

While children die at border

GOV'T SHUTDOWN

Jobs, services cut for millions

By Martha Grevatt

Dec. 31—The current government shutdown, now in its second week, is being called a “partial” shutdown. While it’s true that much of the federal government remains in operation, the crisis is hardly partial for the 800,000 federal workers without a paycheck.

Just over half have been compelled to work with no pay, forced to come to their jobs while the rest are on mandatory furloughs. Many private businesses with federal contracts are also laying off workers.

The shutdown was imposed when Congress would not authorize the \$5 billion Trump was demanding for his wall along the U.S.-Mexico border to prevent migrants from entering the country. As a campaign ploy in 2016 to whip up chauvinism, the would-be president had vowed to make Mexico pay for his wall.

Now 800,000 public sector livelihoods and an untold number of jobs in the private sector are being held hostage as the president tries to force U.S. taxpayers to foot the bill for his wall.

Federal employment has been a path for millions of workers to gain secure and stable union jobs, particularly boosting economic well-being in communities of color. Black government workers comprise 20 percent of those now being deprived of a paycheck. Black communities in and around Washington, D.C., which depend heavily on federal employment, have been hit especially hard.

Now Trump has signed an executive order freezing federal pay. Unless the new Congress votes to approve an annual pay raise, federal workers will be taking a de facto



Federal workers’ unions protest the government shutdown.

PHOTO: AFGE

pay cut when inflation is factored in. Workers are paying the price for a political deadlock they did not create, one generated by the racist, xenophobic hatred emanating from the White House.

Prolonged shutdown to hurt children, women the most

Currently, 75 percent of federal programs are reportedly not impacted because their funding was already allocated. Recipients of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid are due to receive their benefits without

interruption. However, Social Security offices have been closed, which will impact new applicants. It will be harder for recipients to do things such as updating personal information or replacing a lost Medicare card.

Funding for the Children’s Health Insurance Program was already allocated for the next 10 years.

However, if the shutdown continues, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which replaced food stamps, could run out of funds by the end of January.

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Editorial

60 years: Long live the Cuban Revolution!



It is an island only 90 miles from the United States that has been invaded, blockaded and is still partially occupied—at Guantanamo Bay—by the most powerful of all the imperialist countries.

Yet for 60 years now, Revolutionary Cuba has survived as a country dedicated to building socialism at home, while at the same time aiding liberation movements and oppressed peoples in other countries.

Cuba has not only survived. It has inspired countless millions in Latin America, Africa and around the world with its resourceful application of revolutionary theory and practice to the problems imposed by imperialist threats and underdevelopment.

The key to the strength of the revolutionary movement that on Jan. 1, 1959, swept away the Batista dictatorship—that notorious gang

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212.627.2994

‘SAY HER NAME’ The urgency of remembering Sandra Bland

By M. Matsemela-Ali Odom

This month HBO premiered the documentary “Say Her Name: The Life and Death of Sandra Bland.” The December premiere followed an October release of “The Sentence,” which chronicled the story of Cindy Shank, a Mexican-American woman unjustly incarcerated on criminal conspiracy charges.

Both these films show that issues relating to women of color, mass incarceration, police brutality and other forms of state violence have now been placed at a critical intersection in the center of public discourse.

Amidst the current outcry against the police abuse of Jazmine Headley in New York City and in the renewed defense of incarcerated Cyntoia Brown in Tennessee, both African-American women, the release of “Say Her Name” is especially timely.

The documentary places Bland’s life, family and activism at the center of the story. The film also raises crucial questions about the police detention of Bland, her jailing and her death, while steering clear of much of the speculation many people encountered on the internet.

“Say Her Name” reveals Sandra Bland to have been a dynamic individual. A member of a Black sorority, Bland had protested against police violence in college. Back home, Bland quit a corporate job once she became aware the company profited from mass incarceration. She created her own internet show, “Sandy Speaks,” where she tackled issues of police abuse and horizontal violence in the Black community. Underscoring self-reliance and

self-determination among Black youth, Bland stated in a video: “You can do it. We can be successful. It is up to us.”

Politically aware and a leader, Bland worked with children and was returning to her alma mater to help administer a summer program in July 2015.

The death of Sandra Bland

That month, the death of Sandra Bland first made national headlines when a grassroots campaign arose organized by her family, friends and sorority sisters demanding an investigation into the cause of her death.

Bland had recently relocated from Chicago to Waller County in East Texas, home of the historically Black university Prairie View A&M, her alma mater.

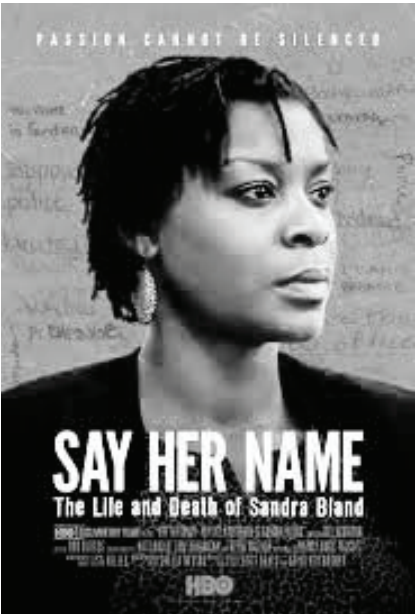
On the afternoon of July 10, 2015, Bland was pulled over on U.S. Route 290 by Texas State Trooper Brian Encinia for failure to signal a lane change.

The truth is that motorists of color are often under surveillance and profiled in that area, especially those with out-of-state license plates. Latoya Smith, a Sigma Gamma Rho sorority sister of Bland, explained in the documentary that the Prairie View community, a majority Black town, is overpoliced. At any time,

students, staff and faculty are subject to five police agencies: campus police, state police, county sheriff deputies, county constables and local police.

Dashcam footage later confirmed the trivial and the coerced nature of the police stop of Bland’s car that

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Workers World Party is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a multinational, multigenerational and multigendered organization that not only aims to abolish capitalism, but to build a socialist society because it’s the only way forward!

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

people are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis.

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

WWP fights for socialism because the working class produces all wealth in society, and this wealth should remain in their hands, not be stolen in the form of capitalist profits. The wealth workers create should be socially owned and its distribution planned to satisfy and guarantee basic human needs.

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

Contact a Workers World Party branch near you:

National Office
147 W. 24th St., 2nd floor
New York, NY 10011
212.627.2994
wwp@workers.org

Atlanta
PO Box 18123
Atlanta, GA 30316
404.627.0185
atlanta@workers.org

Austin
austin@workers.org

Boston
284 Amory St.
Boston, MA 02130
617.286.6574
boston@workers.org

Bay Area
bayarea@workers.org

Buffalo, N.Y.
335 Richmond Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14222
716.883.2534
buffalo@workers.org

Charlotte
charlotte@workers.org

Cleveland
P.O. Box 5963
Cleveland, OH 44101
216.738.0320
cleveland@workers.org

Detroit
detroit@workers.org

Durham, N.C.
804 Old Fayetteville St.
Durham, NC 27701
919.322.9970
durham@workers.org

workers.org/wwp

Houston
P.O. Box 3454
Houston, TX 77253-3454
713.503.2633
houston@workers.org

Knoxville, Tenn.
knoxville@workers.org

Minneapolis
minneapolis@workers.org

Pensacola, Fla.
pensacola@workers.org

Philadelphia
P.O. Box 34249
Philadelphia, PA 19101
610.931.2615
phila@workers.org

Portland, Ore.
portland@workers.org

Salt Lake City
801.750.0248
slc@workers.org

San Antonio
sanantonio@workers.org

San Diego
sandiego@workers.org

Tucson, Ariz.
tucson@workers.org

Washington, D.C.
dc@workers.org

West Virginia
WestVirginia@workers.org

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Workers World
147 W. 24th St., 2nd Fl.
New York, NY 10011
Phone: 212.627.2994
E-mail: ww@workers.org
Web: www.workers.org



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Editor: Deirdre Griswold

Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, LeiLani Dowell,
Monica Moorehead, Minnie Bruce Pratt;
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Production & Design Editors: Gery Armsby,
Jayla Hagans, Sasha Mazumder, Scott Williams

Copyediting and Proofreading: Paddy Colligan,
Sue Davis, S. Hedgecoke

Contributing Editors: G. Dunkel, K. Durkin,
Fred Goldstein, Martha Grevatt, Teresa Gutierrez,
Berta Joubert-Ceci, Betsey Piette, Gloria Rubac

Mundo Obrero: Redactora Berta Joubert-Ceci;
Alberto García, Teresa Gutierrez, Carlos Vargas

Supporter Program: Coordinator Sue Davis

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Historic court ruling lets Mumia Abu-Jamal renew his appeals

By **Betsey Piette**
Philadelphia

A ruling issued Dec. 27 by Common Pleas Court Judge Leon Tucker has opened the door for political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal to appeal his 1982 conviction in a Philadelphia police officer’s death.

On Dec. 28, less than 24 hours after Tucker issued the decision, dozens of Abu-Jamal supporters rallied outside Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner’s office demanding that he let the ruling stand that allows Abu-Jamal to seek long-denied legal relief. Rally participants ended their protest by blocking rush hour traffic around City Hall.

In his decision Tucker ruled for Abu-Jamal, saying that former Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Ronald Castille should have recused himself—stepped down—from hearing Abu-Jamal’s state appeals. Tucker claimed that Castille made the wrong decision, noting that even the appearance of being biased can damage the credibility of the judicial system.

Tucker cited statements Castille made as Philadelphia district attorney that suggested potential bias. He referenced Castille’s public claims of being a “law and order” prosecutor, who was responsible for putting 45 men on death row; his support for the Fraternal Order of Police; and new evidence of Castille singling out men convicted as “police killers.”

Evidence included Castille’s campaign speeches and letters advocating the issuance of death warrants—allowing executions—in cases like Mumia’s. In his 37-page decision Tucker wrote: “The claim of bias, prejudice and refusal of former Justice Castille to recuse himself is worthy of consideration as true justice must be completely just without even a hint of partiality, lack of integrity or impropriety.”

Tucker’s decision was split. He did conclude that the U.S. Supreme Court 2016 decision in *Williams v. Pennsylvania* did not fully apply since Castille, as Philadelphia district attorney, had not played a significant personal role in Abu-Jamal’s case before later denying his appeals as a PA judge.

However, summarizing the *Williams* ruling, Tucker wrote: “If a judge served as a prosecutor and then the judge, there is a finding of automatic bias and due process violation.” Defense lawyer Judith

Ritter said Tucker recognized the “need for a new appeal untainted by this bias.” His decision presents a major break in the long legal struggle to free Abu-Jamal.

Abu-Jamal maintains his innocence

For more than three decades, internationally renowned political journalist and activist Abu-Jamal languished on death row and, more recently in general population (slow death row), because the Pennsylvania criminal injustice system has systematically maneuvered to deny him a fair trial or any semblance of justice.

In December 1981, Abu-Jamal, who was driving a taxi, happened upon an altercation between his brother, William Cook, and police officer Daniel Faulkner. Faulkner, who had been shot, fired at Abu-Jamal as he approached. Cook’s companion, Kenneth Freeman, whom many suspect was Faulkner’s shooter, ran from the scene.

Freelance photographer Pedro Polakoff took 26 pictures of the scene that supported Abu-Jamal’s claim of innocence. The pictures provided clear evidence of police tampering with evidence and showed that prosecutorial witnesses lied during Abu-Jamal’s trial. The photos Polakoff provided to police and prosecutors were never shown to the jury.

The jury was also never told that Freeman’s driver’s license was found in Faulkner’s pocket. Polakoff reported interviewing witnesses who saw the shooter running from the scene before the police arrived.

The original case was heard by Judge Albert Sabo, who has sent more Pennsylvania prisoners to death row than any other judge. There is no doubt that Abu-Jamal’s trial was racially biased: The prosecution excluded African Americans from the jury, and during the trial Judge Albert Sabo declared, “I’m gonna help them fry the n---r.”

