

In Virginia and West Virginia Educators fight back

By Workers World West Virginia bureau

Following the Jan. 22 settlement between the Los Angeles school district and the United Teachers of Los Angeles — a union with a majority constituency of oppressed women of color — education workers are on the move in other states and districts, including teachers and support staff in Virginia and West Virginia.

Virginia education workers 'RedforEd'

More than 10,000 education workers from across Virginia met in Richmond's Monroe Park Jan. 28 and marched to the Capitol for a "RedforEd" rally in defense of public education. The Virginia Education Association endorsed the action, which demanded more state funds for education, but it was initiated by rank-and-file VEA members who identify as Virginia Educators United.

Virginia school employees are asking for dignity, respect and pay that is not below the national average. They are also asking the state government to restore the funding for public schools that was cut during the last 10 years.

According to the National Education Association, the average national teacher salary is \$60,000. But the average teacher in Virginia, even with accumulated seniority and experience, earns only \$51,000 annually.

In December, Gov. Ralph Northam proposed a 5 percent raise for Virginia teachers, but school districts would have to split the cost. Teacher salaries still would not be at the national level. Plus, the raise would not be given to nonteaching workers.

The UTLA won ground on its demand for smaller class sizes. As with most of the teachers' strike actions, Virginia education workers are concerned about the number of students permitted in elementary classrooms. Ask any teacher or school aide and they will tell you: Smaller class sizes lead to better academic achievement. Class sizes are higher in Virginia than in neighboring West Virginia.

West Virginia: struggle continues

It's been nearly a year since the nine-day walkout in West Virginia that generated the continuing mass wave of education workers' actions in the U.S.

On Jan. 9, West Virginia teachers and support staff held an informational walk-in at several schools. That same day billionaire Gov. Jim Justice proposed a 5 percent pay increase and funding of health insurance for teachers.

As the state's legislature begins its session, teachers and support staff face retaliation from right-wing legislators. The state's Senate Education Committee has tied the governor's pay raise and health insurance funding to a legislative package reintroducing charter

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No U.S. War on Venezuela!

Global actions on Sat., Feb. 23 — one-month anniversary of the U.S.-attempted coup
nowaronvenezuela.org

We cannot be silent in the face of the latest U.S. aggression against the Venezuelan people.

Nicolás Maduro is the president of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, chosen twice by the people as part of internationally observed electoral processes. Since the 1998 election of Hugo Chávez, the United States has been relentless in its pursuit of regime change in Venezuela. With Donald Trump in the White House, these efforts have escalated to threats of all-out military violence, the plundering of billions of dollars in wealth from the Venezuelan people and the global media's pushing a multitude of outrageous lies.

For hundreds of years, the U.S. has waged war against the people of the world through coups, invasions and economic warfare. Juan Guaidó is a U.S. puppet. He is not a representative of the Venezuelan people. The idea that a person can swear themselves in as president at a rally in the interest of "defending democracy" is laughable. The right wing in Venezuela claim the Bolivarian elections are rigged because they refuse to participate in them. Instead they engage in voter intimidation using violence reminiscent of Jim Crow terrorism against African Americans in the deep U.S. South.

U.S.-led sanctions and currency manipulation are responsible for the suffering in Venezuela. Sen. Marco Rubio and right-wing media guide the Venezuelan opposition from

Miami. The U.S. cannot stand for any country in the world to enjoy its natural wealth or the fruits of its labor independent of Wall Street and the Pentagon.

Venezuela has the largest proven oil reserves in the world and is rich in gold and other mineral wealth. National Security Advisor John Bolton, architect of the Iraq war, said that regime change in Venezuela would be a tremendous opportunity to gain more profits for Wall Street. We believe him.

Since the Bolivarian Revolution in 1998, massive strides have been taken to uplift the working class and women, Afro-Venezuelans and Indigenous populations in Venezuela. The working poor have made tremendous gains because the government implemented policies and passed laws to fight racism, sexism, homophobia and economic inequality.

Despite sanctions and sabotage, Venezuela has maintained a transparent and democratic system through many elections. Venezuela provides aid to struggling people worldwide through subsidized fuel and by leading the way with progressive labor laws. Their gains are part of the global struggle waged by workers and the oppressed against the wealthiest and most powerful capitalists on the planet.

Therefore, we demand:

- The U.S. immediately cease all hostile actions against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela: Lift all sanctions, stop backing a coup, cease efforts to destroy the Venezuelan economy and respect the right of the Venezuelan people to sovereignty and self-determination.

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Movement builds against Amazon HQ2

By John Steffin
New York

Corporate behemoth Amazon announced in September 2017 it would build a second headquarters (HQ2) in whichever U.S. city offered it the best deal. After a year of city and state politicians across the country wooing the company with increasingly larger promises of tax breaks and handouts, New Yorkers found out last November that they had unfortunately won the bid for this notoriously anti-worker, union-busting corporation.

However, New York City is a union town with a strong protest history and culture. Despite the efforts of Mayor Bill de Blasio and Gov. Andrew Cuomo to cut a backroom deal with Amazon, worth nearly \$3 billion in corporate welfare, city residents are making their voices heard, as they did at the City Council meeting on Jan. 30.

Their message was clear: Amazon is not welcome here. It was the second in a series of meetings that the NYC City Council has called in order to talk with Amazon representatives and review the deal in which they did not have a say. Although there is no official public comments section in Council proceedings, these meetings have become a target of the mass movement because they offer a rare opportunity, in an extremely undemocratic process, to show Amazon directly that the company is not welcome.

Some City Council members had strong words for Amazon, but this was undoubtedly due to mounting pressure from below. Before the meeting began, a rally was held by a number of groups representing different aspects of the struggle, from frontline communities in Queens to tech workers and college students in other boroughs.



WW PHOTO: JOHN STEFFIN

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Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the neverending quest for ever-greater profits.

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

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

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Several unions attended, although not all were there to protest. The Building and Construction Trades, which Amazon has said it will work with on the construction of HQ2, showed up to support the corporation. However, the Department Store Union (RWDSU) and Teamsters Joint Council 16 spoke against the company receiving corporate welfare and demanded that Amazon allow its workers to be unionized.

Fund people's needs, not Amazon!

Throughout the rally, several issues were raised in protest. These include the role Amazon would play in displacing Queens residents and further gentrifying New York City like the company did in Seattle; the company's contract with Immigration and Customs Enforcement to develop facial recognition technology; and horrific working conditions in its fulfillment centers.

Protesters also proposed a number of things the \$3 billion in tax breaks and handouts to Amazon could be spent on to improve conditions for NYC residents, including affordable housing, repairing the crumbling subway system and reducing tuition costs in the City University of New York system.

After the rally, protesters packed the City Council chamber. When the first representative from Amazon spoke and said that New Yorkers would benefit from Amazon, two banners were dropped. One read, "Amazon delivers lies" and the other said, "Amazon fuels ICE deportations." Protesters continued to hold up signs with the same slogans each time a company representative spoke.

The Jan. 30 protest was a clear sign that there is a growing mass movement in New York City against the Amazon deal. This monstrous \$3 billion giveaway, combined with undemocratic city planning, are bringing together a diverse array of groups in a common struggle.

Amazon executives are definitely feeling the heat. Over the last several weeks, the corporation has conducted a slick public relations campaign to convince New Yorkers of its lies. Residents in and around Queens have received multiple pieces of mail telling them about how they will benefit from HQ2. But Amazon's propaganda is all lies — and the people of New York are seeing through them.

Join us in the fight for socialism!

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.

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NEW YORK

Subway riders demand accessible transit

By Tony Murphy
New York

Malaysia Goodson, 22-year-old African-American mother, was carrying a stroller with her 1-year-old daughter, Rylee, down the steps of a New York City subway station on Jan. 28. It had no elevators and two escalators that only go up. Goodson fell down the stairs to her death, somehow protecting her child who survived.

Within 24 hours of the news breaking, leaders in the accessibility rights movement gathered on Jan. 30 at the 53rd Street and 7th Avenue subway stop where Goodson died. As temperatures dropped well below freezing, they demanded elevators throughout the subway system and honored Goodson by laying flowers at the subway entrance where she fell.

An emergency coalition of groups, including the Brooklyn Center for the Independence of the Disabled, the Center for the Independence of the Disabled NY, Rise and Resist, and the People’s MTA, called the action.

The takeaway from the rally’s many speeches was that Goodson’s death was preventable. Speakers called on the MTA to settle the multiple lawsuits against it by committing to a court-enforceable timeline for the installation of elevators in the subway system.

The assembled groups have made this demand multiple times at Metropolitan Transit Authority board meetings and anti-fare-hike protests. Goodson’s death amplified what disability rights leaders

have said all along: The demand for accessible subways affects everyone — parents with strollers; elderly riders; both riders with mobility disabilities and many with nonmobility disabilities, such as sight impairment; workers carrying heavy loads; and travelers with luggage. At some point everyone needs an elevator.

‘This could happen to anybody’

Dustin Jones, a disability advocate and plaintiff in a federal lawsuit addressing the MTA’s poor maintenance of elevators, said that as a wheelchair user he has had to rely on strangers many times to carry him or his chair up subway staircases. “Why should anybody have to go through that? Why should a mother, with her baby, have to go down the stairs at any given time, to get anywhere around the city? It’s a travesty. This could happen to me. This could happen to anybody here. Why isn’t the MTA listening to us?”

Though many reporters and camera crews attended the protest and vigil at the subway entrance, the action received scant coverage in comparison to announcements by the city medical examiner and the New York Police Department that Goodson’s fall was due to a “pre-existing medical condition.”

It’s not surprising that the MTA would try to get the city medical examiner as well as the NYPD to run interference for it. Goodson’s death came as the transit authority has possibly the worst reputation ever in its 50-year existence.

Starting with maddeningly dysfunctional

operations, massive reductions in service, a history of racist crackdowns on riders who can’t afford the fare, and a criminal lack of elevators, the headlines have only gotten worse since the MTA’s crisis of leadership in January over the L train shutdown.

The upcoming decision to raise transit fares has topped all of that. But the MTA has more than bad publicity to worry about. It is also already facing multiple lawsuits over the lack of transit accessibility.

Amid the already existing mass anger at the MTA, the shocking tragedy of Goodson’s death has elicited more outrage and mass solidarity as the hearts of the people of New York have gone out to her and her family.

Subway stairs: a major hazard

Some 5.5 million people take the subway every day. During the winter, they are trying to navigate dangerous snow- and slush-covered stairs as they travel to work, child care services, job interviews and doctors’ appointments. It is treacherous even without carrying a stroller.

Everyone who has taken the subway for more than a month has either been a parent struggling alone on the steps with a stroller or has seen and/or helped a parent in this hazardous situation. Parents have responded online to this tragedy with their own stories. Much of the massive online commentary has been “That could easily have been me.”

Mothers, especially, relate how dangerous and difficult it is to manage stairs with one child in a stroller and often



WW PHOTO: SARA FLOUNDERS

other children in tow. Some mention that strangers often help carry strollers up stairs, but that assistance can’t be counted on. Some people who want to help are not healthy enough to do so. Women worry if the stranger they ask for help will harass or stalk them.

As of Feb. 4, a gofundme page for Goodson’s funeral had raised more than \$10,000; another one for her daughter had raised \$20,000.

The city medical examiner’s findings may push back the headlines that followed Goodson’s death, but the outpouring of sympathy can’t be pushed back. The MTA is like one person with a pail trying to bail out of a massive flood.

Fighters for accessibility speak at MTA board meetings and rally in front of courthouses. Yet the journalists who show up to these events often manage to ignore their presence. The mix of street actions and outpouring of solidarity for Goodson have brought the call for subway elevators further into public view — and hopefully further out of media-imposed isolation. □

DISABLED ACTIVISTS DEMAND No forced institutionalization!

By Workers World NYC Disabilities bureau

The disability community issued a clarification call to Congress on Jan. 15 to legislate freedom for people with disabilities and seniors. National ADAPT, a militant disabled activist organization, hosted a celebratory press conference in Washington to announce the introduction of the Disability Integration Act.

