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Walmart workers 'sit down to live better'

By Scott Scheffer
 Los Angeles

Walmart workers carried out their first ever sit-down strikes at two different stores in Los Angeles on Nov. 13.

After sitting down inside the store at Pico Rivera, workers marched outside, sat down in a busy intersection and refused to leave. Police struggled to free up the intersection and keep traffic and Walmart profits flowing, but were only able to break up the action after 23 protesters had been arrested.

The strike was part of an ongoing campaign by the workers' organization called OUR Walmart to fight for higher pay and stop the company's retaliation against workers who speak out and try to organize.

Intimidation and retaliation are favored anti-union tactics of the giant retail chain. This was the first Walmart workers' sit-down strike, but OUR Walmart, with assistance from the Food and Com-

mercial Workers union, has carried out a series of spirited actions for months.

During October protests, 26 were arrested at the New York home of billionaire Alice Walton and another 16 were arrested at a protest in Washington, D.C. On the same day, hundreds gathered to protest in front of Rob Walton's posh residence in Phoenix. Other recent actions included a 75-mile walk from a giant Walmart warehouse to Los Angeles, which garnered a good deal of press attention.

The Walton family controls more wealth than the bottom 40 percent of the entire U.S. population. That money comes from the exploitation of the Walmart workers, who are paid so little that many live below the federal poverty line and can only survive on food stamps and other social services. The hours they are allowed to work are limited so that Walmart can pay them less and provide few benefits. Many Walmart staff sleep in

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PHOTO: UFCW.ORG

Sit-down in Los Angeles. Coming up: 'Black Friday.'

WWP National Conference:

'Down with capitalism!' Pages 5-8.

WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN



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Left: Pam Africa with Steve Kirschbaum at solidarity picket for Boston bus drivers. Right: FIST youth lead the conference in singing the Internationale.

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Chained protesters say: 'Freedom for Rasmia Odeh'

Outraged by the guilty verdict and immediate jailing of 67-year-old Palestinian activist Rasmia Odeh on Nov. 10, her supporters rallied and vowed to continue with their protests until she is released. Two days later, a group chained themselves to the doors of the Federal Courthouse at the Ron Dellums Federal Building in downtown Oakland.

In addition to those who chained themselves, many others banged and drummed on the doors with their fists, demanding Rasmia's freedom. After several hours, fire fighters were brought in to cut the chains and locks and five people were arrested. They were later cited and released.

"The targeting of Rasmia is purely to criminalize Palestinians who are outspoken and critical of Israel's oppression and occupation of Palestine," says Lara Kiswani, executive director of the Arab Resource and Organizing Center.



WW PHOTO: TERRI KAY

In a statement, the AROC explained that "Odeh is the founder of the Arab Women's Committee in Chicago, a grassroots collective that offers an environment that promotes leadership among Arab immigrant women. The U.S. government has accused her of omitting an answer on her citizenship application 10 years ago. Odeh, who was sexually tortured into a false confession by Israel and served a decade in Israeli prisons, faces revocation of her citizenship, imprisonment, and deportation."

A letter of protest by more than 100 feminist scholars adds: "Rasmia's story encompasses some of the most urgent feminist struggles of our times — violence against women and the use of sexual violence as a tool of colonization and war; the impact of racism and anti-immigrant policies upon women; the criminalization of women of color; and the use of intimidation to thwart feminist activism."

— By Terri Kay



WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

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Who we are & what we're fighting for

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Workers built it all — it belongs to society, not to a handful of billionaires! But we need a revolution to make that change. That's why for 55 years WWP has been building a revolutionary party of the working class inside the belly of the beast.

We fight every kind of oppression. Racism, sexism,

degrading people because of their nationality, sexual or gender identity or disabilities — all are tools the ruling class uses to keep us apart. They ruthlessly super-exploit some in order to better exploit us all. WWP builds unity among all workers while supporting the right of self-determination. Fighting oppression is a working-class issue, which is confirmed by the many labor struggles led today by people of color, immigrants and women.

WWP has a long history of militant opposition to imperialist wars. The billionaire rulers are bent on turning back the clock to the bad old days before socialist revolutions and national liberation struggles liberated territory from their grip. We've been in the streets to oppose every one of imperialism's wars and aggressions. □

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As postal bosses meet in D.C.

Unions rally against downsizing

Officials at the headquarters of the U.S. Postal Service in Washington, D.C., kept an angry, overflow crowd in the lobby during a Postal Board of Governors meeting on Nov. 14.

After chanting “Whose post office? The people’s post office!” and other slogans for over an hour, the boisterous crowd erupted in cheers upon hearing that widely criticized Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe was resigning.

Afterwards, at a rally outside, American Postal Workers Union President Mark Dimondstein called for the new postal manager, Megan J. Brennan, to “reverse Donahoe’s policies of lowering standards, reducing hours, outsourcing work and diminishing a great American institution.”

Top officials of the other three postal unions — the National Association of Letter Carriers, the National Postal Mail

Handlers Union and the National Rural Letter Carriers Union — also spoke, alongside officials of the American Federation of Government Employees, the Coalition of Labor Union Women and the Amalgamated Transit Union, plus two members of Congress.

The event was one of 150 protests, spread over all 50 states, called to defend the postal service from policies such as shutting down 82 processing centers across 37 states by the end of April. New delivery standards scheduled to go into effect on Jan. 1 will significantly impact the time of overnight delivery. “The cuts would cause hardships for the public and small businesses, eliminate jobs and destroy the world’s most efficient and affordable delivery network by driving away mail and revenue,” the APWU said in a press release.

— Report and photo by Joe Piette



Suit challenges law muzzling Mumia

By Betsey Piette

Attorneys representing political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal filed a lawsuit in federal court in Harrisburg, Pa., on Nov. 10 seeking to overturn a Pennsylvania censorship bill that had been quickly passed in October and then signed into law by outgoing Gov. Tom Corbett.

The Pittsburgh-based Abolitionist Law Center, the Amistad Law Project and the Roderick and Solange MacArthur Justice Center together filed the first challenge to Senate Bill 508, known as the Revictimization Relief Act. They acted on behalf of Abu-Jamal, Prison Radio, Educators for Mumia Abu-Jamal, the Human Rights Coalition and two other Philadelphia-area prisoners, Kerry “Shakaboona” Marshall and Robert L. Holbrook.

“This law is clearly unconstitutional,” said Bret Grote, legal director of the Abolitionist Law Center. “The Pennsylvania legislature and Gov. Corbett wanted to use Mumia Abu-Jamal to score political points and passed a law that can’t pass constitutional muster. We’re suing Attorney General Kane and Philadelphia District Attorney Seth Williams before they can sue to keep Mumia from speaking publicly.”

On Oct. 5, two dozen graduates of Goddard College Undergraduate Programs in Vermont heard a pre-recorded commencement address from Abu-Jamal, who had been a student at the college in the late 1970s and earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1996 while he was on Pennsylvania’s death row. His address was played at the commencement despite police intimidation and threats of violence against students and faculty.

Pennsylvania Corrections Secretary John Wetzel acknowledged that prisoners have a constitutional right to phone access and admitted that the state could not prohibit the address from happening. On Oct. 6, however, Corbett, other right-wing politicians and members of the Fraternal Order of Police gathered in Harrisburg to introduce legislation designed to silence Abu-Jamal and other prisoners.

House and Senate versions of the Pennsylvania bill, which opponents labeled the “Mumia Muzzling Act,” were quickly rushed through the state Legislature. Corbett signed the bill on Oct. 21 in Philadelphia at 13th and Locust streets, the site of the 1981 shooting of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner, for which Mumia was convicted in 1982.

Prior to his conviction, Abu-Jamal was an internationally celebrated, award-winning Black writer and radio journalist, a former member of the Black Panther Party and one-time president of the Black Journalists’ Association. His writings and commentaries exposed the racism, brutality and corruption of the Philadelphia police department. They are credited with helping to lay the foundation for Philadelphia being one of two police departments indicted by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Abu-Jamal maintains his innocence in the shooting of Faulkner. His case has gone through decades of the appeals process, including a successful challenge to his death row sentence.

Noelle Hanrahan of Prison Radio, which regularly broadcasts Abu-Jamal’s commentaries, told Workers World: “The Fraternal Order of Police is using Pennsylvania politicians to try finish the job they started when police shot Mumia on Dec. 9, 1981. They railroaded him to death row and held him there for over 30 years. Yet, because he continues to reach the airwaves with his explosive commentaries, they are now trying through SB508 to take away his First Amend-

ment right to speak.”

This is not the first time Pennsylvania has tried to silence Abu-Jamal. In 1996, after the Peoples Video Network aired “The Prison-Industrial Complex,” a filmed conversation Abu-Jamal had with Monica Moorehead and Larry Holmes of Workers World Party, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections bowed to FOP pressure and banned in-person broadcast media visits for all prisoners.

In 1997, Temple University, threatened with funding cuts by then Gov. Tom Ridge, canceled all Pacifica Radio programming on its radio station because Pacifica’s Democracy Now! program was scheduled to air commentaries by Abu-Jamal.

In 1999, Abu-Jamal successfully challenged an attempt by the state to prohibit him from writing after the publication of his first book, “Live from Death Row.” He has gone on to write seven more books, published in nine languages, with two more set for publication in 2015. He has recorded over 3,000 essays, many of which have appeared in Workers World newspaper.

There have been three major documentaries on Abu-Jamal, including “Mumia: Long Distance Revolutionary,” currently

airing on the Starz network.

The new Senate bill says that if a person convicted of a personal injury crime speaks in a manner that produces “a temporary or permanent state of mental anguish” to victims of that crime — as defined by their alleged victim — a district attorney, the Pennsylvania attorney general, or the victim can sue the prisoner, or anyone broadcasting their words, for monetary damages in civil court.

Nikki Grant, policy director of the Philadelphia-based Amistad Law Project, notes that the legislation targeting Abu-Jamal impacts many other people in prison as well as those who have been released. Grant says, “The fact that this bill is even on the books makes it less likely that people who have been convicted of personal injury crimes will speak out publicly. These are the people who are already most marginalized in our society.”

“How can the state’s legislators pass and politicians sign the recent law described as the ‘Muzzle Mumia Act?’” asked Abu-Jamal. “They can’t, at least not constitutionally. In order to do so they had to knowingly and willingly violate both the U.S. and state constitutions and their very oaths of office.” □

Homeless organize in Boston

By Gerry Scoppettuolo
Boston

An overflow crowd of 300 homeless people and their supporters rocked the Blackstone Community Center in Boston’s South End on Nov. 12. Many were among the 700 homeless people who were thrown out of Boston’s biggest shelter — Long Island Shelter in Boston Harbor — on Oct. 9, after the only bridge leading to it was declared unfit for transportation of any kind.