Denied the right to represent himself, Abu-Jamal was forced to accept the counsel of public defender Anthony Jackson, who was subsequently disbarred. Prosecutor Joseph McGill’s erroneous instructions to the jury were later the basis for Abu-Jamal’s release from death row.

Abu-Jamal’s first level of appeal—a Post Conviction Release Act hearing in 1995—was heard by the same Judge Sabo, a lifetime member of the FOP, who came



WWW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Demonstration outside Philadelphia DA Larry Krasner’s office Dec. 28.

out of retirement just for this case. (Many articles on the history of this case can be found at workers.org.) Because of his Black Panther Party membership, his support of the MOVE organization and his work as a radical journalist, his trial and sentencing were politically motivated. Abu-Jamal has always maintained his innocence in the shooting of police officer Daniel Faulkner.

Abu-Jamal’s appeals restored; watershed moment for Krasner

Judge Tucker’s ruling means that Abu-Jamal’s right to appeals stemming from his 1982 conviction are restored and must be reheard in the Pennsylvania appeals court. His appeals were on the grounds that he was framed by the police, that the prosecution manufactured evidence of guilt and suppressed proof of his innocence, as well as other due process trial rights.

Abu-Jamal has 30 days from Tucker’s ruling to file a notice of appeal to the Pennsylvania Superior Court on the grounds of the appearance of bias and impropriety.

Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner’s office has said he is reviewing Tucker’s decision and has not yet decided whether to challenge it.

Krasner, a former progressive defense attorney, ran for the DA’s office in 2017 on a platform that included working “for justice and not just convictions,” reviewing past convictions and freeing the wrongfully convicted. In Philadelphia, Abu-Jamal’s frame-up stands out as the city’s most notorious wrongful conviction.

Since taking office in January 2018, Krasner has introduced some limited reforms and his liberal reputation has

brought national recognition. However, in assuming the functions of Philadelphia district attorney, Krasner is now part of a bourgeois state apparatus which functions to maintain systemic racism, classism and repression. Upholding Abu-Jamal’s conviction has been central to the legacy of the office.

What Krasner ultimately decides to do about this case will be a watershed moment in his tenure.

To date his office has chosen to side with the Fraternal Order of Police in opposing Abu-Jamal’s appeals. The Faulkner family and the FOP have already stated they plan to plead with Krasner to oppose Tucker’s ruling. Krasner’s office has repeatedly rebuffed requests from Abu-Jamal supporters to meet with him.

Abu-Jamal’s brother, Keith Cook, praised everyone “who has come out in protests, stood in the snow, in the rain, written letters, sent postcards, filled courtrooms and more, for being part of the first break Mumia has had in years. We have to take this all the way ... to stay on Krasner’s ass as much as we can.”

Pam Africa, of the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, announced: “The people’s movement is responsible for this victory. A new appeal opens the door to Mumia’s freedom. After 37 years in prison for a crime he didn’t commit, the charges should be dismissed and he should be freed.”

The next demonstration calling on Krasner not to appeal Tucker’s decision is scheduled outside of Krasner’s office at 3 South Penn Square, across from City Hall, on Saturday, Jan. 5, at noon. For more information visit mobilization4Mumia.com. □

The urgency of remembering Sandra Bland

Continued from page 2

afternoon. Encinia tailgated Bland until she was forced to change lanes to let him pass. When she did so without signaling, Encinia proceeded to pull her over.

Then violence at this unnecessary vehicle stop escalated. As the documentary shows, Officer Encinia likely assaulted Bland before forcefully removing her from the car, throwing her to the ground and restraining her. After she was charged with assaulting an officer, Bland was booked in the county jail and held on \$5,000 bond. Then, three days after the stop, Bland was found dead, hanging in her cell.

While many, including her family members, have said that Bland would not have killed herself, the documentarians and others make one point clear: The cause of Bland’s death was the unjust stop, the lies reported by Encinia and the mismanagement by county jail officials.

Whether the most flagrant police actions that have been proposed happened, the racist profiling of Sandra Bland was undoubtedly the cause of her death.

The progressive network of women

and men who loved Sandra Bland while she was alive became her standard bearers once she was dead. Beginning with her sorority sisters, the hashtag #whathappenedtosandrabland spread rapidly through social media, especially in Black college circles and Black fraternities and sororities.

The documentary elucidates the way this grassroots movement shifted the gender dialogue in the Movement for Black Lives. After the hashtag was created in early 2015, Sandra Bland became the highest profiled death in the #sayhername struggle.

But the visibility of Sandra Bland’s death is not intended to diminish the memory or loss of cisgender Black males who’ve died at the hands of police or vigilantes. Instead, the story of Sandra Bland brings a fuller picture of state violence against Black people and people of color by disrupting the myth that Black women have escaped state violence.

The legacy of Sandra Bland’s resistance

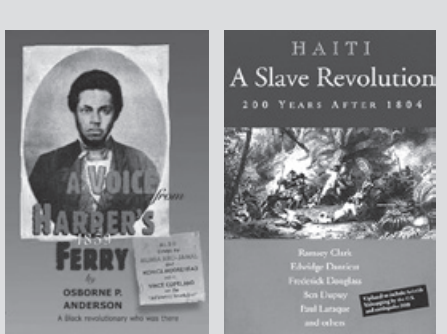
The Bland case is of immediate importance in San Diego. On the afternoon of

Nov. 27, El Cajon resident Aleah Jenkins was taken into custody by cops following a traffic stop in the nearby, upscale community of La Jolla. Aleah was a passenger.

During the stop, this 24-year-old mother of three complained of stomach pains. The arresting officers jokingly dismissed Jenkins’ pleas for help despite her vomiting. They continued to take her to jail—in what might have been as much as an hour-long drive. Once the officers reached the station, Jenkins was found unresponsive. Only then was she transported to the hospital—with brain damage. On Dec. 6, Jenkins died.

Police have certainly speculated that Jenkins consumed a controlled substance. Yet the injustices highlighted in Sandra Bland’s story remind activists everywhere that none of that matters.

The only thing that matters to activists is that if that car had not been stopped in what certainly seems to be a case of racist profiling, and if the police had not ignored Aleah Jenkins’ pleas for help—the cries of a young African-American woman—she would be alive right now. □



A Voice from Harper’s Ferry

Osborne P. Anderson’s account of the raid on Harper’s Ferry appeared in pamphlet form in 1861 right after the start of the Civil War. Includes essays by Mumia Abu-Jamal, Monica Moorehead and Vince Copeland.

Available at online booksellers.

Haiti: A Slave Revolution

Updated to include the Aristide kidnapping by the U.S. and the earthquake in 2010.

Read online at: iacenter.org/HAITI

Houston mourns border deaths of children from Guatemala

In December activists led by the Carnalismo Brown Berets gathered to mourn the deaths of Jakelin Caal Maquin, 7, on Dec. 8 and Felipe Gómez Alonzo, 8, on Dec. 25, two Guatemalan children who died while in custody of the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol.

Caal died in a hospital two days after she was taken to a Border Patrol station, just days after her seventh birthday. She was in custody for over eight hours with no water. Houston activists gathered a few days later outside of what is planned to be a “baby jail” for migrant children. With candles lit at the vigil, Brown Beret activist Elizabeth Lozano expressed her sadness and anger at the death: “We must stay active so no more children die at the hands of the Border Patrol.”

Janie Torres, the sister of Jose Campos Torres, who was murdered by Houston police on Cinco de Mayo in 1977 in an explosive case that received national attention, told those at the vigil: “We need unity. We must work together to stop the violence from the government.”

Participating with the Brown Berets were members of the Carrizo/Comecrudo Indigenous nation and F.I.R.E., Fight for Im/migrants and Refugees Everywhere.

— Report and photo by Gloria Rubac



Galveston, Texas

Protesting border-wall contractor

Activists protested in Galveston, Texas, on Dec. 22 outside the headquarters of the SLS Company, which has a \$145 million contract to excavate the racist and climate-destroying border wall the president wants built. The Carrizo/Comecrudo Tribe of Texas organized the protest.

As two dozen people protested at night with lit-up signs, they literally shined the light on SLS by projecting large images on the front of its building. Beside its Galveston headquarters, SLS has offices in Houston, New Orleans, New York, Charleston, S.C., and the Caribbean Basin. SLS contracts with the Department of Homeland Security and the Customs and Border Patrol.

The Indigenous group, Carrizo/Comecrudo, is leading the struggle not only against the border wall but



supporting the refugees trying to apply for asylum in the United States. To learn how to help the Indigenous people further resist the building of the wall, search Facebook for the Carrizo/Comecrudo Tribe of Texas and Somi Se’k Village Base Camp.

— Report and photo by Mirinda Crissman

Houston

International Migrants Day

Standing over one of Houston’s busiest freeways, Highway 59, activists held a “banner drop” on Dec. 18, International Migrants Day, to show solidarity with the caravans of refugees coming to the U.S./Mexico border. Organized by Houston F.I.R.E. (Fight for Im/migrants and Refugees Everywhere), large banners and signs were held so the tens of thousands of vehicles slowly passing below during 5 o’clock rush hour traffic could see their demands.

“We were pleasantly surprised by all the honking and thumbs up we received. From 18-wheeler truckers to school buses to workers going home for the day, there was a constant cacophony of horns signaling support for the refugees, a clear denunciation of Trump’s border policies,” immigration activist Hope Sanford with the Migrant Rights Collective told Workers World.

Groups participating were CRECEN, the Central American Resource Center; the Carrizo/Comecrudo



Tribe of Texas; the Houston Brown Berets; F.I.R.E.; and the Migrant Rights Collective. CRECEN’s huge banner read: “Save TPS,” referring to President Donald Trump’s decision to end Temporary Protective Status for millions of Central Americans and Haitians who had been allowed to stay in the United States after natural disasters in their home countries.

— Report and photo by Gloria Rubac

Gov’t shutdown

Continued from page 1

Already, 95 percent of the workers who administer SNAP are on furlough. Funds for school lunch programs and the Women, Infants and Children nutrition service could dry up by February.

These programs are an essential lifeline for 1 in 8 people in this country who need food assistance—including 13 million children and 4.4 million seniors.

Farmers, small business people and prospective homeowners may not be able to access federal lending programs. At the Federal Emergency Management Administration, 4,400 office staffers are furloughed. Some national parks are closed.

The funds for enforcing the 1994 Violence Against Women Act and preventing and assisting victims of sexual assault have run out. Likewise with programs that uphold fair housing legislation.

Does the shutdown affect the whole government? Not at all. The Pentagon death machine budget was left untouched. And of course the White House is still spewing out its hate unimpeded.

Racist abuse at border continues

Even without the unpopular wall, migrants and refugees are already suffering unthinkable hardships at the hands of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Late Christmas Eve 8-year-old Felipe Gomez Alonzo became the second child this month to die in Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention after being diagnosed with the flu. The first was Jakelin Caal Maquin, 7 years old, whose death has sparked protests. Both arrived from Guatemala with their parents.

The imprisonment of families with children has been the practice since the separation of children and parents provoked widespread public outcry last May. Many separated families are still not reunited. Now parents are forced to watch their kids suffer and die in detention centers, deprived of adequate food, water and medical care.

Both Democratic and Republican administrations have budgeted plenty of money to set up lackey governments in Central America, whose intense political repression, coupled with dire poverty, is driving refugees to make the dangerous and arduous journey to the U.S. border. Washington supports these governments financially and trains their military officers at the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security and Cooperation at Fort Benning, Ga., formerly known as the notorious School of the Americas.

Conditions are particularly dire for Indigenous communities, whose primary language is not Spanish and who suffer a high rate of illiteracy. Guatemalan children, for example, often lack access to even basic primary education. As adults they find it difficult, if not impossible, to access social services. Indigenous leaders are arrested and jailed for defending their ancestral lands from profit-hungry capitalist developers.

