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Shut out of jobs, gov’t workers say

‘We want to work—with pay!’

By Kathy Durkin

“Stop the war on workers!” and “We want work, not walls!” read signs held by furloughed federal employees at the White House and in cities around the U.S. on Jan. 10. They were protesting the Trump administration’s shutdown of nine federal departments and several federal agencies — one-quarter of the federal government — since Dec. 22.

Some 800,000 government workers are not receiving paychecks. Half of them have been shut out of their jobs, while the other half have been forced to work without receiving paychecks—on threat of being fired. It is a severe hardship for many of those impacted by the longest shutdown in U.S. history, which could go on indefinitely.

The reason for the aggressive attack on these workers: President Donald Trump, backed by top Republicans, is demanding that Congress fund a \$5 billion wall at the southern U.S. border with Mexico to bar the entry of desperate Central American families fleeing government repression, violence and poverty, and looking for safe places to live and work. Many of the ills they are running from are caused by U.S. political interference and/or economic exploitation in their countries.

Trump’s rants about the need to build this wall are xenophobic and white supremacist to the core. He and his political allies are holding federal workers hostage in

their ploy to build the wall, blaming the migrants for the shutdown and deliberately ramping up anti-immigrant hostility to pursue their racist agenda. This is a familiar divisive tool used by the capitalist class and its political representatives.

All progressive forces, particularly labor unions, must strongly oppose the administration’s bigoted rhetoric and show solidarity with these Central American refugees. They are workers, too. This is about class solidarity.

Time for new tactics

The American Federation of Government Employees, the largest federal government union, called out its members to demonstrate in Washington, D.C., and around the country on Jan. 10. Now is the time to “think outside the box,” to push back the intransigent right-wingers in the administration and their ruling-class backers. This will take creative and militant actions nationally and locally.

The labor movement courageously occupied factories in the 1930s to win union recognition and worker benefits. Public workers were part of the sit-down wave.

The historic Civil Rights Movement sat in at segregated public facilities to break the grip of racist Jim Crow laws in the South. It organized countless demonstrations, including a massive rally in August 1963 in D.C.

The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power organized militant actions in the 1980s calling attention to the

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PHOTO: NTEU

Members of National Treasury Employees Union rally in Washington, D.C., Jan. 10.

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Women workers of the All India Trade Union Congress in Bangalore during Jan. 8-9 general strike. More on p. 4.



WORKERS WORLD

editorial

Message to women’s marches

Build global solidarity!

Women and all gender-oppressed people are under attack. From the federal government shutdown, hitting women workers hardest; to the Education Department’s assault on Title IX; to the war on reproductive justice, especially abortion rights; to the persecution of migrant/refugee women and the kidnapping of their children; to escalating violence against LGBTQ2S people, especially trans women of color; to attacks on disabled women and the incarceration of poor and oppressed women — during this period of ultra-reactionary rule, some of the harshest blows are aimed at the gender oppressed.

How do we mount an effective, winning counteroffensive? There is only one way: unity and solidarity.

Unity against sexism. Unity against misogyny. Unity against rape culture. Unity in defense of trans and gender-nonconforming people.

Unity, above all, against racism and misogynoir — that is, the special oppression of and attacks against Black women.

On Jan. 19, women’s marches against Trump will be held across the country, including worldwide for the third consecutive year. Unfortunately, many will be anything but united. After spurious charges of anti-Semitism against women of color who’ve led the national

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Send public comments by Jan. 28

Oppose Title IX ‘revisions’

By Sue Davis

The U.S. Department of Education’s proposed revision of Title IX regulations contradicts the intent of those rules addressing sexual harassment, assault and abuse in K-12 schools and federally funded colleges and universities.

Instead of helping institutions deal forthrightly with such issues, the proposed changes help institutions avoid them and make it harder for survivors, predominantly of oppressed genders, to confront perpetrators, win justice and put an end to rape culture.

Of students, more than 1 in 5 women, nearly 1 in 4 transgender and gender-nonconforming people, and nearly 1 in 18 men are sexually assaulted annually. Women and girls of color, pregnant students, parents, LGBTQ or gender-nonconforming people are often ignored, punished or labeled “promiscuous.”

Two major DOE changes would make it harder to bring charges against an assailant. One raises the standard for a case from “preponderance of evidence” to “clear and convincing evidence.” The other upgrades harassment from “unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature” to “unwelcome conduct on the basis of sex that is so severe, pervasive and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person access to the [institution’s] education program or activity.”

Such definitions would help institutions dismiss all but the most blatant cases.

Institutions are only responsible for sexual abuse occurring within “school-sponsored activity”; all electronic communication is excluded. While students once reported abuse to a trusted teacher, only a Title IX coordinator with “the authority to institute corrective

measures” or a K-12 teacher who has “actual knowledge” of abuse can help survivors. Institutions can now propose mediation, often used to resolve peer conflict, though that is never appropriate for sexual assault cases.

The most controversial aspect of the proposed regulations involves having sexual assault survivors be cross-examined by an advisor for the accused, with an advisor for the survivor likewise cross-examining the accused. While this was included to supposedly promote due process, it’s also where racist bias persists. Although the DOE’s Office of Civil Rights does not collect data on race in Title IX cases, analysis of cases at a private college where 4.2 percent of students were Black showed 50 percent of sexual-violation accusations were against Black students.

Can mere cross-examination eliminate racist bias, given the raging racism ratched up by the Trump administration? Not given the virulent, violent U.S. history of Black men lynched or imprisoned for sexual assault.

See National Women’s Law Center (nwlc.org) for more analysis.

Don’t let DOE Secretary Betsy DeVos get away with destroying Title IX. Public comments are accepted until Jan. 28; all submissions are said to be considered in the final revision. Post comments on regulations.gov under the title “Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance” (listed on Nov. 29).

The NWLC provides two kinds of comments: A pre-written statement (tinyurl.com/y9tm0s4d) and a personal, customizable comment (tinyurl.com/y92v5szu). Submit before the Jan. 28 deadline!□



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

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

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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Philly DA reveals hidden Mumia files after court ruling

By Betsey Piette

If Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner can be believed, on Dec. 28 while he and his staff were reportedly searching for an office desk in a remote, nearly inaccessible, locked storeroom, they “found” six banker boxes containing files related to political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal’s case.

The newly discovered boxes, supposedly stored under the desk, reportedly had “McCann” written on the visible side. Until 2015, Edward McCann served 26 years in the DA’s office, the last four as First Assistant District Attorney. Krasner and his assistants say when they pulled the boxes out, they found “Mumia” and “Mumia Abu-Jamal” on the hidden side.

This discovery allegedly took place one day after Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas Judge Leon Tucker’s historic Dec. 27 ruling that Abu-Jamal, imprisoned for over 37 years, had the right to new hearings on appeals previously denied by former PA Supreme Court Justice Ron Castille. In the ruling, Tucker cited evidence of Castille’s judicial bias.

Tucker also raised that prosecutors representing the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania failed to produce documents they were obligated to preserve while Abu-Jamal’s appeals were active. He noted that unavailability of the documents could be prejudicial to Abu-Jamal.

In a Jan. 3 letter to Tucker and Abu-Jamal’s attorneys Judith Ritter and Samuel Spital, Assistant DA Tracey Kavanagh wrote: “This [discovery of the boxes] means that the Commonwealth’s prior representations that it had produced the complete file for this Court’s review in this case were incorrect.”

Krasner’s office announced that the files are being reviewed, and will be turned over to Tucker. The office has volunteered to allow inspection by Abu-Jamal’s attorneys. The find was not made public until Jan. 9.

Court battle

Haitian workers fight racist deportations

By G. Dunkel

Fighting racist deportation plans, Haitians went to federal district court in Brooklyn for a four-day hearing Jan. 7-10. Nine individuals, a community group and a Haitian newspaper are bringing suit against the U.S. government. They held a press conference Jan. 7 in front of the courthouse.

The aim of their suit is to force the Trump administration to drop plans to deny nearly 60,000 Haitians the right to live and work in the U.S. These Haitians currently do so under Temporary Protected Status.

“The Trump administration’s November 2017 decision to terminate Haiti’s TPS was immoral, racist and unconstitutional,” said Marleine Bastien, executive director of the Family Action Network Movement. “It has thrown the lives of thousands [of] TPS recipients and their U.S.-born children in turmoil.” FANM is one of the plaintiffs in the suit. (Haïti-Liberté, Jan. 9)

Labor support for Haitian workers under TPS was voiced by Alison Hirsh, vice president of Service Employees union 32BJ. Rep. Nydia M. Velázquez (D-N.Y.) also spoke.

Ramped-up racism

While there is a long history of discrimination against Haitians in the U.S., President Trump has taken a



Plaintiffs fighting deportation, workers, labor union representatives, local elected officials and activists held a press conference at U.S. Courthouse in Brooklyn Jan. 7.

Potential grounds for new trial

Responding to an earlier order from Tucker in September 2017, prior to Krasner taking office, the district attorney’s office had delivered 32 boxes of acknowledged case-related files, sequentially labeled “1 of 32, 2 of 32, 3 of 32,” etc.

The newly reported boxes were labeled “18 of 29, 21 of 29, 23 of 29, 24 of 29, and 29 of 29,” with one box unlabeled. In his Jan. 3 letter Assistant DA Kavanagh wrote: “Nothing in the Commonwealth’s database showed the existence of these six additional boxes.” Kavanagh did not account for the other 24 boxes in the marked sequence.

That boxes of files on Abu-Jamal’s case were never accounted for in the DA’s database, and were then buried in a remote storage area under office furniture, is no surprise to Mumia’s supporters who feel there are ample grounds for his case to be blown wide open.

The timing of the “discovery” — one day after Tucker’s favorable ruling — raises a serious question: Would the files have seen the light of day if Tucker had ruled for the Commonwealth and denied Abu-Jamal’s appeal?

If these boxes contain any evidence that prosecutors improperly withheld from Mumia’s defense in his first hearing — significant enough that the jury might have found a verdict of “not guilty” — that could be grounds for a retrial. Even less significant evidence could create an opening for a new Post Conviction Relief Act hearing before the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas.

Krasner’s office has sole authority to appeal Tucker’s Dec. 27 ruling and must respond by Jan. 26. In recent court hearings in the case, Abu-Jamal supporters voiced concerns that Krasner, despite his background as a progressive attorney, appeared to be bending to pressure from the Fraternal Order of Police — who were given preferential seating in Tucker’s courtroom.

Between Jan. 3 and Jan. 7, supporters of Abu-Jamal inundated Krasner’s office with thousands of petitions,

shockingly low road. He has publicly made racist comments about Haiti, including his historically infamous categorization of Haiti and African nations as “s — thole countries.” This outrageous statement was made while meeting with congressional leaders specifically to discuss extending TPS protection for Haitians. (nbcnews.com, Jan. 11, 2018)

At the rally, Steven Forester, immigration policy coordinator at the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, said: “Haiti is a textbook case for why TPS is needed, due to three recent extraordinary catastrophes: the world’s deadliest cholera epidemic, 2016’s Hurricane Matthew [and 2017’s Hurricane Irma], and the devastating 2010 earthquake.” Cholera was brought to Haiti — twice — by the U.N. “peacekeeping” force.

