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As U.S.-Cuba talks proceed

End the blockade!

By Cheryl LaBash

Cuban and U.S. negotiators have announced progress after the second round of talks to formalize diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States. Both delegations characterized the discussions as professional, respectful and constructive. A sticky point, however, is the U.S. persistence in keeping Cuba on the so-called state-supported terrorism list.

To someone who knows the history of U.S.-Cuban relations since 1959, that the U.S. State Department could designate Cuba “terrorist” brings hypocrisy to a new level. When there is a crisis or disaster anywhere in the world, Havana sends doctors; Washington sends Navy SEALs, drones and snipers. The only reason Cuba is on the terrorism list, and the U.S. isn’t, is that Washington draws up the list.

Last Dec. 17, Cuban President Raul Castro announced that the U.S. and Cuba would begin talks to reestablish relations that the U.S. broke in 1961. Since then, one round of negotiations took place on Jan. 22 in Havana and a second on Feb. 27 in Washington, D.C. Amid what Cuba’s chief negotiator Josefin Vidal Ferreiro calls “permanent communication,” technical discussions are scheduled in March on civil aviation, human trafficking, marine preservation, Internet capacity and the structure of human-rights dialog. An interagency U.S. delegation will go to Havana to discuss regulatory changes. Vidal is director general of Cuba’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, U.S. Division.

Cuba’s immediate concerns are Washington’s listing it as a “State Sponsor of Terrorism” (SST) and denying its diplomatic corps in the U.S. banking rights. On Dec. 17, President Barack Obama had instructed the State Department to review its designation of Cuba. More than two months and two rounds of discussion later, Cuba is still on the list.

Secretary of State John Kerry has stated that removing the designation was separate from the negotiations for diplomatic relations. In the press conference following the Feb. 27 talks, most questions addressed this issue.

Vidal answered that Cuba wasn’t making the talks dependent on removing Cuba from the list, but she reiterated what was told to a State Department delegation last summer: “It would be difficult

to explain that Cuba and the U.S. have established normal diplomatic relations while Cuba is on that list.”

Cuba’s good reputation, Washington’s intervention

Cuba is renowned internationally for its quick and selfless intervention to save human lives in emergencies like the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, the earthquakes in Haiti and Pakistan, and mudslides and hurricanes in Central America. Cuba even offered to send 1,586 specialized health care professionals to the U.S. during hurricanes Rita and Katrina. Cuba has also taught millions to read, helping to eradicate illiteracy in many languages, including Indigenous dialects.

With the joint Cuban-Venezuelan “Operation Miracle,” Cuban doctors have performed cataract surgery that over the last decade restored or improved sight for more than 3 million people worldwide free of charge. (Cuba Debate, July 8, 2014)

In the same decade, the U.S. occupied Iraq and Afghanistan, killing hundreds of thousands of people, armed an insurgency that tore apart Syria and bombed

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‘Palestine yes, Netanyahu no!’

WW PHOTO: GREG BUTTERFIELD



Angered that an invitation to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to address the U.S. Congress means a new war drive against the Palestinian and Iranian people, a diverse crowd defied a snowstorm to demonstrate in front of Fox News in Manhattan on March 1. Fox had Netanyahu on its payroll at one time and pushes his far-right agenda.

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WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE



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Women make history: Build Workers World

March is Women's History Month, when Workers World makes a special effort to cover the struggles of poor, working-class women of all nationalities that have advanced women's rights. Given that it was Workers World Party that revived the militant tradition of International Women's Day in the streets of New York in 1970, after years of reaction had suppressed this important socialist holiday, we always commemorate it with a roundup of activities by women in struggle all over the world.

As Marxists, we want to make history — the kind of huge changes that will turn society upside down and put the workers and the oppressed in the driver's seat. A current struggle of the People's Power Assemblies is fighting for \$15 an hour and a union for low-wage workers. While all issues are women's issues, it is important to note that 70 percent of low-wage workers are women, with a huge number being women of color and single mothers.

Women have emerged as leaders in the fight against police violence and terror as the "Black Lives Matter" movement has spread like wildfire across the country. Women of color, especially, see the killing of youth as a direct attack on reproductive justice, because children must be allowed to grow up in safe, secure communities.



If you appreciate WW's year-round articles on women's struggles for justice and equality, it's time to join the Workers World Supporter Program and help build the newspaper. We established the WWSP in 1977 so readers could help build the many campaigns needed to make qualitative, revolutionary change.

For the past 38 years, WW subscribers have helped maintain the paper by joining the WW Supporter Program. We invite you to sign up today! Write checks to Workers World. Send them to Workers World, 147 W. 24th St., 2nd floor, New York, NY 10011. Include your name and address. Or donate online at workers.org/articles/donate/

It's also possible to contribute there by joining the Workers World Supporter Program and giving either a lump sum or a monthly donation. Be sure to check it out. □

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Workers reject McDonald's racism

After facing a pattern of racial discrimination and sexual harassment, 17 Black and Latino/a McDonald's workers in the state of Virginia were told by management that they "need to get the ghetto out of the store." Then management fired them. In response to a call for actions in solidarity with these workers, and all who face racism and low wages at work, the Buffalo Anti-Racism Coalition partnered with the Coalition for Economic Justice and others to rally on Feb. 27 at the McDonald's on Main Street in the Buffalo suburb of Williamsville.

— Report and photo by Ellie Dorritie



WORKERS WORLD PARTY

Who we are & what we're fighting for

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

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

We fight every kind of oppression. Racism, sexism,

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

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

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WW PHOTO: LIZ GREEN

Support for fired school bus drivers

What solidarity in action looks like

By Tony Murphy
Boston

The ruling class of Boston has tried everything to bust the school bus drivers union, United Steelworkers Local 8751. They brought in the global union-busting behemoth corporation Veolia in 2013. Veolia locked out the workers in October of that year and then fired four of the union leaders in November. The courts are now being used to go after the union's grievance chair and founder, Steve Kirschbaum.