According to the Guatemala Solidarity Project, “As a result of repression and land theft these communities are facing extreme hunger and lack access to clean water, leading to widespread chronic malnutrition and other negative health consequences. Mental health consequences of genocide, forced displacement, imprisonment of community leaders and other forms of repression have also been significant.”

This is what the families of Jakelin and Felipe were fleeing when they came to the U.S.

Only class solidarity can stop the suffering

Vicious immigrant bashing is now hurting wide sections of the working class in this country, who are suffering from this shutdown over demands for a wall.

Such a wall would also separate Mexico from what was once half of its own territory—think of all the U.S. states and cities now bordering Mexico that have Spanish names—which was stolen by a Yankee military invasion in 1846-48.

While the Democrats in Washington oppose the wall, they are all for policing border crossings to limit the influx of desperate migrants and refugees.

The wild gyrations on Wall Street are indications that capitalism is embroiled in a protracted economic crisis. This is the source of all the attacks on the workers and oppressed, whether inside the Beltway or in a remote village in Guatemala. It should be crystal clear now that anti-immigrant bias hurts and divides all working-class people, regardless of where they were born.

Building class solidarity across borders and oceans is what’s needed to push back the capitalist assault. □

The unfolding economic crisis: political, systemic or both?

By Deirdre Griswold

Dec. 23—There is no doubt that political turmoil in the U.S. is contributing to growing panic in the stock market.

The shutdown of the government over Trump’s demand that Congress allocate \$5 billion to build a wall on the Mexican border is not only obscene politically but also impacts the whole economy.

So does the growing hostility toward China, as seen in the Trump administration’s imposition of tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars worth of Chinese goods, which started last April. China then imposed an equal amount of tariffs on U.S. goods, affecting particularly farmers in the U.S. who produce soybeans and pork. Prices for U.S. soybeans and pork have already dropped.

But these shocks to the economy that have originated from the Trump administration’s political edicts are far from the whole story. There are many indications that the turmoil in the stock markets reflects much deeper trends in the capitalist economy.

Stock markets and commodity prices

U.S. stocks have just ended their worst week since August 2011, sinking some 17 percent since their record highs.

Beneath the ups and downs of the stock market, however, lurks growing evidence that the capitalist economy is overdue for a “correction”—a crash—of the type that occurred in 2008 or worse.

The website [tradingeconomics.com](#) provides detailed charts on the current and projected prices of currencies, stocks, commodities and bonds. As can be imagined, they reflect the price declines that have occurred in many areas of the economy over the past few days—especially in the price of oil.

But what about the longer-term perspective?

Price projections for most commodities are generally nothing but educated guesses. The gyrations of the stock market—which is based on the anticipated direction of the economy—show how mercurial such guesses may be.

However, there is an indicator based on something more substantial—the Baltic Dry Index. The price of shares in the BDI is based on the volume of goods to be shipped over the coming year. This is a benchmark for where the global economy is headed.

“Because dry bulk primarily consists of materials that function as raw material inputs to the production of intermediate or finished goods, such as concrete, electricity, steel, and food, the index is also seen as an efficient economic indicator of future economic growth and production. The BDI is considered by some people as a leading economic indicator because it predicts future economic activity.” ([tradingeconomics.com](#))

Shares in the BDI fell 3 percent on Friday, Dec. 21. They are expected to

decline every quarter over the next year, from the current \$1,279 a share down to \$939 by the third quarter of 2019.

This anticipated decline in global shipping is a much more reliable indicator of where the economy is headed than the price of other stocks.

Prices of basic commodities fall

At the same time, the prices of basic commodities like oil have also plummeted. Oil is particularly sensitive to the overall demands of economic activity, since it fuels both commercial and individual needs.

When the U.S. administration unilaterally imposed sanctions on Iran, oil producers in the U.S. were delighted. Steve Austin of oil-price.net wrote in August that “the loss of 2.7 million barrels a day from Iran is a gaping hole for global oil supplies.” He predicted the price of oil would soar to \$150 a barrel.

More recently, other analysts predicted that Brent crude oil, which sold for \$85 a barrel in October, could go as high as \$100. They all must be biting their fingers now. Brent crude is selling for \$54 a barrel! The WTI, another index of oil prices, has fallen from \$75 a barrel to just above \$45.

In addition, China is expected to buy little or no crude oil from the U.S. in 2019, citing “policy uncertainty” in its relations with Washington. The U.S. already maintains a record deficit of \$43 billion in its trade with China, which is now expected to grow even larger.

Low oil prices can kill the U.S. fracking business. Fracked oil, in which rock is fractured by pressurized liquid, costs almost \$50 a barrel to produce, making it unprofitable at today’s prices. This could be good news for environmentalists and Indigenous people, as fracking is also the most environmentally destructive method of oil extraction.

The big struggle over the Dakota Access Pipeline two years ago involved oil to be piped east from the fracking fields of North Dakota. Hundreds of protesters, invited by Indigenous nations to come and protect their threatened water sources, were arrested and scores injured when the federal government sent in the National Guard and local police to brutally suppress the protesters and destroy their encampment. This military operation started during the Obama administration and was continued by the Trump gang.

Also, auto sales in the U.S. in the coming year are expected to fall short of 17 million for the first time in four years. All these figures and projections point to tougher times ahead for workers and small businesses in the U.S.

Capitalist crises and overproduction

What is a capitalist economic crisis? Where does it come from? Can palliative measures prevent these periodic collapses from happening?

Such questions have been debated for generations. Liberal bourgeois analysts, often called “Keynesians” after the British economist John Maynard Keynes, insist that government policy can prevent such crises.

Their view, called the “underconsumption theory,” holds that when workers are not paid enough to buy back the products they produce, a crisis follows. They argue for higher wages and benefits as a way to avoid these periodic collapses of the system.

This sounds like a pro-worker point of view, but in fact it conceals a pro-capitalist point of view, since it argues that capitalism can be tamed and reformed.

Karl Marx and his collaborators rejected this view. Marx showed that the crises of capitalism are built into the system. They do not come from underconsumption but overproduction, and they will reassert themselves as long as capitalism exists.

Marx argued that underconsumption existed in previous class societies. Under both slavery and feudalism, the masses lived in dire poverty while the rich lived in opulence. The masses never earned enough to buy all that they produced and needed. Yet these two earlier forms of class oppression, brutal though they were, did not produce recurring crises of production.

Crisis of overproduction are a uniquely capitalist feature.

So what is overproduction? Is it just producing more than what people need? Not at all. And while it does mean producing more than what the public can buy, it also means much more than that.

The capitalist system is driven by the need of the owners of capital to capture more of the market and thus expand their ability to produce. “Expand or die” lies at the heart of this system.

The capitalists must enhance their profits, not only to have a richer lifestyle for themselves, but in order to plow back into their businesses the means to expand production and thereby push out their rivals. It is this competition for the market that continually drives expansion to the point of overproduction. The capitalists who can expand their field of exploitation survive; those who cannot must die.

All capitalists must try to do it. While they may appear to be a billionaires’ club, they are actually a pack of wolves who are at each other’s throats even as they colude in pushing down the workers.

The Great Depression of the 1930s was the result of worldwide capitalist overproduction. It led to the collapse of stock markets in all the developed capitalist



countries. That then meant the collapse of literally millions of companies, corporations and banks, which in turn laid off workers, producing mass unemployment and suffering. Prices also dropped, but without an income, who could enjoy the lower prices?

It should be noted that, of all the larger countries in the world, only the Soviet Union, which had overthrown capitalism, escaped the mayhem of the Depression. With its state-owned planned economy, the USSR’s industrial development actually speeded up in the 1930s.

What ended that general collapse of capitalism? World War II. The most destructive war the world has ever seen. And with it came the obliteration of much of the older means of production, opening space for a new round of capitalist development—at the cost of hundreds of millions of lives.

The coming struggle

Whether it comes sooner or later, another capitalist crisis is inevitable. The pain and suffering it will cause the working class—especially the already most oppressed sectors—are bound to open up many new struggles and add impetus to existing progressive movements.

The capitalist political establishment—particularly the Democratic Party—will try to capture and limit these movements, arguing that reforms can solve the problem.

Of course workers need to fight for major reforms. They need higher wages and guaranteed incomes now, not some time in the future. They need affordable health care and functioning schools. The racist offensive that threatens the very lives of people of color must be ended. Immigrants need to find a safe home. Women and LGBTQ people need to overcome misogyny, male domination and sexual violence.

But all these struggles for reform will not get rid of the basic problem.

For that, these popular movements can and must become part of the struggle to end capitalism, which instigates and spreads every type of discrimination and oppression. It is only the social revolution to end capitalism that can eradicate economic crises and, in doing so, redirect our energies to meeting the needs of humanity and the planet. □



High Tech, Low Pay
A Marxist Analysis of the Changing Character of the Working Class

By Sam Marcy with an updated introduction by Fred Goldstein, author of *Low Wage Capitalism*.



Low-Wage Capitalism
Fred Goldstein

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describes in sweeping detail the drastic effect on the working class in the United States of new technology and the restructuring of global capitalism in the post-Soviet era. It uses Karl Marx’s law of wages and other findings to show that these developments are not only continuing to drive down wages but are creating the material basis for future social upheaval.



Capitalism at a Dead End
Job destruction, overproduction

For more information on these books and other writings by the author, Fred Goldstein, go to www.LowWageCapitalism.com

Available at major online booksellers

Syria, Afghanistan

What’s behind announced U.S. troop withdrawals?

By Sara Flounders

Dec. 31—Since this article was written on Dec. 23, several events have confirmed the unsolvable contradictions of U.S. occupations.

In a quick public relations photo op on Dec. 26, President Donald Trump visited the U.S. Al Asad Base on Iraq’s border with Syria and declared: “In fact we can use this base if we want to do something in Syria.” The Pentagon has made clear that the official withdrawal from Syria might take many months, Special Forces teams can operate from the base into Syria, and they can continue to bomb Syria from the giant U.S. base in Qatar. Israel bombed Syria on Dec. 25.

But the U.S doesn’t hold all the cards. To the frustration of the U.S. and Turkey, the Syrian army has entered the city of Manbij, long held by anti-Damascus rebel forces, following a political deal between Kurdish YPG forces (People’s Protection Units) and the Syrian government. Government forces now hold almost all of Syria.

Trump’s surprise visit to Iraq stirred a firestorm of opposition in Iraq. Many denounced the visit as a violation of Iraqi sovereignty. Iraqi officials refused to meet with Trump based on the arrogant conditions imposed by the U.S. military. The Iraqi Parliament announced they will schedule a special session to vote the U.S. out of Iraq or Iraqi militia units will force the U.S. out by other means.

French, British and German troops, part of NATO forces, are also illegally deployed on the ground.

President Trump’s Dec. 19 announcement concerning withdrawal of the remaining 2,000 U.S. troops from Syria and a partial troop withdrawal from Afghanistan does not mean an end to the Pentagon’s aggressive militarism and endless wars in Syria, Afghanistan, in the region or globally. The Pentagon has 170,000 troops stationed in 150 countries in over 800 overseas bases.

But this surprise “troop withdrawal” announcement—regardless of its limitations and U.S. military strength—exposes the increasingly untenable U.S. imperialist position globally and its fraying historic alliances. And it opened a chasm in U.S. ruling circles. Resignations from the Trump administration and ensuing denunciations are calling the masses’ attention to the heated conflict.

The Democratic Party’s higher echelons and corporate media “talking heads” are in an uproar of opposition. They are attacking Trump for “caving in” to Iran and Russia and allegedly endangering national security—meaning he is “harming” U.S. imperialism’s interests. Their charges confirm that both the racist Trump and his ruling-class opponents are war criminals and enemies of the people of the world. Pro-militarist criticisms of Trump are reactionary.

