Umvezo, in the Transkei region of the Eastern Cape, through his law practice and ANC work in Johannesburg during the 1940s. In the 1950s, Mandela is shown playing a leading role in the Defiance Against Unjust Laws Campaign. The breakup of his first marriage and his meeting and matrimonial union with Winnie Nomzamo Madikizela from Pondoland, also in the Eastern Cape, are portrayed.

Mandela and his comrades in the ANC are shown devising their highly politicized defense strategy for the Rivonia Treason Trial of 1964, in which they escaped the death penalty only to wind up being sentenced to life in prison.

By the mid-1970s, youth and students in the urban areas had reignited the movement, paying the ultimate price in many cases. A new generation of organizers was later sentenced to Robben Island and began to interact with the older leaders from the 1950s and 1960s. Eventually the Rivonia political prisoners were transferred to Pollsmoor prison under better conditions.

During the last years of Mandela's in-

carceration he was held at a single-family home in an upscale area in the Cape and allowed family visits. He eventually opened up discussions on the future of South Africa with apartheid governmental officials, initially raising grave concerns from his fellow political prisoners and the ANC leadership in Zambia.

By the time Mandela and other leaders from the trial were released, the ANC had reemerged as the dominant organizational force in South Africa.

A segment of the film illustrates Mandela's refusal to accept conditional release under the regimes of Pieter Willem Botha and Frederik Willem de Klerk. The arduous process, after Mandela's release, of political organizing and reversing the racist regime's derailment of the liberation struggle is covered in a very generalized fashion.

By late 1993, the date for elections is set and the ANC is elected to the new parliament and the presidency by a wide majority.

This film is the latest contribution in a series of depictions of Mandela and the liberation movement in South Africa. Future feature films will hopefully take up the role of the South African Communist Party, the organized African working class, the Indian Congress, mixed-race communities, the Frontline States, the Organization of African Unity, and support for the anti-apartheid struggle from such socialist countries as the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic and Cuba, as well as the international solidarity movement in Europe and North America in the overall anti-apartheid struggle. □

## 'Felony-murder'

# Another link in the chain of mass incarceration

By Deirdre Sinnott

In September 1990 — two weeks after the wrongful conviction of three defendants in the rape of a jogger in New York City's Central Park — another group of teens was involved in a crime that received similarly intense media focus and racist depictions. Brian Watkins, a tourist from Utah visiting New York to attend the U.S. Tennis Open, was killed in the subway during a spur-of-the-moment robbery gone horribly wrong.

Eight youths, all 18 years old, were indicted. Only one wielded the knife that killed Watkins, but all were charged with murder.

What made the murder charge possible is the felony-murder rule, which is triggered when a death occurs during the commission of a crime such as rape, robbery, kidnapping, burglary or other violent felony. The death could be that of the victim, such as Watkins, or a co-defendant, a bystander, a police officer or a person killed during a getaway. Felony-murder originated under early English Common Law and was abandoned by Great Britain in 1957. However, felony-murder laws exist in all but three states in the U.S.

Many people charged under the law are shocked to learn that even though they didn't anticipate, plan, cause the death or even have a weapon, they are still charged with second-degree murder.

"My lawyer," said Louise Pitcher, who served 25 years as a non-lethal defendant convicted of murder, "I had to keep calling him and have him explain to me, because I said I didn't kill anybody. What are you talking about?"

First-degree felony-murder charges stem from the death of a person in law enforcement.

"I've always been skeptical of the fairness of the felony-murder rule," says former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark. "It's a prosecutor's tool. It fails to demand discriminating fact finding by the jury. You're supposed to be presumed innocent, obviously, until proven guilty. In a gang scene with the charge of felony-murder you almost have a standard of guilt by association."

"It's fundamental to American law that an intentional act is punished differently than an unintentional act, and yet the felony-murder rule undermines that," says Alan Rosenthal, counsel for the Center for Community Alternatives. "The intent of one person is transferred

to the other. A person's bad intent, to commit a non-violent felony perhaps, is sufficient to create the culpability that is equivalent to an intentional act; that's a legal fiction."

In the case of the Watkins homicide, Pascual Carpenter, the subject of the recent documentary "23 Reasons Why 23 Years Is Enough," was an unarmed lookout for the robbery. He was not in the immediate vicinity of the crime and never anticipated or aided in the fatal act, yet he was found guilty of felony-murder and sentenced to 25 years to life. He is still incarcerated but is seeking clemency, a commutation of his sentence.

According to the FBI, about 16 percent of all homicides occur during felonies, though it is not known how many of those murders lead to felony-murder convictions of nonlethal defendants.

"The majority of states still cling to felony-murder because it is an important and easy prosecutorial tool, no matter how strong the criticism and unfair the outcomes that it creates," says Rosenthal.

"It's easier to convict someone of felony-murder than it is manslaughter," said Carpenter. "It's easier to convict someone of felony-murder than it is in a wrongful death suit."



PHOTO: JOE FRIENDLY

Pascual Carpenter

The film can be viewed at [23ReasonsFilm.com](http://23ReasonsFilm.com).

Sinnott is director of the documentary "23 Reasons Why 23 Years Is Enough."

## Anti-imperialist youth meet in Ecuador

By Caleb Maupin

Maupin was a member of the Workers World Party delegation to the World Festival of Youth and Students held in December in Quito, Ecuador. This is excerpted from a report he gave at a WWP public forum on Dec. 20 in New York City.

In Ecuador, years of organizing, resisting and fighting back led to the election of President Rafael Correa in 2006. Correa is identified with the protest movement. His election was a referendum on neoliberalism, and he won overwhelmingly.

After Correa was elected, the U.S. imperialists tried to overthrow him. They turned to the Ecuadorian police, who kidnapped him. But the people of Ecuador poured into the streets and fought back. They rescued their president and beat back the CIA.

President Correa leads a coalition of anti-imperialist forces. Something similar is happening in Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua and other countries in Latin

America. These governments are anti-imperialist and strive for independence from the dominion of the capitalists in the U.S., Britain, France and elsewhere. Called the "Bolivarian Process," this is greatly improving the lives of millions of working-class people.

In Ecuador, we saw free dental care. Dentists were in tents. If you wanted some dental care, you just got in line and they took care of you for free.

People with no health insurance can now go to free health care clinics run by Cuban doctors. Poor people in Ecuador who were blinded because of poverty now have their sight back, thanks to free surgery provided by the Cuban doctors.

Ecuador is trading with other countries from the oppressed world and with Russia, China, Cuba, north Korea and Iran. This trade is mutually beneficial.

While capitalism remains intact in Ecuador, something is happening. The working class is in motion, and the imperialists are being pushed back.

All these movements take inspiration and guidance from Marxist-Leninist rev-



WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

Caleb Maupin

olutionary leaders like Che Guevara and Fidel and Raul Castro.

