



PHOTO: ROBERTO MERCADO
 People's lawyer, Lynne Stewart and poet Amina Baraka celebrate achievements of Cuban Revolution, Jan. 3 in NYC.

'Reclaim MLK Day'

Resist killer cops in 2015

By Kris Hamel

The end-of-the-year holiday season in the United States did not slow down the "Black Lives Matter" demonstrations demanding justice for the victims of racist police brutality and killings.

Since the exonerations of cop Darren Wilson, killer of 18-year-old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo., and cops in Staten Island, N.Y., for their murder caught on videotape of Eric Garner, protests have continued across the U.S. Protesters in New York, Los Angeles, Boston, San Francisco, Oakland, Calif., Atlanta, Cleveland, Detroit and Houston linked these and other cases of police killings and racist atrocities around the country.

'No business as usual' for shoppers, cops

On Dec. 20, the largest megamall in the U.S., Mall of America in Bloomington, Minn., was taken over by several thousand protesters who crowded the main rotunda on one of the busiest shopping days of the year. They chanted, "No justice, no shopping!" and "While you're on your shopping spree, Black people can't breathe," in reference to Garner, along with "Hands up, don't shoot," recalling the murder of Brown.

"Quickly, the mall went into partial lockdown, closing its north and east entrances and locking about 80 stores, trapping some customers inside." (Associated Press, Dec. 20) Riot-clad police arrested 26 people, most for misdemeanors, while the Bloomington city attorney has announced she will seek charges against the leaders of Black Lives Matter, which organized the demonstration. (mprnews.org, Dec. 29)

Actions took place across the U.S. on New Year's Eve. Protesters in St. Louis planned a sit-in inside the lobby of police headquarters. They shouted and pushed their way through the doors "only to be met by a line of aggressive police and pepper spray." (stltoday.com, Jan. 4) The demonstrators posted an eviction notice demanding the cops vacate the premises and relinquish power. About two dozen activists were cited for various alleged acts associated with the protest.

Ferguson activists: 'Reclaim MLK'

The Ferguson Action Team held a national planning meeting by conference call on Jan. 3. "The main focus was on a national effort to reclaim MLK Day weekend in the rebellious spirit of Dr. King and the movement behind him," said participant Monica Moorehead, representing the Peoples Power Assembly. "Ferguson activists asked for everyone's renewed efforts this year to ensure their demands for justice are met."

She reported that FAT leaders stated, "This means sustained actions, deeper commitments, and further outreach to everyone in our communities. Let's make 2015 a 'Year of Resistance for Black Lives.'"

Activists around the U.S. are focusing on three dates

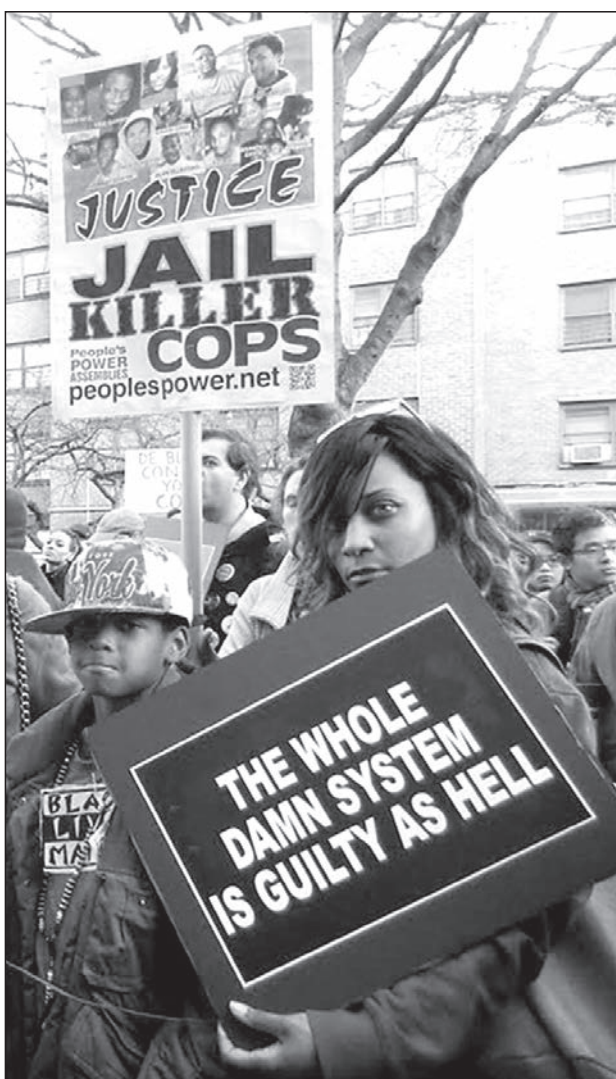
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Mall of America, Bloomington, Minn. Dec. 20.



Madison, Wisc., Dec. 27.



East New York, Brooklyn, N.Y., Dec. 27.

PHOTO: FIGHT BACK! NEWS

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Youth activists condemn police state



Four leaders of the youth group Fight Imperialism, Stand Together spoke at a joint forum sponsored by FIST and Workers World Party on Jan. 2 at the Solidarity Center in New York City. The forum was entitled, "Smash the low-wage police state." The main presentations were given by (from left to right), Nick Maniace on "Hollywood's racist attack on the Korean revolution"; Ramiro Fúnez on "Wall Street's school to

prison pipeline"; Claudia Palacios on "A brief history of police in the United States"; and Caleb Maupin on "Low wages, police terror and the need for revolution."

These four talks can be viewed at: youtu.be/TzfUoXZWrOU, youtu.be/Sfb7HhHku8o, youtu.be/53E_nE24A7o and youtu.be/u3JPak_Jw1A.

— Photo and caption by Monica Moorehead



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Workers built it all — it belongs to society, not to a handful of billionaires! But we need a revolution to make that change. That's why for 56 years WWP has been building a revolutionary party of the working class inside the belly of the beast.

We fight every kind of oppression. Racism, sexism,

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

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

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Vol. 57, No. 2 • Jan. 15, 2015
Closing date: Jan. 6, 2015

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Workers World (ISSN-1070-4205) is published weekly except the first week of January by WW Publishers, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl., New York, NY 10011. Phone: 212.627.2994. Subscriptions: One year: \$30; institutions: \$35. Letters to the editor may be condensed and edited. Articles can be freely reprinted, with credit to Workers World, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl., New York, NY 10011. Back issues and individual articles are available on microfilm and/or photocopy from NA Publishing, Inc, P.O. Box 998, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-0998. A searchable archive is available on the Web at www.workers.org.

A headline digest is available via e-mail subscription. Subscription information is at workers.org/email.php. Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Workers World, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl. New York, N.Y. 10011.

Mario Cuomo's hidden legacy: 30 prisons

By Stephen Millies

Former New York Gov. Mario Cuomo, who died Jan. 1, had more jails under his authority than all the other New York state governors put together. All 30 jails built during his three administrations are concentration camps for poor people. That's not the legacy emphasized in the fawning obituaries of the capitalist media, but it's Mario Cuomo's real legacy as New York governor from 1983 to 1995.

Most of these prisons were built hundreds of miles away from the state's population centers of New York City and Buffalo. Families of prisoners — if they can even afford the trip — have to spend many hours on a bus to visit their loved ones.

These prisons were also largely built in poor white areas, like Ogdensburg, where factories and other workplaces had closed. Their local economies began to revolve around locking up Black and Latino/a men and women.

Capitulating to racism in Queens

Mario Cuomo first came to public attention in 1972. A racist mobilization had been instigated in the Forest Hills section of Queens against the construction of public housing. The leader of the bigots was real estate shark Jerry Birsch.

Youth Against War and Fascism, the then youth organization of Workers World Party, organized demonstrations

in Forest Hills against these bigots.

At stake was whether public housing would continue to be located only in segregated areas. Often public housing was built next to dangerous railroad tracks, like Curries Woods in Jersey City or the Fairfield Homes in Baltimore.

Mario Cuomo was appointed by New York City Mayor John Lindsay to negotiate with the racists. Cuomo capitulated to them by cutting in half the size of the development, which was turned into a publicly owned cooperative. Sixteen years later only one-seventh of the co-op's residents were Black.

Lindsay and Cuomo stabbed Simeon Golar, the first African-American chairperson of the New York City Housing Authority, in the back. Golar had fought valiantly for integrated housing.

Mario Cuomo ran against Ed Koch in the Democratic Party primary for New York City mayor in 1977. That July, a rebellion broke out against racism and poverty.

The wealthy class wanted revenge. Appealing to racists, Koch demanded that the electric chair be brought back. To his credit, Cuomo was against the death penalty and as governor vetoed bills that would have reinstated it.

But suddenly during the 1977 campaign, signs appeared in Queens with the gay-baiting slogan, "Vote for Cuomo, not the Homo." Koch still beat Cuomo in the primary and went on to be elected may-

or. There's no way Mario Cuomo couldn't have known about the hate signs on Queens Boulevard. But Koch's sexuality was his own business.

Over a hundred people would be killed by New York cops while Koch was in City Hall. Among them was the 66-year-old grandmother, Eleanor Bumpurs. Koch closed Harlem's Sydenham Hospital and tried to bust the 1980 subway strike.

A history of betrayal

In 1982, Mario Cuomo beat Ed Koch in the Democratic primary for governor. A key factor was Black and Latino/a voters who despised Koch's open racism.

How did Cuomo repay these voters? With homelessness soaring, Cuomo spent over \$8 billion to build his concentration camps aka prisons.

This money was stolen from the state's Urban Development Corporation, which had been set up to build low cost housing. The legislative act that established the UDC was deliberately passed on the day of Dr. King's funeral, to honor him.

Cuomo, instead, spit on Dr. King's memory and built 30 prisons.

Mario Cuomo even endorsed Reagan's appointment of Antonin Scalia to the U.S. Supreme Court. Scalia is a fascist who claims torture isn't unconstitutional.

With Cuomo's help, Scalia was confirmed in the U.S. Senate by a vote of 98-0. Scalia may have been the decisive

vote in denying Georgia death-row prisoner Troy Davis a reprieve from the death penalty in a case that many, including the NAACP, believed was unproven. By helping to get Scalia on the Supreme Court, Mario Cuomo also helped to execute Troy Davis on Sept. 21, 2011.

Cuomo betrayed his fellow Democrat David Dinkins by helping to put super racist Rudy Giuliani in City Hall. Cuomo authorized a referendum on whether Staten Island should secede from New York City on the same day as the mayoral election in 1993.

Holding this phony referendum on Staten Island guaranteed a massive turnout of white racists to vote for Giuliani. David Dinkins, the only African-American mayor in New York City's history, was narrowly defeated for re-election. Dinkins won every borough except Staten Island.

The following year the Republican Giuliani endorsed the Democrat Cuomo for re-election as governor. But he still lost to Republican George Pataki.

Democrats continue to betray Black, Latino/a and Asian voters. Missouri's Democratic governor, Jay Nixon, refused to appoint a special prosecutor in the murder of Michael Brown, guaranteeing the grand jury's failure to indict. Andrew Cuomo, Mario's son and the current New York governor, also refused, in the police killing of Eric Garner, to appoint a special prosecutor. □

Assata Shakur's open letter: 'I am a 20th century escaped slave'

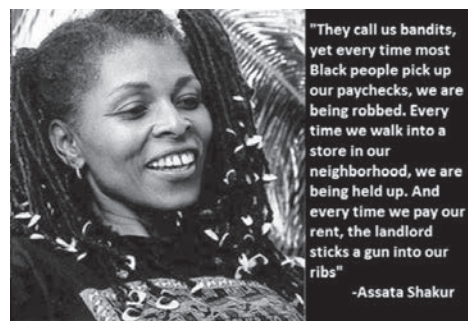
By Assata Shakur

Excerpts are from an open letter written on Oct. 5, 2013 and reissued on Dec. 30, 2014. Go to workers.org to read the entire letter. The Cuban government, under the leadership of President Raul Castro Ruz, has reiterated its intention of not extraditing Assata Shakur back to the U.S. The FBI put out a \$2 million bounty for the return of Shakur to the U.S. in 2013.