Kelly Buckland, executive director of the National Council on Independent Living, said there, “As someone who uses attendant services and has lived in a nursing facility, I can’t begin to express how exciting it is that this is finally going to happen.”

This act would mandate that state entities and private insurers who pay for institutionalizing disabled people and seniors would have to pay for those services at home. It would end the institutional bias. Individuals could live and eat where they want and go to school and work. It was no accident that the bill was introduced on the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday. The act is civil rights legislation in the most fundamental way: It calls for freedom to choose one’s destiny.

The disability community has a long record of working with Dr. King, having marched, rolled, ridden and scooted with him and the Civil Rights Movement. A banner with Dr. King’s famous quote, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,” has been carried on many Disability Pride parades. And the disability community has long marked Dr. King’s birthday, Jan. 15, as “Freedom Day.” Disability activists vow to mark the day that the DIA legislation finally passes as Disability Freedom Day.

This act was originally introduced in 1997 by then Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (R-GA) and went nowhere. In the intervening years, activists shifted their priorities to other issues. In 2017, they focused on the Affordable Care Act. Now, they hope that the new progressive

Congress members elected in the midterm elections will back the DIA.

Activists recognize that they have a lot of work to do. They prepared an extensive manual of questions and answers for those meeting with Congress members to educate them. Many current members of Congress were not in the legislative bodies when the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed and are not familiar with the issues.

ADAPT: ‘Struggle has just begun’

ADAPT says: “Speaker Nancy Pelosi has signaled that the lives and liberty of people with disabilities are not a priority to the House of Representatives. The start of the 116th Congress has been filled with talk of creative opportunities for progress in every community except the Disability Community, but we refuse to be left behind.” (ADAPT.org/Letter to House of Representatives)

In her opening speech as Speaker of the House, Pelosi failed to mention the DIA or any plans to oppose the Trump administration’s legislative efforts to dilute the ADA’s benefits with the ADA Education and Reform Act, which passed in the House last year with the help of a dozen Democratic Party votes.

“The struggle has just begun,” commented Anita Cameron, who chaired the press conference and is a national ADAPT organizer. She explained DIA’s importance as civil rights legislation because those institutionalized are disproportionately people of color, particularly Black women.

The act was introduced in three committees. The Senate referred it to the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. The House referred it to the Energy and Commerce Committee, which handles Medicaid, and the Judiciary Committee, which handles civil rights. “We have to hold hearings and put it to a vote,” Cameron explained.

Bill S.117/HR.555 has bipartisan

support. It was introduced in the Senate by Minority Leader Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., and into the House by Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner, R-Wis. Sens. Cory Garner, R-Colo., and Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., endorsed it. House endorsers are Reps. McMorran Rodgers, R-Wash., and John Lewis, D-Ga. The bill has 144 co-sponsors in the House and 26 in the Senate.

The act is supported by over 100 national disability and senior organizations, including AARP, Brain Injury Association of America, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Paralyzed Veterans of America and the National Federation of the Blind. Among the over 600 local and national supporting groups are African-American, Latinx, women’s and LGBTQ organizations. Further, the issue has public support. ADAPT secured a Harris poll in 2010 assessing public support. It showed that 89 percent of U.S. residents and 94 percent of retirees support the right to live in one’s own home.

Three groups carefully crafted DIA

The bill was meticulously crafted by three organizations: ADAPT and the National Council on Independent Living with the assistance of the Autistic Self Advocacy Network. It addresses public entities and private insurers that pay for long-term services and supports (LTSS) in institutions to require them to do so in private homes.

The DIA carefully spells out its requirements. Among other restrictions, these public and private entities cannot limit the availability of providing services because of cost or service caps. They must maintain a staffing workforce to provide necessary services. They must regularly inform individuals in nursing homes and institutions that they can choose to live at home. To this end, they must develop plans to provide accessible and affordable housing — building it, if necessary.

Now, even people receiving LTSS in their

own homes can lead limited lives because services are provided under a medical model that treats them as if they were sick. Policies that restrict individuals to only receive services at home effectively prevent them from going to work or school or traveling, shopping or having intimate relationships. Some policies prevent dependent children from receiving services. An attendant might cook for an individual who has an LTSS disability, but cannot contractually cook for their dependent children. This denial of services to children can pressure disabled people into giving up their children.

Passage of the DIA would make the ADA a reality for all. Activists are pushing Congress to pass the bill by July 26, the anniversary of the ADA’s signing in 1990.

Nadina La Spina, an ADAPT leader, wheelchair user and filmmaker, spoke at the Jan. 13 New York City Disabled in Action meeting. La Spina best explains the DIA’s importance on her website: “I don’t remember how many times I’ve been arrested. I lost count years ago. Unfortunately such dramatic actions are necessary to get our struggles to the attention of government, the media, and the general public.

“I wish we could stop fighting,” she continues. “But so many of our people are incarcerated in nursing homes and other institutions, so many are living below the poverty level, so many are being denied basic human rights. The promise of equality of the Americans with Disabilities Act remains unfulfilled. We live in an ‘ableist’ world. We face prejudice and discrimination in every area of our lives on a daily basis. When it seems we’re making progress, we suddenly find ourselves having to fight just to hold on to what we’ve gained.”

La Spina’s 1993 film, “Disability Independence Day March,” can be viewed at tinyurl.com/y85qv2st

100 years ago

General strike shut down Seattle

By Jim McMahan
Seattle

From Feb. 6 to 11, 1919, some 60,000 workers, led by 35,000 shipyard workers, shut down Seattle — population 300,000 — in a general strike. The strike was in solidarity with the Russian Revolution of 1917, which, along with the Chinese Revolution of 1950, was one of the great watershed revolutions of the 20th century.

General strikes had already taken place in St. Louis in 1877 and New Orleans in 1892. The Seattle general strike was the most organized, with 110 union locals participating.

Industrial Workers of the World

At the height of the industrial revolution, militants and labor radicals founded the Industrial Workers of the World in 1905 to represent all workers, including im/migrant and workers of all nationalities and genders, for industrial unionism and against capitalism. It demanded that workers receive the fruits of their labor. The IWW struck at Lawrence, Mass., in 1912, when thousands of immigrant women garment workers united and fought to victory against poverty wages.

The “Wobblies” were involved in big struggles in Grays Harbor County on Washington’s Pacific Coast. They fought a successful free-speech battle there in 1911 and 1912 and overturned a ban on radical speakers in the lumber town of Aberdeen. IWW workers then struck between March and May of 1912 in mills all across Western Washington. Great gains were made against low wages. Thousands joined the IWW during and after this struggle.

In 1916, in the mill town of Everett near Seattle, several thousand shingle weavers held out against the shingle mills in a beleaguered five-month strike. The IWW came to the their aid by holding free-speech street meetings in the face of arrests and other heavy repression.

On Nov. 5, 1916, two solidarity ships full of bold and courageous IWW workers sailed from Seattle to Everett. Just before the ship Verona arrived at the Everett dock, shots rang out from two covered piers full of the bosses’ armed thugs. Eleven IWW workers were murdered and 31 wounded.

Everett was the most bloody confrontation with striking workers in the Northwest. But all IWW mass organizing was met with mass jailings, beatings and defamation of workers in the bosses’ news media—which only stiffened the workers’ determination. Admiration for the great solidarity of the worker-martyrs at Everett helped lead to the Seattle General Strike.

In 1917, 50,000 loggers in the Northwest went on strike for the 8-hour day and to win bedding in bunkhouses in lumber camps. The loggers, who were called bindlestiffs because they carried their bedding on their backs in bindles, worked in hazardous and unsanitary conditions. The army was called out against them.

Despite this, the loggers won the 8-hour day and bunkhouse bedding and celebrated by throwing their bindles into big bonfires. They came out of the woods singing a new song for labor—“Solidarity Forever!”

End of WWI brings class struggle home

Seattle shipyard workers, under very regimented, dangerous conditions, had built 26 percent of the U.S. World War I fleet. But they were under a wage freeze during World War I. The Shipbuilding

Labor Adjustment Board in Washington, D.C., had control over wages. It was called the Macy Board after its director, V. Everit Macy. The shipyard workers’ main grievance was their low wages — only \$4.16 a day — which were kept low by the rulings of the Macy Board for the benefit of the yard bosses. But prices began going up and, with many workers moving into the crowded city for jobs in the shipyards, the landlords jacked up the rents.

The end of World War I, Nov. 11, 1918, now celebrated as Armistice Day, brought much rejoicing and helped bring the class struggle home to the U.S. The mutiny of the armed soldiers and sailors of Germany had brought down the German Kaiser. The German Social Democrats supported them and the workers almost overthrew capitalism. (see WW, Oct. 18; tinyurl.com/y9dt3svg)

Workers in Seattle closely followed world events affecting their class. There were at least 52 working class/radical newspapers in Washington state between 1898 and 1920. Seattle had a daily newspaper, the Seattle Union Record, which bent toward socialism and was the mouthpiece of organized labor under the Seattle Central Labor Council. It had a daily circulation of 50,000 to 100,000 during these years.

In November 1918, the Seattle shipyard workers, under the Metal Trades Council, reacted quickly to the end of the WWI strike ban and ratified a strike vote. There were 35,000 workers in the Seattle yards, in about 20 union locals under the MTC.

Hulet Wells gives a description of the Skinner & Eddy yard: There were "boilermakers, drillers, reamers, blacksmiths, machinists, electricians, carpenters, molders and painters. ... In the shops were blast furnaces, giant shears, punch presses and table rolls. Boilers reverberated, planers screamed, white hot rods were rammed into bolt machines. ... It was Dante's Inferno and Chaplin's Modern Times all in one."

Strike!

On Jan. 16, 1919, the workers' MTC entered negotiations with the yard bosses for long-overdue wage increases, especially for the low-paid laborers. But bargaining broke down after an intercepted telegram from the Emergency Fleet Corporation, which said the yards would get no steel if any pay increases were given. The 35,000 MTC workers struck the shipyards on Jan. 21, with another 15,000 in Tacoma.

Now the complete intransigence of the bosses moved the workers in the direction of a general strike. A leaflet showing a worker pushing a capitalist into a coffin showed up across the city and even around the country. It said "Russia Did It" — a spin-off of the slogan "The Yanks Did It" for a WWI Victory Bond drive.

The Seattle Central Labor Council was made up of 110 union locals representing 65,000 workers — half of them shipyard workers already on strike. The CLC had strong flanks from the socialists and the IWW.

A Jan. 22 meeting of the CLC was packed to the rafters, and the question of the general strike was cheered forward by the workers against any opposition. Favorable general strike votes were taken in the next several days by nearly all union locals.

On Feb. 2, a meeting of representatives from all the unions set the general strike date for Feb. 6. A Committee of 15 was chosen to plan the organization of the strike.

The immediate issue was how to run a city without capitalist production and distribution — how to provide and manage the necessities of life for the working class. Essential services such as light and power, fire protection, hospitals and food distribution had to be planned. Organized labor had cooperative relations with farmers through the State Grange, a farmers' association.

How about the aims and duration of the strike? This question was taken up in a way by Anna Louise Strong, the editorial page editor of the Seattle Union Record, who wrote that labor not only would shut down industry, but could reopen more and more industries "under its own management." She also said that workers were starting on a road that leads "no one knows where." This shocked the daylights out of the bosses.

On Feb. 6, at 10 a.m., the general strike began. It was a Seattle and Tacoma general strike, with 20,000 striking in Tacoma. All the streetcars and trucks headed for the barns, and all activity in the city ceased. Some 65,000 union workers struck, but with many sympathetic non-union workers also striking or unable to get to work, there could have been 100,000 staying home. There were also 5,000 to 10,000 striking coal miners in districts east of Seattle.

Labor set up 21 cafeterias serving meals for 25 cents to unionists and 35 cents to others. Milk was provided for babies at 35 milk stations. Linen and fuel was delivered to hospitals under the authorization of the General Strike Committee. The Japanese Labor Association, comprising hotel and restaurant workers, struck in sympathy with a labor movement that had never recognized them.

The Labor War Veterans Guards, under the General Strike Committee, patrolled the city to prevent any provocations against the strike. But the threat to public safety came from 1,500 troops brought in from nearby Camp Lewis, who set up machine gun nests at intersections. Instead of urging workers to stay home, it would have been powerful for the General Strike Committee to call out the masses of labor in demonstrations.