Along with the war against this political, social union is another war — on its contract. The wages, rights and benefits the union won over 40 years are the envy of the industry.

For over a year, a campaign waged to rehire the four has attracted significant national support from labor, Palestinian solidarity activists and others.

The last week in February saw perhaps the most devious tactic of Boston's 1%

against Local 8751. At the bargaining table, the city proposed a deal: Forget about the four and we will make significant improvements in the contract.

The bargaining committee had none of it. Negotiators for the union made it clear that no agreement would be possible unless the four came back to work.

That is solidarity in action. And the scope of issues brought by the union bargaining team was wider than the situation of Local 8751. Bargaining committee members brought the Black Lives Matter struggle into negotiations. At the bargaining table, Andre Francois, the union's recording secretary — and one of the fired four — assailed the mayor's representatives for the mayor's firing of a city worker who blocked traffic on I-93 in support of the uprising against racism and police brutality.

This is in keeping with the tradition of this union — which has always been to see contract justice and the struggle against racism as part of the same struggle. That's



why the Boston school bus drivers union was the first AFL-CIO local to formally endorse and make a donation to the Black Lives Matter movement. Boston Black Lives Matter and the school bus drivers union also collaborated on a protest of the mayor's address in January.

Boston's Mass Mobilization Against Police Violence sent a representative to a Team Solidarity meeting convened by the school bus drivers. School bus drivers attended the first court appearance of the protesters who blockaded I-93; an I-93 protester attended the last court appearance of Steve Kirschbaum on Feb. 2.

All this adds up to the bosses' worst

nightmare: increasing classwide solidarity that will be necessary not only for winning against the city and Veolia's attempts to bust this union, but for pushing back the mayor's plans to close schools and kick seventh graders off school buses.

The actual contract has not gone to a vote. However, in the negotiating session, the message to the bosses was loud and clear. "No contract, no work" is chanted by the workers at many of the daily yard meetings.

Veolia was brought in to tame the school bus drivers union. At this point it is facing the exact opposite: a fighting, aroused, militant union that is ready to fight. □

WISCONSIN

Labor, community vs. anti-union bill

By Workers World Staff
Madison, Wis.

March 2 — As of this writing, the battle is raging in Wisconsin to defeat the misnamed "right to work" legislation. Workers and community members are packing the Capitol to testify to the Labor Committee of the State Assembly. This resistance is a continuation of protest actions over the past week in which thousands of workers and community members statewide are demanding: "Shut down RTW!"

On Feb. 28, at a protest of thousands at the state Capitol here, Stephanie Bloomingdale, secretary-treasurer of the Wisconsin AFL-CIO, called on all workers and community members to come to the Capitol in the coming week to stop the Wisconsin State Assembly from voting for a "right to work" bill.

"We are not going anywhere. We need to stay all day and all week," said Bloomingdale. After she spoke, Phil Neuenfeldt, president of the Wisconsin AFL-CIO, said, "Let's pack the gallery. Let's pack the Capitol."

Many labor and community supporters participated in the Feb. 28 protest, including Fight for \$15 activists trying to raise the minimum wage, youth, seniors, women, the lesbian-gay-bi-trans-queer community, environmentalists, faculty, students and the Black Lives Matter movement. Chants of "What's disgusting? Union busting" and "Shut it down" were heard inside and on the streets around the Capitol.

Speaking inside the Capitol, Eric Upchurch II of the Young, Gifted and Black coalition said, "We are in solidarity. There are so many forms of state violence and 'right to work' is one of them. Mass incarceration and poverty are state violence. We have to see the commonality of our struggles. We can and will stand together and fight."

The deceptively named RTW bill really means the right to work for less, because it would seriously weaken workers' unions and thereby destroy communities by making it hard for unions to collect dues.

On Feb. 25, the Wisconsin State Senate passed an RTW bill on a "fast track" after shutting down a public comment session

the day before. Of those who registered comments at the public session, 1,751 were opposed to RTW and 25 for — proof of overwhelming public opposition to RTW. But the Wall Street politician majority in the legislature are moving forward.

The RTW bill must now be passed by the majority of the State Assembly before going to Gov. Scott Walker, an unabashed enemy of labor who has said he'll sign RTW legislation if it comes before him.

The Wisconsin AFL-CIO expects the Assembly to vote on the RTW bill on March 5.

'RTW is another form of brutal austerity'

"This right-to-work-for-less legislation jeopardizes the future living standards of all workers, organized and unorganized, especially workers and communities of color, women and the LGBTQ community," said Tommy Cavanaugh of Fight Impe-

rialism, Stand Together (FIST) in Rockford, Ill. "RTW is yet another form of brutal, Greece-like austerity coming from Wall Street and being enacted by bought-and-paid-for politicians.

"As a young low-wage worker, I demand a future for my generation, those before us and after us. We didn't stop resisting in 2011 when we occupied the Capitol with hundreds of thousands to fight Act 10, and we won't stop now. We will fight to shut down RTW. And whatever the outcome of this battle, we will continue building a fighting global people's movement to shut down capitalism once and for all."

Cavanaugh participated in a FIST, Workers World Party and Wisconsin Bail Out the People Movement delegation Feb. 25 to protest RTW at the state Capitol.

A series of events is being organized by

Protesters inside Wisconsin State Capitol on Feb. 28.