People had been given four hours to vacate the island. They were dispersed among several of Boston’s already overcrowded shelters and one hastily outfitted gym.

“It’s not a shelter, it’s a warehouse,” testified Cleve Rae, a member of the Boston Homeless Solidarity Committee, formed in October to respond to the crisis. He and 220 other men sleep on cots and mats on the floor in what was once a gymnasium, with access to just two toilets.

The unemployed and homeless people

packed into the auditorium constantly shouted down representatives of Mayor Marty Walsh, as well as city councilors Frank Baker and Ayanna Pressley. Many have not been able to retrieve their few belongings from the Long Island Shelter. People also lost their medical records in the displacement.

Lisa Jenkins said she has been living in the woods since she lost access to the shelter on Long Island, declaring: “I could have frozen to death last night. It’s wrong for women to be overlooked, because we are as human as men,” said Jenkins, who also works as a personal care attendant.

She and Cherie King, a member of the Boston Homeless Solidarity Committee, said that the biggest problem is “the lack of access to shelters for women.”

Several people — including at least one woman — have perished on the streets since the shelter closed and several major recovery programs were shuttered, including the Andrew House Detox Center, the biggest in all of Boston, with 60 beds. Clients were abandoned in the middle of

their medical treatment and have been without a detox program ever since.

A group of men in a prison pre-release recovery program on the island became reincarcerated when the program shut down.

The homeless and their supporters have been holding mass meetings for the past month and reaching out to city shelters in a passionate organizing drive reminiscent of the Unemployed Councils of the 1930s. Massachusetts -- despite its much heralded safety net -- has the fastest-growing homeless population in the U.S. People are being thrown out on the streets to suffer and die, thanks to the real estate developers and banks that initiated the current crisis in 2008 with bad loans and a \$17-trillion government bailout.

Although conditions have only gotten worse during this crisis of capitalism, the organized people power of Boston’s homeless population can be seen in a struggle for deep change that shows no sign of slowing down.

Michigan and Ebola

Nurses' union wins protection for workers and patients

By Martha Grevatt
Detroit

There are as yet no known cases of Ebola in Michigan. Yet union nurses here are not about to let their rights or safety be compromised, should they be called upon to care for a person with the terrible disease.

The Michigan Nurses Association, affiliated with National Nurses United, has negotiated the first-in-the-country contract language to protect some 5,000

registered nurses of the University of Michigan Health System. The agreement also assures that any potential patients get quality care.

The addendum to the nurses' contract sets staffing levels of at least three nurses assigned to a patient with Ebola, with a fourth RN available to the team if needed. Standards for training and personal protective equipment are spelled out in detail. A recent survey revealed widespread fears among Michigan nurses that they are not adequately prepared

to deal with a case of Ebola.

Nurses will not lose their salaries or have to use negotiated paid time off or extended sick leave benefits if they become infected with the Ebola virus, or if they are quarantined due to suspected exposure. Once declared Ebola-free, nurses have the right to return to their previous positions, shifts and work schedules. The hospital will pay for all Ebola-related medical care and for accommodations if a nurse is quarantined or otherwise needs or wants to limit exposure to others.

"This is groundbreaking language," said University of Michigan Professional Nurse Council President Katie Oppenheim. "Nurses have stepped up and volunteered to care for Ebola patients. Now they can do so knowing that their lives and their income will be protected, should they be exposed to the Ebola virus."

"This contract is not only important for the UMHS nurses, but it sets the standard for all hospitals in Michigan and the United States," added MNA Executive Director John Karebian. □

Nurses strike over lack of Ebola preparedness

By E. Catalinotto, RN

National Nurses United held a day of strikes and demonstrations in 16 states on Nov. 12 demanding effective personal protective equipment and "continuous, rigorous interactive training for RNs and other health workers who might encounter an Ebola patient," said Rose Ann DeMoro, NNU executive director. "That includes practice putting on and taking off the hazmat suits where some of the greatest risk of infection can occur. The lack of concern for nurses and patients in a world where corporations have taken over our community health care has been magnified during this deadly Ebola crisis."

In the African countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, Ebola kills at least half the people who contract the disease, according to a World Health Organization fact sheet. In the United States, as of Nov. 16, eight out of 10 Ebola patients have recovered. Survivors received early diagnosis and supportive care: prevention of dehydration with intravenous



Nurses at White House during national strike for health and safety.

fluids, replacement of blood components, oxygen, nutritional support, and treatment for hemorrhage, shock and co-existing bacterial infections.

It is unknown whether blood plasma from survivors, which in theory contains antibodies to fight the virus, or the drug Zmapp, played a role in their recovery. These have not yet been tested in human

beings to determine their safety or effectiveness.

Thomas Eric Duncan is the only Ebola patient treated in the U.S. to have died. An uninsured Liberian man, he was turned away from a Dallas hospital on Sept. 26 after a CAT scan, despite having fever and a history of travel to an area with much Ebola. He did not receive any

treatment until several days later, when he returned by ambulance, critically ill. Two nurses at the nonunion hospital were infected with Ebola while caring for Duncan without proper training. They have recovered.

It appears that basic supportive care can greatly reduce the Ebola death toll. However, since the 1980s, the International Monetary Fund has enforced policies that led to a deterioration of health care infrastructure in countries now hit by the disease.

According to Rick Rowden in the Oct. 30 issue of Foreign Policy magazine, IMF policies that prevent "developing countries from scaling up long-term public investment in public health systems ... have led to dilapidated health infrastructure, inadequate numbers of health personnel and demoralizing working conditions that have added to the 'push factors' driving the migration of nurses from poor countries to rich ones. All this has undermined public health systems in developing countries, including the ones now trying to cope with Ebola." □

PROVIDENCE, RI

Community activist elected

Workers World Bureau
Providence, R.I.

African-American activist Mary Kay Harris won the general election for City Council from Ward 11 on Nov. 4, defeating her Republican opponent by 1,669 to 258, or better than six to one. This is despite support for the Republican from the incumbent machine Democrat, whom Harris had defeated in the primary.

Harris had won the primary race on a very small budget, with lots of door-to-door campaigning by volunteers. She continued that strategy during the general election. Campaign flyers described her record of support for tenants' rights, affordable homeownership, better schools and safe streets.

Rhode Island has an official poverty rate of more than 13 percent and the third-highest unemployment rate in the

country, behind Georgia and Mississippi. With an overall population of just over a million, the state has a very large Latino/a immigrant population, in excess of 100,000, including Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, Colombians, Mexicans and other Central and South Americans. West Africans, mainly from Liberia and Nigeria, and Black Caribbean islanders together number at least another 50,000.

Dissatisfaction with the current City Council leaders, reflecting anger over joblessness and poverty, enabled Harris' People First/El Pueblo Primero campaign to win both elections.

As a former organizer of Direct Action for Rights and Equality (DARE), founded in the 1980s to fight for social and economic justice in communities of color, Harris learned the lessons of mass people's power movements, such as that led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the 1950s and 1960s. She says that one of her greatest inspirations comes from seeing Black, Latino/a, Asian, Native and white



PHOTO: ROBERT MALIN

Mary Kay Harris on the right.

people unite around a common struggle for justice.

Harris called for and chaired the Women of All Colors Assembly in Providence on International Women's Day this year and has been an active participant in the Rhode Island Peoples Assembly since its founding 10 years ago. □

Endorsed by Staten Island Liberian Association, Ramsey Clark, Parents to Improve School Transportation, Community Labor United for Postal Jobs & Services, East Harlem-El Barrio Community Action, WWP Disability Caucus, Solidarity Center, Rev. Luis Barrios

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WORKERS WORLD PARTY CONFERENCE

From revolutionary theory to revolutionary struggle

By Monica Moorehead
Long Island City, Queens, N.Y.

The stage banner in a school auditorium in Queens, N.Y., said it all: “Workers World Party stands in solidarity with Gaza, Ferguson and Ayotzi! Down with capitalism! Fight for socialism!”

This theme resonated on Nov. 15-16 as the WWP annual national conference highlighted major struggles here and worldwide, including resistance to U.S. police and military occupation — from Occupied Gaza to Ferguson, Mo.

Ayotzi is the abbreviation for Ayotzinapa in Mexico’s Guerrero state, where 43 students disappeared recently after being kidnapped by police, setting off massive marches and rebellions against state repression.

Conference attendees were multinational, with many women and youth, Black, Brown, Asian, Arab and Indigenous, as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and people with disabilities. They came from every part of the country — west, south, north and east — to discuss and strategize around important issues such as the fight against union busting and privatization.

There was strong focus on support for the Boston school bus drivers’ union, under attack from the Veolia corporation; building political solidarity with the Ferguson rebellion against police terror; organizing low-wage workers and building peoples’ assemblies, especially for the Dec. 4 “Black Friday” fast food workers’ strike and the Los Angeles \$15-an-hour minimum-wage campaign. Workers.org/wwp lists the many breakout groups held on Nov. 15.

The conference agenda included two protests. Before a lunchtime picket of nearby Goodwill industries on Nov. 15, Edward Yudelovich, a national organizer with the WWP Peoples with Disabilities Caucus, gave an orientation on why it was important to protest the organization’s super-low wages for workers with disabilities.

That evening a demonstration was held in front of the Veolia headquarters in Manhattan to expose this corporate giant’s attempt to break the United Steelworkers Local 8751 bus drivers’ union in Boston. Dozens of the mainly Haitian and Cape Verdean union members led the protest, which was joined by other conference delegates.

Both demonstrations reflected the struggle-oriented program of WWP.

Developing a revolutionary perspective, solidarity with most oppressed

The Saturday opening plenary session, featuring three members of the Party Secretariat — Fred Goldstein, Teresa Gutierrez and Larry Holmes — helped set the political tone for the entire conference. It was chaired by Colleen Davidson, a youth leader of Fight Imperialism, Stand Together from Baltimore. As part of her welcoming remarks, Davidson asked the many FIST members to stand and be recognized.

Goldstein, the author of “Low-Wage Capitalism” and “Capitalism at a Dead End,” spoke on Marxism and revolutionary socialism as the only way to overcome all capitalist inequality. Gutierrez, a co-coordinator of the May 1 Coalition for Worker and Immigrant Rights, spoke on solidarity with the struggles in Latin America, including the recent migrant caravan from



Boston school bus drivers at stage.
WWP PHOTOS: BRENDA RYAN AND G. DUNKEL

Ariel Hernandez Hernandez

New York City to the Texas/Mexican border. Holmes, WWP’s first secretary, spoke on the relationship between national oppression and the current global capitalist economic crisis. (Excerpts from their talks are on pages 6-7.)