My name is Assata Shakur, and I am a 20th century escaped slave. Because of government persecution, I was left with no other choice than to flee from the political repression, racism and violence that dominate the U.S. government's policy towards people of color. I am an ex-political prisoner, and I have been living in exile in Cuba since 1984.

In the 1960s, I participated in various struggles: the Black liberation movement, the student rights movement and the movement to end the war in Vietnam. I joined the Black Panther Party. By 1969, the Black Panther Party had become the number one organization targeted by the FBI's Cointelpro program. Because the Black Panther Party demanded the total liberation of Black people, J. Edgar Hoover called it "the greatest threat to the internal security of the country" and vowed to destroy it and its leaders and activists.

In 1978, my case was one of many cases bought before the United Nations Organization in a petition filed by the National Conference of Black Lawyers, the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression and the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, exposing the existence of polit-



ical prisoners in the United States, their political persecution, and the cruel and inhuman treatment they receive in U.S. prisons.

On May 2, 1973, I along with Zayd Malik Shakur and Sundiata Acoli were stopped on the New Jersey Turnpike, supposedly for a "faulty tail light." Sundiata Acoli got out of the car to determine why we were stopped. Zayd and I remained in the car. State trooper Harper then came to the car, opened the door and began to question us.

Because we were Black and riding in a car with Vermont license plates, he claimed he became "suspicious." He then drew his gun, pointed it at us and told us to put our hands up in the air, in front of us, where he could see them. I complied and in a split second, there was a sound that came from outside the car, there was a sudden movement, and I was shot once with my arms held up in the air, and then once again from the back.

Zayd Malik Shakur was later killed, trooper Werner Foerster was killed, and even though trooper Harper admitted that he shot and killed

Zayd Malik Shakur, under the New Jersey felony murder law, I was charged with killing both Zayd Malik Shakur, who was my closest friend and comrade, and charged in the death of trooper Foerster.

Although he was also unarmed, and the gun that killed trooper Foerster was found under Zayd's leg, Sundiata Acoli, who was captured later, was also charged with both deaths. Neither Sundiata Acoli nor I ever received a fair trial. We were both convicted in the news media way before our trials. No news media were ever permitted to interview us, although the New Jersey police and the FBI fed stories to the press on a daily basis. In 1977, I was convicted by an all-white jury and sentenced to life plus 33 years in prison. In 1979, fearing that I would be murdered in prison, and knowing that I would never receive any justice, I was liberated from prison, aided by committed comrades who understood the depths of the injustices in my case, and who were also extremely fearful for my life.

The U.S. Senate's 1976 Church Commission report on intelligence operations inside the USA, revealed that, "The

FBI has attempted covertly to influence the public's perception of persons and organizations by disseminating derogatory information to the press, either anonymously or through 'friendly' news contacts." This same policy is evidently still very much in effect today.

After years of being victimized by the "establishment" media it was naive of me to hope that I might finally get the opportunity to tell "my side of the story." Instead of an interview with me, what took place was a "staged media event" in three parts, full of distortions, inaccuracies and outright lies. NBC purposely misrepresented the facts.

Like most poor and oppressed people in the United States, I do not have a voice. Black people, poor people in the U.S., have no real freedom of speech, no real freedom of expression and very little freedom of the press. The Black press and the progressive media have historically played an essential role in the struggle for social justice. We need to continue and to expand that tradition. We need to create media outlets that help to educate our people and our children and not annihilate their minds. □

MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper. Edited by Monica Moorehead.

Racism, National Oppression & Self-Determination Larry Holmes

Black Labor from Chattel Slavery to Wage Slavery Sam Marcy

Black Youth: Repression & Resistance Leilani Dowell

The Struggle for Socialism Is Key Monica Moorehead

Black & Brown Unity: A Pillar of Struggle for Human Rights & Global Justice! Saladin Muhammad

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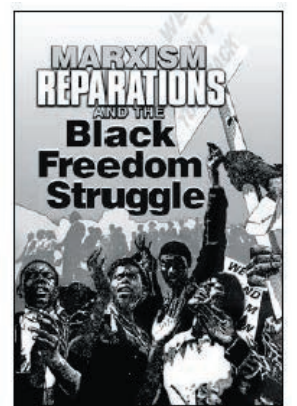
Harriet Tubman, Woman Warrior Mumia Abu-Jamal

Are Conditions Ripe Again Today? 40th Anniversary of the 1965 Watts Rebellion John Parker

Racism and Poverty in the Delta Larry Hales

Domestic Workers United Demand Passage of a Bill of Rights Imani Henry

Available at most online bookstores



GRAPHIC: SAHU BARRON

How capitalism ravaged Detroit

Excerpt from talk by **Jerry Goldberg** at the national WWP conference in New York City, Nov. 15-16, 2014.

If anyone has any doubt that this system is overripe for a socialist revolution, we invite them to come to Detroit and look at what capitalism has done.

When our branch was founded in 1970, Detroit was a city where the Black Liberation and workers' movements found a synthesis with the role of Black workers in the auto plants. The ideological development of the struggle was at a very high level. The Black Revolutionary Union Movement had a Marxist foundation; Marxists were elected to the City Council and as judges. We had a mayor who, although he was bourgeois in many ways, ran for

office showing his defiance of the House Un-American Activities Committee.

Detroit was a center of revolutionary struggle. And that is why it was targeted by the bourgeoisie for an unrelenting war on the workers.

In the 1970s and 80s when the auto companies introduced their restructuring with robotics and automation, they shut down virtually every assembly plant in the city.

By the late 1990s and early 2000s, Detroit's neighborhoods were coming back, housing prices were going back up, and Detroit had the highest homeownership rate in the country. What happened?

The banks came in with their predatory, racist, fraudulent loans. We had 67,000 mortgage foreclosures from 2005 to 2007

alone, and thousands more after that. The banks drove 250,000 people out of the city with their predatory lending policies.

But that wasn't enough for them. The banks involved the whole city in predatory loans called interest rate swaps. On a yearly basis starting in 2008, they robbed \$50 million from the treasury.

But that still wasn't enough. The banks decided to impose full austerity in the city by declaring a financial emergency and putting in an emergency manager, displacing the city government, and giving the emergency manager full power to break union contracts and take every benefit from the workers as long as payment of debt service to the banks was guaranteed.

That's what austerity is. Financial fascism. It's when Wall Street and the banks take direct control over cities, countries, states and impose their will at the workers' expense and throw out whatever democratic forms are in their way.

The real target of the emergency manager was the workers' pensions. So they took the city into bankruptcy. Michigan had the strongest constitutional guarantee of pensions in the country, but bourgeois legality means nothing when the banks want their way. So the bankruptcy judge said the state guarantee doesn't apply here.

On Nov. 7, the court approved a "plan of adjustment" for Detroit. It dissolves \$7.1 billion of debt; \$5.8 billion of that comes from the pensioners, who've virtually lost their health care and are suffering cuts amounting to 40 percent to 50 percent of their deferred wages owed to them for their years of labor.

The role of revolutionaries

Now how did the capitalist system get away with that in Detroit? They did so because while there was broad opposition, including the unions and community organizations, that opposition was confined to a struggle about bourgeois democracy.

It was our party alone that said, "No, that's not enough; to fight austerity means to fight capitalism, to fight the banks that are bringing it in." We called for cancelling the debt to the banks, saying the banks owed us billions for the destruction they've caused.



WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

Jerry Goldberg

Without that revolutionary, anti-capitalist program, the unions and community groups eventually capitulated and went along with the retiree cuts, which will now set a precedent all over the country when Wall Street and the banks decide to go after pensions.

The lesson of Detroit is that what's needed is revolutionary organization to fight back. To the extent there was resistance to the bankruptcy, it was led by our party comrades.

We were the only group that went into the bankruptcy and said the banks don't deserve a damn thing. We forced that judge to take back \$200 million from the banks because of our intervention and being out in the street every day.

We brought the water shutoffs into the bankruptcy. We were demonstrating every week, and we forced the city to at least make serious concessions to keep water on — but not nearly enough, because water is a human right and the idea that anyone gets shut off is criminal.

It was our comrades who formed the Stop Theft of Our Pensions committee and organized a grass-roots group of pensioners who fought the city and banks to the bitter end. The cuts to the pensioners would have been a lot greater if it wasn't for the role of our comrades and those who joined them.

It's revolutionaries and communists who can fight, and we need more of them — we need to organize them. What will transform the unions? It isn't appeals to the top. It's grass-roots organizers — communist organizers from the bottom.

A revolutionary party doesn't just come from activism. It comes from openly declaring that socialism is the answer, while openly recruiting for the party, bringing that message wherever we can.

Let's overthrow this rotten system! Build a communist organization! Build Workers World Party! □

On the Picket Line

By Matty Starrdust and Sue Davis

States' minimum wage increases benefit millions of workers

Millions of low-wage workers in the U.S. will see an hourly pay increase in 2015, based on rising minimum wages in 23 states and the District of Columbia. For instance, voters in Alaska, Arkansas, Nebraska and South Dakota passed increases by ballot initiative. Ten state legislatures, including Maryland, Michigan and Minnesota, voted for increases. Nine states, including Arizona, Colorado and New Jersey, raised them as part of scheduled cost-of-living increases. Washington state now has the highest minimum wage at \$9.47 an hour, followed by Oregon at \$9.25. Workers in Massachusetts got a bump from \$8 to \$9. A total of 29 states now have a minimum wage higher than the federal minimum of \$7.25.

Increases for approximately 60 percent of the country's workforce are a hard won victory for millions of workers currently earning poverty wages. However, the increases in many states will initially provide only a few cents more per hour, with the majority of increases taking effect over coming months and years. Florida and Missouri only raised their minimums by 12 and 15 cents, respectively. Despite workers' clarion calls for livable wages, especially the \$15 an hour campaign, the Republican-controlled Congress will likely not heed their needs. (New York Times, Jan. 1)

Cablevision CEO found guilty of gross labor violations

On Dec. 5, a federal judge in New York found telecom provider Cablevision and its CEO, James Dolan, guilty of multiple labor law violations designed to prevent workers in Brooklyn and the Bronx from forming a union. Included are 22 illegal firings, bargaining in bad faith, and spying on, intimidating and harassing workers engaged in union organizing with the Communications Workers. Dolan first launched his anti-union attack some three years ago when technicians in Brooklyn voted to join the CWA. Amid ongoing contract negotiations, the workers welcomed the guilty verdict as a positive development in their continuing efforts to secure fair and just wages and union representation. (TheCablevision99.org, Dec. 5)

D.C. health care workers take wage thieves to court

As many as 6,000 home health care workers in Washington, D.C., are seeking class action status in a lawsuit filed Dec. 11 against three of the city's largest health care providers. The suit accuses Health Management Inc., Nursing Enterprises and Vizion One Inc. of widespread wage theft over three years. If successful, the lawsuit could award workers more than \$150 million in damages and back pay. The 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East announced that additional lawsuits will be filed. "For years, the home care agencies flagrantly violated the District of Columbia's basic wage and hour protections for workers," said Greg McGillivray, a lawyer representing the workers. "These lawsuits will help the home care workers recover the money that is owed to them." (dclabor.org, Dec. 12)

Part-time faculty at private colleges have right to organize

A December ruling by the National Labor Relations Board ensures that part-time faculty at private colleges and universities across the country have the right to unionize. The ruling settled a dispute between contingent faculty and administrators at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Wash., over whether those faculty are management and are therefore ineligible for union membership. According to the ruling, only faculty who have control over admission, academic programs, finances and personnel can be considered managerial. "This is a huge decision for higher ed, where 75 percent of us are now contingent faculty," said PLU lecturer Jane Harty. "We don't have any say in curriculum or any voice in faculty governance." (New York Times, Dec. 22)

AFT takes stand against Coca-Cola

In a laudable expression of international workers' solidarity, the executive board of the American Federation of Teachers, representing 1.6 million workers, passed a resolution Oct. 15 banning the sale of Coca-Cola products at AFT facilities and events. The resolution cites Coke's history of violence against union organizers in Colombia and Guatemala, its use of child labor on sugar plantations in El Salvador and the outsourcing of thousands of jobs at poverty wages. The resolution encourages AFT members to aid efforts banning Coke at their schools, hospitals and other workplaces. (KillerCoke.org, Nov. 16) Since the "Campaign to Stop Killer Coke" began in 2003, several dozen union locals and state and central labor councils have passed similar resolutions; AFT is the fifth international union to do so. □



By Mumia Abu-Jamal

Taken from a Dec. 23, 2014, audio column posted by prisonradio.org

Throughout much of modern American history, the seasons of mass demonstrations have been spring and summer.

