



SELMA: A must-see movie 2

Racism, imperialism

Behind Paris killings

By Fred Goldstein

On Sunday, Jan. 11, a massive demonstration took place in Paris in sympathy with the staff members of the satirical cartoon magazine Charlie Hebdo who were killed on Jan. 7, as well as a Muslim police officer and four patrons of a Jewish grocery killed in two armed attacks that week.

The primary target of the killings was the staff of the cartoon magazine. The magazine had repeatedly published cartoons insulting Islam and the Prophet Muhammad. They were in the process of designing another offensive cartoon when they were killed.

The French authorities have identified the attackers as Said Kouachi, 34, his brother Cherif, 32, and Amedy Coulibaly, 32. The brothers were French citizens of Algerian descent and Coulibaly was of West African descent. Of course, all the information on these attacks is in the hands of the French police and intelligence authorities. Nothing they say should be automatically accepted.

On the other hand, while some think that the attack was a set-up engineered by Paris, the movement has to deal with this as a political matter and not rely on conspiracy theories, unless significant new information comes to light.

The killings have, of course, been condemned day and night by the big business media in France, across Europe and in the U.S. But also condemning the killings have been the head of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, as well as Hamas. Both resistance groups have been heroic in their struggle against the Zionist state of Israel and its imperialist backers. Hamas, of course, has led Gaza in its struggle against Israeli occupation.

For progressives and revolutionaries, the events pose several questions and difficulties. Should we condemn the killings? Should the attack be called a massacre, when you consider that, on average, every day last summer for 51 days, four times as many people were killed in Gaza by Israel? But the media and political leaders did not call that a massacre.

Terminology itself is a weapon in the struggle, and the language used by the ruling class cannot be automatically adopted, lest we be misunderstood.

How do we oppose the killings without seeming to chime in with imperialism or lend any tolerance politically to the cartoonists' attack on Islam, which constituted what many would consider hate speech?

To be sure, the kind of attacks carried out in Paris did not advance the struggle of millions of oppressed Muslims, in either Europe or the Middle East. In fact, they made it easier for the imperialists to mobilize their own population to support Islamophobic repression and mil-

Continued on page 8

Honor Dr. King: STRIKE AGAINST RACISM



BLACK LIVES MATTER

Editorial 10

- More to Come**
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 resistance** 6

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END POLICE MURDER

6-7 **MORE ON PARIS** 8-9

- ▶ Racism and 'free press'
- ▶ Legacy of French colonialism

REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

42 years later

4 **OIL CRISIS DEEPENS**
 Symptom of dead-end capitalism 4

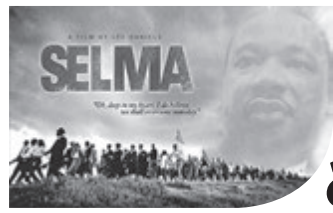
MOSCOW CONFERENCE

Supports U.S. Black movement 10

DISABLED WORKERS

Deserve living wages 5

Movie Review



'Selma':

A phenomenon amid a resurgent movement

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

The movie "Selma," which chronicles the 54-mile march in Alabama from Selma to Montgomery in 1965, was distributed nationally on Jan. 9 and has already been viewed by millions across the U.S. and the world. The Associated Press reported Jan. 11 that "Selma" came in second at the weekend box office, garnering \$11.2 million.

The film has generated a tremendous degree of mainstream and social media interest. Directed by Ava DuVernay — with talk show host and network owner Oprah Winfrey serving as producer and depicting Annie Lee Cooper in a supporting role — the movie is the first feature film that depicts a key chapter in the history of the Civil Rights Movement. A made-for-television miniseries made in 1978 featured Paul Winfield as the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Cicely Tyson as Coretta Scott King.

Despite the movie's success, the Golden Globes on Jan. 11 recognized it in only one of four categories it was nominated for. Songwriter and producer John Legend and hip-hop artist Common were given the top prize for Best Original Song entitled "Glory."

DuVernay wrote on Twitter on Jan. 11, "We've already won. We made a film we believe in, and now it's out in theaters and moving in the world!"

Accepting the award, Legend said, "I'm so honored to be part of this amazing film that honors such amazing people ... and is so connected to what's happening right now. We still are in solidarity with those who are out there fighting for justice right now. We're so grateful to write this song, hopefully as an inspiration to them."

Controversy over historical accuracy

Some of the most widely publicized disagreements over the film's accuracy surround the role of then President Lyndon Johnson. The film suggests that Johnson,

played by Tom Wilkinson, categorically opposed the Selma Campaign and the introduction of voting rights legislation in 1965.

One of Johnson's top advisers on domestic affairs, Joseph A. Califano Jr., wrote an opinion piece published in the Washington Post on Dec. 26 that went so far as to assert that the Selma Voting Rights Campaign was Johnson's idea.

Califano wrote that "in fact, Selma was LBJ's idea, he considered the Voting Rights Act his greatest legislative achievement, he viewed King as an essential partner in getting it enacted — and he didn't use the FBI to disparage him."

The editorial itself is full of historical inaccuracies, contradicting the facts of the period and the chronological order of events, which have been well documented by participants and historians.

"Ramsey Clark, the former U.S. attorney general, who was in Selma for the final march, was praiseworthy of the film, despite how Johnson was portrayed in it," stated WW Managing Editor Monica Moorehead.

Andrew Young, a former aide to King and leading member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, said during several interviews that the actual situation was quite different, but that he was not offended by this aspect of the film.

Young rejected outright the notion that the campaign, which brought SCLC to Dallas County in January 1965, was Johnson's idea. He said that Johnson did not believe voting rights legislation could make it through Congress only months after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

In a Jan. 5 interview with Roland Martin, Young noted that he had traveled with King to Norway when the Civil Rights leader was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in December 1964. Later the group went to Washington, D.C., for a meeting with the Justice Department, and it was only then that Johnson invited them to the

Continued on page 3

WORKERS WORLD

this week

★ In the U.S.

- 'Selma': A phenomenon amid a resurgent movement..... 2
- Lynne Stewart reflects a year free from prison 3
- Event honors Samiya 'Goldii' Abdullah Jamal's life 3
- Reproductive justice in the age of austerity..... 4
- Oil prices swoon, banks fear defaults ahead..... 4
- Autoworkers picket Detroit auto show..... 5
- WWP supports higher wages for workers with disabilities. 5
- 10 most dangerous jobs: Guess who's not there?..... 5
- Artists hold 24-hour protest against police brutality 6
- Anti-racist struggle continues in 2015..... 6
- Should workers support police strikes? 6
- Tamir Rice killing further exposed 7
- Justice for Kendrick Johnson!7
- Phil Africa ¡Presente!7

★ Around the world

- Racism, imperialism behind Paris killings.....1
- Haitians demand relief 5 years after quake 7
- 1961 Paris massacre exposed 'freedom of press' 8
- Charlie Hebdo, the free press and racism 9
- Greece on edge of abyss: What will Jan. 25 elections bring? 10
- Moscow conference stands with Novorossiya,
- Palestine and Black America10
- Ukraine antifascists welcome released activists11

★ Editorial

- Dr. King and Black lives today..... 10

★ Noticias en Español

- Sobreproducción y estancamiento capitalista detrás de aguda caída en precios del petróleo 12
- Ébola, socialismo e imperialismo 12

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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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Lynne Stewart reflects a year free from prison

By Dolores Cox
New York

New Year's Eve marked the one-year anniversary of the release from prison of people's lawyer Lynne Stewart, who was imprisoned for "aiding and abetting a terrorist organization." Her client in the case was Egyptian Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman, whom the U.S. government labeled a terrorist and convicted. On Dec. 31, 2013, Stewart was granted a compassionate medical release due to her metastatic cancer.

On Dec. 31, 2014, Lynne Stewart commemorated her year-long freedom by returning to New York City's Manhattan Correctional Center, where she had been jailed prior to being transferred to Feder-

al Medical Center, Carswell, a maximum security federal prison in Fort Worth, Texas. Under the windows of the Correctional Center on a frigid night, Stewart and others gathered with noisemakers to let the women still locked down know they are not being forgotten, just as her supporters did for her when she was jailed there.

Afterwards, she attended the annual New Year's Eve party thrown by the International Action Center, a grassroots social justice activist organization which has long championed the cause of political prisoners and all oppressed victims of U.S. capitalism and imperialism.

Since being home in New York, Stewart has not wavered from speaking truth to power against all forms of injustice

nationally and internationally. She's passionate about fighting for criminal justice reform and views the U.S. prison-industrial complex as senseless and embarrassing.

Stewart's fighting spirit has helped her endure day-to-day trials and tribulations. The first six months following her release were fraught with serious health challenges. Upon improving, she has attended and spoken at local events, and even traveled out of state with permission from her probation officer. On one such trip, while at the airport, she discovered that she is now on the U.S. government's "terrorist watch list."

Most recently, Stewart participated in a "Black Lives Matter" protest in New York City's Grand Central Station, speaking

and joining in chants and song.

Reflecting on President Barack Obama's recent announcement regarding normalizing relations with Cuba, Stewart states that she sees this as a new initiative to possibly bring Cuba down, and that the flow of U.S. dollars there may be a negative force, an attempt to corrupt Cuba. However, unlike the U.S., she says, Cuba is principled, and knows the U.S. well.

Regarding Assata Shakur, the U.S. political prisoner exiled in Cuba, Stewart believes that Cuba will continue to protect her from bounty hunters and has no intention of extraditing her to the U.S. She does not think the New Jersey State Police will make an attempt on Shakur's life, though they are "mad dogs."

Stewart adds that she is delighted that the last of the Cuban 5 are free. She deplores the fact that her special friend, Puerto Rican political prisoner Oscar López Rivera, has been imprisoned for 33 years.

Regarding the Rev. Edward Pinkney's unlawful conviction and imprisonment in Jackson, Mich. — in a small prison with the only phone being outdoors — Stewart comments that it was Pinkney against corporate power, and that only the people can protect him. She maintains that it was the power of the people that protected her and achieved her freedom.

Stewart states that the number of political prisoners released this year gives her hope that the opposition may not be as formidable as before. She sees a change in attitude toward political prisoners and says we must continue the fight to bring them all home, including Chelsea Manning, Edward Snowden and Julian Assange. Pakistani political prisoner Aafia Siddiqui is also in Carswell federal prison, states Stewart, but her state of mind is such that she is now refusing visits. Her government is willing to take her back.

Regarding grand jury functioning and decisions pertaining to police killings of unarmed Black boys and men, Stewart says "the law" is what "they" want it to be at any given time. She cites legal lynching cases ongoing since 1619. The grand jury is an ancient legal institution, notes Stewart, who served for 30 years as a practicing defense lawyer. The solution, she says, is abolition of the grand jury in favor of a jury trial. She states that the cops and prosecutors are a single entity with an agenda.

Stewart says she is looking forward to a new year of new victories, believing in the power of the people to achieve future gains. "We have our work cut out for us," she says. Her message to the movement remains the same: "Have courage, fight back, continue to struggle and keep the love flowing. Resistance is justified!"

Stewart and her family are planning an anniversary celebration of her freedom in mid-February, her health condition permitting. □

Event honors Samiya 'Goldii' Abdullah Jamal's life

By Henry Hagins
Philadelphia

Too brief. Well-lived.

On what would have been her 37th birthday, on Jan. 9, family, friends, well-wishers, supporters and organizations came together with great enthusiasm and dignity to celebrate the indelible life of Samiya "Goldii" Abdullah Jamal, daughter of Wadiya Jamal and Mumia Abu-Jamal, in Philadelphia.

Very sadly, the deeply beloved daughter of the Jamals died on Dec. 17 after a long struggle against breast cancer. She leaves behind two lovely daughters, affectionately nicknamed Dolly and Puddy, 11 and 4 years old respectively.

In her too-brief yet remarkable life, Goldii had also become an accomplished musician, rapper with a message and strong advocate for political prisoners, especially on behalf of her world-famous and falsely imprisoned father, Mumia Abu-Jamal, starting at age 4! Goldii had recently earned a master's degree with honors in

school and mental health counseling from the University of Pennsylvania as well.

The event, organized by MOVE; the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal; Goldii's mother, family and friends; unsung community activists, residents and concerned individuals; and local artists and musicians, was held at the historic Kingsessing Recreation Center in the evening and was very well-received. The Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition (New York City) was also in attendance.