This plenary included three special solidarity presentations. Fatin Jarara, of the Al-Awda Palestine Right to Return Coalition, gave special mention to the struggle to free Palestinian political prisoner Ramea Odeh, newly imprisoned in the U.S.

Ariel Hernandez Hernandez, first secretary of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cuba to the United Nations, was introduced by Cheryl LaBash, co-chair of the National Network on Cuba. Hernandez spoke on Cuba’s solidarity with West Africa around the Ebola health crisis and the ongoing campaign to free all the Cuban Five.

Team Solidarity leaders Georgia Scott, Andre Francois and Steve Gillis, along with 30 other Boston school bus drivers, received a thunderous ovation after an introduction by Sharon Black, an organizer of the Baltimore People’s Power Assembly. The three Boston militants spoke of their unwavering support for union founder Stevan Kirschbaum, who is facing criminal charges trumped up by the Boston police at the behest of Veolia, which seeks to drive communist leadership out of the union. Kirschbaum goes on trial Nov. 24 in Dorchester, Mass.

The union local may go on strike in the coming months for a decent contract and to demand the rehiring of fired union leaders Kirschbaum, Francois, Gillis and Garry Murchison, who also spoke.

Workers fighting cutbacks

LeiLani Dowell, a WW managing editor, chaired the second plenary on the low-wage worker uprising against austerity and the global capitalist crisis. On the panel were Tommy Cavanaugh, a low-wage worker in Rockford, Ill., and a leader of FIST; Betsey Piette, a WW contributing editor and writer on the cutbacks in

Georgia Scott

Fatin Jarara

Steve Gillis

Andre Francois

Garry Murchison

Philadelphia; John Park-er, WW West Coast editor and an organizer of the Fight for \$15 minimum-wage campaign in Los Angeles; Jerry Goldberg, a fighter against the Detroit bankruptcy crisis and attorney in a lawsuit against the city of Detroit that demanded no cuts in workers’ pensions; and Steven Ceci, an activist with the We Deserve Better Baltimore Workers’ Assembly.

A solidarity message was read from Clarence Thomas, co-chair of the Million Worker March Movement and a rank-and-file longshore worker and unionist.

The right of oppressed youth to resist

The third plenary that day addressed “Lessons of the Ferguson Rebellion against Police Terror.” Rebeca Toledo, an organizer of the migrant solidarity caravan, chaired. Panelists were Monica Moorehead, WWP Secretariat member and editor of “Marxism, Reparations and the Black Freedom Struggle”; Lamont Lilly, an organizer with the Durham, N.C., WWP branch and contributing editor for Triangle Free Press; Larry Hales, organizer of the People’s Power Assemblies movement and a WW contributing editor; and Imani Henry, an organizer against racist police brutality and gentrification, with a major focus in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Moorehead, Lilly and Henry recently traveled to Ferguson and St. Louis for the Oct. 11-13 weekend of resistance. Pam Africa from International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal spoke.

Worldwide unity against imperialism

The theme of the fourth plenary on Nov. 16 was workers and oppressed of the world unite against imperialism. Tova Fry, an organizer with the WWP Bay Area branch and an activist against police abuse, chaired and spoke on anti-apartheid solidarity with Palestine.

Other speakers included Sara Flounders, WWP Secretariat member and

co-coordinator of the International Action Center; Abayomi Azikiwe, WW contributing editor and editor of the Pan African News Wire, who has written on the Ebola crisis in West Africa; Berta Joubert-Ceci, a Puerto Rican revolutionary and editor of WW newspaper’s Mundo Obrero section; Ramiro Funez, a leader of FIST, an activist with the Honduran Libre Party and an organizer of the migrants’ caravan; Greg Butterfield, a WW contributing editor who has written on the U.S.-backed right-wing coup in Ukraine; and Caleb Maupin, a leader of FIST and an editor of its new Red Flag publication.

Deirdre Griswold, a WWP Secretariat member and WW editor, spoke on the political importance of the party’s national fund drive. Jefferson Azavedo, from the WWP Los Angeles branch, read a tribute to the late founder of the American Servicemen’s Union, Andy Stapp, from draft resister Eddie Oquendo, who went to jail rather than be drafted to go to Vietnam war.

Maggie Vascassenno, from Los Angeles, chaired a panel on solidarity with Lucy Pagoada, a founder of Honduras USA Resistencia; Charles Jenkins, president, New York Chapter of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists; Kazem Azim, SI-Solidarity with Iran; Bernadette Elnorin, chairperson of BAYAN USA; Mick Kelly, Freedom Road Socialist Organization; Victor Toro, a founder of Chile’s Movement of the Revolutionary Left, who won the right to live in the United States after facing the threat of deportation; and Joe Lombardo, co-coordinator of the United National Antiwar Coalition.

Eva Panjwani, an organizer with the Durham WWP branch, chaired the closing plenary. Larry Holmes gave a summary. The conference adjourned after singing the communist anthem, The Internationale, in English and Spanish.

Spoken word presentations were given by Tony “Gao” Chia-Ren and Sara Benjamin. □

WORKERS WORLD PARTY CONFERENCE

What it takes to unite the workers & oppressed

Comrades, I want to start by saying a word about the immense Boston struggle.

In the relationships between capital and labor at any given time there is a norm. We all know what it has been: give-backs, concessions, two-tier wage levels.

From Detroit to Philadelphia, everywhere, the workers have been decimated. But there are exceptions, and the Boston school bus drivers are one. They have somehow managed for almost 40 years to get good contracts. It hasn't been easy. They have been on strike; their leaders have been fired.

In addition this union has a worldwide reputation for internationalism, for what it says about Palestine and imperialist war, and in solidarity with Black and Brown communities fighting racist police terror. There is a reason for this. This union has communists in it. It has many great people and a good piece of Workers World Party in it.

We were there at the beginning. We helped organize the union more than 40 years ago, at the time of a struggle to desegregate the Boston schools. The racists were violently trying to stop that. An anniversary is coming up on Dec. 14 of the 1974 March Against Racism. This wonderful school bus union grew out of that struggle.

So is it any wonder that Veolia wants to get the party out of there, wants to get radical influence out of there by hook or crook? The workers know this. They are smart and know what is in their interest. They know that not just Steve Kirschbaum is charged. They know it is the union. And if Veolia is able to separate the party from that union, it is highly unlikely the union will remain the same. The workers support and love our comrades, but that is not the fundamental reason. They know their own class interests and are fighting for themselves.

The struggle is entering a very intense period. The trial opens Nov. 24. We need to be there with the workers. Veolia has

now intensified its hostility with respect to contract negotiations. It is firing workers in the yard and harassing the workers. It is coming to a showdown over the contract, over rehiring the fired workers. And the school bus drivers are getting ready. But they can't do it alone, comrades.

They are here! I see them walking through the door. Stand up. Union! Union! Union!

The bus drivers are here to remind us that if they are to prevail, they have to consolidate union support not only in Boston, but everywhere.

If a strike happens, it is going to get national attention. They have to consolidate the Black and Brown community, which they already have relationships with. And we have to help them. They are here to thank us, but they are also here to remind us that they need our help. We have to make sure that we don't let them down, comrades.

Significance of Ferguson

Why is the Ferguson struggle so important? Many young Black and Brown people are massacred by vicious, racist cops. Those crimes are just as bad as what happened to Michael Brown on Aug. 9. But in Ferguson there was a rebellion that has never ended.

There was also a military occupation. There were huge anti-austerity protests this week in Brussels. The state was so afraid they brought out water cannons and tear gas.

But in Ferguson they brought out tanks, armored personnel carriers, state-of-the-art military weapons. They were aimed at unarmed protesters, like in Gaza, Iraq or Afghanistan.

In some places the repression against Occupy Wall Street was very vicious, but it didn't come close to this. This is what the capitalist state does when the oppressed rise up.

In many ways the labor movement, the progressive movement, let Ferguson down, in my view.

They should have embraced this rebellion, come to its support — no holds barred. Shut down cities, occupy whatever they could. There should have been work actions in support of this. Labor did a lot more than it usually does when there are rebellions, and that is good, but it wasn't decisive. And the progressive movement went about their business pretty much as usual. The climate march was necessary, but you wouldn't know there was a Black rebellion in the center of the country.

You can't win over the oppressed to the working class unless you come to their defense and show them that you feel what they feel. If the movement and the working class had embraced the Ferguson rebellion, there would be a better working class today.

The decision of the grand jury is coming down any time. We have more than 50 locations around the country where there are going to be militant response demonstrations, including right here in metropolitan New York.

Can we be the agent for drawing more political and social forces of our huge class into defense of Ferguson? We've got to figure it out. Maybe we can do something on the Martin Luther King holiday in January. Right after that is Black History Month. February 21 marks the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Malcolm X, a revolutionary. Maybe these dates will help us raise the level in terms of this struggle in Ferguson.

Low-wage workers

About a year ago I wrote a document on low-wage workers. Two days ago workers pulled the first sit-down strike in a Walmart in Los Angeles. Some were ar-

Excerpts from the talk given by **Larry Holmes** at the 2014 Workers World Party National Conference in New York City.



rested. Things are now heating up. I said the entrance of low-wage workers into the struggle represents millions: there are 4 million fast food workers, 2 million Walmart workers and probably 18 to 20 million in retail, most of them low-wage workers. These are enormous organizing drives. The biggest in history, whatever their problems.

But why isn't labor calling on the progressive movement? We have a Workers Assembly fighting to put a referendum for \$15 an hour on the LA ballot; we have the Baltimore Workers Assembly. We are waiting for the union, in this case the Service Employees, to call on the movement. Do they think the workers can do it alone? No matter how brave the McDonald's or Walmart workers are, in this period of capitalism at a dead end, with reorganization of the working class on a global basis, workers in any specific place or industry need more to win.

The fast food workers are planning a strike on Dec. 4 and another, bigger one in the spring. They want to bring McDonald's to the negotiating table, which would be incredible. If they do that, all the other fast food chains would come along. Millions of workers and unemployed people would come and occupy those stores — if you called on them. There is a vast, untapped human reservoir of working-class and radical support for low-wage workers, but nobody is calling on it. We've got to begin to change this.

We've got to be able to offer our own suggestions on how to massify the struggle, how to bring more social forces into the working class.