The World Festival of Youth and Students was revived in 1997, mainly by the Cubans. Every four years since then, young communists have met for a week to discuss the struggle to bring down capitalism and fight imperialism.

We in the WWP delegation met with over 20 different communist youth organizations from around the world. The most inspiring meetings were with youth who live under socialism.

Two members of Cuba's Young Communist League worked with us throughout the week. In addition to formal meetings, we had many relaxed social dinners.

We asked what conditions were like for homeless youth in Cuba. They responded that there are no homeless youth in Cuba. The government makes sure that all citizens have adequate housing and that especially the youth, the future of the revolution, are never homeless.

The honesty of the Cubans was inspiring. We asked about the rights of women and of lesbian, gay, bi, and trans people in Cuba. They said Cuba is still struggling against patriarchy and the idea that men are the heads of families.

In recent years, there has been a campaign to bring equality to LGBT people. Ads are on display promoting LGBT rights. Anti-LGBT violence is being cracked down on and has basically been eliminated.

There are still problems. If youths

come out as LGBT and their parents are hostile to them, the Young Communist League will intervene and work with the families, counseling them to be accepting of the youths.

The Cubans had questions for us, asking about education in the United States. When we told them there are police in the schools, arresting students, they were horrified.

### Meetings with Korean and Vietnamese youth

We met with the Kim Il Sung Youth from People's Korea. The delegates from the DPRK were really the stars of the festival. They sang beautiful music, not just Korean but Cuban revolutionary songs. They seem like the happiest people on earth.

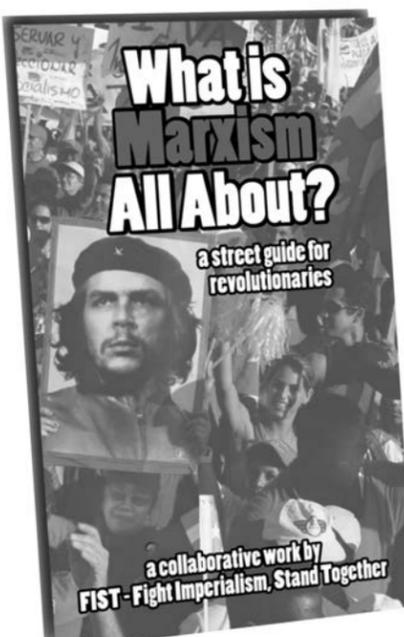
When reading statements or giving a presentation, they were very serious. But you could see the real love and affection they had for each other. They told us they hate what they called the "fascist imperialist government of the United States," but they had no hatred for ordinary working people in the United States.

We were invited to a special meeting by the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union of Vietnam. A Vietnamese comrade from the Los Angeles branch of Workers World Party translated.

The Vietnamese described how it will take more than 300 years to repair all the damage done to their country by decades of war. They said they are not yet a socialist country like Cuba or the DPRK, but are moving in that direction.

The youths said capitalism still exists in Vietnam, but the party is in charge, controlling and regulating it. They said the party is using capitalism to build up a socialist economic infrastructure, much like what Lenin did in the Soviet Union during the New Economic Policy. They provide free health care to all young children and have gotten rid of illiteracy.

We told them WWP demands that the U.S. government pay reparations to the people of Vietnam for its many crimes. □



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# amazon

## German union takes on Internet giant

By G. Dunkel

Starting last March and again during the December holiday rush, the German service workers' union Ver.di, which is organizing the workers at Amazon's German operation, has conducted a series of short strikes in the company's warehouses demanding higher pay and union recognition.

Ver.di is the second largest German union, with 2.3 million workers.

As Amazon's crunch time during the holiday season grew near, the strikes intensified and workers stayed out longer, up to four days in some locations.

Amazon has 9,000 permanent employees in Germany — its largest market after the U.S. — and hired 14,000 more for the holidays. Amazon reported nearly \$9 billion in sales in Germany in 2012, 14 percent of its total sales.

There's a lot of anger among the workers. In a packed hall in Bad Hersfeld, about 90 miles northeast of Frankfurt, a Ver.di representative for Amazon workers asked: "Do we want to strike tomorrow?"

The crowd roared back: "Yes, we do!" (Financial Times, Dec. 18)

In a Dec. 24 press release, Ver.di reported that Amazon had laid off a large

number of seasonal employees on Dec. 23, even though their employment contract ran until Dec. 31.

Under German law, every workplace has to have a works council, which bargains with the company over working conditions — overtime, breaks, rest areas and the like. In addition, the workers' unions bargain over wages and benefits.

Amazon management times its workers to the second to squeeze every last second out of the workers' labor. Any effective union would resist this relentless

speedup. Thus Amazon is doing everything it can to prevent unionization.

Amazon's contempt for its workers can be seen in a statement made by one of its spokespeople to the Financial Times to justify its substandard wages: "Our people stow, pick and pack. It is not like Harrod's where you have customers in front of you and need a special level of education to do that. Many [workers] had no proper education. Some have not even properly finished school."

Amazon's public statements try to

minimize the effect of the strikes, claiming that it can move nonstriking workers in where it is short of labor and that other sites can fill in. But management has announced it will open two warehouses in the Czech Republic and three in Poland as soon as possible — all five designed to serve the German market but not fall under German labor law.

U.S. labor unions and the Seattle Central Labor Council — Amazon's headquarters is in Seattle — have worked with Ver.di to expose how Amazon treats its workers. "Amazon is a very aggressive U.S. corporation that has a very aggressive union avoidance policy," David Freiboth, executive secretary of the Seattle Central Labor Council, told the Financial Times.

"We've been pretty frustrated dealing with Amazon," he says, comparing the online retailer's anti-union stance to that of Walmart. "They've been very successful in ensuring we don't have anything to do with their organization."

Ver.di has announced that the strikes will continue in 2014.

An Amazon worker striking in Bad Hersfeld told the Financial Times: "I will continue to strike until Amazon gives in to our demands. Until they're prepared to do this, it could take another five years." □

## solidarity from Seattle workers

On Dec. 16, when more than 1,000 workers at Amazon.com in Germany walked off the job to protest getting lower wages than other workers in comparable jobs, union activists rallied in solidarity outside the online retailer's headquarters in Seattle. "What Amazon is doing is taking this American race-to-the-bottom roadshow to Germany and trying it out on our German brothers and sisters," Da-

vid Freiboth, executive secretary of the King County Labor Council, told AP on Dec. 16. Nancy Becker, a German worker in the Ver.di union supporting the workers, flew to Seattle "to support our American brothers and sisters ... and to show the German workers that they're not alone in their strike." International union solidarity forever!

—Sue Davis

### ▼ SAN FRANCISCO

## Rally supports Korean railway strikers

By Terri Kay  
San Francisco

In a quick response to calls for international support from Korean railway workers, several dozen labor activists rallied here on Dec. 27.

South Korean President Park Geun-hye had fired over 8,000 striking railway workers and arrested many of their leaders. Some 500 strikebreakers were hired by KORAIL head Choi Yeon-hye in what amounts to an all-out offensive against south Korean workers.