Well over 100 people gathered for this "Celebration of Life and Fundraiser" for the Goldii's children. The slammin' food, atmosphere, spoken-word performances, testimonials and dynamite music were most befitting for the occasion, and included the participation of large numbers of children of all ages as well.

Participants included Tim Hicks; Jade and Ice, with two backup singers; and a poet named Sekou, who gave a moving tribute to Goldii, Dolly and Puddy and expressed deep love to their mom. An on-

the-spot portrait painting of Goldii was created and a beautiful blanket for the girls with a picture of their mom on it was unveiled, to the prolonged applause of the audience for each presentation. The Jamal sons played key roles in making this homage a critical success.

In spite of her grief and loss, Sister Wadiya Jamal was most gracious to all well-wishers and sympathizers, as she acknowledged their presence and contributions as well as her own pain.

While a sad occasion in some respects, the celebration of the life of Goldii was a moving tribute to a most courageous and loving woman, whose high regard for life, justice, humanity and her dad is best expressed in her own words:

"He is an innocent man and the commonwealth has always known this, but being too Black, too smart and too strong. ... The government will silence anyone that possesses the power to open the minds of the people." Right on.

Hagins is a co-chairperson of the Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition (NYC).

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And thanks! □

'Selma'

Continued from page 2
White House.

However, the crisis created through arrests and beatings in Selma during January and February, followed by the police shooting of Jimmie Lee Jackson in neighboring Marion on the night of Feb. 18, prompted activists to organize a march from Selma to the state Capitol in Montgomery.

During the first attempt, the Alabama state police and local law enforcement made vicious attacks using clubs, cattle prods and teargas on 600 demonstrators at the foot of the Edmund Pettus Bridge on March 7, known as "Bloody Sunday." The beating of the demonstrators prompted a

national mobilization in cities throughout the country. Many traveled to Selma two days later for yet another confrontation.

Amid legal challenges over an injunction against marching to Montgomery, King and the SCLC decided to turn 2,000 demonstrators around and headed back to Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church, the center of the campaign. This move caused confusion and debate within the movement, as some felt the mobilization should have refused to disperse.

On March 9, the Rev. James Reeb, a Unitarian minister from Boston who traveled to support the Selma Campaign, was severely beaten by white racists in Selma and died of his injuries the following day.

A favorable federal court ruling several

days later affirming a constitutional right to march paved the way for Johnson to nationalize the Alabama National Guard, which provided protection so demonstrators could initiate and complete the final march from March 21-25.

On the day the march concluded, Viola Liuzzo, a volunteer activist from Detroit portrayed in the film by Tara Ochs, was murdered in her vehicle while transporting demonstrators through Lowndes County. It was later revealed that she was killed due to a Ku Klux Klan conspiracy.

In late February, Johnson came out in favor of new legislation, which worked its way through Congress over the next five months.

Despite a few historical inaccuracies

and other minor problems, many feel the film can play a progressive role in light of the resurgence of the anti-racist struggle, manifested through rebellions and mass demonstrations in response to the police killings of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo., Eric Garner in Staten Island, N.Y., and Tamir Rice in Cleveland.

The fact that these tremendous events unfolded five decades ago illustrates how far the struggle against national oppression has to go in this country. At the same time, the developments over the last five months reveal the capacity of African Americans and their allies to create new methods of agitation aimed at the state and the corporate structures of the racist capitalist system. □

Reproductive justice in the age of austerity

By Sue Davis

A new report shows that the state of abortion rights in the U.S. on the 42nd anniversary of the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion is significantly worse than even four years ago.

The Guttmacher Institute's report, issued in the first week of 2015, says that states have passed 231 abortion restrictions in the last four years. More than half the women of reproductive age (15-44) in the U.S. live in states that are hostile or extremely hostile to abortion. In 2000 Guttmacher rated 13 states as hostile; in 2010, 22 states were hostile, with five of them extremely hostile; and in 2014, 27 states were hostile, with 18 of them extremely hostile.

Nine million poor women (one in seven women of childbearing age) who are eligible for Medicaid coverage are denied abortion coverage, although they have coverage for other reproductive health care, including sterilizations. They are in addition to millions of women in 23 states that have refused to expand Medicaid coverage under the Affordable Care Act.

Given the restrictions passed by 27 states — like limits on medically induced abortions and bans after 20 weeks of pregnancy, waiting periods, medically unnecessary procedures, and facilities' physical requirements — millions of low-wage women workers, particularly women of color and young, immigrant, rural and disabled women, many of whom are single mothers, do not have ready access to abortion, even though it is the law of the land.

If we expand our vision beyond abortion rights to reproductive justice — the

concept that women's human rights, including all social, economic and political, cultural aspects of life, must be acknowledged and honored in law and practice — then the vast majority of women in this country do not have the quality of life they deserve. Only the richest of women, whose rights are not bound by what money can buy, may have such luxury — though they may be otherwise bound by patriarchal demands.

The promise of *Roe v. Wade*, envisioned by the millions of young women who fought in the streets for legal abortion in the early 1970s, was to expand women's right to control their bodies, to allow them to decide whether to have or not have children and to help them achieve equality in all aspects of life. That goal is now a distant memory for those who fought for it.

New challenges to legal abortion

Given the increasing inequality between those who work for wages and those who own the rich-as-Croesus corporations, it's no wonder white women are still making only 77 percent of what white men make, while women of color make even less than what Black and Brown men make. The bosses are only too eager to buy Republican Party shills to impose austerity on working people and the oppressed.

The primary cudgel Congress has over women — besides denying them equal pay — is limiting abortion rights. In their first three days in office, the new Republican-controlled House of Representatives introduced five anti-abortion bills.

The keystone of the anti-choice agenda is a federal ban on abortions after 20

weeks of pregnancy, which the House passed in 2013. Groups supporting the ban claim a fetus can feel pain at 20 weeks, though major medical associations attest that is not scientifically possible. Already 14 states have 20-week bans on their books; with new Republican-controlled state legislatures more are sure to follow, including other restrictions.

Twenty-week bans are troublesome for two reasons. One, women at risk for fetal abnormalities often get the results of amniocentesis and other genetic tests around that time or later. Two, such a ban conflicts with the second-trimester limit of 24 weeks set by *Roe v. Wade*; that's the time when a fetus may live independently.

Passage of such a federal ban is a direct challenge to *Roe*, which is exactly what the right wing — and their corporate owners — want.

Even if President Barack Obama vetoes such a ban, it is likely that the hodgepodge of conflicting regulations passed by the states will eventually be appealed to the Supreme Court. The court would be asked to rule on whether a state has created an "undue burden" on a woman seeking an abortion. That test was established in the 1992 *Casey* decision.

In a Jan. 7 case about the legality of the Texas law known as HB 2, heard by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, a panel of judges ruled that a plank of the law requiring doctors to have admitting privileges at a nearby hospital was constitutional when the state had more than 20 clinics. But another panel of judges blocked a similar law in Mississippi; finding it constitutional would have shut the only clinic in

the state. Confusion abounds.

What's needed

There are glimmers of hope, as the progressive wing of the women's health and women's rights movement has begun to coalesce locally and nationally. The Women's Health Protection Act, which would negate state laws, was introduced in Congress last year with 166 congressional cosponsors and more than 300,000 grassroots supporters.

In July 2013 the reproductive justice, health, youth and rights organizations launched All Above All. Its purpose is to overturn the 1977 Hyde Amendment that ended Medicaid abortion coverage. According to the press release announcing the initiative, the campaign "engages young people 18 to 30 years old and people of color to realize their collective power. ... As those who are most affected when politicians withhold abortion coverage, millennials and people of color are ... taking a stand to ensure Medicaid coverage for all pregnancy care, including abortion."

But more is urgently needed. There has not been a national demonstration affirming women's right to choose since 2004. Even though national mobilizations can cost millions of dollars, just setting a date and issuing a strong, united call, as organizers in Ferguson, Mo., did for activism around "Black Lives Matter," might be enough to initiate a demonstration in Washington, D.C., and elsewhere around the country.

As the movie "Selma" shows, protests matter. It's time to take to the streets to demand reproductive justice for all women. □

Oil prices swoon, banks fear defaults ahead

By Deirdre Griswold

Jan. 12 — As the extent of overproduction in the oil and gas industry sinks in with the markets, oil prices continue to swoon.

Just today, the price of U.S. crude oil dropped by another 5 percent, bringing it down to \$46.07 a barrel, the lowest since April 2009. Last June, the price was more than \$100 a barrel.

The huge investment bank Goldman Sachs announced it was cutting its three-month forecast for U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude oil to \$41 from \$70 a barrel. West Texas Intermediate is used as a benchmark for U.S. crude oil prices. Goldman Sachs also slashed its three-month price forecast for Brent crude, the European benchmark.

As explained earlier, the big decline in oil prices reflects two factors, which have resulted in a crisis of capitalist overproduction. (See "Capitalist overproduction and stagnation behind sharp decline in oil prices," WW, Jan. 5.)

One is the continued capitalist economic stagnation, and even decline in some countries, that has affected world demand for oil.

The other is the huge investment made by U.S. oil companies in the last few years that has propelled this country to become the world's largest oil and gas producer, after having been a net importer of oil just a short while ago.

This combination of increased oil production and less-than-anticipated demand is leading to a new crisis in an area of the capitalist economy that can drag

everything down.

While many workers are right now getting relief from lower prices at the pump, this will be more than offset if the crisis triggers a general crisis in the financial markets, which could then ripple out to affect the jobs and income of millions.

Big banks worried about defaults

Already, several dozen oil rigs have been shut down in western U.S. and thousands of workers laid off. But this may only be the tip of the iceberg. The rapid expansion of U.S. oil production by the mega-corporations that control the industry was financed by big loans from major banks. These banks are now worried about possible defaults on the loans, raising the prospect of another round of bankruptcies.

The title of an article in the Jan. 11 New York Times Business Section warned Wall Street that "As Oil Prices Fall, Banks Serving the Energy Industry Brace for a Jolt."

The article explained: "Banks have been lending hand over fist to companies in the nation's energy industry, underwriting bonds, advising on mergers, even financing the building of homes for oil workers. All of this has provided a boon to banks that have been struggling to find more companies and consumers wanting to borrow.

"Yet with the price of crude oil falling below levels sufficient for some energy companies to service their huge debts, strains are being felt and defaults are likely. While it may take some time for the crunch in the oil industry to translate

into losses, one thing already seems clear: The energy banking boom is over."

Making Wall Street especially nervous is the fact that the new oil to come online in the U.S. is much more expensive to produce than that obtained from oil fields in other parts of the world, especially the Middle East. At the beginning of this boom, oil companies took out hundreds of billions in loans to pay for the technological infrastructure that has allowed them to get oil from shale rock through the environmentally destructive process known as fracking.

Huge investments have also been made in tar sands and in attempts to establish oil rigs offshore in the Arctic north of Alaska. A detailed front-page article in the New York Times Magazine of Jan. 4, entitled "The Wreck of the Kulluk," told of Shell Oil's unsuccessful effort in 2012 to position a giant offshore drill rig in the Beaufort Sea, which ended in the rig going aground after impossible weather conditions threatened the lives of the entire crew.

This cautionary tale might never have gotten such wide attention were it not for the fact that it is becoming clear to some of the big investors on Wall Street that they may be in for a very bumpy ride.

Part of the oil companies' strategy



seems to have been based on thinking they could capture more of the world market from countries in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. They particularly wanted to undermine Iran, Venezuela and Russia. But with oil now trading at less than \$50 a barrel, and expected to drop even further, the stocks of the companies that started this competitive race by investing so heavily in fracking and other technologies are starting to fall, dragging down the financial markets.

There is no eradicating the capitalist boom-bust cycle. Temporary "bailouts" may drive the basic contradictions of the profit system underground, but they are sure to break out in even more catastrophic forms later on. The only answer is to get rid of capitalist exploitation itself, so the working class can reorganize economic life to benefit all the people, not the privileged few. □

Autoworkers picket Detroit auto show

By Martha Grevatt
Detroit

For the seventh year in a row, rank-and-file United Auto Workers members and supporters picketed outside the North American International Auto Show in Detroit on Jan. 11. This year, the theme of the protest, sponsored by Autoworker Caravan, was “People Before Profits.” The NAIAS is the biggest auto show in the country and is where the auto bosses tout their billions in record

profits and car sales, which have exceeded pre-recession levels.

In September, the contracts between the UAW and Ford, General Motors and Chrysler expire. Workers are tired of givebacks and want to see an end to two-tier pay; a pay raise, which many have not had since 2005; the elimination of temporary work; and an end to inhuman “alternative work schedules” that undermine the eight-hour day.