WW PHOTO: BEN HERRENBRUCK

the Wisconsin AFL-CIO and the Defeat "Right To Work" in Wisconsin coalition, with the support of numerous labor, community and youth/student organizations.

On March 4, a Students and Workers, Unite and Fight! Solidarity Rally Against "Right to Work" protest will take place at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. On March 5, a Fill the Capitol! Shut down "Right to Work!" protest will begin at 8 a.m. at the state Capitol.

For event information, updates and resources to fight RTW: facebook.com/defeatrighttowork; facebook.com/wisafclio; wisafclio.typepad.com; wibailoutpeople.org. □

In second month of strike, oil workers picket Marathon

By Martha Grevatt
Findlay, Ohio

Over 200 oil strikers and their supporters demonstrated here on Feb. 24 near the international headquarters of the Marathon Petroleum Co. Despite harsh winds and near-zero temperatures, the crowd waited to begin the rally until a busload of Marathon strikers from Kentucky arrived. The delegation had been delayed when one of its two buses broke down.

The strike began Feb. 1 after negotiations between the United Steelworkers and oil industry representatives, led by Royal Dutch Shell, broke down. The USW represents 30,000 oil workers in 230 facilities across the country.

Initially, workers at nine refineries in Texas, California, Kentucky and Washington walked out. On Feb. 7, the strike was expanded to two refineries in Indiana and Ohio.

Steelworkers District One Director Dave McCall, whose district represents

all of Ohio, announced on Feb. 23 that workers at four more refineries — one in Texas and three in Louisiana — had joined the strike. The Port Arthur, Texas, refinery is the largest in the country.

Representing the union's National Oil Bargaining Policy Committee, which negotiates with the oil companies, Jim Savage explained the number one issue behind the strike: safety on the job.

Staffing cuts and excessive overtime are putting workers and the community at risk, as evidenced by a horrific explosion at a refinery near Los Angeles on Feb. 18 and the deaths of 27 USW oil workers in four years. Another issue is the high out-of-pocket health care costs that workers — in the most profitable industry in the U.S. economy — have been saddled with. Savage spoke for the five members of the national negotiating team who had traveled to Findlay to attend the solidarity rally.

USW Local 719 President Dave Martin, who represents the Catlettsburg, Ky., refinery, thanked all the supporters and

reported that solidarity remains high on the picket line as the strike heads into its second month.

A large number of strikers from the BP refinery near Toledo, Ohio, attended the rally, along with steelworkers and UAW members from Detroit and various parts of Ohio. After the rally, a boisterous march circled Marathon's corporate offices several times.

Solidarity continues to build. On Feb. 25, the Steelworkers and North America's Building Trades Unions issued a joint document defining the lines of demarcation between USW members and NABTU contract tradespeople when both are working in a refinery. The unions agreed that "for the duration of the USW strike, NABTU unions and their members shall respect the USW picket lines and refrain from performing struck work."

Unionists from Great Britain, South Africa and Australia spent a week in Texas visiting picket lines. Six refineries are on strike in that state. □



WW PHOTO: MARTHA GREVATT

As pension cuts start

Detroit retirees keep fighting

By David Sole
Detroit

Pension cuts to 32,000 retired city of Detroit workers went into effect March 1. Federal Bankruptcy Court Judge Stephen Rhodes had ordered the slashing of pensions following over one year of court proceedings in the largest municipal bankruptcy filing in U.S. history.

The cuts varied from 6.75 percent to over 22 percent, in addition to an earlier elimination of all city-funded medical, dental and vision care for retirees. It has been reported that retirees are being forced to pay for about 80 percent of the city's \$6 billion to \$8 billion debt reduc-

tion. Meanwhile, the city continues to pay 100 percent on almost all its debt to the biggest banks.

First cut was the pensioners' 2014 cost-of-living payment. That amounted to 2.25 percent that will no longer be paid annually, which is estimated to be an 18 percent reduction in pensions over a retiree's lifetime. Then a general 4.5 percent reduction was shaved off the monthly checks. Finally a "recoupment of excess earnings" will take up to 15.5 percent from the pensions of retirees who saved money weekly from their checks. The city went back to 2003 to reduce the amount already paid in interest to those enrolled in the annuity savings plan. This recoup-

ment will continue for at least 18 years.

Retired bus driver Joyce Griffin-Sole, for example, had her pension reduced from \$1,279 a month to \$1,076, about a 16 percent cut from a relatively small pension.

Anger among retired workers and their survivors continues to build, months after the "Plan of Adjustment" was finalized in court. Protests inside and outside the federal court were ongoing even before the 2013 bankruptcy proceedings started, led by the Stop Theft of Our Pensions Committee and Moratorium NOW! Coalition.

A new formation, the Detroit Active and Retired Employees Association, has been in the forefront in recent months. DAREA reports that many retirees feel they were misled by union leaders and older retiree associations into false hopes that the court actions would not affect them so much. These retirees are now packing DAREA meetings.

In January, DAREA filed a last-ditch appeal against the pension cuts in federal court, to be argued by rank-and-file retirees.

On Feb. 25, Judge Rhodes and former emergency manager Kevyn Orr spoke to a dinner honoring them as "2014 News-

makers of the Year," sponsored by Crain's Detroit Business. DAREA protesters massed across from the entrance for an hour as guests arrived, chanting "The banks got bailed out! We got sold out!" and "Hands off our pensions! Make the banks pay!"

Banks' tool: 'We could have taken it all'

At one point, Orr, the overpaid tool of Wall Street, came across the street shouting at the retired workers: "We could have taken all of your pensions!" For a moment, it looked like violence might erupt.