Look at old black and white photos of the anti-war, civil rights and Black Power demonstrations of the 1960s and 1970s, and you'll see people in T-shirts, or simply dressed in shirts and jeans. The dress reflected the ease of the weather.

Like in old military theory, the ground (or terrain) is important when planning battles.

Now, look at today; hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people amass in biting cold: in wind, rain and even snow.

This is thus something new in social movements, perhaps enhanced by social media, but strengthened too by a deep sense that change must come to an intolerable situation: police violence against unarmed Black men and boys.

For, at the very core of every meaningful movement of the 20th century, has

Demonstrating respect

been the beating hearts of Black people, and let's face it, Black folks aren't fond of the cold. This should give us some sense of how deeply these issues resonate in Black minds.

Now, after the shootings of two cops in New York come calls from politicians to "suspend" demonstrations, out of respect.

The question arises, who respects whom?

When cops killed Mike Brown, Eric Garner and Tamir Rice, who showed respect for them? Brown was literally demonized by his killer. Garner, we were told, was too fat to survive his choking, and should've just meekly submitted to the attack on his life. Tamir, a child, was "big for his age" and "scared" cops, they said. Amazing.

According to police bargaining unit head Patrick Lynch, Garner's killer was a "model officer," an Eagle Scout and "just doing his job."

Yeah — choking a man to death for suspicion of selling a cigarette. Real respectful, eh?

(By the way, the verb "lynch" comes

New York funeral demonstrations

Massive show of ruling class support for cops

By Fred Goldstein
New York

Jan. 4 — Over the past nine days, two police funerals in New York got massive coverage in the media, showing ruling class support for the cops. Both funerals were also political demonstrations by the police, demanding to continue their policy of unrestrained racist brutality against oppressed people.

The first, on Dec. 27, for Officer Rafael Ramos, had the character of a state funeral. The White House sent Vice President Joseph Biden to represent President Barack Obama. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo and Mayor Bill de Blasio took the podium, as well as Police Commissioner William Bratton.

A week later on Jan. 4, at the funeral for Officer Wenjian Liu, FBI head James Comey represented the Justice Department. Cuomo could not come because his father, Mario Cuomo, had just died. But De Blasio and Bratton both spoke.

Both times, CNN reported, more than 1,100 cops from all over the country were flown in for the funerals free of charge by JetBlue. The media reported that 20,000 cops attended the first funeral and 10,000 attended the second. The politicians and the police commissioner vied with each other to manufacture sympathy for the cops slain on Dec. 20 and to heap praise on the police in general.

It is worth noting that on Dec. 13, over 40,000 people had demonstrated against the cops in New York City for nine hours in the cold.

No pomp and ceremony for the victims

Of course, JetBlue did not offer to fly free of charge those people who marched under the banner #BlackLivesMatter to the funerals of Michael Brown or Eric Garner. Unarmed African Americans who are gunned down, like so many others, by the cops apparently do not merit state funerals. Their families do not merit the glowing, saccharine sympathy poured out by capitalist politicians occupying the highest offices, nor the hundreds of thousands of dollars raised for the families of the police to pay for mortgages and children's education.

Representatives of the White House, the governor and the mayor did not show up at the gravesites of the victims of the racist cops. The media did not give massive, sympathetic coverage for days in advance about their funerals. The oppressed have to pay for their own funerals, do their own publicity, and fight just to get a small slice of the limelight, even in the most highly publicized cases of police killing. All this while trying to make ends meet.

But there were other aspects about the

funerals for the police. First of all, they were meant to undercut the mass resistance that is growing around the #BlackLivesMatter movement, which has mushroomed with unprecedented energy and determination from coast to coast, North to South, in cities large and small.

The media falsely painted the random

The aim of the funerals was to overshadow the searing video image of Eric Garner being choked to death by NYPD officer Daniel Pantaleo, backed by a gang of accomplices; to put into the background the image of Michael Brown who, after being shot dead with his hands up, lay on the ground for four hours.

killing of the two cops by a troubled individual as retribution for the killings of Michael Brown and Eric Garner. This was meant to push the movement back and undercut the growing sympathy it has gathered everywhere.

Restoring the image of the cops

One of the most important political aims of the funerals, as far as the racist ruling class is concerned, was to refurbish the image of the cops and the grand jury system. After the killing of the two cops, the rulers seized the initiative to make them into martyrs. They gave vivid portrayals of their personal lives. They televised their grieving relatives. They dwelled upon the “danger” that the cops supposedly face and all but turned them into saints.

The aim was to blot out the searing image of Eric Garner being choked to death on video by New York Police Department Officer Daniel Pantaleo, backed by a gang of accomplices; to put into the background the image of Michael Brown being shot with his hands up, after which his body lay on the ground for four hours. The ruling class publicists used the funerals for all they were worth to drown out the suffering of the oppressed and hush up the crimes of the cops — mercenaries who occupy the oppressed communities.

This country is mired in an economic crisis. The last thing the ruling class wants is for the workers and the oppressed to weaken the cops, who will be called upon in the future to defend the capitalists and put down uprisings of the oppressed.

Struggle between de Blasio and the cops

The funerals also became an arena for the struggle of the cops against civilian authority and any attempt to restrain their racism and brutality. The focus of attention was on the way thousands of cops turned their backs on Mayor de Blasio during the Ramos funeral. During Liu's funeral, the number of cops turning their backs declined to several hundred, according to the media. This came after Bratton issued a memo disapproving of the tactic. But there was no decline in the cops' antagonism for any civilian restraint on their racist aggression.

Their movement is an undemocratic, semi-fascist manifestation of defiance. First of all, whatever one thinks of de Blasio and his compromise tactics of appeasement (approving the “broken windows” policy, for example), nevertheless, he was elected with 65 percent of the general vote and 95 percent of the Black vote.

It is widely acknowledged that most of his victory margin came from de Blasio's stand against stop-and-frisk and for reforming the police department.

Toward the end of the administration

of billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg, mass pressure and a lawsuit brought by the Center for Constitutional Rights brought about a legal victory against stop-and-frisk. The cops have fought this decision relentlessly; negotiations over its implementation are still going on. Much of the police rebellion is over de

demonstrators could see Wallace buttons behind the lapels of many of the white cops.

The white police support of Wallace was a demonstration of raw racism and was directed at both the Lindsay administration and the African-American and Latino/a communities.

Struggle against David Dinkins, first Black mayor

In 1989 David Dinkins was elected New York City's first Black mayor. Although he strengthened the police force considerably, he also campaigned on police reform and introduced a proposal for a Civilian Complaint Review Board. He also ordered the cops to use restraint when putting down a Black rebellion in Brooklyn after a Black child was killed in a traffic accident.

Dinkins also refused to give the cops semi-automatic weapons after they started a public campaign about allegedly being “outgunned by the criminals.” Actually, the so-called “criminals” with high-powered weapons could not have remained free for one day except for the fact that corrupt cops were deeply involved in allowing guns and drugs into the community.

The PBA, led at the time by Phil Caruso, campaigned against Dinkins in the 1992 mayoral election. The PBA was in league with racist, right-wing mayoral candidate Rudolph Giuliani. On Sept. 16, 1992, during a Giuliani election rally, 10,000 off-duty cops, many of them drunk, leaped over barricades and swarmed the steps of City Hall. They assaulted Black people in the area, including a Black woman member of the City Council. They blocked the Brooklyn Bridge.

The cops carried derogatory signs about Dinkins and hurled racial slurs, calling him a “washroom attendant.” Giuliani spoke on the platform with Caruso and riled up the crowd. The cops also assaulted reporters. Ray Kelly was acting police commissioner at the time. There were never any consequences for the police mob.

This is the context in which the struggle for and against “police reform” must be understood. Police reform, given the racist police repression and the level of police corruption in this country, always boils down to curtailing the racist violence of the police and/or their corrupt practices.

The reforms themselves, however, cannot change the repressive and racist character of the police, no matter if Black police are on the force or who is in charge. Black police themselves have testified over and over about their fear of white police, both in uniform and on the streets.

When the movement supports demands for police reform by the Black and Latino/a communities, it should not be because we expect the cops to be transformed. It is to show solidarity with the struggle against racism.

The only way to push the police back is to escalate the magnificent #BlackLivesMatter mass mobilization that has been going on for months and has been growing stronger and stronger.

Put the killer cops and their prosecutorial allies on the defensive. Make them fear the wrath of the people. That is the best way to get any police reform. But the real reform is to get rid of them altogether, together with the bosses and bankers they serve. □

from — we are told by anti-lynching journalist and activist Ida B. Wells, Pittsylvania County, Va., ca. 1780 — when a Col. William Lynch instituted hangings for alleged horse thieves, without trial or due process. Hence the term, lynching — and “Lynch Law.” A crusading reporter, Ida B. Wells would be amazed at how easily Blacks could be killed in the 21st century by police, without due process.

Her keen eye would survey New York, Cleveland, Ferguson and beyond, and perhaps she would recognize modern day “Lynch Law.” □

Autopsy confirms police murder of Ezell Ford

By John Parker
Occupy LAPD Headquarters
Los Angeles

After four months and an order from a mayor responding to pressure from protests organized by groups like "Community Control Over the Police" and "Black Lives Matter," an autopsy report was finally released by the Los Angeles Police Department. The report makes civilian witness accounts of the police killing of 25-year-old Ezell Ford, an African American, more credible than the official police version. The killing looks more and more like an execution by the LAPD, occurring Aug. 11, just two days after the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo.

The LA Times reported that the autopsy information that was released Dec. 29, just two days before Mayor Eric Garcetti's deadline for the cops' report, showed that Mr. Ford was shot three times: once in the right side, once in the right arm and once in the back at close range. The Ford family and their attorney argued that the report showed the shooting was unjustified.

Immediately after the shooting of Ezell Ford, witnesses were reportedly contradicting the police assertion that the shooting was the result of a struggle in which Ford allegedly grabbed for one of the officers' guns. Dorene Henderson, interviewed by the LA Times, witnessed part of the incident and "saw no struggle between the officers and Ford." Henderson said that neighbors began yelling at the offi-

cers: "He's got mental problems." (Aug. 15)

Ford's parents said he was diagnosed with depression and later schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Another witness told the Times: "They laid him out and for whatever reason, they shot him in the back, knowing mentally, he has complications. Every officer in this area, from the Newton Division, knows that. The excessive force ... there was no purpose for it. The multiple shootings in the back while he's laying down? No. Then when the mom comes, they don't try to console her ... they pull the billy clubs out." (Aug. 15)

In response to the police report, Black Lives Matter set up an occupation of the LAPD headquarters right across the street from the previous occupation of City Hall. This reporter went to that site to get reactions to the report. Jhsun Edmonds, one of the occupiers, responding to the fact that Mr. Ford -- like Michael Brown and many other victims of racist police killings -- had medical attention delayed by the cops after the shooting, said: "It's almost like the old days with a lynching, and you allow the body of the victim to be out there as a sign to others. It's used as a terrorist tactic to strike fear in the community, like putting a head on top of a spear."

Melina Abdullah, a leading organizer of Black Lives Matter in Los Angeles,



WW PHOTO: JOHN PARKER

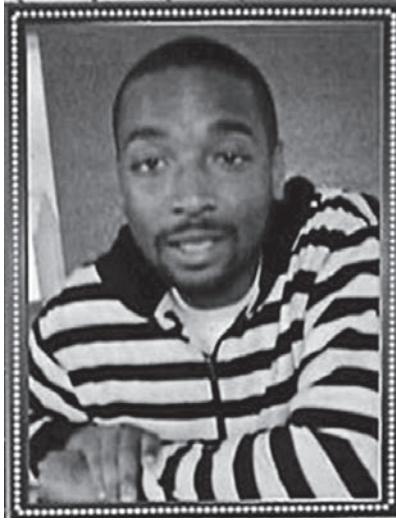
Occupation of LAPD with activist Melina Abdullah, far right.

said that they were willing to "stay out indefinitely." Responding to the autopsy report, she said: "They murdered Ezell Ford probably lay-

ing face down in the street with a point blank shot to the back. I think police who kill people shouldn't be allowed to be on the payroll and walk the streets ... It's now January 4th, so Ezell Ford was killed 5 months ago. Those police officers have been on paid vacation for all of that time and that can't happen any more. So, we're going to be here as long as it takes for them to be fired."