Labor advances

The great strike lasted five working days until Tuesday, Feb. 11, at noon. The workers had won nothing from the federal government, but were satisfied they had shown solidarity. It was a great demonstration of the growing power of labor against the bosses, who were rabid in their attacks. It was a demonstration of labor’s ability to run and manage society, and also a show of solidarity with the Russian Revolution, as it grew to become a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

In October 1919 a shipment of crates labelled “sewing machines” came to the Seattle port. Suspicious longshore workers "accidentally" dropped a crate on the dock. Out came rifles from Remington Arms bound for counterrevolutionary Admiral Alexander Kolchak, who led the White Movement against the Russian Revolution. The longshore workers refused to load the cargo, and the Central Labor Council backed them up. Such was the spirit of proletarian internationalism in Seattle and among the working class in many places during and after the Russian Revolution.

Seattle Mayor Ole Hanson was whipped into a rage against the Reds, and even toured the country giving speeches on Americanism versus Bolshevism.

Possibly influenced by Seattle's strike, a six-week general strike broke out in Winnipeg, Canada, from May Day, May 1, until mid-June. This general strike involved 30,000 workers—virtually the entire working class of Winnipeg. Sympathy strikes were called in Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver and all across Canada, and the ruling class was so shaken that they responded with bloody violence.

The Seattle general strike and all the organizing during that period helped labor move to a higher level during the 1930s. Under the labor movement, the pension leagues and the Washington Pension Union fought for and won a \$50 state pension for workers. This helped force the federal government to implement Social Security for retirees and others. □

Sources: “Revolution in Seattle” by Harvey O'Connor and The Canadian Encyclopedia.

Capitalism at a Dead End

Job destruction, overproduction and crisis in the high-tech era

by Fred Goldstein

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

Low-Wage Capitalism

by Fred Goldstein

Low-Wage Capitalism 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.

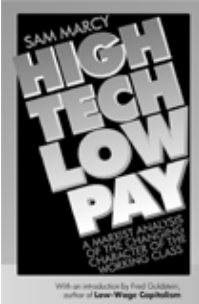
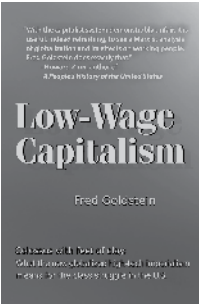
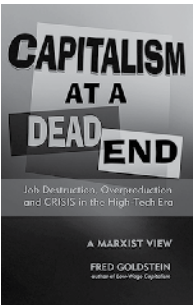
High Tech Low Pay

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*.

Available at online booksellers and workers.org/books



On the picket line

By Alex Bolchi and Sue Davis

Issaquah education workers' strike threat wins contract

After the successful Los Angeles teachers' strike, school support staff in Issaquah, Wash., learned that even the threat of "shutting shit down" is enough to make bosses tremble. A huge majority of office professionals in the Issaquah Chapter of Public School Employees of Washington, represented by Service Employees (SEIU) Local 1948 and Paraeducators in SEIU Local 925, voted to authorize a strike on Jan. 15. Among the lowest paid in the district — near Seattle's booming tech industry — workers testified to that fact at two school board meetings. They'd also filed grievances against the district for being unwilling to bargain in good faith and provide workers with a cost of living agreement they had committed to in past contracts.

The district continually ignored the workers until the strike authorization, finally offering a tentative agreement on Jan. 24. So on Jan. 29, instead of going on strike, the workers overwhelmingly voted to approve the agreement, which includes a 3.1 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) over two years, with 1.9 percent retroactively covering the 2018-19 school year. As one elected strike committee member said, "All we wanted was for the district to acknowledge our important work in keeping Issaquah schools safe places for kids to learn." The COLA increase "helps us keep up with our region's growing expenses so we can be at our best on the job." (seiu925.org, Jan. 25)

Denver teachers cast historic strike vote

For the first time in 25 years, Denver public school teachers voted overwhelmingly on Jan. 22 to strike. The union, the Denver Classroom Teachers Association, represents about two-thirds of Denver Public Schools' 5,600 educators. The 93 percent strike vote comes in the wake of massive teacher walkouts last April in districts across Colorado demanding increased funding. The DCTA demands are similar to those that drove the Los Angeles teachers' strike — higher pay, smaller class sizes, more guidance counselors.

The district has repeatedly pushed misleading messages to both the public and the union in its "offers" — like claiming there's no money for COLA increases when money was already allotted. In a racist act on Jan. 24, the district's human rights department wrote to school administrators threatening to report teachers with visas to immigration officials if teachers struck. Though it was soon rescinded, damage had already been done to both teachers and immigrant students. (In These Times, Jan. 25)

The DCTA negotiators walked out of a raucous public negotiating session Jan. 31, rejecting the district's latest proposal. The district maintains it has offered as much as it can without help from the state, which has said it will decide by Feb. 11 whether to delay the process six months. The strike could begin soon after if the state doesn't join negotiations. (Colorado Public Radio, Feb. 1)

Sexually abused housekeeper sues Marriott

Leticia Vallejo, a housekeeper at a Marriott hotel in Irvine, California, filed a lawsuit in State Superior Court on Jan. 27 alleging her supervisors created a hostile work environment because they didn't do enough to protect her from guest misconduct. The suit grew out of an incident in the summer of 2017 when a drunk male guest groped Vallejo while she was cleaning the hotel lobby bathroom and then offered her \$50. When she complained to her supervisors, they laughed and said, "He should have offered you \$100." Though she subsequently requested a sign to block the bathroom entrance while she was working, the small one management provided didn't deter customers. During the 18 years Vallejo has worked at the hotel, she said men often urinate in front of her and make inappropriate advances. And not just to her, to all housekeepers.

After Vallejo filed a notice with the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing, she was issued a right-to-sue letter prior to filing the lawsuit. Vallejo is seeking unspecified damages and injunctive relief. "I don't want other people to go through this," she said. Along with 120 other back-of-house employees she voted to join UNITE HERE 11 at Marriott Irvine in January.

Meanwhile, the Marriott corporation announced it was issuing "associate alert devices" across all locations last September — before UNITE HERE's stunningly effective nationwide strike. The technology was designed to send notification allowing management to locate the worker who activated it. But Vallejo and others are still waiting for that protection. (Bloomberg, Jan. 28) Maybe workers throughout the Marriott system should strike again to force the company to deliver. □

In Virginia and West Virginia

Educators fight back

Continued from page 1

schools, vouchers and the elimination of union dues deduction from payroll checks. All these measures were defeated last year as a result of the educators' strike.

The Senate proposal would eliminate seniority rights and penalize and criminalize participants in any future walkouts. It's an all-out attack on unions.

Proponents of this reactionary proposal falsely claim they are trying to "help students," but the proposal even had language that would increase class sizes.

The "Omnibus bill" passed in the Senate Education Committee, but, in a rare move, the Senate then voted to bypass the Senate Finance Committee. The bill was amended in late January while being read on the Senate floor. Under pressure from militant teachers, the Senate removed language about increasing class size, but it still includes elimination of seniority as a factor in annual reductions in force, employment transfers and other attacks on workers' rights.

If the bill moves quickly through the House, there may be another strike. The three unions have asked their members to vote to authorize a work action — another walkout — if the House doesn't defeat or amend it.

A pro-public education rally was held at the Capitol in Charleston, W.Va., on the evening of Jan. 31. "Our Students First" was organized by a grassroots coalition made up of state affiliates of the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers, as well the independent West Virginia School Service Personnel Association and other advocates of public education.

The ultraright, union-busting American Legislative Exchange Council and the libertarian-leaning Cardinal Institute for West Virginia Policy have been campaigning in the state to mislead parents and the public into believing for-profit charter schools will somehow improve the lives of students.

Reactionary politicians and business leaders are doing everything they can to weaken workers' rights by trying to break the unions and replace public schools with corporate-controlled schools.

New movement of militant teachers

Since the 2018 West Virginia strike, school and public workers in nearly every state in the U.S. have been forming and joining organizations seemingly modeled on



PHOTO: OUR STUDENTS FIRST

West Virginia educators, still #55Strong in all counties, rally at state capitol building, Feb. 1.

rank-and-file committees of the American Federation of Teachers. These include the Caucus of Rank and File Educators in Chicago and the Movement of Rank and File Educators in New York City.

In some ways, these groups are similar to Teamsters for a Democratic Union that formed in 1975 or Miners for Democracy that fought, starting in 1970, for black lung recognition and benefits within the United Mine Workers. Other examples of rank-and-file militancy can be found throughout labor history.

In the West Virginia educators' strike, the first rank-and-file group began in the fall of 2017 as a simple Facebook page. West Virginia Public Employees UNITED quickly gathered more than 24,000 members, leading to the formation of the WV United Caucus and then to the Feb. 23-March 7 strike.

The April 26-May 3 strike in Arizona began with a rank-and-file Facebook page called Arizona Educators United, which was then embraced by the Arizona Education Association.

Members of these rank-and-file groups are also activist members of the NEA and AFT affiliates in their respective states. Young teachers, who care deeply about their profession as well as social justice issues and organize heavily through social media, have led the rank-and-file organizing.

More members of these informal rank-and-file groups are becoming increasingly radicalized through their personal experiences and struggles as education workers in the heart of capitalism. This is certainly a positive development.

With the onslaught of corporate attacks on public education, it's crucial for union leaders, rank-and-file activists and revolutionary communists to work together collectively to push back against the big-business agenda of union busting and privatization. □

Class War in West Virginia: Education Workers Strike and Win!

In West Virginia, famous for pitched battles between union miners and the coal barons, class war is raging. This time it's teachers and all school employees on one side and right-wing capitalist politicians on the other. To quote the old labor song, "Which Side Are You On?" — "there are no neutrals."

Read Workers World's coverage of the West Virginia education workers strike at [workers.org/books](#).

from the pages of WORKERS WORLD suggested donation \$3.00

International Committee for Peace, Justice and Dignity: ‘We stand with Maduro and the Venezuelan people’

The following statement was issued by the International Committee for Peace, Justice and Dignity on Jan. 23.

We reject the coup attempt of the U.S. government against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which ignores and violates the sovereign decision of the Venezuelan people who, in an absolute democratic and transparent election, in the presence of international observers, elected Nicolás Maduro as their legitimate President last May.

On Jan. 22, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence sent a recorded message out that was broadcasted by 2,527 media outlets for three days in coordination with the shadowy Organization of American States (OAS) calling for subversion against Maduro's government.

Before the eyes of the world, and in the most grotesque manner with the absence of opposition involvement, this new attack was openly done by the one who pays and rules. They spoke and presented their new puppet they had prepared for the occasion, Juan Guaidó, announcing him on the stage for the world to see.

The National Assembly, a body that represents no one, in contempt for the violation of the principles of the Constitution, responds directly to U.S. interests, and whose rotating presidency was held by Guaidó [who was] named president of Venezuela out of thin air. It would be laughable if the facts were not so serious and the



stability of the region was not put at high risk. Donald Trump quickly gave recognition to Guaidó through twitter, immediately followed by the vile secretary of the OAS Luis Almagro, the mafioso of Miami Marco Rubio and part of the cartel of Lima.

It did not take long to learn that Guaidó, unknown until three days ago, was selected by USAID [U.S. Agency for International Development] and the U.S. intelligence agencies as the clown on duty to play such an embarrassing and usurping role. He says he will carry out a transitional government, to which the people, the Bolivarian National Armed Force (FANB), or any other institution did not respond.

Nicolás Maduro Moros holds the Presidency of the

Republic and is the one who was elected by the overwhelming majority of the Venezuelan people with more than 67 percent of the votes. The so-called new president has sought refuge in an embassy — in other words he is in foreign territory knowing that his actions are illegal and a crime against the Constitution.

The Bolivarian National Armed Force and the military high command are on alert and have reiterated their allegiance to Maduro.

Faced with imperial interference and the attempted coup d'état, the government of President Nicolás Maduro has broken diplomatic relations with the United States and has ordered personnel of the U.S. government to leave the country in 72 hours.