In addition to raising contract issues, the pickets drew attention to the fact

that the profit motive has compromised vehicle safety, resulting in hundreds of deaths. As in previous years, Autoworker Caravan chided the industry for contributing to climate change and called for the reopening of closed plants for green jobs, demanding that people be put to work making solar panels, wind turbines and products for mass transit.

Solidarity with Colombian GM workers who were fired after they were injured on the job was a theme, as it has been since 2012, when the president of their

association conducted a 72-day hunger strike here in Detroit.

There were many chants on a variety of issues. “Sit-downs then! Die-ins today! Solidarity is the way!” linked the struggles of the past, present and future.

At a get-together after the action, conversation focused on how to build a campaign inside the plants to make ending divisive two-tier pay scales a make-or-break contract issue. Workers hired after October 2007 now make two-thirds or less than what their higher-seniority counterparts earn. □

WWP supports higher wages for workers with disabilities

By Edward Yudelovich

This article is based on a talk by Yudelovich at the 2014 Workers World Party National Conference.

I am a person with emotional and one-sided hearing-loss disabilities.

I became active in the Workers World Party People with Disabilities Caucus in 1981 when I took part with Comrade Betsy Gimbel in the Disability Rights Workshop at the All-Peoples Congress in Detroit. Gimbel, who was secretary of the group “Disabled in Action,” led the fight that forced New York City buses to have wheelchair lifts.

I am a proud member of a union of 8,500 New York City administrative workers, mostly women and people of color, and I am co-chair of my union’s Committee on People with Disabilities. In October 2013, when the People’s Power Assembly held a rally in New York for the campaign to raise the U.S. minimum wage to \$15 an hour on the 75th anniversary of the Fair Labor Standards Act, which established the U.S. minimum wage, I was wearing my union uniform.

I spoke at the rally about the need to include people with disabilities in this demand, because that law excludes many of us from that right. It also excludes prisoners, immigrants and domestic workers.

Attica prisoners fought for minimum wage

When the Attica prisoners rose in rebellion in September 1971, they had five demands. The first was: “Apply the New York state minimum wage law to all state institutions” and “Stop slave labor.”

U.S. prisoners in federal prisons have a maximum wage. It is \$1.15 an hour. The U.S. has the largest incarceration rate on the planet and many of the estimated 2.4 million U.S. prisoners are people with disabilities who are regularly subjected to abuse, beatings, torture, and denial of properly prescribed medication and accommodations to their disabilities.

An example is Jerome Murdough, an African-American homeless and mentally disabled veteran who was baked to death in the prison at Rikers Island in February while on anti-psychotic and anti-seizure medication, which made him more vulnerable to the over-100 degrees heat in his cell. Murdough had been arrested for trespassing in the stairwell of a city housing project to escape the cold.

In the U.S., slave labor is also legal for people with disabilities. Goodwill Industries pays workers with disabilities as little as 22 cents an hour, yet their top executives get over \$53.7 million.

The National Federation of the Blind



Edward Yudelovich, center, in his union contingent at the People’s Climate March, New York City, Sept. 21.

is the largest organization of blind and low-vision people in the United States. It is leading the fight to change U.S. laws to end this slave labor for people with disabilities and, along with other disability rights groups, has organized protests against Goodwill Industries around the country, including one in Buffalo, N.Y., led by the disability rights group ADAPT.

The National Federation of the Blind has a petition to end minimum wage discrimination against the disabled available on their website, www.nfb.org/fair-wages which is a fantastic resource for information on this subject.

In 2012, Workers World Party’s Peoples with Disabilities Caucus reconstituted itself with a series of annual forums commemorating the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, first in New York and then in Dorchester, Mass., this August, where we were joined by the heroic Boston bus drivers. We have been meeting regularly with national conference calls to plan our strategies and actions.

We invite comrades and friends with disabilities and our allies to participate in our meetings and activities, including organizing protests against Goodwill.

Disabilities Caucus in solidarity with Ferguson

Our disabilities caucus is also an endorser of the statement by more than 20 disability rights groups in solidarity with the community of Ferguson, Mo., which advocates “civil rights, respect and justice are due to all. We will not remain silent. The disability community, like the LGBTQ community, and so many others around the country, stands with the family of Michael Brown and with the people of Ferguson.”

It was Karl Marx, in his “Critique of the Gotha Program,” who coined our great slogan, “From each according to our abilities, to each according to our needs.” We also subscribe to the slogan inscribed on Marx’s grave: “The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to change it.”

10 most dangerous jobs Guess who’s not there?

By Deirdre Griswold

Facts are very stubborn things. Very often they contradict what is considered general knowledge. Which raises the question: What is general knowledge? Isn’t it the opinions and attitudes fed constantly to the public through the dominant media? It takes big social upheavals to unseat the widespread lies that conveniently justify the status quo.

Take the question of dangerous jobs. We hear a lot these days about certain occupations being very dangerous. I won’t tell you which ones. You already know, if you are alive and watch television or read the corporate newspapers.

So let’s look at the official government figures on the 10 most dangerous occupations in the U.S. in 2011, the most recent year of data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Here they are, in descending order, starting with the most fatalities per 100,000 workers in that occupation. Also listed are the total numbers of deaths that year in that category, as well as the median salaries for the type of work.

1. Fishing: 127.3/100,000, 42 fatalities, median salary \$25,590
 2. Logging: 104/100,000, 65 fatalities, \$32,870
 3. Pilots and flight engineers: 56.1/100,000, 71 fatalities, about \$100,000
 4. Refuse and recyclable material collectors: 36.4/100,000, 30 fatalities, \$35,230
 5. Roofers: 34.1/100,000, 60 fatalities, \$34,220
 6. Structural iron and steel workers: 30.3/100,000, 18 fatalities, \$44,540
 7. Helpers, construction trades: 26.8/100,000, 15, about \$25,000
 8. Farmers, ranchers, agricultural managers: 26.1/100,000, 268, \$60,750
 9. Truck drivers: 25.9/100,000, 485, \$38,200
 10. Natural resources and mining: 22.1/100,000, 721, \$54,020
- Did you notice something about this list? Something missing?
Well, actually a lot of people did notice.

On the website where these figures can be found (bankrate.com), the Comments section of the site turned into a huge debate over the cops. Some comment contributors were indignant, claiming that somehow the figures weren’t right because the cops have very dangerous jobs. But others answered them with logic and sometimes with humor.

Take this interesting exchange:

A person with the username “zs” wrote: “Police officers keep this country from tearing it’s self [sic] apart each and every day.”

“Bill Owen” replied to “zs”: “Right, cause the only thing stopping your neighbors from eating your family and raping your dog are the two cops at the donut shop.”

“fortylegz” brought the figures on the police up to date: “In 2013, out of 900,000 sworn officers, just 100 died from a job-related injury. That’s about 11.1 per 100,000, or a rate of 0.01%. ... The jobs above are two or three times more dangerous.”

Many commented on how the police generally make much more money than the workers in the listed occupations, plus get good pensions, health plans and other benefits. And of course, that’s not counting the off-the-books “tips” that many cops extort from small businesses.

Here’s a point that needs to be added to this discussion: The police really don’t belong in this list, either as number 20 or 30 or even lower. Because the others are workers. They work under the most dangerous conditions to produce goods and services that people really need.

The police are not workers. On the contrary, they are anti-worker. Their primary function is to preserve the unjust capitalist order, which exploits and oppresses workers. The police are particularly brutal and murderous against those who are additionally oppressed by virtue of their color or national origin.

Now that there’s a vibrant and courageous movement in the streets against police murders, led by youth of color, more people are challenging the false ideas promoted as “general knowledge.” □

Protest Goodwill

We are inviting everyone in the conference to march with us to a demonstration against Goodwill Industries. We will show the utmost solidarity with and sensitivity to the Goodwill workers, who deserve good jobs at decent wages.

I received an email from Rose Sloan, government affairs specialist for the NFB, recognizing our protest today: “Thanks for raising awareness about this issue! I

hope your event goes well!”

At many disability rights events, famous people with disabilities are often mentioned. I choose this moment to cite one historical figure with the disability of asthma: the great revolutionary comrade, Ernesto Che Guevara, and invoke his great battle cry: “If you tremble with indignation at every injustice, then you are a comrade of mine.”

Equal pay for workers with disabilities! □

Artists hold 24-hour protest against police brutality



A group of artists held a 24-hour action against police brutality in New York City's Grand Central Station from 5 p.m. on Jan. 5 to 5 p.m. on Jan. 6. They carried signs with the names of 170 people killed by cops over the last 50 years, including Eric Garner and Michael Brown.

Organizer Laurie Arbiter noted that there were extraordinary moments as people came upon the demonstration. One man noted that his 14-year-old son, Claude Reese, was shot in the head by a cop in 1974, when cops burst into the basement of his Brooklyn home. The organizers added a sign with Reese's name. Another man stopped when he saw a sign with the name of his friend, Phillip Pannell, who at the age of 16 was shot and killed by a cop in Teaneck, N.J., in 1990.

The group read out the names of each person killed and spoke about their lives and how they were murdered. Many family members of those killed participated in the event. #carrythenames #wewillnotbesilent

— Photo and story by Brenda Ryan

Anti-racist struggle continues in 2015

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

An upsurge in mass demonstrations and rebellions across the United States portends much for developments in 2015. The federal government and ruling class have not seriously addressed the underlying factors associated with the rise in police killings and other racist incidents.

The profound disconnect between the ruling Democratic and Republican parties and the African-American masses was starkly revealed last year when voter turnouts were low, while tens of thousands of people demonstrated in the streets against police terrorism and the racist criminal justice system.

These militant protests and urban rebellions were not planned by the mainstream Civil Rights organizations, but grew out of the objective conditions facing tens of millions of oppressed people.

Entering 2015, we see that right-wing ideology dominates the political superstructure of the U.S. Completely ignored are the growing demands by millions for decent wages, adequate housing, quality education, an end to police abuses and the cessation of military hostilities abroad.

The Democratic Party, which appeals to the workers and oppressed during election years seeking their votes, is not advancing any concrete programs to alleviate the suffering and impoverishment of growing numbers of people. Unemployment, underemployment and poverty rates remain extremely high. The decline in the labor participation rate conceals

the real magnitude of the problem.

A Pew Research Center study entitled "Black unemployment rate is consistently twice that of whites" was issued on Aug. 21, 2013, to mark the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington. It reported, "In 1954, the earliest year for which the Bureau of Labor Statistics has consistent unemployment data by race, the white rate averaged 5% and the black rate averaged 9.9%. Last month, the jobless rate among whites was 6.6%; among blacks, 12.6%. Over that time, the unemployment rate for blacks has averaged about 2.2 times that for whites."

Such statistics illustrate that despite the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, fundamental issues of jobs and income remain unresolved. The refusal of the federal government and the corporate elite to enact any national jobs program means that these unemployment figures will continue at the same rate or become even more disparate between African Americans and whites.

The U.S. poverty rate sharply reflects these disparities. Overall, it stood at 15 percent in 2013. When race is considered, whites had a poverty rate of 10 percent, while the rate was 27 percent for African Americans — 17 percent higher. The Latino/a poverty rate was 24 percent, just three points below African Americans. (These figures are posted under "Poverty Rate by Race/Ethnicity" at the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation blog, using data issued in March 2014 by the U.S. Census Bureau.)

Consequently, it is not surprising that African Americans are expressing mass opposition to the status quo. The struggles of this oppressed nation in North America have paved the way for all significant contemporary democratic and working-class movements.

50 years after Selma

A "white backlash" against the demonstrations demanding justice for Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice and other victims of racist police violence is already in evidence. Police organizations, backed up by politicians, are decrying any public sympathy expressed toward African-American and other oppressed people who are being gunned down in the streets by the cops.

These developments are taking place 50 years after the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference went to Selma, Ala., to escalate an existing struggle for voting rights. Since 1965, many African Americans have been elected to public office and have entered job categories from which they had been previously excluded.

However, the fundamental contradictions between the majority of African Americans and the capitalist ruling class remain. Most African Americans have been negatively impacted by the economic system's restructuring over the last several decades.

The housing crisis and the deterioration of the public sector, including in municipal affairs and education, have dispro-

tionately robbed jobs, incomes, homes and essential services from tens of millions of the oppressed living in cities and suburbs.

