



The Cuban Five

Cuba wins back its five heroes

By Cheryl LaBash

Dec. 17 — The government of the United States has done what it repeatedly swore it would never do: It has freed the last of the Cuban 5. Today Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino and Gerardo Hernández were finally released from U.S. jails after more than 16 years of unjust imprisonment. René González and Fernando González had already served their full prison terms and returned to Cuba.

Those whom Gerardo Hernández termed “the jury of millions” — who had organized, picketed, written letters, signed petitions, collected money for newspaper ads, investigated, inveighed on parliamentarians, climbed mountains, rode bicycles, tweeted, wrote poems, plays, songs and more in every corner of the globe — rejoiced. The steadfast Cuban people joyfully welcomed their heroes: the five men who sacrificed so much to protect them from terrorist attacks launched from U.S. territory during the 1990s.

We can only imagine the joy of their families. A Miami court and the U.S. government had expected Gerardo to die in prison after he was sentenced to two life terms plus 15 years.

Today, says the International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban 5, “Gerardo has now been reunited with Adriana, Ramón is back with Elizabeth and his three beautiful daughters, and Antonio is with his mother Mirta, the 84-year-old tireless inspiration of this struggle, who feared she would die before she saw her son back in Cuba.”

Workers World Party and many dedicated organizers in the U.S. share this awesome and joyous moment of victory.

Opening the prison doors for the Cuban heroes was only part of the top story today. In a broadcast speech, President Barack Obama outlined “charting a new course on Cuba,” and asserted, “Today, we are renewing our leadership in the Americas.” Washington has its eye on the April Summit of the Americas in Panama.

Yet a bill imposing sanctions on Bolivarian Venezuela is sitting on Obama’s desk. Will he veto it, as part of this new course? The Obama administration recognized the coup government in Honduras that has driven thousands of children to flee violent repression. Will it stop engineering coups and dictatorships in Latin America? What about the U.S. role in destroying the Mexican economy and turning it into a killing field? And, especially, will the U.S. end its blockade of Cuba?

For more than two years, the pressure for this moment has been building in the United States. Reflecting this pressure, seven New York Times editorials in recent months have advocated a change in U.S. policy toward Cuba. The Associated Press ran a series that exposed Alan Gross, the contractor for the U.S. Agency for International Development — often used as a cover for CIA operations — who was convicted by a Cuban court of having secretly and illegally installed military-grade communications devices on the island in violation of Cuba’s sovereignty and

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Protests against police terror continue

WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD



Activists confront Dec. 19 #ThankyouNYPD bigots. See page 6-7 for more U.S. protests against police brutality.

Statement on Brooklyn, N.Y., shootings:

Uprising must stay strong

The New York City Peoples Power Assembly Movement issued this “Don’t let this incident be used to crush the uprising” statement on Dec. 21:

The police have been desperately searching or waiting for some occurrence that they can use as a weapon to crush the most powerful, widespread, national mass uprising against racist police terror and murder since the 1960s.

Until yesterday, the frame-up of activists from #MillionsMarchNYC on Dec. 13 was the weapon. We demand immediate amnesty for those targeted activists accused of the alleged attacks on New York Police Department detectives on the Brooklyn Bridge.

But now, the police — and the powers that be who rule over society and whose interests the police “protect and serve” — have got a much bigger weapon. The killing of NYPD officers Rafael Ramos and Wenjian

Liu, allegedly by Ismaaiyl Brinsley, who afterwards allegedly killed himself in a subway station, is NOW that weapon.

We underscore the word “allegedly” because all we know about what happened is what the police have told us. And while at the moment we have no information that counters the police story, we always suspect whatever the police say because they lie all the time.

One of the reasons that many of us prefer the strategy of a mass, social and political uprising against the whole system, over individuals targeting police, is because history has shown that more often than not, when people engage in individual, random attacks on police, it’s used by the government, the police and the system to attack the movement with violence baiting, in order to

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 147 W. 24th St., 2nd Fl,
 NY, NY 10011 workers.org

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'Protesters are NOT the problem'

An open letter to the head of the Durham, N.C., Police Department from Lamont Lilly.

According to Chief Jose Lopez of the Durham Police Department, "outside agitators" have now penetrated Durham's local protest and social justice movement. According to Chief Lopez, out-of-towners are the culprits causing trouble and influencing our city's peaceful protesters to block traffic and storm shopping malls.

Unfortunately, Chief Jose Lopez could not be more wrong. Most of us are not outsiders. We reside right here in Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill. And as far as we're concerned, our acts of civil disobedience are not the problem; they're effects of the problem.

The real problem, Chief, is the repressive occupation of modern-day slave patrols in Black and Brown communities — police officers who are direct descendants of slave catchers and state militia who reinforced our ancestors' captivity. The problem is your department's excessive use of force, its blatant brutality and well-documented racial profiling. The problem is the state-sponsored beating of Stephanie Nickerson and John G. Hill, the deaths of Jesus Huerta, Derek Walker and Jose Ocampo. The problem, Chief, is the militarization of police departments nationwide — the manifestation of a police state that values profit more than people. And a very big problem is the judicial system that always seems to justify such savagery.

The problem at hand is not the various tactics of local protesters, but the continued perpetuation of political, social and economic inequality for the masses of nonwhite males. Blocking traffic and interrupting profit margins is not the problem here, Chief.

What has angered a great mass of people, both locally and nationally, is the preponderance of mass poverty and the school-to-prison pipeline, voter suppression and the presence of armed police in public schools. Our collective frustration is the lack of concern for and daily indignities of Black life in this country. We are angered that private prisons are no different than the Convict Lease System during Reconstruction. We are pissed off that advocating for justice equals state surveillance

and undercover police officers attending our organizing meetings.

What has truly enraged us is that throughout this country's history every journalist, labor or civic leader who stands up and speaks out for the poor and oppressed has been targeted by the FBI. Every artist, musician or organizer who dares speak truth to power has been imprisoned, unjustly harassed or simply assassinated by some form of state and federal law enforcement.

These factors combined are the real reasons we're protesting, Chief. The connections of oppression are much deeper than Michael Brown and Eric Garner, and they're much more meaningful than your obvious attempt to "red bait" local socialists and anarchists. Do we always agree on best practices and perspectives? No. But anyone who stands up for Black folks' right to breathe is a comrade to me; your personal philosophy is irrelevant. So please, Chief, stop trying to divide the movement. Stop trying to redirect the focus from injustice to those who resist it. And please stop demonizing us with your cast-off labels and outdated political hashtags.

We are not "trouble makers" and "outside agitators." What we are is a new generation who are no longer standing down to the repressive tactics of fascist police departments. What we are are descendants of the Abolitionist, Civil Rights, Stonewall and Black Power movements. We are truth speakers and justice seekers. We are students, workers and parents. We are sons and daughters, neighbors and teachers. We are one people, one movement, one resistance.

We are freedom fighters who clearly realize that body cameras and better police training are merely band-aids on a broken system. What we are is a new voice of promise and hope — fearless visionaries who have reimagined a just society for all and not just a few. And you know what, Chief, we do believe that we will win.

Power to the People.

Lamont Lilly is a contributing editor with the Triangle Free Press and organizer with Workers World Party. Follow him on Twitter @LamontLilly.

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WW readers take note: This issue of WW is dated Jan. 8, 2015. In accordance with our usual schedule, we skip an issue at the end of each year. But because of the delay between publication and when the paper is dated, this time it means there will be no issue dated Jan. 1, 2015. Our all-volunteer staff takes a well-earned break around the holidays. Happy solstice and see you again in two weeks! Meanwhile, check **workers.org** for updates online.

WORKERS WORLD PARTY

Who we are & what we're fighting for

Hate capitalism? Workers World Party fights for a socialist society — where the wealth is socially owned and production is planned to satisfy human need. This outmoded capitalist system is dragging down workers' living standards while throwing millions out of their jobs. If you're young, you know they're stealing your future. And capitalism is threatening the entire planet with its unplanned, profit-driven stranglehold over the means of production.

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

We fight every kind of oppression. Racism, sexism,

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

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

Contact a Workers World Party branch near you:

workers.org/wwp

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

Atlanta
 P.O. Box 5565
 Atlanta, GA 30307
 404.627.0185
 atlanta@workers.org

Baltimore
 c/o Solidarity Center
 2011 N. Charles St.
 Baltimore, MD 21218
 443.221.3775
 baltimore@workers.org

Bay Area
 1305 Franklin St. #411
 Oakland, CA 94612
 510.600.5800
 bayarea@workers.org

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

Buffalo, N.Y.
 367 Delaware Ave.
 Buffalo, NY 14202
 716.883.2534
 buffalo@workers.org

Chicago
 27 N. Wacker Dr. #138
 Chicago, IL 60606
 312.229.0161
 chicago@workers.org

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

Denver
 denver@workers.org

Detroit
 5920 Second Ave.
 Detroit, MI 48202
 313.459.0777
 detroit@workers.org

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

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

Huntington, W. Va.
 huntingtonww@workers.org

Los Angeles
 5278 W Pico Blvd.
 Los Angeles, CA 90019
 la@workers.org
 323.306.6240

Milwaukee
 milwaukee@workers.org

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

Pittsburgh
 pittsburgh@workers.org

Rochester, N.Y.
 585.436.6458
 rochester@workers.org

Rockford, IL
 rockford@workers.org

San Diego
 P.O. Box 33447
 San Diego, CA 92163
 sandiego@workers.org

Tucson, Ariz.
 tucson@workers.org

Washington, D.C.
 P.O. Box 57300
 Washington, D.C. 20037
 dc@workers.org

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

Technical Editors: Lal Roohk, Andy Katz
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Conference unites Southern Black movement forces

By Dante Strobino
Savannah, Ga.

“The deep crisis facing Black people requires bold, radical action,” begins the Draft Manifesto for Black Liberation that was distributed at the Southern Human Rights Organizing Conference (SHROC X) held here Dec. 12-14.

This powerful gathering brought together primarily Black activists from many Southern states to discuss campaigns and conditions of the region and develop strategies for building an anti-racist human rights movement as well as the re-emergence of a national, unified Black liberation movement.

The focus of the conference was the emerging rebellion across the country against racist police murders and terror. Themed “War, Crisis and Repression — No Justice, No Peace,” the conference connected the domestic war on Black America with both endless foreign wars and the economic crisis of capitalism at a dead end.

In his opening remarks, Ajamu Baraka, veteran human rights activist and organizer, talked about how the capitalist crisis, which has left millions of people in the United States permanently and structurally unemployed, along with systematic white supremacy, is creating the material basis for this huge plague of racist police terror.

The conference was organized to honor the life and struggle of Troy Davis, an innocent man executed by the state of

Georgia in September 2011 after serving 20 years in prison on a false charge. Friends and family of Davis fought many years for his freedom, knowing he was innocent. Davis was from Savannah and his family participated in SHROC X.

Davis’ sister, Kim Davis, spoke about how in one of the final struggles to free her brother, a judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit turned down his appeal, refusing to consider evidence that had gone unheard for 20 years. The community refers to Chatham County, where this frame-up occurred, as “Cheat-em County.”

Along the walls were portraits of other Black folks killed or recently imprisoned by police departments across the country, including Charles Smith, a young man shot and killed while handcuffed by Savannah police in September 2014. Others pictured included Eric Garner, Mike Brown, Renisha McBride and Trayvon Martin. Also pictured were Marissa Alexander, Monica Jones and CeCe McDonald, three Black women, two of them transgender, who were jailed for defending themselves. McDonald was recently released.

Jamala Rogers, of the Organization for Black Struggle in St. Louis, spoke about the daily spontaneous actions in Ferguson, Mo. She spoke about the strong, fearless leadership of many young Black folks now emerging, including groups like Hands Up United founded by Tareen “Tory” Russell and poet Tef Poe.