"We call ourselves Black Lives Matter," she continued. "But for us to assert that Black lives matter and for that to be a radical statement is hugely problematic because, of course Black lives matter... but the state itself is sanctioning our murder so we have to push back against a state that doesn't see our lives as valuable and even more, sees us as targets or prey."

Amari Shakur has also been braving the temperatures of 40 to 30 degrees, very cold for southern California. "I'm out here because I'm tired of the police coming into our communities and killing us. They always have an excuse for killing unarmed Black men. In the case of Mike Brown, he was actually 145 feet away when Darren Wilson shot him with his hands up. It has to stop ... Yes, it's been cold, but I'm out here for justice. I want to see these officers either charged or fired." □



Resist killer cops in 2015

Continued from page 1

for actions: Jan. 15, the date of King's birthday, as a day of mass resistance; Jan. 18 as a day of reflection, with special emphasis on faith-based outreach; and Jan. 19, a day of direct, mass actions on the official King holiday. Actions on other days are also welcomed.

For a listing of upcoming actions related to MLK, including a link to add actions, go to fergusonresponse.tumblr.com. To sign the "New Year's Revolution pledge to make 2015 the Year of Resistance," go to engage.fergusonaction.com/pledge-new-years-revolution. To promote MLK anti-racist actions on Twitter, use the hashtag #ReclaimMLK.

Protests continue across U.S.

Here are abbreviated reports from Workers World Party activists in several cities.

Chanting "Hands down, fists up!" hundreds in **Houston** marched to the courthouse on Dec. 29 demanding justice for Jordan Baker. The 26-year-old unarmed

Black man was murdered by a Houston cop who was not indicted on Dec. 23 for the shooting.

Baker, a college student, worker and father, was shot and killed on Jan. 16, 2014, when he was riding his bicycle through a shopping center three blocks from his house. His family contends he was killed for being Black and wearing a hoodie. The Harris County grand jury's "no bill" has led to several marches, rallies and calls for justice.

Every single police officer who has shot a resident since 2004 has had his case cleared by a Harris County grand jury. Last year 47 officers were no-billed by grand juries, which included 20 cases where civilians died. Cops were never tried in any of these cases. (Houston Chronicle, Jan. 5)

Declaring "All Black Lives Matter," **Atlanta** protesters on Dec. 20 afternoon blockaded a busy intersection where two of the largest upscale shopping malls in the city are located. The multinational group of mostly young people spread large banners on the pavement and then, chained together in a series of lock boxes, laid down on the



Protesters storm St. Louis police department, Dec. 31.

street, bringing traffic to a stop for some 90 minutes. Thirteen people were arrested.

Organizers noted the inconvenience to thousands of motorists, but stated that as long as Black and Brown people, particularly youth, could not walk safely to avoid police terror, there could be no business as usual.

The previous evening, a die-in was held inside a suburban Atlanta mall as dozens of people lay down on the floor, chanting "Black lives matter."

There were actions Dec. 27 for Akai Gurley at Pink Houses in **East New York, Brooklyn**. Gurley, unarmed, was killed Nov. 20 by police in a dark stairwell at that location. The protests included three rallies, a march of some 500 in the streets and demonstrations at two police precincts. There, people turned their backs on the cops and yelled for the ones on the roofs to "Jump!" A "lie-in" was also held at the second precinct.

A rally speaker from Malcolm X Grassroots Movement stated, "Gurley's murder was not an accident. It's the paramilitary approach to policing our community. We refuse to be policed based on race

and economics. We charge genocide! We will end this genocide!"

There was no business as usual in downtown **Newark, N.J.**, on New Year's Eve as students of color from the Eleven25 Coalition at Essex County College and their supporters,

including members of the International Action Center, Peoples Organization for Progress, Veterans For Peace and faculty mentors, shut down three major intersections starting at 3 p.m. Heavy, early-rush-hour, pre-holiday traffic was stopped for 15 minutes at each intersection. Activists marched in the street from one intersection to the other. Some passersby joined the protest.

Most drivers understood the students' message about police violence, racism, the capitalist system and "Black Lives Matter" and waited patiently for the protest to move on. Many honked their horns in support — especially bus and truck drivers — while others raised clenched fists in solidarity.

In **Boston** on Dec. 31, the "First Night Against Police Violence" die-in took place. "First Night" is a New Year's Eve blowout that includes fireworks, ice sculptures and a parade. A couple hundred demonstrators received wide media coverage because they refused the pleas of the mayor and police to stay away from First Night.

Michael Kramer, Dianne Mathiowetz, Tony Murphy, Anne Pruden and Gloria Rubac contributed to this report.



Black Panther and Brown Beret members, Houston, Dec. 29.

WW PHOTO: GLORIA RUBAC

Wisconsin activists vs police terror: 'Black lives matter'

By Workers World Staff
Milwaukee and Madison, Wis.

The youth-led fightback against racist police terror and Wall Street austerity continues to escalate in Wisconsin.

Immediately following the Milwaukee County district attorney's Dec. 22 announcement not to indict Christopher Manney, the cop that murdered Dontre Hamilton, protests organized by the Coalition For Justice and supported by numerous allies took place in Milwaukee with hundreds hitting the streets in other locations.

Protesters led a die-in of about 100 people at the Mayfair Mall in Wauwatosa, Wis., on Dec. 23 and a protest of hundreds at Red Arrow Park in Milwaukee — the site where Dontre Hamilton was killed — followed by a militant march in downtown Milwaukee.

"Occupy the Hood Milwaukee" held a Dec. 27 community protest in the heart of the Black community to demand an end to police terror, for living wage jobs and other demands.

Protest actions continued throughout the holiday season. Two of these included a press conference at the 5th District police headquarters to demand that police and other repressive state agents stop "investigating" labor and community activists and a counterprotest at a pro-cop rally in Wauwatosa.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson of the Rainbow Push Coalition in Chicago joined the Hamilton family for a Jan. 2 press conference at the Federal Courthouse in Milwaukee. They announced that the U.S. Department of Justice will review the Hamilton case to determine whether federal civil rights laws were violated, an effort supported by Jackson and the Hamilton family.

"We are the leaders of the new civil rights movement," said Nate Hamilton, Dontre's brother, at the press conference. "We are the beginning. We will continue to fight. We will continue to stand up."

"We have nothing to lose
but our chains..."

Over a hundred protesters marched on the East Towne Mall in Madison and participated in a 16-and-a-half minute die-in occupation at the mall's food court on Dec. 27. The time denoted how long it took the police to choke to death Eric Garner in Staten Island, N.Y.

The action was sponsored by the Young, Gifted and Black Coalition in Madison and supported by numerous labor-community organizations including the revolutionary youth group "Fight Imperialism, Stand Together" or FIST, the Wisconsin Bail Out The People Movement and Veterans For Peace. Members of Workers World Party from Chicago; Detroit; Milwaukee; Janesville, Wis.; and Rockford, Ill., participated.

The multinational protesters of all ages marched in the streets adjacent to the East Towne Mall and repeatedly stopped traffic at multiple locations along busy Highway 151. Then protesters marched into the mall chanting various slogans, including "Michael Brown! Michael Brown! Shut it down! Shut it down!" and "Black lives matter!"

Numerous workers and shoppers — Black, Brown, Asian and white — expressed their solidarity with the anti-police terror protesters, who also demanded that living-wage jobs should be brought to the Black community, not another planned jail for the city.

Wisconsin has one of the highest incarceration rates for people of African descent in the United States. Other demands included justice for Dontre Hamilton and for others murdered by the police.

"You can't have capitalism without racism. Many businesses in this mall underpay their employees. Many businesses in this mall use prison labor. This mall is symbolic with what is wrong with America, with capitalism. This is about the right to live, to love, to be creative. People, it's time to wake up. All power to the people!" said Brandi Grayson of the Young Gifted and Black Coalition during a speakout in the food court after the die-in.

The protest concluded with a quote from Assata Shakur that ends with the words "We have nothing to lose but our chains."

The Young Gifted and Black Coalition



Relatives of Dontre Hamilton lead a march for justice in Milwaukee, Jan. 2. PHOTO: JOE BRUSKY

joined protesters Jan. 2 in Milwaukee to support the Hamilton family and to build statewide solidarity in the fight against police terror and austerity.

Numerous future protests in Madison, Milwaukee and elsewhere are in the planning stages.

The Young, Gifted and Black Coalition has weekly protests. Go to facebook.com/fergusontomadison

For more information on how to join the fight against police terror in Wisconsin: go to facebook.com/justicefordontre and wibailoutpeople.org.

Fight continues six years later Justice for Oscar Grant



Oakland, Calif.



PHOTOS: DANIEL ARAUZ

Jan. 1 — On the sixth anniversary of the murder of Oscar Grant, a 22-year-old African American, by Johannes Mehserle of the Bay Area Rapid Transit police, the Oscar Grant Foundation held a vigil today at Grant Station (the Fruitvale BART station at which Oscar Grant was killed). Several hundred people came to honor him and celebrate his life. Speakers included his mother, Wanda Johnson, and his uncle, Cephus "Uncle Bobby" Johnson.

—Terri Kay

On DR. KING'S
BIRTHDAY

- Thursday
- January 15

City-Wide Strike AGAINST RACISM

In New York City
8 am - 12 noon ►
Neighborhood Direct Actions
1 pm Assemble @

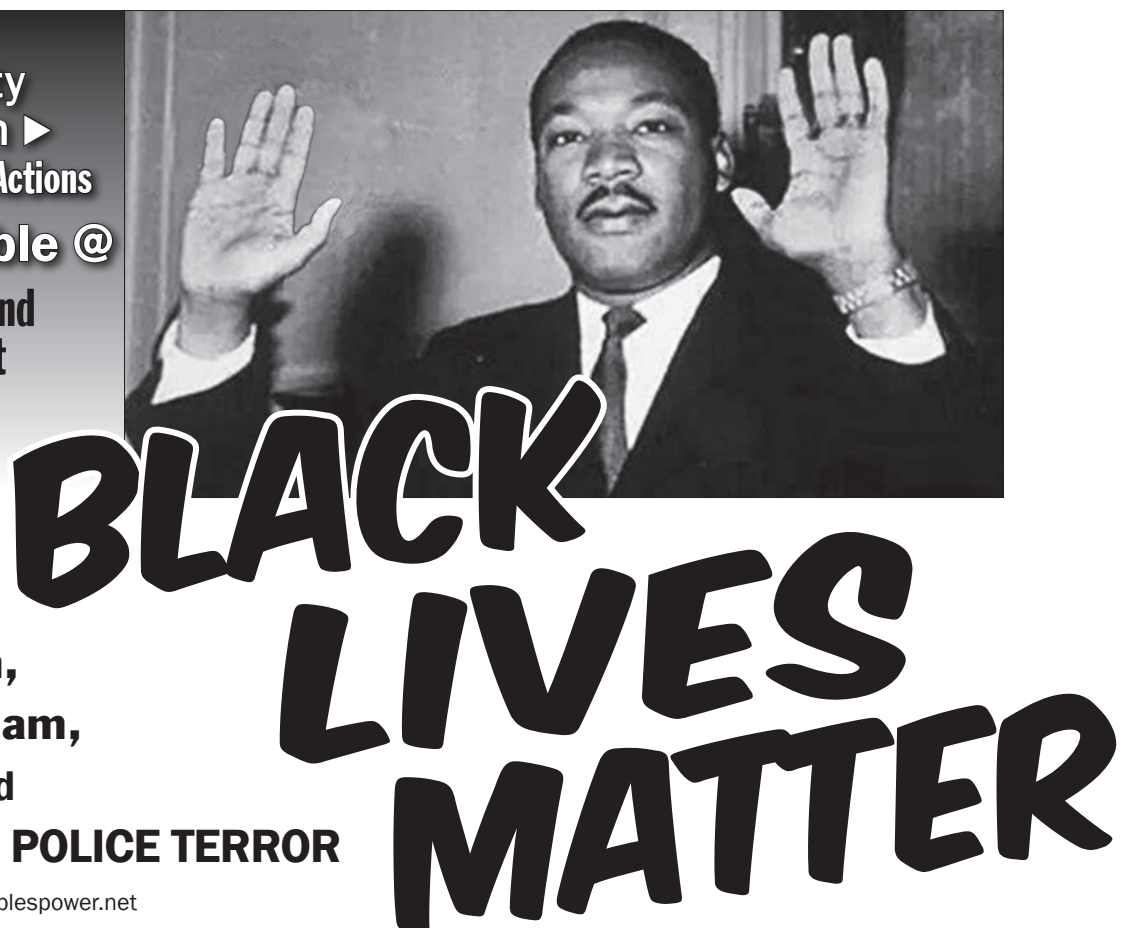
African Burial Ground
National Monument

Duane St. between
Foley Square &
Broadway

JUSTICE

for Eric Garner,
Michael Brown,
Ramarley Graham,
Akai Gurley and
ALL VICTIMS OF POLICE TERROR

People's Power Assembly • peoplespower.net
Occu-Evolve • OccuEvolve.com



Oil price decline impacts African economies

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

During 2014 many Western-based financial publications declared that the Federal Republic of Nigeria had surpassed the Republic of South Africa as the largest economy on the continent.