A progressive working-class analysis

Trump’s abrupt announcement—with no known discussion with policy makers or consultation with co-conspirators in the NATO war alliance—is a departure from U.S. hegemonic strategy of the past 75 years.

That departure is behind “Mad Dog” James Mattis’ resignation as Trump’s secretary of defense. Mattis, lauded as the “grownup” in Trump’s cabinet, has bulwarked relations with U.S. allies using his Pentagon position. His nickname stems from his statement about the U.S. war in Afghanistan: “It’s fun to shoot some people. ... It’s a hell of a hoot.” (New York Times, Feb. 4, 2005)

Mattis’ resignation reflects how the announced withdrawal is a dramatic break with countries that have collaborated with the U.S. in Syria: France, Germany, Belgium and Britain. All are former colonial powers that destroyed Indigenous cultures and looted the Americas, Africa and Asia.

These countries’ rulers were determined to recolonize the Arab world after the Soviet Union’s collapse. Saudi Arabia and Israel were other willing partners in imperialist crimes. They would commit to war on Syria based on the assumption they would share in looting the country. Their official cover was they were fighting a “war on terror.”

Trump surprised all of them with this major U.S. policy shift in the region, which increases imperialist instability.

U.S. tries to exploit national differences

Numerous media reports say Trump made his decision based on a phone call with Turkish President Recep Erdogan, who has threatened to invade majority-Kurdish regions of Syria. Erdogan stressed the U.S. cannot

have Turkey as an ally and also have a Kurdish U.S.-proxy statelet.

This is an unsolvable dilemma for U.S. imperialists, whose corporate rulers have not been able to destabilize Syria, carry out “regime change” and install a government subservient to U.S. interests. From day one, Washington has demanded the resignation of Syrian President Bashar Assad and all government officials. It hasn’t happened.

To this end, the U.S. political-military establishment attempted to exploit every difference, based on the many religious, ethnic and national groups within Syria, including the Kurdish forces. The U.S. and Western effort was aimed at carving Syria into pieces—in the name of “defending” oppressed nationalities and “democracy.”

Outside imperialist and Saudi efforts sought to mobilize reactionary elements in the majority Sunni Arab population against Christians, Alawis, Druzes, Shi’a, Yazidis, Armenians, Kurds, Turkmen and smaller national, ethnic and religious groupings and refugees. Among Syria’s population of 23 million (counting recent emigrants) are over 500,000 Palestinian refugees and 1.5 million Iraqi refugees.



The U.S. spent eight years orchestrating participation of Western imperialist powers and Gulf monarchies in its endeavor. Despite four years of bombing that decimated Syria’s infrastructure, introduction of tens of thousands of heavily armed mercenaries, intense international pressure and strangling economic sanctions, the country still remains unconquered.

Solidarity combats sectarian divisions

Syria resisted the attempted takeover on two fronts. The government organized a defensive military struggle. But the most important weapon was reliance on Syria being a mosaic of many religious, ethnic and national groupings that can coexist within a secular state.

The positive face of the struggle to maintain national independence was visible in every picture, delegation and mass rally. The government stressed the rich cultural diversity and unity of the entire population.

Syria also invited Hezbollah’s well-organized military units from Lebanon, and then Iranian and Russian military assistance, to aid in defense against this imperialist attack, part of the expanding regional conflict.

Almost all the tens of thousands of reactionary foreign mercenaries funded and trained by the U.S., Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have been defeated, along with the fanatical Islamic State forces (IS) who held large areas of Syria.

National pride in Syria’s accomplishments and defense of its sovereignty successfully kept the country intact.

Diminishing U.S. ability to dominate globe

The U.S. has been dealt a different but similar failure in Afghanistan. Despite the U.S. invasion in 2001 and years of occupation, with the rotation of a million troops, Washington’s brutal “pacification” program there has failed. Resistance is endemic in an occupation. Today, not one base of occupation or one national road is secure. The Afghanistan war is now the longest in U.S. history, with no end in sight and no prospect of establishing a stable puppet regime.

Another crisis for U.S. imperialism is mounting international opposition to the civilian casualties and starvation in Yemen. Even with U.S.-supplied high-tech arms and a U.S. naval blockade, its proxy, Saudi Arabia, has not crushed resistance there.

Meanwhile, against all odds, the Palestinian resistance continues against U.S.-proxy Israel. This resistance is a force that even the latest generation of U.S.-provided weapons cannot seem to reverse.

Despite the confident, aggressive tone of Trump’s announcement, it nevertheless reflects diminishing U.S. capacity to dominate the world—regardless of who is in the Oval Office. The media and political brouhaha is about whom to blame for this diminished capacity—and how to reverse the slide of U.S. power.

Turkey and the Kurds

The day before Trump’s troop withdrawal announcement, a meeting was held in Geneva about Syria, which excluded the U.S. and imperialist European Union countries. Instead, the foreign ministers of Russia, Iran and Turkey met about Syria’s future.

For different reasons and interests, these three countries oppose the destructive U.S. role in Syria. In Geneva, says the Guardian newspaper, they pledged to move forward with “a viable and lasting Syrian-owned, Syrian-led, UN-facilitated political process.” (Dec. 18)

Turkey, a strategic member of the U.S.-commanded NATO military alliance, has opposed U.S. use of the Kurdish YPG forces in Syria. Turkey has waged a decades-long war against the national aspirations of the 15 million oppressed Kurdish people in Turkey, where the Kurds comprise almost 20 percent of the population.

The smaller Kurdish minority in Syria, comprised of 1.5 million people, took advantage of the vacuum created by the weakened Syrian government to establish a Kurdish homeland as an autonomous area. However, they did not call for the Syrian government’s overthrow or for President Assad’s ouster.

The SGF, the political umbrella representing the Syrian Kurds, has held official meetings with the Syrian government, where President Assad said the government welcomed “open doors” and discussion with the Kurds. But, he insisted, all foreign occupiers, including the U.S. and Turkish forces, must leave Syria.

The Syrian Kurdish delegation stated they seek a political deal to safeguard their autonomy. Syria’s government, engaged in a struggle to save the whole country, did not oppose Kurdish autonomy. The future federated status of the Kurds was left open. (tinyurl.com/yervng9b)

In May 2017, Washington, aiming to create a statelet or proxy state in the oil-rich area of northeast Syria, armed the Kurdish YPG forces to create an army dependent on the U.S. With al-Qaida and IS forces on one side—and a U.S. bombing onslaught on the other—the Kurdish YPG militias were boxed into an alliance with the U.S.

The Turkish regime appeared apprehensive that U.S. arms supplied to Iraqi Kurds—with Washington aiming to keep Iraq divided—and U.S. arms supplied to Syrian Kurds to try to keep Syria divided would easily reach the more numerous, more oppressed Kurds in Turkey.

The U.S. media’s hand-wringing that a U.S. troop withdrawal means Washington will no longer “protect” the Kurds in Syria is disingenuous. The U.S. goal has always been to establish its own base in the region and keep all other forces divided and contentious.

Now Turkey’s participation with Russia and Iran in the Geneva conference, and the growing possibility of Turkey’s break with NATO—or a military confrontation of Turkey’s army against U.S. forces—has caught Washington in a tangled web of its own making.

Russia, Iran: Which country is next?

Russian and Iranian assistance to Syria is defensive in character. If the U.S. were to overturn Syria’s government, as it did in Iraq and Libya, it seems likely that Russia and Iran, which both resist U.S. domination, are next on the U.S. hit list.

The antiwar movement must remain vigilant. U.S. forces are still massed on the ground in the Near East, at drone bases in African countries and in naval convoys off China’s shores.

There are still U.S. troops, aircraft carriers and nuclear submarines around Syria, looking for a new opportunity or a staged provocation. As the Pentagon did in Iraq, there are many ways to rebrand or rename U.S. military intervention in Syria and launch a new imperialist initiative.

Antiwar and progressive forces must clearly and consistently demand: Bring all U.S. troops home! Close all bases! End all occupations and sanctions! □

Sara Flounders traveled twice to Syria in solidarity delegations during the U.S. war against that country. She is co-director of the International Action Center and helps coordinate the United National Antiwar Coalition, the Hands Off Syria Campaign and the Coalition Against U.S. Foreign Military Bases.

WW Commentary

LeBron James’ apology and the roots of anti-Semitism

By Shelley Ettinger

A beloved athlete posts a brief song lyric on social media. Commentators denounce the lyric as offensive and him as a bigot. He says he didn’t know it was offensive, and apologizes. What does it all signify?

It signifies that it is in the interests of the capitalist ruling class to foment division and to blame the oppressed as somehow the real perpetrators of bias and bigotry.

The athlete is Los Angeles Lakers basketball megastar LeBron James. The lyric, which he posted to Instagram Dec. 22, included the phrase “Jewish money” from a rap song by the performer 21 Savage he’d been listening to.

Reaction was swift. Sports Business Daily reporter Darren Rovell took to Twitter to express his outrage and call on Jewish people, including National Basketball Association Commissioner Adam Silver, to join him.

Sports Business Daily is owned by Advance Publications Inc., a media conglomerate with vast holdings. These include Conde Nast, which publishes Vogue and Vanity Fair among other magazines; Fairchild Publications, which owns Women’s Wear Daily and other publications; and American City Business Journals, the biggest publisher of metropolitan business newsweeklies in the United States.

SBD is, in other words, a major capitalist media outlet. It posted \$2.2 billion in revenues in 2017. Rovell, formerly of the worldwide sports conglomerate ESPN, the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network, is one of its best-known commentators and a right winger.

In fact, the headline of Newsweek

magazine’s Dec. 23 article on this “controversy” characterized James’ Twitter post as “angering conservative critics.”

So a reactionary writer for a website devoted to the profitability of professional sports tries to stir up hostility toward one of the country’s most prominent and progressive Black athletes for an unintended and immediately retracted reference. Although the attempt ultimately fizzled, and did not draw in Commissioner Silver, it did gather some support, mostly on Twitter, where dozens of tweets called James anti-Semitic.

The day after his tweet, LeBron James said on ESPN: “Apologies, for sure, if I offended anyone. ... I actually thought it was a compliment, and obviously it wasn’t through the lens of a lot of people. My apologies. It definitely was not the intent, obviously, to hurt anybody.” (Dec. 22)

It seems clear, it rings true, that James honestly didn’t know the historical meaning and use of phrases like “Jewish money” as fodder for anti-Semitism. He apologized anyway. What more could he do?

Also on a Dec. 22 episode of his HBO series, “The Shop,” James criticized the majority of white National Football League billionaire owners for having a “slave mentality” by disregarding the rights of their players, 70 percent of whom are Black. (espn.com, Dec. 22) James made no apology for this accurate statement.

Real source of anti-Semitism

This is far from the first time that a prominent person of color, especially a Black person who is an outspoken activist against racism, as is LeBron James, has been lambasted as an anti-Semite. It’s not

the first effort to direct anger and fear, especially Jewish anger and fear, against such a person.

The issue, in reality, is never what the person did or didn’t say, or how perfectly phrased the person’s apology was.

The issue is that it is in the ruling class’s interest to deflect attention from the real source of anti-Semitism: itself.

Anti-Semitism is a very old, very effective strategy to direct the working class’s rage away from the true source of its problems: the ruling class, which is overwhelmingly made up of white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants. It instead portrays Jewish people, a tiny group—only 0.2 percent of the world’s population—as somehow owning and controlling the world’s wealth by being devious, evil schemers bent on driving workers and the poor into poverty and misery.

While its roots are deep and wide and go back millennia, anti-Semitism flourished during the rise of capitalism in Europe. From 19th-century czarism in Russia through the Nazi genocide, it was skillfully crafted as a tactic to break up revolutionary movements. To this day, with resurgent fascist organizing again casting caricatured Jewish bankers as the culprit behind workers’ worsening standard of living in Germany, France and other countries, the capitalists wield anti-Semitism as a favored tool.