This is a dangerous new move against Venezuela and sets the stage to try and legitimize a military intervention.

We call on the friends of Cuba and Venezuela in the world, the men and women of goodwill, to support the legitimate President Nicolás Maduro, his government, and the people of Venezuela.

#VenezuelaIsNotAlone!

#WeAreMaduro

#TodosConMaduro

#NoPasarán!

International Committee for Peace, Justice and Dignity

Argentine League for Human Rights

Carioca Committee in Solidarity with Cuba

U.S. Peace Council: ‘Stop the U.S.-led coup!’

The following statement was issued Jan. 26.
Petitions and condemnations are not enough! The U.S. peace movement must act decisively!

Once again, the bloody hand of U.S. imperialism is reaching out into Venezuela to complete the failed job of regime change that it started in 2002 against President Hugo Chávez. There is no doubt that another U.S.-led coup is underway to topple the democratically elected government of President Maduro in the hope of putting an end to the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela.

The illegal act by the U.S. government to recognize Juan Guaidó as the “President of Venezuela” is not only in violation of international law and the United Nations Charter, but constitutes a direct attack on the Venezuelan people’s right to national sovereignty and self-determination.

We do not forget that the same tactic of creating a U.S.-fabricated “alternative government” was also used by the Obama administration, and especially by Hillary Clinton as the U.S. secretary of state, in an attempt to overthrow the legitimate government of President Bashar Assad in Syria.

The forced regime change operation in Venezuela is just another instance of the ongoing policy adopted by U.S. imperialism against the governments that have been resisting U.S. domination since the dismantling of the USSR: Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Iran, Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua, North Korea. It is now being intensified by the exclusively corporate/military-controlled Trump administration. In addition, recent efforts by NATO to recruit Latin American countries, such as Colombia and Brazil, further threaten countries like Venezuela which dare to assert their autonomy.

This criminal, decades-long, regime change policy is driven by both economic and strategic objectives. Venezuela has been in U.S. crosshairs, along with Iraq, Libya and Iran, for its large oil reserves. Venezuela is also the primary exporter of oil to the United States. U.S. control of these rapidly depleting oil reserves is key to U.S. imperialism’s domination of the global economy in the 21st century, especially in the face of emerging, powerful challenges from countries like China and Russia.

But an even more urgent motivation for U.S. imperialism to force regime change in Venezuela is to put an end to the anti-imperialist role Venezuela’s Bolivarian Revolution has played in Latin America. Since the ascendance of President Hugo Chávez to power in 1999, the Bolivarian government of Venezuela has played a critical role in promoting self-determination, democracy and mass-empowerment in Latin America.

Venezuela has been Cuba’s main supporter during the emergency period that it faced after the disintegration of the socialist camp. Venezuela provided subsidized oil to numerous countries in the Caribbean — Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica, Belize and Nicaragua — that allowed those countries to finance education, reduce poverty and pay down

debt. Venezuela also provided deeply discounted heating oil to impoverished families in 25 states throughout the U.S.

It is for all these reasons that the success of a U.S.-led coup in Venezuela would result in a disaster, not only for the people of Venezuela, but for all of Latin America and even the people of the United States. It could easily lead to a long civil war and possibly another U.S. military intervention, this time in Venezuela, especially since Trump, Bolton and Pompeo have consistently said that this option is on the table.

This would lead to displacement of hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of people, creating a huge wave of refugees throughout Latin America, which would affect the United States as well. Given Trump’s anti-refugee, anti-immigrant, wall policy, one can imagine the dimensions of the humanitarian disaster that could arise.

The U.S. Peace Council strongly opposes U.S. imperialism’s criminal interference in the internal affairs of Venezuela and demands full respect for the will of the majority of the Venezuelan people who have freely elected Nicolás Maduro as their president.

We call upon the U.S. peace movement to not limit itself to just signing petitions and issuing statements of condemnation, as important as they are. While these methods are necessary and helpful in applying pressure on the U.S. Congress and the government, the history of U.S. imperialism has demonstrated that such appeals alone have not been effective enough to stop the crimes that are being committed by our government abroad in our name.

We need to organize broad mass protests in every corner of the country, against war, against foreign intervention and against violations of the U.N. Charter by the U.S. ruling class.

Many organizations in the U.S. and around the world have already issued calls for mass protests against the ongoing U.S. coup attempt in Venezuela. For a partial list of actions [visit tinyurl.com/y7qwel2r].

We urge our members and supporters, and all peace-loving people, to join these actions or organize similar protests in their own area.

Let us remember how we stopped the Vietnam War. Let us join hands again to demonstrate the immense power of the people who want peace and an end to imperialist interventions. □

No U.S. war on Venezuela!

Continued from page 1

- All countries involved in the plunder of Venezuelan wealth immediately return what they have stolen to the democratically elected government of Venezuela and its people.

- Wall Street must immediately pay reparations to the Venezuelan people for their suffering under genocidal sanctions and currency manipulation.

In the internationalist and liberatory spirit of Simón Bolívar, we pledge to mobilize and fight on the side of Venezuela’s right to sovereignty, understanding that the gains won under the Bolivarian Revolution are gains for all the world’s workers and oppressed. □



- The U.S. immediately cease all hostile actions against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela — lift all sanctions, stop backing a coup, cease efforts to destroy the Venezuelan economy and respect the right of the Venezuelan people to self-determination.
- All countries involved in the plunder of Venezuelan wealth immediately return what they have stolen to the democratically elected government of Venezuela and its people.
- Wall Street must immediately pay reparations to the Venezuelan people for their suffering under genocidal sanctions and currency manipulation.

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Chavistas ready to talk, ready to fight

By Marco Teruggi
Caracas

Feb. 3 — Two conclusions emerge from the Venezuelan conflict almost two weeks after Juan Guaidó's self-proclamation as president. The first is that the leadership of this attempt to set up a parallel government resides in the United States. The second is that, for the present, the main force does too.

Anyone who came to Venezuela to find images of a country transformed into an arena of open battles will have to wait. This Saturday, Feb. 2, confirmed that conclusion at this point in the U.S.-led attack.

The coup masters are National Security Adviser John Bolton, Vice President Mike Pence, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Special Envoy for Venezuela Elliot Abrams, Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin, Republican Senator Marco Rubio and President Donald Trump himself.

It is a waste of time to follow Juan Guaidó, or any other Venezuelan leader of the right, to find out what might happen.

Pence, for example, gave a speech at a Miami church on Feb. 1. There he stated that it is necessary to "eliminate" the governments of Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua, that it is a "regional" issue, and that "This is no time for dialogue." (Miami Herald, Feb. 2)

Bolton gives the orders

Meanwhile Bolton spoke as the chief: "The United States calls on all military members to follow General Yáñez's lead, and to protect the peaceful protesters supporting democracy." Bolton was referring to Air Force General Francisco Yáñez of the Bolivarian National Armed Force (FANB), who broadcast a video Saturday morning (Feb. 2) announcing his support for Guaidó.

The security adviser also tweeted Feb. 1 that Washington will send so-called humanitarian aid: "Pursuant to the request of Interim President Juan Guaidó, and in consultation with his officials the U.S. will mobilize and transport humanitarian aid—medicine, surgical supplies, and nutritional supplements for the people of Venezuela. It's time for Maduro to get out of the way."

At the right-wing mobilization in Caracas on Saturday, Guaidó said, "We announce a global coalition for humanitarian aid and freedom in Venezuela. We already have three collection points for the aid: Cúcuta is the first. Another will be in Brazil and another in a Caribbean island." (Business Standard, Feb. 2)

His only announcement was the one Bolton had already made. The chain of command provides proof that they hardly try to disguise, although sometimes they need to explain it, as Rubio did when he tweeted: "The U.S. didn't organize this movement. This is led by the Venezuelan people." (#2DeFebrero)

Guaidó only specified one particular point of entry: Cúcuta, a border area characterized by the high presence of Colombian paramilitarism, smuggling mafias — linked to or synonymous with paramilitarism — where those who attempted to assassinate Nicolás Maduro in August last year were trained.

Cúcuta is one of the main points that could be activated as a key focus, to unleash fires, with the characteristic of getting record media exposure. It was from there, for example, that Luis Almagro, secretary of the Organization of American States, affirmed that the military option against Maduro's government was not ruled out.

It is likely that if the coup plotters follow this scenario, the conflict's center will alternate between Caracas and those critical points. How do they plan to bring in aid?



Protest in Berlin, Germany, Feb. 1, demands hands off Venezuela.



PHOTO: AVN



PHOTO: PSUV

Pro-government Venezuelans reject U.S.-led coup efforts with massive rallies in Caracas (top) and Barinas state (bottom) on Feb. 1.

With what logistics, force, permission and actors? What type of action will accompany the entry?

The "parallel government" needs territory and the capacity to exercise power — two factors it does not possess now. The only thing that makes Guaidó "president" at the Venezuelan domestic level is that his right-wing social base calls him that. It is evident that neither he nor all the right-wing together have the strength to carry out this kind of strategy.

No entry without permission

The Bolivarian government will not let U.S. forces or hired contractors open a wedge into Venezuela's national

territory. No government would allow a foreign force — or its agents — to enter without its permission.

The game is now at stalemate. Washington argues for no dialogue and rejects attempts such as those the governments of Mexico and Uruguay proposed, or positions such as that of the Secretary General of the United Nations, which affirm the need for dialogue.

Some countries of the European Union proposed the creation of an International Contact Group with Venezuela—made up of 10 or 12 members, not all of them European—to advance the proposal to reconvene elections, with a period of 90 days to evaluate the results.

In this context, Maduro announced at the mobilization held on Feb. 2, where Chavismo carried out a new show of force, that it will consult on the possibility of anticipating the legislative elections that are due to be held in 2020. It would be a way of trying to deactivate the National Assembly, with all the risks that entails. Would it be preferable to let the National Assembly move forward in its attempt to set up a parallel government, beyond all legality, with the aim of carrying out a coup d'état?

It seems clear at this point that the U.S. will move forward and use any argument to redouble its narrative that there will be no negotiation. Many U.S. messages are aimed at breaking the will of Chavismo and in particular of the Bolivarian Armed Forces, which is their main goal. To achieve the latter, they have worked out a series of steps, from promising amnesty for the generals to threatening direct U.S. military intervention, and including

accounts created in social networks to convince soldiers to disobey the generals [if they order repression of the pro-coup forces — WW].

So ends another week in Venezuela. The struggle is nonstop. The speeches by the U.S. leaders of the coup attempt say they have set a final offensive in motion. Chavismo remains unbroken and mobilized, with the will both to talk and to fight.

Teruggi is an Argentine journalist and political analyst who has been living in Caracas. Original at pagina12.com.ar. Translation by Workers World Managing Editor John Catalinotto.

Honor Black History Month, Support Workers World

Fighting racism in February 2019, Black History Month, means starting at the top of the political ladder and denouncing the openly racist, white supremacist in the White House. It means opposing and exposing his administration's racist policies, like shutting down the government for 35 days, which put 800,000 government workers, many of whom are African American, in dire financial straits because he demanded \$5.8 billion to build a racist wall on the Mexican border.

Workers World makes a big deal of Black History Month because racism pervades every aspect of life in this country. Everything from fighting for living-wage jobs to ending mass incarceration to having affordable housing and fully-funded public schools is rooted in the centuries-long struggle to end this vicious history of racism, rooted in slavery.

That's why every month, not just Black History Month, the newspaper chronicles the struggles of African Americans to eradicate institutionalized, systemic racism. Case in point is our continuing coverage of the struggle to free Mumia Abu-Jamal. The latest chapter involves calling out the Philadelphia courts

for hiding evidence about Abu-Jamal's case that could lead to a new trial and eventually his freedom.

WW bases our weekly coverage of the Black struggle in the U.S., and in the African diaspora to throw off imperialist chains, on the principle of self-determination — that oppressed people have the right to fight to end all forms of inequality and injustice by any means necessary.

If you appreciate our coverage, it's time to join the Workers World Supporter Program established 42 years ago so readers could help us publish anti-racist, working-class truth and build campaigns needed to make revolutionary change leading to socialism.