Ferguson, Mo., where the rebellions and mass demonstrations erupted in response to the police killing of Michael Brown on Aug. 9, represents a microcosm of African-American life in the U.S.

As voting rights are besieged in many states, the Supreme Court in 2013 struck down the enforcement provisions of the 1965 Voting Rights bill. The U.S. Congress has yet to take any meaningful action to restore access to the basic right to vote, which is ostensibly a byproduct of any bourgeois democracy.

Malcolm X said on Jan. 7, 1965, in a speech before the Militant Labor Forum in New York, that 1965 would be one of the bloodiest years on the racial front in U.S. history. His life was taken on Feb. 21. Then on March 7, "Bloody Sunday," state and local police attacked hundreds of Civil Rights marchers on the Edmund Pettus Bridge, after they left Selma on their way to Montgomery, the Alabama state capital. The Watts Rebellion began on Aug. 11. Also, the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, the original Black Panther Party, was founded in Alabama, in the aftermath of the Selma-to-Montgomery march.

Independent political action by the African-American masses must lead to new organizational forms and alliances. As a system, capitalism has run its course. Therefore, a major political movement aiming for national liberation and socialist reconstruction is required. □

Should workers support police strikes?

By Sam Marcy

This updated article first appeared in the Jan. 29, 1971, issue of Workers World newspaper. The writer was a founding member and chairperson of Workers World Party. Read the entire article on workers.org.

Should strikes of cops be treated on an equal level with workers' strikes?

Emphatically, no! A striking worker and a striking police officer may on the surface appear to have the same immediate aims — to get higher pay and better conditions for themselves. But this is to take an extremely narrow and superficial view of their apparently similar situations. The truth, however, is that there is objectively speaking not a shred of class identity between workers and the police. The fundamental interests of the workers are diametrically opposed to those of the police and are absolutely irreconcilable with them.

A worker is, above all, a producer. The police officer is a parasite who lives off what the worker produces. No truer words could be said! All the material wealth which is now in the possession of the cap-

italist class was produced by the workers. When a worker goes out on strike she [or he] is merely trying to retrieve a portion of the wealth which her [or his] labor power produced. The worker gets back in the form of wages only a portion of what he [or she] produces. The rest is what the capitalist class retains in the form of profit (really the unpaid labor of the workers).

The gross national income of the U.S. last year reached the astronomical sum of one trillion dollars. It was all produced by workers: Black, Brown, white, men and women and even children. The struggles of all the workers, insofar as their immediate demands are concerned, are merely to retrieve a larger portion of this wealth which they produced for the bosses and which the bosses keep for themselves.

Contribute nothing to social wealth

What have the cops contributed to the production of this unprecedented amount of wealth? Nothing at all. In fact, their principal function is to guard the wealth for the capitalists, protect their monopolist profits from the demands of the workers.

A cop is a mercenary hired by the cap-

italist class through their agent (the city government) to keep the mass of the workers and the oppressed in complete subjection. They utilize all the forces and violence at their disposal whenever the masses rise up in rebellion against the unendurable conditions imposed by the master class.

The police are the most parasitic social grouping in society. When they work — if that's what it can possibly be called — their labor is directed against the workers and oppressed.

They are utterly inseparable from crime and corruption itself. One could not exist without the other. Both are nourished and supported by the nature of the capitalist system itself. To put the police on a par with the workers is to erase the difference between the persecutors and their victims.

Such incidental operations of the police as traffic control and other related useful functions for society are deliberately tacked on by the government to police control when they in reality should be separate and independent activities of workers apart from the parasitic regular police functions.

In this country, who does not know that the Klan and the John Birch Society are the most intimate collaborators with the police and in some cities actually control the police?

Who does not know that almost all the strike-breaking agencies in the country work hand in glove with the police? Both are in the service of the industrialists as soon as the workers make an independent move of their own.

Army of occupation in oppressed communities

In the Black and Brown communities, the police play the role of a foreign occupation army and practice a form of cruelty and brutality which differs only in degree from the U.S. occupation army in Vietnam and Cambodia.

The police strikes, if they can be called that, are in the nature of pro-slavery rebellions whose ultimate effect is to strengthen the capitalist state against the masses everywhere. A victory for the cops means extra privileges for these parasites. This will embolden them and encourage them in the use of violence in future struggles against the workers. Every cent paid to the

Tamir Rice killing further exposed

By Martha Grevatt and Susan Schnur
Cleveland

Last November, the whole world watched with horror the heartbreaking video of the Cleveland police killing of 12-year-old Tamir Rice. Police officer Timothy Loehmann gunned down Rice immediately after coming upon him playing with a toy gun.

Now the ugly truth is even uglier in the public eye. Newly released video footage has made the news again, proving what Cleveland's African-American community has known all along from information shared by Rice's family.

After Rice was shot, Loehmann's partner, Frank Garmback, tackled, handcuffed and forced Rice's 14-year-old sister

into a squad car. She had rushed to the scene after Rice had been shot, crying, "You killed my baby brother!"

The complete footage, which the Cleveland Plain Dealer pushed the police to release, also shows Loehmann and Garmback denying Rice first aid. Additionally, it has come to light that Rice's mother and brother were kept from the dying youth's bedside by Metro General Hospital police.

Meanwhile, another widely viewed case has revealed the hideous collusion of the Cleveland Division of Police — whose consistent policy of covering up brutality and abuse permeates this racist institution from top to bottom — with the courts and the professional associations of police wrongly characterized as unions, who defend their own in each and every case

WW PHOTO: SUSAN SCHNUR
Dec. 30 counterprotest of
"Blue Lives Matter" rally in
Cleveland.



of misconduct, including murder.

In the aftermath of the shocking killings of Malissa Williams and Timothy Russell, who died after Cleveland police fired 137 bullets into their vehicle in 2012, 85 police officers received various levels of discipline, including firings. The Cleveland Police Patrolman's Association filed grievances on behalf of the officers.

One of these killers who was fired and two who were demoted have been reinstated with back pay after Common Pleas Judge Timothy Russo upheld an arbitrator's ruling in favor of the three. It's highly possible that more and possibly all 85 of

those complicit in the double murder will be exonerated.

There is more heat in the street about the killing, earlier in November, of Tanisha Anderson, who died in front of her family members' home after relatives called 911 asking for an ambulance. Police came instead, causing Anderson's death by a "takedown maneuver" and leaving her to die in the cold after she stopped breathing.

Many are furious about what these killer cops are getting away with and no one has turned the page on Tamir Rice's murder. Hundreds are packing rooms in the various city wards where the City Council is conducting "listening tours." One can immediately feel the bubbling anger as residents vent, despite their cynicism that these meetings will not yield any significant changes. With the latest revelation of the outrageous conduct of Loehmann and Garmback coming to light, the crisis has reached a tipping point.

The resistance continues, with courageous youth, parents and children holding "Black Lives Matter" demonstrations — while facing down police dogs, bomb squads, marine units and other elements of the militarized occupation force that constitutes the CDP. When the City Council returns from winter recess, they can expect council chambers to be sweltering from the heat of community anger. □

Justice for Kendrick Johnson!

By Dianne Mathiowetz

The town of Valdosta, Ga., witnessed, on Jan. 10, the kind of militant protest march that characterizes the "Black Lives Matter" movement across the country. The crowd of city residents and out-of-town supporters, including several youth activists from #ItsBiggerThanYou, came to demand justice for Kendrick Johnson. They surged into the lanes of a major city street and state highway, stopping traffic. They were undeterred by the orders of police to move until they reached their destination, the entrance to Lowndes County High School.

It's been two years since the body of 17-year-old Kendrick "KJ" Johnson was found in a rolled-up gym mat at the school. This most suspicious death was immediately declared an "accident" by Lowndes County Sheriff Chris Prine, who closed the case.

Johnson's parents suspect foul play and have worked tirelessly to win a thorough investigation to find out who killed their son. They had to fight to exhume their child's body for a second autopsy, which revealed that blunt-force trauma to the neck had contributed to his death. The examination also revealed that all of John-

son's vital organs were missing, including his tongue and larynx, and that his body had been stuffed with newspaper.

For two years now a daily vigil in front of the Valdosta City Hall demanding justice for KJ has been sustained by family, friends and supporters. As a result of public pressure, the Department of Justice has been investigating his death for months. KJ's parents deserve answers.

In front of the school where their son died, Kenneth Johnson and Jacquelyn Johnson vowed not to stop fighting for the truth — because Kendrick Johnson mattered. □

Haitians demand relief 5 years after quake

Five years ago, after a catastrophic earthquake killed hundreds of thousands of Haitians and destroyed much of Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital, the people of the world were so struck by the devastation and suffering that they donated billions of dollars to Haiti's relief. A majority of those who donated lived in the U.S.

But the "international community" felt that Haiti's government couldn't handle so much money, so they appointed former U.S. President Bill Clinton as head of the Interim Haiti Reconstruction Fund and

guaranteed that he would have complete control.

Now \$6 billion of these contributions have yet to be dispersed. At a demonstration in New York on Jan. 13, called by the Committee to Mobilize Against Dictatorship in Haiti (Komokoda), Haitians asked, "Where's the money, Bill?" They also pointed out that then U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton installed Michel "Sweet Mickey" Martelly as president of Haiti to cover up this plunder.

— Photo and story by G. Dunkel



police comes out of the hides of the workers. Every cent they get is at the expense of welfare, housing, schools, and other facilities and services that are needed by the people. And the police are now the biggest item in New York City's budget!

Unlike workers, when police go out on strike they are not trying to retrieve money withheld from them for useful work done on behalf of society. Their services are solely and exclusively in the interests of one class of society only: the ruling class. Clarity on this point is absolutely indispensable. If the police find themselves in a controversy with the ruling class over the amount of money they should get as mercenaries, the workers should treat this as an internal struggle in the camp of the enemy and not confuse it with a struggle of their own class.

Will there be cops when classes are gone?

One way for a Marxist to judge whether a specific social group in the present capitalist state setup is parasitic or really performs socially necessary and useful work is to ask whether such groupings would be needed in a socialist system after the aboli-

tion of all class rule. Clearly police will not be needed. With the abolition and disappearance of all vestiges of class privilege, the need for a coercive special force, even a workers' militia, becomes superfluous.

However, men and women who work to make a more sanitary social environment and make it free from all sorts of hazards, such as fire, will of course be needed. If even in a socialist society the need for a coercive force such as police continually diminishes as the socialist system develops to a higher and higher form, then all the less do we need police in a capitalist society. Here its fundamental function is to suppress the working class and in particular use the most brutal violence against the Black, Chicano/a and Puerto Rican people.

It is to be noted that the current wave of police insurgency comes after a considerable period when they have been engaged in actual civil war against the Black and Brown communities. The ruling class has felt itself more and more indebted to the police precisely because of this. Having been highly flattered for their brutal role in the recent period, the police are now demanding extra privileges and remuneration for their storm trooper role in those

Phil Africa ¡Presente!

By Betsey Piette

MOVE 9 member Phil Africa died in prison on Jan. 10 under what family members are calling "suspicious circumstances." Six days earlier, Africa reportedly wasn't feeling well and went to the prison infirmary in the State Correctional Institution at Dallas, Pa. MOVE members who drove to SCI-Dallas were denied a visit by the prison.

They later learned that Africa had been secretly transported to Wilkes-Barre General Hospital and held there in isolation for five days. Callers to the hospital were told he wasn't there. The prison and hospital reportedly initially denied Africa the right to call Janine Africa, his spouse of 44 years, on the grounds that she wasn't a blood relative.

After hundreds of supporters from around the world flooded the phones at the hospital and prison, Phil Africa was allowed to call Janine Africa on Jan. 8. She reported that he seemed heavily drugged, incoherent and had difficulty talking. On Jan. 9, Phil Africa was sent back to the prison infirmary. MOVE members Ramona Africa and Carlos Africa were giv-

communities and on the college campuses as well as in the recent strike struggles throughout the whole country.

The police have also become more vociferous in denouncing the so-called lenient judges and demanding that the government "take the handcuffs off the police." This cry is nothing but a fascist demand for the right to unrestricted use of force and violence against the civil population. It is in this context that we must view the police strikes as well as the general historical role that they play in the class struggle. □

en permission to visit him on Jan. 10 and found him unable to talk or move his head. He died an hour after they left.

The family says that inmates in the infirmary and prison who saw him before he was sent to the hospital reported that Phil Africa was walking, stretching and doing jumping jacks, and seemed in good health. The inmates expressed shock to see his deteriorated condition after his release from the hospital. The hospital has refused to release information on his medical condition to the family.