Nigeria relies on oil exports to generate its foreign exchange earnings.

Minister of Finance Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala delivered a major policy address Nov. 17 indicating that the rapid decline in oil prices would cause the government of President Goodluck Jonathan to impose measures designed to trim costs and spending. In a Jan. 5 article in the leading Nigerian newspaper *Leadership*, the finance minister admitted that the price declines and drop in production forced the government to cut its capital expenditures by 59 percent.

With increased oil production in the United States, India has replaced the U.S. as the largest importer of Nigerian crude oil. From April 2013 to March 2014, India imported \$14 billion worth of goods from Nigeria, making India Nigeria's largest trading partner.

Impact on labor

During mid-December the two largest oil workers unions in Nigeria held a four-day strike to demand lower gasoline prices in light of the rapid slump in oil prices on the global market. Other demands included infrastructural improvements, including the roads surrounding oil production facilities. The workers also sought to pressure the government to pass a new petroleum investment bill that had been stalled for years in the parliament.

Bloomberg reported on Dec. 15, "The [strike] action involves both Pengassan, as the managerial union is known, and the Nigerian Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers, or Nupeng, its affiliate for manual workers. Nigeria's crude oil output declined 3.2 percent when they last went on strike in September."

The strike, which could have shut down production and cut foreign exchange earnings, was settled in less than a week.

These industrial actions in Nigeria coincided with unrest around the entire region. In Ghana, a new oil-producing state, a public sector strike took place during mid-2014 over the demand for the government to take action against the declining value of the cedi, the national currency, and the need to protect pension funds.

By late October, oil workers were again demanding improvements in conditions of their employment. A statement issued by the Ghana Management and Petroleum Commission showed that the government was intervening to resolve the issues even if this meant making some concessions to the workers.

Sudan suffers from partition

Nearly four years ago the Republic of Sudan was partitioned after the conclusion of civil unrest and war that had existed for decades. Sudan, prior to the division of the country, was the largest geographic nation-state in Africa, with nearly a million square miles.

As a growing oil-producing state, the Republic of Sudan was pumping 500,000 barrels per day prior to 2011. Since the partition, both Khartoum, Sudan's capital, and the Republic of South Sudan have suffered growing economic difficulties.

South Sudan is receiving the lowest price internationally for its oil. This is in part the result of a negotiated deal with the Republic of Sudan where additional costs were placed on the export of each barrel of oil in order to compensate Khartoum for South Sudan's ownership of the pipelines and the potential damage done to its economy resulting from the partition.

Production has also been hampered due to the recent conflict between the followers of President Salva Kiir and those of ousted Vice President Reik Machar. Hundreds of thousands of people have been dislocated, and neighboring Uganda has deployed troops to South Sudan to bolster the central government in Juba.

On Dec. 21 the *Financial Times* reported: "War-torn South Sudan is receiving what traders say is arguably the lowest oil price in the world, \$20-\$25 a barrel, because of falling prices and unfavorable pipeline contracts. South Sudanese revenues have now fallen to about \$100 million a month, equal to an oil price of about \$20.50 per barrel based on output of 160,000 barrels a day."

The *Financial Times* article stresses: "Oil executives believe South Sudan could become an example of how falling oil prices can exacerbate political risk as countries are forced to slash budgets."

Prospects for economic growth amid declining prices

These problems are reflective of the ongoing vulnerability of the oil-producing African states based on the fluctuations of the international petroleum market. Other commodity prices have also declined.

The discovery of large-scale oil depos-

its in East Africa had fueled speculation based on phenomenal economic growth. But this growth depended on increased exports with prices above \$100 per barrel. Although the price decline brings some benefits for nonproducing states, it poses serious problems for states that have focused development plans on increased drilling and exports.

New Times reported Dec. 14: "Economists expect, in the short run, tumbling prices to benefit East African consumers in form of reduced commodity prices. But two East African economies, Kenya and Uganda, which have invested heavily in recently discovered oil, could suffer negative effects if the trend persists up to the time they are expected to start production."

A Dec. 30 article in the *Ugandan Observer* opines: "The macroeconomic malaise in both Russia and Nigeria as a result of the plunge in oil prices is a clear reminder to the East African economies that while oil and gas will open up new sources of government revenue and foreign exchange inflows, the other sectors of the economy should not be ignored. In any case, it would be prudent to direct the oil and gas revenues to facilitate the growth of manufacturing, services and agricultural sectors."

Nonetheless, efforts aimed at diversifying the economies of African states will face major impediments after substantial resources have already been invested in plans to increase oil production. These developments illustrate that until genuine economic growth based on the internal priorities of African states can be realized, these postcolonial societies will remain subject to the capitalist problems of overproduction and declining prices. □

Indonesia

Massive struggle to raise minimum wage

By **G. Dunkel**

In December, all of Indonesia's labor unions led a massive campaign for a much higher minimum wage.

Minimum wages in Indonesia vary from province to province and even from city to city. They are set by a local committee consisting of business representatives, local politicians and union representatives, and then must be approved by the governor or mayor.

Since Indonesia is a big country, around 250 million people, with a lot of industry, wage levels floored by a minimum are very important to millions of workers.

One particular issue that has bothered the unions is that the formula for calculating the minimum wage ignores the cost of fuel; the government just raised fuel prices by 30 percent. The unions also feel the cost of phone service and refrigerators needs to be in the market basket.

According to Bloomberg News, Jakarta Gov. Basuki Tjahaja Purnama approved a 2015 minimum wage of \$219 a month, while unions want about \$285 a month.

Dedi Hartono, a worker on the Jakarta Wage Council, said at least 5 million workers will join rallies, including assemblies outside the offices of the governor and president, to protest this low minimum.

According to press reports, 50,000 people marched through Jakarta, Indonesia's capital, in a militant display of popular anger.

Outside of Jakarta, the situation was very mixed. Some regions saw the governor reject the pro-business levels of the wage board. Some regions saw solid successes for the unions and others not so much. But all over Indonesia, the workers responded to the call of their unions and were out in the streets by the millions.

The website of the International Federation of Worker Educational Associations published a report from the Federation of

Indonesia Metalworkers Unions showing the strength of the movement. In some factories, 70 percent of the production lines were stopped. The report adds that "12 workers [were] arrested and detained by police during the night. If last year we were dealing with thugs, this year our enemy is the police."

In 1965-66, after a military coup took the power from President Sukarno, a million Indonesians, mainly members of the

Indonesian Communist Party and its progressive mass organizations, were slaughtered in an operation conducted by the Indonesian military and endorsed by the United States. It has taken a long time, but the progressive movement defending Indonesian workers has come back and is showing its strength in the streets.

Read the 1965 pamphlet, "Indonesia: The second greatest crime of the century" at workers.org/indonesia/index.html

Build workers' assemblies!



WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

Talk given by **Steven Ceci** at the 2014 National Conference of Workers World Party in New York City.

First, I would like to congratulate Tommy Cavanaugh for his courageous decision as a McDonald's worker to go on strike and be arrested.

We also want to salute the Walmart workers who, this past Thursday, took the

daring step of conducting a sit-down strike in the middle of their respective stores. Following their strikes, hundreds faced squadrons of police and were arrested.

Anyone familiar with the power of the Walmart empire, whose wealth rivals that of entire countries, understands the courage necessary on the part of these workers to take this kind of action.

We as revolutionary socialists could not be happier!

The emerging low-wage workers' movement represents the future of the working class. In fact, the term "low-wage workers' movement" is a slight misnomer, since the majority of the working class has been pushed into poverty as the global capitalist system intensifies its exploitation and grows more moribund with each passing day.

I want to talk about the power of workers' assemblies as vehicles for the working class.

As many of you know, we played a pivotal role in forming the Baltimore "We Deserve Better" Workers' Assembly, inspired by our sisters and brothers in the Southern Workers' Assembly and, of course, by the international movement. Our workers' assembly grew organically out of the Baltimore Peoples' Power Assembly. Both function in a complementary way with each other.

And now Los Angeles has launched a Workers' Assembly.

One of the major features of capitalism in this period is its global character and the fact that it has atomized workers in a million different workplaces, making it harder for workers to organize.

The global system of capitalism has more and more forced workers to compete with each other.

To succeed even in the smallest fight, it is necessary to fight as an entire class; in fact, it is necessary to fight against capital-

Behind the sharp decline in oil prices

Capitalist overproduction amid stagnation

By Deirdre Griswold

Jan. 5 — For tens of millions of members of the working class in the United States, a car is a necessity. They have no access to reliable public transportation to get to work, shop, go to school, see a doctor or get a little recreation.

For the multinational working class, and especially the unemployed or those stuck in low-wage and part-time jobs, the recent drop in gasoline prices has come as welcome relief.

However, the impact of this steep decline cuts many ways.

The price of oil has long been considered volatile, especially in comparison to the prices of commodities like automobiles and housewares. However, the decline over the last six months is of historic proportions. The benchmark figure, based on the price of Brent crude oil, has dropped by more than half, from \$117 a barrel in June to \$53 a barrel as of Jan. 5.

Biggest drop since 2008

This is the biggest drop in oil prices since the economic crisis of 2008-09, when the collapse of the housing bubble in the U.S. triggered a financial crisis that swept throughout the capitalist world.

While Wall Street recovered from that crisis — thanks to the infusion of over a trillion dollars of government money into the major banks and other financial entities — there has never been a real recovery for the workers, in either the U.S. or many other countries. Taking into account those who can't get full-time work or have had to drop out of the labor force, unemployment remains very high and real wages have declined, even as corporate profits and executive salaries have soared into the stratosphere.

Since oil is the major source of energy in the world today, it is obvious that such a huge fluctuation in price can have a very big impact.

What are the underlying factors behind this development?

In the early stages of the price decline, some saw it as a manufactured phenomenon, driven by political motivation. They pointed out that the U.S. imperialists were hoping to weaken countries like Russia, Iran and Venezuela, which depend on the proceeds from state-owned oil industries to cover a very large part of their budgets.

And it is true that the drop in oil prices has hit these countries very hard — especially since all three suffer from economic sanctions imposed by the imperialists.

Such an explanation, however, cannot account for the deep, tectonic shift in prices that continues to shake up the whole capitalist world market.

This view also assumes a degree of control over the market that is not possible under the capitalist system — not by individual capitalists, groups of capitalists, or even the governments and international bodies that serve their interests.

Capitalism cannot be controlled

Capitalism is an economic system that is driven by forces beyond the control of the capitalists themselves. Like the sorcerer's apprentice, the capitalist class unleashes the forces of production, which then take on a life of their own.