These collective catastrophes have forced people to leave the island for work in the U.S. (Brooklyn Reader, Jan. 7)

Another plaintiff is the Haitian community newspaper, Haïti-Liberté, whose Jan. 9 statement was read at the press conference by its representative Jocelyn Gay:

“Since U.S. Marines first invaded Haiti a century ago, the U.S. has plundered and strong-armed our nation, leaving it impoverished and politically unstable. The U.S. has re-enslaved our people, first in the Marines’ corvées, today in cheap labor sweatshops. Through coups d’état or electoral shenanigans, Washington has imposed and supported dictators, like Papa and Baby Doc Duvalier, or neo-Duvalierist charlatans, like Michel Martelly and Jovenel Moïse, all of whom have plundered state coffers.

“However, the death and destruction caused by the Jan. 12, 2010, earthquake in Haiti shocked the world’s conscience. ... The Obama administration was compelled to grant some 50,000 Haitians Temporary Protected Status (TPS).”

After mentioning the additional catastrophes of cholera and hurricanes, as well as Trump’s racism, Haïti-Liberté’s statement ended by urging Judge William Kuntz, who is hearing the case, to do the right thing and preserve Haitians’ TPS status.

Both the plaintiffs and the U.S. government will be allowed to submit additional material during the month of February. Judge Kuntz will then begin deliberations and issue his decision after March 1. □



Over 4,000 petitions were delivered to Philadelphia DA Larry Krasner Jan. 7, telling him not to appeal judicial ruling in favor of Mumia Abu-Jamal appeal.

phone calls, emails, letters — and a twitter storm. This support came from U.S. and international individuals and organizations, including prominent labor unions. All urged Krasner to allow Abu-Jamal’s appeals. One can only hope the concerted public pressure moved the DA to acknowledge the missing files.

Strong evidence of police and judicial misconduct

Whether or not these files contain “new evidence” about Castille’s involvement relating to the basis for Abu-Jamal’s 2017 appeal, the very existence of hidden files mirrors decades of police and prosecutorial misconduct in denying justice to Abu-Jamal.

After spending nearly 29 years in isolation on death row, since 2011 the 64-year-old political prisoner has been serving a life-without-parole sentence at Pennsylvania SCI Mahanoy. As a result of years of untreated hepatitis C, he suffers from unresolved skin rashes and cirrhosis of the liver, a potential precursor to liver cancer.

Unjustly convicted in 1982 for the death of a Philadelphia police officer, Abu-Jamal’s case stands as one of the most controversial in the history of Philadelphia, which is known for widespread corruption in both the police department and district attorney’s office.

Fifteen of the 35 police officers involved in collecting evidence in Abu-Jamal’s case in 1981 later went to jail for evidence tampering. Several witnesses in his case reported being pressured by police to change their testimony. Krasner’s predecessor Seth Williams, who delayed Abu-Jamal’s release from death row from 2001 until 2011, is currently in prison for five years for bribe-taking.

Mumia Abu-Jamal, the highly political, nationally honored Black journalist, was targeted by the state for his support of the MOVE organization; his public opposition to racist, neo-fascist former Philadelphia Mayor and one-time police commissioner Frank Rizzo; and his earlier membership in the Black Panther Party. □

Atlanta

Housing activists march for homeless people



Housing rights activists marched Jan. 7 in an effort to make the city open warming and day shelters for homeless people who currently face harsh winter weather. The city forced the largest shelter to close in 2018 — effectively killing a number of people living on the streets. The march, sponsored by Atlanta Street Groomers, went from the Fulton County morgue to Atlanta City Hall where a press conference was held. Then marchers attended the City Council meeting to raise this issue with council people. The city claims to have solved homelessness in Atlanta, but the hundreds of people who are sleeping in subfreezing weather tell another story.

— Report and photo by James Raynor

LARGEST IN WORLD HISTORY

All-India General Strike

By Martha Grevatt

It is estimated that at least 150 million workers, perhaps as many as 200 million, participated in the two-day All-India General Strike Jan. 8-9.

The strike was probably the largest general strike in world labor history.

Although generally ignored by the Western capitalist news media, this was a world-shaking event. Workers throughout India participated — from the largest cities of Mumbai (12 million plus) and Delhi (11 million plus) to the 67 percent of the country that remains rural.

Workers in government, banking, transit, manufacturing, transportation, education, agriculture and the informal economy were among those walking out. Every sector of the economy experienced slowdowns and in some cases total shutdowns.

As of 2017, India’s population was 1.34 billion people; only China’s population is larger. One in six people in the world live

in India. Of those 1.34 billion, at a bare minimum more than 1 in 9 took part in the strike.

Or about one striker for every 50 people in the entire world!

Classwide unity

As in other general strikes against the current government, 10 of India’s different labor federations, along with various independent unions, came together and struck as one. The politics of these federations range from conservative to revolutionary. According to British blogger Jamie Woodcock, who witnessed the strike’s impact in Bangalore, “The majority of the workers were aligned with the ‘red’ unions, and political parties were playing an important role.” (notesfrom-below.org)

Prominent in strike photos are the red banners of the All-India Trade Union Congress, which is India’s second largest labor federation and the largest with left-wing leadership. Founded in 1920,

AITUC is also the oldest labor federation in India and is affiliated with the World Federation of Trade Unions, which AITUC co-founded in 1945.

“The crowd of workers was diverse, with a large number of women, as well as significant numbers of visible Muslims,”

Woodcock noted. Muslims are the largest of many religious minorities in India, whose population is 80 percent Hindu. India has over 2,000 ethnic groups, speaking many languages that belong to four distinct linguistic families.

Women have played a major role in the ongoing struggle against the neoliberal government of Narendra Modi. In a 2016 interview with this writer, AITUC General Secretary Amarjeet Kaur spoke about women’s participation in the Sept. 2, 2016, general strike: “Women were essential because they are hard hit. All the social security investment which the government is reducing is hitting women because it is making education, health, drinking water and food items expensive. Good jobs and opportunities are being lost. Women are being engaged only in precarious jobs, where wages are not protected at all, so women’s participation in our strike was immense. They were in the forefront everywhere.” (“Women & the All-India Trade Union Congress,” Workers World, Nov. 20, 2016)

‘A clear warning from the working class’

Unions built the mass work stoppage around 12 demands. The first opposes Prime Minister Modi’s efforts to dismantle the 1926 Labor Law, demanding the government “stop all



Two hundred farmers’ unions are organized under the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee.

pro-corporate, anti-worker amendments.” Other demands address inflation, privatization, the right to unionize, irregular and “non-permanent” employment, social security for unorganized workers, the Foreign Direct Investment policy in banking, high unemployment and pensions.

The strike’s strength extended far beyond the unionized sector, which is only about 30 million workers, a majority of them in government.

Student and farmer organizations supported the strike. Farmers engaged in road and rail blockades to back the strike demands and “to save rural farmers’ lands from the corporate.” (Times Now News, Jan. 8)

Strike leaders were arrested, including Communist Party of India (Marxist) leaders from West Bengal, Sujan Chakraborty and Anadi Sahoo, who were detained in Kolkata, along with their comrades from Jadavpur.

“The struggle will continue,” Chakraborty stated emphatically. Tapan Sen, general secretary of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions, added, “This strike is a clear warning from the working class and toiling people of India that they were not going to take lying down the attacks on their basic rights and living conditions.” (The Morning Star, Jan. 8) □



Workers massed in Mumbai during Jan. 8-9 strike.

Canadian GM workers fight to stop plant closings

By Martha Grevatt

Windsor, Ont., is just across the border from Detroit. General Motors’ world headquarters was in clear view from a riverfront park where thousands of angry Canadian autoworkers rallied Jan. 11. While GM was holding a meeting of institutional investors, union members made it clear they will fight tooth and nail to stop the closing of GM’s Oshawa, Ont., assembly plant.

About 2,000 members of UNIFOR Local 222, which represents the Oshawa workers, came by bus to Windsor for the protest. UNIFOR Local 444, whose largest unit is the Fiat Chrysler Automobiles minivan plant in Windsor, sent a large delegation. UNIFOR, formed in 2013, was the merger of the Canadian Auto Workers and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers. The CAW was founded in 1986 when Canadians left the United Auto Workers in opposition to concession bargaining.

Local 444 President Dave Cassidy chaired the rally. Speakers included Local 222 President Colin James, Shop Chair Greg Moffat and rank-and-file member Jackie Sobil.

Sobil was a “temporary” worker for six years until finally becoming a seniority worker in 2016. Now her economic prospects are dim if GM closes the plant.

UNIFOR President Jerry Dias pointed out that GM made a \$6 billion profit in the first three quarters of 2018 and is

projecting record profits for the year. Even bigger earnings are anticipated in 2019 despite weakening sales. Dias blasted CEO Mary Barra, who not only made \$22 million personally last year, but is the company’s largest individual stockholder.

“General Motors is not closing our plant,” Dias vowed. UNIFOR also wants action from Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Ontario Premier Doug Ford. Canada gave \$11 billion to bail out GM during the 2009 bankruptcy.

Militancy and solidarity must be stronger to win

Dias expressed solidarity with autoworkers in the U.S. where GM plans to close four plants in Michigan, Ohio and Maryland. About 5,000 UAW members will be laid off or forced to relocate to keep their jobs.

With additional cuts in the salaried workforce, 14,000 jobs are on the chopping block in North America. Jon Gabrielsen, an economist who consults with automakers and auto suppliers, predicts the cuts will not stop there. (Detroit Free Press, Jan. 9) Unfortunately, the UAW — which could easily have sent a solidarity delegation to the rally across the river — did not even send a message of support.

The Oshawa plant produces both cars and trucks. GM plans to terminate production of the iconic Chevy Impala and move truck production to Mexico,

where autoworkers make \$2 an hour. In 1993, GM produced a million vehicles in Oshawa; now it makes the same number in Mexico.

While UNIFOR’s support for UAW members is laudable, solidarity needs to be extended to super-exploited workers in Mexico and around the world. GM has announced mass layoffs at its Bogota, Colombia, plant. That is the same plant whose injured workers whom GM fired have maintained a tent encampment demanding restitution outside the U.S. embassy since 2011.

Sit-down strike tactics

While the rally was a tremendous display of strength and unity, UNIFOR rank and file realize the need for more militant tactics. On the morning after GM made a public statement announcing the planned closing — before even notifying the unions as a courtesy — Oshawa workers walked out. There was no production Nov. 26.

UNIFOR then attempted to negotiate with GM to keep Oshawa open. On Jan.



WW PHOTO: MARTHA GREVATT

Members of UNIFOR Local 222 rallied Jan. 11 against GM plans to close Oshawa, Ont., assembly plant.

8, GM stated publicly that it would go forward with the shutdown.

After the evening shift watched the GM news conference in the plant, Local 222 members staged a five-hour sit-down strike, stopping production but staying in the plant.

It took a 44-day occupation of GM plants in Flint, Mich., to force the company to recognize the UAW in 1937. Inspired by that victory, Oshawa GM and workers at local parts suppliers then struck for union recognition and a contract. As a result, Local 222 became the first UAW Local in Canada.

Now, members are determined to keep their militant history alive and beat “Greedy Motors.” □

AS L.A. TEACHERS STRIKE Oakland teacher unions prepare for action

By Judy Greenspan
Oakland, Calif.

Jan. 15: Yesterday 30,000 Los Angeles public school teachers went out on strike. Today teachers will be picketing 1,000 schools in the second-largest school district in the U.S. With the slogan “On strike for our students,” their demands include more nurses, counselors and librarians, smaller class sizes.