The conference also focused on South-



WWW PHOTO: DANTE STROBINO

Opening panel at Southern Human Rights Organizing Conference.

ern workers’ struggles for economic justice and power. Many from the Southern Workers Assembly (SWA) and the United Workers Congress discussed fighting racism, reactionary right-to-work (for less) laws and other questions facing workers of the region, including the fight for \$15 an hour and a union.

A powerful panel consisted of Lisa Lopez, a former Walmart worker from OUR Walmart; Alfred Marshall, New Orleans Workers Center; Bernetta Lanier, International Longshoremen’s Association, Local 1414; Jerome Irwin, a Chatham County school bus driver employed by First Student, a private contractor for school buses in the surrounding county; Sarah White, Mississippi Workers Center; and a woman from the National Domestic Workers Alliance in Atlanta.

Irwin, an organizer with the Teamsters, spoke about their long-term efforts to organize the 500 employees of First

Student. He talked about a recent contract settlement that resulted in year-round pay. According to Irwin, this is the first time year-round pay has been negotiated anywhere in the country with a private school bus company. He also talked about a major victory in which 19 workers were rehired after being fired in 2006, resulting in \$250,000 in back pay divided among the workers.

The Teamsters are also continuing to wage a long campaign, started in 1995, to organize the truck drivers at the Port of Savannah. Similar Teamster campaigns are happening across the country, including at Long Beach, Calif.

Going forward from the conference, the SWA is seeking to organize picket lines at workplaces across the South in support of the Black Lives Matter movement — an effort to more strongly engage labor in the uprisings happening all across the country. □

Campaign builds to free Rev. Pinkney

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Michigan political prisoner the Rev. Edward Pinkney, now being held in Jackson State Prison, remains in good spirits despite the racist injustice that has landed him there. He was sentenced to up to 10 years for supposedly changing the dates on five signatures on a petition to recall Benton Harbor Mayor James Hightower.

No material or circumstantial evidence was presented at the trial that would implicate Pinkney in the purported five felonies. Many believe that Pinkney, a Berrien County activist and leader of the Black Autonomy Network Community Organization (BANCO), is being punished by local authorities for opposing the corporate plans of Whirlpool Corp., headquartered in Benton Harbor.

In 2012, Pinkney and BANCO led an “Occupy the PGA [Professional Golfers’ Association of America]” demonstration against a world-renowned golf tournament held at the newly created Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf Course on the shoreline of Lake Michigan. The course was carved out of Jean Klock Park, which had been donated to the city of Benton Harbor decades ago.

Berrien County officials were determined to defeat the recall campaign against Mayor Hightower, who opposed a program that would have taxed local corporations in order to create jobs and improve conditions in Benton Harbor, a majority African-American municipality. Like other Michigan cities, it has been

devastated by widespread poverty and unemployment.

Statements of support pour in

This is not Pinkney’s first imprisonment for political activities. In 2007, he was convicted in a second trial — the first ended in a hung jury — for “mishandling” absentee ballots during a recall election involving two Benton Harbor city commissioners. The election results, which would have removed the officials, were overturned after criminal charges were filed against the BANCO leader.

Pinkney was sentenced to one year under house arrest and four more years of probation. Later in 2007, he was charged with violating the terms of the sentence by allegedly threatening a judge in Berrien County.

The threat charge stemmed from an article he wrote in the People’s Tribune newspaper, based in Chicago, in which he quoted scriptures from the Old Testament. He was sentenced to three to 10 years. The charges were overturned in late 2008 by the Michigan Court of Appeals after Pinkney received widespread support from civil liberties, ecumenical and academic communities across the country. He was released at the end of 2008 and successfully completed his probation, returning to full-time activism in Berrien County.

In 2008, while still in prison, Pinkney had run for Congress on the Green Party ticket in Michigan. He received 3,500 votes in a challenge to Fred Upton, a Republican incumbent and heir to Whirlpool corporate wealth.



WWW PHOTO: ABAYOMI AZIKIWE

A statement issued on Dec. 17 by Green Party Watch says: “The overt targeting of an African-American activist for a politically motivated prosecution is reminiscent of recent episodes involving Chuck Turner and Elston McCowan, both Greens who challenged the power structures in their communities. In a system where police officers regularly kill unarmed African-American men without facing trial, it is especially galling that the same system sentences an African-American activist to up to 10 years imprisonment on trumped-up, politically motivated charges.”

Black Agenda Report, a well-known media outlet opposing the corporate influence over African-American politics in the U.S., wrote in a Dec. 17 editorial: “This may seem like an Old Jim Crow story, about a preacher from a small, mostly Black town who wanted only to help his people through the voting process, but is set upon by backward whites determined to maintain their monopoly on political power. And, it is true; Old Man Jim Crow is alive and well on the banks of Lake Michigan.”

It continues: “But it is the New Jim Crow, the Mass Black Incarceration State, that has snatched 66-year-old Rev. Pink-

ney away to what could become life in prison. The judge and prosecutor said that Pinkney’s 12 past and present felony convictions make him a career criminal, even though each count stems from an elections process. The Old Jim Crow would have unapologetically sent Pinkney to the chain gang for being an uppity Black man, but the New Jim Crow simply piled on a bunch of felonies to put him away as a serial criminal, allowing the system to claim that race had nothing to do with it.”

A national conference call was held on Dec. 18 to build a defense campaign. Former Vermont state senator, Ben-Zion Ptashnik, initiated the call through the People Demanding Action organization.

The conference call included activists from the clergy, electoral reform organizers, former Green Party candidates, progressive Democrats, the People’s Tribune newspaper, the Moratorium NOW! Coalition and others. It provided an update on the case and made plans to publicize the plight of Rev. Pinkney and the people of Berrien County, recruit a legal team and raise funds to proceed with an appeal.

Ptashnik and Victoria Collier wrote on

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Call to beat back Wisconsin anti-labor bill

Right-wing legislators in Wisconsin announced in December that they will push for passage of a right-to-work (for less) law in the 2015 legislative session. In response to this grave assault on all labor, community and youth organizations, the Wisconsin Bail Out the People Movement issued this appeal on Dec. 7. The appeal leaflet and other related information are available at www.wibailoutpeople.org.

An appeal to the Wisconsin AFL-CIO and Our Communities:

YES WE CAN!

The attack on unions and our communities by Wisconsin's governor and legislature is a declaration of war on the rights of poor and working people. Rallies alone won't do. Wisconsin showed that even temporary occupations of the Capitol aren't enough. This latest assault must be met with decisive direct action by organized labor and our allies.

The United Auto Workers Constitution gives us a weapon that can be used to fight and win. Article 50, Sec. 8 says:

"In case of great emergency, when the existence of the International Union is involved, together with the economic and social standing of our membership, the International President and the International Executive Board shall have the authority to declare a general strike within the industry by a 2/3 vote of the International Executive Board, whenever in their good judgment it shall be deemed proper for the purpose of preserving and perpetuating the rights and living standards of the general membership ... provided, under no circumstances shall it call such a strike until approved by a referendum vote of the membership."

The union-busting "Right-to-Work" plan certainly fits this description. A general strike is where all us workers take a holiday.

No general strike can be rushed into. Workers must be educated and the ground carefully prepared. Holding a referendum vote in every local union gives the opportunity to discuss this unprecedented attack and how to respond with every worker at every work place. The South Central Federation of Labor in Madison passed a resolution with similar plans in February 2011.

Along with the UAW, the State AFL-CIO can urge every affiliate to initiate discussions and hold referendums to authorize a general strike. Mass strikes are part of our history. In the 1950s, the Kohler strike, with the support of Black and white workers, won and built UAW Local

833. In 1934, successful mass actions in Minneapolis, San Francisco and Toledo lifted the living standards of workers for generations.

The Wisconsin politicians are not acting alone. The RTW legislation was openly demanded by the Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce, the Bradley Foundation and other similar groups. The entire crowd of Wall Street bankers and corporate bosses, including GM, Ford, Chrysler and the billionaire Koch brothers and ALEC, are behind the push to break us in this stronghold and symbol of unionism.

After years of concessions, the bosses thought we were ready to collapse. By moving methodically, vote by vote, toward a general strike, the working class of Wisconsin will send a message that will sow panic in their ranks. Let the big business news media, politicians, judges and others scream that it is illegal. As the words of the union song "Solidarity Forever" says, "In our hands is placed a power greater than their hoarded gold, greater than the might of armies magnified a thousandfold." That power is our ability to bring everything to a standstill.

Labor-community solidarity the key

Unions are not a "special interest" apart from our suffering communities and all workers — unorganized, retired, young, immigrant or unemployed. Along with uniting all the unions we must bring in the many community groups affected. Labor must make their problems our own. "Social unionism" can take a big leap forward. While proceeding to authorize the general strike, unions and community groups should convene a huge assembly of the people in Wisconsin. Starting now, all union halls and resources should be available to fight RTW and to support community struggles, especially ones led by Black, Brown and poor white youth, most of whom are unemployed or low-wage workers.

Community organizations, church leaders, people of color fighting back against police abuse, women, the LGBTQ community, the education community, foreclosure victims, the unemployed, low-wage workers, the Occupy Wall Street movement, immigrants and all others who are under attack by the international austerity assault must be brought together to prepare for the general strike. Demands must be shaped to make the largest majority of the people of the state understand that we are fighting for everyone.

In a state where local and state politicians only represent the 1%, an assembly of the 99% will have commanding authority. An injury to one is an injury to all! □

UAW local backs BDS

By Terri Kay
Berkeley, Calif.

Dec. 10 — United Auto Workers Local 2865, a statewide University of California student-worker union local, became, according to their press release, the "first major U.S. labor union to support divestment from Israel by membership vote." Sixty-five percent of the members at nine UC campuses voted yes on a ballot which read:

"Should the UAW 2865 and its members join the global movement for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions, until such time as Israel has complied with international law and respected the rights of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Palestinian citizens of Israel, and all Palestinians refugees and exiles?"

The measure calls on the University of California to divest from companies involved in Israeli occupation and apartheid; the UAW International to divest from these same entities; and the U.S. government to end military aid to Israel. In addition, there was a check box on whether to adhere to the academic and research boycott of Israeli institutions. Some 52 percent pledged to support the academic boycott.

"This vote was a first step in our commitment to solidarity with Palestinians under occupation and facing discriminatory laws," said Kumars Salehi, a UCB grad student and local member, "and we will continue to take steps to make that solidarity concrete as part of our involvement in anti-racist and anti-colonial struggles broadly."

In July the union's joint council, comprised of 83 elected officers from nine campuses, had issued a paper quoting a statement by Palestinian trade unions that called

for "arms embargoes on Israel, sanctions that would cut off the supply of weapons and military aid from Europe and the United States on which Israel depends to commit such war crimes ... [And] Boycott, divestment and sanctions, as called for by the overwhelming majority of Palestinian civil society in 2005."

Workers World spoke to David McCleary, a grad student at UCB and rank-and-file member of the BDS caucus of the local. McCleary explained that, "In July at the height of Israel's latest attack on Gaza, someone put forward a BDS proposal at the joint council meeting, in the form of an open letter. It says the union endorses BDS and calls for a vote to affirm that. People were organizing from then on, trying to educate members. Another joint council meeting finalized the wording of the resolution."

Campaign to free Rev. Pinkney

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truth-out.org on Dec. 16: "Concerned activists and clergy associated with People Demanding Action, a national social justice organization, are circulating a petition to ministers and various organizations. The petition is to be forwarded to the U.S. Justice Department and Attorney General Eric Holder, asking for an investigation into the circumstances of Pinkney's trial and sentencing."