The San Francisco rally, organized by the Transport Workers Solidarity Committee, was timed to support a general strike called by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions in solidarity with the Korean Railway Workers Union and the federation of public service and transport workers' unions (KPTU) to which it belongs. KPTU has been opposing the privatization of the national railway.



Unions call for release of jailed workers in south Korea.

WW PHOTO: TERRI KAY

Demands on the south Korean government, presented in solidarity with the Korean workers at today's rally, were:

- ▶ Immediate release of all jailed trade unionists in Korea
- ▶ Immediate lifting of the suspension of all 8,000 KORAIL workers
- ▶ Halt plans to privatize the KORAIL system
- ▶ Resignation of the Park Geun-Hye government
- ▶ Solidarity with the struggle against the building of a military base on Jeju Island, establishing a U.S. military outpost to threaten China and north Korea
- ▶ Solidarity with the Korean working class fighting to defend their decent living and safe working conditions for them and the public
- ▶ Smash the national security laws used to suppress democratic rights, free speech and the right to form a working-class party that represents the workers' political interests

The south Korean government has also repressed teachers and other public workers for organizing unions by passing laws that make striking workers personally liable in lawsuits. This has resulted in bankruptcy for many workers and even some suicides.

Workers World spoke with Ike Shin, a Korean activist who immigrated to the U.S. from Seoul in the 1960s. He discussed how he had been involved with the democratization movement for Korea since 1970, when the Yushin Law, "which ushered in 'emergency' repression to limit human rights," was first enacted.

Shin spoke of the plans to build a U.S. base on Jeju Island: "Jeju is a beautiful island, with coastal coral, and shouldn't be destroyed. As a surfer, I have dreamed of being there. The U.S. government is putting its own people in positions of power in south Korea. Even [south Korean] Embassy representatives say, 'Why complain to us? Go to the U.S. government.'"

Judy Greenspan delivered a solidarity statement from Workers World Party. "The anti-labor, repressive policies carried out against the railway workers of south Korea are dictated by the U.S. ruling class," she said. "It is our responsibility to end U.S. support for the south Korean regime and military threats against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Bring the troops home now!"

Speakers at the rally also included Jack Heyman and Steve Zeltzer of the solidarity committee, George Figueroa of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1555 and Alice Loaiza of Marcha Patriótica. Endorsers of the rally included United Public Workers for Action, Workers World Party, Marcha Patriótica, Workers International Network, Answer Bay Area, the International Socialist Organization, the Communist Workers Group, Doro-Chiba, Doro-Mito and Facts for Working People. □

The Korean Railway Workers' Union rallies in Seoul on Dec. 19.



## Yet another oil war?

# South Sudan: U.S./U.N. deepen intervention

By Abayomi Azikiwe  
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

U.S. imperialism, which exacerbated the conflict that split the African nation of Sudan in two with the objective of controlling the energy resources of that vast area, is now increasing its direct military intervention as instability grows.

A split within the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) has grown into an armed conflict in the world's most recently recognized nation, South Sudan. Since Dec. 15, fighting has erupted in South Sudan's capital of Juba and in the states of Jonglei, Warrap, Central Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria and Unity between forces loyal to President Salva Kiir and ousted Vice President Riek Machar.

U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has said that "peacekeeping" forces would be doubled inside the vast country to nearly 14,000, even as a delegation of representatives from several East African states seeking to mediate the conflict reportedly reached an agreement with the two contending forces to hold peace talks.

In a much anticipated announcement, President Kiir announced a unilateral ceasefire and an agreement reached on Dec. 27 to end the fighting that has killed over 1,000 people and dislocated tens of thousands of others. Conflicting reports over who is controlling the oil-producing areas of Unity state have caused great concern on the part of the U.S. and other Western imperialist governments.

### Conflict follows breakup of Sudan

The Republic of South Sudan came into being in July 2011 after Africa's largest geographic nation-state, the Republic of Sudan, was broken up under the aegis of the U.S. government, which backed Juba in its two-decade armed and political struggle against Khartoum in the North. Since the breakup of the country, there have been ongoing conflicts between the governments in the two capitals over border demarcations, allegations of support for rebel groups within the respective states, and over the exploitation, export and distribution of oil, the main foreign exchange generator for both countries.

Within South Sudan itself, problems have escalated since 2011 between various ethnic groups over allocations of governmental portfolios as well as allegations of widespread corruption and abuse of power. President Kiir accused the former vice president, who was sacked in July 2013, of attempting a coup against his government and proceeded to arrest some of the leading politicians in the country.

Machar has said he will contest the upcoming 2015 national presidential elections. He is demanding that all the politicians arrested in the recent crackdown be released prior to beginning serious peace talks.

The power struggle within the ruling SPLM/A has spilled over into the military. Gen. Peter Yaak, based in Jonglei state, has pledged his allegiance to Machar, as did others who seized control of the lucrative oil fields in Unity state. But during the week of Dec. 24, there were conflicting reports over whose forces held control of the oil fields, the rebels or those still loyal to President Kiir. Meanwhile, civilians have fled in the tens of thousands, seeking refuge from the intense fighting between the two factions within the military.

### U.S. deploys additional troops

The administration of President Barack Obama has already sent dozens of Pentagon troops into South Sudan, allegedly to evacuate U.S. citizens and assist U.N. peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. An additional 150 U.S. troops have reportedly been sent to Djibouti, where the U.S. maintains a military base. They await deployment to South Sudan.

A meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, on Dec. 27 among representatives of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development told the opposition forces loyal to Machar that they would not tolerate the overthrow of the South Sudan Kiir-led regime. IGAD, as an affiliate organization of the continental African Union, an organization composed of 53 states, is mandated to suspend and isolate any government that seizes power by force.

Representatives at the Nairobi meeting on Dec. 27 included heads of state from Uganda, Ethiopia, Somalia and Djibouti, in addition to the host, Kenya.

During the IGAD meeting, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta said: "Let it be

known that we in IGAD will not accept the unconstitutional overthrow of a duly and democratically elected government in South Sudan. Violence has never provided optimum solutions — violence begets more violence." (BBC World Service, Dec. 27) The Kenyan leader also said that the factional fighting must cease immediately.

### Oil interests prompt U.S. intervention

For more than a decade prior to the partition of Sudan, U.S. oil companies were largely excluded from the production and distribution of oil in this African state, and the U.S. government was hostile to Khartoum. The bulk of the oil concessions in the Republic of Sudan was held by the People's Republic of China and other countries in the Middle East and Asia.

Sudan at that time was producing approximately 500,000 barrels of oil per day. But since the partition and the resulting disruptions in production due to disagreements and conflicts between Juba and Khartoum, oil production has dropped drastically in both states.