Jan. 12 — Today, the people’s protest site in downtown Oakland, Oscar Grant Plaza, was red with over 2,000 teachers, educators, students and community activists who came out to support public education. Activists wore red shirts, jackets and armbands to show support for California teachers who are fighting for a living wage and better working conditions. The East Bay Rally for Public Education drew the support of dozens of Bay Area unions and community organizations.

On Jan. 14, thousands of Los Angeles teachers, members of United Teachers of Los Angeles/California Teachers Association, will go on strike for a living wage, smaller class sizes, funding for public not charter schools and better school funding overall.

The Oakland Education Association, the Oakland teachers’ union, is not far behind. On Jan. 11, Oakland teachers

participated in school walk-ins to support L.A. teachers.

Today’s rally highlighted the demands of L.A., Oakland and all public teachers who are coalescing in a national movement to fund and save public education. The streets of Oakland shook today with chants and songs as hundreds of OEA members, their families and supporters marched from Lake Merritt to the rally site. Hundreds of local unionists, students and the Bay Area progressive community came together there to demand an end to attacks on public education.

Due to low wages and worsening conditions in Bay Area schools, there is a serious shortage of public school teachers. Many teachers at today’s demonstration talked about how impossible it is to survive in the Bay Area on their low salary.

Teachers in both Los Angeles and Oakland are feeling the impact of the funding cuts on public education. At the same time, school districts are supporting and funding the opening of privatized charter schools. In December, the Oakland Unified School District announced plans to close or consolidate 24 public schools.

Although the list of schools to be closed has not yet been made public, community members and OEA teachers have begun to mobilize to save their community schools. Over 150 students, teachers, parents and their supporters from Roots International

Bay Area teachers, students, parents, unions and community organizations rally Jan. 12 in support of growing militancy by California education workers.



Academy, a predominantly African-American public school, rallied inside the Jan. 9 Oakland School Board meeting demanding that their school be kept open. Roots families also attended today’s rally and spoke from the stage about the fight to save their school.

It is well known and accepted that California “skimps” on education spending. Some studies place California 41st in per-pupil spending and 46th in money spent per student. California, however, ranks first in prison spending. A recent article by EdSource.org, explains that for the last four decades, California simply has not made education a priority. ([tinyurl.com/y6w3336c](https://www.tinyurl.com/y6w3336c))

The state’s failure to prioritize spending for public education, including real cost-of-living increases for teachers and support staff, is a catalyst behind the rapid radicalization of California’s teachers.

Several high schools have already organized day-long sick-outs to put pressure on the school board to bargain in good faith. Although the Bay Area is one of the most expensive areas to live in, the school board has refused to offer a cost-of-living increase or to consider a reasonable reduction in class size.

Teachers all over the country will be watching the Jan. 14 Los Angeles strike by the second largest teachers’ union in the country. OEA believes that it too will be on strike in the near future. Teachers say the future of public education is at stake.

Greenspan is an Oakland public school teacher and a member of the Oakland Education Association. □

West Va. education workers hold walk-ins a year after historic strike

By Workers World West Virginia bureau

Jan. 10 — One year after the nine-day work stoppage in West Virginia that paved the way for education worker walk-outs in other states, teachers and support staff in that state are once again starting to take action. On Jan. 9 — the same day coal baron Gov. Jim Justice delivered his so-called “State of the State” address, which is also the first day of the state’s 2019 legislative session — school workers in several locations throughout the state conducted an informational walk-in.

As a unified way to show solidarity, participants wore red and held signs that expressed concerns for public education. Some brought back the slogans #55Strong and #55United, referring to all 55 West Virginia counties whose schools were closed during the unified 2018 education worker strike.

Some signs featured messages of support to the majority Black and Latinx educators in the Los Angeles school district, who are facing their own battle against greedy administration.

The purpose of the walk-in was to show

the billionaire governor and his right-wing-led legislature that teachers and staff are still united across the state. One high school social studies teacher told Workers World, “This is a perfect opportunity to educate the public on what is going on and why we are still not happy. We also want the governor and the legislature to know we are watching them closely this year.”

In his address, Justice gave superficial lip-service to teachers and to “improving” the state’s education system. He even showed a prerecorded video of Shaquille O’Neal talking about “communities in schools.” And Gov. Justice mentioned another 5 percent raise for all public employees.

Concerns about health insurance

But the governor is still refusing to offer long-term solutions to fully fund state and education workers’ health insurance through the Public Employees Insurance Agency. He promised to provide \$150 million toward PEIA, but that will not be a permanent solution; it will only temporarily keep premiums from increasing.

The governor’s proposals still have to pass the legislature, which is even more hostile toward public employees than he is. Justice also opposed suggestions about expanding coverage made by the PEIA Task Force, which was created shortly after the nine-day walkout.

For most people who stood on picket lines in frigid temperatures last year, the cost for PEIA was their number one concern. Premiums have been increasing to the point where people are quitting the teaching profession and leaving the state on a larger scale than anywhere else in the country.

Last year, most people involved in the strike suggested that the legislature help fund PEIA by passing an increase in the severance tax on natural gas. The governor and most legislators of both parties have financial ties to energy resource extraction industries.

Education workers also know that the state’s pro-Trump, Republican-led Senate and House are preparing to bring back anti-union bills defeated during the strike. These bills include promoting charter schools, offering school vouchers for students attending them, and stripping away seniority rights and elimination of payroll deductions for union dues.

New enemy in the struggle

During last year’s walkout, the two people who were hated the most were Gov. Jim Justice and Senate President Mitch Carmichael. Carmichael is a former CEO of Frontier Communications, whose workers went on strike at the end of the education workers’ strike.

In early December of 2018, Carmichael personally appointed Sen. Patricia Rucker to become chair of the Senate Education Committee, replacing a more “moderate” Republican who actually had a background in public education. Union leaders immediately spoke out in disgust and concern. Rucker is an open proponent

of homeschooling, charter schools and “faith”-based curriculum. She is also an ardent opponent of vaccinations and a denier of global climate change.

Born Patricia Elena Puertas in Caracas, Venezuela, Rucker grew up in Montgomery County, Md. She spent most of her political career serving the interests of white male supremacy in spite of her Latinx heritage. She was an active member of the racist Tea Party movement in 2008. She and her family moved to Jefferson County, W.V., to — in her own words — be “refugees from socialist Montgomery County.” (The Federalist, Feb. 14, 2017)

In addition to being anti-union and anti-public education, Rucker is actively anti-communist. Despite having nothing but animosity toward the Bolivarian Revolution, she still travels to Venezuela every couple of years and is an open sympathizer with the violent right-wing opposition.

As a traditional Catholic who refuses to acknowledge the current papacy, Rucker is closely affiliated with anti-choice extremists and loosely associated with the anti-Semitic “Radical Traditionalist Catholic” movement. As the new chair of the Senate Education Committee, Rucker will have enormous authority about the direction of legislation regarding public education.

Rank-and-file led action

The Jan. 10 walk-ins were organized by rank-and-file activist members of the American Federation of Teachers-WV, West Virginia Education Association and the West Virginia Service Personnel Association, which call themselves the United Caucus. Walk-ins did not occur at every school, but in places where they did not, the staff wore red. While state union leaders did not initiate the walk-ins, they all expressed support for their members. □



WW PHOTO:

Education workers in several West Virginia counties conducted a “walk-in” on Jan. 10.

WORKERS WORLD

editorial

To women's marches

Build global solidarity!

Continued from page 1

women's march movement, there will be separate, competing marches in several cities including New York City.

This splintering weakens the struggle. It serves the interests of Trump, the right-wing Republicans, the Democratic Party leadership and especially the capitalist class they truly represent. There can be little doubt these had a hand to some degree, however hidden, in concocting the phony "controversy" to create this split.

The mounting attacks on march leaders Tamika Mallory, Linda Sarsour and Carmen Perez, three women of color, are doing the work of the enemy, even if they don't realize it. Everyone who really wants to fight against gender oppression must close ranks and reject these efforts to divide the movement, despite any get-out-the-vote slogans from the Democratic Party.

Why this slander? Why now?

Which class benefits from anti-Semitism?

Over the last few decades in the U.S., claims of anti-Semitism have become the go-to move against Black activists especially. This is meant to confuse people, to diffuse support, to block solidarity — in other words, to sow disunity. Which is exactly what has happened in the lead-up to this women's march.

What a cynical strategy. There is a deep, long, very real history of anti-Semitism. But it is not to be found in the Black or any other oppressed community. It flourished in Europe over centuries, fomented by the czars in Russia and ultimately, horrifically, by the genocidal Nazi regime. Tens of millions died, both at the hands of the fascist death machine and in the heroic effort, led by the Red Army of the Soviet Union, to defeat it.

The U.S. has its own sordid history of anti-Semitism. There was early 20th century anti-Jewish propagandizing by powerful figures such as capitalist Henry Ford. There were long decades of discrimination in housing and employment. And there is the current period, with Nazis marching in Charlottesville, Va., chanting, "Jews will not replace us," and a white supremacist murdering 11 people in a Pittsburgh synagogue last year.

However it manifests, scapegoating of Jewish people as somehow the cause of everyone's troubles always emanates from one source. And that's the ruling class, which is overwhelmingly WASP—white Anglo-Saxon Protestant. Its goals: to break up unity, undermine the working-class struggle and deflect anger from itself as the real cause of our problems.

No other force in society, least of all any oppressed

community, has the motive or the power to promote anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism serves only ruling-class interests. The only actual threat to Jewish people is from the ruling class and those it mobilizes.

Solidarity with the Palestinian people

There is another element at work in developments around the women's march. That is the question of Palestine. As so often happens, solidarity with the Palestinian people's righteous struggle for self-determination is being conflated with anti-Semitism. This is a false equation, and it makes the claims against Tamika Mallory, who is Black, and Linda Sarsour, who is Palestinian, particularly odious. It's outrageous that Mallory and Sarsour have been forced to repeatedly affirm their opposition to anti-Semitism simply because they stand with Palestine.

We too support Palestine. As we oppose anti-Semitism and Zionism. As we support the rights of women and all gender-oppressed people.

As we fight against racism. As we defend Black, Brown and Indigenous women.

We call for unity among all working and oppressed people against our real enemies. Crush Trump! Defend women's lives! Defend LGBTQ2S people! Unite! Unite! Unite to fight! □

WW Commentary

Despite clemency, Cyntoia Brown remains in prison

By Monica Moorehead

The case of Cyntoia Brown, the now 30-year-old African-American woman who spent almost 15 years in a Tennessee prison, has garnered worldwide attention especially through social media. Brown was sentenced for killing a white male sexual predator who solicited her for sex when she was just 16 years old. As a child, Brown suffered from fetal alcohol syndrome and homelessness, and as a juvenile, she was a victim of multiple rapes.

Her case has helped shine a bright spotlight on global sex trafficking, especially that targeting young people of color regardless of gender, gender expression or national borders.

A mass campaign of petitions and other forms of support forced Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam to grant Brown clemency on Jan. 7. Haslam is the same right-wing Republican governor whose administration in 2014 was exposed as undermining unionization of a Volkswagen plant in Chattanooga by providing lucrative financial incentives to the anti-labor auto conglomerate.

That's proof enough that Haslam did not grant clemency to this young African-American survivor out of the goodness of his heart. She is being freed through mass pressure from below, along with support from prominent figures like singer Rihanna, actors Ashley Judd and Amy Schumer, and other high-profile people.