Judge Rhodes showed his larger aim in allowing constitutionally protected Michigan public pensions to be slashed using federal bankruptcy law. "Other cities need to consider moving away from costly pension plans and transition employees on to 401(k)-styled defined contribution retirement plans," he declared. (Detroit News, Feb. 25) Defined contribution plans pay huge fees to Wall Street firms to administer individual accounts. They also hold the danger that workers would have little or nothing to retire on if and when the stock market crashes.

From the beginning of the bankrupt-

Continued on page 11

On the Picket Line

By Matty Starrdust and Sue Davis

Refinery explosion confirms need for greater safety

An explosion and fire on Feb. 18 at the ExxonMobil refinery in Torrance, Calif., dramatizes the United Steelworkers' demand to improve safety conditions in the oil industry to protect both workers and communities. The explosion occurred as 5,200 USW members are conducting unfair labor practice strikes at 11 refineries with safety as a major concern. "Our members work in dangerous and too often deadly conditions," said USW International President Leo W. Gerard. "While employers have reaped billions of dollars in profits over the past several years, they have done little to improve conditions for workers and surrounding communities." Luckily, only four workers were slightly injured, while residents were told to close windows to prevent exposure to toxic chemicals. (usw.org, Feb. 18)

Over the Feb. 21-22 weekend, workers at three more refineries and a chemical plant joined the strike, bringing the number of strikers to about 6,550. The union is bargaining for new labor agreements to cover about 30,000 workers at 65 refineries and hundreds of pipelines, terminals, petrochemical plants and other facilities around the country. To show solidarity with the strikers, sign the USW petition at usw.org/act/oilsafety. (aflcio.org/Blog, Feb. 23)

Bulletin: Shell finally agreed to resume contract negotiations on March 4.

LGBTQ health workers win union

Some 174 health care workers at New York City's Callen-Lorde Community Health Center, a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer-focused health care provider, voted to unionize with 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East on Jan. 13. Ariadne Brazo, a mental health patient navigator, told Gay City News: "We felt that the staff didn't have enough of a voice in terms of our employment. We felt the best way to do that was with a union and we felt that 1199 had a good history of social justice — which Callen-Lorde has as its mission." The center is the first LGBTQ-focused health center to be unionized in the city by 1199SEIU. (Feb. 5)

Students against sweatshops gain traction

United Students Against Sweatshops, a group of U.S. college and university activists, have successfully compelled 16 universities and colleges to sever contracts with VF Corporation. USAS's ongoing campaign targeted VF after it refused to sign the accord making a legally binding commitment to improve safety for workers producing garments in Bangladesh. The accord has been signed globally since the Rana Plaza disaster in 2013 by over 180 brands from 21 countries, including 18 American brands. VF, the parent company of 36 brands, including North Face, Jansport and Timberland, sources apparel from 90 factories employing over 190,000 garment workers. In addition to the 16 universities, another nine have promised to end contracts with VF. (USAS.org, Jan. 26)

Victory for tipped workers in NY

Amid nationwide calls for raises to federal and state minimum wages, tipped workers, for whom the legal minimum is considerably lower, are left far behind. The New York Labor Department announced Feb. 24 that by the end of 2015, the state's tipped minimum wage will rise from \$5 to \$7.50 an hour for waitstaff, bartenders, hotel housekeepers and others who work for tips. While labor groups supported the hike, they wanted the increase to be the same as the state minimum wage, which will rise to \$9 at year end. Of New York's more than 229,000 tipped workers, about 70 percent are women. Labor statistics show that tipped workers are twice as likely as other workers to experience poverty. (USAToday.com, Feb. 24)

W. Va. workers protest 'right to work'

While politicians sat comfortably inside the West Virginia State House discussing measures to slash workers' wages and attack labor unions statewide, more than 1,000 activists braved the freezing cold to protest the anti-union legislation deceptively titled "Right to Work." Those protesting included Food and Commercial Union members, unorganized workers (for whom RTW would make unionizing almost impossible) and a senator and former governor. Protests have erupted across the country as other state governments consider such anti-union legislation. (DClabor.org, Feb. 20) □

Tenant protest occupies Brooklyn realtor

WW PHOTO: ANNE PRUDEN



By Workers World New York Bureau

Landlords left the apartments of long-term tenants with cracks in the walls and slanting floors. The new tenants' apartments had one bedroom renovated into two or three tiny bedrooms and the rents hiked to \$3,000 a month. In the opinion of the protesters from the Crown Heights Tenants Union, all renters in Brooklyn were under attack.

That's why the CHTU targeted two Crown Heights realtors, Renaissance Realty and ZT Realty, on Feb. 27. They protested inside the lobby of ZT Realty, where one tenant complained that ZT had failed to supply heat or hot water for three days in February — which this year were the coldest three days in New York since 1934. The mostly Black protesters chanted, "Jail ZT Realty!"

The CHTU also rallied outside of Housing Court in Brooklyn a few blocks away to demand stronger laws protecting tenants, including not to allow evictions based on the landlord's desire to get higher rents.

The CHTU Facebook page reported that "Renaissance Realty threw out a frivolous lawsuit against longtime Crown Heights Resident Samba Diallo!" following the rally.

Tenants spoke about horrible conditions of neglect, including cracks in the walls, while in the renovated apartments rents have been raised to triple the amount formerly paid, without guarantees of heat and hot water. They described how the landlords try to scare and pressure families to leave so they can provide apartments at higher rents or convert to condos. All the current tenants are working class and most are people of color.

According to the CHTU website, the "Crown Heights Tenant Union is a union of Tenant Associations that began meeting in October 2013 in response to rampant gentrification, displacement, and illegal rental overcharges in the neighborhood. There are over 40 buildings in our union that have come together to demand new, stronger protections that guarantee tenants' rights."