I was asked to write a document for
Continued on page 8

Spread Marxism, build the party

This is a very difficult period for the working class and the oppressed. But this difficult period also offers great potential and opportunity for revolutionaries. I think it is safe to say that the capitalist system in all its aspects has not been so visibly rotten and so universally harmful to the workers since the depths of the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Every day you read about new casualties of the profit system. In Detroit tens of thousands of people are without water because the city is using the treasury to pay off bondholders instead of guaranteeing water service.

I read about a young woman worker and mother, Maria Hernandez, who was accidentally asphyxiated in her car. She was working three jobs at Dunkin Donuts in New Jersey. She had to drive from Newark to Harrison to Linden every day just to make ends meet. She never had a real night's sleep and she died in a Dunkin Donuts parking lot when she dozed off between two of her three jobs. Her situation is common.

The bosses have taken technology to new depths. Mary Bolender was at home in Las Vegas when her 10-year-old had an asthma attack with a 103 fever. She jumped in her Chrysler van and it would not start. Why? An auto-lease firm in Mesa, Ariz., had shut her car down by remote access because she was three days behind in her payments.

Such examples are not unusual. They represent the life of the working class.

Racist police brutality and killings are at epidemic levels. Ferguson is the straw that broke the camel's back. Mass incarceration, closing of women's health care clinics, summary deportation of millions of immigrants, not to speak of the disastrous climate change brought on by the fossil fuel industry — you name it.

Why bring all this up? It is not new. We have written about and participated in protesting virtually all of these injustices. The reason to bring it up is that all the evils and injustice engulfing the workers are caused by the system of capitalist exploitation, the irresistible lust for profit,

the global search that lies deep within the system. And it is easy to show it.

We communists know it. And we also know that the only way out for the workers is to destroy capitalism and establish socialism — a system based on planned production for human need and not for profit. But our knowing it is not worth much if the workers do not know it. And this lack of knowledge is a great danger. It is as dangerous as the capitalist crisis itself.

I want us to ask ourselves: What is the most important thing that we can do, given our size, given the state of capitalist crisis and the great difficulties that the workers are going through? Given the circumstances and our limited resources, what is the most important contribution we can make to the working-class struggle, now and in the future?

Multiply the ranks of WWP

The answer in my opinion is to grow the party. To multiply the ranks of Marxist, communist revolutionaries who are clear

about the path forward, who are clear that the liberation of the working class and the oppressed from the nightmare of capitalism lies in the class struggle, which must end up in the establishment of socialism.

However, we will never find those future cadre, those future fighters, if they don't know we are here and if they don't know what we stand for.

So we must expose capitalism and promote socialism whenever and wherever we can. Since we are already a struggle party, since we gravitate to all resistance movements, we have the activity side covered. It's the ideological war that must be strengthened. This must be done thoughtfully, artfully and sensitively, but it must be done.

Since the collapse of the USSR and Eastern Europe, there has been a global retreat of Marxism, an adaptation to the ideological supremacy of the ruling class. Discussion of the contradictions of capitalism and the need for socialist revolution has been largely confined to the meeting halls and publications of a limit-

With capitalism at a dead end

Lessons of May Day & the migrant rights movement

Not too long ago, the movement in this country hardly remembered, much less commemorated, May Day. In 2005, however, a wonderful grouping of labor activists and communists sought to revive May Day and organized a Union Square demonstration.

May Day 2005 was a great start in flexing working-class muscle: a call to the movement to break the stranglehold of the Democratic Party and to orient instead toward the struggle; hit the streets instead of the voting booths.

But it took the uprising of migrant workers in 2006 to thoroughly revive May Day.

What the bourgeoisie had tried to erase from class history was brought back by the very sector that had fought and died for it in the 1800s. Migrant workers once again took center stage in the class struggle and reminded the capitalist class that it is the workers who have the real power in society.

Some 200 cities were part of the Great American Boycott of 2006 — “El Gran Paro Americano.” Over 2 million workers participated in demonstrations on May Day in what some say was the largest single day of protest ever in the U.S.

But this was not just a demonstration. Construction sites were shut down. Schools were empty. Ripe fruit spoiled on the land, restaurants had no workers, and the machines in meat processing plants were turned off.

Some reports indicate that Wall Street lost billions in profits.

This was a general strike, not against an employer but against the capitalist government.

Everything that Sam Marcy wrote in “High Tech, Low Pay” and everything we have written since came to light that spring in the first major uprising of low-wage workers.

“Capitalism at a dead end” means enormous overproduction with increased exploitation abroad and less need for cheap labor. It means massive incarceration of Black and Latino/a youth, lower wages

for all, and the drive of migrants underground or out of the country altogether.

Now, why do I bring this up? Why review May Day 2006? Well, much can be said about the immigrant struggle then and now.

As Comrade Holmes wrote in his document, “In all likelihood, migrant workers will start the revolution.” This point alone demonstrates why we can never exhaust the discussion on immigrants.

But the main reason I raise these important developments is because Mexican migrants were central to the 2006 uprising. At this very moment, the very workers who helped revive May Day are again making history at U.S. imperialism’s front door.

As we meet, the possibility that the Mexican government could be shaken up in a way not seen since the early 1900s is very real, including the possible resignation of the current president, Enrique Peña Nieto. Mexicans are declaring ¡Ya basta! The disappearance of 43 students from the Ayotzinapa School in Iguala, Guerrero, is the drop of water that has shattered the oppressor’s vase.

It evokes the events of 1968 at Tlatelolco, where hundreds of students were brutally murdered in Mexico City. That incident is forever burned into the minds of young revolutionaries around the world.

Forty-three young people studying to become teachers are now missing. They may be dead.

But from Mexico to the U.S., throughout Europe and Latin America, and as far away as Australia, demonstrators are demanding: “¡Vivos los llevaron, vivos los queremos!” “Alive they took them, alive we want them back!”

The Ayotzi students were political activists, rooted in the community, part and parcel of the Mexican working class. Revolutionary slogans and pictures of Che Guevara adorn their campus.

They are the drop of water that shattered the vase because the masses have had enough. At least 100,000 Mexicans

have died since the so-called war on drugs began in 2006. Thousands more are missing. Extreme repression against unionists, journalists and activists accompanies miserable economic conditions.

Mexicans are dying from hunger. Or from protesting. Decapitations and bodies hanging from bridges are all too common.

Never to be forgotten are the women of Juárez, where hundreds if not thousands of women have been tortured and killed in the shadows of the maquiladora factories. No one has been punished for this femicide.

We must blame U.S. imperialism for all of this. In 2006, the Bush administration passed the Mérida Initiative, an aid program described as a “counternarcotics, counterterrorism and border security initiative for security forces to fight drugs.” The U.S. has spent approximately \$3 billion to fund this war on the people!

The Mexican state has evolved into a narco-state doing the bidding of the ruling class in the most crass, brutal way. Mexico is running red from the blood of the people.

But it is also red with righteous rage. Government offices have not been occupied, they have been burned down. Major airports in Acapulco and in Michoacán, prime tourist areas, have been shut down for hours by protesters. Marches are taking place throughout the country and schools shut down as students walk out day after day.

The country is becoming ungovernable. The governor of Guerrero was forced to resign and the Iguala mayor and his wife have been arrested, not just for corruption but as part and parcel of the narco state.

With this kind of corruption, who can be counted on to find justice for the 43 students? No one but the masses.

Developments in Mexico demand our complete attention. If the ruling class was worried about an Arab Spring, imagine their response to an “Arab Spring” at their front door?

Talk by **Teresa Gutierrez** to the 2014 Workers World Party National Conference in New York City.



What imperialism has done to sabotage and undermine revolutionary developments in Cuba, Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia will pale in comparison to what they will do in Mexico. Mexico is on fire. And this is a fire Washington will stop at nothing to put out.

But the people are picking up arms. They are beating up cops. And winning! In many areas, the people have formed their own police and have run drug dealers out of their communities. This is real community control!

It also sounds like emerging dual power, a situation we must monitor as it is very fluid.

There appears to be a call for a massive shutdown on Thursday, Nov. 20, just five days from now.

The families of the 43 are traveling throughout Mexico in caravans right now. They plan to end their caravan in Mexico City on Nov. 20. This could be a huge day of struggle right in our front yard.

Finally comrades, let me return to the point that Comrade Holmes made in his document: “In all likelihood, migrant workers will start the revolution.”

It could very well be immigrants, it could be women, it could be the people of Ferguson, it will certainly be youth!

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Excerpts from the talk given by **Fred Goldstein** at the 2014 Workers World Party National Conference in New York City.

ed number of small groups.

It is completely counterproductive to the aims of revolutionaries to withhold Marxist knowledge from the workers in struggle, those who are suffering at the hands of parasitic, predatory corporate bosses and financial sharks at this moment in the history of decadent capitalism — when it is more openly hostile to the interests of the workers and oppressed in every sphere of life.

And in this struggle there are many misguided analyses and many opponents who will advocate everything from workers’ cooperatives to local self-sufficiency to democratizing capitalism, etc.

But we know that there is no third way beyond socialist revolution. If you want to build a new society, it must be built not in the mind, not on the pages of utopian schemers, but on the existing social and economic foundation. And capitalism has laid the foundation for socialism. The revolution just sets that foundation free from the constraints of capital, from its use as a profit-making system, and allows

it to be used by the workers for their own well-being.

The foundation for socialism is an economic structure that can create enough for everybody. Why is that important? Because socialism is a society based upon good human relations. And the most important thing to promote good relations between people is to see that everyone has what they need to live and does not have to find personal security by getting rich at someone else’s expense.

In a millionaire’s home, no one fights over food. Why? Because there is an abun-

dance of food there. Tension over food only prevails in poor households where the supply is limited. If someone takes too much, someone else suffers.

That goes for society, too. It was the genius of Karl Marx that in the middle of the 19th century he was able to see that capitalism — and its profit motive — contained within it a never-ending drive to increase the productivity of labor. And that this drive would end up in the capacity to create abundance — enough for everyone. But he also saw that this capacity to create enough for everyone would, under capitalism, always be used for further enslavement and accumulation of profit.

And that is where we are today.

This advanced economic foundation, which could materially support the production of abundance and leisure time, is being used by capital to create mass poverty. Under capitalism you cannot live if you cannot sell your labor to some boss.

Under socialism, there are no capitalists, no bosses, no capitalist wage slavery. But under capitalism, as technolo-

gy makes workers more productive, the tendency to overproduction increases. If goods or services cannot be sold at a profit, then the bosses have less need for labor.