Harsh conditions based in racism and sexism

Despite this victory for Cyntoia Brown and the movement that supported her, the governor's clemency does not come without infuriating conditions based in racism and sexism.

The most blatant condition is that Brown will not be released until Aug. 7, seven months from now. Not only should she not have been convicted of murder in 2004 as a juvenile, she should not have to spend one more day in prison, which



Cyntoia Brown today.

must be agonizing for her. Anything could happen to her between now and her release date, given that prison is a dangerous place for any prisoner.

Just think back to what happened to Sandra Bland, the 28-year-old African-American woman from Chicago, falsely arrested in July 2015 by an arrogant, racist police officer for "failing to use a turn signal." Three days later, she was found hanging in the Waller County, Texas, jail cell — a highly suspicious death that was ruled a "suicide."

Her tragic death triggered the #SayHerName campaign led by the Black Lives Matter movement to remind everyone that Black and other women of color are brutalized by the repressive state apparatus.

The second punishing condition linked to the governor's clemency is that reportedly Brown will still be on parole for the next 10 years after she is finally released.

To be "on parole" means being trapped within the criminal justice system, whether behind prison walls or not, like millions of faceless others. If there is any perceived violation of her parole — and racism and sexism can easily create a "violation" — Cyntoia Brown could end up back in prison.

The movement should continue to pressure the governor to release Cyntoia Brown immediately, with no conditions. □

Shut out gov't workers say 'We want to work--for pay!'

Continued from page 1

AIDS crisis and demanding research and life-saving treatment.

And last year, disabled activists occupied local congressional offices and Senate office buildings in D.C. to defend the Affordable Care Act. For many, it was a life-and-death struggle.

There are new, progressive Democratic members of Congress, many women of color. Some of them, along with longtime congresspeople, are joining workers' protests and speaking out on their behalf. A number are denouncing "Trump's wall" and bigotry.

It's a big political party. Where are its leaders? They could call for a massive demonstration to circle the Capitol. Democratic members of Congress could take the floor and insist on an end to "business as usual" until the shutdown ends and all furloughed employees and contracted workers are paid lost wages.

But this is a party of Big Business. The workers cannot rely on it for solutions.

Shutdown's impact on federal workers

U.S. imperialism's main instrument, the Pentagon, is not affected by the shutdown. It was fully funded earlier by a vote of both congressional parties.

But many federal workers who perform vital social functions like inspecting food, taking care of national parks, administering public housing, curtailing pollution, preparing and serving food, and working as custodians in federal buildings are either furloughed or working without pay.

This shutdown is harming the lowest-paid workers the most. Many are having difficulty paying for mortgages, rent, transportation, child care, medication, food and utilities. While they will receive lost pay retroactively, they need their income now! Many are taking part-time work, relying on family members and/or taking out loans with interest fees. Some are turning to food pantries, churches, and charities and/or setting up online fund appeals.

The shutdown has exposed the reality that millions of workers, federal employees or not, lack the funds to get through



AFGE union members protest the shutdown in Detroit on Jan. 10 (top) and in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 14 (bottom).

a crisis. It has further exposed the financial inequities faced by African-American, Latinx and other workers of color.

Women comprise the majority of the federal workforce, and 81 percent of women workers in the U.S. live paycheck to paycheck. Many are heads of households and sole supporters of their families. Cuts in essential government services are endangering them and their families' health and well-being. Gender-oppressed people are among those harmed by this shutdown.

Contracted Black and Latinx workers

The federal government also relies on contracted workers; 2.8 million of them perform service jobs, from health aides to computer programmers. Many are women. Some of them are affected by the shutdown. A vast pay gap exists among these and other federal workers. Those doing food service and facility maintenance, those who are administrative assistants and security guards all work long hours for little pay—many earning only the federal contractor minimum wage.

Already among the lowest paid in the federal workforce, they will continue to feel financial pain for years to come. Unlike other federal employees, they are outrageously blocked from receiving pay

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100 years after murder of German revolutionaries

Rosa Luxemburg's views on the Russian Revolution

By John Catalinotto

One hundred years ago last Nov. 9, a movement of sailors, workers and soldiers forced the German Kaiser to abdicate his throne and release from prison the two top revolutionary leaders of the working class in Germany, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, as the mass revolt ended World War I. (tinyurl.com/y9dt3svg)

On Jan. 15, 1919, a gang of reactionary German military officers, who were fore-runners to the Nazi Storm Troopers of the 1930s, murdered these two heroes, making them martyrs of the world communist movement. The military had the go-ahead from the right-wing Social Democratic Party running the German government.

Luxemburg's Marxist theorizing, organizing

Because Rosa Luxemburg made theoretical and organizational contributions to the Marxist movement at the highest level, it is vital for communists to examine her political development in the final 75 days of her life as she tried to mobilize and organize the working class under pre-revolutionary conditions in Germany.

Another German Communist leader, Clara Zetkin, wrote a book titled "Rosa Luxemburg's Views on the Russian Revolution" in 1922 (available since 2017 in English) that presents exactly the information needed to clarify Luxemburg's positions at that time. In the book's fourth chapter especially, Zetkin presents, with ample quotes, how Luxemburg quickly grasped what the workers, sailors and soldiers needed to do if there was to be any possibility of victory.

It is important to clarify this question today because forces who wish to weaken the class struggle purposely distort Luxemburg's creative Marxist thinking. These forces misuse her honest positions to attack the Russian Communist leaders who did succeed in seizing and holding power.

This distortion of Luxemburg's theory disorients present-day political activists away from using organized force — while the capitalist class continues to wield the force of the militarist state against the workers and oppressed peoples.

If today's bourgeois and social democratic politicians revile the Russian revolutionary leader V.I. Lenin more than they do Luxemburg, it is only because he led a workers' revolution that succeeded and stayed in power for over 70 years.

As hostile as the ruling classes were then and are now toward Rosa Luxemburg, after murdering her, they are happy to exploit any differences, real or imaginary, that existed between her and the Bolshevik leader.

In Chapter 4 of her book, Zetkin shows how, under the pressure of a near revolutionary situation, Rosa Luxemburg fought for positions that were the equivalent under German conditions to those taken by Lenin and the Bolsheviks under Russian conditions.

On the question of intransigence against imperialism and against the capitalist state, Luxemburg and Lenin, two revolutionary leaders, were in complete agreement.

The struggle for a revolutionary workers party

In November 1918 the objective political conditions in Germany were similar to those that provoked the socialist

revolution in Russia in 1917. The armed forces were in turmoil, led by revolutionary sailors after a disastrous war; the monarchy collapsed. A socialist revolution seemed possible. Individual revolutionary leaders — like Luxemburg, Liebknecht and Zetkin — existed.

What was lacking was a revolutionary workers party trained in combat.

The Social Democratic Party of Germany, which at the beginning of World War I in 1914 had over a million members, had divided into three major political tendencies, with their differences sharpening during World War I.

The largest tendency, on the right, was called the Majority Social Democrats, with a leadership who voted funds for the imperialist war and joined the government during the war, betraying the workers. When the Kaiser abdicated on Nov. 9, 1918, the MSD took over the reins of the government. The capitalist parties counted on the MSD to tame the workers' movement.

Smaller but still massive was the centrist Independent Social Democrats (USPD), who opposed the war in words but stayed inside the pro-imperialist Social Democratic Party until 1917. Many USPD militants played an active role in the mass rebellion that deposed the Kaiser, but their leaders made no attempt to mobilize the masses for a socialist revolution. Instead they looked to negotiate a compromise with the Majority Social Democrats and join the government, apparently hoping to win socialism through parliamentary means.



Marchers on Jan. 13 in Berlin honor martyred revolutionaries. Lead banner reads: "Luxemburg, Liebknecht, Lenin; No one is forgotten; Arise and resist."

The third group was the much smaller, leftist Spartacist League. Its leaders — Luxemburg, Liebknecht, Zetkin, among them — heroically promoted using mass opposition to the war to keep pushing the class struggle forward. This group existed inside the centrist USPD as a political tendency until they founded the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) on Dec. 30, 1918.

After she and Liebknecht were released from prison by the Nov. 9 mass military revolt, Luxemburg took over responsibilities for "Rote Fahne" (Red Flag), the Spartacist League newspaper — the only mass media available for revolutionaries. At the time there were hundreds of thousands of rebellious workers, soldiers and sailors in the streets daily in Berlin, though not everywhere in Germany was it as "hot" as in the capital.

Even in Berlin, there was no structure for a revolutionary struggle. It's true that

the state apparatus — the police and much of the armed forces — disappeared instead of protecting the monarchy. However, a pro-monarchy grouping of army officers, the Freikorps, began to attack the revolutionary workers.

Meanwhile the right-wing social democrats, the MSD, ran the government, sometimes with, sometimes without the Independents. The MSD had control of most of the trade unions. Even in the Workers and Soldiers Councils, which were the nearest thing to organs of workers' power like the soviets in Russia, the MSD or the Independents had the most influence.

Luxemburg's strategy for Germany

The Spartacist League was too new, small and weak to act on its own. The leadership's goal was to break the Independents away from the MSD, to win a majority for the revolutionary forces in the Workers and Soldiers Councils, and to use those councils as the basis of a new state power representing the working class.

Zetkin shows that, from the very beginning as editor of Rote Fahne, not only did Luxemburg write the lead editorials, she reviewed every word in the revolutionary



Clara Zetkin (left) with Rosa Luxemburg in 1910.

the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils and who will otherwise become the personal bodyguard of the Ebert-Haase [MSD] Cabinet." She urged workers and soldiers to "demand the disarmament of all officers and of the White Guard trained by the Ebert-Haase government and create the Red Guard." She also called for them to "reject the National Assembly and identify it as an attack on the revolution and the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils."

Socialism as 'the mightiest civil war'

On Dec. 25, a spontaneous action of the workers took back a newspaper — Vorwärts — that the MSD had seized from the workers two years earlier during the war. The MSD attacked this action as "illegal seizure of property."

Rote Fahne attacked the MSD for its hypocrisy and supported this bold action of the masses that, in a small way, challenged the bourgeois monopoly of propaganda.

In her "Spartacist Program," Luxemburg wrote: "The fight for socialism is the mightiest civil war ever seen in world history, and the proletarian revolution must procure the necessary tools for this civil war; it must learn to use them — to struggle and to win."

"Such arming of the solid mass of laboring people with all political power for the tasks of the revolution — that is the dictatorship of the proletariat and therefore true democracy. Not where the wage slave sits next to the capitalist, the rural proletarian next to the Junker [rural landlord] in fraudulent equality, to engage in parliamentary debate over questions of life or death, but where the million-headed proletarian mass seizes the entire power of the state in its calloused fist — like the god Thor his hammer — to smash the head of the ruling classes: that alone is democracy, that alone is not a betrayal of the people."

No matter how many times present-day political militants read the chapter of Luxemburg's revolutionary life work, they can't change the outcome of her death and subsequent events in Germany.

They can, however, do their best to learn why Lenin, whatever his differences with Luxemburg, categorized her as an "eagle" who soared above the other working-class leaders of her epoch. □

Quotes are from Chapter 4 of "Rosa Luxemburg's Views on the Russian Revolution" by Clara Zetkin, Red Star Publishers, 1917. Available from online vendors; chapter 4 available at tinyurl.com/ybbue6yn.