The CHTU uses "a collective bargaining strategy to demand both stricter enforcement of existing tenants' rights in addition to new, stronger protections that eliminate loopholes in the law that favor landlords. Our demands call for a stronger tenant voice in decisions that impact rental housing and include a five-year rent freeze and restrictions on tenant buyouts.

"The Crown Heights Tenant Union has identified a cycle in which low paying tenants are pushed out, and newer tenants are charged rent far higher than the legally regulated limit. In response to this cycle, we have adopted a unique UNITE AND FIGHT strategy where long-term tenants and new residents of the neighborhood come together with the understanding that the landlords are the true target. We hope to set an example for changing neighborhoods across New York City and the rest of the country." □

TRANS LIVES MATTER!

By Kris Hamel

In the first two months of 2015, at least eight transgender women have been murdered in North America, including one trans woman in Canada. This killing spree, mired in hate and bigotry, doesn't make the national corporate-owned news media. There is no mass outrage over the killings of these women, although they are mourned by many. It is mainly the lesbian, gay, bi, trans and queer media and organizations that report their deaths.

The year's first three known killings of transgender women in the U.S. occurred over a two-week period in January. They were all trans women of color, two Black and one Latina.

Lamia Beard, 30, of Norfolk, Va., was found the morning of Jan. 17 with severe gunshot wounds; she was transported to a hospital where she died. Beard was a musician who sang and played four instruments. A fluent French speaker, she received a full scholarship to Bethune Cookman College.

On Jan. 26, **Ty Underwood**, 24, of Tyler, Texas, was found dead in her car of three gunshot wounds. She had recently been accepted into the nursing program at Kilgore College. (autostraddle.com, Jan. 28)

Michelle (Yazmin) Vash Payne, 33, of

Los Angeles died of multiple stab wounds on Jan. 31. A candlelight vigil and march was held on Feb. 1 outside Payne's apartment building.

Taja Gabrielle DeJesus, a 36-year-old trans woman of color, was found the morning of Feb. 1 fatally stabbed multiple times in a stairwell in San Francisco. She was an active church member who volunteered at food pantries and with Trans Thrive. (janetmock.com, Feb. 16) A die-in for DeJesus by members of the LGBTQ community was held Feb. 10 in front of San Francisco City Hall. (nbcbayarea.com, Feb. 10)

Penny Proud, 21, of New Orleans was found in the early morning hours of Feb. 10 fatally shot multiple times. A candlelight vigil was held for Proud later night. (advocate.com, Feb. 10)

Bri Golec, 22, of Akron, Ohio, was stabbed to death by her own father on Feb. 13. An artist and drummer, Golec was active in the trans community. (pgh-lesbian.com, Feb. 15)

On Feb. 16, the body of **Kristina Gomez Reinwald**, 46, was discovered in her home in Miami. She worked as an entertainer under the name Christina (or Kristina) Grant Infiniti. Local trans activists and friends held a candlelight vigil outside Reinwald's house. (advocate.com, Feb. 26)



Sumaya Dasia Dalmar, 26, of Toronto, also known as Sumaya Ysl, was found dead on Feb. 22. Damar, a Somali-Canadian, was a model and actress.

Chilling statistics

Today, transgender people are 400 times more likely to be assaulted or murdered than are members of the "general population."

Although four years old, a 2011 study by the National LGBTQ Task Force and the National Center for Transgender Equality confirmed that trans people of color suffer worse discrimination than their white counterparts.

The study found 34 percent of Black and 28 percent of Latino/a trans and



Left, Taja DeJesus. Above, Penny Proud.

gender-nonconforming respondents had a household income of less than \$10,000 a year. Some 41 percent of Black and 27 percent of Latino/a transgender and gender-nonconforming respondents experienced homelessness at some point in their lives. When attempting to access shelters, 40 percent of Black respondents and 45 percent of Latino/a respondents were denied access altogether. (thecol. mn, Feb. 16)

Fighting racism, sexism and anti-LGBTQ bigotry must be a priority for women, men, gender-nonconforming and all progressive activists in the U.S. The Black Lives Matter movement has revealed the power of the people in saying "No more!" to rampant police violence and killings of young people of color across the U.S.

Black and Latino/a lives matter! Trans lives matter! □



Actions planned for International Women's Day

By Kris Hamel

International Women's Day, March 8, became an official working-class holiday 105 years ago. Revolutionary women were inspired by a march of 15,000 garment workers, mostly women immigrants from Ireland, Italy and Eastern Europe, in New York on March 8, 1908.

At the Second International Socialist Women's Conference in Copenhagen in 1910, German socialist Clara Zetkin proposed March 8 as International Women's Day. The resolution passed unanimously, and in 1911 hundreds of demonstrations were held throughout Europe on that date. Since that time, International Women's Day has been commemorated by socialists and progressive activists around the globe.

Whether it's now called International Working Women's Day or Month, or Working Women's History or Liberation Month, it is a time to salute the struggles of working-class and oppressed women around the world for justice, equality and liberation.

Members and friends of Workers World Party will be involved in the many activities scheduled to take place in the United States. Here are some of these events.

In celebration of International Women's Day in **Chicago**, a "Food Is a Human Right" march and forum on Friday, March 6, are being sponsored by Dominican University Nutrition Science and the Food Is a Right Chicago People's Assembly. The march will gather at 10 a.m. at the Dirksen Federal Building at 219 S. Dearborn at Adams; the forum starts at 12 p.m. at 135 South LaSalle, Suite 4300.