The capitalist market exists, in the final analysis, for just one purpose: profits for the owners of capital. These profits come from the exploitation of human labor, not from any genius on the part of the capitalists themselves. The mad scramble for profits drives the capitalists to continually invest in the means to produce more and more in order to drive out their competitors and capture the market. This eventually leads to overproduction and crisis — a condition that did not exist under previous social systems.

The profits of the energy companies have been phenomenal and their political clout is prodigious. For decades, they have been able to block any meaningful international agreements or national legislation addressing the horrendous problem of climate change. Especially in the U.S., presidents and cabinets have been chosen by ruling families whose fortunes are intertwined with oil and Wall Street.

But it is important to note that the rate of oil profits in relation to the cost of producing oil has been declining in recent years. In this country, the “easy oil” that once lay in great lakes at shallow depths under the earth's surface — and was the basis for the growth of the Rockefeller oil and banking dynasty — has been largely exhausted.

Nevertheless, U.S. oil and gas production has risen greatly since 2008. This growth has come largely from fracking, tar sands and offshore drilling — all of which require much greater capital investment in expensive technology than did the oil wells of the past.

A glut of oil on world market

U.S. crude oil production, which had been falling for many years, has now risen from less than 7 million barrels per

day in 2008 to more than 11 million barrels at the present time — most of it due to fracking. By last June, according to the International Energy Agency, the U.S. had become the world's largest producer of oil and natural gas, exceeding Saudi Arabia and Russia.

The price tag for this, however, is huge. “Annual investment in oil and gas in the country is at a record \$200 billion, reaching 20 percent of the country's total private fixed-structure spending for the first time,” wrote Bloomberg News on July 4.

To recoup this huge investment, U.S. oil companies must expand their market — at the expense of their competitors.

The oil industry bases its estimates of proven reserves — oil that can be harvested in the foreseeable future — on the cost of extraction. Oil that would cost more to extract than it could be sold for is not counted.

In recent years, the price at which it was profitable to extract oil was put at around \$80 a barrel. With the price rising to \$100 a barrel or more, it became feasible for the oil companies to sink hundreds of billions of dollars into the technology needed for fracking, tar sands and offshore drilling. But if oil continues to sell for a good deal less than \$80/barrel, which most economists say is likely given the world economy today, the producers have to either cut production or take a big loss.

At the present time, both the U.S. and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries are expanding, not reducing production. U.S. oil companies are in a commercial war, especially with Saudi Arabia and Russia, which have sunk to become the world's second- and

third-largest oil producers, respectively. This is a war to drive out the competition and dominate the world market.

That is why the price of oil has fallen so low. It's a clear case of capitalist overproduction, made worse by a slowing of the world capitalist economy.

More oil than ever has been coming onto the market. At the same time, growth rates are dropping in Europe, China and other parts of the world which have been major consumers of oil. Industries are cutting back and workers are being laid off. Investment in renewable energy is also beginning to have an effect.

The result is a glut of oil and a steep fall in prices.

Some industries that require a lot of petroleum products, like airlines and trucking, can benefit — at least temporarily. But overall, this struggle is a symptom of a growing crisis that can drag down the whole financial architecture of the capitalist system.

It is also a huge component in the aggressive war drive of U.S. big business, especially in the Middle East and Eastern Europe. And the Pentagon, it should be remembered, is the world's largest consumer of oil.

These are the material realities behind the posturing of U.S. imperialist politicians, who talk about “human rights” and “spreading democracy” while they do the bidding of the oil billionaires and try to crush the competition.

Today's demonstrators, brought into the streets by the epidemic of racist police murders in the U.S., have it right when they chant: “Bring the whole system down!” □

Germany

Workers challenge Amazon

By G. Dunkel

The Christmas spirit doesn't suspend the class struggle. German workers and their union, Ver.di, want a higher minimum wage and better working conditions.

Ver.di, formed in 2001, is a union with 2.4 million members, mostly in the service sector.

Amazon faced a similar, but smaller and less militant strike in 2013 and decided to take preventive measures to protect its sales in Germany, its second largest market after the United States.

So it set up three warehouses in Poland and two in the Czech Republic.

Still, more workers struck in 2014 in more German warehouses and for longer periods than in 2013. The strikes kicked off on Dec. 8 and finished Dec. 24. They involved all but one of Amazon's warehouses.

These strikes hit Amazon at its peak time for sales. On Dec. 15, last year, Amazon in Germany received 4.6 million orders, which worked out to 53 sales per second. (reuters.com, Dec. 15)

Ver.di is demanding that Amazon workers be classified as “retail workers,” whose minimum salary in Germany is 13 euros (about \$15.90) an hour rather than “logistical workers,” whose minimum is 9 euros (about \$10.80) an hour.

Amazon management times its “pickers” [the workers who assemble orders] to the second to squeeze every last drop out of the workers' labor. Workers are not allowed to talk to each other, which not only

limits union organizing but also cuts out normal human exchanges, like “How are your kids?”

Workers who break out sobbing or cursing because they can't maintain the intense effort of walking up to 15 miles a shift, finding an item, loading it and going on to the next task in the few seconds allotted are fired on the spot.

All these burdens on the workers have made working conditions an important part of the dispute.

Ver.di recently has gotten the German courts to keep Amazon from requiring work on Sundays. In no way, shape or form has Amazon management indicated it would recognize Ver.di as representing Amazon workers in Germany.

Amazon pays only 3 euros an hour in Poland, as opposed to 9 in Germany — and Polish workers have also challenged Amazon management. Workers are bringing legal complaints about the intensity of work and the distances workers have to walk. They also protest being regularly assigned to work 10 hours instead of 8 and that they don't get paid for the time spent for security checks at the end of work.

Labor unions from the European countries where Amazon has a presence held a meeting in July 2014 to coordinate their efforts on behalf of Amazon workers. The militant strikes hitting Amazon management in the middle of the busy holiday season in Germany have set an example for others, in Europe as well as in the United States. □

ism itself, if we are to seriously take on the life-and-death issues facing workers.

How can the fast food workers succeed without the full, active engagement of the entire working class?

The workers' assemblies can afford workers the tool to do this.

They are not a substitute for unions — in fact, the assemblies must vigorously defend the unions — but rather a necessary complementary form of organization to bring union workers, the unemployed and the vast majority of younger and unorganized workers together on a higher and more defined level.

And what about Ferguson, police terror and rampant racism? Aren't racism and police terror workers' issues!

What about the huge number of unemployed workers, particularly the youth who have no future under capitalism?

How about the migrant workers and their families?

These are all workers' issues, which the assembly must and can take on, along with the many day-to-day issues that the working class and the community face, from foreclosures to water shutoffs.

As the capitalist crisis deepens and ultimately convulses, the organization of assemblies, from workers' to people's assemblies, must be prepared to take on the issue of political power itself.

Imagine for a moment if the whole working class in Los Angeles was organized into powerful assemblies. When the Walmart workers held their courageous sit-down strike, the workers in the assemblies would have joined them, surrounded Walmart and defended these workers. That would have been workers' power, the kind that the Walton family could not ignore.

We look forward to the day when that will happen — maybe much sooner than we think. □

WORKERS WORLD editorial

Ebola, socialism & imperialism

Now that the threat of the spread of Ebola within the United States has diminished — for the present — news of the crisis has dropped into the back pages of the corporate-owned major newspapers and off the broadcast media. But the Ebola epidemic remains a continuing danger in parts of Africa and an ongoing threat that requires worldwide attention and action.

To date, over 20,000 people, mostly in West Africa, have contracted the disease; over 8,000 have died; and the number of new cases is still on the increase.

A sustained international effort is called for, but the response, especially from Western imperialist countries, has been minimal at best.

For example, the major U.S. government action has been the deployment of elite combat troops, such as the 82nd and 101st Airborne divisions. The focus of these troops, according to the U.S. chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, is “to ... [establish] command and control nodes, logistic hubs ... and [provide] engineering support” along with training for health care workers. The general made clear that none of the troops would be involved in directly treating or caring for victims of the epidemic. (Defense.gov, Oct. 1)

Little wonder that many question the real motives of what amounts to an invasion of the region.

By contrast, socialist Cuba has sent 256 medical workers to Africa, with 165

in Sierra Leone and the rest in Guinea and Liberia. In comparison to the relative total populations of the U.S. and Cuba, the U.S. would need to send 7,680 doctors and health care workers to Africa to equal the Cuban effort.

From the beginning of the outbreak, the U.S. and its allies have attempted to politicize the Ebola crisis.

Volunteers from private agencies who traveled to West Africa from the U.S. have often found themselves treated, not as heroes, but virtual pariahs upon their return.

By contrast, the Cuban volunteers are rightly considered heroes.

Because of the illegal U.S. embargo, many of the Cuban doctors in Africa — who are working under the aegis of United Nations organizations — have not only faced delays in their deployment, but even found that the U.S. Treasury had held up their pay and expenses for several months.

Despite all this, they have maintained their morale and internationalist spirit.

Cuban doctor Félix Báez — who contracted the virus in Sierra Leone in November, was treated and has since recovered — announced on Dec. 29 that he will return to the region.

Considering that the disease has already killed nearly 350 medical personnel, including 106 in Sierra Leone, the courage of the Cuban doctors must be commended. They are a shining example of the socialist ideal that health care is a human right for everyone in the world. □

Letter on the Berlin Wall and the war between capitalism and socialism

In response to the Nov. 11 editorial, “The wall & counterrevolution,” published on the 25th anniversary of the end of the Berlin Wall, longtime WW reader and supporter Phyllis Lucero of Colorado Springs, Colo., sent us the following letter:

The “only” reason the U.S. poured millions of Marshall Plan aid to West Germany (and similar aid to defeated Japan) was to keep them on the U.S. side and to get rid of socialism. If all the aid had gone to East Germany and not a penny to West Germany, then the West Germans would have gone to East Germany. The Soviet Union (USSR) wanted to help East Germany more but couldn’t because the USSR had been the country most devastated from the invasion from Hitler’s Germany and there were no other countries to help the USSR.

If Hitler had won in the USSR, he would have treated this occupied country terribly. The USSR did not mistreat the East Germans.

From the very beginning of the 1917 socialist revolution in Russia against the Tsarist and capitalist regime, the U.S. and all the leading capitalist countries of Europe ganged up on Russia to put down the workers’ revolution. You can find a description of this in the 1970 edition of the Encyclopedia Americana with a quote from the book, “Civil War, America’s Siberian Adventure,” by U.S. Army Maj. Gen. William Graves, who commanded the ex-

pedition; or in “Archangel, the American War with Russia,” by John Cudahy; in “The Cold War and its Origins,” by Dennis F. Fleming; or “The Ignorant Armies,” by E.M. Halliday, among others.

Only a relatively few troops from each of many capitalist countries were involved, and this was kept “top secret” as the capitalist rulers wanted to keep the people brainwashed and denied them the truth of their invasions on the side of the corrupt Tsarists.

After World War II, all the capitalist countries got together knowing they could not defeat workers’ socialism unless they they all ganged up on the socialist Soviet Union — hence, the formation of NATO. With the help of the Catholic Church, the U.S., the other wealthy countries and the “Quislings” from Russia, the Cold War enemies were successful in bringing down socialism in the Soviet Union in 1989-1991. Here are some quotes from articles in the corporate media that admit much of this:

From an Associated Press article published on April 27, 1997, the first line is “Eight years ago, the Iron Curtain fell with the pope’s help,” with the reference being to Pope John Paul II.

Another article printed in the Gazette-Telegraph on Sept. 20, 1996, with the headline, “Pope, CIA teamed up to oust Communists, book says.” The book is “His Holiness: John Paul II and the Hidden History of our Time,” by former Washing-



PHOTO: ROBERTO MERCADO

A standing-room-only crowd in New York City at a Jan. 3 program commemorating the 56th anniversary of the Cuban revolution and the freedom of all the Cuban Five heroes. At the podium is Rodolfo Reyes Rodríguez, Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations. The event was organized by the July 26th Coalition of New York and New Jersey.