## Central African Republic Marches demand French troops out

By Abayomi Azikiwe  
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

The French government has admitted that 1,600 of its troops are now deployed in the Central African Republic, a former French colony. The CAR has faced internal fighting between the governing Muslim-dominated Seleka coalition and the opposition "anti-balaka" forces, which are heavily Christian.

The U.N. Security Council authorized French intervention earlier in 2013, but the government of Francois Hollande has now requested additional troops to assist its military contingent and soldiers from Chad, acting in the name of the African Union Mission to CAR (MISCA).

Hollande says the French military will be in the CAR for only six months. France made similar claims regarding its invasion of Mali one year ago, where thousands of French troops still remain.

Interim CAR President Michel Djotodia remains in his palace in Bangui after seizing power in March 2013. Djotodia overthrew the government of Francois Bozize, who had come to power through a coup 10 years earlier. Fighting continued during the last week of 2013.

Chadian troops have been accused of supporting the Seleka coalition, while French imperialism is said to be more sympathetic to the Christians, who make up 85 percent of the population. Both governments have denied political favoritism in the conflict.

### Thousands demonstrate against occupation

Despite public statements by the Hollande government claiming impartiality, the Muslim population of the CAR is increasingly dissatisfied with France. A Dec. 24 demonstration in the capital demanded that Paris withdraw its troops

from the country. A Dec. 26 Associated Press report stated that "Dozens of Muslims marched down the streets of Bangui on [Dec. 24] to demand the departure of French troops, who were deployed to the Central African Republic this month to try to pacify fighting but instead have been accused of taking sides in the nation's sectarian conflict. The marchers, almost all of them young and male, began their demonstration in the Kilometer 5 neighborhood, a mostly Muslim section of the capital that has been the scene of clashes with French forces."

A much larger demonstration on Dec. 22 enjoyed the participation of thousands of Muslims. They accuse France of attempting to disarm the Seleka coalition. There have been reports of mass killings of Muslims by anti-balaka militias seeking to remove President Djotodia.

This same AP article points out how the demonstration was explicitly anti-French, noting that "the crowds making their way down the deserted city streets were holding signs that said: 'We say No to France!' and 'Hollande = Liar.' Other signs had a hand-drawn map of this nation located at the heart of Africa, but showed the country split in two, with a Muslim homeland penciled in in the north."

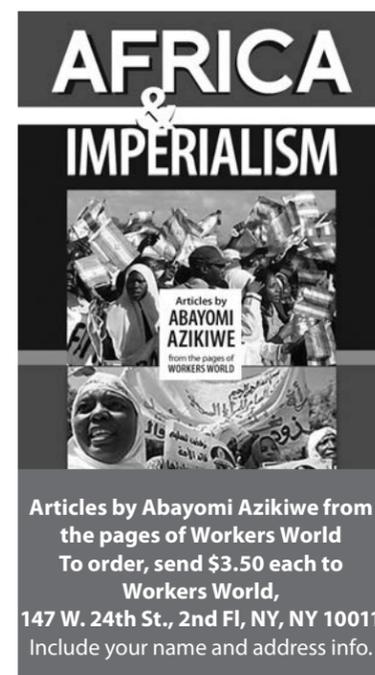
Such sentiments could broaden opposition to the French occupation and prompt the Hollande government to request additional foreign intervention. But recent surveys in France indicate that public support — which was never very strong — is declining for the military operation in the CAR. (Prensa Latina, Dec. 15)

Hollande's call for a broader U.N. force coincided with an open letter published in the Dec. 27 Washington Post jointly signed by Dieudonne Nzapalainga, archbishop of the Catholic Church in Bangui, and Omar Kabine Layama, president of

In the North, a precipitous decline in oil export revenues has forced the government to impose austerity measures, including the elimination of fuel subsidies, prompting inflation. The sharp rise in prices for oil and other basic commodities has sparked protests and rebellions that have been utilized by opposition forces seeking the overthrow of President Omar Hassan al-Bashir's National Congress Party government.

Since the breakup of Sudan, U.S. imperialism has been eager to re-enter the oil production process in South Sudan. Japanese imperialism has also expressed interest in building a pipeline to allow South Sudanese oil to flow through neighboring Kenya, in an effort to bypass the Khartoum government.

The Platts energy website reported in July that South Sudan was looking for additional "support" from the U.S. energy sector. Susan Page, U.S. ambassador to South Sudan, said Washington had a growing interest in South Sudan's oil. This is a recipe for more suffering and conflict in the region. □



the Central African Republic Islamic Community. This letter was tantamount to a public appeal for more U.S. and French involvement in the country.

Meanwhile, sentiments are also running very high against the presence of Chadian troops, who have fought alongside France in its Malian campaign since early 2013. Several Chadian soldiers have been killed in the CAR, along with at least two French soldiers.

During a demonstration near the airport outside Bangui on Dec. 23, Chadian troops opened fire on protesters, killing at least one person and wounding several others. The demonstration, held by members of the CAR Christian community, called for the resignation of Djotodia and the withdrawal of Chadian troops from the country. It appears that the French intervention, backed up by the U.S., may have the opposite impact from what was intended.

The CAR has a relatively small population of less than 5 million people but contains substantial mineral wealth of interest to the imperialist states. The mining of gold, diamonds, uranium and other mineral deposits make up only 7 percent of the country's gross domestic product. Western capitalists are very interested in exploiting these resources on a broader level but need firm control over the political and security situation to do so. □

## Why not amnesty here?

In December, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed an amnesty for some 20,000 prisoners — including the Greenpeace protesters, the Pussy Riot punk band, who are considered dissidents, and his billionaire political opponent Mikhail Khodorkovsky. Putin's political enemies quickly denounced this amnesty as a cynical political maneuver, a comment repeated widely in the imperialist media.

Khodorkovsky is a favorite of the U.S. ruling class because he's a newly super-rich robber baron. No one, to our knowledge, refused the amnesty, regardless of what they called it.

We have a suggestion for President Barack Obama: Outdo Putin.

Obama has barely used his power of pardon. Even George W. Bush outparaded him. A blanket amnesty could quickly reverse this.

U.S. imperialism is the world's No. 1 jailer, with more than 2 million prisoners. With 5 percent of the world's population, the U.S. locks up 25 percent of the world's prison population. More than 3,000 prisoners still face execution.

Not only are 70 percent of prisoners people of color, but 90 percent are from families that cannot afford the high cost of legal representation. Many have been in prison 30 years or more. Many others got 15-year-minimum sentences for "crimes" like selling marijuana.

Some prisoners are known far and wide for the political nature of their incarceration and are the center of campaigns for their release. These international heroes and heroines should top the pardon list:

**Mumia Abu-Jamal**, in prison 32 years, 30 on death row.

**Leonard Peltier**, 36 years.

**Oscar López Rivera**, 33 years.

**Lynne Stewart**, a people's attorney diagnosed with terminal breast cancer.

Four of the **Cuban 5**, still in prison after 15 years.