Participants are invited to speak, and the floor will be open for discussion on such topics as the Black Lives Matter movement and proposals for action. Some of the demands raised include stop all cuts to SNAP (food stamps) and other government food programs; healthy, affordable food for all (no food deserts); and economic justice for food, agricultural and all workers, including a \$15 an hour

minimum wage and the right to unionize. For more information, call 708.524.6904.

The women of Workers World Party in **Detroit** are hosting the second annual Women's Speakout for Liberation and Justice on March 7 to commemorate International Women's Day. Women there have participated in and led many struggles in the past year, including defending the city's people against big banks and the emergency manager's bankruptcy; demanding hands off retiree's pensions and health care; marching and blockading to stop mass water shutoffs, foreclosures and evictions; and fighting racism and repression.

All women are invited to share their stories and struggles in the spirit of camaraderie and solidarity. The program, including dinner, starts at 5 p.m. at 5920 Second Ave. For more information, call 313.378.2369.

'Free our sisters! Free ourselves!'

The International Working Women's Day Coalition in **New York City** on Sun-

day, March 8, will gather women and men to demand an end to state repression, police terror and U.S. militarization. Events begin with a 12 p.m. rally at Herald Square, 34th Street at 6th Avenue and Broadway.

The march steps off at 1 p.m. and a speakout, which includes food and cultural presentations, starts at 2 p.m. at the Solidarity Center, 147 W. 24th Street, 2nd floor in Manhattan. For more information, call 212.633.6647 or monitor the Facebook page of the International Working Women's Day Coalition. (Plans may be changed if there is inclement weather.)

In **Oakland, Calif.**, on March 8, "Uphold the legacy and power of women's resistance here and abroad!" will include a 12 p.m. rally and speakout, a 12:30 march and a 1:30 celebration to honor the legacy of the 105th anniversary of International Working Women's Day.

Initiated by GABRIELA USA, the event will be held at the Oakland Lake Merritt Amphitheater, 12th Street and 1st Street. Workers World Party is in-

Interview with Geraldine Blankenship

Women and the Flint sit-down strike of 1937

By Martha Grevatt

The Flint, Mich., sit-down strike achieved victory 78 years ago on Feb. 11, 1937. After a 44-day occupation of General Motors plants, the company was forced to recognize the United Auto Workers.

Critical to the strike's success was the Women's Emergency Brigade, formed by a striker's spouse, Genora Johnson. Famous footage shows the brigade breaking plant windows with clubs when the police fired tear gas inside. This daring action kept the strikers occupying the plant from being suffocated.

This Jan. 29 the last living veteran of the brigade, Geraldine Blankenship, died. Below are excerpts from a 2007



interview conducted by this writer with Sister Blankenship:

My mother was born in Columbiaville and my father out close to Pinnebag. They met at a woolen mill in Yale. [Before they met] my mother got the girls to go on strike so they could get a five-cent raise a day. And she was only 15.

I remember [before the occupation] my

dad coming home so tired that he couldn't eat. He would just go and wash up a little, and he'd go to bed and fall asleep.

They used to have union meetings at our house before the strike — secret of course. I don't know where the decision was made to go on strike, but it could have been in our living room.

My dad was the vice chairman of the sitdown at Fisher One. I remember my dad called home and said, "Well, we're on strike, I'll see you when it's over." We were rather scared, because we'd heard about how [the police] treat strikers. My dad had been on a picket line once and the police came in and [a striker] got

Continued on page 11

Oscars & mass incarceration show why BLACK LIVES MATTER

By Monica Moorehead

On Feb. 24, two days shy of the third anniversary of the vigilante murder of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, an African American, in Sanford, Fla., the U.S. Justice Department refused to indict Martin's killer, George Zimmerman, for carrying out a hate crime against him. Eric Holder, the outgoing U.S. attorney general, commented that "the standard for a federal hate crime prosecution cannot be met under the circumstances here." (New York Times, Feb. 24)

Since the acquittal of Zimmerman on second-degree murder charges by a Florida state court in 2013, he has made more news for attacking two women and also for a road rage incident, once again showing his propensity towards violence. It took national and international protests for more than a month to force the Florida district attorney's office to charge Zimmerman for Martin's killing.

Attorney Benjamin Crump, the lawyer for Sybrina Fulton and Tracy Martin, Trayvon's parents, commented on their behalf: "This is very painful for them; they are heartbroken. But they have renewed energy to say that we are going to fight harder to make sure that this doesn't happen to anybody else's child." (New York Times, Feb. 24)

This outrageous federal ruling, coupled with the nonindictments in the police killings of Michael Brown, Eric Garner and countless other African Americans by state grand juries, is not just an individual travesty of justice but should be viewed within the broader political context of a racist war against people of color, especially youth of color.

A disproportionate number of people of color killed by the police are also homeless and/or coping with mental illness.

John Legend's political message

This war was touched upon by multiple-Grammy-winner John Legend in his 30-second acceptance speech on Feb. 22 upon winning an Academy Award for Best Original Song in the movie "Selma." As an audience of at least one billion people watched the Oscars telecast, Legend first gave credit to the late, great artist Nina Simone for saying "It's an artist's duty to reflect the times in which we live."

Legend went on to say that the U.S. is the most incarcerated country in the world and that there are more young Black men "under correctional control" than were in slavery in 1850 — a startling revelation documented in the 2010 groundbreaking book, "The New Jim Crow," by Michelle Alexander. Legend also mentioned how the 1965 Voting Rights Act is being compromised today, despite the Selma to Montgomery massive march that forced President Lyndon Baines Johnson to sign the bill.

Legend's speech ignited a firestorm of positive responses on Twitter and Facebook. Many connected Legend's remarks to the blatant snub by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' voting members of the critically acclaimed "Selma," which was nominated only for best song and best picture. Most notably, neither David Oyelowo or Ava Duvernay was nominated for best actor or best director, respectively.