Under socialism, that contradiction is broken. Workers will be the collective owners of the economy. Production, services, the availability of culture and sports, and many other features of life will be planned according to the needs of the people. Capitalism has created supercomputers and networking that will make it possible to discover people’s needs and to translate that into economic life — and that also includes ensuring the universal availability of art, music, theater, poetry and all cultural forms. And the workers will have the leisure time to enjoy them.

On the USSR

But in order to promote socialism, a word must be said about the USSR. This is a subject for hours of presentation and discussion. I will only say this:

The moment you embark upon a dis-

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WORKERS WORLD PARTY CONFERENCE

WWPHOTO: G. DUNKEL

Youth are the future!

I would like to ask all the FIST members, in fact, all the young people in the hall, to stand — because you are the future of Workers World Party!

This year's conference comes at a critical juncture.

Many of you who have gathered in this hall have been on the front lines of the protests in solidarity with the heroic Gaza resistance. You have participated in support of the Ferguson rebellion, and many of you have also played critical roles in support of the emerging low-wage workers' fight for justice.

In fact, we are poised with contingency plans for our conference if the Ferguson grand jury announces its decision this

weekend. If that happens, we will be in the streets to demand justice for Mike Brown and an end to police terror.

We also come here today inspired by the resistance of our sisters and brothers and comrades in Mexico who are fighting a life-and-death struggle for their children and their fellow students.

We are inspired by our Cuban comrades, whose doctors and health professionals have traveled to West Africa to fight Ebola and the criminal neglect by the imperialist West.

What is crucial as communists is that all these resistance movements — whether they have been to stop union busting, end racist attacks on oppressed youth or



Opening talk at the 2014 Workers World National Conference in New York City by **Colleen Davidson**, a member of the Baltimore Branch of Workers World Party and Fight Imperialism, Stand Together.

its before people and promotes worldwide unemployment, hunger, war and oppression.

The upside to all of this is that our class is worldwide, and we have the power to unite globally and defeat capitalism and imperialism. Without our unity, without the power of our entire class fighting together, the very future of the planet is in danger.

As we continue our fight in our respective communities and on our respective issues, we must keep our eyes on the prize — socialist revolution!

Build a workers' world! □

defend the rights of migrant children — are all connected to the fight against capitalism and imperialism.

Capitalism today is at a dead end, and we must become the grave diggers of this decaying system, which puts prof-

What it takes to unite the workers & oppressed

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this conference. The title is “What is the working class and does it retain its revolutionary potential?” It sounds abstract, but it is a deeply political, ideological and strategic question. Either the capitalist ruling class is right, and these changes in the capitalist economy, globalization and technology have further atomized and fragmented the workers — don't even call them workers; call them associates — until we no longer have the same class interests, or there is something else going on. I smell a rat.

There is a deliberate, conscious strategy on the part of the ruling class to convince the working class that it is not one class and that, instead of being in solidarity with each other, they should compete, be fearful of each other, fight and hate each other. That lets capitalism remain on top. The truth of the matter is that the changes in capitalism have not shrunk the working class, but enlarged it. People who formerly thought they were

in another class are beginning to realize they are in the working class — even with PhDs and master's degrees. Young white people who thought they might be privileged, like their parents, are in the working class.

The ideas of the bourgeoisie infect even the labor movement. That is why the labor leaders have such narrow, limited ways. We have to fight bourgeois influence in the movement. We have to let everybody know that the working class is low-wage workers, migrant workers. Why wouldn't you want the millions of migrant workers to be in the union movement? They are the most militant and the most politically advanced, the strongest sector. We want the migrant workers leading it and the militant youth who have no job and may never have a job. Including the youth who rose up in Ferguson! That is our class.

Our relationship to them is not based on sentiment or altruism. They are our class sisters and brothers, regardless of their circumstances. The homeless, the prisoners, the most downtrodden and

oppressed are part of our class.

We have got to get over narrow, stupid, bourgeois ideas, old encrusted ideas that somehow confuse or reverse that truth.

The ruling class celebrated the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. They see it as the beginning of the period that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

But they are not as cocky as 25 years ago, because their world system is in deep crisis. The world capitalist economy is so bad there is going to be something — whether a bank failing somewhere or some other event — that starts it. Whether it is a war — and you see their mission creep to a wider war in the Middle East. Whether it is a struggle with Ukraine and Russia, or whatever is the catalyst for the next catastrophic economic and financial crisis. It is coming.

The collapse of the Soviet Union was the biggest disaster for the working class in history. Our class is still reeling from it. But our conception of world socialist revolution was never exclusively based on

the existence of a camp where the working class held power. That is important. The more places the working class holds power, the better. We all agree.

But world socialist revolution does not depend on that alone. World socialist revolution is dependent on the working class rising up from the bottom everywhere and anywhere. It can't be merely a geographical struggle: East vs. West, South vs. North.

That paradigm is passing. The economic crisis and changes in the capitalist system are making the world smaller — the distance between New York and Berlin, South Africa, Indonesia, Buenos Aires or Iraq is much smaller. The decisive thing for the revolutionary party is to do what is necessary to forge unity between the workers and oppressed. In order to forge that unity the working-class movement has to militantly, aggressively, consciously seek out ways of coming to the aid of the most oppressed. It is the only way, the only path to real global unity of the workers and the oppressed, and it is the path to socialist revolution. □

Spread Marxism, build the party

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cussion of socialism, you don't have to wait long for questions about how socialism failed and the Soviet Union showed it.

I want to read a quote from Marx from the “Critique of the Gotha Program.” This is probably the single most important work in understanding the problems of socialism.

Discussing what would happen after the revolution takes power in an advanced capitalist country such as 19th-century England, Marx wrote:

“What we have to deal with here is a communist society, not as it has developed on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, just as it emerges from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges.”

Marx was talking here about the difficulties that would have to be overcome by communist society in its early stages, precisely because the prejudices and practices instilled in the generations raised by capitalism would still exist. And the economy and economic organization would have to be transformed.

But, as Lenin later said, capitalism first broke at its weakest link — in backward Russia, where capitalism and the capitalist class were weak and the legacy of feudalism in the countryside was strong. The peasantry and much of the working

class were largely illiterate and industry was scattered in a few centers that were geared to the West.

Every socialist revolution since, whether it was in China, Korea, Vietnam or Cuba, came into existence under even more difficult conditions.

Not only was abundance not even remotely possible, but to make matters worse, imperialism never gave any country that aspired to socialism one minute's peace. It surrounded them, invaded them, blockaded them, and did everything possible to keep socialism from succeeding. This, of course, inevitably created great internal contradictions in the USSR.

So socialism did not fail. Every socialist country had to deal with the legacy of capitalism and imperialism in an environment of permanent warfare — economic, political, military, diplomatic and so forth. The successes of the USSR were based on the socialist measures, nationalization of property, planning the economy, guarantees for the workers, etc. The failures were due to the legacy of capitalism, feudalism and imperialist aggression.

So anyone who tells you that socialism failed has not studied history and has bought the false line of the bourgeoisie.

This much we do know: The foundation for socialism is ripe in the U.S. Our job is to liberate that foundation from the greedy grasp of the capitalist class, destroy its state and set up a socialist society. □

May Day & migrant rights movement

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We can agree that there are important lessons right now that cry out for the party's intervention.

Mexico demands of us to imagine a near future when we should shut down an airport. For example, LaGuardia Airport, to protest the Veolia corporation in defense of the Boston bus drivers.

I know, conditions are not quite there. I am saying, however, that this should be our party's orientation for the future.

And we might not be able to shut down LGA, but we can all try to go to Boston on Nov. 24!

Mexico demands of us to demonstrate our internationalism on an even higher level. It urges us to collectively develop an advanced strategy to link our struggles. To continue to fight for left unity despite any differences.

Workers are under attack, economically and socially. And youth in particular are being gunned down in unprecedented waves.

How about developing an international campaign — “From Gaza to Ferguson to Ayotzinapa: Hands up, don't shoot!” — and demand that the police be disarmed?

How about that the next caravan we organize be one on immigration and mass incarcerations together? If debtors' prisons are back — and they are — then how about a campaign to break the chains of ankle monitors?

Isn't it possible that another more advanced strike can happen some May Day in the future on the heels of 2006? Will we be part of it? Hell, yes!

World events cry out for the Party and all revolutionaries in the U.S. to come together immediately and deepen our influence among the working class. To figure out basic transitional demands as well as higher political ideological work.

In the words of the Mexican movement, “Fue el estado” — it was the state behind the missing Ayotzi students. It is the colonialist settler state that occupies Palestine. It is the racist occupying state that allows killer cops to walk free in Ferguson. It is the state that we revolutionaries, young and old, must target, fight against and crush.

Mexico and the immigrant movement show us that the imperialists can militarize the border all they want, but they will never stop the rising tide of revolution on our doorstep and in the barrios and neighborhoods of this country.

Gaza, Ferguson and Mexico are the flames of revolutionary class upheaval. Let us fan those flames.

Down with U.S. imperialism! ¡Vivos los llevaron, vivos los queremos!

From Gaza to Ferguson to Ayotzinapa: Hands up, don't shoot!

All power to the people! All power to the workers!

Socialism or death! □

LESLIE FEINBERG, 1949-2014

A communist who revolutionized transgender rights

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

Leslie Feinberg, who identified as an anti-racist white, working-class, secular Jewish, transgender, lesbian, female, revolutionary communist, died on Nov. 15. She succumbed to complications from multiple tick-borne co-infections, including Lyme disease, babesiosis and protomyxzoa rheumatica, after decades of illness.

She died at home in Syracuse, N.Y., with her partner and spouse of 22 years, Minnie Bruce Pratt, at her side. Her last words were: "Hasten the revolution! Remember me as a revolutionary communist."

Feinberg was the first theorist to advance a Marxist concept of "transgender liberation," and her work impacted popular culture, academic research and political organizing.

Her historical and theoretical writing has been widely anthologized and taught in the U.S. and international academic circles. Her impact on mass culture was primarily through her 1993 first novel, "Stone Butch Blues," widely considered in and outside the U.S. as a groundbreaking work about the complexities of gender. Sold by the hundreds of thousands and also passed from hand-to-hand inside prisons, the novel has been translated into Chinese, Dutch, German, Italian, Slovenian, Turkish and Hebrew. Her earnings from the Hebrew edition go to ASWAT, Palestinian Gay Women.

In a statement at the end of her life, she said she had "never been in search of a common umbrella identity, or even an umbrella term, that brings together people of oppressed sexes, gender expressions and sexualities," and added that she believed in the right of self-determination of oppressed individuals, communities, groups and nations.