Maybe not as well known but equally facing unjust and/or frame-up sentences are:

The surviving eight of the **Move 9 prisoners** — **Charles, Debbie, Delbert, Edward, Janet, Janine, Michael and William, all with the surname Africa** — 34 years.

**Sundiata Acoli**, 40 years.

**Ruchell Magee**, 44 years.

**Imam Jamil** (formerly H. Rap Brown), 10 years.

**Albert Woodfox**, the last of the Angola 3, 30 years. Robert King was finally released after 29 years in solitary confinement and Herman Wallace died three days after he was released last October from the infamous Louisiana prison plantation after more than 41 years in solitary.

And there's **Assata Shakur**, who has spent 40 years in prison or exile and has a \$2 million bounty on her head. She escaped U.S. racist injustice for asylum in Cuba.

At the website of the Jericho Movement, you can see a list of more political prisoners, who belonged to organizations like the Black Panther Party, La Raza Unida, FALN, Los Macheteros, the North American Anti-Imperialist Movement, May 19th, AIM, the Black Liberation Army, etc. They are in prison because of their political beliefs and acts in support of and/or in defense of freedom for their people from imperialist rule.

There are the mostly Muslim prisoners framed up in the post-9/11 frenzy. There are the prisoners still held at Guantánamo. And there are undoubtedly others who missed making any lists.

A revolutionary workers' movement in the U.S. should want to "tear down the walls" of the penitentiaries. In the meantime, we challenge Obama to pardon even a small part of the prison population, the hundreds who are heroes for their people and the hundreds of thousands who are only behind bars because of racist injustice and class exploitation. □

## The good news

The bad news is that capitalism is forcing more suffering on the workers and oppressed. Some 1.3 million jobless workers who have been living off extended unemployment benefits — extended because even the government had to admit that the jobs just weren't there — will be scrambling to survive after Dec. 28 when the checks they depend on are cut off.

The good news is that more and more people are realizing that their troubles come not because of some failing on their part but because this capitalist system, whose whole purpose is to provide profits for the rich, can't deliver even a moderately decent life for most people who get up and work five days a week or more.

What?! Not even three squares and a roof over your head in a country where billionaires increase their wealth by tens of millions each year? Right, that's capitalism for you.

So let's try to enjoy the holiday season

while we can. Happy New Year, peace on earth, goodwill to all. But after all the platitudes are over, let's rededicate ourselves to fighting this system. The destiny of the working class is to overthrow this rotten system — that pushes us increasingly into a race to the bottom. That pits worker against worker, nation against nation. That takes the stunningly powerful technology we have created and uses it to destroy other people — and the planet.

We can replace it with a rational system, owned not by individuals but by all of us collectively, so there can be work for all, health and joy, and enough left over to repair the awful damage of the last century. We can replace it with socialism, workers' power.

Is there any other choice? Revolutions are what have reshaped human society in the past, and they're long overdue today. They take hard, stubborn work, but there's nothing more rewarding than to struggle for the liberation of humanity. □

## British TV airs Snowden statement

By Cheryl LeBash

Whistleblower Edward Snowden spoke to the world for the first time on Dec. 25 via an Alternative Christmas Message aired by Britain's commercial television, Channel 4.

Snowden said, "[O]ur governments, working in concert, have created a system of worldwide mass surveillance, watching everything we do." The computer analyst spoke from temporary asylum in Russia, where he sought refuge from a furious U.S. government manhunt following his exposure of massive spying by the National Security Agency.

Documentary videographer Laura Poitras filmed Snowden's statement. She and journalist Glenn Greenwald were instrumental in bringing Snowden's revelations to the public conversation. Together with WikiLeaks reporting in 2010, the government documents released by Snowden showed massive surveillance of individuals, even including allied heads of state, and a cancerous U.S. obsession with covering up the truth about its military occupation of Iraq and other lies inherent in imperialist diplomacy.

The Alternative Christmas Message is an answer to the annual message de-

livered by the British monarch, a relic of feudalism. The first one was broadcast via radio in 1932, at a time when "the sun never set on the British empire."

Britain had still not recovered from the first horrific inter-imperialist war dedicated to redividing the resources and wealth of the colonized world. The horrors of that war enraged the masses and gave rise to the Russian Revolution, the first long-standing workers' revolution.

As one of its first acts, the revolutionary Bolshevik government rejected imperialist diplomacy and published the secret treaties that czarist Russia, and later the brief social-democratic Kerensky government, signed with other capitalist governments. One was the Sykes-Picot Agreement, in which Britain and France, with the assent of czarist Russia, agreed to divide up the Middle East — a root of the current wars and devastation.

Snowden ended his message by reminding the government that "if it really wants to know how we feel, asking is always cheaper than spying." The unprecedented global anti-war outpouring before the U.S. invasion of Iraq certainly gave both the British and U.S. governments ample indication of how the people felt about that war.

It doesn't take a huge, oppressive spying apparatus to know the feelings of more than a million long-term unemployed in the U.S. whose income is being cut off, or of the families and children who are hungrier after food stamp cuts, or of the low-wage workers demanding a \$15 minimum wage, or of the Detroit retirees whose pensions are at risk because the capitalist government prefers to pay the bankers.

No, this expensive "national security" state is a desperate attempt by U.S. imperialism to maintain its super-profits around the globe even as the system is imploding at home. □

## 'Tis the season to give to Workers World!

The end of the year is traditionally when people are asked to show their appreciation for what matters most to them.

What matters most to you?

We like to think that Workers World matters because for 51 weeks a year the newspaper brings you news the corporate media squashes. And our consistent Marxist analysis of critical issues, both national and international, can't be found in other U.S.-based media.

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- ▶ Why defending the Boston school bus drivers' union should be at the top of labor's agenda
- ▶ How people fight to end the war on youth, to stop mass incarceration and

police brutality; defend political prisoners and tear down the jails

▶ Why worldwide socialism means abundance for all workers and oppressed peoples

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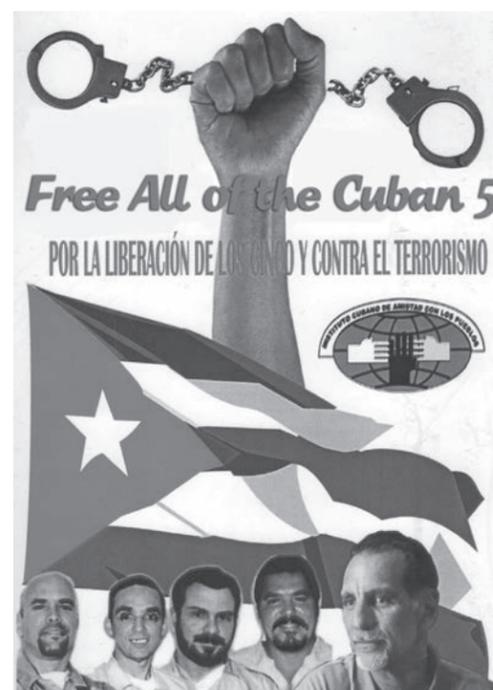
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Help us continue to publish working-class truth and build many vital struggles in 2014 and the years to come.