Phil Africa was one of nine MOVE members imprisoned in the aftermath of a police assault on their home in the Powelton Village section of Philadelphia in August 1978. During the conflict, a police officer was shot and killed with one bullet; however, all nine MOVE members in the house at the time were charged with third-degree murder. They were each given 30-year to 100-year sentences, even though the average sentence for the charge is 10 to 15 years.

Since 2008, the MOVE 9 have been denied parole because they maintain their innocence and refuse to give any false admission of guilt or remorse, as required by the parole board as a condition for release.

Another MOVE 9 member, Merle Africa, died in prison under similar conditions in March 1998. Apparently healthy in prison, she was nonetheless forced to go to an outside hospital, where she died.

Eleven MOVE members, including five children, were murdered when the government intentionally dropped a bomb on their home on May 13, 1985. MOVE members and supporters will be holding a major 30-year commemoration on May 13 in Philadelphia.

A revolutionary all his adult life despite having two of his children murdered by the system, Phil Africa is remembered as a warm father figure to many in prison. □

1961 Paris massacre exposed 'freedom of press'

By John Catalinotto

On Jan. 11, the French imperialist bourgeoisie mobilized and manipulated a massive demonstration in all the country's major cities under hypocritical slogans extolling Western civilization and alleged "freedom of speech." Their goal — which they share with U.S. and European Union imperialism — is a reactionary modern crusade against colonial peoples, mostly Muslims, in the guise of a "war on terror."

One piece of French history that clashes with this ruling-class argument concerns the Paris massacre of Oct. 17, 1961. If you don't know about this massacre, it is because the imperialist defenders of "French civilization" have made every effort to keep it secret.

Between 1954 and 1962, French imperialism waged a bitter colonial war to

hang on to its North African colony of Algeria. As is often the case with peoples in an imperial colony, many Algerian immigrants and their descendants were living in Paris in October 1961. Many sympathized with the National Liberation Front's struggle for independence in Algeria.

On Oct. 17, some 30,000 took to the Parisian streets in an unarmed demonstration to protest a curfew in Algeria by the occupation forces on "Muslim Algerians" in the colony. (France24.com, Oct. 18, 2012)

Some 7,000 heavily armed French police — following direct orders of Paris prefect Maurice Papon — brutally attacked the peaceful demonstrators, trapping them on bridges, beating and strangling them and throwing them into the Seine River to drown. Papon told his officers he would stand behind

their slaughter of the protesters.

Because so many bodies were lost in the Seine, there is uncertainty about the number of people the French police killed. Estimates range between 70 and 300. Thousands of people were injured and 11,000 arrested.

The next day, the French newspaper *Libération* reported the official toll as two dead, several wounded and 7,500 arrests. They and the rest of the corporate French media collaborated with the French state and covered up the real story of the massacre for decades. The international imperialist media did the same, even though reporters saw dozens of bodies floating in the Seine. (wrmea.org, March 1997)

Finally, in 1991, French historian Jean-Luc Einaudi wrote a book on the massacre entitled "The Battle of Paris."

Top-cop Papon had collaborated with

the Nazi occupation during World War II and sent Jews, Communists and other Resistance fighters to their death. He was tried in France and found guilty of complicity in war crimes decades later in 1998. More information on the massacre came out during Papon's trial. Sentenced to 10 years in prison, Papon was released in 2002 on alleged health grounds, but died in 2007 at the age of 96.

In 2005, filmmaker Alain Tasma made a film about the massacre, "Nuite noire," and stories of the event became incorporated in other films and books. Current French Premier Francois Hollande acknowledged the massacre officially for the first time in 2012.

When the imperialist ruling class talks about "freedom of speech" and "defense of Western Civilization," watch out for the next war. □

Racism, imperialism behind Paris killings

Continued from page 1

itary intervention. Even Nasrallah himself was quoted as saying that the attack probably did more harm to Islam than the cartoons. (Huffington Post, Jan. 9)

Biggest terrorists denounce terrorism

On the other hand, the loudest denunciations of terrorism have come from the world's biggest terrorists — the U.S., French, British and other European powers. They try to use revulsion against the attacks to further their goals of racist repression of Islamic residents, increased policing, and escalation of bombing and military operations in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Pakistan, Afghanistan and other places.

Already, the racist New York Police Department has used the Paris situation to step up its surveillance and to raise false threats to security in order to expand their operation. These alarmist pronouncements and tactics by the NYPD are undoubtedly aimed to undermine the Black Lives Matter movement and burish the tarnished image of the cops.

The global big-power terrorists want to conceal the origin of the Paris attacks. These attacks must be seen against the background of more than three decades of war against Muslim countries, mainly by the U.S., but in collaboration with others, including France.

Glenn Greenwald made a count of the bombings since 1980: "Iran (1980, 1987-1988), Libya (1981, 1986, 1989, 2011), Lebanon (1983), Kuwait (1991), Iraq (1991-2011, 2014-), Somalia (1992-1993, 2007-), Bosnia (1995), Afghanistan (1998, 2001-), Sudan (1998), Kosovo (1999), Yemen (2000, 2002-), Pakistan (2004-) and now Syria." (The Intercept)

Silent on imperialist slaughter

While gruesome photos are shown of the aftermath of the attack on Charlie Hebdo, similar pictures are not shown of families slaughtered by U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan, Yemen or Somalia. Nor does the French head of government, who says, "We are at war with radical Islam," want to bring up the fact that "France has emerged as one of the most active interveners in the Muslim world, conducting military operations in Libya, Mali, Chad, Ivory Coast, Central African Republic, Djibouti, Abu Dhabi, Afghanistan, Iraq

and Syria. Critics accused France of a new era of Mideast and African colonialism." (Eric Margolis, Common Dreams, Jan. 10)

The war crimes of the U.S. are seared into the memory of the Muslim masses: images of Afghanistan pummeled by smart bombs, laser bombs, bunker-busting bombs and so-called "daisy cutters" — 5,000-lb. bombs that explode above ground and kill everything within a 100-yard radius. Untold numbers have been killed and millions made homeless in Afghanistan alone. This was followed by the "shock-and-awe" bombing of Iraq, including U.S. attacks on Fallujah, with the virtual destruction of that city of 300,000. Then came the images from Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo and other torture chambers set up by the U.S. military and CIA.

The French colonized Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos as well as parts of North and West Africa beginning in the 19th century. The French Foreign Legion, a mercenary force, was infamous for its brutality in the French colonial era. The crimes of imperialism against Muslims and other colonial peoples are too long to list here (see "French imperialism's brutal colonial rule" by John Catalinotto, workers.org). This is the background to the Paris attacks.

The movement must not let opposition to the killings diminish resistance to the U.S.-French intervention in Iraq, Syria and North Africa just because these imperialists for the moment are fighting ISIS or al-Qaida. The reactionary forces of ISIS and al-Qaida must be defeated by progressive and revolutionary forces within Islamic society on the ground, not by imperialism. A victory for Washington or Paris would be a setback for the oppressed people of the world.

Free speech and the national question

It is a characteristic of French capitalist society and French imperialism that it deals with the national question by refusing to recognize its existence. This insensitive national chauvinism has shaped attitudes. In fact, the left in France has shamelessly adapted to this attitude. This has everything to do with the latest attack.

According to the Jan. 8 New York Times, "In 2012 when Charlie Hebdo editors defied the government's advice

and published crude caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad in naked and sexual poses, the French authorities shut down embassies, cultural centers and schools in about 20 countries" anticipating a violent reaction.

The editor, Stephane Charbonnier, who was killed Wednesday, was intransigent and had been under police guard since 2012. He risked his life for the right to insult a billion oppressed people without restriction or inhibition.

According to the Times, "In the past Mr. Charbonnier vowed that his cartoonists would keep poking fun 'until Islam is just as banal as Catholicism.' ... [In] its raucous, vulgar and sometimes commercially driven effort to offend every Islamic piety ... Charlie Hebdo was in the vanguard of opposition to conservative Islam."

Charbonnier put an equal sign between the religion of the colonists — the religion of the Crusaders and missionaries who were in the vanguard of colonial enslavement — and Islam, a religion practiced mainly by oppressed peoples who were conquered by colonialism and have been attacked repeatedly by the military forces of Washington, London, Paris, Berlin, Rome, etc.

Falsely equating oppressed and oppressor

This attitude is a reflection of French ruling-class society. When the French colonized Algeria, they classified the Algerian people as French and called Algeria a province of France. They even put puppet delegates in the French parliament to sustain the fiction that "We are all French."

In 2005 when the mainly Arab and African-Muslim youth of the Paris suburbs carried on a rebellion for three weeks against poverty, unemployment and lack of opportunity, one of their demands was to force the French government to keep statistics on how many people in France were of foreign origin. Algerians, North Africans and their descendants who live in France are not counted as foreign. They are just categorized as "French citizens" and therefore cannot prove discrimination on the basis of race or nationality.

Imagine if African Americans were not counted as such or if Chicanos were not regarded as Latino/a by the U.S. government. There could never be an affirma-

tive action program if everyone was just an "American."

This is the chauvinist attitude that lies behind the magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. Charbonnier was supposed to be a "leftist." But no genuine leftist, certainly no communist, could ignore the question of national oppression. This is not a matter of "free speech," but rather a matter of hate speech that has the result of fueling right-wing, racist forces to carry out discrimination, harassment and violence against Muslims.

The second-largest party in France's last election and a menacing force is the National Front, a fascist organization that has made Islamophobia and restrictions on the Muslim community the center of its program. These cartoons feed the frenzy of Islamophobia, not just in France but in Germany, where the Patriotic Europeans Against Islamization recently organized 18,000 marchers in Dresden. The Sweden Democrats Party, which is anti-Islamic, draws 15 percent of the vote. The United Kingdom Independent Party, the Golden Dawn in Greece and other right-wing, fascist and Islamophobic parties are growing in the atmosphere of the capitalist economic crisis.

High unemployment and poverty are creating the ground for racism and divide-and-conquer tactics.

The democratic right of free speech for progressives, workers, oppressed communities and all organizations that have to fight against capitalist reaction is extremely important. This right, however, is highly restricted in capitalist society because the rich own the media, the publishing houses, the film studios, the great printing establishments and paper supplies, etc., while the bourgeoisie has its point of view put forward 24/7 every day and in every way.

But the "right" of the Ku Klux Klan, the John Birch Society, the Tea Party, etc., to vilify African Americans, Latinos/as, immigrants, women and lesbian-gay-bi-trans-queer people should be suppressed by the people themselves in a struggle against these hatemongers. In the same way, the progressive forces in France should wake up and shut down the racist forces spawned by French imperialism.

Above all, the movement in the U.S. has to guard against the continued step-up in racism, Islamophobia and intensification of police activity on the local and federal level. □

Charlie Hebdo, the free press and racism

By Sara Flounders

How do we put in perspective the international media focus on the massacre of 12 journalists in Paris on Jan. 7 at the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo, notorious for its racist anti-Muslim caricatures and lack of response to the routine, daily, racist police murders of Black youth in the U.S.? Why were protests banned in France when 15 journalists were killed among the 2,000 deaths in the Israeli assault of Gaza this past summer? Don't those lives matter?

The Charlie Hebdo assassinations strengthen the hand of the state, which is using them in an ideological offensive, even if the state had a role in arming and training the killers.

Why are other murders not mourned, not respected, not even reported — even the murders of other journalists? A crucial role of the corporate media is to try to shape the perception of which lives matter.

Consider the mass outpourings following several different, very public killings in the U.S. Hundreds of thousands of youths have been in the streets again and again in the U.S. confronting the refusal of the state to prosecute killer cops, even when their murderous crimes have been seen on video by millions.

Hundreds of thousands of people were in the streets of Paris on Jan. 11. French, other European, U.S. and Israeli politicians led the march honoring the slain journalists.

Twice, on Dec. 27 and Jan. 4, thousands of police in uniform from all over the U.S. converged on New York City for separate funerals of two police officers shot in their patrol car in Dec. 20. JetBlue offered free flights to all police traveling nationally to the funeral. The U.S. vice president, New York state's governor and the city's mayor attended the funerals. Roads in the areas were closed; giant outdoor TV screens were erected.

Not a free speech issue

The French government's protection of the racist journal Charlie Hebdo had nothing to do with protecting freedom of speech. This is a deception that must be confronted. In 2012 the same government that protected this vile publication banned any demonstrations or protests or even public prayers opposing the racist publication.