In this context, the absurdity of



LeBron James’ warm-up shirt quotes the late Eric Garner as he was being choked to death by New York police in 2014.

portraying oppressed communities as purveyors of anti-Semitism should be clear. Who has the motive and the power to foment attacks against Jewish people? Who poses an actual threat to Jewish people?

Of course it is not, and can never be, the oppressed. Of course it is only, and will always be, the bosses.

The threat is real, as evidenced by the Oct. 27 massacre at a synagogue in Pittsburgh. Emboldened under Trump, previously suppressed elements, the worst violent, anti-Semitic scum, are surfacing and acting in a way that has not been seen in this country for decades. At the same time, racist attacks, already epidemic, are on the rise, whether against Latinx migrants, Black youth, or other oppressed people.

The only effective response is unity, first and foremost against racism, and against all forms of bias and division, from anti-Semitism to sexism to LGBTQ2S oppression. It’s this unity, rejecting the bosses’ attempts to divert anger away from themselves, that will move the struggle of the workers and oppressed forward against capitalism itself. □

Metro Detroit

Bigots’ attempts to shut down Drag Queen Storytime fall flat

By Martha Grevatt
Detroit

In December 2017, the Detroit suburb of Huntington Woods became the first community in Michigan to have a Drag Queen Storytime. Every month Raven Cassidine, Miss Motor City Pride 2017, reads to preschool and elementary school children. The Huntington Woods Public Library is one of a growing number of venues around the country to host these unique events.

“Drag Queen Storytime is just what it sounds like —” writes the library, “drag queens reading stories to children in libraries, schools, and bookstores. DQS captures the imagination and play of the gender fluidity of childhood and gives kids glamorous, positive, and unabashedly queer role models.” (tinyurl.com/yevwa57x)

The story hours have been well-attended and are popular with both children and parents.

Cassidine, an African-American drag queen who grew up in Huntington Woods—which is 96 percent white—described her involvement as a



“homecoming.” She was nervous before the first reading, telling the children, “There’s a lot of little people in this room and it made me nervous. I didn’t know if you guys were going to like me or not. Do you like me?” The children applauded, yelled “Yay” and hugged the storyteller. (Between the Lines, Dec. 19)

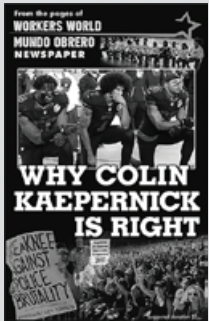
Reacting to the program’s success, a right-wing campaign is aimed at shutting down DQS or making it an “adult” event forbidden to children. In other parts of the country, the campaign even disrupted story hours. Here, Huntington Woods City Commissioner Allison Iversen attacked DQS for “provocative, controversial, ‘unabashedly queer’ demonstrations of diversity.” Iversen acted in

concert with Mass Resistance, an out-of-state hate group that has also attempted to shut down DQS in New York and Alaska.

The City Commission announced that the issue would be discussed at its Dec. 18 meeting, where public comment was allowed. It was clear before the meeting that there would be mass support for DQS. When the meeting began, however, there was an empty seat at the table where the Commissioners sit. Iversen had resigned abruptly after seeing how unpopular her position was.

The chambers were packed to overflowing. Only five people spoke against DQS; four of them were not even Huntington Woods residents. In a resounding victory against transphobia and racism, the Commission voted unanimously to continue the monthly story hour.

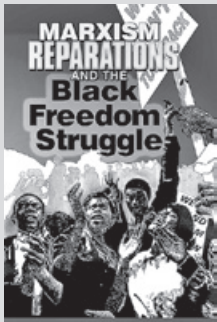
It remains to be seen if the humiliated bigots will follow through on announced plans to picket DQS on Jan. 26. In any case the Commission vote demonstrates that, even with the current political makeup in Washington and the Michigan state house, the LGBTQ+ community can score a win. □



WHY COLIN KAEPERNICK IS RIGHT

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Australia and its Aboriginal prison population

By Dolores Cox

Australia is the sixth largest nation in the world. It is an island continent between the Indian and Pacific oceans. In 1788, it was illegally occupied by British settler-colonialists. These included prisoners who were exempted from the death penalty because they agreed to be “transported” there, as part of a ruling-class plan to colonize the continent “for England.”

The British colonists in power instituted a white-supremacist government to dominate and control the original Aboriginal inhabitants while seizing their land.

But as Jenny Munro, Wiradjuri nation, has stated: “[A]s from time immemorial, we believe as Aboriginal people, Australia has been here from the first sunrise, our people have been here along with the continent, with the first sunrise. We know our land was given to us by Baiami; we have a sacred duty to protect that land.” (aboriginalheritage.org/history)

The Aboriginal Heritage Office states: “It would not be an exaggeration to claim that the island continent was owned by over 400 different [Aboriginal] nations” before the first British arrived.

Before and after 1901, when Australia gained independence from England, additional British and Irish settlers increased the white population and now form the

majority population.

Aboriginal people are estimated to be only about 3 percent of the population now, yet they make up 27 percent of the prison population. According to Australia’s Justice Project, their racialized incarceration rate is 13 times that of the white prison population. (tinyurl.com/ybdq7g6z)

Australia’s 2017 Bureau of Statistics revealed an increase in the total prison population during the past 10 years. The largest increases were of Aboriginal men and women. Thirty-three percent of those incarcerated were “on remand,” charged without bail and yet not found guilty.

Aboriginal people also have higher arrest rates than whites, more convictions and a greater likelihood of imprisonment. Non-Indigenous prisoner rates have not increased since 2008.

Structural disadvantages play major roles in overpopulation in prisons. Poverty, overpolicing of the mental and cognitively disabled, institutional discrimination and greater severity by the criminal justice system in the treatment of Aboriginal offenders are contributing factors. Racial disparities continue to exist.

The Australian Indigenous have experienced dispossession, exclusion from education and employment, and displacement. Only about 10 percent of Aboriginal people speak their native language. Only

59 percent of Indigenous youth ages 15-18 attend school, with just 34 percent graduating. And just 8.5 percent attend universities. Aboriginal home ownership is approximately 39 percent, and average income is only two-thirds that of non-Indigenous people.

Parallels in racism

Parallels exist between the actions of white Europeans and European-descended people in the United States when it comes to the treatment of people of color worldwide. The U.S. was colonized in the 1600s by European settlers, resulting in the massacre, destruction of property and wholesale displacement of Indigenous people who had inhabited the land for thousands of years. Today, Native peoples comprise only about 2 percent of the U.S. population.

The U.S. has only 5 percent of the world’s population, yet jails 25 percent of the world’s total prisoner population. Similar to Australia, racial disparities dominate in the U.S. African Americans comprise approximately 14 percent of the U.S. population, yet 34 percent of prisoners are African-American men, women and children. Black men are incarcerated at nearly 6 times the rate of white men. And their prison sentences are 19 percent longer.

For centuries, both the state structures

of the U.S. and Australia have been committed to an ideology of white-supremacist dominance and privilege. This includes domestic terrorism against people of color, unequal treatment and failure of opportunity—with never a level playing field for “the other.”

Both countries’ economic, political and social systems and institutions are deeply imbedded in racist policies and laws.

State structures and entities created by people of European descent have waged war on people of color in the U.S. and elsewhere, destroying Indigenous cultures and languages, stealing land and resources, and murdering the people. The U.S. appropriation of Hawaii, Alaska and Puerto Rico in the 19th century is a dramatic example, as are ongoing U.S. aggressions in South America and Africa.

The practice of European and European-American capitalism and imperialism, militaristic invasions, settler-colonialism, white supremacy and dehumanization of people of color continues through brutal attempts to put these systems in place globally.

Centuries of leadership in resistance by people of color and Indigenous peoples—including the Aboriginal peoples of Australia—sends a message to the rest of the world to join with them in ending these systems of oppression. □

Bolton’s false claim of ‘new’ U.S. policy for Africa

By Carlos Lopes Pereira

This article was first published in Avante, the weekly newspaper of the Portuguese Communist Party, on Dec. 27. Its author was a former member of the Secretariat of the PAIGC, the party leading the struggle for the liberation of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde. Translation by WW Managing Editor John Catalinotto.

The United States has announced a “new” policy for Africa. It was up to National Security Adviser John Bolton—known for his reactionary and aggressive positions—to reveal the basics of Washington’s strategy for the African continent. This policy was approved by President Donald Trump on Dec. 12.

Speaking at the right-wing Heritage Foundation on Dec. 13, Bolton defined three priorities. The first was to strengthen trade ties with African countries through agreements that benefit both parties. He said, “We ask only for reciprocity, never for

subservience.” The second was to contain the “proliferation of radical Islamic terrorism”—namely, “ISIS, Al-Qaida and other terrorists,” which “targeted United States citizens and interests.”

The third priority was to ensure that U.S. “aid” is efficient and effective, in line with U.S. interests—while “unproductive aid” should be ended, including United Nations peace missions. He stated, “Countries that repeatedly vote against the United States and international forums that would take action against U.S. interests should not receive generous American foreign aid.”

Bolton stressed that the main aim of U.S. strategy is to oppose and, if possible, to prevent China’s and Russia’s good and cooperative relations with African countries. He said that these “great power [U.S.] competitors are rapidly extending their financial and political influence across Africa” and “are deliberately and aggressively targeting their investments in the region to gain a competitive

advantage over the United States.” (CSPAN, Dec. 13)

In essence, there is no change of strategy. But Bolton’s speech raises concerns about his threat to reconfigure or end funding for U.N. missions in Africa. These missions contribute to the search for peaceful resolutions of conflicts and wars in Sudan, South Sudan, Mali, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Western Sahara and Somalia.

In fact, many of these conflicts and wars have been caused by interference from Washington and its allies. Under the pretext of the fight against terrorism, the Pentagon maintains several military bases in Africa, from Djibouti to Niger, under the United States Africa Command (Africom). Africom has about 7,200 staff members in “advisory missions” in many African countries.

Bolton has promised that Washington will reduce the number of troops stationed in Africa by 10 percent and has urged the countries on the continent to

assume their own defense. The White House adviser also raised the possible transfer to African soil of Africom, which has had its headquarters in Germany since its inception in 2007.

Moussa Faki Mahamat, chairperson of the African Union Commission, responded to the announcement of the U.S.’s “new African policy” while speaking at the Africa-Europe Forum in Vienna on Dec. 18. He reminded the group that “investors have their interests, we have ours, we know better than anyone else with whom we should trade and cooperate.”

Whether under old or new guises, within the framework of its strategy of world domination, U.S. policy toward Africa does not change. It will continue to be one of meddling, military intervention and exploitation of the continent’s wealth. However, this policy faces increasing resistance and opposition from the African peoples, who continue to fight for their complete emancipation. □

U.S. Senate votes no funds for war on Yemen

By John Catalinotto

Dec. 17—The U.S. Senate held two votes on Dec. 13 that hold potential to diminish U.S. military aid to Saudi Arabia for the oil-rich kingdom’s war against the people of neighboring Yemen.

By 56 to 41, the Republican-controlled Senate voted to limit presidential war powers. Then, the Senate approved a unanimous resolution to hold Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) personally responsible for the death of Jamal Khashoggi. The victim, a dissident but also reactionary Saudi, worked as a journalist for the Washington Post.

The Senate votes may provide a hope of ending the war for the 28 million beleaguered people of Yemen, half of whom face imminent starvation. They do not, however, end U.S. aid. The votes signal a

split in the U.S. ruling class and its government on how to pursue U.S. imperialist interests in the region.

Since the U.S. achieved a dominant role in the region following World War II, taking over from the British Empire, Washington has used the Saudi monarchy as its local client state. The outrageous reactionary policies of the Saudi regime have never created any obstacle to U.S. support. Whether the monarchy was cutting off the hands of alleged thieves, brutalizing migrant workers or repressing women in a hundred ways, Washington and the U.S. oil corporations stood by the king.