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Send your check made out to Workers World, 147 W. 24th St., 2nd Fl., New York, NY 10011. Include your address, email and phone number, and let us know if we can include you in our 2013 Supporter Program. □



Left to right: Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González, Ramón Labañino, and, now free, René González.

## A brief history of 'marriage'

### Part 26

# Marriage and the struggle for socialism

By Bob McCubbin

*"Revolution is necessary ... not only because the 'ruling' class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class 'overthrowing' it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew." A critically important formulation by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in "The German Ideology." (New York: International Publishers, 1970, p. 95)*

In the concluding section of "Feminism and Marxism," Dorothy Ballan notes the advances in social/sexual relations brought about by the Bolshevik revolution: "Its rich experience in the initial stages of the revolution still offers some of the most illuminating insights on what the starting point of the sexual revolution is, and how it was conceived by its leaders as part of the great socialist transformation of humanity." (New York: World View Publishers, 1971, p. 60)

"The Bolsheviks began a new world historic process of dissolving the millennia of patriarchal society founded on private property, and began to construct a socialist cooperative society, free from patriarchal domination. It actually began to dismantle the patriarchy. What could be more significant for women?" (p. 62)

Alexandra Kollontai (1872-1952) was a Bolshevik Party member and a leader in the revolutionary Soviet government. In her contribution to a collection of essays eulogizing V.I. Lenin, she wrote: "Vladimir Ilyich [Lenin] was the one who initiated the involvement of broad masses of women from the cities and villages in the building of a socialist state. ... Not only the women of the Soviet Union, but women throughout the world should know that Vladimir Ilyich laid the foundations of female emancipation. ... Nowhere in the world, nowhere in history is there such a thinker and statesman who has done so much for the emancipation of women as Vladimir Ilyich." ([tinyurl.com/llyrur](http://tinyurl.com/llyrur))

#### V.I. Lenin's views on dismantling the patriarchy

In "The Emancipation of Women," a book-length collection of the writings of Lenin on this crucial issue, we find the words: "In the course of two years of Soviet power in one of the most backward countries of Europe more has been done to emancipate woman, to make her the equal of the 'strong' sex, than has been done during the past 130 years by all the advanced, enlightened, 'democratic' republics of the world taken together.

"Education, culture, civilization, freedom — all these high-sounding words are accompanied in all the capitalist, bourgeois republics of the world by incredibly foul, disgustingly vile, bestially crude laws that make women unequal in marriage and divorce, that make the child born out of wedlock and the 'legally born' child unequal, and that give privileges to the male and humiliate and degrade womankind." (New York: International Publishers, 1966, p. 75)

But Lenin tempered his approval of the progress that had been so far achieved by the Soviets in the early days of the revolution by pointing out what still needed to be done: "Public catering establishments, nurseries, kindergartens — here we have examples of ... the simple, everyday means, involving nothing pompous,

grandiloquent or ceremonial, which can 'really emancipate women,' really lessen and abolish their inequality with men as regards their role in social production and public life.

"These means are not new, they (like all the material prerequisites for socialism) were created by large-scale capitalism. But under capitalism they remained, first, a rarity, and secondly — which is particularly important — either 'profit-making' enterprises, with all the worst features of speculation, profiteering, cheating and fraud, or 'acrobatics of bourgeois charity,' which the best workers rightly hated and despised." (p. 64)

#### Lenin's discussions with Clara Zetkin

Starting in the autumn of 1920, Lenin held a series of discussions with Clara Zetkin, a founder and leader of the German Communist Party. Zetkin's notes on those discussions are reprinted in "The Emancipation of Women." Lenin raised his concerns with Zetkin about the need for the full liberation of all women from the tyranny of patriarchy. As the great internationalist he was, the global struggle against capitalism was always on his mind: "We do not yet have an international Communist women's movement and we must have one without fail. We must immediately set about starting it. Without such a movement, the work of our International and of its parties is incomplete and never will be complete." (p. 98)

In the matter of social/sexual relations, Lenin queried Zetkin at length on what he considered an overemphasis on personal sexuality and marriage problems at meetings of German working-class women and among the youth. Zetkin responded eloquently to Lenin's concern, emphasizing the use of historical materialist analysis in these discussions: "Where private property and the bourgeois social order prevail [e.g., in Germany], questions of sex and marriage gave rise to manifold problems, conflicts and suffering for women of all social classes and strata. ...

"Knowledge of the modifications of the forms of marriage and family that took place in the course of history, and of their dependence on economics, would serve to rid the minds of working women of their preconceived idea of the eternity of bourgeois society. The critically historical attitude to this had to lead to an unrelenting analysis of bourgeois society, an exposure of its essence and its consequences, including the branding of false sex morality. ... Every truly Marxist analysis of an important part of the ideological superstructure of society, of an outstanding social phenomenon, had to lead to an analysis of bourgeois society and its foundation, private property." (p. 102)

But Lenin needed more convincing: "Can you assure me in all sincerity that during those reading and discussion evenings, questions of sex and marriage are dealt with from the point of view of mature, vital historical materialism? This presupposes wide-ranging, profound knowledge, and the fullest Marxist mastery of a vast amount of material." (p. 102)

This back and forth between Lenin and Zetkin continued, broaching a number of related issues. Lenin sought to clarify his position with the following words: "Not that I want my criticism to breed asceticism. That is farthest from my thoughts. Communism should not bring asceticism, but joy and strength, stemming,

among other things, from a consummate love life. Whereas today, in my opinion, the obtaining plethora of sex life yields neither joy nor strength. On the contrary, it impairs them." (p. 107)

#### Leon Trotsky on the backtracking following Lenin's death

Leon Trotsky, who stood with Lenin in the front ranks of the Bolshevik revolution, expressed concerns similar to those of Lenin with regard to freeing women from domestic drudgery: "Washing must be done by a public laundry, catering by a public restaurant, sewing by a public workshop. Children must be educated by good public teachers who have a real vocation for the work. Then the bond between husband and wife would be freed from everything external and accidental, and the one would cease to absorb the life of the other. Genuine equality would at last be established." ("Problems of Everyday Life," New York: Monad Press, 1973, p. 42)

Defeating the capitalists and feudalists through proletarian revolution in one of the world's poorest countries, and then struggling through civil war and imperialist invasion, the Soviets were hard pressed to provide all that was materially required. Gradually though, through rational, socialist planning and the revolutionary dedication of the workers and peasantry, great strides forward that would have been impossible under capitalist rule were made. Politically, however, after the death of Lenin in January 1924, much was lost, as documented in great detail in Trotsky's later writings.