Others on Twitter referred to an important article that appeared in the Los Angeles Times in 2012 which exposed structural racism and sexism within the Academy. To this day, it is still at least 94 percent white and 76 percent male, even though the president of the Academy is an African-American woman, Cheryl Boone Isaacs.

To add insult to injury, actor Sean Penn made a racist remark when he announced the winner for best picture, "Birdman."



Delphine Matthews, Monica Moorehead, Rain Robbins Africa, Berta Joubert-Ceci and Ikea Coney speak at Philadelphia Black History Month Forum on Feb. 24.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Penn asked, "Who allowed this son of a bitch a green card?" referring to the director of the film, Alejandro González Iñárritu, who is Mexican. This offensive outburst should shatter any preconceived notion about Penn being progressive. Hardly any criticism was raised in the bourgeois press about Penn's anti-immigrant slander, which helps give the green light to racist brutality, like the recent police slaughter of a Mexican farmworker, Antonio Zambrano-Montes, in Washington state.

'The New Jim Crow'

The "correctional control" — being incarcerated, on parole or on probation — that Legend referred to is fueled by the prison-industrial complex: the growth and expansion of the prisons that began in the 1980s, when unionized, industrial jobs were being replaced by low-wage service jobs, due to the technological revolution and the introduction of robotics. Prisons remain an enticing source of profits for Wall Street investors.

The U.S. is 5 percent of the world's population but is home to 25 percent of the world's prison population, estimated at 2.2 million people. African Americans make up an estimated 13.6 percent of the U.S. population, but in 2010, Black men alone constituted 40.2 percent of prisoners, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Here is a breakdown of these 2010 percentages: Black men were incarcerated at a rate of 3,074 per 100,000 residents; Latinos at 1,258 per 100,000; and white men at 459 per 100,000. (Population Reference Bureau, Aug. 2012)

The Bureau of Justice Statistics states that one out of three young Black men will go to prison in their lifetime.

While there has been an 800 percent increase in women prisoners over the past 30 years, African-American women are three times more likely than white women to be incarcerated, while Latinas are 69 percent more likely than white women to be incarcerated. (Center for American Progress, March 13, 2012)

These staggering figures, among others, shine a bright light on the reality that capitalism offers no positive future for youth, especially youth of color, and since the 2008 recession this includes more privileged white youth. The "Occupy" movement was an expression of anger and disillusionment among a growing layer of these youth, many of whom have become allies of the "Black Lives Matter" movement.

Build solidarity with the most oppressed

The Black Lives Matter struggle needs the solidarity of the entire movement, including organized labor, more now than

Baltimore No militarization of city schools!

By David Card
Baltimore

The Board of Commissioners of Baltimore City Public Schools held a public hearing Feb. 24 on a bill recently introduced in the Maryland House of Delegates. House Bill 101 would allow Baltimore City School Police Officers to carry firearms inside school buildings during school hours. Although the hearing was scheduled with very little advance warning, FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together) activists quickly took action to stand up against the further militarization of public schools.

The hearing room was filled well in advance of the start of the hearing with both supporters and opponents of the bill. FIST displayed large signs reading "Students are not criminals!" and "\$\$\$ for teachers, not cops!" The numbers on each side of the issue were relatively similar; the social makeup of each side, however, was entirely different.

Supporters of the bill were all powerful people in society: the Fraternal Order of Police, school police officers, school principals and other school officials. The entire school and police bureaucracy is behind the law. In contrast, opponents of the law consisted entirely of students, parents and activist groups such as FIST and Casa de Maryland. In essence, it was the establishment versus the community.

The arguments by the police were filled

with rhetoric and concepts that, upon further examination, were contradictory and untruthful. There were appeals to protect innocent students from shootings in schools, yet also the demonization of Baltimore students as dangerous criminals with weapons. At the same time school cops were spoken of as community leaders and role models for children. The complete distrust of the police by young people of color, in the forefront of the movement against police violence, was predictably absent.

Students more afraid of cops than bullies

One police officer told how school police regularly break up fights between students, all while unarmed, and said they need firearms to be able to "do their job." It appears that, despite careful planning, this officer let the truth slip out: The school police want the ability to use deadly force on students. It was never explained why, despite all the intense praise of the police by the establishment, that the police now require firearms after 24 years of being unarmed in the schools.

Opponents of the bill argued that arming police with guns creates an even greater level of distrust between students and police. Young people in poor and oppressed communities understand that a gun on a cop's belt is not there to protect them, but to be used against them.

A report from a student at Digital Harbor High School indicated that students

were more concerned about the police in their school than any other issue, topping even bullying. This comes as no surprise after a school officer recently sent three girls from Vanguard Middle School to the hospital after beating one with a baton and pepper spraying two others.

A Latino high school student addressed the school board through an interpreter, bringing up how the situation relates to students who do not speak English. He raised the issue of non-English-speaking students' inability to comply with orders in English and the tragic consequences of

what can happen when police use deadly force in such circumstances.

The bill is in the hands of the state legislature and is expected to be voted on in March. This will keep the decision out of the hands of working and oppressed families who, through the school board hearing, showed their disgust with the proposed law.

Although the legislature, including the school board, wants to silence criticism of their system and the police, the youth and communities of Baltimore will remain defiant in the face of police terror. □

Rally assails police killings

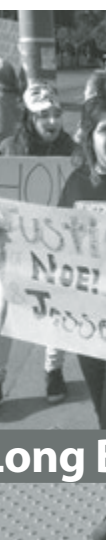
Over 50 family members of Black and Latino youth killed by Long Beach and Anaheim police departments and their supporters rallied on Feb. 28 in Long Beach to challenge this epidemic. Organized by the Young Survivors-Legacy Support Network and Black Lives Matter LBC, the event brought together mothers, sisters, girlfriends, children, dads, best friends and cousins of over half a dozen people killed by local police over the last two years.