To sign the petition in support of the Rev. Edward Pinkney, log on to tinyurl.com/ps4lwyn. Contributions for Rev. Pinkney's defense can be sent to BANCO at 1940 Union St., Benton Harbor, MI 49022. □

On the Picket line

By Matty Starrdust and Sue Davis

New labor regs speed up unionization process

The National Labor Relations Board issued a new set of rules on Dec. 12 to streamline the process for workers who want to join unions. While previously, workers filing for union representation had to wait as long as a month before union elections could be held, the new regulations eliminate the waiting period. Joseph T. Hansen, president of the Food and Commercial Workers union, praised the decision: "Too often, anti-worker employers use every trick in the book — including filing frivolous litigation — to delay union elections as they work behind the scenes to sabotage the outcome. When a majority of workers want to form a union, they should be able to do so in a fair and timely fashion." (New York Times, Dec. 13) Another new NLRB regulation affirms workers' freedom of communication. Management must allow workers to use company email to conduct union-organizing activities on their own time. (NY Times, Dec. 12)

Strong public support for USPS

Despite rampant budget cuts, mass layoffs and continued attempts to privatize the U.S. Postal Service, a recent Gallup poll shows that the vast majority of people in the U.S. hold a positive image of the USPS. The poll asked respondents to rate the job performance of 13 major government agencies. Of those examined, the USPS received more "excellent" or "good" ratings than any other. While the majority of respondents in every age group rank the USPS highly, young people, ages 18 to 29, did so overwhelmingly at 81 percent. Joe Piette, a retired postal worker in Philadelphia, says the workers see this as a testament to living wages and strong unions in public sector jobs. The USPS is the country's second-largest employer, with more than 90 percent of the workers unionized. (Gallup.com, Nov. 21)

N.Y. public sector union jobs under attack

The office of New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo recently announced its intention to reclassify at least 1,000 government jobs held by members of the Public Employees Federation as non-union positions. More than three dozen state agencies could be affected by the reclassification, including departments tasked with overseeing labor relations, environmental conservation, public housing and health. The Cuomo administration will need approval from the state's Public Employees Relations Board before the reclassification can go into effect. Susan Kent, PEF president, told the union's more than 54,000 members: "Be assured we will be fighting this."

This latest union-busting move comes only weeks after the N.Y. State Supreme Court affirmed that 250 public managerial jobs qualify for union protection, despite Gov. Cuomo's attempt to strip those workers of collective bargaining rights in March 2013. (Albany Times Union, Dec. 16)

Supreme Court disses workers in pay dispute

In a unanimous and far-reaching decision on Dec. 9, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that workers are not entitled to payment for time spent going through security screenings at the end of their shifts. The lawsuit was filed by workers employed by a temp agency at an Amazon.com shipping warehouse who, according to court documents, spend as much as an unpaid half hour a day going through anti-theft security before being allowed to leave the facility. The workers filed for hundreds of millions of dollars in damages arising from back pay and overtime due to lengthy screenings. This anti-worker ruling affects as many as 400,000 workers who are forced to undergo similar screenings without pay at warehouses contracted by such companies as CVS and Apple.

This court ruling is a blatant example of anti-worker bias embedded in U.S. labor law. Here's the logic behind the ruling: "The screening process is not a 'principal activity' of the workers' jobs under the Fair Labor Standards," so to be paid, the screening had to be "an intrinsic element" of the job. The screening may not be a "principal activity" for the worker, but it is for the boss. To be fair, the worker must be compensated for all time he or she is required to be at the work site. It will probably take a revolution to get rid of this anti-worker law! (Reuters, Dec. 9) □

Eric Garner killed by police & capitalism

By Fred Goldstein

It is an outrage that Eric Garner was killed by a wolfpack of racist cops and a chokehold. It is an even greater outrage that, although the attack was caught on videotape for the whole world to see, the killers were not brought to trial.

What makes it even more horrendous is that Garner was killed for being suspected of the petty offense of selling “loosies,” which he was not even doing at the time.

Garner’s killing and the killings of Michael Brown, Tamir Rice and so many others have set off a movement that is trying to push back the racist cops, the pro-cop prosecutors and the grand jury system through mass demonstrations, shutdowns, blockages and other forms of resistance.

Unemployment and the underground economy

But why was a father of six with two grandchildren, whose son was about to start college, forced to sell loosies to support his family?

According to an Associated Press dispatch of July 21, entitled “Man in Chokehold ‘Gentle Giant,’” Eric Garner had recently worked for the New York City Parks Department on horticultural maintenance projects. He spent time on a block known as a gathering spot for day laborers and others in the underground economy.

The underground economy grows when there is less and less room for making a living in the formal capitalist economy. It is not just that there is an unemployment crisis in the U.S. The fact is that the African-American unemployment rate is more than twice that of white workers.

This difference is an ironclad measure of social and economic inequality. High unemployment among all oppressed people goes with rundown neighborhoods, inferior schools and health care, massive medical problems, and high rates of hunger and poverty, especially child poverty and infant mortality.

As the accompanying graph indicates, this disparity has been officially acknowledged for six decades, since the U.S. government began compiling statistics by race. This shows how deeply rooted are racism, national oppression, and social and economic inequality in the U.S. system of capitalist exploitation.

It is, after all, the bosses who carry out racist hiring policies as well as discrimination in pay. And it is the summits of the capitalist ruling class, the bankers and the giant corporate monopolies, along with their politicians and government officials, who for generations have lavished public funds on corporate handouts, war and intervention while inequality festers — not only for African Americans but also for Latinos/as, Asians, South Sea Islanders and Indigenous peoples.

‘40 acres and a mule’ denied to freed slaves

The capitalists have shut the door on economic equality, going back to the Civil War 150 years ago. After the Northern armies defeated the slavocracy, they occupied millions of acres of confiscated land. Some 394 million acres of land had belonged to 70,000 former slave owners. (W.E.B. Du Bois, “Black Reconstruction in America,” Meridian Books, 1935) Four million freed slaves were largely landless with no means of support. Former slaves had deserted their Southern masters by the hundreds of thousands and taken up arms in the war. Black people began cultivating lands that their former masters had fled. Those freed from slavery expect-

ed land from the victorious Northerners.

From May to September 1864, General William Sherman made his famous march on Atlanta and then from November to December his “March to the Sea,” defeating the Southern armies. Thousands of freed slaves followed his army into South Carolina.

(It is important to note that Sherman later played a key role in the genocidal war against Indigenous nations on the Great Plains, destroying their food supply by killing the buffalo and expelling them from their lands to make way for the railways and settlers.)

On Jan. 12, 1865, Sherman and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton held an unprecedented meeting in a church in Savannah, Ga., with 20 leaders from the Black community and asked them what they wanted. The universal demand was for land. (Henry Louis Gates, “The Truth Behind ‘Forty Acres and a Mule,’” theroot.com)

On Jan. 16, Sherman issued his famous “Special Field Order No. 15”: It read in part that whenever three heads of families of freed slaves “shall desire to settle on land ... the Inspector of Settlements and Plantations will himself ... give them a license to settle such island or district and afford them such assistance to establish a peaceable agricultural settlement. The three parties named will subdivide the land, under the supervision of the inspector, among themselves, and such others as may choose to settle near them, so that each family shall have a plot of not more than forty acres of tillable ground.” (blackpast.org)

Sherman later offered army mules to the Black homesteaders to help till the land. This is the origin of the demand, which spread like wildfire, for “40 acres and a mule.” Under this order, 40,000 freed slaves were settled on about 400,000 acres.

(It should not be forgotten that much of the former plantation owners’ land was originally occupied by Native people, most of whom had been driven out.)

The freed African Americans established self-governing communities that were to be, according to Order No. 15, governed entirely by Black people themselves. The lands included the Sea Islands off the coasts of South Carolina, Georgia and Florida, down to Jacksonville and abandoned rice plantations 30 miles inland. Inspector General Rufus Saxton told the freed slaves that “the faith of the government was solemnly pledged to maintain them in possession.” (James Allen, “Black Reconstruction,” International Publishers, 1937)

Capitalists and former slave owners took the land

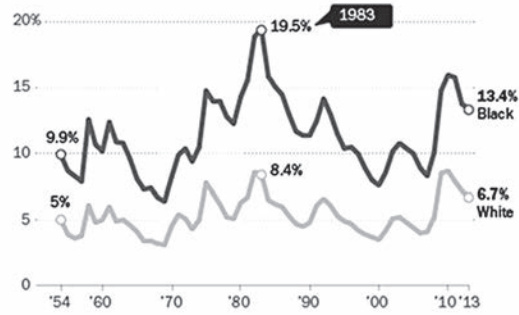
The Radical wing of the Republican Party, led by Rep. Thaddeus Stevens from Pennsylvania and Sen. Charles Sumner from Massachusetts, advocated broad land redistribution and wanted to crush the slavocracy. But the bourgeoisie made an historic decision to disregard them and the promise of 40 acres and a mule and keep the former slaves in a different kind of bondage, wage slavery.

The counterrevolution began after Lincoln was assassinated. President Andrew Johnson signed a virtual universal pardon for the former plantation owners and restored confiscated land to them.

Established in March 1865, the Freedmen’s Bureau, which had custody of another 850,000 acres of land, sold most of it to Northern land speculators. Congress prescribed that on land where the military was in control, former slaves had

Unemployment rates by race

seasonally adjusted



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics
Note: “Black and other.” 1954-1971; “Black or African American” thereafter.
2013 average is January-July.
Pew Research Center

to sign year-long labor contracts. These contracts resembled slavery. There was armed resistance when the military tried to expel the freed homesteaders from their land in the Sea Islands. The military finally had to back off.

While the Northern armies and Congress authorized male suffrage for former slaves, and in many of the former Confederate states constitutional conventions endorsed political rights for African Americans, the Northern ruling class would not concede to 40 acres and a mule — the economic foundation upon which political and social rights rested.

The capitalist class refused to fund equality, which required a massive distribution of land to the majority of landless former slaves. Millions of landless poor whites, who were told by former slave owners that they were superior to the freed slaves, could also have been granted land and thus been removed from political domination by the plantation owners.

But by 1877 the Northern armies pulled out of the South and the freed slaves were subjected to a reign of terror, enforced by the Ku Klux Klan and the infamous Black Codes. These were designed to restrict African Americans’ freedom and compel them to work for wages so low they were constantly in debt. A major feature was vagrancy law, which allowed local authorities to arrest former slaves at will and force them into involuntary labor.

Between the Northern capitalist investors and the returned Southern planters, the African-American population was submerged in a racist world of sharecropping, prison labor and the end to Black participation in government, while the capitalists and the planters piled up profits.

From Civil War to 1960s rebellions

Fast forward 100 years to the 1960s. From 1964 to 1967, there were numerous Black rebellions in urban centers. From Watts in Los Angeles to Harlem in New York to Newark, N.J., and Detroit, the rebellions were powerful. In many cases, armed former GIs from the Vietnam War battled police from windows and rooftops. There were at least 100 more rebellions after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in April 1968.

Because the rebellions of the 1960s constituted a social explosion of threatening magnitude for U.S. capitalism, President Lyndon Johnson appointed the blue-ribbon Kerner Commission in 1967 to investigate the uprisings. On Feb. 29, 1968, the commission issued its famous verdict:

“Our nation is moving toward two societies, one Black, one white — separate and unequal.” The commission found the causes of the rebellions to be rooted in police brutality, racism, and economic and social hardship. In other words, in racism and national oppression.

After copious interviews in the various communities, the commission report

outlined the causes, arranging them by “level of intensity”:

“First level: police practices, unemployment and underemployment, inadequate housing.

“Second level: inadequate education, poor recreation facilities and programs, ineffectiveness of the political structure and grievance mechanisms.

“Third level: disrespectful white attitudes, discriminatory administration of justice, inadequacy of federal programs, inadequacy of municipal services, discriminatory consumer and credit practices, inadequate welfare programs.”