Having been forced into exile, Trotsky wrote disparagingly of the backtracking of the privileged Stalinist bureaucracy on

social/sexual matters as on other issues in 1936: "The marriage and family laws established by the October Revolution, once the object of its legitimate pride, are being made over and mutilated by vast borrowings from the law treasures of the bourgeois countries. And as though on purpose to stamp treachery with ridicule, the same arguments which were earlier advanced in favor of unconditional freedom of divorce and abortion — 'the liberation of women,' 'defense of the rights of personality,' 'protection of motherhood' — are repeated now in favor of their limitation and complete prohibition." (pp. 86-87)

Nonetheless, the Soviet Union, having come into existence bearing a millstone of millions of illiterate and desperately poor people, was, within a short period of time, able to produce several generations of socially secure, educated women, including many women in positions of authority and leadership. And the socialist goal to free women from patriarchal slavery has continued and grown in the century since the birth of the Soviet Union. Socialist and communist leaders like Rosa Luxemburg in Germany, Nguyen Thi Binh (Madam Binh) in Vietnam, Jiang Qing (Chiang Ching) in China, Lolita Lebrón in Puerto Rico, Leila Khaled in Palestine, Nidia Díaz in El Salvador, Haydée Santamaría in Cuba, Titina Sila in Guinea Bissau, the Black Panther women in the U.S. and countless other revolutionary women have been an inspiration to millions, women and men alike, all around the world.

*The next installment in this series will cite the gains in social/sexual relations made by the Cuban revolution.*

## MUNDO OBRERO

### Senado mexicano accede a venta recursos energéticos

*Continua de página 12*

de México para su posterior explotación.

#### La oposición

La reforma energética, así como otras medidas anti-populares en materia de educación, transporte y otras, ha sido opuesta por senadoras/es y diputadas/os izquierdistas, así como por sindicatos y movimientos sociales. Esfuerzos por detener la legislación fueron hechos por el PT, el Movimiento Ciudadano y el Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional, cuyo fundador, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, fue despojado de la elección presidencial en el año 2006 por las maquinaciones de los partidos institucionales de la derecha. Sin embargo, la abrumadora presencia de la policía y la velocidad del proceso impidieron una enérgica resistencia exitosa y oportuna.

La militarización y la violencia del estado han desempeñado un importante papel en la prevención de una lucha eficaz. La represión e incluso los asesinatos de activistas políticos, son comunes en México. El Estado ha aprobado una nueva legislación para reducir las manifestaciones públicas en la capital, yendo tan lejos como prohibiendo las marchas que hacen demandas a la ciudad o al gobierno federal.

Las fuerzas progresistas han realizado varios intentos de unirse para llevar una lucha más concertada. Varias movilizaciones han tenido lugar, convocadas por diversas organizaciones. Un frente unido está formándose organizado por el PT, PRD, Movimiento Ciudadano, Unión Nacional de Trabajadores, y los sindicatos de trabajadoras/es universitarias y teléfono, entre otros. Las/os artistas se han unido para oponerse a la reforma en un colectivo llamado "El Grito Más Fuerte".

Y se están recogiendo firmas en una petición para que se lleve a cabo una consulta popular para la derogación de la ley.

La insatisfacción aumenta. Ningún acuerdo puede tener éxito si el pueblo une sus fuerzas para luchar conjuntamente. El movimiento progresista en los Estados Unidos debe ayudar a las fuerzas progresistas en México en todas las formas posibles y exponer la crueldad y la hipocresía del gobierno capitalista estadounidense, que no sólo no ha logrado aprobar una reforma migratoria plena que pueda ayudar a las/os inmigrantes mexicanos en Estados Unidos, sino que ahora va a devastarles en su propio país a través de la intensificación de la explotación de los recursos mexicanos. □

## Partidos capitalistas de México capitulan ante EE.UU.

# Senado mexicano accede a venta recursos energéticos

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

Con 3.500 policías fuertemente armados rodeando el edificio que alberga al Senado Mexicano, una mayoría de ese órgano aprobó un proyecto de ley de “reforma energética” en la medianoche del 11 de diciembre. La amplia legislación fue aprobada con sólo 10 horas de discusión. Esta abrirá el camino a la privatización de los activos más valiosos del país: el sector de la energía, incluyendo petróleo, gas natural y electricidad.

Horas más tarde, el proyecto de ley fue aprobado por la Cámara de Diputados y se envió a los 31 estados de la república mexicana para su confirmación. Antes de que esta ley pueda ser promulgada, debe obtener la aprobación de 17 estados, ya que requiere un cambio de varios artículos de la Constitución. Para el 16 de diciembre, ya 16 estados la habían endosado.

Esta ley tendrá enormes consecuencias negativas para las masas populares y su

aprobación ya ha despertado la oposición de las masas. La única forma en que se podía aprobar era a través del proceso de “vía rápida”, que dio a algunos diputados sólo 10 minutos para emitir su voto, junto con la fuerte presencia policial. En algunas zonas, los senadores y/o diputados fueron escoltados a las cámaras en camiones policiales. Cambios de última hora de la agenda en algunos estados impidieron que diputados de la oposición dieran sus votos.

La “reforma” permitirá la inversión privada, tanto nacional como transnacional, en el sector energético, que ha estado bajo la propiedad y control del Estado mexicano a través de la empresa petrolera estatal Petróleos Mexicanos conocida como Pemex. Esta ley otorgará derechos amplios a empresas privadas para la exploración, extracción, refinación y comercialización de petróleo y gas natural. También eliminará por completo las cinco plazas ocupadas por el sindicato de

los trabajadores petroleros en el consejo de Pemex compuesto de 15 miembros.

Los que promueven la privatización tratan de justificarlo diciendo que Pemex no cuenta con los recursos necesarios para extraer petróleo en las aguas profundas del Golfo de México, donde hay depósitos significativos – se estima en un 50 por ciento de los recursos de petróleo sin explotar del país. También dicen que se necesitan mejoras tecnológicas con el fin de ser “más competitivo”. Los privatizadores afirman que Pemex quedará en bancarrota dentro de 20 años si no hay cambios. (jornada.unam.mx)

### Impacto potencial

Pemex proporciona la mayor fuente de ingresos de México. Según Manuel Bartlett, un senador de la oposición perteneciente al izquierdista Partido del Trabajo (PT), “los recursos que Petróleos Mexicanos (Pemex) paga al erario pasarían de 68 por ciento actual a 55 por ciento, en el mejor de los casos, y hasta 27 por ciento en el peor de los escenarios, según el tipo de contrato de que se trate”. (jornada.unam.mx, 13 de diciembre) Pemex actualmente ayuda a financiar muchos servicios y programas sociales como la educación y la atención de la salud.