WW PHOTO: GABRIELE SENFT

Movement to stop executions gained in 2018

By Gloria Rubac

At their January meeting, members of the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement emptied the contents of four red mesh onion sacks onto a square of tables in the center of the meeting room at the S.H.A.P.E. Community Center in Houston where they have been meeting for over 25 years. Out of these bags tumbled the only possessions of Alvin Braziel Jr., who had been executed Dec. 11. Anxious to talk, Braziel called this reporter around 2:30 p.m. on his execution day. He'd gotten the phone number from Workers World newspaper and had heard it given out over Houston's Pacifica radio station. He then asked for the number to call the Abolition Movement to speak with Director Deloyd Parker.

Folks gathered to hear this man who would be dead in a few hours. For the next period over a speaker phone, Parker and others at the center talked, prayed together and shared stories with Braziel. When they hung up at 5 p.m., officers walked Braziel to the death chamber where he was legally lynched one hour later.

Although Braziel was allowed five family members or friends to witness the execution, no one was there. Without family or friends to leave his property, he had asked Parker to come to Huntsville and collect his things.

"We went through the bags and found a few prison-issued clothes, a bible and other religious books, letters from friends, commissary receipts, dishes, and food he purchased from the prison commissary — corn chips, jalapenos, giant dill pickles, sardines in Louisiana Hot Sauce and a chemical-laden squeeze tube of spicy cheese," explained Joanne Gavin. "He must have been a loner because prisoners usually give away their property to others on the row when they leave to be executed."

Typical of many of the 2,700 people on death rows around the country, Braziel was Black, poor, lacking social skills and with little-to-no family support. Alone on his last day on Earth he got solace speaking with people he had never met, like many of the 25 prisoners executed in 2018.

Death penalty rates continued downward in 2018 as they have over the last decade. Executions and death sentences were down, as was public support for executions.

The Death Penalty Information Center in Washington, D.C., is a national nonprofit organization serving the media and the public with analysis and information on issues concerning capital punishment. On its website you can read:

"As the number of sentences and executions held steady at historically low levels, the cases that resulted in new death sentences or executions continued to exemplify systemic concerns about the death penalty. Those executed in 2018 included prisoners with serious mental illness, borderline intellectual disabilities, and childhood trauma or neglect. In many instances, they had given

up their rights or had inadequate representation, unresolved claims of innocence, and/or non-unanimous jury sentencing recommendations.

"The geographic isolation of the death penalty was especially stark this year, with more than half the year's executions taking place in Texas, while the rest of the country conducted a record low number of executions."

The capital of capital punishment

While death sentences even in Texas were fewer, each of the seven people sentenced to death in Texas in 2018 was a person of color — three African-Americans, three Latinxs and one Asian — as over 70 percent of those sentenced in the last five years have been. A high of 48 people were executed here in 1999, with single digits in nine of the last 10 years.

Washington state's supreme court ruled in 2018 that capital punishment violated the state's constitution because it "is imposed in an arbitrary and racially biased manner." Washington became the 20th state to abolish the death penalty.

Both people exonerated off death rows in 2018 were foreign nationals; the DPIC underlined the difficulties noncitizens encounter dealing with the U.S. injustice system. Death row exonerations in the U.S. have risen to 164, including Vicente Benavides Figueroa in California and Clemente Javier Aguirre in Florida.

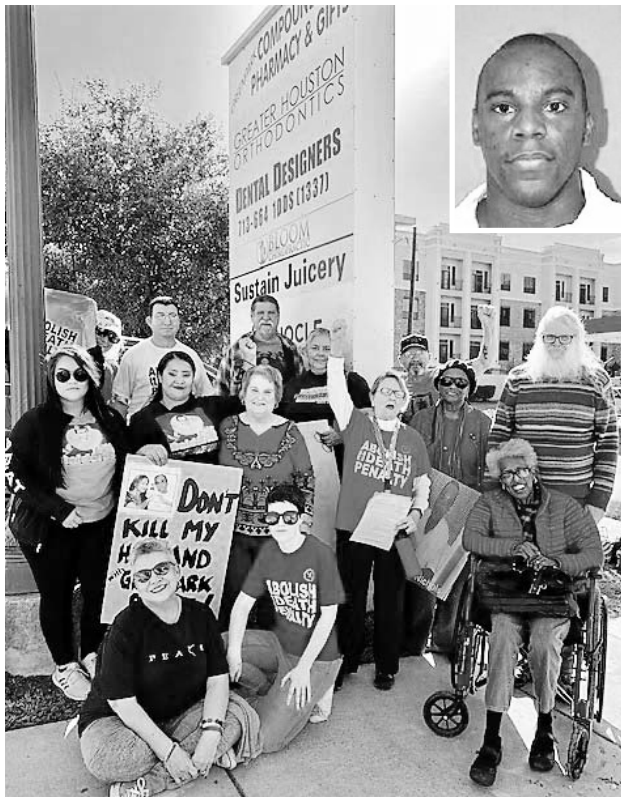
Lethal drug suppliers' violations

With the execution process coming under fierce scrutiny in the last few years, some states passed laws to prevent the public from discovering which companies sold them lethal injection drugs. Investigative journalist Chris McDaniel with BuzzFeed News discovered both Texas and Missouri were obtaining drugs from compounding pharmacies with serious safety violations. Unlike regular pharmacies, compounding pharmacies are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration. They are accountable to no one. (tinyurl.com/ydgepw2r)

In Missouri, 17 prisoners were executed with drugs from a St. Louis pharmacy that the FDA considered high risk due to numerous health violations, including reselling drugs that had been returned to them by customers.

Buzzfeed's McDaniel reported that in Houston the Greenpark Compounding Pharmacy's license has been on probation since November 2016, when the Texas State Board of Pharmacy found that it had compounded the wrong drug for three children, sending one to the emergency room, and forged quality control documents. Texas has imposed 48 violations on Greenpark in the last eight years, including selling out-of-date drugs and unsanitary practices.

Activists with the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement held a press conference and demonstration



WW PHOTO: GLORIA RUBAC

Activists with Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement demonstrate Dec. 3 at Green Park Pharmacy, provider of drugs used to execute prisoners. Inset: Alvin Braziel.

on Dec. 3 outside Greenpark Pharmacy, generating news coverage and customer outrage.

A continuing "Phone-in Friday" has encouraged activists to make repeated phone calls every Friday to the pharmacy, demanding they stop selling execution drugs, which is a violation of the Code of Ethics for Pharmacists. Their phone number is 713-432-9855 and the owner is Ken Burns.

The compounded drugs Texas uses have caused serious pain and burning sensations to those being executed, as reported by witnesses to the executions. U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor has called lethal injection "the chemical equivalent of being burned at the stake" and noted the "cruel irony that the method that appears most humane may turn out to be our most cruel experiment yet."

In March 2018, Alabama tried to execute Doyle Lee Hamm, a 61-year-old prisoner with terminal cancer. Prison personnel spent two-and-a-half hours sticking Hamm's legs, ankles and groin with needles to set up an IV line. The prison finally called off the execution. Hamm said later he was hoping they'd find a usable vein, so the torture would stop. After a legal settlement, no new execution date will be set. (tinyurl.com/y7tnafgt)

As 2019 begins, 18 executions are already scheduled, though some will be stayed, some overturned, some possibly commuted and some rescheduled. These include seven in both Texas and Ohio and four in Tennessee.

In Texas, John King is scheduled to be executed April 24. He is one of three racists who dragged a Black man, James Byrd Jr., to death in Jasper, Texas, in a high-profile case in 1998 that outraged people around the country.

A disaster defined by racism

The death penalty in the U.S. is a disaster defined by the racism inherent in the criminal justice system — from the cops to the prosecutors to the judges. The death penalty is a direct descendant of lynching. More than 8 in 10 people lynched between 1889 and 1918 were lynched in the South, as were more than 8 in 10 of the almost 1,500 executions in the U.S. since 1976, according to the Equal Justice Initiative based in Montgomery, Ala.

African Americans are less than 13 percent of the U.S. population, but 42 percent of the 2,738 people currently on death row and 35 percent of those executed since 1976.

Examine the facts: innocent people being executed, incompetent lawyers, a lack of funding for proper investigations, foreign nationals denied their rights under international law to consult their consulates, people executed despite serious mental illnesses or mental disabilities, prosecutors hiding exculpatory evidence and the use of jailhouse snitches.

Combine these with the pervasive racism and anti-poor bias in all capital cases, and the only fair solution is to abolish the death penalty completely. The Alvin Braziels of this country would live. Governments would save billions, and the families of the accused would not become victims along with their loved ones. □

Since 1995, Rubac has been a leader of the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement.

Gov't workers say 'Pay us for work!'

Continued from page 6

lost due to the shutdown—even those who support families.

Julie Karant, representing Service Employees Union Local 32BJ covering 2,000 federal contract workers in the D.C. area, says, "Our members are predominantly, if not exclusively, African-American and Latino. They don't necessarily have health care or pension benefits and most of them have multiple jobs." Loss of a paycheck means they have to choose among medications, food and electricity. (Think Progress, Jan. 12)

This crisis is disproportionately hitting African Americans, who comprise 18 percent of federal workers. Because of the racial wealth gap in the U.S., more of these employees lack the emergency savings needed to get by without regular paychecks. In many Black families, several wage earners work for the federal government, due to private sector racist discrimination.

Lora Williams, a 26-year employee of the National Parks Service, told the Jan. 11 Guardian that she lacks cash reserves and, even with online fundraising, is "barely staying above water." This Black woman is concerned about NPS contractors who provide essential services like trash collecting but have not received back pay after past shutdowns.

Shaneece Hill and her spouse, both contract workers for the Food and Drug Administration have gone through their emergency savings. They are not guaranteed retroactive pay. (Guardian, Jan. 12)

Millions of women, seniors, refugees

The shutdown has repercussions on the working class

beyond the federal workforce, especially for women of color, people with disabilities and seniors. Food and nutrition program (WIC) funding for 7 million women, infants and children has already stopped, reports the Jan. 10 Business Insider. Food stamps should continue through February.

Domestic violence shelters countrywide cannot obtain federal funds they depend on. So they are curtailing crucial services for victims/survivors, including housing, transportation, medical care and food.

Federal funds have been suspended for the Indian Health Service, which provides care to over 1 million Indigenous women.

Five million people who receive federal housing subsidies could face eviction as Section 8 vouchers lapse. Women head 75 percent of households living in public housing.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development abruptly stopped funding many assisted living facilities for low-income seniors, with no warning.

Asylum hearings have been postponed for thousands of refugees. Central American adults, youth and children denied asylum continue to be held in inhumane U.S. detention facilities. Families are still separated.

Moreover, national parks are deteriorating. Pollution and aviation safety inspections have ended. The FDA stopped checking food, despite widespread food-borne illnesses. Even small farmers are hurting, deprived of federal financing.

End the shutdown! Reinstate all federal employees, contracted workers and programs! No racist wall! □

Dakota men, women and youth ride to honor executed warriors and for healing

By Stephanie Tromblay

Dakota men, women and youth rode into Mankato, Minn., on horseback on Dec. 26 to honor Dakota warriors hanged by Abraham Lincoln on that day in 1862 in the largest mass execution in U.S. history.

The Dakota 38 + 2 Wokiksuye Sunk Akan Yankapi — the 17-day Dakota Prayer Ride and Water Walk — honors the 38 warriors hanged in Mankato, as well as two additional chiefs who were kidnapped from Canada three years later, brought back to the United States, and then executed. (tinyurl.com/yc7jvpt6)

This year about 100 riders rode from their homes throughout South Dakota and elsewhere to gather at Sisseton, S.D., and began the honoring ride on Dec. 10. The ride follows the 330-mile path of their ancestors to the site of the mass hanging.