The report said the U.S. was in danger of moving toward “a system of apartheid.” To remedy this, the communities would have to be lifted up, primarily through the creation of jobs, job training programs and decent housing.

President Johnson rejected the report. Similar reports have been written by numerous commissions since then. The same report could be written today.

Constitutional declarations recognizing equality — legal decisions, civil rights laws, voting rights laws, affirmative action laws — are important steps forward. People shed blood and died to achieve these gains. But as history shows, political advances alone do not bring about social and economic equality. Equality has to be funded.

The Northern bourgeoisie faced the decision about what was to be done with millions of acres of landed wealth in 1865: Was it to go to the landless former slaves who had created the wealth of the Southern slave-owning aristocracy, or would it line the pockets of the Northern railroad barons and industrialists and the former slave owners? They chose their profit interests.

Fast forward to 2014

Today, to move toward equality, jobs must be created and funded. The rundown housing stock in the oppressed communities, including the prison-like projects, has to be replaced with affordable, livable housing. Schools at all levels have to be turned into welcoming environments, and all staff have to be well paid and trained. Mass incarceration must be ended, and the racist, repressive prison system has to be torn down to be replaced by community-supervised rehabilitation.

In order to root out inequality, the entire working class must have its standard of living raised. But because African Americans and other oppressed peoples have suffered from racism and national oppression for so long, their needs require even greater resources to close the gap.

It does not take much math to figure out that these measures would require hundreds of billions of dollars. That is what it would take for the millions of Eric Garners to be able to make ends meet without having to sell loosies in the underground economy.

History shows that genuine social renewal and the eradication of racism and national oppression cannot be obtained under the present-day, decadent profit system, any more than it could in 1865.

As long as the super-rich control the wealth, they will deny it to the masses of people. And as long as they control the economy, they will control the wealth. The only way to put an end to this is for the workers and oppressed to oust the capitalists and their politicians from power, take over the economy and run it for human need — that is, establish socialism. □

Protests against police brutality

By Kris Hamel

Demonstrations to protest racist police killings and to assert “Black Lives Matter” have continued strong throughout the United States since the Dec. 13 national march in Washington, D.C., and the massive march in New York the same day. Protests have taken place in many other cities and towns, large and small.

Walkouts, die-ins, road closures, traffic stoppages, town hall meetings, rallies and other forms of protest have occurred daily across the country. Here are reports from Workers World activists in several cities.

Facing down criminal cops

In **New York City**, hundreds of anti-racist protesters confronted a small group of pro-New York Police Department demonstrators on Dec. 19 in front of City Hall. Built as a “#BlueLivesMatter” demonstration, the mainly white, male racists wore T-shirts with the slo-



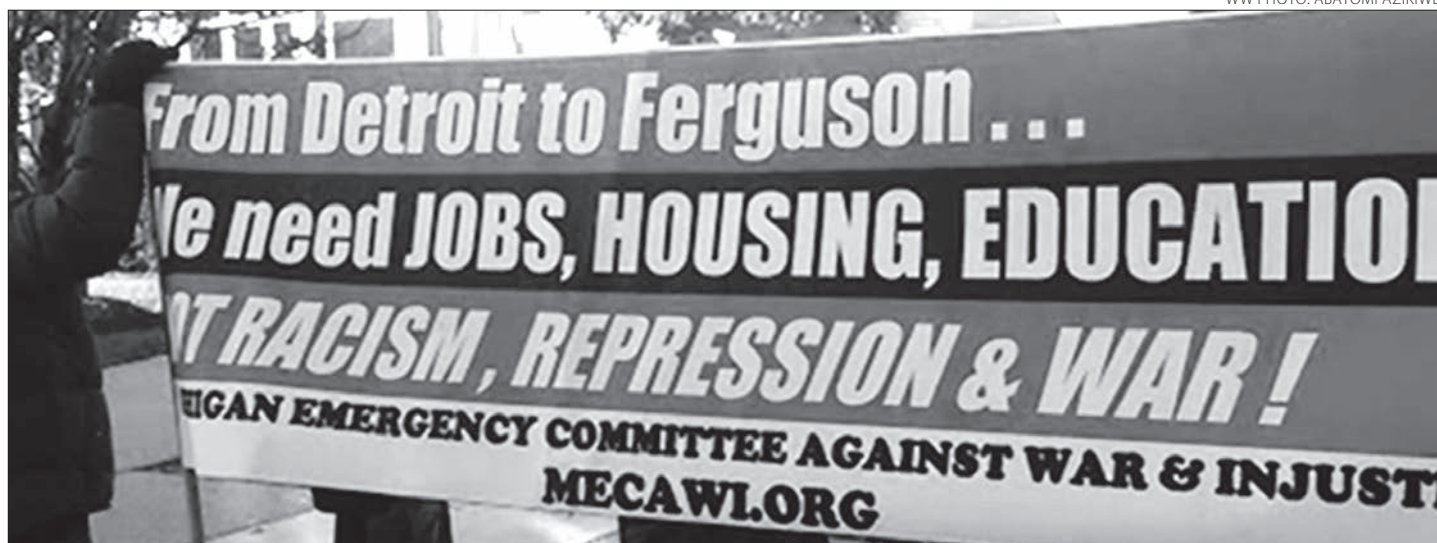
Philadelphia

gan “I Can Breathe.” That was a racist slap in the face to 43-year-old Eric Garner, whose last words — “I can’t breathe” — were heard repeatedly by millions on videotape before he died after being put in a chokehold by cops in Staten Island on July 17. A grand jury refused to indict the police who killed him.

The multinational, youthful counter-demonstrators got right in the faces of the racists, separated by a barricade, chanting “Eric Garner, Michael Brown, shut it down, shut it down!” and “No justice, no peace, no racist police!” as well as “Black lives matter!” They then took to the streets of lower Manhattan and blocked traffic for at least another hour.

The Peoples Power Assembly released a national statement with hundreds of signers denouncing the pro-cop demonstration. It read in part:

“Callously called ‘Thank you NYPD,’ this provocative demonstration is insulting and disrespectful to families who have lost loved ones to police murders and people who have survived police brutality. In fact, also on Dec. 19, at the same time, only blocks away from this pro-police brutality rally, the family of 18-year-old Ramarley Graham — murdered in his Bronx home by NYPD Officer Richard Haste on Feb. 2, 2012 — will be holding a rally to demand that the Department of Justice convene a



Royal Oak, Mich.

grand jury hearing for his case.

“We believe this pro-police demonstration is cause of great concern to millions of people across the country who have been in the streets protesting against racism, white supremacy and police vi-

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

olence. After all, it is not police officers who are shot down every 28 hours in the U.S. But this alarming statistic is the daily reality for Black people in the United States.

“We believe this pro-police brutality mobilization is a dangerous threat to communities of color already under attack due to police occupation. We see this mobilization of largely armed off-duty and plainclothes police and their supporters as an effort to whip up violence against people who have peacefully mobilized in the streets for the past several months all across the country.” To read the entire statement, go to peoplespower.net.

Demonstrators in downtown **Buffalo, N.Y.**, defied bitter cold to deliver anti-racist demands to the Department of Justice on Dec. 19. They then marched to a rally at City Hall, to the County Holding Center (jail), and finally took their protest to police headquarters. In the process they held up rush-hour traffic at a main highway intersection. This “Black Lives Matter” event was initiated by the Buffalo AntiRacist Coalition.

The Ferguson to Philly Emergency Response Network (#FergusonPHL) held its second town hall meeting Dec. 16 at Calvary Church in west Philadelphia. More than 400 people turned up for what became a second Peoples Power Assembly.

The meeting, larger than the one held Dec. 2 immediately after the verdict from Ferguson was announced, was a serious planning and coordinating vehicle for upcoming protests and beyond. It is impossible to list the many upcoming protests announced at the meeting. Of note was the enthusiasm to have more community-based events.

ner and other victims of police killings. Afterwards, eighth-grade African-American students from Sankofa Freedom Academy held their own die-in outside the injustice center. The protests ended two blocks away with another die-in at the hated statue of Frank Rizzo, infamous for his brutally racist treatment of Black community members during his terms as police commissioner (1968-1971) and mayor (1972-1980).

The gathering was attended by students from area colleges who have provided leadership roles in Ferguson and New York response actions. Lawyers holding the Dec. 17 die-in stopped by to announce their plans. Members of the Philadelphia Student Union also announced a die-in for Dec. 18 outside the next School Reform Commission hearing.

A key proposal was a call for a Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Action, Resistance and Empowerment (#) with a citywide, if not regional, march and rally to reclaim King’s legacy of resistance and struggle.

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Philadelphia

“We can march all night long!”

In **Atlanta** on Dec. 15, more than 125 people gathered at Underground Atlanta and marched on Peachtree Street behind letters in lights spelling out “Black Lives

Matter.” Upon reaching the Fox Theater, a die-in was held in front of an expansive entryway where a holiday concert featuring Christian music singer, Amy Grant, brought out a largely white suburban audience. The protesters repeated the last words of Eric Garner, “I can’t breathe,” 11 times.

With a front row of demonstrators holding the illuminated letters, the theater was blockaded for more than a half hour. Police cars with blue lights flashing shut down traffic on the city’s main corridor.

The largely youthful crowd took all lanes on Peachtree Street as they marched back to their starting point. One of their chants was “We’re young, we’re strong, we can march all night long!” The demonstration was organized by the Gen Y Project and supported by many other groups, including Workers World Party and the International Action Center.

Protest in mostly white suburb

An anti-racist demonstration was held in **Royal Oak, Mich.**, a majority-white suburb outside **Detroit**, on Dec. 19. An African-American woman had been chased by a white motorist after being falsely accused of a home invasion. She happened to be at the wrong address and did not enter the property. After flagging down the Royal Oak police, the woman was treated as a criminal but later released.

Demonstrators from the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War & Injustice, the Moratorium NOW! Coalition, the Detroit chapter of the National

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Lawyers Guild and others picketed outside the Royal Oak Police Department.

Demonstrators said the situation could have resulted in a Renisha McBride scenario. McBride, just 19, was shot and

Quality continue coast to coast

PHOTO: BLACKOUT COLLECTIVE



Oakland, Calif.

killed by homeowner Theodore Wafer in 2013 after she knocked on his door in Dearborn Heights, Mich., seeking help after an auto accident. Wafer said he thought she was an intruder. A jury convicted and sentenced Wafer for second-degree murder.

When Royal Oak Chief of Police Corrigan P. O'Donohue and the city manager showed up, they told demonstrators no racial profiling was involved. They left after protesters did not accept their explanations.

'Black lives on our mind!'

In **Madison and Milwaukee, Wis.**, hundreds of Black and Brown youth and their allies have taken part in die-ins, protests at jails and street protests.



Milwaukee

PHOTO: MILWAUKEE COALITION FOR JUSTICE

Wisconsin resembles an apartheid state for those of African descent, having the highest incarceration rate of Blacks in the U.S. and numerous murders of Black people by police. On Dec. 14, hundreds of

students marched, chanting, "Finals on your mind, Black lives on mine!" at University of Wisconsin-Madison and staged a die-in at the undergraduate library.

In Milwaukee a die-in took place at Marquette University on Dec. 8. The next day, protesters staged a rally and die-in in front of District Attorney John Chisholm's house to demand he charge Christopher Manney, the cop who killed Dontre Hamilton on April 30. "The blood is at the doorsteps of the district attorney's office," said Nate Hamilton, Dontre's brother, as he and supporters lay in the street in front of Chisholm's home.

The Coalition for Justice sponsored a rally Dec. 9 at Red Arrow Park, the site of Hamilton's murder. Protesters faced off against dozens of police and occupied

City Hall for hours, demanding that Mayor Tom Barrett meet with the Hamilton family, which he did the next day.