She preferred to use the pronouns she/zie and her/hir for herself, but also said: "I care which pronoun is used, but people have been respectful to me with the wrong pronoun and disrespectful with the right one. It matters whether someone is using the pronoun as a bigot, or if they are trying to demonstrate respect."

Low-wage worker, anti-racist organizer

Feinberg was born Sept. 1, 1949, in Kansas City, Mo., and raised in Buffalo, N.Y., in a working-class Jewish family. At age 14 she began supporting herself by working in the display sign shop of a local department store, and eventually stopped going to high school classes, though officially she received her diploma. It was during this time that she entered the social life of the Buffalo gay bars. She moved out of a biological family hostile to her sexuality and gender expression, and to the end of her life carried legal documents that made clear they were not her family.

Discrimination against her as a transgender person made it impossible for her to get steady work. She earned her living for most of her life through a series of low-wage temp jobs, including working in a PVC pipe factory and a book bindery, cleaning out ship cargo holds and washing dishes, serving as an ASL interpreter, and doing medical data inputting.

In her early twenties, Feinberg met Workers World Party at a demonstration for Palestinian land rights and self-determination. She soon joined WWP's founding Buffalo branch.



With Minnie Bruce Pratt at Stop War on Iran protest.

WW PHOTO: MIKE EILENFELDT

After moving to New York City, she participated in numerous mass organizing campaigns by the party over the years, including many anti-war, pro-labor rallies. She was a key organizer in the December 1974 March Against Racism in Boston, a campaign against white supremacist attacks on African-American adults and schoolchildren in the city. Feinberg led a group of 10 lesbian-identified people, including several from South Boston, on an all-night "paste-up" of South Boston, covering every visible racist epithet. In 1983-1984 she embarked on a national tour about AIDS as a denied epidemic.

Feinberg was one of the organizers of the 1988 mobilization in Atlanta that routed the white supremacist Ku Klux Klan as they tried to march down Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue on MLK Day. When anti-abortion groups descended on Buffalo in 1992 and again in 1998-1999, following the murder there of Dr. Barnett Slepian, Feinberg returned to work with Buffalo United for Choice and its Rainbow Peacekeepers, which organized community self-defense for local LGBTQ+ bars and clubs as well as the women's clinic.

A WW journalist since 1974, Feinberg was the editor of the Political Prisoners page of the newspaper for 15 years, becoming a managing editor in 1995. She was a member of the National Committee of the Party.

From 2004 to 2008, Feinberg's writing on the links between socialism and LGBT history, "Lavender & Red," ran as a 120-part series in Workers World. Her most recent book, "Rainbow Solidarity in Defense of Cuba," was an edited selection of that series. (workers.org/lavender-red)

Feinberg authored two other non-fiction books, "Transgender Warriors: Making History" and "Trans Liberation: Beyond Pink or Blue," as well as a second novel, "Drag King Dreams."

Feinberg was a member of the National Writers Union, United Auto Workers Local 1981 and of Pride at Work, an AFL-CIO constituency group. She received an honorary doctorate from the Starr King School for the Ministry for her transgender and social justice work, and was the recipient of numerous other awards, including the Lambda Literary Award and

Painting a wall for CeCe McDonald.

PHOTO: BILLY NAVARRO JR.



WW PHOTO: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

Speaking in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal, Town Hall, New York, 1999.

declared War." (transgenderwarrior.org)

At the time of her death, Feinberg was preparing a 20th-anniversary edition of "Stone Butch Blues." She worked up to within a few days of her death to prepare the edition for free access, reading and download from on-line. In addition to the text of the novel, the on-line edition will contain a slideshow, "This Is What Solidarity Looks Like," documenting the breadth of the organizing campaign to free CeCe McDonald, a young Minneapolis (trans)woman organizer and activist sent to prison for defending herself against a white neo-Nazi attacker. The new edition is dedicated to McDonald. A devoted group of friends are continuing to work to post Feinberg's final writing and art online at lesliefeinberg.net.

Feinberg's spouse, Minnie Bruce Pratt, an activist and poet, is the author of "Crime Against Nature" about loss of custody of her sons as a lesbian mother. Feinberg and Pratt met in 1992 when Feinberg presented a slideshow on her transgender research in Washington, D.C., sponsored by the local Workers World branch. After a long-distance courtship, they made their home for many years in Jersey City, N.J., where, to protect their relationship, the couple domestic-partnered in 2004 and civil-unioned in 2006. They also married in civil ceremony in Massachusetts and in New York state in 2011.

Feinberg stressed that state authorities had no right to assign who were or were not her loved ones, but rather that she would define her chosen family, citing Marx who said that the exchange value of love is — love.

Feinberg is survived by Pratt and an extended family of choice, as well as many friends, activists and comrades around the world in struggle against oppression and for liberation. □

the American Library Association Gay and Lesbian Book Award.

'Bigotry, prejudice, lack of science'

During a period when diseases would not allow her to read, write or talk, Feinberg continued to communicate through art. Picking up a camera for the first time, she posted thousands of pictures on Flickr, including "The Screened-In Series," a disability-art, class-conscious documentary of her Hawley-Green neighborhood photographed entirely from behind the windows of her apartment. (tinyurl.com/k5bpg58)

Diagnosed with Lyme and multiple tick-borne co-infections in 2008, Feinberg was infected first in the early 1970s when little was known about the diseases. She had received treatment for these only within the last six years. She said, "My experience in ILADS care offers great hope to desperately ill people who are in earlier stages of tick-borne diseases."

She attributed her catastrophic health crisis to "bigotry, prejudice and lack of science" — active prejudice toward her transgender identity that made access to health care exceedingly difficult and lack of science from limits placed by mainstream medical authorities on information, treatment and research about Lyme and its co-infections. She blogged online about these issues in "Casualty of an Un-



WORKERS WORLD

editorial

Ferguson's moment of truth

A moment of truth approaches in Ferguson, in Missouri, in the United States. Two sides are mobilizing for the next step in the struggle for freedom from police and state repression for nationally oppressed peoples in the United States.

The point of contention is the Missouri grand jury's decision either to indict the killer of 18-year-old Michael Brown, gunned down last August by cop Darren Wilson — or to let Wilson walk without even facing a trial.

Those on the side of the repressive cops have leaked selected bits of "news" that they hope will make Wilson look slightly less guilty of murder, but it won't convince those who demand justice for Brown. On the contrary, this has led the progressive movement that supports Ferguson's Black residents to expect that Wilson, who shot and killed Brown, won't be indicted for it. And with good reason.

Gov. Jay Nixon of Missouri has already declared a state of emergency and mobilized the National Guard, along with the militarized state and local police forces

equipped with the heaviest weapons the Pentagon could distribute, under the pretext of a "terrorist" threat. All this is clearly meant to intimidate and/or repress the people who stand up against injustice.

On the side of justice, those fighting for civil rights and against racism in Ferguson and around the country are prepared to demonstrate. Actions are planned in 70 cities, four in New York City alone. Most are set for the day of or day after the grand jury decision. (See iacenter.org for details.)

It is a sign of the maturity and determination of this movement that the protesters plan to go out in the streets to show their support for justice and against racism, whatever the grand jury decides. The struggle against police brutality and racist policing neither begins nor ends with Ferguson — but it has reached a moment of truth there.

We call on all our readers to participate in the protests and marches.

Long live the memory of Michael Brown! □

NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

THURS., NOV. 27, 2014

Cole's Hill, Plymouth, Massachusetts

Since 1970, Native Americans have gathered at noon on Cole's Hill in Plymouth to commemorate a National Day of Mourning on the U.S. "Thanksgiving" holiday. Many Native Americans do not celebrate the arrival of the Pilgrims and other European settlers. 'Thanksgiving Day' is a reminder of the genocide of millions of Native people, the theft of Native lands, and the relentless assault on Native culture. Participants in National Day of Mourning honor Native ancestors and the struggles of Native peoples to survive today. It is a day of remembrance and spiritual connection, as well as a protest of the racism and oppression that Native Americans continue to experience.

Join us to demand freedom for Native political prisoner Leonard Peltier. Help us in our struggle to create a true awareness of Native peoples and demonstrate the unity of Indigenous peoples internationally. Help shatter the untrue glass image of the Pilgrims and the unjust system based on racism, sexism, homophobia and war.



Buses to DOM leaving at 6 a.m. sharp from the Solidarity Center 147 W 24, 2nd floor, New York, NY

The bus will return from Plymouth to NYC at about 4:30 p.m.

Round-trip bus tickets are sliding scale \$30-\$45

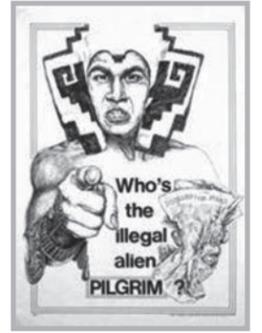
(Paying the full price will help cover the cost of subsidized tickets for activists who live on fixed incomes/or are unemployed)

Tickets can be purchased in advance at the International Action Center 147 W. 24 St, Second Floor Manhattan

Hours office open: 2 p.m. - 9 p.m., Monday to Friday

Tickets will go fast, don't delay, get your ticket asap. 212.633.6646

United American Indians of New England/LPSG uaie.org and [facebook.com/events/1526787624229601/](https://www.facebook.com/events/1526787624229601/)



Detroit bankruptcy 'exit plan'

Latest attack on African-American majority

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

As the corporate-controlled media in the city of Detroit continue to champion the massive theft of health care programs, pension funds and public assets totaling over \$6 billion, the majority African-American population is being completely disenfranchised by the bank-led "plan of adjustment."

Despite claims of a "rebirth" of the municipality through a forced and illegal bankruptcy proceeding, the overall conditions in Detroit have declined over the last 20 months since the appointment of Kevyn Orr as emergency manager. Public transportation, lighting, water resources, education and emergency medical services have suffered.

The ruling-class interests have praised two select areas in the city as prime centers for investment. In downtown, billionaires Dan Gilbert, owner of Quicken Loans, and Mike Ilitch, owner of the Detroit Tigers, Detroit Red Wings and other corporations, are attempting to reshape the development agenda for the entire city.

Efforts have also been underway to encourage people to move into the Midtown district, which includes Wayne State University, the Detroit Medical Center and

the Institute of Arts, for both residential and business purposes. Meanwhile, the working class, poor and senior residents of Midtown are being targeted for removal through astronomical hikes of rent and police sweeps.