Also this year Dakota runners started Dec. 25 from Fort Snelling in St. Paul, Minn., and joined the riders at Reconciliation Park in Mankato. Various riders addressed political and social struggles with messages on horse blankets and jackets. One horse wore a black blanket lettered, “Missing, Murdered Indigenous Women & Children.”

Colonizing theft and murder

During the westward drive of the U.S. to steal all Native nations’ lands and to murder the Indigenous peoples, U.S. troops were used in successive war campaigns. By 1860, just before the Civil War, the U.S. Army had six of its seven departments, comprising 183 companies, deployed west of the Mississippi River. This colonizing army was the principal institution of the settler state in the occupation and theft of the West. (Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, “An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States,” 2014)

Lincoln, like every U.S. president before him, promised settlers land stolen from the Native nations in the West. During Lincoln’s presidential campaign, the “free-soilers,” who were opponents of slavery, demanded the government give them Indigenous land west of the Mississippi River. Following the secession of the southern states, Lincoln signed the Homestead Act, which resulted in the theft of over 270 million acres of Indigenous lands.

Most of the stolen lands went to wealthy robber barons, for riches to be made from timber and mineral extraction — devastation of the environment for profits. The amount of land given to settlers for homesteads was a small portion of that total. Before and during the Civil War, poor whites who fought for the Confederacy were motivated by a similar desire to own stolen land and slaves — people stolen from their lands in Africa and sold to work the plantations.

Broken treaties and mass execution

From 1778 to 1871, the U.S. negotiated treaties with some 375 Native nations in its drive to militarily take



Some participants in the Dakota 38 + 2 Wokiksuye Sunk Akan Yankapi — the Dakota Prayer Ride and Water Walk — ride into Mankato, Minn., near the end of their 17-day journey from South Dakota.

over the West. The treaties itemized provisions of trade goods, cash payments, food and the right to live on some small pieces of their lands. These treaties, referenced in the U.S. Constitution, are the “law of the land.” But from the beginning the U.S. broke every treaty it signed.

Minnesota, recognized as a state in 1858, created incentives to increase the number of colonizing settlers. In the fall of 1861, the Dakota Nation’s crops failed; then during a bitter winter they were snowed in and people starved. The treaties were broken, and food was not delivered.

Traders rejected the tribe’s offer to buy food on credit at a meeting with Indian agents and traders. A Dakota spoke, “This is our reservation, and yet you go out and you cut our grass for your animals. You cut down our trees for your building and your fire. You shoot our game, which we have very little of anyway. It’s ours, you leave it alone.” (tinyurl.com/y8ykpyzo)

The trader Andrew Myrick responded, saying the people could eat grass.

By summer 1862, a portion of the Dakota rose up against the settler state in an attempt to drive the colonists out of the Minnesota River Valley. Myrick was later found with his mouth stuffed with grass. The Dakota War lasted two months before the Dakota surrendered; and the army marched the prisoners to Ft. Snelling to be executed. After 392 Dakota men were tried in English, with no recognition of sovereignty and treaty violations, they were all sentenced to death. (tinyurl.com/yb8uasbv)

Lincoln ordered that 38 should be randomly selected to be hanged in Mankato. The army deployed 1,500

cavalry and soldiers at the hanging; retribution did not end there. The remains of the Dakota men were mutilated and pillaged. (tinyurl.com/yc7jvpt6)

A ride to commemorate the warriors

“When the 38+2 were hung, for them it was over, but the women and children endured terrible suffering,” said one of this year’s riders, Helena LaBatte. “The cavalry did what they wanted with them. They chose who they wanted, what age and what gender.”

The Wokiksuye Commemorative Ride began in 2008, as a result of an earlier dream of Jim Miller, a Dakota elder from Cheyenne River Reservation and a Vietnam veteran. He dreamed that 38 Dakota would ride on horseback each year to honor the warriors hanged at Mankato after the Dakota Uprising.

“This walk is about healing the women, and also for reconciling our men and women,” LaBatte continued. “Women were the keepers of the water, the dogs and the horses. For us to be whole again, we need all three.” (tinyurl.com/y7pz7v27)

Paula Looking Horse, one of the Water Walkers, said the planning this year reflected thought of “all the streams and rivers that the walk would cross over and how contaminated many are from dairy farm operations as well as the 2017 bitumen (coal) spill that happened just west of the Sisseton Wahpeton reservation.” Looking Horse said, “As we walked the path along the Minnesota, we felt our ancestors’ presence all the way. ... We prayed for the healing of the water.”

She added, “This year we also raised awareness about the epidemic of missing and murdered indigenous men, women and children. All of these issues are connected. If you don’t respect the people, you can’t respect the land or the water.”

The Dakota were exiled from Minnesota; repression scattered survivors from Saskatchewan, Canada, to Nebraska. On May 8, 2017, descendants of those exiled Dakota met for the first time at Fort Snelling for the Dakota Truth-Telling Gathering. Kate Beane, a Dakota historian who works for the Minnesota Historical Society, said claims that the fort was built to keep the Dakota and Ojibwe at peace are “not actually the way we view this history.”

“This fort was put here to pave the way for European settlement,” she said. “It is a symbol of colonization, of imperialism, of years of unjust negotiations and dealings with our community. Two of our warriors were hanged right over here, outside of the round tower. ... So sometimes if you hear 38 plus two, those were the two.” (tinyurl.com/ya95krl5)

The Wokiksuye Ride reveals the genocidal history of the United States. From the beginning, the settler state was founded to steal all lands and resources from the original peoples of this continent.

Manifest Destiny, the philosophy of the founders of the U.S., remains the principle of the ruling class: to steal everything for profits, whether by war or so-called peaceful means. To this day these lands are still being plundered and desecrated for profits — to the increasing threat to life on Earth. □

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WORKERS WORLD editorial

A mystery within a mystery

Oh, the horror of it! That loud, whining, brain-piercing sound! What will these Reds do next to poor U.S. diplomats?

It made headlines and evening news flashes. The nasty Cuban communists were making life unbearable for the poor U.S. Embassy staffers who had the misfortune of being posted to this dangerous island. Wasn't it bad enough that they had to suffer annual parades of a million singing and chanting people marching past their embassy? Or that the Yankees couldn't miss seeing the Cuban flags flying provocatively right across the street!

But now the commies were subjecting them to sonic blasts from who knew where. They couldn't stand it any more. Something had to be done. So the State Department found U.S. experts to come and examine them and opine that they were being exposed to some diabolical new technology that weaponized sound and might have damaged their hearing. But how?

U.S. personnel in Cuba made a recording of the sinister droning, gave it to the Associated Press, and it went viral.

Unfortunately for the diplomats, a couple of scientists decided to analyze

the recording. In early January they presented their findings to the annual meeting of the Society of Integrative and Comparative Biology. Alexander Stubbs of the University of California, Berkeley and Fernando Montealegre-Z of the University of Lincoln in England had come to what they call a "definitive conclusion" about the source of the sound. Crickets.

The scientists analyzed field recordings of insects stored in an online database at the University of Florida. They found a striking resemblance to one species in particular: the Indies short-tailed cricket. They wrote that its love song matches "in nuanced detail, the A.P. recording in duration, pulse repetition rate, power spectrum, pulse rate stability, and oscillations per pulse." (New York Times, Jan. 4)

Case closed? Not yet. A mystery remains. Were the U.S. Embassy personnel so stupid they couldn't tell the sound of a cricket from some infernal machine? Or were they just so bored with their jobs that they had to come up with a juicy story for the always-eager-to-bash-the-Reds media? □

France's Yellow Vests won't go away

By Joshua Hanks

In the ninth consecutive week of actions by the Yellow Vest movement, thousands of people poured out into cities throughout France on Jan. 11. With more people in the streets and squares than in the last few Saturdays, their numbers increased to 84,000. (BBC News, Jan. 12)

Across the country some 80,000 police authorities were mobilized to counter the almost equal number of protesters. But a far greater number of the French public is frustrated with austerity and neoliberal capitalism, viewing the Macron government as working on behalf of the wealthiest few. The government's opponents number in the tens of millions.

Police used tear gas, water cannons and flash grenades to disperse protesters near Paris' Arc de Triomphe. Violent police repression also took place in the cities of Bordeaux, Bourges, Marseille, Rouen and Toulouse. With the Interior Ministry threatening severe repression for anyone not in compliance, more than 100 people were arrested across France. (AP, Jan. 12)

Several Metro stations in Paris were closed and numerous shops were shuttered for the weekend. Police deployed armored vehicles and attack dogs



In France, the Yellow Vests march in Lyons, Jan. 11.

throughout Paris, concentrating on Champs-Élysées Avenue, where some of its many high-end shops have been attacked. Dior, owned by the LVMH luxury goods conglomerate, rescheduled a Jan. 19 fashion show to avoid the protests, which have repeatedly targeted brands like Dior, Chanel and Versace, according to Jan. 9 Reuters.

While the corporate media concentrated its coverage on physical clashes between demonstrators and police, in most of the hundred demonstrations around the country there were no such clashes.

On Jan. 12, President Macron delivered a lengthy letter to the public, intending to extinguish the movement that has swept France by channeling it into the state's bourgeois political system. How he thinks to totally neutralize the movement remains unclear, since Macron maintained that he would follow the same neoliberal path as before, with tax cuts for the rich and cuts to public spending.

These class issues are the core ones driving public discontent and unless the regime addresses those in a meaningful way, the material conditions that gave rise to the Yellow Vest movement will continue to create resistance and rebellion. □

Imperialist machinations in the Congo election

By G. Dunkel

In his speech accepting the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize, Congolese doctor Denis Mukwege said, "I am part of one of the richest countries of this planet and yet the people of my country are part of the poorest of the world." Mukwege and his collaborator, Nadia Murad, were awarded the prize for "their efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict."

Mukwege contrasted his people's poverty and his country's wealth. That wealth has attracted the brutal interventions of colonial and imperialist powers. From the 1600s to the present, European countries and the U.S. have been contending over the division of the spoils in the Congo. The country's poverty has grown along with these interventions.

Most of the 80 million citizens of the Democratic Republic of the Congo live on less than \$1.25 a day in an area of nearly 1 million square miles — about the size of Western Europe. The Congo's per capita gross domestic product is just \$372, one of the lowest in the world.

But the country produces nearly all the world's rare minerals essential for cell phones and other electronic devices that use the global internet system.

Only 1 percent of Congolese in rural areas have access to electricity, while just 30 percent in big cities have it. The Congo enables the world's connection to the internet but doesn't have its own because of its vast underdevelopment.

To underline U.S. imperialism's interests in the Congo, President Donald Trump recently sent 70 U.S. troops to nearby Gabon for possible intervention in the Congo during its recent elections. The U.S. State Department also "warned" the Congo about vote "transparency," as a declaration of U.S. economic and strategic interests in the election outcome.

For progressives in the United States,



WW PHOTO

During the 1960s, Workers World Party founder Sam Marcy (middle) marches in New York City in support of self-determination for the Congo.

it is essential to follow the developments in the Congo in order to be able to work against U.S. intervention in the region.