As part of the national day of actions, the coalition sponsored another rally Dec.

13 at Red Arrow Park. A "People of Faith Standing Together" rally at Red Arrow Park and a protest at the police "Safety Building" took place Dec. 14. For information about ongoing protests in Wisconsin, follow twitter.com/justice4dontre and wibailoutpeople.org.



Buffalo, N.Y.

WW PHOTO: ELLIE DORRITIE

Locking down the cops

The **Oakland, Calif.**, Police Department was surrounded and locked down on Dec. 15 in the middle of rush-hour traffic. Protesters — organized by the Blackout Collective, Black Lives Matter and Black Brunch — had locked themselves across the OPD front doors and across the 7th Street and Broadway intersection at the north side of the OPD, and blocked the 6th Street and Broadway intersection and the freeway ramp at the south side of the building. The U.S. flag on the OPD flagpole in front of the building was replaced with a beautiful flag featuring the faces of victims of racist killings: Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Oscar Grant, Renisha McBride and Alex Nieto.

All the while a strong and vocal contin-

gent of militant Black organizers, dressed all in black, rallied at the doors, leading chants, singing protest songs and raising their fists in the air in the Black Power salute. A group of Asian activists locked down one of the OPD doors, holding a banner signed "#Asians 4 Black Lives." The other door was locked down by white activists with a banner reading "White Silence Is Violence."

All this was accomplished in an atmosphere where for the last several years the OPD has used lines of riot-gear-equipped police to keep any protest march at least a block away from the building. The protesters tried to keep the blockade up for at least four hours and 28 minutes — four hours for the time Michael Brown's body lay in the street after he was killed and 28 minutes for Black and Brown lives lost every 28 hours to violence at the hands of police and vigilantes, based on a study by the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement.

A large number of the protesters were eventually arrested, with many having to be sawed out of the lockdown equipment by the Oakland Fire Department. Most were cited and released.

Mollie Costello, from the Alan Blueford Center for Justice, was part of the contingent that rallied at the OPD doors, leading the chants and songs. WW asked her about the importance of this action: "There has been sustained action, and that is part of the significance. I think a lot about history and where we're going. As a direct descendant of slaves, I think about a famous abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, who said 'Power concedes nothing without a demand, it never has and it never will.' After the slaves were freed, were we really free? My father is

the first generation who wasn't a sharecropper. But now, just trying to struggle in America and in Black America in a capitalist system, did we really get free?"

In **Seattle**, some 400 demonstrators, inspired by the stand of many Black athletes, held a high visibility "Black Lives Matter" protest on Dec. 14 outside the professional football game of the Seattle Seahawks versus San Francisco 49ers. The protest at Century Link Field shook up some of the high-income people going in and attracted a lot of interest. More protests are planned.

Abayomi Azikiwe, Ellie Dorritie, Terri Kay, Dianne Mathiowetz, Jim McMahan, Milwaukee WW Bureau, Monica Moorehead, Betsey Piette and Joe Piette contributed to this roundup.

Statement of President Raúl Castro

The Cuban government released the following statement by President Raúl Castro on Dec. 17.

Since my election as President of the State Council and Council of Ministers I have reiterated on many occasions our willingness to hold a respectful dialogue with the United States on the basis of sovereign equality, in order to deal reciprocally with a wide variety of topics without detriment to the national independence and self-determination of our people.

This stance was conveyed to the U.S. government both publicly and privately by Comrade Fidel on several occasions during our long-standing struggle, stating the willingness to discuss and solve our differences without renouncing any of our principles.

The heroic Cuban people, in the wake of serious dangers, aggressions, adversities and sacrifices, have proven to be faithful and will continue to be faithful to our ideals of independence and social justice. Strongly united throughout these 56 years of Revolution, we have kept our unswerving loyalty to those who died in defense of our principles since the beginning of our independence wars in 1868.

Today, despite the difficulties, we have embarked on the task of updating our economic model in order to build a prosperous and sustainable Socialism.



PHOTO: ESTUDIOS REVOLUCION

As a result of a dialogue at the highest level, which included a phone conversation I had yesterday with President Obama, we have been able to make headway in the solution of some topics of mutual interest for both nations.

As Fidel promised on June 2001, when he said, "They shall return!" Gerardo, Ramón and Antonio have arrived today to our homeland.

The enormous joy of their families and of all our people, who have relentlessly fought for this goal, is shared by hundreds of solidarity committees and groups, governments, parliaments, organizations, institutions and personalities, who for the last 16 years have made tireless efforts demanding their release. We convey our deepest gratitude and commitment to all of them.

President Obama's decision deserves the respect and acknowledgement of our people.

I wish to thank and acknowledge the support of the Vatican, most particularly the support of Pope Francisco, in the efforts for improving relations between

Cuba and the United States. I also want to thank the government of Canada for facilitating the high-level dialogue between the two countries.

In turn, we have decided to release and send back to the United States a spy of Cuban origin who was working for that nation.

On the other hand, and for humanitarian reasons, today we have also sent the American citizen Alan Gross back to his country.

Unilaterally, as has always been our practice, and in strict compliance with the provisions of our legal system, the concerned prisoners have received legal benefits, including the release of those persons that the government of the United States had conveyed their interest in.

We have also agreed to renew diplomatic relations.

This in no way means that the heart of the matter has been solved. The economic, commercial and financial blockade, which causes enormous human and economic damages to our country, must cease.

Though the blockade has been codified into law, the President of the United States has the executive authority to modify its implementation.

We propose to the government of the United States the adoption of mutual steps to improve the bilateral atmosphere and advance towards normalization of relations between our two countries, based on the principles of International Law and the United Nations Charter.

Cuba reiterates its willingness to cooperate in multilateral bodies, such as the United Nations.

While acknowledging our profound differences, particularly on issues related to national sovereignty, democracy, human rights and foreign policy, I reaffirm our willingness to dialogue on all these issues.

I call upon the government of the United States to remove the obstacles hindering or restricting ties between peoples, families and citizens of both countries, particularly restrictions on travelling, direct post services and telecommunications.

The progress made in our exchanges proves that it is possible to find solutions to many problems.

As we have reiterated, we must learn the art of coexisting with our differences in a civilized manner.

We will continue talking about these important issues at a later date. □

Cuban Five victory

Continued from page 1

laws.

Cuba released Gross as soon as the Five were returned home, citing humanitarian reasons.

The AP continued its investigation of failed U.S. regime-change antics, including the "Cuban" twitter site Zunzuneo — another USAID program — and the recent infiltration of Cuban hip hop artists in an attempt to use them as unknowing instruments to undermine Cuba's self-determination.

Polls have shown that sentiment in Miami now favors changing U.S. policy toward Cuba even more strongly than in the rest of the U.S. Since 1992, the U.N. General Assembly has voted almost unanimously every year for the U.S. to

end the blockade.

As Obama himself admitted in his speech, the U.S. for more than five decades has tried "to push Cuba toward collapse." And, he testified, it didn't work.

Development despite imperialist hostility

Development in the hemisphere has been moving forward despite the machinations of the U.S.

Latin America and the Caribbean, including Cuba, have forged many interlocking levels of continental unity through the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas. At the same time, the U.S. is still unable to recover from its 2007-2008 economic collapse, especially in regard to employ-

ment. Longshore union members report that the port of Tampa, Fla., is underutilized, while Cuba's new automated container port in Mariel is ready to handle huge ships from Asia.

As long as the blockade is fully in place, it is U.S. trade with Cuba that suffers, while trade between Cuba and other countries continues, just 90 miles away. How long will European banks continue to pay U.S.-imposed fines for handling Cuban financial transactions? The old system of sanctions imposed by Washington has become untenable.

The people of the U.S. have also suffered from the blockade. They have been prevented from knowing the Cuban reality: that it is possible to do so much, even with scarce resources, when the power of the people is freed from capitalism.

In the U.S. a new militant movement led by Black and Brown youth is challenging the racism and repression embedded

in capitalism. Don't they want to learn how first-rate education and health care can be made available without throwing youth and workers into debt? They really want to see how a different world is possible. And couldn't Detroit benefit from what Cuba has to offer?

The Cuban people, and particularly the Cuban Communist Party, are committed to socialism — making the goal of social production the needs and welfare of human beings, not profits for a few. They are well aware and capable of dealing with any challenges to come. Now there are five additional leaders, tested by long years of U.S. imprisonment, who can help chart this new future.

Volvieron! They have returned!

Cheryl LaBash has been an organizer with the International Committee to Free the Cuban 5 since 2006 and is a co-chair of the National Network on Cuba.

Haitian regime in crisis

Protests continue despite U.N. troops' bullets

By G. Dunkel

All over Haiti, people by the tens of thousands are putting their bodies in the streets and their lives on the line. They are demanding the departure of President Michel Martelly and the 6,500 Minustah troops currently occupying the country under a United Nations mandate.

The resignation of Prime Minister Laurent Lamothe and 40 members of his cabinet on Dec. 13 made no difference to the size or intensity of the protests.

This struggle has been ignored or minimized by most of the corporate media. For example, the BBC on Dec. 16 commented on a protest by "hundreds of people in Haiti" that it said had turned "violent" when protesters threw rocks. Videos and photos of that protest show tens of thousands of Haitians in the street, demanding the departure of Martelly and Minustah.

A video shot at a Dec. 12 protest shows Minustah troops firing on protesters. (tinyurl.com/pyeeeq8) It has been viewed over 1 million times.

How the protesters reacted to this live fire is significant. They took cover but didn't disperse and kept on chanting and throwing rocks at the soldiers. When an officer with a pistol began firing at protesters, a Haitian journalist with a microphone and camera moved towards the officer and asked him what he was doing. As the confrontation developed, several other journalists rushed forward and a soldier with a rifle extracted the officer.

At least one protester was killed Dec. 12 and a half dozen were so seriously injured that they had to be taken to the hospital.

December 12 and 13 saw large demonstrations outside Port-au-Prince in Cap-Haïtien, Gonaïves, Ouanaminthe and Petite-Goâve, where daily demonstrations for

the last month have blocked National Road #2 to the south. In every city, the main demand is the departure of Martelly. In many places, using official cars for a fast getaway, Martelly supporters have fired on protests. A number of injuries were reported.

Radio Kiskeya has videos of large demonstrations that took place in Port-au-Prince on Dec. 18.

While the Haitian people have united to demand the departure of Martelly, U.S. Ambassador to Haiti Pamela White supports him. "We believe he was elected for a certain period of time," she told *Le Nouvelliste*, the largest daily Haitian newspaper. "He must stay until his mandate ends." His term is not up until May 14, 2016.

However, the U.S. still denies interfering in Haiti's internal affairs.

Probably planning to rule by decree, Martelly has refused to hold the constitutionally required elections that would



PHOTO: DANIEL TERCIER, HAITI LIBERTÉ

keep the Haitian parliament functioning. For public consumption, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry called on Haiti to hold elections as soon as possible in order to put an end to the crisis.

Despite all the bloody Minustah and Haitian police attacks, and the political pressure the U.S. exerts covertly, the anger of the Haitian people is so strong that some optimism is being expressed.

"We are definitely witnessing the final days of the regime," said Haitian Sen. Moïse Jean-Charles, a leader of the anti-Martelly protests. "We do not expect to celebrate Haiti's independence on New Year's 2015 with Martelly still in power. We are not going to negotiate now with Martelly. We simply want Martelly and Lamothe to go." (Haiti-Liberté, Dec. 10-16) □

As resistance grows

Ukraine puts anti-fascists on trial

By Greg Butterfield

A frame-up trial of 20 anti-fascist activists began on Nov. 27 in the Primorsky court in Odessa, Ukraine. The defendants are among 70 people jailed or held under house arrest since the May 2 massacre at the House of Trade Unions.