Battle inside U.S. ruling class

What is different now is that there is an internal battle among U.S. rulers. The Donald Trump gang is especially close with the MBS regime, so a U.S. break with

the crown prince also weakens Trump. In addition, the Saudi military offensive over three years has failed to dislodge the Houthis from controlling most of Yemen.

There is nothing else exceptional about the current U.S. role as senior partner to the monarchy: For the past 70+ years both Democratic and Republican administrations considered the Saudi kings their junior partners.

In 2015, the Barack Obama administration began backing the Saudi military intervention in Yemen, just as it ordered the direct intervention in Libya in 2011 and the ugly, dragged-out imperialist intervention against the Syrian government that same year.

The Saudi monarchy aimed at supporting its own Yemeni puppet regime and at stopping a victory of the Ansar Allah or Houthi movement. The Houthis are

considered allied to Iran. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told the senators that weakening Iran was the goal in supporting the Saudi war. (New York Times, Dec. 14)

Since 2015 the Pentagon has provided equipment and logistical support for the Saudi war on Yemen, including air refueling of Saudi bombers and fighters. This aid was essential to the Saudi war, which has directly killed thousands of Yemeni fighters and civilians and destroyed the local infrastructure.

That destruction and a naval blockade have prevented food from reaching people in Houthis-controlled areas. Since that is most of the country, the war puts 14 million Yemeni lives at risk. In other words, though the U.S.’s Saudi clients are unable to win, their war leaves the U.S. responsible for this humanitarian catastrophe. □

FRANCE

Macron, austerity, repression and the Yellow Vest revolt

By Rémy Herrera
Paris, France

Dec. 23—According to representatives of police trade unions leaving the Ministry of the Interior on the evening of Dec. 19, “the negotiations were difficult, very difficult.” Nevertheless, it took only a few hours for them to win “the highest salary advances” for their members in nearly 20 years.

Interior Minister Christophe Castaner had to concede: Police salaries were increased by 120 euros (\$137) a month for beginning cops and 150 euros (\$171) for veterans. This was more than what other civil service employees were offered during the negotiations on Dec. 20 and more than what President Emmanuel Macron had promised the Yellow Vests movement ten days earlier—which was almost nothing.

Police officers had been complaining for years about their poor working conditions and pay, not to mention the 24 million hours of overtime that the state has still not paid them, nor the costs of reimbursement for when they are injured that the Social Security workers’ compensation fund takes a long time to deliver. Neoliberal austerity also affects the police.

More recently, on television or on the Internet, anonymous police officers have expressed their frustration and some even unhappiness with their (political) superiors’ orders that they step up repression: against the Yellow Vests or, before that, the student protesters, political activists occupying “Zones to Defend” (ZAD), environmental activists or demonstrators against laws that make the labor market flexible, that is, laws that remove protection for workers. Tongues are loosening: “It is our friends, our brothers, our parents, our children whom we are being told to repress,” we hear from police officers.

As early as two days after the Dec. 15 “Act V of the Yellow Vests,” several national police union organizations, which are not allowed to actually go on strike, announced their intention to hold a “closed police station” day on Dec. 19. Because the Emmanuel Macron government has become dependent on the repressive force of the cops to stop the mass movement of Yellow Vests, it would try to keep the police satisfied.

An atmosphere of fear

The tipping point for this development is clearly identifiable: the state of emergency that the government declared throughout the country in November 2015 after the terrorist attacks that struck here has triggered a terrifying spiral of repression and has allowed those in power to create an atmosphere of fear.

It was under pressure and threats from this extreme right-wing of Islam, the political Islam from Al-Qaida to the Islamic State (IS), that the repressive state of emergency was imposed on the French people and renewed five times in a row. That’s the first jaw of the vise.

Although the state of emergency was lifted at the end of 2017, the fact is that most of the exceptional provisions it contains now have the force of law: searches, preventive arrests, protective perimeters, individual house arrest and border controls are now authorized under the “Law strengthening internal security and the fight against terrorism” of Oct. 30, 2017. Hence the misuse of this exceptional legal arsenal to reduce public freedoms in France, to the point that what are in danger now are the rights to demonstrate



Paris, Dec. 22.

or express one’s opinions.

All those who have recently participated in demonstrations in the country know what human rights organizations, and even police officers, have been denouncing for months, as we have mentioned, and sometimes even journalists, when they, too, are beaten up: that the many interventions by the police are disproportionate and excessively violent.

These interventions include intense flash-ball fire at ground level, frequent use of sound or stun grenades, systematic use of tear gas and water cannons against peaceful protesters, the practice of containment traps to prevent people from joining other protesters, arbitrary arrests, confiscation of medical equipment from street medics who volunteer at marches to treat injured demonstrators, intimidation, provocations for no reason, sometimes insults, and keeping minors in police custody.

The state aims to stop the revolt

All these facts shock and worry the French. But that anxiety is precisely what the state aims for: to make the people stop their revolt.

From the very first days of the mobilization of the Yellow Vests, rumors circulated that the protesters were being manipulated by the ultra-right National Rally (formerly National Front), that it was a “power grab” remotely controlled by the far-right party whose leader is Marine Le Pen. The second jaw of the vise. This is indeed the argument of the Interior Minister’s speech. What “evidence” did he provide? Only that there were some xenophobic comments noted here and there among the demonstrators.

Of the several hundred thousand Yellow Vests participating, it would have been miraculous if none of them were racist. From there to extrapolate that the ultra-right is leading this movement was a big leap that Interior Minister Castaner was only too happy to take. It’s a clever fraud. In this way, he tries to 1) discredit all Yellow Vests; 2) keep the young people who live in the suburbs, where there are large immigrant populations, separate from the current rebellion; and 3) create a false image of Emmanuel Macron as a rampart against “fascism.”

The far right has up to now failed to gain the leadership of the mobilization—for the fundamental reason that the vast majority of the French people are hostile to its racist program. What is discreetly emerging, however, is a shift of the state to the far right. Surveys indicate that more than half of the police and military would have sympathies with or vote for the National Rally.

Ultra right inside state apparatus

The far right is at the very heart of the repressive state apparatus. This was also revealed a few days ago in an openly anti-immigrant letter signed by a former Minister of Defense and a dozen senior army officers denouncing not only the “Global Pact for Migration,” adopted under the aegis of the UN at the Marrakesh Summit, but also “Islam as a threat to France.”

The Yellow Vest grievance sheets explicitly demand that “asylum seekers be treated well (...) we owe them housing, security, food, as well as education for minors.” So let us be very clear. It is not the Yellow Vests that are xenophobic and racist, but increasingly large components of the French elite. The elites will not hesitate for a moment, when the post-Macron era comes, to entrust power to the far right if necessary.

That is to say, if their odiously iniquitous capitalist order were really threatened; if the French people, thirsty for justice, their hearts full of renewed hopes, shouting for their joy in regaining their dignity, gathered in revolt and aware of their strength, managed to get back on their feet, to become masters of a collective future of solidarity and progress, then the elite would look to the ultra-right parties as their solution.

President Macron, who has slavishly bowed at the feet of billionaires, chose not to satisfy the deep needs of the French people and even sinks deeper into the path of repression every day. This “rotten strategy” plays into the hands of the National Rally.

Despite differences between the right and the far right—differences dramatized by the media, which are differences in degree, not in their essence—there is in reality no discontinuity. The right wing of high finance, which Emmanuel Macron serves, and the extreme right of the reactionary bourgeoisie of Marine Le Pen form a terrible, dramatic political continuum that unites to defend a dying capitalism. One is neoliberal-globalized, the other obscurantist-nationalist, but both want the current economic system.

Macron and Le Pen share class interests

Over and above mutual personal hatreds, which exist, common class interests will soon bring them closer together in an effort to save their system, whatever the cost.

The people will have to find in themselves the energy to amplify their struggles in order to free themselves from the deadly vise where the jaws of the two-headed monster of the modern far-right

will surround them: fear of terrorist al-Qaida-type attacks on one side, selfish bourgeois and racist chauvinism on the other side.

Meanwhile, on Saturday, Dec. 22, for the “Act VI” of their mobilization, the Yellow Vests tested the effectiveness of the intelligence services. Watched very closely by the eyes of the Ministry of the Interior, their social networks called for a rally—a highly symbolic one—in front of the gates of the Château de Versailles. The prefect quickly ordered its closure and immediately sent the CRS [riot police] to guard the area and protect the businesses.

The protest was a decoy! Some 20 Yellow Vests, no more, were present on the scene that morning, to laugh at the joke and mock the mass arrival of the police.

At the same time, in Paris, most of their comrades dressed in yellow, who, to keep the action a surprise, were notified at the last minute, gathered around the Place de l’Étoile or around the Basilique du Sacré-Cœur at the top of the slopes of the Montmartre hill, among others. And since Parisian security devices had boasted of being “extremely mobile” in previous weeks, groups of Yellow Vests played cat and mouse with them, making them run all day long in the streets of the capital, blocking the traffic routes at random, here and there, to a concert of horns of supportive motorists and the applause of amused tourists.

On Dec. 22, however, the police did succeed in stopping, at different points in the territory, several particularly active “symbols” of Yellow Vests. This was the case with Éric Drouet, arrested at mid-day in the Madeleine district of Paris and placed in police custody for “unlawfully organizing a demonstration, participating in a group formed for violence or degradation, and carrying a prohibited weapon.”

The weapon in question was a piece of wood. Its owner, a professional truck driver, keeps it on him at all times as a means of defense, according to his lawyer. Immediately after the announcement of Drouet’s arrest, hundreds of Yellow Vests emerged from this sovereign people, all proclaiming themselves “leaders of the movement” and demanding Drouet’s release ... or their own arrest! □

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

A painful reminder of cultural genocide

What was supposed to be just another amateur wrestling match held in southern New Jersey on Dec. 19 turned out to be an act of unspeakable violence, prompting a viral response on Twitter.

A white male referee, Alan Mahoney, gave a white woman a pair of scissors to cut off the dreadlocks of 15-year-old African-American wrestler, Andrew Johnson, 90 seconds before his match. Johnson's white coach stood by and let it happen. Johnson was given what amounted to an ultimatum—either cut your hair or forfeit your match. The “reason” given for this was that the cap that Johnson had on did not meet “regulations” in covering his “unnatural” hair, although most of his hair was covered.

The incident created such outrage that Mahoney is indefinitely suspended from calling any future matches until a review is carried out by the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association. Johnson's wrestling team at Buena Regional High School had announced before the suspension that they will boycott any matches involving Mahoney.

Mahoney was criticized for using a racial slur against a Black referee during a match in 2016, but was still allowed to call matches. New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy felt compelled to respond, saying, “No student should have to needlessly choose between his or her identity and playing sports.” (Washington Post, Dec. 21)

Cultural genocide, an attempt to erase one's identity if you are a person of color, usually starts with the very young. Just think about all the Indigenous youth who were kidnapped and forced to attend Westernized schools. These children endured the deep pain of having their hair cut off, wearing clothing foreign to them and being forbidden to speak their original languages. The aim of these schools was to torture Indigenous youth and erase from hearts and minds

their cultural heritage, including heroic resistance of ancestors to racist genocide dating back to the days of Columbus.

Millions of kidnapped Africans, brought to the U.S. to endure chains and the lash under slavery, suffered a similar kind of cultural genocide. There was not only the physical torture but also the psychological torture of the slave master's attempts to erase African roots from one generation to the next.