A struggle for independence

In the 1600s, British, French, Portuguese and Dutch slave traders began raiding the Congo. The rapacious colonizing efforts of Belgian King Leopold II, begun in the 1870s, were so outrageously cruel that the Belgium government took administration of the colony — and its phenomenal profits — away from him in 1908.

Patrice Lumumba was the Congo's first premier after the country's independence on June 30, 1960. The U.N. began its intervention in the Congo that same year and provided a cover for the maneuvers of French, Belgian and U.S. imperialism. The current U.N. armed presence is the "largest and most expensive peacekeeping mission in the organisation's history." (BBC, March 31, 2017)

With the active assistance of the CIA and Belgian intelligence, in 1961 local Congolese pro-imperialist politicians deposed the anti-imperialist Lumumba, and then assassinated him in Katanga, a region in southeast Congo.

One of the local imperialist

collaborators involved in this operation was Mobutu Sésé Seko. After five years of maneuvers and low-level armed conflicts, and with much help from the CIA, Mobutu seized power in 1965 with a coup and remained in place until 1997, with U.S. support until the last few years. In 1997 a rebellion led by Laurent Kabila, the father of current President Joseph Kabila, and supported by Uganda and Rwanda, drove Mobutu from power.

Joseph Kabila was an officer in his father's army, got his first military training at Makerere University in Uganda, and later received advanced military training in China. Then days after his father was assassinated in 2001, Joseph Kabila became president.

Imperialist presence in current elections

Joseph Kabila won a runoff election in 2006. His re-election in 2011 was contentious. The Congo's own Independent National Election Commission (CENI) claimed the results in 2011 lacked credibility. Election monitoring organizations based in the imperialist countries like the Carter Center — set up by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter — also criticized the elections.

In 2016, CENI declared that, due to political instability in the country, the elections would be postponed until 2018. Kabila remained in office throughout that period. Facing increasing pressure from the U.S., the EU and even the African Union, in addition to popular unrest, Kabila agreed to elections in 2018.

One example of this unrest: the Catholic Church organized protests in early 2018 with palm fronds and placards that took place after Sunday mass in Kinshasa to demand elections. They were met with deadly force, according to The Economist. (Dec. 13)

Unable to run for a third term, Kabila supported Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary, a close associate who directed the repression of those protesting the postponement of the 2016 elections. The EU and the U.S. imposed sanctions on Shadary for his actions then.

One of the two major candidates that emerged from Kabila's opposition was Martin Fayulu. He is a former Exxon Mobil executive who served in the Congo as well as some other African countries.

The other candidate was Felix Tshisekedi. He is the son of Etienne Tshisekedi, who opposed the CIA-backed Mobutu Sésé Seko, as well as opposing Laurent and Joseph Kabila. Felix Tshisekedi is a founder of the political party Union for Democracy and Social Progress.

CENI postponed the election from Dec. 23 to Dec. 30 for technical reasons and announced preliminary results on Jan. 10.

Felix Tshisekedi came in first with 7 million votes. Martin Fayulu got 6.4 million and Emmanuel Shadary, the candidate from Kabila's party, got 4.4 million votes.

Voting turnout was said to be 48 percent.

These results were a surprise and were challenged by the Catholic bishops conference. Fayulu announced an appeal to the Congo's constitutional court and called on his supporters to stand "ready," although street protests were scattered with only a few casualties.

But neither the announced winner nor any of the other candidates promised to try to stop the U.S. and other imperialist powers from draining the riches of the Congo and impoverishing its people.

Whoever comes out on top in this "democratic election" will only reflect the continuing machinations of imperialist powers to exploit and dominate the Democratic Republic of the Congo. □

The menace behind falling prices

By Deirdre Griswold

Any worker wants to know what the future will bring. Will jobs be plentiful and reliable? Can I make ends meet and buy the things I need for myself and maybe for a family?

Or should I be hunkering down, saving every penny against a dangerous and uncertain future?

For many, trapped in the gig economy and barely surviving from day to day, the answer is already there. Others may feel more stable, but worry if their current job will last. Official unemployment rates are low now, but that could change quickly.

This article alerts our readers to some facts about the U.S. economy that don't usually make it into the headlines, but are very, very serious.

Most economic news reported in the capitalist media revolves around how the stock markets are doing. Share prices of all kinds have generally been declining over the last year, but they have also gyrated wildly up and down. That means people who have money to invest can rake in even more if they buy stocks that are rising and then sell them before they fall again.

It's a big gamble, with winners and losers, but mostly losers in recent months. This affects not just capitalists but many workers, mainly through their pension funds.

The stock markets can be influenced in the short run by political pronouncements, government changes in interest rates and trade policies, and other factors. Over the long run, however, they reflect bigger trends in the economy.

An even more telling look at where the economy is headed can be found in the commodities markets. These markets reflect the anticipated prices of various commodities in the coming months or year.

What's a commodity? It's something that has both a use value and an exchange value.

For example, a snow plow has use value in Minneapolis. But who would buy a snow plow in Miami? There, it has no use value and is not a commodity you'll find in any store.

Exchange value, on the other hand, reflects the amount of human labor it took to produce a commodity. Even though we can't live without it, air is not a commodity. Why? Because it has no exchange value. It's free because there's no labor involved in getting it (except when air comes pressurized in a can or at a gas station).

Even tiny things, like diamonds, can have a huge exchange value because of the amount of skilled human labor required to find, extract, cut and polish them.

Commodity prices are falling

Right now, the prices of the vast majority of commodities are falling, and that is expected to continue throughout the coming year.

Whether it's sugar, milk products or orange juice, lumber, steel, zinc or petroleum/gasoline, wholesale prices are projected to keep going down. The future prices of a wide array of commodities can be seen at tradingeconomics.com/forecast/commodity.

If this were not a capitalist economy, we could all be rejoicing. Lower prices for food and other essentials! What's wrong with that?

The problem is that to enjoy lower prices, you need to have an income to buy things. But these across-the-board declines in prices of so many commodities point to one thing: overproduction. And capitalist overproduction is extremely dangerous for workers and farmers.

What is overproduction?

Overproduction comes from the constant need of capitalists to outdistance their competitors and expand the market for their products. How? Mainly by plowing some of their profits back into labor-saving, more productive technology. It's expand or die. That's the driving force behind capitalist expansion.

The ones who do it first have a competitive edge — for a while. But eventually others catch up with the new level of technology and can also produce more goods with fewer workers.

Pretty soon there are not enough customers able to pay for the expanded number of commodities. It means businesses laying off workers, maybe collapsing altogether. It means farmers having to destroy their crops and livestock when prices drop.

Who is going to buy all this stuff if workers are losing their jobs to machines and robots?

It's a vicious cycle that can end only in great destruction.

Depression of the 1930s

The collapse of the markets that started in 1929 and continued right up to the outbreak of World War II in Europe was a classic example of overproduction. In the twenties, everything seemed great. New technology — like the Ford assembly line — led at first to enormous fortunes for a few but also a rising living standard for millions of workers and farmers.

Then came the infamous stock market crash of October 1929. Businesses and banks failed, millions were laid off, and hunger and misery spread even as farmers were plowing under their crops and dumping their milk. They destroyed commodities because prices had dropped so low they would lose money just bringing their products to market.

“In summer 1933, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration tried to boost the wholesale price of agricultural produce through an artificial scarcity initiative, in which crops were plowed up or left to rot and six million pigs were killed and discarded.” (R.L. Heinemann, “Depression and New Deal in Virginia: The Enduring Dominion”)

Can this happen again? It has already started.

Take milk and cheese.

“Farmers in the U.S. are pouring out tens of millions of gallons of excess milk, amid a massive glut that has slashed prices and has filled warehouses with cheese. More than 43 million gallons' worth of milk were dumped in fields, manure lagoons or animal feed, or have been lost on truck routes or discarded at plants in the first eight months of 2016, according to data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture,” wrote the Wall St. Journal on Oct. 12, 2016.

That was more than two years ago. And it is just getting worse. Today, a reported 1.6 BILLION pounds of cheese sit in refrigerated warehouses across the U.S.

Two years ago, the U.S. Department of Agriculture was predicting higher prices to come: “Food and feed grains prices are expected to have bottomed out by marketing year 2017/2018,” it said. “Marketing year 2018/2019

marks the beginning of gradual price increases that are expected to continue through the decade.”

The USDA's rosy predictions (rosy for farmers, not for consumers) of higher prices were repeated last year.

It hasn't happened. Global production of agricultural products and other commodities continues to rise — and along with it, the fierce competition that accompanies overproduction and drives down prices.

Tariffs haven't reversed declining prices

This explains the main reason for the Trump administration's tariffs on commodities, and not just those from China. Last May, by decree, Trump also imposed tariffs on the European Union, Canada and Mexico. He later imposed an additional \$50 billion in tariffs on goods from China.

Of course, these countries all objected to the tariffs, but criticism inside the U.S. was muted, even as Trump started a new round of trade wars. The expectation was that, by eliminating some of the competition, prices would rise on U.S. agricultural and industrial products.

Nope, it hasn't happened. And because of lower prices, farmers have been trying to make up for the loss of income by planting more acreage, which leads to a bigger glut on the market and even lower prices.

Less than a year ago, 40 percent of adults in the U.S. didn't have enough savings to cover a \$400 emergency expense, such as an unexpected medical bill, car problem or home repair. Forty-three percent of households couldn't afford the basics to live, meaning they weren't earning enough to cover the combined costs of housing, food, child care, health care, transportation and a cell-phone. Some 22 percent of adults weren't able to pay all their bills every month. And more than a quarter of adults skipped necessary medical care in 2017 because they couldn't afford it. (Washington Post, May 25)

Yet in this same period, increased efficiency, automation and a whole raft of labor-saving devices and technologies raised the possibility of a better life for everyone, with abundance of everything we need to lead comfortable lives.

In earlier societies, our ancestors all over the world celebrated a bountiful harvest with festivals, singing and dancing. It was a joyful time. Today, under a decaying capitalist system, every new invention or technique that increases production may turn millionaires into billionaires, but at the same time it pushes more workers and farmers over the edge.

There's no legislative or electoral way to get rid of capitalist overproduction. It is built into the system. It will only be eradicated when the working class seizes the means of production it has built and uses them to meet human need, not capitalist greed.

Such a revolutionary transformation of society must be the goal of progressive humanity. □

There's no legislative or electoral way to get rid of capitalist overproduction. It is built into the system. It will only be eradicated when the working class seizes the means of production it has built and uses them to meet human need, not capitalist greed.

Alta tecnología, baja remuneración y crisis

Continúa de la página 12

Siguiendo el argumento de Marx en “El Capital”, Marcy escribió:

“Con menos trabajadoras/es y más capital constante, la composición orgánica del capital cambia, lo que resulta en una tasa de ganancia decreciente. Esta es una ley invariable del proceso de producción capitalista. No se puede evitar.

“Cuanto más muerto o constante sea el capital y menos humano o capital variable utilizado en la producción, mayor será la composición orgánica del capital. Esto invariablemente conduce a una disminución en [la tasa de] ganancias.

“A pesar de esto, los capitalistas individuales están obligados a sustituir la maquinaria de ahorro de

mano de obra por trabajadoras/es porque les da una ventaja competitiva. Durante un período determinado, el capitalista que puede utilizar la nueva tecnología y reducir el costo de su producto puede disfrutar de una ganancia mayor porque el mercado refleja un costo generalizado aún basado en la tecnología anterior. Eventualmente, sin embargo, la nueva tecnología en sí se generaliza y la tasa de ganancia cae.