Armed fascist goons from western Ukraine were bused into the southeastern city in April and May to suppress the protest movement against the U.S.-backed government in Kiev, which took power in an illegal coup last February.

Unleashed on the multinational port city, the ultra-right attacked and burned an Occupy Wall Street-style encampment on Kulikovo Field. Anti-fascists fled to the nearby House of Trade Unions. The neo-Nazis shot at, gassed and finally burned those inside. Survivors who jumped from the blazing building were beaten, some to death.

Officially, 48 people were killed in the massacre, though activists believe the true number is far higher.

None of the neo-Nazis who carried out the massacre have been jailed, much less put on trial — despite the existence of extensive video footage and photographs of the massacre, some of it proudly posted online by the fascists themselves. An official parliamentary inquiry into the tragedy led to stonewalling by police and the Interior Ministry.

The preliminary hearing of the anti-fascists in the Primorsky court was a farce, as reported by independent news site Timer. The 20 defendants were caged. Many of their attorneys were absent. Just 10 minutes before the hearing was scheduled to start, the prosecutor requested a 60-day extension of the prisoners' detention. The request was granted.

The hearing started late. After a brief appearance, the judge hid in his chambers. Eventually the hearing was declared over, to be resumed Dec. 3, but the defendants refused to come out of the cage and leave the courtroom. They chanted, "Freedom to political prisoners!" and "No to the bloody regime!" (Timer.od.ua, Nov. 27)

Family members and supporters in the courtroom shouted, "Shame on the Primorsky court!" as police forced them

out. Outside, right-wingers attacked two defendants.

After that debacle, the Primorsky court refused to hear the case further, referring it to the Odessa Regional Court of Appeals, which promptly sent the case back. As of Dec. 12, Primorsky was still refusing the case.

Albu: 'Prisoners must feel our support'

Workers World spoke about the trial and the situation in Odessa with Odessa Regional Council Deputy Alexei Albu, a leader of the anti-fascist movement and survivor of the May 2 massacre. A coordinator of the Marxist organization Union Borotba (Struggle), he was forced to leave the city in May under threat of arrest. Albu currently lives in exile in Crimea, where he co-founded the Committee for the Liberation of Odessa and the investigative website 2May.org.

"Among the 70 opposition members arrested by the government are people of different political views, and even some bystanders, who are accused of various crimes," Albu explained.

"The charges include terrorism, attempting to change the borders of Ukraine and support for the People's Republics of Donetsk and Lugansk. Some are accused of plotting a coup — even though those in power now got there through a coup!

"All the political prisoners are united in hatred of the neo-fascist regime," he said. "They include anti-capitalists like Vladislav Wojciechowski and Nikolai Popov." "The authorities can't prove the guilt of the defendants," stated Albu, noting that some gave confessions under torture. "The judges themselves realize these people aren't guilty, but they are under intense pressure from the executive branch to condemn the anti-fascists in Odessa. The judges understand that they have to live in Odessa and look people in the eye, which is why they are refusing to deal with the criminal cases."

Albu said the Committee for the Liberation of Odessa is urging people to come out and support the political prisoners at future court dates: "We have to be in the court because the political prisoners must feel our support. They must feel that they are not alone. They need to understand



PHOTO: TIMER.OD.UA

Anti-fascists held in cages at Odessa court.

that everything they did was not in vain."

Protests grow bolder

After seven months of occupation by neo-Nazi gangs and intense repression, Odessa workers and anti-fascist activists are growing bolder in their resistance.

Kiev and the local rulers are doing everything they can to suppress protests, Albu told WW, explaining that "coming to the courthouse, relatives and supporters are arrested or attacked by organized ultra-nationalists."

Yet activists and victims' family members continue to gather every Sunday on the Kulikovo Field to mourn those who died on May 2, despite facing frequent harassment from police and violence from junta supporters.

A man was arrested at the Dec. 7 commemoration, after putting on a St. George's ribbon, the orange-and-black striped symbol of the anti-fascist movement and the Soviet victory over Nazism in World War II. Police dragged him off in front of his crying 8-year-old son and detained him for several hours. (Borotba.su)

On Dec. 10, an explosion ripped through a so-called volunteer center — actually a fascist organizing headquarters that gathers supplies for the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO), the regime's brutal war against the independent People's Republics of the Donbass mining region. (Molbuk.ua)

More than 600 workers walked off the job Dec. 14 in a bold anti-war action at the Odessa Portside Plant, one of Ukraine's largest chemical facilities. The workers demanded an end to the economic block-

ade against the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics.

Because of the war in Donbass, the plant has lost business, and is now operating at 30 percent of capacity. Workers held signs and banners reading, "No economic blockade" and "Make peace so we can work." They also demanded the rehiring of laid-off workers. (Tribuna.ru, Dec. 15)

The combination of the civil war unleashed by Kiev, austerity measures demanded by the U.S. and European Union, and the global crisis of capitalism has pushed Ukraine to the brink of bankruptcy.

Like many areas of the country, Odessa suffers from rolling power outages, utility and rent hikes, and cuts in social services. On Dec. 13, the government predicted consumer gas prices would jump three to five times higher this winter.

In response, Kulikovo activists are planning to protest at the Odessa Regional State Administration building on Dec. 19. Under the slogan "We want to live, not just exist," they are calling on local residents to join them. (Timer.od.ua, Dec. 15)

"Today everyone understands that the regime in Ukraine will not last long," said Albu. "The junta will fall, and everyone who helped the ATO, who attacked our loved ones, who threw our friends into prison, who made them starve, will have to answer for it.

"It's this awareness of imminent retribution that hardens the fascist attack dogs. But the pendulum of history has already started moving back and there's no getting around it," Albu concluded. □

Mexico's drug wars: Made in USA

By Jim McMahan

The disappearance and presumed murder of the 43 Mexican students of Ayotzinapa exposed to the world the relation between drug cartels and the violence of the state apparatus in capitalist Mexico. What is not publicized in the corporate media is the U.S. role in corrupting and impoverishing Mexico — and in causing the drug war that has taken 100,000 lives. Today, the masses there are rising up in protest.

Crushing poverty was imposed on the rural Mexican people in 1994 by the so-called North American Free Trade Agreement pushed by Washington. Its provisions destroyed the rural economy and ended the livelihoods of many farmers, as the invasion of U.S. corporations and their commodities began. This fueled the rise of the drug cartels. Another factor in their ascent has been the strong demand for drugs and drug profits coming from the U.S. side of the border.

The forcible intervention of U.S. arms traffickers and repressive forces in Mexico has only escalated this conflict, which has

now spread countrywide. The U.S. has invaded Mexico and violated the country's sovereignty and security for years.

Gun control laws are much more rigorous in Mexico than in the U.S. Large-caliber rifles or high-powered pistols, which are considered military weapons, cannot be legally owned by private citizens.

U.S. provides guns for 'drug wars'

However, in the four U.S. states bordering northern Mexico — California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas — there are 8,500 licensed gun dealers. Agents or "straw buyers" of drug gangs purchase guns there, such as AR-15s and AK-47s, often in large quantities, and take them to Mexico for transfer to the drug bosses.

The weapons were first brought into Mexico in massive quantities as the drug wars escalated in 2005 and then continued. But the tens of thousands of U.S. military troops on the U.S. side of the border have never tried to stop the gun traffic. They are stationed along the border solely for the inhumane purpose of stopping immigrants from entering the U.S.

Mexican authorities have said they seized 20,000 weapons from drug gangs in 2008, with the majority brought in from the United States. Officials from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives estimated in 2009 that 90 percent of the weapons recovered in drug gang violence originated in the U.S.

Between 2006 and 2011, the ATF operated Project Gunrunner and the Arizona ATF branch ran Operation Fast and Furious (OFF). These operations were ostensibly to stop the flow of guns to Mexico. They traced the guns' journeys from U.S. dealers to the traffickers in Mexico. ATF agents went along with the "straw buyers" and surveilled and built relations with heads of the drug cartels, especially those in Sinaloa.

But these programs did not actively try to stop gun shipments from the U.S. to Mexico, whose law enforcement agents were not even notified about the ATF operations. While these operations were going on, the drug wars became especially violent in the border city of Tijuana and all along the Mexican side of

the border with Texas.

In Ciudad Juárez, just across the border from El Paso, 10,000 deaths from the drug wars were recorded from 2009 to 2012. Now, the violence has moved south into central Mexico once again.

However, the U.S. right wing, with Rep. Darrell Issa in the lead, has used the issue of U.S. gunrunning and OFF to attack Attorney General Eric Holder. The right wing has a vendetta against Holder, one reason being that a Border Patrol agent was allegedly killed with a gun supplied by OFF in 2010.

The ATF and OFF are supposedly under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Justice Department. However, agencies of repression such as the ATF are often powers unto themselves, though they're part of the repressive capitalist state.

U.S. planes, drones fly over Mexico

Washington has been involved with Mexico in a "new security initiative" to combat drug trafficking called the Mérida

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WORKERS WORLD editorials

George Stinney's life mattered

The current national uprising against police terror sweeping the U.S., following the murders of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, is helping to shed a bright light on the racist war against Black youth, rooted in slavery and Jim Crow racism. The demise of Reconstruction, a radical period when freed Black people attempted to build institutions to codify democratic rights, ushered in an era of semi-slavery that included horrific lynchings by the Ku Klux Klan and other fascistic formations.

These lynchings of Black people not only took place illegally with hangings and other unspeakable acts of savagery, but also legally through the racist courts with executions of many, including youth. Take the case of George Stinney.

At the age of 14, Stinney was the youngest person to be executed in the U.S. during the 20th century. He was arrested in March 1944 for allegedly killing two white girls in Clarendon County, S.C. In less than three months, an all-white jury had convicted and condemned him — after deliberating for only 10 minutes!

On Dec. 17, 70 years after this heinous crime was committed against Stinney, South Carolina Judge Carmen T. Mullen vacated his conviction, stating in a 28-page order that there were multiple “fundamental, constitutional violations of due process.” (New York Times, Dec. 17) Among these violations were Stinney’s arrest without a warrant and police interrogation without a lawyer.

The vacating of Stinney’s conviction comes 70 years too late because his arrest, much less execution, should have never taken place.

Fast forward to 1955, when another 14-year-old, Emmett Till, was lynched by the KKK in Money, Miss., for allegedly whistling at a white woman. When his mother, Mamie Till Mobley, showed her son’s horribly disfigured face in a casket for the whole world to see, it helped to launch the historic Montgomery Bus Boycott a few months later on Dec. 1, 1955. The success of this boycott against racial segregation is viewed as the opening shot of the Civil Rights Movement.

If the racist sham of a trial for 14-year-old George Stinney had become national news — which it should have — would it have helped to save his precious life? Stinney certainly would have benefited from a worldwide movement of solidarity, like that which came to the defense of the imprisoned Scottsboro Brothers in Alabama.

The case of George Stinney is educating many, many people about the fact that the racist war against Black youth didn’t start with 12-year-old Tamir Rice in Cleveland; 18-year-old Ramarley Graham in New York; 18-year-old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo.; 18-year-old Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Fla.; or even 14-year-old Emmett Till.

As this anti-racist movement declares that “Black Lives Matter,” let us also add the name and photograph of George Stinney to that already too long and tragic list. □

U.S. attacks on Korea no joke

In case anyone thought that Washington’s recent moves to modify its policy toward Cuba mean the imperialist monster has suddenly mellowed, the White House, State Department, FBI, CIA and Pentagon have all cleared up that misunderstanding.

To the cheers of the corporate media, from the virulently right-wing Fox News to the liberal-sounding New York Times, they all ganged up to launch more threats against the valiant Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

What is the supposed issue? Another piece of cynical Hollywood trash that claims to be just a “comedy” — about the U.S. assassinating the DPRK’s head of state.