The increasing demand for rental units in Detroit has much to do with the impact of the foreclosure crisis, which has plagued the city for nearly a decade. Whole neighborhoods in the east, west and southwest districts of the city have been devastated by the predatory actions of banks, insurance firms, the monopoly utility company DTE Energy and the deeply distressed Water and Sewerage Department.

A moratorium on bank foreclosures could have saved tens of thousands of households from bank seizures of their properties and therefore stemmed the precipitous decline in tax revenues and public school enrollments. But state and local governments declined to consider this.

Massive electrical, heating and water services shut-offs have also served to drive people from their neighborhoods, since it is almost impossible to live in homes without these necessities of modern life.

Court endorses draconian bank policies

The Moratorium NOW! Coalition and other organizations made two major ef-

forts to bring the questions of predatory bank lending and water shut-offs into the considerations of how the plan of adjustment would be structured. During the bankruptcy trial, hundreds of rank-and-file workers, retirees and homeowners filed legal objections to both the eligibility for municipal bankruptcy as well as the plan of adjustment.

The Jones Day law firm, which misrepresented the interests of the city through the emergency manager and Gov. Rick Snyder, rejected any mention of the role of foreclosures and evictions in relationship to Detroit's financial ruin. To ignore such an obvious fact of history and its effect on population decline, destruction of housing stock and municipal services is a clear recipe for disaster.

A class action lawsuit, filed by victims of the massive water shut-offs that have impacted over 30,000 households since January, sought to bring attention to the usurious bond issues and loans that have drained at least \$537 million from the city treasury over the last two years. But Federal Judge Steven Rhodes refused to impose a moratorium on the termination of water services.

Can capitalists rebuild Detroit?

Even though the ruling class is saying they will rebuild the city of Detroit in their own image, is enough investment capital actually available to make a significant dent in the blight and underdevelopment?

A key element of the city development plan is building a new hockey arena and entertainment district by Ilitch Holdings. A Woodward Avenue light rail system from downtown to the New Center area is being built. However, similar

efforts during the late 1990s and early 2000s when two stadiums and three casino hotels were opened, failed miserably to ensure financial stability.

Anywhere between 60,000 to 150,000 tax foreclosures could take place by the spring of 2015. Unemployment in Detroit and the surrounding region of southeast Michigan remains high. The only real jobs being created come with low wages and no benefits or stability.

Since the financial crisis of 2007 to 2009 and the bailing out of the banks, insurance firms and auto companies, the corporations have failed to reinvest their trillions of dollars in job creation or infrastructural improvements — because they would not guarantee the rate of profit these entities are demanding. The phasing out of quantitative easing could prompt a rise in interest rates and further stall growth, spurring a renewed decline in the overall economy.

When these plans fail to create the desired results, the ruling class and their agents in government will initiate a new round of austerity measures through layoffs and further drive down wages, creating additional hardships for the majority African-American working class in Detroit. Only a program of development that empowers the working class can provide any realistic hope of improving the conditions of the people.

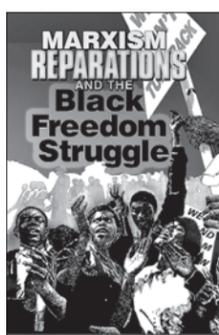
Such a shift in policy will only come from mass struggle and anti-capitalist organization. The only real solutions to the problems facing the people of Detroit will come through a direct challenge to the banks: demanding payback of the billions they have expropriated from the people through seizures of homes, jobs, pension benefits and public assets. □

MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper.

Edited by Monica Moorehead.

Available at major online bookstores



GRAPHIC BY SAHU BARRON

After killing of young militant

Protests over police violence sweep France

By G. Dunkel

Rémi Fraisse was killed by an “offensive grenade” used by French cops Oct. 26 during a protest against a dam being built in Tarn, a rural area northeast of Toulouse. Fraisse, 21, was part of the encampment by a local militant group with the slogan “As long as there are bodies, there will be no dam.”

The encampment was supported by significant left groups in France — the Party of the Left, the Greens and the New Anti-capitalist Party. Their candidates in the first round of the 2012 presidential vote got close to 15 percent.

Fraisse’s death sparked a storm of protest, both immediately after it took place and as news spread. High school students all over France marched, not only to commemorate Rémi’s courage but also to protest police violence.

While French cops had avoided killing protesters, they have been harsh and hard with the Black and Arab immigrant communities and working-class youth of all nationalities, killing even nonprotesters with relative impunity.

The cops facing off with the protesters in Tarn were members of the anti-riot unit of the gendarmerie. The gendarmerie are a national, militarily organized police force controlled by the minister of the interior. They are extensively trained with all sorts of light weapons; the ones in Tarn had night-vision goggles.

At the session of Parliament after Fraisse was killed, some deputies from the Party of the Left called for the resignation of Minister of the Interior Bernard Cazeneuve, the prohibition of “offensive” grenades and an investigation around the circumstances of Fraisse’s death. Their charges were extensively aired on French television.

Adding heat to the charges made in Parliament were attacks by masked men



Paris youth say: ‘Rémi: The people are in the streets!’

on Party of the Left leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon, Green Party leaders and José Bové, head of a peasant union opposed to the dam and a deputy in the European Parliament. The attacks took place during substantial demonstrations held in Testet, the nearest village to the dam, on Oct. 24 and 25.

Cazeneuve fairly quickly banned the use of concussion grenades, while Ségolène Royal, minister of the environment and economic development, suspended work on the dam indefinitely. It came out that only 20 farmers would have benefited from the dam.

Major demonstrations raising both police violence, as exemplified in the killing of Fraisse, and the ecological consequences of this dam and other projects in the south of France, also took place in Toulouse, Nantes, Marseilles and Paris. Some of the demonstrations were attacked by the police; others were banned. (New York Times, Nov. 1)

A large number of demonstrations started in November, mainly involving high school youth. They often showed an amazing degree of militancy, forcing the cops to back down. They put their videos and photos on sites like citizenside.com/

fr, which reported on 69 actions, from cities like Paris to smaller towns like La Rochelle and Nîmes.

One slogan stands out in the pictures: “The state is a killer.”

A video from Nantes starts with 300 to 500 youth facing off against 30 to 40 gendarmes, armed with batons, shields and hand-held pepper spray cans. The cops advance on the youth, who are yelling “Assassins, assassins” and banging garbage can covers. When the number of youths start to swell and they begin to flank the cops, the latter retreat — slowly but under steady pressure. Even a youth who is sprayed three or four times keeps advancing.

While these protests were growing in intensity, the French newspaper Le Monde released a transcript of cops talking about Fraisse’s death and how to muffle its impact. The transcript raises the question that an order telling the cops to act with “firmness” wasn’t local, so where did it come from?

The mass movement against police violence in France is putting a lot of pressure on the French government, which is maneuvering to keep the wraps on and keep destroying the environment to satisfy the greed of the rich. □

MUNDO OBRERO / WORKERS WORLD

Lección de las elecciones 2014

Luchar por un partido obrero

Continúa de página 12

Misuri, con su militarización de la policía y la violencia contra las/os manifestantes en busca de justicia, o la exclusión de millones de prisioneras/os y ex prisioneros de las listas de votantes, para ver una verificación del punto de vista de Lenin.

Bajo estas circunstancias, las/os trabajadores y las/os oprimidos no tienen otra alternativa que declarar su ruptura con los partidos capitalistas y el capitalismo y luchar por su propio partido independiente - uno que hable y luche abiertamente por las/os trabajadores, contra la clase capitalista y por la revolución socialista.

Walmart workers ‘sit down to live better’

Continued from page 1

their cars in the parking lots of the stores where they work, so that, if they’re called on, they can work extra hours without having to commute.

Workers World spoke with Daniel Coles, a Walmart worker who is also an OUR Walmart organizer and who participated in the action at the Crenshaw store, located in South Central Los Angeles.

WW: You participated in one of the sit-down actions called by OUR Walmart on Thursday. Can you describe what happened?

Daniel Coles: Yes, I did! I was in the one at Crenshaw. At first, none of us who were going to be in it knew which stores we were going to. When I was first told I was going to Crenshaw, I was so happy, because that’s the store where I work. I knew that customers would know us and support us.

When we got there we went inside the entrance, and one group lined up on one side, and the other group lined up on the other side. We didn’t intend to block the entrance, we just wanted to be on both sides for a long time so that as people walked in they would have to see us and hear us.

We used the Walmart slogan, which

is “Save money, live better,” except we changed it to say “Stand up, live better.” So at first we chanted that, and then when we were ready to do the actual sit-down, we changed it to “Sit down, live better.” Then we put tape on our mouths with “Strike” written on it to symbolize that Walmart tries to silence us. The action lasted about two hours. At my store, just like I thought, we had a lot of customer support. People told us that they agreed with us.

It was live streamed so a lot of people saw it. The analysts saw it in Arkansas. They had a meeting scheduled. We wanted them to see what was really happening at Walmart.

WW: Who are the analysts?

Coles: They’re a group of investors really, who analyze information about the different stores to see if everything is going well, so they know the stores are going smoothly and making money.

WW: Is it usually managers who give them the information?

Coles: Usually CFOs. But we wanted them to see what’s really happening. Their meeting was set for 10 o’clock in Arkansas so we got started about 15 minutes before and we know they saw it.

WW: So these actions were set up for

that reason? They were timed so that the investors would be confronted with the actions during their meeting?

Coles: Yes, that was the plan from the beginning.

WW: What were the specific demands?

Coles: We were demanding \$15 an hour, full-time hours, and that Walmart management stop retaliating against us for our efforts to get a living wage.

WW: What was management’s reaction? Did they try to stop you or try to make you leave?

Coles: They were really surprised because they had no idea this was happening. At the Crenshaw store the manager called his boss, but they must have decided not to try to make us leave because we weren’t blocking customers and we had a lot of customer support in that store. A lot of people told us they agreed and supported us.

WW: What was the mood of you and your fellow workers at the end? Did you feel it was successful?

Coles: Everyone was really happy and proud, telling each other, “I’m really glad we did this.” “We did good work,” and things like that. We’re all looking forward to another strike on “Black Friday,” which is going to be even better.



Lección de las elecciones 2014

Luchar por un partido obrero

“A los oprimidos se les permite una vez cada ciertos años decidir qué representante de la clase opresora les representará y reprimirá en el parlamento”.

– Karl Marx, “La Guerra Civil en Francia”

Por Fred Goldstein

Las elecciones de medio término en EUA han causado un gran revuelo porque el Partido Demócrata perdió el control del Senado y perdió aún más terreno en la Cámara de Representantes. La baja participación récord, el 36 por ciento del electorado, ha producido mucho comentario. Ha habido un torrente de análisis que trata de explicar la derrota del Partido Demócrata.