Cuba’s priority in funding education

By Cheryl LaBash

The Cuban revolution values education. According to World Bank statistics, no country uses more of its gross domestic product for education than Cuba. Nearly 13 percent of the total value of all the goods and services produced in Cuba over a year, or one of every eight euros, is used to provide free education through the post-graduate level. (tinyurl.com/plgygcz)

For anyone who wonders how hundreds of Cuban trained doctors mobilized like no other nation to help stop the horrible Ebola epidemic in West African countries, this statistic is certainly a clue. Education is free, including university and post-graduate training.

Cuba had 6,000 doctors before the revolution, but only half stayed to help build a socialist future. In 1959, 37.5 percent of Cubans were illiterate and 70 percent of Cuba’s children had no teacher.

Cuban President Fidel Castro revealed these details of Cuba’s colonial underdevelopment that challenged the young revolution in a speech before the United Nations on Sept. 26, 1960.

In that speech, he announced the massive 1961 Literacy Campaign that mobilized 250,000 volunteers — 100,000 under the age of 18 — to erase illiteracy in all corners of the island, including the remote mountainous regions. In 1962, the U.N. declared Cuba free of illiteracy.

Infant mortality was at least 60 per thousand live births before the revolution. Cuba just announced the current national statistic of 4.2 per thousand. This couldn’t have been achieved without a thorough commitment to universal free education as well as universal health care.

Education is critical to fully develop human beings and to maximize each in-

dividual’s potential to contribute to the common good of a socialist economy. Literacy is a powerful weapon, which is why in the U.S. it was illegal to teach an enslaved person of African descent to read and write.

In 2004, Cuba and Venezuela initiated the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our Americas, known as ALBA, which is also the Spanish word for dawn. Using the Cuban literacy program “Yo Sí Puedo,” UNESCO certified Venezuela free of illiteracy in 2005. Other ALBA partners — Ecuador, Nicaragua and Bolivia — also achieved that milestone, including literacy in several Indigenous languages.

Without fanfare or publicity, tens of thousands of Cuban trained medical, teaching and other professionals are internationalist volunteers across the globe in day-to-day work and to assist in natural disasters. When Haiti suffered a devastating earthquake five years ago, Cuban doctors were already there. In 2005, the U.S. rebuffed Cuba’s offer of 1,586 medical disaster specialists to aid the people of New Orleans after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Many of those same “Henry Reeve Contingent” doctors were then deployed to help Pakistani earthquake survivors in the Himalayas. Granma.cu just reported that 600 new Pakistani doctors will be graduating from Cuban medical schools to return home.

Cuban researchers have developed medicines like Herberprot-B, a foot ulcer medication that can prevent diabetic amputations. The U.S. government’s unilateral economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba — still in full effect despite Barack Obama’s speech on Dec. 17 — prevents Cuba from fully developing its potential and U.S. residents from sharing in Cuban advances. □

ton Post reporter Carl Bernstein and Italian journalist Marco Politi. “The authors say John Paul met with then-CIA Director William Casey, who has since died, and former CIA Deputy Director Vernon Walters 15 times in an effort to bring democracy [meaning capitalist counterrevolution — PL] to Poland.” It added that “the CIA had secretly given the Solidarity trade union movement more than \$50 million to support its work in challenging the Polish government.”

At the beginning of World War II, in 1939 and 1940, the U.S. and all its capitalist allies had allowed Hitler to march across and conquer countries to give it access to the Soviet Union (USSR). They did this thinking that Hitler and the USSR would weaken each other and they could

step in as the victors. Many of the military elite wanted to finish off the USSR in 1945, but others were war weary and thought the U.S. population would not accept any more direct war-mongering. Hence this hostility to the USSR took the form of the Cold War. It is hard for socialism to advance when all the capitalist countries gang up against it, as they did with NATO.

All these wars were fought for the rich to expand markets, gain access to resources and to exploit cheap labor.

I was raised as a right-wing Mormon in redneck Kansas. I opened my mind when I was 20 and by the time I was 24 I was a full-fledged committed socialist. I’ve been a contributor to and supporter of Workers World for more than 34 years. □

'THE INTERVIEW'

Regime change packaged as 'free expression'

By Chris Fry

The Obama administration issued new sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on Jan. 2, targeting its diplomats stationed in Iran, Syria and Russia and claiming the DPRK was behind the hacking of Sony Corp.

"We take seriously North Korea's attack that aimed to create destructive financial effects on a U.S. company and to threaten artists and other individuals with the goal of restricting their right to free expression," said the White House.

In the Sony film "The Interview," two U.S. journalists invited to visit the DPRK head of state are coached by the CIA to kill him. The film ends with the Korean leader being blown up. This is what the U.S. government calls "artistic expression."

In November, large amounts of data taken from Sony's computers were released to the public, including many embarrassing and racist emails by top company officials.

Very quickly the FBI officially charged the DPRK with being the hacker. But computer experts have cast serious doubts on that.

Scott Borg, director and chief economist of the U.S. Cyber Consequences Unit, said to CNBC: "Most of the things the attackers were actually doing don't point to North Korea. None of their activity inside Sony's networks was focused

on the film North Korea wanted to suppress. In fact, the demand for the film to be suppressed came relatively late in the communications that seem to have come from the attackers. It seems to have been added as an afterthought.

"The forensic evidence that does point to North Korea is all ambiguous and circumstantial. It mostly involves software being re-used that was widely available and servers being used that any skilled hacker could have accessed. ... What's more, any attackers capable of carrying out these specific attacks would also have been capable of faking the supposed evidence." ("North Korea May Not Have Been Behind Sony Hack," cnbc.com, Jan. 2)

Who else might hack Sony? Borg points out that "Sony carried out a cyber attack on its own customers in 2005-7 by putting root kits into their computers in an effort to catch them in copyright infringement." Borg goes on to describe an "escalating" conflict between Sony and the "hacking community."

The DPRK has demanded a joint investigation of the Sony hack. The U.S. has refused.

Long history of U.S. assassinations of world leaders

Sony's movie is war propaganda, not "free expression." Sony and the film's creators consulted with high officials from the U.S. State Department while pre-

paring the film, particularly the graphic scenes simulating the assassination of DPRK leader Kim Jong Un. The officials all gave their stamp of approval.

Not coincidentally, in December a group hostile to the DPRK said it plans to attach CDs of "The Interview" to balloons and float them into north Korea. (hollywoodreporter.com, Dec. 16)

The list of world leaders in the crosshairs of U.S. imperialism is long. The U.S. tried many times to kill Fidel Castro, but failed. However, the CIA, Pentagon and State Department were successful in bringing about the deaths of Salvador Allende of Chile, Patrice Lumumba of the Congo, Sukarno of Indonesia, Moammar Gadhafi of Libya and Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia. Even long-time allies who became ineffective faced the long knives of U.S. "intelligence," including dictator Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic and Ngo Dinh Diem, the first president of South Vietnam.

When the Lumumba assassination and the attempted killings of Castro were exposed by the Senate's Church Committee in the 1970s, the White House officially declared such assassination attempts were illegal. Later, President Ronald Reagan even issued Executive Order 12333, one provision of which states: "No person employed by or acting on behalf of the United States Government shall engage in, or conspire to engage in, assassination." (archives.gov, Dec. 4, 1981)

But that was for public consumption. No government official ever obstructed U.S. imperialism in any way from using assassination of targeted world leaders to forward its own banking and corporate interests.

When NATO bombers dropped three bombs on Milosevic's private villa in 1999, then Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder — now attorney general — called it legal. "There has not been any attempt on the part of the United States to target any particular individual." ("Is It Legal to Kill Qaddafi? — Probably So," foreignpolicy.com, June 6, 2011)

Release of "The Interview" came shortly after the Senate released its report on the CIA's worldwide torture campaign. It was also timed to coincide with a new U.S. campaign charging the DPRK with "human rights" violations.

But there's greater resistance to this kind of pro-war propaganda than there used to be. What is bringing young people into the streets is the reality that unarmed Black people are being gunned down or strangled in the streets of the U.S. by racist cops, that even a 12-year-old child can be killed by cops when playing with a toy gun, and that the U.S. keeps more people in prison than any other country on the planet.

U.S. imperialism is in no position to charge any other country with human rights violations. □

Long live a free Puerto Rico!

DOWN WITH CAPITALISM!

We are seeing the effects and the consequences of this stage of capitalism — what we have called "capitalism at a dead end." The intensification of the attacks at all levels on working people, on the oppressed and on the masses in general. The U.S. wars against the peoples abroad.

The racist police murders of our Black and Brown youth, carried out with impunity. Attacks on migrant children and workers, layoffs and, in general, a war on the poor. And the pauperization of the population.

But how does this manifest in the only "formal" colony of the United States in the Latin America-Caribbean region? In Puerto Rico, my homeland. Why is it important for us to study this?

While many Latin American countries are gaining independence from Washington's domination, Puerto Rico is slipping backwards. It's losing population to Florida and Texas, while many people from the U.S. buy low-priced property on the island. It's like a substitution of the population, similar to Hawaii's history. Some 3,000 people a month migrate to the USA from Puerto Rico. Many are youths, often graduates of higher education — the future of the island! More Puerto Ricans live in the U.S. now than on the island.

Puerto Rico's experience concentrates all the effects of capitalism at a dead end. There is an economic but also a social crisis.

The amount of the country's external debt gives an idea of the economic crisis: It's close to \$76 billion and unpayable! As a colony, we have no sovereignty — we cannot even file for bankruptcy. The U.S.-imposed constitution establishes that the bondholders must be paid first — before the needs of the population. The government of the island is just a servant

of U.S. corporate interests and does not challenge that inhumane law.

With few exceptions, the whole island has been privatized. Telephone, health care, roads, the international airport, our precious pineapple plantations.

The cost of utilities has risen. Sales taxes have been imposed in a futile effort to pay the debt. Salaries are much lower than in the United States while most products are more expensive. Why? Because U.S.-imposed shipping laws forbid shipping with non-U.S. vessels. More than 80 percent of the food is imported.

The people of Puerto Rico are being squeezed, resulting in an increase of violence at all levels.

Solidarity needed now

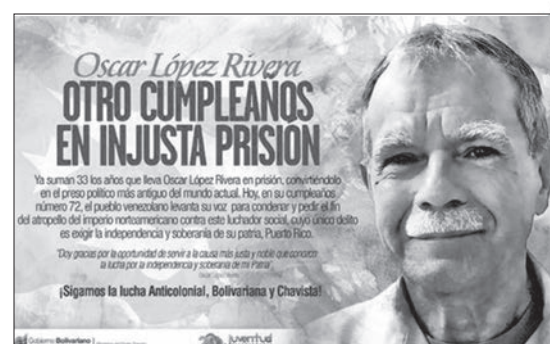
Comrades, it is a profound crisis. And that is why we should discuss it so we can give the solidarity that is needed now.

The Boricuas have always been a fighting people. Starting with our Taíno warriors — Urayoán, Guarionex, Agueybaná — who revolted against the Spanish colonizers.

U.S. colonization suppressed our real history and our heroes. These included Ramón Emeterio Betances, an internationalist, the father of the homeland and the independence movement. He organized the uprising against Spain and against slavery both in Puerto Rico and Haiti, and he participated in the French revolts. He advocated unity of the Antilles, much like Simón Bolívar did in Latin America. However, most Puerto Ricans don't know him.

The colonization process was meant to belittle the people, to make them feel dependent on Washington. Yet, an independence movement has always existed.

Excerpted from a talk by **Berta Joubert-Ceci** to the Workers World Party national conference in New York City, Nov. 15-16.



WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

now with the demand for freedom for Oscar López, who has been 33 years in a Yankee cell.

Along with the independence movement itself, now with the capitalist crisis two of the most militant and active movements on the island are the one headed by the UTIER — the electricity workers who are defending the electric company from privatization — and the teachers fighting against public school closings, both part of the anticolonial struggle. The Boston Consulting Group is demanding the schools close.

It is important that we here show full solidarity with these struggles, as we did during the successful struggle to get the U.S. Navy out of Vieques.

The people of Puerto Rico will continue fighting, but remember: The majority of Puerto Ricans are part of the working class inside this country. We have to join them in solidarity both here and in Puerto Rico. And demand the freedom of political prisoner Oscar López Rivera and Norberto González Claudio.