French law allows for the prosecution of "public insults" based on religion, race, ethnicity or national origin. But the racist, sexist, bigoted, grossly insulting cartoons in Charlie Hebdo magazine were never once a source of any successful legal action.

However, France did ban anyone from even protesting the cartoons that insulted Muslims or the Prophet Muhammed.

In 2012, as protests swept the Muslim world in response to an anti-Muslim film made in the U.S., French Interior Minister Manuel Valls said prefects had orders to prohibit any protest and to crack down if the ban was challenged. "There will be strictly no exceptions. Demonstrations will be banned and broken up." (Daily Mail, Sept. 21, 2012) Even prayer meetings and street prayers were banned. (CNN, Sept. 19, 2012)

In the same week Charlie Hebdo put out an extra run of cartoons featuring a grossly obscene caricature of a naked Prophet Mohammed. The magazine was given extra police protection.

Freedom of speech and of the press is hardly sacred in France. It was punishable by a year in prison to even post on

the Internet a notice of a demonstration opposing the Israeli onslaught on Palestine during the Israeli 2014 summer offensive on Gaza. France was the only country in the world to bar all demonstrations and protests in any form supporting Palestine during that time. The penalty was one year in jail and 15,000 euro fine.

It is worth noting the double standard: There is no similar crackdown against the current right-wing, fascist demonstrations against immigrants.

Role of Nazi caricature

Charlie Hebdo serves a very important purpose for French imperialism, and that is why its virulent racism has been protected at the very time that protests against it are prohibited.

Charlie Hebdo may have run cartoons to ridicule the powerful 40 years ago when it claimed to be left wing, irreverent and nonconformist. But there is a big difference between satire ridiculing the powerful — a French tradition going back to Voltaire — and the current imagery promoting fear and loathing of the oppressed and powerless. The latter is right wing and fascist in character.

In this period when Muslims are facing increasing extreme right-wing attacks, and fascist mobilizations are growing in Europe, Charlie Hebdo functions as did the Nazi publication Der Sturmer with its vehemently anti-Semitic caricatures. Jewish people in Der Sturmer, as Muslims in Charlie Hebdo, were depicted with exaggerated facial features and misshapen bodies. Both publications use obscene, sexually explicit caricatures.

The Nazi newspaper's caricatures were part of a policy to make Jews an object of hatred, fear, ridicule and disdain. At the end of World War II, Julius Streicher, the editor of Der Sturmer — though he didn't run death camps but used the press to incite hatred — was put on trial, convicted of crimes against humanity and executed.

Charlie Hebdo is protected because it hardens the population against Muslim people in order to divide the population. The French government has announced a grant to Charlie Hebdo of 1 million euros, and Google donated 250,000 euros.

Charlie Hebdo is not freedom of expression and freedom of press. It is an instrument of war mobilization. It ran cartoons demonizing Serbs during the NATO campaign against Yugoslavia, and it supported NATO's attack on Libya.

No free press

Although "free speech" and "free press" are being lauded and glorified in the murder of the French journalists, no such thing exists in any capitalist state. The press in France or in the U.S. is not free, open or accessible. The media are owned by and serve the interests of the ruling class. What can be said and who can say it is tightly controlled. The corporate media in capitalist society are owned to serve class rule. What is covered depends entirely on who can pay for publication or airtime. A handful of multibillion-dollar media conglomerates control almost all information, culture and entertainment in the Western capitalist countries — though in the past decade social media and the Internet have opened a few cracks in this overwhelming corporate control.

The media industry has an enormous impact in shaping what lives have value and what deaths go unreported, unmarked or consciously covered up.

The hundreds of thousands of deaths in wars initiated by U.S. imperialism, and



The banner of 'Youth against racism' in a protest in Paris, November 2013.

with full support of French and British imperialism, are unmarked, unmourned and callously labeled "collateral damage." The media ignore or barely mention the enormous toll in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Afghanistan. No mass sympathy is created when a U.S. drone wipes out a wedding party in Pakistan or a whole village with a hellfire missile.

The assassinations of journalists in these wars are hardly noted. There were no state funerals for the 166 journalists killed in Iraq under U.S. occupation. Chelsea Manning is in prison for releasing videos of U.S. helicopters gunning down two Reuters camera operators in Iraq and then circling to kill the family that stopped their van to try to help them.

According to The Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms, 15 journalists were killed in the 2014 Israeli bombing of Gaza. They "were killed in civilian sites which are supposed to be safe for civilians." Eight media centers were targeted and bombed.

U.S. bombers targeted and destroyed the RTS, Radio TV Serbia, in the 1999 U.S./NATO war on Yugoslavia, killing 17 journalists.

The most dangerous country in the world for journalists is Honduras. Since the U.S.-backed coup, 46 media and information workers have been assassinated.

The International Federation of Journalists sharply criticized NATO 2011 air strikes against Libyan television, which killed three people and injured 15. The IFJ stated that the strikes violated international law and U.N. resolutions.

If a free press existed, then Chelsea Manning would not be in prison or Edward Snowden and Julian Assange on the run, living in exile.

What media are even allowed coverage in imperialist countries demonstrates how little freedom of the press is respected. For example, PRESS TV, an Iranian news channel broadcasting in English, is banned from broadcasting via satellite throughout Europe, Canada and the U.S. Al-Manar, a Lebanese satellite station affiliated with Hezbollah, has also been banned by France, Germany and the U.S. Both Press TV and Al-Manar have protested, to no avail, that this is a grave breach of freedom of speech. While both news channels are available via the Internet in limited form, Apple and Google have removed Al-Manar mobile apps.

National oppression

National oppression and racism in France cannot be ignored. There are 5.5 million residents of African origin, many of them born in France and most of them citizens. A large number are from Muslim background, although not all are practicing. They are isolated by poverty in suburbs that have high unemployment, inferior schools and substandard housing.

Just as prisons in the U.S. overwhelmingly imprison Black and Brown youth, so too do French prisons. About 60 to 70 percent of all inmates in the country's prison system are Muslim, according

to Muslim leaders, sociologists and researchers, though Muslims make up only about 12 percent of the country's population. (Washington Post Foreign Service, April 29, 2008)

Imperialism needs hatred of targeted peoples. Western politicians have cynically used Islamophobia to advance right-wing political agendas and curtail freedoms.

Who benefits?

Regardless of whether a police conspiracy is ever exposed, we do know that the French ruling class and the corporate media are always primed to take full advantage of such acts to reinforce the repressive state apparatus and sow division among the working class.

There should not be an iota of confidence in the news stories of this massacre at Charlie Hebdo. We know only what we are being told in the corporate media by French military police and state intelligence agencies. We do know that three men, who are now dead, were tools of imperialism in their wars of conquest in Syria and Libya. More than 1,000 French citizens of Arab and North African descent have been recruited, trained, armed and used as weapons conduits, saboteurs and terrorists in the efforts of U.S., France, Britain, Turkey and Saudi Arabia to overthrow the government of Syria.

This leads to the fundamental question of whose policies are responsible for the massacre and who gains from the massacre.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, U.S. imperialism, aided by the old colonial powers of Europe, has been engaged in a whole series of wars to reconquer countries that had achieved a high level of development based on sovereignty and control of their resources.

In their frantic efforts to recolonize Iraq, Syria and Libya, they have cynically whipped up sectarian divisions, organized deadly militias and promoted fanaticism and anarchy. That has aroused deep-seated rage against the U.S., France and Britain.

It is also highly unpopular that French imperialism is widely involved in Africa, primarily in the majority-Muslim countries of Mali, Central African Republic, Chad, Ivory Coast and Djibouti, and in Abu Dhabi on the Arabian peninsula.

The French ruling class wants to divert mass attention from their expanding wars and increasingly militarized society. The mobilizations claiming to defend a free press by defending racism must be opposed and countered. □



by Sara Flounders

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WORKERS WORLD editorial

Dr. King and Black lives today

If the great Civil Rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. were alive today, he would unequivocally lend his name and support to the national protests being called in his honor against racism and especially police terror. Beginning on Jan. 15, the 87th anniversary of Dr. King's birth, protests will begin all over the country culminating on Jan. 19, the federal King holiday won in 1986 through mass protests.

These four days of demonstrations — be they marches, rallies, direct actions, no work, no school, or forums and other gatherings — are part and parcel of the two-month-old uprising against police brutality that began on Nov. 24 when a St. Louis, Mo., grand jury refused to indict Darren Wilson, a white cop, for murdering Michael Brown, an 18-year-old African American, on Aug. 9 in Ferguson, Mo. The uprising intensified after this racist slap in the face repeated itself on Dec. 3, when a Staten Island, N.Y., grand jury refused to indict another white cop, Daniel Pantaleo, for the chokehold murder, captured on videotape, of another African American, 43-year-old Eric Garner.

Despite the cold, wintry weather, activists, especially the youth, have maintained an ongoing presence with die-ins, school walkouts, blocking of traffic, takeovers of police precincts and other acts of defiance to demand that Black lives matter. The Ferguson National Response Network is centralizing numerous Jan. 15-19 protests from around the country on its website.

In New York City, the People's Power Assembly, Occu-Evolve and others are organizing a strike against racism on Jan. 15. Various boroughs will be holding actions in the morning, followed by a vigil at the African Burial Ground in lower Manhattan to pay homage to enslaved Africans whose unpaid labor helped build the international financial district of Wall Street. Actions will also take place at 1 Police Plaza and the

Manhattan Correctional Center. A rally will be held at City Hall followed by a protest at Grand Central Station, a major transportation hub. Families of murdered police victims will be participating at some of these actions. The Baltimore PPA is also holding a strike against racism on Jan. 15.

Major marches will be taking place in Philadelphia, Detroit, Atlanta, New York and elsewhere on Jan. 19. Go to peoplespower.net for more details.

Regardless of whether one followed Dr. King's philosophy of nonviolence or not, no one can deny that he was an activist who believed that only the direct intervention of the masses can create real social change.

Dr. King was a firm believer in putting deeds before words. He not only believed in civil rights, but also in workers' rights. An assassin's bullet tragically took his life at the age of 39 on April 4, 1968, while he was supporting the right of Black sanitation workers to unionize for better working conditions and a living wage in Memphis, Tenn.

#ReclaimMLK on Twitter reflects the growing national momentum to usher in 2015 as a year of resistance, first and foremost against police brutality but also regarding other issues related to racist repression, like mass incarceration, gentrification and low wages, and challenging the attacks on public education, health care and other basic services.

Workers World Party stands in solidarity with the Ferguson Action Response Network pledge that reads in part: "This pledge is in defense of ALL Black lives. We stand with Black men and women. We act when Black Queer and Trans lives are threatened. We defend the rights of our Black family when we are poor, disabled and incarcerated. I will elevate their names." (engage.fergusonaction.com)

The legacy of Dr. King will be felt not only Jan. 15-19 but throughout the year. □

Greece on edge of abyss: What will Jan. 25 elections bring?

By G. Dunkel

Every political and economic problem afflicting Europe has a worse case scenario in Greece. Whichever party wins the snap election called for Jan. 25 will either offer a small ray of hope or another five years of failed austerity.

The Greek Constitution calls for elections when the parliament can't elect a new president. This happened in late December 2014.

The two major parties contesting the parliamentary elections are New Democracy, which is leading the current government headed by Prime Minister Antonis Samaras, and Syriza, the official opposition led by Alexis Tsipras.

The European bourgeoisie, in particular the German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble, has said that if New Democracy and Samaras win the upcoming vote, then the bailout will continue along with austerity. If Syriza wins, they say, then the resulting chaos will likely force Greece out of the European Union.

Economic problems make disaster for workers

Deflation, a general fall in prices, wages and economic output and profits, has been raging since 2008. From its high point in 2007 — when the Greek economy was still growing — to 2014, the Greek output of goods and services has fallen by 33 percent, based on official Greek economic statistics. (qz.com) This is a sharper fall than the United States experienced during the the Great Depression in the 1930s.

In November 2014, Greece's economy minister declared his country's six-year recession over. The Guardian, a British newspaper that carefully covers Greece, then surveyed hundreds of Greek families. Only 12 percent said they saw any signs of improvement.

The Guardian's Greece correspondent summed up its findings in a Nov. 27 article:

"The 'success story' peddled by the government differs wildly from what life

is really like on the ground — with plummeting living standards, unprecedented unemployment and the inability of most to keep up with bills, including the barrage of new taxes that can change with lightning speed on any given day.