For a donation of at least \$75 a year — and more if you're able — members receive a year's subscription to WW, a monthly letter about timely issues and five free subscriptions to give to friends. Write checks (either monthly or once a year) to Workers World and mail them, with your name and address, to 147 W. 24th St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10011. Or sign up to donate online at workers.org/donate/. Know that we're grateful for your help in building Workers World! □



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

As the poor freeze to death

Nothing ‘natural’ about climate disasters

By Deirdre Griswold

Feb. 4 — Yes, it was January, and cold weather was to be expected in much of the United States. In addition, the forecasters had warned for days that an arctic blast was about to hit much of the country.

There was plenty of time to prepare for it—to provide the means for all the people of this very rich capitalist country to be protected from the “polar vortex” to come.

Protecting the people: Isn’t that the excuse given for the hundreds of billions of tax dollars spent on “national defense”?

But at least 21 individuals are reported to have died directly from the cold. Most of them were homeless, trying to survive in tents and even cardboard boxes.

One community of homeless people living in tents in Chicago had their little propane stoves confiscated by the police because of “fire danger.” Did that make them any safer, when the temperature dipped far below zero degrees Fahrenheit?

A report issued in December 2018 by the Department of Housing and Urban Development found that last year about 553,000 people were homeless on an average day in the U.S. Of those, about two-thirds were living in shelters of some kind, leaving almost 200,000 living “rough.”

Another shocking fact is that millions of houses are standing empty. In February 2014, even as approximately 600,000 people were homeless, there were roughly 18,600,000 vacant homes in the U.S. (National Alliance to End Homelessness)

This during a period when the economy is supposedly strong and the two richest people in the world, both of them in the U.S. — Jeff Bezos of Amazon and Bill Gates of Microsoft — have a combined net worth of more than \$267 billion!

In jail and freezing

It’s bad enough trying to survive on the street. How about when you’re locked up behind bars without warm clothing or blankets and the temperatures in the jail drop below freezing?

Hundreds of inmates at a federal jail in New York City are still, days after the icy blast ended, without adequate heat and electricity. The Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn — across the river from the Wall Street financial hub where enormous sums of money are traded daily — has been cold and dark for more than a week. A breakdown in the heating system has not been fully repaired and a lockdown means the prisoners can’t even call their loved ones.

Word of the freezing conditions inside finally leaked out, leading to a demonstration outside the jail on Feb. 3. Desperate prisoners pounded on barred windows in response to chants from their relatives and supporters. When some relatives tried to enter the building, they were pepper sprayed by jail police.

This federal prison is owned and operated by the U.S. government, whose president keeps demanding billions of dollars to build a racist wall on the Mexican border, but has no word to spare for homeless people within the U.S., and only bigoted words for the refugee and migrant families seeking shelter from chaos engineered by U.S. capitalism.

Growing crisis of climate change

Meanwhile, the climate is changing and the infrastructure is crumbling in ways that leave more and more people vulnerable to extreme weather events.

Scientists have known for decades that the buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere was leading to climate change. They have pleaded with politicians to take action. It is not ignorance that is responsible for the growing disasters.

We live in an age of supercomputers and nuclear power, an age of not only material abundance but actual overproduction of goods. What is preventing the development of a plan to reorient human economic activity in order to head off and protect us from the climate disasters unfolding around the world?

Don’t look for answers in the capitalist media. But the clues are there — in the financial pages. Oil continues to be the most fought-over commodity by capitalist countries. For generations it has provided fortunes and

political power to a few super-rich families, whose oil and banking empires continue to run the U.S.

Think about all the prominent “trouble spots” where the U.S. government has intervened politically and militarily in recent decades to protect and expand the interests of the ruling class here. Libya, Iraq, Iran and Venezuela are among the most prominent — all major oil producers. Meanwhile, the “liberal” capitalist media provide phony excuses for these imperialist wars and efforts at “regime change.”

The burning of oil and coal is the biggest contributor to a warming planet and climate change. Yet the U.S. has torpedoed the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change, which was weak but better than nothing. This didn’t happen just because of Trump, as bad as he is. It is what was wanted by the ruling class that helped put him into power.

The workers of this country have the ability to change all this and pull down the exploiters who are ruining the world. The workers have the collective strength to paralyze “business as usual” and take the power away from the super-rich.

But first, workers have to be able to cut through the torrent of daily propaganda and recognize who the enemy is — who is really responsible for impoverished people suffering lonely and painful deaths inside cardboard boxes, even as millionaires become billionaires. □



PHOTO: COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

Homeless advocates demonstrate in New York City, Jan. 30.

Christina Swarns, Abu-Jamal’s attorney at that hearing, responded that the Commonwealth’s concern cannot be that Abu-Jamal might receive “too much justice.”

When DA Krasner took office in January 2018, Eisenberg resigned from his post. However, it seems that Krasner, who appointed Castille to his transition team, has chosen to continue his predecessors’ denial of justice to all-too-many unjustly convicted prisoners.

Community organizations launch protest

Krasner’s office acknowledged this January that in addition to finding six uncataloged boxes of prosecutors’ evidence in Abu-Jamal’s case, they found hundreds of boxes of files from other cases. That this “progressive” DA, who won election by promising to investigate questionable prosecutions by former DAs, now seeks to put limits on just how many cases and which ones are worthy of investigation is raising broad concerns.

Many of the Philadelphia community organizations that not only endorsed Krasner’s 2017 run for office but functioned on the ground to turn out support in Black communities are speaking up. Several of these groups are issuing a collective letter to Krasner expressing their outrage and sense of betrayal, and they are calling on him to rescind his appeal of Tucker’s decision about Abu-Jamal.

Philadelphia NAACP President Rodney Muhammad held a Jan. 28 press conference and denounced Krasner’s decision to appeal. Activists are also calling out Krasner at public events where he is speaking.

When Krasner addressed a Jan. 30 panel on the impact of parole and probation trends on Philadelphia’s workforce, Abu-Jamal supporters seized the opportunity. Megan Malachi with Philadelphia REAL Justice questioned why Krasner was so concerned that Tucker’s decision would impact thousands of other cases.

She and her family campaigned for Krasner and are outraged at him for appealing Tucker’s ruling. Malachi stated, “I am 37 years old, and Mumia has been in prison my whole life. A lot of us voted for you because we wanted Mumia out of jail. We care about our political prisoners. We put our names out for you. You have to give us better answers.” □

Yale RebLaw conference disinvites Philly DA after Mumia appeal

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

Organizers of the Rebellious Lawyering (RebLaw) 25 Conference at Yale Law School rescinded a keynote-speaking invitation to Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner on Feb. 1. They took that action in condemnation of his decision to appeal a Dec. 27 ruling by Philadelphia Common Pleas Court Judge Leon Tucker who granted appeal rights to political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Krasner would have been one of four keynote speakers at RebLaw’s Feb. 15-16 conference, a forum to discuss innovative and progressive approaches to law and social change. In rescinding their invitation to Krasner, the students announced they are inviting Abu-Jamal, a “jailhouse lawyer,” to replace Krasner’s spot on the agenda.

Harvard University law students who plan to attend the conference initiated the decision to disinvite Krasner. In their letter to RebLaw organizers they wrote, “The so-called progressive Larry Krasner is hell-bent on keeping Mumia’s case out of the appellate process. Larry Krasner was voted into office by the Black, working-class people of Philadelphia, but in the hour of truth he has upheld the rulings of racist judges [in this case] and is doing the bidding of one of the country’s most corrupt and homicidal police forces.”

Anneke Dunbar-Gronke, a member of the Harvard Prison Divestment Campaign and a signer of the letter, wrote, “Krasner will go down in history as the well-meaning, ‘progressive’ DA who opposed justice in the case of the Nelson Mandela of our time.” Dunbar-Gronke’s group has sought to expose Harvard’s profits from their many holdings within the prison-industrial complex.

In announcing their collective decision to uninvite Krasner, RebLaw 25 directors called on Krasner to drop his appeal and asked the DA to instead “join activists in a conversation about the promise and perils of ‘progressive prosecution’ including discussing his decision to appeal Mumia’s court decision.” Krasner declined to take part in this conversation.

In a collective press release, Harvard Law Student Felipe Hernández stated: “The lesson here is that in the

mind of a progressive DA, justice is doled out selectively and only when there is no real political risk involved. Thankfully the conference participants will hear from Mumia, an actual jailhouse lawyer — and the pinnacle of rebellious lawyering.”

In their letter, made public Feb. 1, RebLaw 25 directors wrote: “We cannot understand how DA Krasner’s decision in this case serves justice or the transformative vision he ran on. We also hear and deeply appreciate the voices of law students and activists calling on us to take action in response.”

Too much justice

Responding to the organizers’ decision, on Feb. 2 Krasner spokesperson Ben Waxman said that the DA’s office is “passionate about making carefully considered decisions that are based on the law and facts of every case. That is what we are doing now on the evolving issues in the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal and the cases of thousands of less well-known defendants.” (philly.com, Feb. 2)

Waxman’s statement on Krasner’s behalf echoes Krasner’s Jan. 28 statement, in filing his appeal, that Tucker’s “opinion has sweeping and, in our view, problematic implications for a large volume of cases, in addition to its effect on the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal.” (tinyurl.com/y8bcxqog)

The repeated refrain that granting Abu-Jamal’s appeal could open a floodgate of similar unjust conviction appeals sounds eerily similar to the closing arguments by former Assistant District Attorney Ronald Eisenberg, a protégé of former DA and Pennsylvania Supreme Court justice Ronald Castille, in Abu-Jamal’s initial hearing before Judge Tucker on April 24, 2017. Eisenberg argued against how much access to due process Abu-Jamal should receive. He voiced concern that granting Abu-Jamal’s case would “be a huge impact” on the higher court, stating, “At some point you just have to draw the line.” Abu-Jamal’s appeal is based on a 2016 U.S. Supreme Court decision in Williams v. Pennsylvania that Castille, who served as DA during Williams’ initial trial, should have recused himself from hearing the case on appeal as a Pennsylvania Supreme Court justice.

Europe complicit in INF Treaty destruction

By Manlio Dinucci

This article, published Feb. 2 in Rome by Il Manifesto, was translated by Workers World Managing Editor John Catalinotto.

The "suspension" of the INF Treaty [Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty], announced Feb. 1 by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, starts the countdown that, within six months, will lead the United States to definitively withdraw from the treaty. Already today, however, the United States considers itself free to test and deploy weapons of the category prohibited by the treaty: nuclear missiles with an intermediate range (between 300 and 3,300 miles), based on the ground. This category included nuclear missiles deployed in Europe in the 1980s: Pershing 2 ballistic missiles, deployed by the United States in Western Germany, and cruise missiles launched from the ground, deployed by the United States in Britain, Italy, Western Germany, Belgium and Holland, with the pretext of

defending European allies against SS-20 ballistic missiles deployed by the Soviet Union on its territory. The Treaty on Intermediate Nuclear Forces, signed in 1987 by Presidents Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan, eliminated all missiles of this category, including those deployed at Comiso in Sicily. Military experts in Washington started re-discussing the INF Treaty when the United States saw its strategic advantage over Russia and China diminish. In 2014, the Obama administration accused Russia, without providing any evidence, of having tested a cruise missile (acronym 9M729) of the category prohibited by the treaty. In 2015, Washington announced that "faced with the violation of the INF Treaty by Russia, the United States is considering the deployment of ground-based missiles in Europe." The plan was confirmed by the Trump administration: In 2018 Congress authorized the financing of "a program of research and development of a cruise missile launched from the ground by a

mobile platform on the road." For its part, Moscow denied that its cruise missile violated the treaty and, in turn, accused Washington of having installed in Poland and Romania launch ramps of interceptor missiles (those of the "shield"), which can be used to launch cruise missiles with nuclear warheads. In this context, the geographical factor must be kept in mind: While a U.S. nuclear missile with an intermediate range, deployed in Europe, can strike Moscow, a similar missile deployed by Russia on its territory can strike the European capitals, but not Washington. If the scenario were reversed, it would be as if Russia were deploying intermediate range nuclear missiles in Mexico. The U.S. plan to destroy the INF Treaty has been fully supported by NATO's European partners. The North Atlantic Council declared on Dec. 4 that "the INF Treaty is in danger because of Russia's actions." It accused Russia of deploying "a destabilizing missile system." The same North Atlantic Council declared yesterday [Feb. 1] its "full

support for the action of the United States to suspend its obligations with respect to the INF Treaty" and ordered Russia to "use the remaining six months to return to full compliance with the Treaty." **EU sinks treaty too** The European Union also contributed to the sinking of the INF Treaty and, at the United Nations General Assembly on Dec. 21, voted against the resolution proposed by Russia on "Preservation of and compliance with the INF Treaty," which was rejected by 46 votes to 43, with 78 abstentions. The European Union — of which 21 of its 27 members are members of NATO (as is Britain, which is on its way out of the EU) — has thus fully aligned itself with the position of NATO, which in turn has aligned itself with that of the United States. In essence, therefore, the European Union has also given a green light to the possible installation of new U.S. nuclear missiles in Europe, including Italy. □

Kurds see Russia as security guarantor

By Karin Leukefeld

This article was published in the German daily Junge Welt on Jan. 30. Translation by Workers World Managing Editor John Catalinotto.