En virtud de la reforma, los recursos que ahora pagan por estos servicios se desplazarán a manos privadas, en su mayoría fuera del país y lejos del pueblo mexicano quien más lo necesita. Según la Comisión Económica para Latinoamérica y el Caribe (CEPAL), México en este momento es el único país de América Latina donde la pobreza ha ido en aumento. Un estudio reciente mostró que el número de mexicanas/os que viven por debajo del nivel de pobreza ha aumentado a 60 millones, en una población de poco más de 112 millones. Es revelador que el Estado de México tenga la mayor pobreza. El actual presidente del país, Enrique Peña Nieto, fue gobernador del Estado de México desde el 2005 hasta el 2011.

También se predicen impactos no económicos como la posible destrucción del medio ambiente y la devastación cultural.

### La riqueza de Pemex

La Jornada, el periódico de la prestigiosa Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, en un artículo titulado “Petroleras tendrán acceso a riqueza de 3 billones de dólares”, refutó la afirmación hecha por los autores de la reforma que aducen que Pemex está en bancarrota. Citando a economistas mexicanos, Israel Rodríguez escribe: “los cálculos más conservadores indican que México posee reservas probadas de crudo por 14 mil millones de barriles. En hidrocarburos de lutitas (shale), las existencias de crudo en México son de 13 mil millones de barriles adicionales, y las de gas natural de 545 billones de pies cúbicos”.

Rodríguez continúa diciendo que: “Pemex se mantiene como el quinto productor mundial de petróleo, es también el quinto exportador y las reservas mexicanas se ubican en el decimotercer

lugar mundial; los costos de extracción son los más bajos: 6.84 dólares por barril frente a 7.55 de Statoil, 9.55 de Exxon o 13.62 de Petrobras. Sus ingresos antes de intereses, impuestos y amortizaciones (EBITDA) pasaron de 71 mil millones de dólares en 2008 a 88 mil millones en 2012; durante los últimos tres años ha mantenido un promedio de inversión de 22 mil millones de dólares, mientras que empresas como Exxon o British Petroleum realizan inversiones globales por 36 mil millones de dólares; además, el pago de su deuda ocupa 6.4 por ciento en proporción de su capital de operación, por lo que resulta muy discutible la afirmación de que carece de recursos para afrontar nuevos retos”.

### ¿Quién está detrás de la reforma?

El presidente Peña Nieto pertenece al derechista Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), que gobernó al país durante décadas hasta el año 2000. Cuando recuperó el poder hace un año, después de una elección ampliamente corrupta, prometió un plan completamente neoliberal disfrazado de un plan para “salvar a la nación”. Este plan, llamado el Pacto por México, abarca entre otras, grandes reformas en la educación, las finanzas, las telecomunicaciones y la seguridad.

Estas reformas han sido un camino directo a las políticas anti sindicales y de privatización. Los tres partidos principales apoyaron el Pacto: el PRI, el Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), que bajo el predecesor de Peña Nieto, Felipe Calderón, militarizó el país y desató una violencia terrible, y el Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD). Desde entonces, el PRD se ha separado del Pacto, sobre todo por su oposición a la reforma.

Básicamente, tanto el PRI como el PAN quieren imponer una agenda neoliberal en nombre de los ricos y las empresas transnacionales. Ambos sirven como sustitutos del imperialismo estadounidense en México y en la región.

Los primeros elogios aprobando la reforma fueron Washington y los grandes medios corporativos de Estados Unidos. La oposición ha señalado desde el principio que la reforma fue redactada por y en nombre de Exxon Mobil, Chevron y otras grandes corporaciones energéticas. La dominación imperialista avanzará en México con terribles consecuencias.

La oposición mexicana considera a la reforma energética como el desarrollo más devastador en la historia reciente, igual a la aprobación del TLC en 1994. Señala el fin de la soberanía mexicana en el sector energético. Fue en 1938, cuando las empresas petroleras extranjeras estaban robando el petróleo del pueblo mexicano y otros recursos naturales, que el entonces presidente Lázaro Cárdenas lo aseguró a través de una legislación que nacionalizó la industria petrolera. Ahora, 75 años más tarde, las compañías petroleras de Estados Unidos finalmente han logrado, después de muchos intentos, abrir los recursos naturales más importantes

## ¡Defender a Corea socialista!

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El 13 de diciembre, la Agencia Central de Noticias de Corea, voz oficial de la República Popular Democrática de Corea, informó que un miembro de alto rango del gobierno, Jang Song Thaek, había sido juzgado y ejecutado por haber “perpetrado actos disidentes contrarrevolucionarios en contra del partido, en un intento por derrocar a la dirección de nuestro partido y del Estado y el sistema socialista”.

El juicio de Jang por un tribunal militar especial vino después de que el Buró Político del Comité Central del Partido de los Trabajadores de Corea celebró una reunión ampliada y luego emitió un informe a la nación.

Lo importante para tener en mente al leer la interpretación de los medios capitalistas estadounidenses sobre estos graves acontecimientos es que nada de esta es objetiva o bien intencionada. Cada palabra está calculada para socavar y calumniar a la RPDC, con el objetivo de derrocar al gobierno, al Partido de los Trabajadores y al sistema socialista.

Durante 65 años, los imperialistas estadounidenses han fracasado en sus esfuerzos por destruir el gobierno socialista en la mitad norte de la península de Corea.

Washington llevó a cabo una terrible guerra de agresión en la década de 1950, seguida desde entonces por incesantes amenazas militares y sanciones destinadas a estrangular la economía y promover divisiones que abrirían la puerta a la contrarrevolución. Su fracaso demuestra la fuerza perdurable de la lealtad del pueblo coreano a su revolución y a sus líderes, que se han negado a someterse al imperialismo.

Durante estas largas décadas de lucha, el Partido de los Trabajadores ha elegido líderes comprometidos con el camino labrado por Kim Il Sung, gran teórico, político, organizador, guerrillero y comandante militar de la revolución coreana.

En este momento crítico, la obligación de toda persona progresista, especialmente en los Estados Unidos, consiste en reconocer y respetar el derecho soberano del pueblo coreano a controlar su propio destino y mantener su sistema social. Esto significa denunciar y rechazar cualquier intento del imperialismo para intervenir en la situación, ya sea por medios militares, económicos o diplomáticos. También significa rechazar las calumnias inventadas por los medios capitalistas contra Kim Jong Un y otros líderes de la RPDC.

La clase obrera de todo el mundo, incluyendo en los EE.UU., ya está pagando el precio de los éxitos contrarrevolucionarios del imperialismo en Europa y Asia que han abierto vastas áreas del planeta a la súper explotación por las corporaciones transnacionales hambrientas de ganancias.

Workers World – Mundo Obrero afirma su solidaridad con el camarada Kim Jong Un. Como primer secretario del Partido de los Trabajadores de Corea y Comandante Supremo del Ejército Popular de Corea, lleva sobre sus hombros la responsabilidad de la defensa de la RPDC y la protección contra todos los esfuerzos, tanto externos como internos, para subvertir las conquistas revolucionarias ganadas a través de los sacrificios de muchas generaciones de valientes combatientes de la resistencia coreana. □