I summon the forces of Urayoán, Guarionex, Betances, Filiberto and Lolita to help me say ¡Viva Puerto Rico Libre!

¡Free Oscar and Norberto! Long live international solidarity! Workers of the world, unite!



Norberto González Claudio

With figures like Albizu Campos, Lolita Lebrón, Rafael Cancel Miranda and so many others.

The colonizers always penalized

those fighting for independence. Local police, FBI and all U.S. repressive forces target independence activists. We will never forget how in 2005 an FBI team was sent to the island to kill Filiberto Ojeda Ríos, the leader of Los Macheteros, an independence group. On a special day for the independence movement, Sept. 23 — known as Grito de Lares — the FBI shot him and let him bleed to death. And we will never forget how all Puerto Rican political prisoners have been charged with the same "seditious conspiracy" to overthrow the U.S. government.

Recent movements like "the peoples' strike" to prevent the privatization of the telephone company, the "U.S. Navy out of Vieques" and the University of Puerto Rico student strike demonstrate the people's will to come together and fight back. Something similar is happening



WW FOTO: DANTE STROBINO
Panel de apertura de la Conferencia Organizativa en el Sur sobre Derechos Humanos.

Narco guerras en Méjico: Hechas en USA

Por Jim McMahan

Una pobreza devastadora se impuso a la población rural de Méjico en 1994 con el Tratado de Libre Comercio de América del Norte impulsado por Washington. Sus disposiciones destruyeron la economía rural y terminaron los medios de subsistencia de muchas/os agricultores al comenzar la invasión de corporaciones y mercancías estadounidenses. Esto fomentó el auge de los carteles de la droga. Otro factor en su ascenso ha sido la fuerte demanda por drogas y las ganancias del narcotráfico procedentes del lado estadounidense de la frontera.

La intervención forzada de los traficantes de armas de Estados Unidos y las fuerzas represivas mejicanas sólo ha intensificado este conflicto que ahora se ha extendido por todo el país. Los EUA han invadido Méjico y violado la soberanía del país y la seguridad durante años.

Las leyes de control de armas son mucho más rigurosas en Méjico que en los EUA. Los rifles de gran calibre o pistolas de alta potencia, consideradas como armas de guerra, no pueden ser propiedad legal de ciudadanos civiles.

EUA proporciona armas para 'guerra contra el narco'

Sin embargo, en los cuatro estados estadounidenses limítrofes con el norte de Méjico – California, Arizona, Nuevo Méjico y Texas – hay 8.500 comerciantes de armas con licencia. Agentes o “compradores fantasmas” de las bandas de narcotraficantes compran allí armas como

AR-15 y AK-47, a menudo en grandes cantidades, y las llevan a Méjico para transferirlas a los capos de la droga.

Las armas comenzaron a ser llevadas a Méjico en cantidades masivas cuando se intensificaron las guerras del narco en el 2005, continuando luego. Pero las decenas de miles de tropas militares estadounidenses en el lado EUA de la frontera nunca han tratado de detener el tráfico de armas. Están estacionadas a lo largo de la frontera con el único propósito inhumano de detener a inmigrantes para que no entren a EUA.

Las autoridades mejicanas han dicho que se apoderaron de 20.000 armas procedentes de bandas del narco en el 2008, la mayoría traídas de EUA. Funcionarios de la Oficina de Alcohol, Tabaco, Armas de Fuego y Explosivos [ATF por las siglas en inglés] estimaron en 2009 que el 90 por ciento de las armas recuperadas en la violencia del narco provenían de los EUA.

Entre 2006 y 2011, la ATF operó el Proyecto Traficante de Armas y la rama del ATF de Arizona la Operación Rápido y Furioso (OFF). Estas operaciones aparentemente eran para detener el flujo de armas a Méjico. Trazaban la ruta de las armas desde los concesionarios en EUA hasta los traficantes en Méjico. Agentes de la ATF secundaban a los compradores fantasmas y vigilaban y establecían relaciones con los jefes de los cárteles de la droga, especialmente los de Sinaloa.

Pero estos programas no intentaron activamente detener los envíos de armas desde EUA a Méjico, cuyos agentes de la ley ni siquiera eran notificados sobre las

operaciones de la ATF. Mientras estas operaciones se llevaban a cabo, las guerras del narco se tornaron sustancialmente violentas en la ciudad fronteriza de Tijuana y a todo a lo largo del lado mexicano de la frontera con Texas.

En Ciudad Juárez, al otro lado de la frontera de El Paso, 10.000 muertes por la guerra contra las drogas se registraron entre 2009 y 2012. Ahora, una vez más la violencia se ha desplazado hacia el sur hasta el centro de Méjico.

Sin embargo, la derecha estadounidense, con el Rep. Darrell Issa a la cabeza, ha utilizado el tema de tráfico de armas de EUA y OFF para atacar al fiscal general Eric Holder. La derecha tiene una vendetta contra Holder; una de las razones es que un agente de la Patrulla Fronteriza fue supuestamente asesinado con un arma suministrada por OFF en 2010.

El ATF y OFF supuestamente están bajo la jurisdicción del Departamento de Justicia de EUA. Sin embargo, organismos de represión como la ATF son a menudo poderes en sí mismos, aunque son parte del estado capitalista represivo.

Aviones estadounidenses y drones sobrevuelan Méjico

Washington ha estado involucrado con Méjico en una “nueva iniciativa de seguridad” para combatir el tráfico de droga llamada la Iniciativa Mérida/Plan Méjico, a un costo de \$3 mil millones. Ahora aviones pilotados y drones estadounidenses vuelan sobre Méjico, no sólo a lo largo de la frontera. Y Washington entre-

na a miles de soldados y agentes de seguridad mejicanos.

De acuerdo con oficiales de inteligencia de EUA, Washington colabora con agentes escogidos de seguridad mejicana. Todo esto no es muy conocido porque la Constitución mejicana prohíbe operar en Méjico a agentes militares y policiales extranjeros. Los funcionarios quieren evitar que esto salga a la luz pública. No sorprende que ninguna de estas relaciones haya detenido o disminuido la guerra del narco.

En realidad, EUA contribuye a la guerra del narco en Méjico. El ejército y las fuerzas de inteligencia estadounidenses dentro de ese país trabajan con e influyen la policía de Méjico e interactúan con las bandas de narcotraficantes.

El gobierno de EUA no está ayudando a combatir la violencia relacionada con las drogas en Méjico. Por el contrario. El imperialismo estadounidense sólo está fomentando el sufrimiento causado por la guerra del narco y no tiene ningún interés en detenerlo – no importa cuán brutal sea para las/os trabajadoras y las/os pobres de Méjico.

Washington mantendrá las fuerzas represivas en Méjico para asegurarse que las ganancias corporativas estadounidenses sigan fluyendo del trabajo de la clase obrera mejicana, pero no para mejorar o proteger sus vidas. Al imperialismo estadounidense no le importa las vidas de las masas mejicanas.

Sus vidas sí importan, sin embargo, a las/os trabajadoras y los pueblos oprimidos del mundo que están de pie junto a ellas/os contra el Coloso del Norte. □

Conferencia une fuerzas del movimiento negro del sur

Por Dante Strobino
Savannah, Georgia

“La profunda crisis que enfrenta el pueblo negro requiere una acción audaz y radical”, comienza el borrador del Manifiesto para la Liberación Negra que se distribuyó en la Conferencia Organizativa en el Sur sobre Derechos Humanos (SHROCX), celebrada en Savannah, Georgia del 12 al 14 de diciembre.

Este poderoso encuentro reunió principalmente a activistas negras/os de muchos estados del sur para discutir las campañas y las condiciones de la región y el desarrollo de estrategias para la construcción de un movimiento anti-racista de ddhh, así como el resurgimiento de un movimiento nacional unificado de liberación negra.

El enfoque de la conferencia fue la emergente rebelión en el país contra los asesinatos y el terror racista de la policía. Con el tema “Guerra, Crisis y Represión – Sin Justicia no hay Paz”, la conferencia conectó la guerra interna contra la América Negra con las dos guerras sin fin en el exterior y la crisis económica del capitalismo en un callejón sin salida.

En su discurso de apertura, Ajamu Baraka, organizador y activista veterano de ddhh, habló de cómo la crisis capitalista, que ha dejado a millones de personas

en EUA permanente y estructuralmente desempleadas, junto a la supremacía blanca sistemática, está creando la base material de esta enorme plaga de terror racista de la policía.

La conferencia fue organizada para honrar la vida y la lucha de Troy Davis, un hombre inocente ejecutado por el estado de Georgia en septiembre de 2011 tras cumplir 20 años de prisión bajo una acusación falsa. Amigos y familiares de Davis lucharon muchos años por su libertad, sabiendo que era inocente. Davis era de Savannah y su familia participó en la SHROCX.

Kim Davis, la hermana de Davis, habló de cómo en una de las luchas finales para liberar a su hermano, un juez de la Corte de Apelaciones del 11º Circuito rechazó la apelación, negándose a considerar las pruebas que habían sido ignoradas durante 20 años. La comunidad se refiere al Condado de Chatham donde ocurrió esta farsa, como “Condado Cheat-em” [nota ed: juego de palabras en inglés donde “cheat” quiere decir “engañar”].

En las paredes había retratos de otras personas negras muertas o encarceladas recientemente por departamentos de policía en el país, entre ellos Charles Smith, un joven baleado y muerto mientras estaba esposado por la policía de Savannah en septiembre 2014. Otras/os fotografiados incluyen Eric Garner, Mike Brown, Reni-

sha McBride y Trayvon Martin. También había fotos de Marissa Alexander, Monica Jones y CeCe McDonald, tres mujeres negras, dos de ellas transgénero, quienes fueron encarceladas por defenderse. McDonald fue liberada recientemente.

Jamala Rogers, de la Organización por la Lucha Negra en St. Louis, habló sobre las acciones espontáneas diarias en Ferguson, Misuri. Habló sobre el fuerte y valiente liderazgo emergiendo de jóvenes negras/os, incluyendo grupos como Hands Up United establecido por Taureen “Tory” Russell y el poeta Tef Poe.

La conferencia también enfocó las luchas obreras del sur por la justicia económica y el empoderamiento. Muchas/os de la Asamblea de Trabajadoras/es del Sur (SWA por sus siglas en inglés) y del Congreso de Trabajadoras/es Unidos discutieron la lucha contra el racismo, las leyes reaccionarias llamadas “derecho a trabajar” (por menos), y otras cuestiones que enfrentan las/os trabajadoras de la región como la lucha por \$15/hr y un sindicato.

Un poderoso panel incluyó a Lisa López, una ex-trabajadora de Walmart miembro de OUR Walmart; Alfred Marshall, del Centro de Trabajadores de Nueva Orleans; Bernetta Lanier, de la Asoc. Internacional de Estibadores, L-1414; Jerome Irwin, conductor de autobús escolar del Condado

de Chatham empleado por First Student, un contratista privado de autobuses escolares; Sarah White, del Centro de Trabajadores de Mississippi; y una mujer de la Alianza Nacional de Trabajadoras/es del Hogar en Atlanta.

Irwin, organizador del sindicato Teamsters, habló sobre los esfuerzos para organizar a las/os 500 empleados de First Student. Habló de un reciente acuerdo que resultó en pago anual. Según Irwin, esta es la primera vez que el pago anual se ha negociado en el país con una compañía privada de autobuses escolares. También habló de una importante victoria en la que 19 trabajadoras/es fueron recontratados después de ser despedidos en 2006, resultando en la paga de \$250.000 en salarios atrasados divididos entre las/os trabajadoras.

Los Teamsters también continúan con su campaña iniciada en 1995 para organizar a los conductores de camiones en el Puerto de Savannah. Campañas similares de Teamsters están ocurriendo en todo el país, incluso en Long Beach, Calif.

Con cara al futuro, el SWA está tratando de organizar piquetes en los sitios de trabajo en todo el sur apoyando al movimiento Black Lives Matter – un esfuerzo para que los sindicatos participen más en los levantamientos que están sucediendo en todo el país. □