“La ventaja para una composición más alta de capital constante [nueva tecnología - FG] es siempre temporal. Fomenta una competencia destructiva, en la que gran parte del equipo que aún podría ser socialmente útil se vuelve prematuramente obsoleto.

“Para compensar la caída de la

tasa de ganancia, los dueños se ven obligados a aumentar el volumen de ganancia. Esto solo puede hacerse incrementando aún más la producción”.

Esto es lo que lleva a la sobreproducción capitalista y la crisis económica. Como señaló Marcy, “la automatización no resuelve el problema de la contradicción capitalista que conduce a la crisis económica. Por el contrario, lo exacerba precisamente debido a la disminución de la tasa de ganancia”.

Marcy estaba escribiendo antes de la nueva fase de reestructuración global, pero la esencia de su análisis marxista se aplica completamente a la actual competencia salarial mundial generada por los capitalistas.□



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Alta tecnología, baja remuneración y crisis capitalista

Por Fred Goldstein

El siguiente extracto (páginas 81-84) del libro “Capitalismo de bajos salarios” de Fred Goldstein, escrito en 2008, trata sobre el clásico e innovador trabajo de Sam Marcy “High-Tech, Low Pay”. Marcy, el fundador y líder teórico del Partido Workers World-Mundo Obrero, escribió HTLP en 1986 en medio de una furiosa reestructuración tecnológica llevada a cabo por la clase capitalista durante la presidencia de Ronald Reagan. El libro anunciaba el desarrollo del capitalismo en el siglo XXI. (HTLP se puede leer en línea en workers.org/marcy).

El punto central de Marcy fue explicar la disminución de la tasa de ganancia como la fuerza motriz de la competencia capitalista, que empuja inevitablemente en la dirección de la crisis económica. También abordó los problemas resultantes que enfrenta la clase trabajadora.

También es relevante el reciente artículo de Deirdre Griswold sobre cómo la sobreproducción capitalista está detrás de la actual turbulencia del mercado de valores y los temores de la clase dominante sobre una inminente crisis económica.

El difunto Sam Marcy, presidente y fundador del Partido Workers World-Mundo Obrero, en un libro muy importante titulado “Alta tecnología, baja remuneración: un análisis marxista del carácter cambiante de la clase trabajadora”, publicado en 1986, analizó las primeras etapas de la revolución de la tecnología alta y su efecto en la clase obrera en los Estados Unidos.

En una sección dedicada a su impacto en los sindicatos, trazó las fases del desarrollo de las fuerzas productivas bajo el capitalismo, desde la fase de fabricación por la cooperación simple hasta la revolución industrial y la maquinaria a gran escala hasta la producción en masa, principalmente la producción por líneas de ensamblaje a principios del siglo XX. Luego describió la fase de alta tecnología:

“Esta etapa [de producción en masa] ahora ha dado paso a otra fase de desarrollo tecnológico. El período de producción en masa que comenzó con Ford y continuó durante un período de tiempo posterior a la Segunda Guerra Mundial se caracterizó por la expansión. Pero la etapa actual, la etapa científico-tecnológica, mientras continúa algunas de las tendencias anteriores del desarrollo, reduce la fuerza laboral.

“Como todas las etapas previas del desarrollo capitalista, la fase actual se basa en la utilización de las/os trabajadores como fuerza de trabajo. Pero toda su tendencia es disminuir la fuerza laboral mientras se intenta aumentar la producción. La revolución tecnológica es, por lo tanto, un salto cuántico cuyos efectos devastadores requieren una estrategia revolucionaria para superarla”.

Los estudios de Marx demostraron que el avance de la tecnología capitalista subordinaba cada vez más a los trabajadores a la máquina, hacía el trabajo más monótono, aumentaba la división del trabajo y reducía las habilidades de los trabajadores. El resultado final fue reducir los salarios de más y más trabajadoras/es

al ponerlos en competencia entre sí, todo para aumentar las ganancias del capital. La revolución de la alta tecnología, demostró Marcy, ha coincidido completamente con el análisis de Marx.

Marcy observó el declive de los empleos de manufactura y el crecimiento de los empleos de servicios. Pero no se limitó a hablar de ellos como una categoría burguesa. El principal aspecto del cambio de la manufactura al servicio fue, para la gran mayoría de las/os trabajadores forzados a este cambio, un cambio de los empleos con salarios altos a los empleos con salarios bajos.

Cambió la composición social de la clase obrera

Marcy promovió varias tácticas y estrategias para la lucha contra el asalto laboral, muchas de las cuales son completamente aplicables hoy en día. Pero también fueron importantes las observaciones sociológicas que hizo y las conclusiones políticas que sacó.

“Es este cambio altamente significativo de pagos más altos a pagos más bajos lo que está cambiando dramáticamente la composición social de la clase trabajadora, aumentando enormemente la importancia de la llamada composición étnica de la clase trabajadora, es decir, el número de negras/os, latinas/os, asiáticas/os, mujeres y otros grupos oprimidos, particularmente los millones de trabajadoras/es indocumentados”.

El cambio en la composición social de la clase trabajadora, tanto desde el punto de vista de la creciente importancia numérica de las/os oprimidos como de la preponderancia cada vez mayor de las/os trabajadores de bajos salarios sobre las/os trabajadores mejor pagados y más privilegiados, “importa mucho”, escribió Marcy, “porque en términos de lucha política, se establece la base objetiva para que el liderazgo político sea asumido por el segmento más numeroso de la clase”.

Citando un artículo anterior que había escrito sobre el efecto de la alta tecnología sobre las/os trabajadores, Marcy escribió:

“Lo que sucedió, particularmente en la última década, es que la velocidad misma de la introducción de la alta tecnología, de tipo muy sofisticado, ha socavado a los sectores privilegiados de la clase trabajadora (como los de acero y automóviles) a escala mundial”, y ha comenzado un proceso de nivelación que ha socavado el nivel de vida de la clase trabajadora en su conjunto. ...

“Si bien sigue causando estragos en el nivel de vida de las/os trabajadores, al mismo tiempo establece la base objetiva para la politización de las/os trabajadores, para moverse en una dirección más hacia la izquierda y para su organización a gran escala. La conciencia política que debe corresponder a las nuevas condiciones materiales de la vida se ha quedado atrás, como casi siempre lo hace”.

La tendencia del imperialismo a elevar las capas privilegiadas de la clase trabajadora en el país, que Lenin había observado, ya estaba comenzando a contrarrestarse en la década de 1980 con la aplicación de automatización, robotización y nuevos procesos industriales,

como el acero, el automóvil, el caucho y la electricidad, los bastiones de la AFL-CIO, estaban siendo socavados por la tecnología capitalista y empujados a las industrias de servicios de bajos salarios o al desempleo a largo plazo.

Marcy y otras/os comunistas esperaban con razón, que el asalto de la alta tecnología a las/os trabajadores llevaría a un aumento de la lucha de clases en un período cercano. La base de este pronóstico fue tanto subjetiva como objetiva.

El proceso de empobrecimiento de la clase obrera proyectaría a los sectores más militantes de las/os trabajadores, mientras que el aumento de la productividad del trabajo produciría cada vez más productos básicos que serían cada vez más difíciles de vender en los limitados mercados capitalistas del mundo. Esto intensificaría la enfermedad capitalista clásica de la sobreproducción, aceleraría una crisis económica y estimularía la lucha de clases.

Pero el colapso de la URSS transformó la situación mundial y pospuso las perspectivas inmediatas para la lucha de clases en los Estados Unidos y en el campo imperialista en su conjunto.

Tasa de ganancia decreciente y crisis capitalista

El trabajo de Marcy fue diseñado para mostrar la destrucción de los niveles de vida de la clase trabajadora provocada por el desarrollo de las fuerzas productivas, el cambio subsiguiente en la composición de la clase trabajadora y cómo estos desarrollos formaron la base para el resurgimiento revolucionario de la lucha de clases.

Su enfoque estaba en la difusión de la tecnología por parte de la clase dominante dentro de los Estados Unidos. Analizó la reestructuración interna del capitalismo estadounidense y trazó las primeras etapas de la ampliación de la pauperización del proletariado.

Marcy destacó las nuevas tendencias en el desarrollo del capitalismo en la era de la revolución científico-tecnológica. Explicó las leyes de su desarrollo que se derivan de las características más internas del capitalismo, tal como habían existido desde su creación: la lucha por aumentar la plusvalía y reducir a las/os trabajadores. Y describió sus efectos sobre las/os trabajadores y las/os oprimidos, enfatizando su efecto en los

sindicatos.

Al analizar el declive de los sindicatos y el auge de la tecnología, Marcy invocó la ley de Marx sobre la disminución de la tasa de ganancias. “La prensa burguesa está llena de maravillas de la alta tecnología y la introducción de robots en fábricas casi totalmente automatizadas. Pero no mencionan un elemento extremadamente importante en las leyes económicas del movimiento que gobierna a la sociedad capitalista: los robots no producen plusvalía.

“Como demostró Marx hace mucho tiempo, la maquinaria o el capital constante es el resultado del trabajo pasado y la plusvalía pasada. Las ganancias no provienen de la propia maquinaria. Es el trabajo de un/a trabajador/a, conocido en términos marxistas como capital variable, el que produce plusvalía, del cual se derivan las ganancias. Las/os trabajadores producen un mayor valor del que reciben en salarios, y es la porción impaga de su trabajo la que produce plusvalía. Pero un robot no es un trabajador. Un robot es capital fijo o constante, que no produce ganancias. Sólo el trabajo humano no remunerado produce ganancias”.

Todo el propósito de introducir una nueva tecnología es tener menos y menos trabajadores que produzcan cada vez más productos en un tiempo cada vez más corto. Pero la nueva tecnología suele ser muy costosa y el alto costo puede superar los ahorros en mano de obra. Dado que la tasa de ganancia se calcula dividiendo la ganancia total por la inversión total en capital constante y variable, es decir, en maquinaria y materias primas, así como en salarios, los nuevos medios costosos de producción reducen la tasa de ganancia.

Los capitalistas que están dispuestos a gastar dinero en nuevas tecnologías antes de que sus rivales logran escapar temporalmente de este problema. De hecho, la nueva tecnología produce un gran salto en la cantidad de trabajo no pagado que se puede obtener de las/os trabajadores. Los capitalistas que lo obtienen primero obtienen súper ganancias, es decir, ganancias por encima del nivel de los capitalistas rivales que utilizan la tecnología más antigua. Los primeros capitalistas que usan la nueva tecnología venden al precio general de la mercancía o ligeramente por debajo de éste y siguen obteniendo ganancias extras.

Continúa en la página 11

La tesis de este libro es que la crisis económica, que se inició en agosto de 2007, marcó un punto de inflexión en la historia del capitalismo. El autor sostiene que el sistema no se recuperará, no volverá al ciclo capitalista normal de auge y caída.

Durante décadas, la clase capitalista ha utilizado la revolución tecnológica digital para aumentar la productividad del trabajo a un ritmo récord. Menos trabajadores producen más bienes y servicios en menos tiempo con salarios más bajos. El resultado es una serie de “recuperaciones sin empleos” que hace que las cosas vayan aún peor.

Goldstein utiliza las leyes de la acumulación capitalista de Marx, y la tasa decreciente de ganancia, para demostrar por qué el capitalismo global ha llegado finalmente a un punto de inflexión.

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