The leadership of the "Democratic Federation of Northern Syria" (DFNS) is looking for one or more new powers to protect them after the announced withdrawal of U.S. soldiers from Syria. A Turkish invasion or the establishment of a 30-kilometer-wide "protection zone" under Turkish control would mean the end of the DFNS plans for the region. They have appealed to the "international community" to impose a "no-fly zone" over northern Syria. A visit to the Élysée Palace in Paris at the end of 2018 brought no tangible results. In Cairo, in mid-January, a Kurdish delegation asked for support from the Egyptian

Foreign Ministry. Ilham Ahmed, co-chair of the DFNS Supreme Council, spoke in Washington at the end of last week; according to Bloomberg TV, which interviewed Ahmed, she is trying to win U.S. assistance against Turkey. The Russian government considers the best solution would be for the Syrian government and the Syrian armed forces to regain control of the territories. This is in line with international law and with the demand of U.N. Resolution 2254 for the "territorial integrity" of Syria. The Kurdish news agency Anha published a list of demands on Jan. 19 laying out the basis on which the DFNS delegation is to negotiate with the Syrian government in Damascus. This "roadmap" had already been presented to Russia at the end of 2018, reported the Arab-English daily Asharq al-Awsat, stating that it had received a copy of the list of demands.

Under the demands, Russia is to act as a guarantor power for the Syrian Kurds vis-à-vis the Syrian government. Sipan Hemo, commander-in-chief of the People's Defense Units (YPG), presented the proposal to both Damascus and Moscow. In detail, it says that the "unity of Syria" would be recognized; that Syria should be a "democratic republic" to which also the "autonomous administration" [of the Kurdish region] should belong; that the "autonomous administrations should have representatives in the parliament in Damascus" and that beside the Syrian flag there should also fly the "flags of the autonomous administrations." Point five states that "diplomacy in the territories of the autonomous administrations is not contrary to the interests of the Syrian people and the Constitution." Furthermore, the "Syrian Democratic Forces" are to become part of the Syrian

army, which is responsible for the protection of the border. Point seven demands that the "internal security forces in the areas of the Autonomous Administration should operate on the instructions of the local councils," which does not contradict the Syrian constitution. Point ten demands that the "Syrian wealth be fairly distributed to all areas of Syria." The demands are similar to the partial autonomy agreed to between the Kurdish government in northern Iraq and Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in 1970. It would be their own administration, own army, own foreign policy and at the same time representation in the national parliament. With control of the most important gas and oil deposits east of the Euphrates, and large wheat and water resources in the Euphrates valley, the Syrian Kurds obviously think they have a "convincing deposit" in their hands. □

Russia, Turkey make arrangements in northern Syria

By Karin Leukefeld

This article was published in the German daily Junge Welt on Jan. 30. Translation by Workers World Managing Editor John Catalinotto.

Turkey has failed to achieve its mission in Idlib. An agreement reached in September with Russia and Iran to follow the “Astana format” had provided for the establishment of a demilitarized buffer zone with 12 checkpoints around the province of Idlib. [However], Haiat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS), an internationally listed terrorist organization, will now control this zone. [“Astana format” refers to the results of discussions among Russia, Turkey and Iran for resolving the war in Syria, starting in 2016 and meeting in Astana, Kazakhstan’s capital. — WW] HTS, the Alliance for the Conquest of Syria, the former Fatah Al Sham Front (formerly the Al Nusra Front), prevailed in a bloody power struggle against the "National Liberation Front," the group that emerged from the "Free Syrian Army" and that cooperates with Turkey.

The defeated forces retreated via the Afrin area to northern Syria and Turkey. HTS, which already controlled the border crossing Bab Al-Hawa, the provincial capital Idlib and strategically important connecting roads, now dominates the whole province. Recent reports indicate that the Syrian army and its allies are preparing to advance into Idlib province. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Jan. 28 that Moscow was prepared to implement the Idlib agreement, but that HTS was not abiding by it. According to Lavrov, the province is a hotbed of terrorism and the area would have to be put back under the control of the Syrian army. Russian President Vladimir Putin had already expressed criticism at a meeting with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Moscow on Jan. 23. Russia and Turkey must work more closely together to fight HTS in Idlib, Putin said. Erdogan showed himself open to the suggestion and declared that "more bilateral action is necessary to end the actions of terrorist groups." At the next Astana meeting between Russia, Turkey

and Iran — presumably in February — the action should be jointly agreed upon. Meanwhile, Erdogan seemed more interested in the planned advance into the areas east of the Euphrates River after the planned withdrawal of U.S. troops. However, he sought Russia’s support in vain. Putin stressed that Turkey’s security concerns were well understood. These are best guaranteed by Syrian troops in the area. Putin referred to the Adana Agreement signed by Turkey and Syria in October 1998. At that time the Turkish government had threatened to invade Syria if Damascus did not end its support for the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). After PKK chairman Abdullah Öcalan was forced to leave Syria and go on an odyssey through various countries, he was captured in Kenya and brought from Kenya to Turkey by a Turkish-Israeli secret service command. The Adana Agreement was directed against the PKK on all five points and provided for close cooperation between Ankara and Damascus. Syria pledged itself at the time to protect the common border and to take on preventing “PKK

arms deliveries, logistics, money support and propaganda in Syria." In order to revive cooperation between Ankara and Damascus, Moscow had already brought up the agreement in 2016 and again thereafter. In order to include the interests of Turkey, Syria and the Kurds, Moscow apparently strives for two parallel reconciliation processes. Maxim A. Sukhkov analyzes them in the Internet portal Al-Monitor: "A political agreement between Damascus and the Kurds and security coordination between Ankara and Damascus.” During a press conference at the meeting with Erdogan, Putin read from a letter that had been leaked to Russia. In the letter, the co-signers Germany, France and Britain had asked United Nations Secretary General António Guterres at the end of 2018 to instruct the outgoing U.N. special envoy for Syria, Staffan De Mistura, to reject a proposal put forward by Russia, Iran and Turkey for the composition of the Constitutional Committee (for Syria). “To be honest, we were shocked," Putin said, that the work of the Astana Group for Peace in Syria should be so openly undermined. □

Jussie Smollett and the attack on queer people of color

Jussie Smollett, internationally known Black television star and LGBTQ+ activist, was beaten in Chicago in a horrific racist and homophobic attack by two men early on the morning of Jan. 29. Smollett was there filming the award-winning series “Empire” in which he plays a gay singer.

A police statement said two “unknown people” attacked Smollett, hurling racist and homophobic slurs at him, and wrapped a noose around his neck. Smollett had previously received threats along these lines in an envelope with a MAGA (Make America Great Again) return “address.” (Ebony, Jan. 29)

It’s possible Smollett, as a well-known figure, was targeted specifically by racists. It’s also possible that this was a random attack. But the exact origin of the attack is the same: The attackers once again wore the face of white supremacy and class patriarchy.

In a Feb. 1 statement to Essence, Smollett emphasized that “these types of cowardly attacks are happening to my sisters, brothers and non-gender conforming siblings daily. I am not and should not be looked upon as an isolated incident.”

But social media responses to the attack on Smollett include disgusting accusations that Smollett was “making the attack up.”

Such a deeply racist and homophobic worldview shows its determination never to admit that devastating levels of violence are unleashed on queer people of color.

A 2016 report from the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs documented that a staggering 87 percent of LGBTQ and HIV-affected people murdered in 2011 were people of color. The report also revealed that 61 percent of all survivors of hate violence identified as a person of color.

The year that report was released, a gunman attacked the Pulse, a nightclub in Orlando, Fla., killing 49 people and injuring 53 — the majority of them LGBTQ and Latinx. (tinyurl.com/ydbfvu8l)



PHOTO: JASON ROSENBERG VIA TWITTER

In response to the attack on Jussie Smollett, a rally to stop violence against all LGBTQ people of color was held in Brooklyn on Feb. 1.

In late 2018 the Human Rights Campaign described violence against transgender people in the U.S. as “epidemic,” with 128 transgender people killed the five previous years. The overwhelming majority were transgender women of color. (tinyurl.com/yabz3377) The first person killed in Montgomery, Ala., in 2019 was an African-American transwoman, Dana Martin, who was also the first trans person killed in the U.S. this year.

Like Jussie Smollett, queer, two-spirited, gender-nonconforming people of color have been targeted with violence for centuries. And queer POC have always defended themselves by fighting back.

Gender-nonconforming people of color were the leaders in the historic rebellions at Compton’s Cafeteria in 1966 in San Francisco and at the Stonewall Bar in 1969 in New York City, igniting larger movements for justice and freedom for LGBTQ people. The Black Lives Matter freedom surge that began in 2014 was strategized and fueled by queer people of color.

Racists may be coming out of the woodwork like the vermin they are, encouraged by white supremacist Trump, his rhetoric and policies. Bigots may be masking themselves and attacking by night, like they targeted Jussie Smollett.

But queer people of color are defending themselves and are staying strong.

As Smollett affirmed in his Feb. 1 statement: “My body is strong but my soul is stronger.” □

Black History Month: ‘Stayed on freedom’

Black History Month again offers us a chance to honor the body-and-spirit-filled determination of African-American people who have struggled, built and fought in order to win against the deeply violent injustices of “America.”

Honoring the lessons of Black history means acknowledging that those who founded the U.S. were colonizers and enslavers bent on despicable wealth and profit. And the truth of Black history reveals that a MAGA agenda to make “America” “great again” means reinstating and intensifying the subjugation of Indigenous peoples, Black and Brown peoples, women and gender-oppressed people.

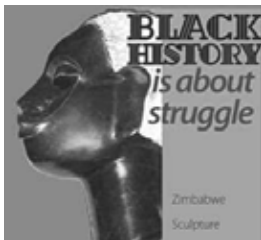
The current reactionary president’s administration — unbridled in its vicious language and policies toward all these groups — is simply enacting the same hateful principles embedded in the documents of the “Founding Fathers.”

This administration’s new volley of attacks are attempts to roll back victories that people’s movements have won over many hundreds of years, always with people of African descent in resistance and leadership.

The more recent wins under attack range from worker protections in union membership gained in the 1930s, to laws benefiting women like Title IX in the 1970s, to trans and gender-nonconforming people recently winning safety protections like gender neutral bathrooms.

The struggle has won some space for oppressed peoples to live, breathe, work and even sing — that is what the haters and the bigots want to erase.

But these attacks are not made simply out of hate. These are calculated attempts to intimidate and push back those who are leading the forward motion against prejudice, discrimination and violent repression. The attacks are designed to break solidarity between people and



between movements.

One freedom song that the Black Civil Rights Movement marched to was “Woke up this morning with my mind stayed on freedom.”

That determination by people of African descent

in the U.S. fuels the struggle for justice every day, every year, every decade, every century in this unjust country.

There are many, many inspiring examples to learn and reflect on during Black History Month. But just within the last couple of years:

In Mississippi, the heart of the “right-to-work-for-less” South, Black auto workers have been indefatigable in organizing for a union at the Nissan plant in Canton.