Shireen Ahmed, a Black sportswriter, wrote in The Guardian, “I thought about all the ways that racists have invoked vacuous and bigoted reasons for hacking the young people's hair in order to maintain systems of white privilege. I remember stories of how Indigenous children's long braids, which had spiritual and traditional significance, were cut off in order to appease colonial white powers. Those were acts of violence, this was too.” (Dec. 21)

This same article quotes Dr. Amira Rose Davis, a Black assistant professor of history, gender and sexuality studies at Penn State University: “What we see with Andrew Johnson is reminiscent of what we saw with, say, Venus Williams incurring a penalty for beads falling out of her hair. [T]he constant demand to ‘tame’, conform and change their natural hair to accommodate or assimilate into white dominated sports spaces is an all too common demand of so-called integration and a power move designed to remind athletes of color of their place and the terms of their inclusion.” Eighty percent of all amateur wrestlers in the U.S. are white.

Johnson won his match but will not be wrestling anytime soon while he deals with this traumatic experience.

What happened to Johnson was not an isolated incident but part of a centuries-long societal pattern of cultural genocide within a capitalist system riddled with white supremacy.

60 years: Long live the Cuban Revolution!

Continued from page 1

of torturers and exploiters who had made Cuba a paradise for U.S. millionaires and a hell for campesinos and workers—was that it smashed the old repressive state and set up structures to guarantee rule by the workers and farmers.

Almost immediately, the revolution launched a literacy program, sending high school kids into the countryside to teach the rural poor how to read and write. It soon provided materials for them to build real houses, with running water and electric lights. Sugarcane cutters rejoiced while burning down their dirt-floor, thatched-roofed huts of the old days.

Women and men, Black and white, joined the newly organized people's militia to defend their revolution against the Yankees and their mercenaries. A revolutionary film industry truthfully chronicled these emotional moments—and didn't shy away from showing backwardness that had to be overcome, like those who still harbored sexist attitudes booing as militia women paraded by. It was the beginning of the Cuban Communist Party's consciousness raising on sex and gender issues.

When a counterrevolutionary invasion by U.S.-trained and -funded mercenaries came in April 1961 at the Bay of Pigs, it was defeated in a few days as an armed people mobilized along with the regular military. In the middle of that invasion Fidel Castro, the historic leader of the revolution, for the first time said in a broadcast to the people that Cuba had

made a “socialist revolution” under the very noses of the Yankee imperialists.

The very fact that Fidel would call the revolution socialist during the middle of the invasion was proof that socialism was what the Cuban people wanted and were willing to die for. (This writer was in the packed New York office of the July 26th Movement when Fidel's speech came over shortwave radio. His words set off an outburst of cheering and berets thrown joyously in the air.)

Cuba captured 1,200 gusanos (counterrevolutionaries) during the invasion and forced the U.S. government to pay reparations in return for their release. Just two weeks after the invasion, Fidel spoke to a huge May Day gathering. His words captured the pride and joy of the Cuban masses in their great victory over imperialism and its lackeys:

“We had a chance today to see genuine results of the revolution on this May Day, so different from the May Days of the past [when] each sector of labor set forth its demands, its aspirations for improvement, to men who could not even accede to those basic demands because they did not govern for the people, for the workers, for the peasants; they governed solely for the privileged, the dominant economic interests. ... How different today's parade has been! ... The workers know now that everything the revolution does, everything the government does or can do, has one goal: helping the workers, helping the people.”

And the revolution continues—¡Viva la revolución cubana, socialista! □



Rainbow Solidarity in Defense of Cuba by Leslie Feinberg

This ground-breaking book is a compilation of 25 articles about same-sex love and sex/gender variance in Cuba's pre- and post-revolutionary history. Available at major online booksellers.

Popular uprising brewing in Haiti

By G. Dunkel

Two major, massive demonstrations took place in Haiti in October and November, when hundreds of thousands of people throughout the country came out into the streets over the government's plan to raise fuel prices. Some \$2 billion in loans from Venezuela for economic redevelopment, through the PetroCaribe program, had gone missing at the same time, most probably into the pockets of well-connected politicians.

The response of the government of President Jovenel Moïse and Prime Minister Jean-Henry Céant has been weak. It basically called for a Christmas truce in the protests, stepped up repression and armed pro-government gangs.

Conditions for all but the rich in Haiti are abysmal. According to a U.N. agency, 37,000 families who lost shelter in the earthquake of 2010 are still living in 27 tent camps. Hunger is rampant: More than 2 million Haitians, out of a population of 10 million, don't get enough to eat. And 2 of 3 Haitians live on less than \$2 per day; nearly 25 percent live in extreme poverty, on less than \$1.25 per day.

Cholera, introduced twice by the U.N. so-called “peace keepers”; a major drought; and devastation caused by Hurricane Matthew, which ravaged Haiti's southern peninsula in 2016, have all contributed to the devastation of Haiti's economy and certainly helped to propel people into the streets.

A group of young Haitians formed the Rally of Engaged Organizations (Rassemblement des Organisations Engagées, ROA) in December to hold a demonstration in front of Céant's office to demand he explain where the money from PetroCaribe had gone.

The ROA certainly did not accept the “truce” that Moïse/Céant want to impose on protests. An ROA spokesperson told Haïti-Liberté: “We are inspired by the Yellow Vest movement in France and we are going to adopt the same attitude if the government fails to satisfy our demands.” (Dec. 19)

Protect Haitians against Trump

In March, a lawsuit was filed against President Donald Trump and the top two officials in the Department of Homeland Security for denying Temporary Protected

Status to some 50,000 Haitians who live and work in the U.S. The suit maintains that Trump acted out of racism and ignored the current abysmal conditions in Haiti.

The trial is set to begin on Jan. 7 at 9:30 a.m. at the U.S. District Court for

the Eastern District of New York, 225 Cadman Plaza East in Brooklyn. For more information, contact Steve Forester of the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti at 786-877-6999 or steveforester@aol.com or Haïti Liberté at 718-421-0162 or editor@haitiliberte.com.



Haitians too don Yellow Vests.

Brazilian elections: Part 2 a political discussion

This is Part 2 of an exchange between Manuel Raposo, Portuguese left communist and editor of Mudar de Vida, and Fred Goldstein of Workers World Party in the U.S. They are discussing Trumpism and fascism at the time of the election in Brazil. Raposo’s text was translated by WW Managing Editor John Catalinotto.

Manuel Raposo

Oct. 23 — When the process of removing Dilma Rousseff from the presidency of Brazil began, and even when it was brought to a conclusion, the Portuguese right-wing and the “institution-respecting” democrats said that this was nothing like a coup, but only the normal functioning of democratic rules. When people denounced the invisible hand of the United States in trying to change the direction in Latin America to the right, they said again that this was an illusion of the anti-imperialist left.

Now that the former puppet, Michel Temer, leaves the scene and gives place to an open fascist, alerts are already heard against the danger of a new dictatorship and the return of military rule. Now that it has been openly stated that the U.S. Justice Department and U.S. secret services (long before Trump) provided the Brazilian coup plotters with the data to persecute and blame the Workers Party (PT) leaders, people already say that Bolsonaro is a Trump, but worse.

It is this same behavior that leads cautious democrats to classify European or U.S. fascists only as “extremists” and “populists” — just because they act, for the moment, within democratic norms.

Democracy in imperialist countries, however, is in itself an apparatus to beat back workers’ interests while running the country — and therefore deserves this name: a dictatorship of the bourgeois minority over the majority of the people. That’s true even though a ritual vote consecrates bourgeois rule. The extreme right’s use of democratic institutions is merely tactical and is really just the first step in a long road to smash any attempt to represent popular voices.

The “democratic” tolerance towards the fascists repeats, under today’s conditions, the connivance of European and American democracies with the rise of Hitler and Mussolini after World War I, as well as with the crushing of the Spanish Republic. This was followed by support for António de Oliveira Salazar [dictator of Portugal, 1932-68] and Francisco Franco [dictator of Spain, 1939-75], the Greek colonels [1967-74] and the Brazilian generals [1964-85], Augusto Pinochet [Chile, 1973-90] and Jorge Videla [Argentina, 1976-81], etc.

There’s a reason for the parallel. Then, as now, the bourgeoisie fears above all the revolt of the masses and that the working class could be in power. Faced with this possibility, the bourgeoisie finds fascism acceptable, if not preferable.

The bourgeoisie can also find fascism useful in dealing with criminality and insecurity of the population. The bourgeois democratic system becomes more and more incapable of overcoming these blights, because it generates crime and insecurity every day by increasing material inequalities. Once the capitalist root of these crimes is hidden, capitalism and the bourgeois system are absolved of responsibility. All kinds of false justifications are made possible, whether on the basis of “race,” ethnic and religious differences, or simple “human wickedness.”

Police brutality — against “the bad guys,” of course — is presented to the popular strata (who are usually the first victims of that criminality) as a solution to make order out of chaos. And that is how many people accept police brutality, not only in the Philippines or Brazil, but also in Europe and even here in Portugal.

Bourgeois apparatus rotting from within

Social revolution is nowhere in sight in any part of the world. But the capitalism of today is creating the conditions for social revolution to mature.

The current stagnation has shaken not only the economy and business, but also all state institutions and all bourgeois beliefs. This includes belief in the virtues of democracy as it presently exists — which is the “real existing democracy,” or the “possible democracy.” The bourgeois democratic apparatus is rotting from within, accompanying the decline of the economic system.

We must ask what effective content the parliamentary democracies of today can have. Today, the whole economic force is in the hands of an increasingly restricted bourgeois layer that monopolizes political power. No one else, even broad bourgeois groups, see their class interests represented.

The democracies humans have experienced have been based on the accumulation of wealth in capitalist-imperialist metropolises. Until recently, these democracies owed their stability to continuous economic growth. Only this way could the ruling bourgeoisie have the financial means to buy the support of the petty bourgeoisie and part of the working masses for their regime. With this growth missing, as it is now, the base supporting the bourgeoisie is weakened and the institutions of formal democracy lose practical effectiveness and even symbolic value.

If the bourgeoisie is unable to guarantee progress and an improvement of living standards for the mass of the population, this shows the majority that the bourgeoisie is a useless, parasitic and undesirable class. The social foundation of bourgeois power is therefore shaken, because that class loses the arguments capable of convincing the masses that capitalism, on which its domination rests, is better than anything else.

Under those conditions fascism can gain adherents among the ruling classes, as the fascists express their preference for the “argument” of force — all-powerful police and military, a manipulated judicial apparatus, laws that restrict individual liberties, cutting social rights, etc. This is the class response of the bourgeoisie to the crisis in which the capitalist social system, in all its aspects, is mired.

The fascists use the denunciation of corruption and crime as a weapon. Or they might use nationalism, hatred of immigrants, whatever — this only concerns the methods of propaganda that they put in place to regiment the population. This population is up to its neck in bad living conditions and does not envisage another social system besides one where the bosses hold power. But this situation in no way allows the bourgeoisie to gain “legitimacy” to exert power or restore the capacity of capitalism to generate a new surge of progress.

On the contrary, the fascist drift shows a bourgeois world in its death throes, with no chance to return to a prior healthier existence. Thus to fight against fascist forces we must go beyond raising demands that use bourgeois democratic formulas like “deepening democracy,” as the followers of the “just compromise” would like.

Among the left wing of democratic regimes, the idea of promoting democratic reform stems from a false assumption: that it is possible to return the globalized, monopoly-imperialist capitalism to a capitalism with a national dimension, with which it is possible to negotiate, in concert, the terms of the social progress of the masses. But the objective conditions of present-day capitalism are closing off this path.

If the left binds the proletariat to this falsehood, it in effect depoliticizes the working class. It erases its class boundaries. It reduces it to a force that is limited to making demands on those in power.

Insisting on this lie also confuses the proletariat about the nature of the change of course the world bourgeoisie has undertaken. This change is in the direction of forcing a class confrontation. The illusion thus makes the proletariat a docile mass when faced with the drift to the right.

Bourgeois democracies have always lived in a contradiction between the inequalities that capitalism creates and from which it lives, and the equality that a true democracy presupposes. This contradiction has now reached the extreme: To a maximum of inequality corresponds a minimum of democracy.