There’s nothing fictional or funny about U.S. assassinations of foreign leaders. It’s been done too often. And this film even got the State Department’s official go-ahead. Now that an anonymous group of hackers called Guardians of Peace has allegedly retaliated by hacking into the website of the Sony Corporation, all branches of the capitalist state are blaming the DPRK and calling for blood.

Hacking is nothing unusual these days. Think Chase Bank, Home Depot, Target. But it is now Washington’s latest excuse for bellicose statements against the DPRK.

Did Obama make his strong statement against Korea partly to appease his far-right opponents, who are fuming about Cuba? Maybe. That’s typical capitalist politics.

But the people of the DPRK take U.S. threats very seriously, and so should we. The U.S. war in Korea killed millions of Koreans, mostly civilians, and some 50,000 U.S. military personnel. What the U.S. has done to Korea is no laughing matter. The Korean people have sacrificed and fought long and hard to defend their national sovereignty. The head of state, Kim Jong Un, is the embodiment and symbol of their national identity.

Sony withdrew the film and was criticized by Obama for doing so, as though this were somehow a surrender of “freedom of speech” and “artistic integrity.” But we haven’t heard a peep from the self-designated defenders of free speech in the U.S. government about the repression in U.S.-occupied south Korea under the National Security Act, which makes it a crime to publish or say anything positive about the DPRK.

The U.S. has never ended its state of war against the DPRK. We must elevate the struggle here to demand that Washington sign a peace treaty and withdraw its troops from south Korea, so the Korean people can determine their own destiny.

The struggle against the imperialist domination of other countries is integral to the struggles at home for good-paying jobs, against racism, sexism and anti-lesbian-gay-bi-trans-queer bigotry, mass incarceration, police murders and the persecution of immigrants.

No justice, no peace, no racist police! No foreign occupations, bring the troops home now! □

LOS ANGELES

How movement won Ethnic Studies



PART 2 of an interview that Jefferson Azevedo of *Workers World* conducted with Ron Gochez of *Unión del Barrio* in Los Angeles after a popular struggle won a district-wide Ethnic Studies program.

Workers World: We know that the adoption of Ethnic Studies in the schools of Los Angeles is due probably mostly to your work and your organization’s work. How did you do it?

Ron Gochez: Many other people have been doing this since the 1960s in Los Angeles and many other cities: fighting for Chicano studies, African-American studies and others. We believe that, right now, it was a political moment when we can get it passed in Los Angeles to make it a requirement for all students. LAUSD [Los Angeles Unified School District] already has Ethnic Studies classes; the difference is that they elect those and they’re not a requirement. If the schools and principal sees it as an elective, they don’t feel it’s necessary to offer these classes and most schools don’t.

So we gathered a coalition of students, educators, parents, community members, community activists, and we did a campaign. We collected thousands of signatures for online petitions, made hard-copy petitions, passed them out to students throughout the district, and they collected more than 6,000 signatures. We raised funds for this campaign online, made

people in the community aware, met individually with board members, told them the importance of Ethnic Studies to convince them that this was something they should support. We were, obviously, successful. It involved many different people and different organizations.

The day of the vote, we had to make sure that the board understood that we had a lot of community support. We had at least six buses that went to different high schools and Cal State Los Angeles to pick up students. We brought teachers, different community organizations and on the day of the board meeting — on that Tuesday — we had, at least, a thousand people there.

We packed the room full of our people. We had the red shirts that read “Ethnic Studies now!” and there were so many people on the outside that we actually did a picket line around the entire building. We know that they were very, very clear that we were out there. We contacted the media, we got letters of support from professors from all over the country, letters of support from organizations and even from political elected officials.

Now that the board has passed the resolution to have Ethnic Studies, the next

part is we have to continue the struggle; we are not done yet. We have to continue to make sure that they provide the funding for the program, that they hire the teachers for the program, that they implement it in all the high schools by the year of 2019. We can’t back off and expect everything to happen.

WW: When will it take effect?

RG: It has to be fully implemented by the year of 2019. We are right on the corner — it’s 2015 — so it’s a four-year plan. For the next couple of years, there is going to be a pilot program where some of the schools will participate. They will have Ethnic Studies, and we are going to be creating the curriculum. There is also a committee that is going to be formed that will lead this work. By 2019, every single high school student in Los Angeles Unified School District will need at least one semester of Ethnic Studies to graduate from high school.

WW: A lot of young people got involved in the demonstration and helped to organize it. How?

RG: At schools, we contacted student organizations like MEChA [Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán], or other groups were already there as natural allies. They wanted to join. We also contacted other very progressive teachers and asked them if they could help. The students went out to gather signatures and made posters. On the day of the event, the adults provid-

ed the buses and all the transportation; the students provided the people.

The majority of the people were young people, and it was a beautiful experience because they saw what can happen when the community organizes itself, that we can win if we organize. The next day, when they were at school, that was all they were talking about. They told me, “Look, I’m not going to have these classes because we are going to graduate soon, but my little brother, my little cousins will.” One student said, “When I have kids, some day, they are going to have Ethnic Studies classes.”

WW: There were many people with placards and signs that had the figures of Black Panther Party leaders, [Mexican hero Emiliano] Zapata and other figures of the social-revolutionary movement. Why was that?

RG: In the Black Panther Party, one of the main demands was for education where students can learn about their true history. The Black Panthers are one of those groups not really taught about enough in our U.S. history classes. In that spirit of community organization, of self-determination, different organizations came and some brought placards of the Black Panthers — which was really powerful — and Zapata and others.

We are bringing these historic figures

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Statement on Brooklyn, N.Y., shootings:

Uprising must stay strong

Continued from page 1

justify ratcheting up repression against the masses.

That said, we also know that anger over police repression and murder is so deep that it should come as no surprise to anyone that somebody would, sooner or later, act on that burning rage. Especially when the so-called justice system demonstrates time after time after time that police can, and do, murder with impunity.

Neither do we forget that 99.9 percent of the violence comes from the police.

'No repression against the movement'

From this point on, the establishment media and all who benefit from or serve the system will insist that we forget that the police have been waging a racist, violent and deadly war against Black and Brown people, especially young people.

The new narrative coming from on high will be that the murders of Mi-

chael Brown, Eric Garner, Akai Gurley, Tamir Rice, Ramarley Graham, Aiyana Stanley-Jones, John Crawford III and thousands of other young people of color don't matter anymore.

We are about to witness a no-holds-barred campaign to criminalize and break the powerful movement sparked by Ferguson, Mo., which every day has brought many thousands of people into the streets of cities and towns across the country.

The rhetoric from rulers about "respecting the right to protest" will be replaced with "the protesters are guilty of murder" — and so the right to protest will be revoked.

The strength of the uprising has rocked the system and weakened the capacity of the police to crack down on the protests, which, after all, is the ultimate goal of the police. How else can they continue their war against Black and Brown people?

Let us not forget: It is the police who kill without mercy, without regret, with-

out concern for the families of their victims. It is the police who function like a gang, alien and hostile to most of society that's not privileged by class or race.

The only concern of the police is that their violence, their cover-ups and lies not be questioned.

The people who really value all life, who want a world free of repression, violence and all forms of injustice, are the people who have been marching with signs that say "Black Lives Matter." It is within this tremendous new movement against police violence that genuine humanity and the understanding of the pain of those who must face the holidays without their slain loved ones are rooted.

Most importantly, we must not let what happened in Brooklyn on Dec. 20 be used to destroy, harm or shake this movement for justice. We demand no escalation of repression against the movement.

This movement is the hope of the future. The oppressors hate it and fear it. We must see that it is not set back. □

Mexico's drug wars: Made in USA

Continued from page 9

da Initiative/Plan Mexico at a cost of \$3 billion. Now, U.S.-piloted aircraft and drones fly deep into Mexico, and not just along the border. And Washington trains thousands of Mexican troops and security officers.

According to U.S. law enforcement and intelligence officials, Washington collaborates with vetted Mexican security units. All this is not well-known because the Mexican Constitution forbids foreign military and law enforcement agents from operating in Mexico. Officials want to keep this from coming into public view. Not surprisingly, none of these relationships have stopped or slowed the drug war.

In reality, the U.S. contributes to the drug war in Mexico. The U.S. military and intelligence forces inside that country work with and influence Mexico's police force, and they interact with the drug gangs.

The U.S. is not really helping to combat the drug-related violence in Mexico. The opposite is true. U.S. imperialism is only furthering the suffering caused by the drug war and has no interest in stopping it — no matter how brutal it is for Mexico's workers and poor people.

Washington will keep repressive forces in Mexico to ensure that U.S. corporate profits continue to flow from the

labor of Mexican workers, but not to improve or protect their lives. The lives of the Mexican masses do not matter to U.S. imperialism.

Their lives do matter, however, to the workers and oppressed people of the world who stand with them against the Colossus to the North. □

Raise wages for people with disabilities!

During Workers World Party's National Conference in New York on Nov. 15-16, some of the participants took advantage of a lunch break to picket in front of a nearby building housing Goodwill Industries. The issue was how Goodwill, which cultivates the reputation of helping people with disabilities, actually exploits them quite shamefully.

Edward Yudelovich, an organizer of the protest and a co-chair of his union's Committee on People with Disabilities, explained to the conference that the Fair Labor Standards Act, which established the minimum wage, excludes people with disabilities, as well as prisoners, immigrants and domestic workers. This has resulted in abysmally low wages for many workers at Goodwill.

He pointed out that when the Attica prisoners rose in rebellion in September 1971 against inhuman conditions, their demands included "Apply the New York State minimum wage law to all state institutions" and "Stop slave labor."

Many of the people imprisoned in the U.S., he informed, "are people with disabilities who are regularly subjected to abuse, beatings, torture, denial of properly prescribed medication when it is medically necessary, and minimal accommodations to their disabilities."



WW PHOTO

Yudelovich cited the case of Jerome Murdough, a homeless African-American veteran, mentally disabled, "who was baked to death at Rikers Island in February while on anti-psychotic and anti-seizure medication, which made him more vulnerable to the over-100 degrees heat in his cell. Murdough had been arrested

for trespassing in the stairwell of a city housing project to escape the cold."

He also invoked the words of Karl Marx to describe the world we are fighting for, one in which society's wealth is distributed "from each according to our abilities, to each according to our needs."

— Deirdre Griswold

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so that people have pride in our history. It's beautiful to see young people holding up placards of historical figures, who now they see as heroes, that before, in regular history classes, they never would have heard of.

WW: I see that Ethnic Studies are very important for the movement. Why?

RG: [Besides what I already said], students should take their history and take their schools in their communities and realize that they are all theirs and that it is their responsibility to be active, to become involved. When the students see the videos of the Black Panthers, see the videos of the walkouts from the 1970s in East LA, they are going to see young people who were very active, and we believe that having Ethnic Studies will create more students who are more politicized, more active in their communities, who are going to want to go to college so they can become professionals, but come back to the community to help the community.

Ethnic Studies classes are so important because they provide that space that just does not exist otherwise. When thousands of students throughout the district take that, I really believe that it is going to make a difference to society. I think it will help the social justice movement. □

Lucha de clases se agudiza en México y Puerto Rico

Continúa de página 12

alto impacto y entregar resultados finales sostenibles".

El 15 de diciembre se presentará el plan de Donahue, no al pueblo de Puerto Rico sino a los tenedores de bonos en Nueva York. Despide trabajadoras/es, disminuye los beneficios para jubiladas/os, aumenta las facturas de electricidad y elimina los subsidios y las plantas generadoras.

A través de sus empresas consultoras, Wall Street también pretende privatizar la educación en Puerto Rico. El año pasado, el Boston Consulting Group dictaminó que se cerraran 100 escuelas públicas. A

WORKERS WORLD MUNDO OBRERO

pesar de la resistencia de los sindicatos de maestros, estudiantes y sus familias, se cerraron 70 escuelas. Esta vez, el BCG va a la yugular, designando el cierre de 580 escuelas, o alrededor de un tercio de todas las escuelas públicas de PR.