In Alabama, Black women were the heart of local campaigns to uphold the basic right to a vote; their work resulted in the defeat of a violently white supremacist, anti-LGBTQ, anti-woman candidate for senator.

In Missouri, the Fannie Lou Hamer Committee of the Fight for \$15 led the way in striking against sexual abuse and wage discrimination at McDonald’s. Fannie Lou Hamer was a legendary organizer for justice for African-American people.

And last December, in a small individual act of solidarity, Jussie Smollett appealed for lifting up the lives of Black women through support for Bennett College, a historically Black college for women in the South.

During Black History Month, let’s affirm with our actions that we are also on the side of justice and solidarity in the fight against racism.

As attacks are hurled by bigots aiming to break down freedom struggles, let’s remember that Black History Month calls us to actively honor hundreds of years of Black determination to keep fighting while saying, “My body is strong, but my soul is stronger.” □

Black activists report on Palestine trip

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

Philadelphia area Black activists, artists and educators recounted their experiences traveling to Palestine before a standing-room-only crowd at Uncle Bobbie’s community center on Jan. 31. For most of the delegation members, it was their first time as eyewitnesses to Israel’s oppression of Palestinians. Others, like Marc Lamont Hill, had visited multiple times. All described the trip as a transformative experience.

Hill, who organized the November delegation, gained national attention when he was fired by CNN for speaking out about the apartheid-like conditions experienced by Palestinians at a U.N.-sponsored conference in solidarity with Palestine in late November in the U.S.

At the Jan. 31 gathering, Hill discussed the tradition of Black radical solidarity with Palestine going back even prior to the six-day war in 1967, when Israel seized the West Bank, Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula. He raised earlier examples of this solidarity from Malcolm X, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Black Panther Party.

Hill also mentioned the solidarity Black community activists received from Palestinians in August 2014, in the aftermath of the police murder of Mike Brown in Ferguson, Mo. Palestinians in Ramallah not only sent messages of solidarity but tweeted advice on how to create makeshift gas masks and wash teargas from eyes. During the time that the streets of Ferguson were scenes of nightly confrontations with the police, Gaza suffered heavy Israeli bombing for an entire month.

Following Hill’s opening remarks, participants recounted their individual reasons for joining the delegation and what they came away with from the experience. Many raised the need to see conditions on the ground in the Israeli occupied territories for themselves, as well as to express transnational solidarity in general.

Similarities with sections of Philly

As activists, artists and educators concerned with prisons, police brutality, the lack of educational opportunities for Black students and the constant impact of spreading gentrification, all compared similarities they observed in Afro-Palestinian communities to those in sections of Philadelphia.

A common concern was constantly seeing armed Israeli soldiers stopping and frisking Palestinians in the streets of Hebron and other West Bank cities. They even blocked access to areas near their homes that had been taken over by illegal Israeli settlements. Delegation members reported witnessing construction cranes all over Palestinian cities in the West Bank, as these internationally condemned settlements continue to expand and push Palestinians out.

Photographer Marc Holley described how Israeli soldiers prevented him from buying a 25-cent whistle for his daughter at a marketplace stand because they thought he might be Muslim. Others recounted that entering the marketplace through arbitrary check points reminded them of visiting U.S. prisons.

As artists, they were moved by a visit with Daren Tatour, the Palestinian poet sentenced to five months in prison because she expressed her sentiments against occupation in a poem. They encountered other Palestinians who were incarcerated for years just for posting their views on Facebook.

As U.S. activists against mass incarceration, they found it powerful to learn that the

top three reasons Palestinians are incarcerated are social media posts, throwing rocks and assembling with other people.

In describing their experiences at checkpoints and at Israeli airports, Hill raised that just being Palestinian gets one criminalized. “As we were leaving Israel, at the airport we were asked if we had seen any ‘Arabs,’ a designation used by Israelis to deny Palestinian identity. Of course we had, but you got conditioned to say you haven’t.”

Holley noted, “I felt like my mom must have felt during the Civil Rights era when just opening your mouth could be dangerous to you and your family.”

During the question-and-answer period, former SNCC and BPP member Timothy Hayes spoke from the audience about having his job threatened for speaking out in solidarity with Palestine in the 1970s. A young woman from North Philadelphia’s Black community connected witnessing the destruction of her neighborhood to speakers’ accounts of seeing construction cranes in the West Bank.

Before the program ended, Hill shared a trailer for his documentary, “Blacks in the Holy Land,” which he hopes to release at the Black Star Film Festival in the spring. □

Haitian Revolution shook empires

By Motema Makasi

In a Vodou ceremony led by Dutty Boukman in 1791, several hundred enslaved people swore to fight to the death against a brutal system of slavery and torture. The revolt that followed would shake the greatest empires of Europe and burn the slave society of Saint-Domingue to the ground. From the ashes emerged the first Black Republic in the Western Hemisphere and the first nation founded by a successful slave rebellion: Haiti.

In the 18th century, Saint-Domingue — the western French-owned half of the island of Hispaniola — was the most lucrative colony in the Caribbean. Its primary export was sugar, which was extremely valuable. By 1780, Saint-Domingue was producing 40 percent of the sugar consumed in Europe.

Their incredible profits were the product of incredible human suffering. Harvesting sugar cane was labor intensive, and enslaved people were imported to the island in greater and greater numbers as sugar profits rose. By 1787, the colony was importing 40,000 enslaved people per year. More than 60 percent of enslaved people on the island were African-born.

Enslaved people were worked to death and tortured brutally if they resisted. Mortality rates were high — 50 percent of enslaved people died within a year of arriving in Saint-Domingue. But the business was so lucrative, planters simply opted to import more enslaved people rather than improve treatment.

In any slave society, sexual assault is rampant; as a result, many mixed-race children were produced. In Saint-Domingue, the French referred to them as "Coloreds." What made Saint-Domingue different from other slave societies was that slave owners openly entered relationships with, and even married, their Black and Colored enslaved people. The Colored offspring would then go on to inherit their father's property — including the plantations and the enslaved people. This created a new socio-racial class that was oppressed by strict de jure racial discrimination, but, at the same time, possessed vast amounts of wealth.

Adding to these divisions were the contradictions between wealthy whites and poor whites or "grands blancs" and "petit blancs." The grands blancs owned the plantations, but they spent very little time in Saint-Domingue. Some had never been to the island at all. They hired petit blancs, whites from the lower classes who were desperate to escape their debts, to manage the plantations. For petit blancs, the goal was to earn enough money to buy their own plantations and perhaps leave Saint-Domingue.

French Revolution inspires revolts

With the social stratification of Saint-Domingue, the French Revolution in 1789 hit the island like a meteor. The grands blancs saw the revolution as their chance to extricate themselves from the hated "Exclusive," the system of trade laws that prevented Saint-Domingue from trading with any other nation besides France. The petit blancs, on the other hand, wanted to renegotiate the entire social contract.

The petit blancs attempted to form their own councils and began marching across the island, extolling the virtues of liberté (liberty) and égalité (equality). They were quick to use mob violence against all who stood in opposition.

Meanwhile, enslaved Blacks observed the revolutionary ferment and planned to secure their own liberty. Historian

Carolyn Fick argues that enslaved people held secret meetings every week throughout the summer of 1791.

The Haitian Revolution would never have been possible without the information network that connected Blacks throughout the island. Enslaved people who worked in the ports overheard the news from sailors and merchants. Through Black overseers and coachmen — who held the trust of their masters and were therefore given significant freedom of movement — this information was passed along to the enslaved people on the plantations in the interior.

Escaped enslaved people, living in settlements known as "maroon colonies," also communicated with Blacks on the plantations and provided safe places for meetings. One unique feature of slavery in Saint-Domingue was that temporary escape, "petit marronage," for a night or even a few days was quite common and sometimes went unpunished. Through these short-term excursions, Blacks were able to meet and coordinate their actions in the remote mountain regions of the island.

It was during these meetings that rumors spread of new laws passed in France. The possibility that reforms in treatment were coming, perhaps the banning of the whip and all other forms of torture, filled the enslaved people with hope and courage. But if such reforms had been made, there was no evidence that the white masters planned to implement them. Drastic measures had to be taken, and the plot for insurrection was born.

On Aug. 14, 1791, Black conspirators slipped back into their plantations in the night, killed their masters and torched the instruments of their enslavement. Sugar cane fields are highly flammable, and in just a few days most of the North Province of Saint-Domingue was set ablaze. All the machinery on the sugar plantations was destroyed; the means of production were not merely seized but annihilated so that the planter system could never return.

White citizens, who had retreated to the large port city of Cap-Français, looked out on a landscape of smoke and ash. In the midst of their own struggle for liberty, the whites of Saint-Domingue had done little to prepare for the possibility of a slave insurrection, even though a few captured Blacks had confessed to the plot several weeks prior. Blinded by white supremacy, the colonists could not imagine that "their" enslaved people would fight as fiercely and as bravely as any Europeans to free themselves from oppression.

Angry and confused white colonists descended into rioting and lynched any Blacks they could find in the city. But the insurrection could not be stopped. France effectively lost control of Saint-Domingue in those first few months and never regained it.

What followed were several years of guerrilla warfare. Several leaders emerged from this struggle, the most famous being Toussaint Louverture. Louverture had been born into slavery under a lenient master. He learned to read and studied European classics. He was likely tutored in the ways of West African warfare by his father, reported to have been an African chief. By the time the revolution broke out, Louverture had been free for many years and worked as a supervisor on his former master's plantation. Louverture joined the growing insurgency, and his education and ability resulted in his rapid appointment as a rebel commander.

As the French Revolution sent

shockwaves throughout Europe, the surrounding monarchies declared war on France one by one. Britain invaded Saint-Domingue from the west, hoping to snatch the most valuable colony in the Caribbean while France was embroiled in chaos. Spain, already holding the eastern half of the island (Santo Domingo) and, seeing an easy opportunity to undermine the revolution in France, began supplying the Black insurgents with weapons and supplies. This encouraged many rebels, including Louverture, to join the Spanish and resist the French during 1792 and 1793.

Slavery abolished

But in 1794, France officially abolished slavery in all its territories. Knowing that no other imperialist power would take such a radical step, Louverture and his rebel forces allied with France to resist the monarchist powers. Like a hammer and anvil, Louverture in the north and the Colored general André Rigaud in the south led Black, Colored and white soldiers against the British in the center of the colony, forcing them off the island.

The brilliant leadership of the Black insurgency, which had first taken Saint-Domingue from France, had now won the island back for France. This made Louverture a valuable asset for the colonial government. The white members of the French Civil Commission, who nominally governed Saint-Domingue from Cap-Français, relied on Louverture to enforce their decrees and maintain order in the colony. The Black people had won their freedom, and most were content to live as subjects of France, so long as France respected that freedom.

But the plantation owners, who had been made refugees by the insurrection, continued to plead their cause in France. As the forces of counterrevolution took hold in Europe, the exiled colonists gained more sway. When Napoleon Bonaparte seized power in 1797, the proponents of slavery finally found a sympathetic ear.

During the period of 1795-1800, contradictions mounted in Saint-Domingue. Although the Black population was free, the French Civil Commissioners were eager to restore the profits from sugar exports. They mandated that Blacks remain on the plantations to work as paid laborers. The Black masses resented this serfdom, but there was little they could do. Meanwhile, the Black leadership sought to appease the French. There was only one nation in Europe which would tolerate free Blacks in such a wealthy colony, so Black generals, Louverture included,

enforced the labor laws demanded by France.

There was also a division of race and class between the Blacks and the Coloreds. The Coloreds believed that their wealth and education made them better suited to governing and resented seeing formerly enslaved Black people in positions of power. These contradictions culminated in the "War of Knives" in 1799. Instigated by the reactionary French Commissioner Hédouville, the most prominent Colored leader Rigaud rebelled against Louverture's mostly Black forces.

Rigaud's southern army was outnumbered, but he counted on aid from the British. That aid never came. It was not long before Louverture's most dangerous lieutenant, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, moved south and crushed Rigaud.