"Five years down the road the crisis, to great degree, has been 'normalized,' but the disconnect is evident in the collateral damage ... suicides, homelessness, a middle class pauperized by austerity."

The official unemployment rate is 27 percent. For youth under 30, at least 50 percent are out of work. Most jobless Greeks haven't had a paycheck for two years. These figures don't count the many workers whose pay is one to six months late. (New York Times, Dec. 29)

Over 400,000 Greek families have no one in the family working, which means they have to depend on private food pantries to eat. (Newsweek, Oct. 14)

The so-called economic troika — the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank and the European Commission — demanded 800 separate measures of cuts and tax increases in Greece. They were designed to lower Greece's foreign debt in relation to its output and thus make it easier for Greece to meet its bond obligations. Instead, the debt-to-gross-domestic-product ratio has grown. This makes it abundantly clear that Greece's debt cannot be paid off for decades under the current financial structure.

The political struggle: general strikes and elections

Greek workers did not take these vicious attacks lying down. At least 40 general strikes and major strikes in transportation and steel have taken place, generally involving all three union confederations. The struggles were particularly intense from 2010 to 2012, but almost always the bourgeoisie was able to beat them back and avoid making any major concessions.

While Syriza didn't oppose these strikes, it did not have many members who were workers, so it did not have much

Continued on page 11

Moscow conference

Stands with Novorossiya, Palestine and Black America

By Bill Dores
International Action Center

A conference on the Right of Peoples to Self-Determination and Building a Multipolar World was held in Moscow on Dec. 13, hosted by the Anti-Globalization Movement (AGM) of Russia. The conference brought together activists from Novorossiya (Donetsk and Lugansk), TransDniester, Iran, Syria, the Serb Republic, Italy, the United States and several regions of the Russian Federation. The conference was opened by AGM President Alexander Ionov. Other speakers included Oleg Tsarev, the speaker of the Parliament of Novorossia, and Alexander Kofman, the minister of foreign affairs of the Donetsk People's Republic.

Among the U.S. delegates were five representatives of the United National Antiwar Coalition, including Margaret Kimberley of Black Agenda Report, Joe Iosbaker of the Committee to Stop

FBI Repression, women's rights activist Maureen Hannah, Bill Dores of the International Action Center and UNAC Co-Coordinator Joe Lombardo, all of whom addressed the conference. Major themes of the discussion were the U.S.-backed war against the people of Donetsk and Lugansk in eastern Ukraine; the expansion of NATO into the former Soviet Union and economic war against Russia, Venezuela and Iran; and the ongoing uprising against racism and police brutality in the United States.

Activists from Donetsk, Lugansk and Odessa eloquently described the atrocities and humanitarian catastrophe Washington's proxy war is inflicting on the people of Novorossiya and the urgent attempts to bring medicine and food to that besieged region. The U.S. role in Israeli genocide against the Palestinian people was also on the agenda, including the case of U.S. Palestinian political prisoner Rasmea Odeh. Speakers also condemned the

AGM President Alexander Ionov with AGM members and UNAC Co-Coordinator Joe Lombardo outside the U.S. Embassy in Moscow.



U.S.-NATO proxy war against Syria and U.S.-NATO crimes in Libya, Yugoslavia and the TransDniester Republic.

The conference was followed by a Dec. 15 press conference with Russian and foreign media and a Dec. 17 demonstration outside the U.S. Embassy protesting racism, police brutality and political repression in the U.S. Demonstrators carried photos of Mike Brown, Eric Garner and Rasmea Odeh and chanted, "Hands up!

Don't shoot" and "I can't breathe!" The protesters laid flowers outside the embassy in memory of Mike Brown, Eric Garner and others murdered by the U.S. state apparatus.

Below is the full text of the conference declaration:

International Panel Discussion
National Dialogue: The Right of Peoples to Self-Determination and Building a Multipolar World

Ukraine antifascists, supporters welcome released activists

By Greg Butterfield

Jan. 6 — Four Ukrainian anti-fascist activists detained in the Donetsk People's Republic for two weeks were freed Jan. 3 and have now safely returned to Crimea in the Russian Federation.

Meanwhile, an Odessa activist tortured and held for almost four months by the U.S.-backed Ukrainian regime was freed Dec. 26 in a prisoner exchange between Ukraine and people's militias in the Lugansk People's Republics.

All five are members of the revolutionary Marxist organization Union Borotba (Struggle).

Victor Shapinov, Maria Muratova and Maxim Firsov had been held by the Special Division of the Vostok Battalion of the people's militia since Dec. 21. They were arrested by soldiers while on a solidarity visit to Donetsk to meet with activists and officials. Alexei Albu was detained Dec. 26 while trying to win their release. The activists have been living in exile in Simferopol, Crimea under threat of arrest for their anti-fascist activities in Ukraine.

Initial reports of the arrests stoked fears that they might be handed over to the Ukrainian regime as part of a prisoner swap, endangering their lives.

Their detention and subsequent expulsion from Donetsk highlights the sharpening class struggle and political contradictions in the People's Republics of the Donbass mining region, also known as Novorossiya, which declared independence from Ukraine following a far-right coup in Kiev last year.

Odessa massacre survivor freed

Vlad Wojciechowski survived the May 2 massacre of anti-fascist activists at the Odessa House of Trade Unions, where he suffered serious head trauma at the hands of a neo-Nazi mob. In September, he was arrested by the SBU, the Ukrainian equiv-

alent of the FBI, on trumped up charges of "forming a terrorist organization." He was subsequently imprisoned and tortured.

Wojciechowski was finally liberated just before the New Year in an exchange of prisoners of war between Ukraine and the Donbass republics.

In a statement published at Borotba.su, Wojciechowski said, "I am very angry with the fascist government of Ukraine, which proved once again with its barbaric acts that it is willing to wade through corpses to defend its interests and those of the West.

"They failed to break me. And my will has become tempered steel. Now I'm even more convinced that it is impossible to save Ukraine without defeating fascism on its territory."

Ukraine's government in Kiev, backed by U.S. and European Union imperialism and NATO, has carried out a bloody war against Donetsk and Lugansk, targeting homes, schools, hospitals, the civilian infrastructure and killing thousands.

In December the U.S. Congress and President Barack Obama reaffirmed their support for Ukraine's aggression with the so-called "Ukrainian Freedom Act." Among its provisions are millions of dollars in additional aid to the far-right junta of oligarchs, neoliberal politicians and neo-Nazis in Kiev, along with the direct supply of weapons and war materiel.

International solidarity to free antifascists

Despite the distraction of year-end holidays, the four Borotba activists detained in Donetsk drew wide international support demanding their release.

Groups in solidarity with the Donbass republics and Ukraine anti-fascists issued an international appeal to Donetsk officials. It read in part: "The four activists and their organization

have been steadfast leaders of the anti-fascist movement since the first days of the U.S.-NATO-backed coup in Ukraine. ... These comrades have been essential to building international solidarity with Donetsk and Lugansk, as well as the anti-fascist movement inside Ukraine. They are valuable allies of your struggle against the Kiev junta and NATO expansion.

"Mistakes happen in war time. It is not always easy to tell friend from foe. There is no shame in this. But there is still time to correct the mistake before it becomes a tragedy."

The appeal, initiated by the U.S.-based International Action Center, was co-signed by Colombia's March Patriótica movement, Britain's militant RMT Paddington No. 1 Branch of the transit workers' union, former U.S. Congressperson Cynthia McKinney, Joe Lombardo of the United National Antiwar Coalition, and solidarity groups from Britain, France, Greece and the U.S. (The full appeal can be read at No2Nato.org.)

Borotba members in Donetsk, in Simferopol and others exiled in Europe worked around-the-clock to free their comrades. Together with international solidarity activists, they appealed to influential individuals to speak out, and many responded, including Donetsk-based journalist Graham Phillips, military analyst Boris Rozhin (Colonel Cassad), Italian punk band Banda Bassotti, Russian champion athlete and communist youth Maryana Naumova, and leader of the Russian Communist Workers Party Victor Tyulkin.

In a statement issued following their release, Shapinov, Muratova, Firsov and Albu noted that direct appeals for their release from high government officials, including vice chair of the Donetsk People's Soviet Denis Pushilin and parliamentary leader Boris Litvinov, went unheeded by the Vostok Battalion leaders.

"After two weeks of detention in the Special Division," the activists report, "members of the Ministry of State Security of the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) came. They told us that we would be immediately taken to the Russian border and deported from the DNR. They also reported that we are forbidden to enter the territory of the DNR and the Lugansk People's Republic.

"In response to a question about the motives of deportation, Ministry officers said, 'Now you are with us for one thing, and then we do not know what you want to do.' Apparently, there is a view that as representatives of the communist movement, we could start an opposition to the activities of the current DNR leadership.

"At the moment we do not have enough information to make an unambiguous conclusion about what is behind our arrest and expulsion from the Donetsk People's Republic — banal excessive vigilance of intelligence agencies, political denunciation or some kind of political order. In any case, such actions with respect to sincere friends of the Donbass rebellion only harm the reputation of the People's Republics.

"Despite this unfortunate incident in which we were unwitting participants, we have not changed our attitude to the People's Republics and the anti-fascist uprising in the Donbass. We remain bitter enemies of the Kiev regime of oligarchs and Nazis, and friends of all who oppose fascism.

"However," they continue, "some recent developments, including our arrest and deportation, give rise to legitimate concerns — whether the original spirit of the anti-fascist and anti-oligarchic revolt will continue, or will it be buried in favor of commercial and political interests of various groups operating in the republics?" (The full statement in English can be accessed at Borotba.su/newsen.html.)□

Greece on edge of abyss: What will Jan. 25 elections bring?

influence. The Greek Communist Party (KKE) and the Greek Socialist Party (PASOK) were the political parties with the deepest connections to the labor movement, though PASOK was often a junior member of the governing coalition.

Syriza got 16 percent of the vote in the 2012 election when its position on remaining in the eurozone and rescheduling Greece's debt was ambiguous. After the vote, in the process of moving from an electoral coalition to a party, Syriza made its move to the center clearer: It adopted a position that Greece should remain in

the EU and pay off what it owed out of its economic growth.

Running on a platform of "a left government" and "unity of the left" in June 2014 — when the total bankruptcy of the troika's austerity policy was clear to the Greek people — Syriza got 27 percent of the vote, second to New Democracy.

Polls favor it to finish first in the Jan. 25 elections. Even finishing first, however, is no guarantee that Syriza will be able to form a government.

According to Panagiotis Karystinos of Communist Revolutionary Action (KED),

"The KKE claims that Syriza is just one more bourgeois party. Since Syriza does not proclaim to overthrow capitalism or break with the EU, it will do nothing more than an effort to manage the crisis within the capitalist framework. So, no support for Syriza." Karystinos goes on to say that many organizations of the nonparliamentary left in Greece agree with the KKE's criticism of Syriza. (personal correspondence)

As conditions for the workers deteriorated, a fascist party called Golden Dawn became much more prominent, getting 7

percent of the vote in the 2012 election up from 0.3 percent in the prior election. It specialized in physically attacking isolated leftists and immigrants. Many Greek leftists suspected the cops played a big role in Golden Dawn. In 2013 the government brought 30 legal cases against Golden Dawn, but didn't ban the party outright.

The big question in the election is whether pressure from EU bankers and governments will coerce Greek voters into re-electing New Democracy and its platform of austerity on Jan. 25. □

Moscow, Dec. 13, 2014

The world is changing. And, unfortunately, it is changing for the worse. The worsening geopolitical situation calls on us to support the nations and peoples who oppose the dictate [of] a unipolar world and seek to propose an alternative agenda. [The] progressive part of mankind stands for the development of international cooperation and solidarity, respectful of other peoples, their sovereignty, values and lifestyles as opposed to the current destructive manifestations of the "new world order": the barbaric exploitation of the majority of the world population, the destruction of national sovereignty and spiritual foundations of society, [and the] suppression of sovereignty of personality through the illegal collection of information.

Organizations participating in the international panel discussion urge people worldwide to unite and establish a united

front against discrimination, violation of human rights, religious and racial intolerance. We condemn the crimes and murders perpetrated against the people of Novorossia. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the innocent victims in Odessa, Lugansk and Donetsk. We strongly condemn political repression, particularly in countries that have positioned themselves as democratic nations.