Bourgeois democracy, which is limited and obsolete, has to be not “perfected” but overcome. This overcoming can only be achieved by a full democracy that is truly representative of the vast majority of the population — that

is, the working classes. And this requires a change of which class is in power. Instead of the dictatorship of a bourgeois minority over the working majority, what is needed is a dictatorship of the working majority over the capitalist, minority bourgeoisie. As long as there are inequalities, this is what democracy looks like.

Goldstein’s response

Now the fascist Bolsonaro has been elected. No surprise. The international monopolies and Brazilian agribusiness got behind the rest of the Brazilian bourgeoisie to throw their weight behind him. They cannot wait to get their hands on the rest of the Amazon rainforest and to cash in on wholesale privatizations.

Although your document is an analysis of the present situation in Brazil, this analysis can also be applied in Europe and the U.S.

I fully agree with it.

As you wrote, maximum inequality brings minimum democracy.

You excellently explain that capitalist democracy has been associated historically with capitalist growth, expansion and enough surplus value to maintain a regime of concessions. The British parliamentary system, the French Republic, U.S. capitalist democracy

have all been based on expanding global empires.

These conditions are vanishing. Capitalism is at a dead end for both internal and external reasons. The historic stage of growth and prosperity, which allows the masses to look forward to some life improvement, is over. The quality of life for the workers, as well as large sections of the middle class, is declining. In the absence of a revolutionary socialist alternative, political reaction is on the rise everywhere.

Your analysis also applies to the developing right-wing politics of Trump and his growing relations with finance capital.

He is in a constant stage of testing how far he can go to the right and appeal to neo-fascist elements in the ruling class and the population. He is feeling out how many democratic norms he can disregard and how much seizure of authority he can get away with.

Your explanation of the Brazilian crisis is illuminating. As you point out, capitalism generates crime and corruption. The masses are the prime victims — and after decades of crime and corruption and in the absence of a socialist alternative, they can easily fall victim to right-wing and fascist demagogues — e.g., Bolsonaro, Duterte, the League in Italy, etc.

You importantly point out the extreme centralization of capital and the massive growth of inequality as the irreversible economic background to the present political crisis and the growth of fascism as an alternative for the big bourgeoisie. Ten years after the economic collapse and the failure of the system to revive, the ruling classes know better than the working class that this general crisis of capitalism is irreversible.

Finance capital knows that the best they can hope for is to stave off collapse for the time being. The attraction of fascism and authoritarian use of force against the people is an anticipation of social upheaval, which they fear will result from the collapse of the system.

Those who are living on the illusion of the return to the “old” capitalism are engaged in self-deception and at the same time the deception of the masses. This kind of politics disarms the masses at the moment the bourgeoisie is preparing to take a reactionary offensive. As you said, “The bourgeois democratic apparatus rots from within, accompanying the decline of the economic system.”

The Brazilian masses have a tradition of struggle against reaction. Hopefully Bolsonaro’s win will reawaken this tradition. Because we observe the events without illusions, we see this is the best we can hope for in the present situation. □



FOTO: MUNDO OBRERO

Fuera del auto show anual en Detroit en 2016.

GM recorta empleos: los trabajadores se defienden

Por Martha Grevatt

Detroit—General Motors anunció el 26 de noviembre que planea recortar más de 14.000 empleos y cerrar cuatro plantas en los EE. UU., una en Canadá y dos más en ubicaciones aún no nombradas.

La CEO de GM, Mary Barra, quien devengo \$22 millones el año pasado, eligió sus palabras con cuidado cuando reveló el plan. Dijo que en varias ocasiones el próximo año las plantas se quedarían “sin asignar”. Eso significaba que los productos que se fabrican actualmente en la planta se suspenderán y que no se asignarán nuevos productos a las plantas mencionadas en el anuncio.

Barra evitó decir las palabras “cerrado” o “inactivo”. El contrato actual entre GM y United Auto Workers dice: “[La] compañía no cerrará, inactiva, ni venderá parcial o totalmente, escisión, escisión , consolidar o eliminar de cualquier otra forma, cualquier planta, activo o unidad de negocios de cualquier tipo”.

La UAW ha rechazado el doble discurso de GM. Cualquier cierre o ralentí de la planta, independientemente de la selección de palabras, infringe el contrato actual, que no expira hasta septiembre de 2019.

El presidente de UAW International, Gary Jones, criticó la “cruel decisión de GM”, declarando: “La UAW y nuestros miembros se enfrentarán a esta decisión de GM a través de todas las vías legales, contractuales y de negociación colectiva abiertas a nuestra membresía”. (The Hill, 6 de diciembre)

Miembros, aliados y otros sindicatos se

les pide que escriban cartas a la compañía mostrando su oposición a los cierres.

GM afirma que los cortes son esenciales porque hay más plantas de las que necesita la empresa para el mercado actual de vehículos y muchas plantas solo están ejecutando un turno de producción. El presidente de la UAW, Jones, dice que esto se debe a las decisiones de la compañía de trasladar cada vez más la producción a México y otros países de bajos salarios.

Sin embargo, Jones está adoptando una posición nacionalista limitada en la lucha por empleos sindicales decentes al exigir “leyes fiscales y comerciales que recompensen la inversión de los Estados Unidos”. La declaración de Jones ni siquiera reconoce el ataque a los trabajadores canadienses de GM.

La oficialidad sindical persigue una estrategia legalista y estrecha, combinada con una táctica dócil de escribir cartas. Lo que se necesita es activismo militante.

Las compañías ricas violan rutinariamente todo tipo de leyes: la antidiscriminación, el derecho a organizar sindicatos, la protección del medio ambiente. Sólo una lucha de masas los hará responsables.

Activistas de base planean la lucha laboral-comunitaria

Caravanas de trabajadores, celebraron una reunión el 8 de diciembre en Detroit para establecer una estrategia contra los cierres. La reunión comenzó con un video creado por Sean Crawford, quien trabaja en la planta de GM Detroit-Hamtramck, que se encuentra en el bloque de recortes.

Crawford dijo que las ciudades de Michigan de Flint, Pontiac y Saginaw habían sido “machacadas y escupidas” por GM. Añadió: “Todos sabemos qué es lo que realmente busca GM, lo único que han buscado, más dinero”. Su video terminó con un llamado a “unirse a través de las fronteras para construir un movimiento de personas de clase trabajadora”.

Esto marcó la pauta para escuchar una serie de oradores y una animada discusión sobre por qué los cierres de plantas no son aceptables y qué acciones podría tomar una lucha real. En la reunión se dirigieron el presidente emérito del Ayuntamiento de Detroit, JoAnn Watson; La representante estatal y senadora electa del estado, Stephanie Chang; Andy Gooderis, representante de la congresista electa Rashida Tlaib; Ghana Goodwin-Dye, presidente de la Local 909 de la UAW, cuya planta en Warren está programada para cerrar; y Jerry Goldberg, en representación de Moratorium Now! Coalición para detener ejecuciones hipotecarias, desalojos y cierres de servicios públicos.

La reunión fue copresidida por el ex presidente de Local 909 y presidente de la tienda, Frank Hammer, y por Martha Grevatt, fideicomisaria local de UAW 869.

Los oradores señalaron el hecho de que los cierres de la planta no solo violaron el contrato, sino que también violaron los términos de las exenciones fiscales estatales y federales que habían atado los donativos a la creación de empleos por parte de GM.

Existen muchas alternativas para cerrar las plantas, incluida la reorganización de las mismas para combatir la emergencia del cambio climático. En lugar de construir camiones de alto consumo de gasolina, los trabajadores automotrices podrían construir vehículos eléctricos limpios, autobuses y trenes para el transporte público, así como paneles solares y turbinas eólicas.

Las leyes de dominio eminente, que se utilizaron en la década de 1980 para apoderarse y destruir todo un vecindario para que GM pudiera construir la planta de Detroit-Hamtramck, podrían usarse en cambio para apoderarse de la planta y ejecutarla bajo el control de la comunidad sindical.

El grupo decidió manifestarse fuera del auto show anual de Detroit en enero y formar un contingente en la marcha anual del Día de Martin Luther King. Los trabajadores también discutieron la necesidad de crear comités de lucha dentro de las plantas.

Una colección de solidaridad obtuvo más de \$125 para los trabajadores despedidos y heridos de GM en Colombia que han estado luchando por la justicia desde 2011.

La reunión también celebró el décimo aniversario de la acción inaugural de Auto Caravan. El grupo se fundó cuando envió una caravana de automóviles a Washington, DC, en 2009 para exigir que se incluyera una cláusula a las términos del contrato de no concesiones a los términos de los rescates de GM y Chrysler por parte del gobierno de los Estados Unidos. □

Grandes beneficios farmacéuticos para el dolor

Por Princess Harmony

Dsuvia. Ese es el nombre comercial del último opioide de alta potencia que pronto aparecerá en el mercado. Su nombre científico es sufentanilo, y es un análogo del infame y fatal opioide fentanilo. Es aproximadamente 5 a 10 veces más fuerte que el fentanilo y 1000 veces más fuerte que la morfina. Se administra por vía sublingual, toma 15 minutos para comenzar a trabajar y proporciona alivio del dolor durante aproximadamente 3 a 4 horas. Fue aprobado el 12 de octubre por la Administración de Drogas y Alimentos en una votación de 10 a 3.

Dsuvia, al igual que otros productos de fentanilo en el mercado, tenía la intención de tratar un dolor insoportable. Está dirigido a personas que no responden a los medicamentos normales para el dolor. Otros productos de fentanilo, como Subsys, estaban destinados a tratar el dolor insoportable del cáncer, pero se desviaron de su propósito y se entregaron a personas que en realidad no los necesitaban.

Aunque este producto está diseñado

para ser un medicamento de un solo uso, todavía existe el riesgo de desviación y abuso. El grupo defensor Public Citizen dijo al Washington Post que “si se aprueba, Dsuvia sufrirá abusos y comenzará a matar gente tan pronto como llegue al mercado”. (Psmag.com, 2 de noviembre)

Esta acción irresponsable por parte de la compañía farmacéutica AcetRx y la FDA será inevitablemente la causa de muchas muertes, ya que el sufentanilo podría convertirse fácilmente en un producto de corte en la heroína y otras drogas o el abuso a sabiendas. Los funcionarios de salud pública ya tienen preocupaciones de que este producto será desviado.

Ha habido decenas de miles de muertes por opioides en el último año, y muchas más en 2018, con el fentanilo involucrado en muchos de ellos. La adición de Dsuvia a la lista de drogas de abuso solo derramará combustible en ese fuego. El comisionado de la FDA, Scott Gottlieb, reconoció que los críticos de Dsuvia estaban preocupados por el potencial de abuso de la droga.

Pero afirmó que la FDA tenía que juzgar la droga por sus propios méritos

y cómo encaja en el cuadro completo de la adicción a las drogas, pero aún así lo aprobó. La FDA incluso invocó a los militares, diciendo que es un dispositivo de entrega que es una prioridad para los militares.

La FDA había firmado un Memorando de Entendimiento con el Departamento de Defensa para acelerar los productos

médicos que podrían ser útiles para el DOD. Este memorándum es probablemente la razón por la cual el medicamento fue aprobado.

Los comunistas y otros progresistas deben presionar a AcetRx para que no comercialice este medicamento. Para expresar su oposición, escriba a info@acetrx.com. □



El capitalismo en un callejón sin salida Por Fred Goldstein

La tesis de este libro es que la crisis económica, que se inició en agosto de 2007, marcó un punto de inflexión en la historia del capitalismo. El autor sostiene que el sistema no se recuperará, no volverá al ciclo capitalista normal de auge y caída. Goldstein utiliza las leyes de la acumulación capitalista de Marx, y la tasa decreciente de ganancia, para demostrar por qué el capitalismo global ha llegado finalmente a un punto de inflexión. El continuo estancamiento Y el desempleo generalizado provocarán inevitablemente un resurgimiento de la lucha de clases.

Más en www.LowWageCapitalism.com.