Muchos señalan el fracaso de los demócratas y la administración de Barack Obama de presentar un programa que pueda solucionar los problemas reales de las masas - empleos, pobreza, racismo, la difícil situación de los inmigrantes, el cierre de las clínicas de aborto, etc. Otros dicen que Obama se mantuvo fuera de la campaña electoral y los demócratas huyeron de él - especialmente en el Sur racista pero también en muchos otros estados. Otros apuntan a la decisión de Ciudadanos Unidos y el dinero corporativo que ha corrompido el proceso político - cerca de \$4 mil millones se destinó, principalmente por las grandes empresas y los ricos, en estas elecciones. Además, miles no pudieron votar por las leyes de supresión de votantes.

Todo esto es cierto. Y hay mucha desmoralización comprensible sobre el barido republicano. La tentación es dejarse arrastrar por el debate sobre lo que salió mal, lo que esto significa para el 2016, y el debate relacionado sobre cómo solucionar los problemas del Partido Demócrata.

La lucha de las masas ignorada

En los análisis de los expertos burgueses, dejan de lado el hecho de que decenas de miles de personas están luchando contra los homicidios y el acoso de la policía, así como la encarcelación en masa. La campaña para detener la supresión de votantes es generalizada. Millones de inmigrantes han estado luchando desde el 2006 para conseguir sus derechos y legalización.

En todo el país las/os trabajadoras de bajos salarios se han manifestado por un salario mínimo de \$15 la hora y el derecho a un sindicato. En septiembre, unas 400.000 personas se manifestaron en la ciudad de Nueva York contra el cambio climático. Miles se manifiestan contra el oleoducto Keystone y el fracking por los depredadores de las compañías petroleras.

Por encima de todo, millones están desempleadas/os, subempleados o han caído fuera de la fuerza de trabajo, sin embargo, no hubo una palabra durante la campaña sobre un programa de verdaderos puestos de trabajo para poner a la gente a trabajar con un salario digno.

Nada de esto, ni de las muchas luchas populares se reflejó en las campañas nacionales de los partidos capitalistas.

¡Eso es porque son partidos capitalistas y estos temas son cuestiones de las/os trabajadoras!

Para la clase obrera y para todas/os los oprimidos, el tratar de averiguar cómo reparar el Partido Demócrata sería una distracción inútil. Lo que las/os trabajadoras necesitan sacar de estas elecciones es que es otro ejemplo dramático del porqué necesitan su propio partido político. Necesitan un partido que luche por sus necesidades diarias, con métodos de lucha militante. Necesitan un partido que utilice el proceso electoral, no para promover ilusiones electorales, sino para exponer al capitalismo y la quiebra del sistema de ganancias.

Y necesitan un partido que luche para superar la pesadilla capitalista totalmente.

Este problema no comenzó ahora. Hace casi 145 años, cuando Karl Marx analizó la lucha de los trabajadores franceses durante la Comuna de París, puso las cosas claras en relación a las elecciones en el capitalismo: “a los oprimidos se les permite una vez cada ciertos años decidir qué determinado representante de las clases opresoras les representará y reprimirá en el parlamento”.

Los ricos a cargo del Partido Demócrata

Marx hablaba de cómo las elecciones deciden quién va a dirigir el gobierno capitalista. Echemos un vistazo a los funcionarios elegidos por Obama para administrar la parte alta del gobierno.

Chuck Hagel, jefe del Pentágono. Algunas fuentes estiman conservadoramente su patrimonio neto como \$5 millones. Pero más importante aún es que está en la junta de Chevron, de Deutsche Bank y de la Wolfensohn Co., fundada por el presidente del Banco Mundial. Cuando dejó el Senado en el 2009, se fue a la junta de Corsair Capital, que tenía participaciones en instituciones financieras en Argentina, Brasil, Bermudas, Alemania, Corea, Polonia y Suecia.

Hagel es un banquero/financiero que ahora dirige la máquina de guerra de Estados Unidos y está tomando decisiones para escalar la intervención estadounidense en Irak, desplegar más fuerzas a la OTAN para luchar contra el movimiento de resistencia ucraniana, enviar \$3 mil millones al año a Israel, etc. (USA Today, 14 de enero 2013)

O veamos al secretario del tesoro Jacob Lew. Lew es un multimillonario. Él vino del departamento de Inversiones Alternativas del Citibank y antes, del departamento Global Wealth Management (Dirección de Riquezas Globales) del Citibank. La inversión Alternativa es un nombre elegante para los derivados financieros y el juego especulativo. La Global Wealth Management maneja el dinero de las personas más ricas del mundo. A los millonarios apenas se les consideran. Lew fue implicado en ayudar a causar la crisis financiera de 2008.

Luego está el secretario de estado John Kerry, con valor de \$300 millones en fideicomisos que provienen de su esposa

Teresa Heinz Kerry, heredera de la fortuna de la salsa de tomate Heinz. Kerry vive de un imperio empresarial al que defiende, junto a otros, como jefe del Departamento de Estado. Los secretarios de Defensa, Tesoro y Estado son el núcleo del gobierno capitalista.

¿Y la legislatura? Este es el primer año en que los ingresos de las/os representantes en la Cámara conforman un promedio de más de \$1 millón cada uno. Algunos de los congresistas importantes del Partido Demócrata están entre los 25 miembros más ricos en patrimonio neto, a partir del 2012. Por ejemplo, Mark Warner de Virginia con \$257 millones; Richard Blumenthal de Connecticut con \$103 millones; Nancy Pelosi con \$87 millones; Dianne Feinstein con \$68 millones; Alan Grayson con \$40 millones, y así sucesivamente. (Net Worth de 2012, en opensecrets.org, publicado por el Center for Responsiveness in Politics)

¿Cómo se pueden escuchar los intereses o preocupaciones de las/os trabajadoras, y mucho menos tratados, entre esta cueva de ladrones corporativos ricos y los tiburones de Wall Street? No es de extrañar que la austeridad, los recortes y los rescates para los ricos prevalezcan sobre la solución a la pobreza y el desempleo.

Los mismos capitalistas a quienes los políticos están atados, son los que están reduciendo, despidiendo, recortando horas, haciendo dinero mediante el pago de bajos salarios, recortando beneficios, imponiendo fracking, instituyendo las escuelas charter y cárceles privadas, participando en el saqueo en el extranjero y en ciudades como Detroit, etc.

Mito del Partido Demócrata “progresista”

La mitología del Partido Demócrata, que ha existido desde Franklin Roosevelt, debe ser demolida. En su lugar debe venir la dedicación a la independencia de la clase obrera y una exposición de la democracia capitalista como una farsa, una manera de mantener las/os trabajadoras subyugados.

Los fracasos de la administración de Obama con respecto a las/os trabajadoras no son nuevos. Roosevelt y Lyndon Johnson se vieron obligados a aprobar legislaciones progresistas sólo porque millones de personas estaban en movimiento. El New Deal fue considerado un “seguro contra motín” para salvar al capitalismo, que estaba siendo atacado por las huelgas de brazos caídos, huelgas generales y manifestaciones masivas durante la década de 1930.

Johnson firmó la Ley de Derechos Civiles, la Ley de Derechos Electorales y la llamada Gran Sociedad porque millones de afroamericanas/os y otros estaban en las calles enfrentándose a la policía y al Ku Klux Klan en los años 1950 y 1960.

Sin embargo, tan pronto cesó la lucha, la dirección del Partido Demócrata se quitó su disfraz como un amigo del pueblo. La administración de Jimmy Carter en la década de 1970 abrió el ataque contra la beneficencia pública. Carter dijo que “la vida no es justa” al responder a

una pregunta sobre la prohibición puesta sobre la financiación de abortos para las mujeres pobres. Él comenzó una escalada militar y planeó el ataque anti sindical contra la Asociación Profesional de Controladores de Tránsito Aéreo que Ronald Reagan más tarde llevó a cabo.

Bill Clinton destruyó completamente el sistema de beneficencia pública. Declaró que “la era del gran gobierno ha terminado”, arrojando a millones de mujeres pobres, desproporcionadamente afroamericanas y latinas, fuera de las listas. Él puso las primeras leyes “antiterroristas”, aprobó la Ley Efectiva de Pena de Muerte y, de hecho, desreguló Wall Street mediante la destrucción de la Ley Glass-Steagall, aprobada después de la Gran Depresión para frenar a los bancos.

Así que el gobierno de Obama está siguiendo una larga tradición de ataques por el liderazgo del Partido Demócrata contra las/os trabajadoras y oprimidos. Es y ha sido un partido capitalista de las grandes empresas por más de 100 años. Sirve a los intereses de los ricos, los banqueros y los empresarios.

Por supuesto, el Partido Republicano es más flagrante en su búsqueda de los intereses extremos de los ricos. No tienen nada que ocultar porque el sector empresarial es su base. La dirección del Partido Demócrata está dirigida por tener que ocultar sus maniobras anti obreras, reaccionarias y racistas, ya que su base son los sindicatos, la población africana americana, latina, las mujeres, la comunidad LGBT, la clase media progresista, las/os estudiantes y así sucesivamente. Es por eso que los dos partidos tienen diferentes atractivos, dos imágenes diferentes. Pero no hay nada esencial en el que se diferencian cuando se trata de servir a los intereses fundamentales del capital.

Ferguson y la democracia burguesa

V.I. Lenin puso las cosas bien cuando citó a Federico Engels diciendo “el Estado moderno representativo es un instrumento de explotación del trabajo asalariado por el capital.” (Citado en Lenin “La revolución proletaria y el Renegado Kautsky”)

Lenin añadió: “Tome las leyes fundamentales de los Estados modernos, tome su administración, tome la libertad de reunión, la libertad de la prensa, o ‘la igualdad de todos los ciudadanos ante la ley’, y verá a cada paso la prueba de la hipocresía de la democracia burguesa con la que cada trabajador honesto y con conciencia de clase está familiarizado. No hay un solo estado, no importa cuán democrático sea, que no tenga tecnicismos o reservas en su Constitución que garantizan a la burguesía la posibilidad de enviar tropas contra los obreros, de proclamar la ley marcial, y así sucesivamente, en caso de una “violación del orden público, ‘y, de hecho, en caso de que la clase explotada viole ‘su posición de esclavitud y trate de comportarse de una manera no servil”.

Uno sólo tiene que mirar a Ferguson,