The interference in the affairs of sovereign states, the sponsorship and support of extremist and terrorist entities are unacceptable in the XXI century. Events in Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Ukraine demonstrate the predatory foreign policy of the U.S. and its NATO allies. Local conflicts have affected more people than those affected during World War II. The U.N. no longer performs [its] role as peacekeepers, as more than 70 armed conflicts have taken place since the establishment of the organization.

The U.S. government has depressing statistics in the field of human rights. The latest example of political repression is Rasmia Odeh, an activist of the Palestinian community of Chicago, who is a political prisoner now. The U.S. Department of Justice has sent her to the tribunal because her migration card had no information about the fact that in 1969 she was imprisoned in Israel by the Israeli military court based on the information extracted under torture. As part of the support for the Israeli occupation of Palestine, the U.S. government supports the Israeli occupation and military courts. Rasmia's torture was part of a series of repressions against [the] pro-Palestinian movement in the United States. We demand the release of Rasmia Odeh and an end to the U.S. support for the occupation of Palestine!

African Americans, [Latinos/as] and other minorities are oppressed in the

U.S. We condemn the systematic killings by the police in the USA!

We condemn the murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo., Eric Garner in New York City and many others!

We support the protests in the U.S. cities as part of their struggle for freedom from police brutality, against mass defiance of human rights by the police, and call for the release of political prisoners such as Leonard Peltier and Mumia Abu-Jamal!

We call upon the people of the United States to take activities of the police under their control and demand investigation into the atrocities committed by the police officers!

The time of retreat has passed! It's time for advancing! This Declaration is the first step toward the consolidation of the progressive part of mankind! We will make every effort to build a multipolar world! We are the alternative! □



Sobreproducción y estancamiento capitalista detrás de aguda caída en precios del petróleo

Por Deirdre Griswold

Para millones en la clase obrera de EUA, el auto es una necesidad. No tienen acceso a transporte público fiable para ir a trabajar, de compras, a la escuela, consultas médicas o para un poco de recreación.

Para la clase trabajadora multinacional, en especial para las/os desempleados o aquellas/os atrapados en empleos de bajos salarios y de tiempo parcial, la reciente caída de los precios de la gasolina ha sido un bienvenido alivio.

Sin embargo, esta fuerte caída impacta de muchas maneras.

Por mucho tiempo, el precio del petróleo ha sido considerado como volátil, especialmente comparado con los precios de productos como autos y electrodomésticos. Sin embargo, el descenso en los últimos seis meses es de proporciones históricas. La cifra de referencia, basada en el precio del crudo Brent, se ha reducido a más de la mitad, de \$117 el barril en junio a \$53 para el 5 de enero.

Mayor caída desde 2008

Esta es la caída más grande en los precios del petróleo desde la crisis económica de 2008-09, cuando el colapso de la burbuja inmobiliaria en EUA provocó una crisis financiera que se extendió por todo el mundo capitalista.

Mientras que Wall Street se recuperó de la crisis – gracias a la inyección de más de un billón de dólares de dinero público a los principales bancos y otras entidades financieras – nunca ha habido una recuperación real para las/os trabajadoras, ni en EUA, ni en muchos otros países. Teniendo en cuenta a quienes no pueden conseguir empleo a tiempo completo o han tenido que abandonar la fuerza laboral, el desempleo continúa muy elevado y los salarios reales han disminuido, aun cuando las ganancias empresariales y los salarios de los ejecutivos se han disparado.

Dado que el petróleo es la principal fuente de energía en el mundo de hoy, es obvio que esta gran fluctuación en los precios puede tener un impacto muy grande.

¿Cuáles son los factores subyacentes detrás de este acontecimiento?

En las primeras etapas de la caída de precios, algunos la vieron como un fenómeno fabricado, impulsada por motivaciones políticas. Señalaron que los imperialistas estadounidenses esperaban debilitar a países como Rusia, Irán y Venezuela que dependen de los ingresos de las industrias petroleras estatales para cubrir una parte muy importante de sus presupuestos.

Y es cierto que la caída en los precios ha afectado a estos países muy duramente – principalmente porque los tres sufren de las sanciones económicas impuestas por los imperialistas.

Esta explicación sin embargo, no justifica el cambio tectónico de precios que sigue sacudiendo a todo el mercado capitalista mundial.

Este punto de vista también supone un cierto grado de control sobre el mercado que no es posible bajo el sistema capitalista – ni por los capitalistas individuales, grupos de capitalistas, o incluso gobiernos y organismos internacionales que sirven a sus intereses.

Capitalismo no puede ser controlado

El capitalismo es un sistema económico impulsado por fuerzas más allá del control de los propios capitalistas. Al igual que el aprendiz de brujo, la clase capitalista desata las fuerzas de producción, que luego adquieren una vida propia.

A fin de cuentas, el mercado capitalista existe para un solo propósito: ganancias para los dueños del capital. Estas ganancias provienen de la explotación del trabajo humano, no de la genialidad de los propios capitalistas. La loca carrera por las ganancias impulsa a los capitalistas a invertir continuamente en los medios para producir más y más con el fin de eliminar a sus competidores y capturar el mercado. Esto a la larga conduce a la sobreproducción y crisis – una condición que no existía en los sistemas sociales anteriores.

Las ganancias de las empresas de energía han sido fenomenales y su influencia política es prodigiosa. Por décadas han podido bloquear cualquier acuerdo internacional significativo o leyes nacionales que aborden el horrendo problema del cambio climático. Sobre todo en EUA, los presidentes y gabinetes han sido elegidos por las familias dirigentes cuyas fortunas se entrelazan con el petróleo y Wall Street.

Pero es importante destacar que la tasa de ganancias del petróleo en relación con su costo de producción ha venido disminuyendo en los últimos años. En este país, el “petróleo fácil” que yacía en grandes lagos a poca profundidad bajo la superficie de la tierra – y que fue la base para el crecimiento de la dinastía petrolera y bancaria de Rockefeller – en gran medida se ha agotado.

Sin embargo, la producción de petróleo y gas en EUA ha aumentado considerablemente desde el 2008. Este crecimiento ha ocurrido en gran parte por la fractura hidráulica [fracking], las arenas bituminosas y la perforación mar adentro – todo lo cual requiere una inversión mucho mayor de capital en tecnología cara que la que requerían los pozos petroleros del pasado.

Exceso de petróleo en mercado mundial

La producción de petróleo crudo, que había estado decayendo durante muchos años, ahora ha aumentado, de menos de 7 millones de barriles por día en 2008 a más de 11 millones de barriles en la actualidad – la mayor parte por fractura hidráulica. Para junio pasado, según la Agencia Internacional de Energía, EUA se había convertido en el mayor productor mundial de petróleo y gas natural, superando a Arabia Saudita y Rusia.

El precio de esto sin embargo, es enorme. “La inversión anual en gas y petróleo en el país está en un récord de \$200 mil millones, alcanzando por primera vez el 20 por ciento del gasto total privado para estructuras fijas”, escribió Bloomberg News el 4 de julio.

Para recuperar esta enorme inversión, las compañías petroleras de EUA deben ampliar su mercado – a expensas de sus competidores.

La industria del petróleo basa sus estimaciones de reservas probadas – el petróleo que puede ser extraído en un futuro próximo – en el costo de la extracción. El petróleo que cuesta más extraer de lo que podría venderse no se cuenta.

En los últimos años, el precio al que era rentable extraer el aceite se puso en alrededor de \$80 el barril. Con el aumento del precio a \$100 o más por barril, se hizo factible que las compañías petroleras invirtieran cientos de miles de millones de dólares en la tecnología necesaria para el fracking, arenas bituminosas y de perforación mar adentro. Pero si el petróleo se sigue vendiendo por mucho menos de \$80 el barril, lo que la mayoría de los economistas dice que es probable dada la actual economía mundial, los productores tienen que o bien reducir la producción o asumir enormes pérdidas.

En la actualidad, tanto EUA como la OPEP están expandiendo, no reduciendo la producción. Las compañías petroleras estadounidenses están en una guerra comercial, especialmente con Arabia Saudita y Rusia, que retrocedieron convirtiéndose en el segundo y tercer mayor productor de petróleo del mundo, respectivamente. Esta es una guerra para eliminar a la competencia y dominar el mercado mundial.

Es por eso que el precio del petróleo ha caído tan bajo. Es un caso claro de sobreproducción capitalista, agravada por una desaceleración de la economía capitalista mundial.

Más petróleo que nunca ha estado entrando al mercado. Al mismo tiempo, las tasas de crecimiento están bajando en

Europa, China y otras partes del mundo que han sido grandes consumidores de petróleo. Las industrias están recortando y las/os trabajadoras están siendo despedidos. La inversión en energía renovable también está empezando a tener un efecto.

El resultado es un exceso de petróleo y una fuerte caída de los precios.

Algunas industrias que requieren una gran cantidad de productos derivados del petróleo, como las aerolíneas y compañías de camiones, se pueden beneficiar – al menos temporalmente. Pero, en general, esta lucha es síntoma de una crisis progresiva que puede arrastrar a toda la arquitectura financiera del sistema capitalista.

También es un gran componente del agresivo empuje de guerras por las gigantes empresas estadounidenses, especialmente en el Oriente Medio y Europa del Este. Y el Pentágono, hay que recordar que es el mayor consumidor de petróleo del mundo.

Estas son las realidades materiales detrás de las posturas de los políticos imperialistas estadounidenses que hablan de “derechos humanos” y “democracia” mientras funcionan en pro de los multimillonarios del petróleo y tratan de destruir a la competencia.

Las/os manifestantes de hoy, traídos a las calles por la epidemia de asesinatos policiales racistas en EUA, tienen razón cuando gritan: ¡“Abajo con todo el sistema capitalista!” □

Ébola, socialismo e imperialismo

Editorial WW/MO
7 de enero 2015

Ahora que la amenaza de la propagación del ébola en EUA ha disminuido – por el momento – las noticias de la crisis han sido relegadas a las últimas páginas de los periódicos más importantes de los medios corporativos. Pero esta epidemia sigue siendo un peligro constante en algunas partes de África y una amenaza continua que requiere atención y acción en todo el mundo.

Hasta la fecha, más de 20.000 personas, la mayoría en África Occidental, han contraído la enfermedad; más de 8.000 han muerto; y el número de casos nuevos sigue aumentando.

Se necesita un esfuerzo internacional sostenido, pero la respuesta, especialmente de los países imperialistas occidentales, ha sido mínima.

Por ejemplo, la principal acción del gobierno de EUA ha sido el despliegue de tropas élites de combate, como las divisiones Aerotransportadas 82 y 101. El enfoque de estas tropas, según el presidente del Estado Mayor Conjunto, el general Martin E. Dempsey, es “para . . . [establecer] núcleos de mando y control, sitios de logística . . . y [proporcionar] soporte de ingeniería”, junto al entrenamiento de trabajadoras/es de la salud. El general dejó en claro que ninguna de las tropas estaría involucrada en el tratamiento o atención directa de las víctimas de la epidemia. (Defense.gov, 1 de octubre)

No es de extrañar que muchas/os cuestionen los motivos reales de lo que equivale a una invasión de la región.

Por el contrario, Cuba socialista ha enviado a 256 trabajadoras/es médicos a África, 165 en Sierra Leone y el resto en Guinea y Liberia. Comparando las poblaciones relativas totales de EUA y Cuba, EUA tendría que enviar a 7.680 médicos y trabajadoras/es de la salud a África para igualar el esfuerzo cubano.

Desde el inicio del brote, EUA y sus aliados han intentado politizar la crisis del ébola.

Las/os voluntarios de agencias privadas que viajaron a África Occidental desde EUA han encontrado que a menudo han sido tratadas/os no como héroes sino como parias virtuales a su regreso.

En contraste, las/os voluntarios cubanos correctamente son considerados como héroes.

Debido al embargo ilegal de EUA, muchas/os de los médicos cubanos en África – quienes están trabajando bajo los auspicios de la ONU – no solo han sufrido retrasos en su despliegue, sino que incluso el Tesoro de los EUA les ha demorado su sueldo y gastos por varios meses.

A pesar de todo esto, han mantenido su moral y su espíritu internacional.

El médico cubano Félix Báez – que contrajo el virus en Sierra Leone en noviembre y fue tratado y se ha recuperado – anunció el 29 de diciembre que regresará a la región.

Teniendo en cuenta que la enfermedad ya ha matado a casi 350 trabajadoras/es médicos, incluyendo 106 en Sierra Leone, el valor de las/os médicos cubanos debe ser aplaudido. Son un brillante ejemplo del ideal socialista que la salud es un derecho humano para todas/os en el mundo. □