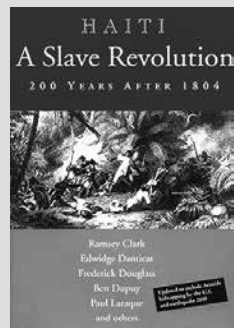
'Haiti' is born

Louverture consolidated his power, becoming master of Saint-Domingue. He devoted himself to rebuilding the plantation economy and creating a society without racial discrimination. He enshrined racial equality in a new constitution and declared himself governor for life.

But in France, Napoleon Bonaparte saw Saint-Domingue as the launching point for a new North American empire. He craved the seemingly boundless profits that only a slave economy could produce. And he resented the Black general who presumed to rule Saint-Domingue and issue proclamations and constitutions without his approval. In 1801, Napoleon sent his brother-in-law, General Charles Leclerc, and 40,000 French soldiers to oust Louverture and restore white rule.

The result was a war where disease, a veteran Black army and ceaseless guerrilla warfare would devastate the French forces, leaving only about 8,000 survivors to return to France. Louverture would not live to see the end of the war; he would be captured by Leclerc and die in a French prison in 1803. It was left to Dessalines and the masses of armed free Blacks to beat back the French and establish an independent Haiti on Jan. 1, 1804.

In choosing the name "Haiti," the name given the island by its original Taino inhabitants, Dessalines repudiated not just slavery, but 300 years of colonialism. Today, as we see Haiti struggle under the oppression of neocolonial forces, we should remember that this small island nation was founded as a symbol of resistance and liberation. It is exactly that symbol that imperialists have always sought, yet failed, to destroy. □



Haiti: A Slave Revolution 200 years after 1804

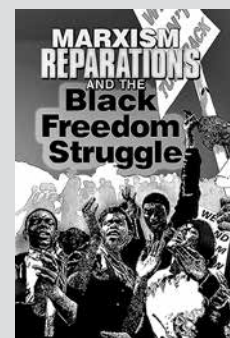
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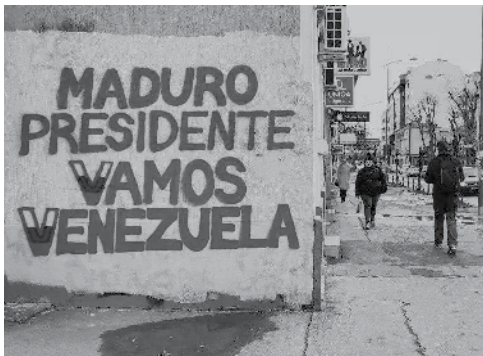
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¡No a la guerra de EE.UU. contra Venezuela!

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No a la guerra de los Estados Unidos contra Venezuela, sábado el 23 de febrero

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No podemos permanecer calladas/os ante la última agresión de Estados Unidos contra el pueblo venezolano.

Nicolás Maduro es el presidente de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, elegido dos veces por el pueblo como parte de un proceso electoral observado internacionalmente. Desde la elección de Hugo Chávez en 1998, Estados Unidos ha sido implacable en su afán de cambiar el régimen en Venezuela. Con Donald Trump en la Casa Blanca, estos esfuerzos se han intensificado con amenazas de violencia militar a gran escala, el saqueo de miles de millones de dólares en riqueza del pueblo venezolano e impulsando múltiples mentiras escandalosas en los medios globales de comunicación.

Durante cientos de años, los Estados Unidos han librado una guerra contra los pueblos del mundo a través de golpes de

estado, invasiones y guerras económicas. Juan Guaidó es un títere de los Estados Unidos. No representa las masas venezolanas. La idea de que una persona puede auto juramentarse como presidente en un mitin en interés de “defender la democracia”, es risible.

La derecha en Venezuela afirma que las elecciones bolivarianas están amañadas porque se niegan a participar en ellas. En su lugar, se dedican a la intimidación de votantes mediante el empleo de la violencia con reminiscencias del terrorismo Jim Crow contra las/os afroamericanos en el sur profundo de los Estados Unidos

La manipulación de la moneda y las sanciones lideradas por los Estados Unidos son las responsables del sufrimiento en Venezuela. Marco Rubio y los medios de comunicación de la derecha guían a la oposición venezolana desde Miami. Estados Unidos no puede tolerar que ningún país del planeta pueda disfrutar de su riqueza natural o del fruto de su esfuerzo laboral independiente de Wall Street y el Pentágono.

Está comprobado que Venezuela tiene

las reservas de petróleo más grandes del mundo y es rica en oro y otros minerales valiosos. El arquitecto de la guerra de Irak, John Bolton, dijo que el cambio de régimen en Venezuela sería una gran oportunidad para obtener más ganancias para Wall Street. Y sabemos que es cierto.

Desde la Revolución Bolivariana en 1998, se han dado pasos agigantados para elevar la clase trabajadora, las/os afrovenezolanos y las poblaciones indígenas en Venezuela. Los trabajadores pobres han logrado enormes avances porque el gobierno implementó políticas y promulgó leyes para combatir el racismo, el sexismo, la homofobia y la desigualdad económica. A pesar de las sanciones y el sabotaje, Venezuela ha mantenido un sistema transparente y democrático a través de muchas elecciones.

Venezuela brinda ayuda a pueblos en lucha en todo el mundo a través de combustible subsidiado y liderando el camino con leyes laborales progresistas. Sus logros son parte de la lucha global emprendida por los trabajadores y los oprimidos contra los capitalistas más

ricos y poderosos del planeta.

Por lo tanto, exigimos que:

Estados Unidos cese de inmediato todas las acciones hostiles contra la República Bolivariana de Venezuela: levante todas las sanciones, deje de respaldar un golpe de estado, cese los esfuerzos para destruir la economía venezolana y respete el derecho del pueblo venezolano a la libre determinación.

Todos los países involucrados en el saqueo de la riqueza venezolana devuelvan inmediatamente lo que han robado al gobierno elegido democráticamente de Venezuela y a su pueblo.

Wall Street pague reparaciones inmediatamente al pueblo venezolano por su sufrimiento bajo las sanciones genocidas y la manipulación de la moneda.

En el espíritu internacionalista y liberador de Simón Bolívar, nos comprometemos a movilizarnos y luchar por el derecho a la soberanía de Venezuela, entendiendo que los logros y beneficios obtenidos durante la Revolución Bolivariana son ganancias para todas/os los trabajadores y oprimidos del mundo. □

EUA comanda el golpe, pero no consigue encarnarlo en Venezuela

Por Marco Teruggi
Caracas

Dos conclusiones emergen del conflicto venezolano después de casi dos semanas del autoproclamamiento de Juan Guaidó. El primero es que la dirección del intento de gobierno paralelo reside en los Estados Unidos, el segundo es que, por el momento, la fuerza principal también. Deberán esperar quienes vinieron al país a buscar las imágenes de un país transformado en un escenario de batallas abiertas. El sábado fue una nueva confirmación de esa conclusión que parece aplicar en este momento del ataque.

La dirección: para entender qué sucede y qué puede pasar en Venezuela es necesario seguir a quiénes toman las decisiones desde EE.UU. John Bolton, asesor de seguridad, Mike Pence, vicepresidente, Mike Pompeo, secretario de Estado, Elliot Abrams, el enviado especial para manejar la cuestión Venezuela, Steven Mnuchin, secretario del tesoro, Marco Rubio, senador republicano, y el mismo Donald Trump. Es una pérdida de tiempo seguir a Juan Guaidó, o cualquier otro dirigente de la derecha, para saber qué puede pasar.

Pence, por ejemplo, ofreció un discurso en una iglesia de Miami el día viernes. Allí afirmó que es necesario “eliminar” a los gobiernos de Venezuela, Cuba y Nicaragua, que se trata de un asunto “regional”, y que “el tiempo de la negociación terminó”.

Bolton, el jefe

Bolton por su parte se paró desde el lugar de jefe: “Los Estados Unidos insttan a todos los militares venezolanos a

seguir el liderazgo del general Yánez, y a proteger a los manifestantes pacíficos que apoyan la democracia”. Bolton se refirió a Francisco Yánez, general de aviación de la Fuerza Armada Nacional Bolivariana (Fanb), que difundió un video en la mañana del sábado donde anunció su apoyo a Guaidó.

El asesor de seguridad también afirmó que enviarán la denominada ayuda humanitaria: “Siguiendo la petición del presidente interino Juan Guaidó, y en consulta con sus funcionarios, EE.UU. movilizará y transportará medicamentos de ayuda humanitaria, suministros quirúrgicos y suplementos nutricionales para el pueblo de Venezuela. Es hora de que Maduro se quite de en medio”.

Guaidó, en la movilización que realizó la derecha el sábado en Caracas, declaró: “Anunciamos una coalición mundial por la ayuda humanitaria y la libertad en Venezuela. Ya tenemos tres puntos de acopio para la ayuda: Cúcuta es el primero. Otro estará en Brasil y otro en una isla del Caribe”. Su único anuncio fue el que ya había dicho Bolton. La cadena de mandos es de una evidencia que casi no intentan disimular, aunque a veces necesiten aclararlo, como Rubio, quien afirmó que “EE.UU. no organizó este movimiento, sino que es liderado por el pueblo venezolano”.

Guaidó solo especificó un punto concreto para la entrada: Cúcuta, zona fronteriza caracterizada por la alta presencia del paramilitarismo colombiano, mafias de contrabando – ligadas o sinónimos del paramilitarismo – donde fueron entrenados quienes intentaron el asesinato de

Nicolás Maduro en agosto del año pasado.

Es uno de los principales puntos que podrían ser activados como foco críticos, donde desatar incendios, con la particularidad de la alta exposición mediática. Fue desde allí, por ejemplo, que Luis Almagro, secretario de la Organización de Estados Americanos, afirmó que no se descartaba la opción militar contra el gobierno de Maduro.

Es probable que en este escenario planteado el centro del conflicto alterne entre Caracas y esos puntos críticos. ¿Cómo piensan hacer ingresar la ayuda? ¿Con qué logística, fuerza, permiso, actores? ¿Qué tipo de acción acompaña el ingreso?

El “gobierno paralelo” necesita territorio, capacidad de ejercer poder, dos dimensiones que no posee. Lo único que hace “presidente” a Guaidó en lo nacional es que la base social de la derecha lo nombre de esa manera. Es evidente que no tiene, ni él ni toda la derecha reunida, la fuerza para llevar adelante una estrategia de estas características.

No pasarán

El gobierno no dejará que ingresen fuerzas norteamericanas o actores contratados para abrir una grieta en el territorio nacional. Ningún gobierno dejaría que una fuerza extranjera -o sus agentes- ingrese sin su permiso.

El juego está trancado. EE.UU. plantea que no habrá diálogo, descarta intentos como el de los gobiernos de México y Uruguay, o posiciones como la del secretario general de las Naciones Unidas, que afirman la necesidad de un diálogo.

Algunos países de la Unión Europea

plantearon la creación de un Grupo de contacto internacional con Venezuela -integrado por unos diez o doce miembros, no todos europeos-, para avanzar en la propuesta de volver a convocar elecciones, con un plazo de noventa días para evaluar resultados.

En ese cuadro Maduro anunció en la movilización realizada el mismo sábado, donde el chavismo hizo una nueva demostración de fuerzas, que consultará acerca de la posibilidad de anticipar las elecciones legislativas que deberían hacerse en el 2020. Sería una manera de intentar desactivar a la Asamblea Nacional, con todos los riesgos que conlleva. ¿Es preferible dejarla avanzar en un intento de gobierno paralelo por fuera de toda ley con el objetivo de lograr un golpe de Estado?

Parece claro en este momento que los EE.UU. avanzarán y utilizarán cualquier argumento para redoblar su narrativa de que no habrá negociación. Muchos de sus mensajes tienen por objetivo quebrar la voluntad de lucha del chavismo y en particular de la Fanb, a la que necesitan partir. Para esto último han creado un abanico, desde la promesa de amnistía hasta las amenazas de intervención, pasando por cuentas creadas en redes sociales para que los soldados no obedezcan a los generales.

Termina así otra semana en Venezuela. No habrá descanso. Los discursos de los EE.UU. remiten a una ofensiva final que se han puesto a conducir. El chavismo se mantiene entero, movilizado, con voluntad de diálogo y de pelea. □

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