Pero ni el régimen colonial ni sus amos de Wall Street deben esperar un camino de rosas. Los sindicatos se han comprometido a luchar y vencer. El 14 de diciembre muchas/os maestros y sindicatos

relacionados con la educación marcharon por las calles de Viejo San Juan distribuyendo información sobre estos ataques y sobre la demanda por una educación pública gratuita. Terminaron en la casa del gobernador donde él se negó a recibirlos, por lo que entregaron una declaración con sus demandas a una de sus ayudantes.

El año 2015 promete ser un año de gran sufrimiento para las masas puertorriqueñas, con más migración a EUA, pero también — y sobre todo — con un aumento en la combatividad de los sindicatos de orientación clasista. □



El pueblo cubano celebran regreso de los Cinco.

Victoria: 5 cubanos unidos y libres en Cuba

Por Cheryl LaBash
17 de diciembre de 2014

El gobierno de EUA ha hecho lo que repetidamente juró que nunca haría: ha liberado al último de los 5 cubanos. Hoy, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero y Gerardo Hernández fueron finalmente liberados de cárceles estadounidenses después de más de 16 años de encarcelamiento injusto. René González y Fernando González ya habían servido la totalidad de sus penas y habían regresado a Cuba.

Quienes Gerardo Hernández denominó “el jurado de millones”, que había organizado piquetes, escrito cartas, firmado peticiones, recogido dinero para anuncios en periódicos, investigado, protestado a parlamentarios, escalado montañas, montado bicicletas, Twitter, escrito poemas, obras de teatro, canciones y más en todos los rincones del globo—se regocijó. El dedicado pueblo cubano dio la bienvenida alegremente a sus héroes: los cinco hombres que sacrificaron tanto para protegerlos de los ataques terroristas lanzados desde territorio de EUA durante la década de 1990.

Sólo podemos imaginar la alegría de sus familias. Un tribunal de Miami y el gobierno estadounidense esperaba que Gerardo muriera en prisión después de ser condenado a dos cadenas perpetuas más 15 años.

Hoy, dice el Comité Internacional por la libertad de los 5 “Gerardo se ha reunido con Adriana, Ramón está de vuelta con Elizabeth y sus tres hermosas hijas y Antonio está con su madre Mirta, la inspiración incansable de esta lucha, que temía que con sus 84 años de edad

moriría antes de ver a su hijo en Cuba”.

El Partido Workers World-Mundo Obrero y muchas organizadoras/es dedicados en EUA comparten este momento extraordinario y alegre de victoria.

El abrir las puertas de la prisión para los Héroes cubanos fue sólo una parte de la historia hoy. El discurso difundido del presidente Barack Obama indica “trazar un nuevo curso en Cuba” afirmando que “Hoy en día, estamos renovando nuestro liderazgo en las Américas”. Washington tiene puestos sus ojos en la Cumbre de las Américas de abril en Panamá.

Pero un proyecto de ley que impone sanciones a Venezuela Bolivariana está en el escritorio de Obama. ¿Lo vetará como parte de este nuevo curso? [Nota de redacción: Al día siguiente de la publicación de este artículo, Obama lo firmó] La administración Obama reconoció el gobierno golpista de Honduras, que ha llevado a miles de niños a huir de la violenta represión. ¿Dejará de ingeniar golpes y dictaduras en América Latina? ¿Y el papel de EUA en destruir la economía mexicana y convertirla en un campo de muerte? Y, especialmente, ¿EUA pondrá fin a su bloqueo de Cuba?

Por más de dos años la presión para este momento iba aumentando en EUA. Reflejando esta presión, siete editoriales del New York Times en los últimos meses han abogado por un cambio en la política estadounidense hacia Cuba. Prensa Asociada publicó una serie que expone a Alan Gross, el contratista de la USAID—a menudo utilizado como cubierta para las operaciones de la CIA—que fue condenado por un tribunal cubano por haber instalado ilegalmente y en secreto dispositivos

de comunicación militar en la isla en violación a las leyes y la soberanía de Cuba.

Cuba liberó a Gross tan pronto como los Cinco regresaron a casa, citando razones humanitarias.

La AP continuó su investigación de las fallidas tácticas de cambio de régimen de EUA, incluyendo el sitio de twitter “cubano” Zunzuneo—otro programa de USAID—y la reciente infiltración de artistas de hip-hop cubano intentando usarlos para socavar la autodeterminación de Cuba.

Las encuestas han mostrado que ahora el sentimiento en Miami favorece cambiar la política estadounidense hacia Cuba aún más fuertemente que en el resto de EUA. Desde 1992, la Asamblea General de la ONU ha votado casi unánimemente cada año por que EUA ponga fin al bloqueo.

Como Obama mismo admitió en su discurso, por más de cinco décadas EUA ha intentado “empujar a Cuba hacia el colapso”. Y admitió que no funcionó.

Desarrollo a pesar de hostilidad imperialista

El desarrollo en el hemisferio ha avanzado a pesar de las maquinaciones de EUA.

América Latina y el Caribe, incluyendo Cuba, han forjado muchos niveles que entrelazan la unidad continental a través de la CELAC y la ALBA. Al mismo tiempo, EUA todavía es incapaz de recuperarse de su colapso económico 2007-2008, especialmente respecto a los empleos. Los miembros del sindicato de estibadores informan que el puerto de Tampa, Florida, está subutilizado, mientras que en Cuba, el nuevo puerto automatizado de

contenedores en Mariel está preparado para manejar enormes barcos de Asia.

Mientras el bloqueo siga, es el comercio de EUA con Cuba que sufre, mientras que el comercio entre Cuba y otros países continúa a sólo 90 millas de distancia. ¿Cuánto tiempo los bancos europeos seguirán pagando las multas impuestas por Estados Unidos para el manejo de las transacciones financieras cubanas? El antiguo sistema de sanciones impuesto por Washington se ha vuelto insostenible.

El pueblo de EUA también ha sufrido desde el bloqueo. No ha podido conocer la realidad cubana: que es posible hacer mucho, incluso con escasos recursos, cuando el poder del pueblo se libera del capitalismo.

En EUA, un nuevo movimiento militante dirigido por jóvenes negros está desafiando el racismo y la represión incrustada en el capitalismo. ¿No querrán aprender cómo una buena educación y cuidado de salud pueden hacerse disponibles sin endeudar a las/os jóvenes y trabajadores? Realmente querrán ver cómo es posible un mundo diferente. ¿Y no podría beneficiar a Detroit saber lo que Cuba puede ofrecer?

El pueblo cubano y particularmente el Partido Comunista de Cuba, están comprometidos con el socialismo — haciendo el objetivo de la producción social las necesidades y el bienestar de los seres humanos, no ganancias para unos pocos. Están muy conscientes y son capaces de lidiar con los desafíos venideros. Ahora hay cinco líderes adicionales, probados por largos años de encarcelamiento en EUA, que pueden ayudar a trazar este nuevo futuro. □

Lucha de clases se agudiza en México y Puerto Rico

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

16 de diciembre — Dos meses después de la desaparición de los 43 normalistas en Ayotzinapa, el presidente Enrique Peña Nieto finalmente visitó esa región el 4 de diciembre. Fue, no para ofrecer apoyo a las familias de las/os estudiantes, sino para inaugurar un puente que había sido dañado por un huracán en septiembre de 2013 y para anunciar algunas iniciativas económicas.

Peña Nieto ignoró las masivas y ahora generalizadas protestas que han barrido México condenando la falta de una acción eficaz por el gobierno para encontrar a las/os estudiantes desaparecidos y totalmente investigar y castigar a los culpables. En cambio, pidió al pueblo mexicano “superar” Ayotzinapa y “avanzar”. Estas palabras agregaron furia a las masas de personas que exigen su renuncia.

Tres días después, el equipo forense argentino involucrado en la identificación de las muestras humanas supuestamente encontradas en un basurero en Cocula, reportó que un laboratorio de genética en Austria había identificado restos de uno de los 43 estudiantes, Alexander Mora. Según muchos especialistas en México, sin embargo, eso no prueba que el resto de los estudiantes estén muertos. Por lo

tanto, siguen exigiendo del régimen: “Encontrarlos con vida”.

Mediante una interpretación racional de los hechos, un equipo de científicos de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma (UNAM) refutó las afirmaciones del gobierno de que los estudiantes habían sido incinerados y sus cenizas puestas en bolsas encontradas en un río — reclamaciones basadas únicamente en el testimonio de tres presuntos testigos. Los científicos afirmaron que la temperatura necesaria para incinerar un cuerpo humano era imposible lograrla a través de los métodos que la Procuraduría informó.

Desde sus inicios, familiares de las/os estudiantes y otros manifestantes han acusado al gobierno de encubrir las desapariciones.

La solidaridad con Ayotzinapa ha sido internacional, incluso desde EUA, y no sólo de las/os mexicanos en el exterior sino de diversas organizaciones también.

El 10 de diciembre el caso de Ayotzinapa llegó a millones de personas por todo el mundo cuando Adán Cortés Salas, un estudiante de la UNAM que viajó a Oslo, se puso de pie y caminó frente a Malala Yousafzai justo después de que ella recibiera el Premio Nobel, gritando: “Por favor, Malala, México” mientras llevaba una bandera mexicana manchada de rojo.

Crisis capitalista afecta pueblo pobre y trabajador en Puerto Rico

El año 2014 trajo un aumento de los ataques a las personas pobres y a las/os trabajadoras en Puerto Rico como resultado de su condición colonial que está profundamente afectada por la crisis capitalista dirigida por EUA. Al terminar el año, el gobierno colonial encabezado por Alejandro García Padilla ha impuesto varias medidas antipopulares, incluyendo un aumento del impuesto sobre el petróleo y derivados de \$9,25 a la colosal cifra de \$15,50 por barril. “La crudita” como se le conoce en la isla tanto como un nombre descriptivo por el petróleo crudo y como crueldad, fue aprobada tanto por la Cámara de Representantes como por el Senado.

Según el gobernador García Padilla, esto es necesario para financiar al Banco Gubernamental de Fomento el cual es el principal órgano fiscal que provee de fondos a entidades desde municipios a proyectos especiales del gobierno. Estos incluyen asociaciones público-privadas, carreteras y transporte público, etc. Al igual que muchas instituciones del gobierno, éste se ha caracterizado por mala dirección y corrupción — una parte inherente del capitalismo.

Este aumento de impuestos no sólo

afectará el precio de la gasolina sino que será un golpe para todo el sector de la energía — la base del desarrollo en la isla. La agencia nacional de energía, la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica de Puerto Rico (AEE), ha sido marcada para la privatización por mucho tiempo. Este proyecto ha fracasado hasta la fecha gracias a las acciones de sus trabajadoras/es, organizados en el sindicato clasista UTIER.

Una vez más García Padilla ha obedecido a Wall Street y sus tenedores de bonos al firmar contratos con empresas “consultoras” estadounidenses. También está intentando, sin éxito, resolver la terrible insolvencia del gobierno cuyo crédito ha sido calificado como “basura” por agencias estadounidenses.

Una de las que ofrece consultoría es Lisa Donahue, directora gerente de AlixPartners. Ella no habla español y recibe \$9,7 millones como oficial de reestructura fiscal y de operaciones. Según su sitio web, “AlixPartners es líder de asesoría de negocios globales con profesionales orientados a obtener resultados que se especializan en la creación de valores y la restauración del rendimiento en todas las etapas del ciclo de vida de los negocios. Nos esforzamos en nuestra capacidad de hacer una diferencia en las situaciones de

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