The rally focused on many police killings, highlighting the recent case of Noel Aguilar, who was killed by Los Angeles County Sheriff's Deputies on May 26, 2014, in the city of Long Beach — which is outside their

jurisdiction. The event announcement read, "According to several eyewitness accounts, Noel was in handcuffs at the time he was shot, executed by a deputy in a homicidal rage. Noel's family and friends immediately rose up to protest his killing, which came a year after (and in the same neighborhood as) the extrajudicial murder of his best friend, Jesse Delgadillo, April 28, 2013, by the LBPD."

Aguilar's mother, girlfriend and two children were at the rally carrying a banner demanding justice. Loud chanting and marching continued for over three hours.

— Report and photo by Dante



Long Beach

ever. While it's important to be in solidarity with the families seeking justice for their loved ones — like Kyam Livingston, Shantel Davis, Brandon Tate-Brown, Frank McQueen, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, John Crawford III, Jessie Hernandez, Antonio Zambrano-Montes, Kevin Davis, Trayvon Martin and countless others murdered by the police or vigilantes — these are more than cold statistics. These stolen lives are part and parcel of an unprecedented genocidal racist war fueled by an intractable capitalist crisis resulting in a systematic disregard for the lives of the workers and oppressed.

Organized labor has a duty and obligation to reach out and bring young people, especially Black, Brown, Indigenous and disadvantaged white, into the unions, and provide them with vocational and educational training. A national strategy like this will both strengthen the U.S. labor movement and classwide unity. Black youth understand more than anybody that if there are no jobs and education for them, their destiny as well as their children's futures will be doomed by either mass incarceration or becoming another victim of police terror, like Michael Brown or 12-year-old Tamir Rice.

These youth see the capitalist system as the problem. This is why they have put their lives on the line from Oakland, Calif., to Ferguson, Mo., to New York City by facing down state repression — because they have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

As Malcolm X stated just one week before he was assassinated, 50 years ago on Feb. 21, 1965: "It is incorrect to classify the revolt of the Negro as simply a racial conflict of Black against White, or as a purely American problem. Rather, we are today seeing a global rebellion of the oppressed against the oppressor, the exploited against the exploiter."

This quote, from the text of Malcolm's "Road to Revolution" speech, applies today to the current Black Lives Matter upsurge, which reflects the ongoing rebellion led by oppressed youth against a repressive force that represents the interests of Wall Street. The entire working class, regardless of nationality, gender, sexual orientation or other factors, must join its ranks to achieve real justice with revolution. □

Cops attack unity rally against police brutality

By **Betsey Piette**
Bridgeton, N.J.

A peaceful protest against police brutality outside the Cumberland County courthouse here on Feb. 28 was disrupted by an orchestrated police provocation that resulted in two people being arrested. The rally was cut short after police converged on the gathering, confronting demonstrators and pushing them out of the street, even though organizers had a permit. Demonstrators reported seeing police armed with M16s.

The demonstration, initiated by the Salem County-based civil rights group National Awareness Alliance, was held to unite families from New Jersey and Philadelphia who have been demanding justice for loved ones killed or injured by police. Starting at the intersection where police killed Jerame Reid, 36, of Bridgeton on Dec. 30, 2014, it was the fifth event demanding justice for Reid since his death.

Reid's mother, Shelia Reid, led a half-mile march of nearly 200 protesters to the rally site. On one side of her walked Tanya Brown Dickerson, whose son Brandon Tate-Brown, 26, was killed by Philadelphia police on Dec. 15. On Reid's other side was Regina Ashford, whose son Kashad Ashford, 23, was killed by Rutherford, N.J., police on Sept. 16. They were joined by Ikea Coney and her 17-year-old son Darrin Manning, who survived a brutal attack by a Philadelphia police officer in January 2014.

The demonstration was supported by the Newark, N.J.-based People's Organization for Progress and the Philadelphia Coalition for Racial, Economic and Legal Justice.

Just minutes before the police attack, a jeep driven by a New Jersey state police officer, blaring out commands that the road be cleared, barreled toward protesters. When demonstrators refused to disperse, an SUV coming close behind

the police car rammed into the crowd and hit a man, who responded by kicking the tire of the car. Within seconds, dozens of police vehicles descended on the demonstration and cops arrested the man who was hit, letting the SUV speed away.

The police attack occurred minutes after Bridgeton Mayor Albert B. Kelly had addressed the rally, and just before Shelia Reid was about to speak. Rally organizers loudly denounced the provocation designed to silence Reid and promised to continue their fight. They noted that police were photographing the entire rally and confrontation from the roof of a nearby restaurant and reportedly carried military-style weapons.

The police only pulled back after speakers called on demonstrators to record the confrontation on their cellphone video cams.

This is not the first time New Jersey police have tried to silence protesters demanding answers about Reid's death. Earlier in February, Bridgeton police ticketed rally organizer Walter Hudson and three others for not staying on the sidewalk while protesting Reid's murder.

Hudson called the police assault on the permitted protest "a deliberate attempt to silence Reid's mother" and compared the experience of dealing with South Jersey to dealing with the Deep South.

He called Bridgeton, a town of 25,000 people where 25 percent are unemployed, a city "under siege and woefully oppressed." He noted that while people want to get involved, they are afraid of retaliation. (Phillyfocus.com, March 1) He called for support for a Million Person March against police brutality planned for Newark on July 25.

Pam Africa of the MOVE organization invited those gathered to participate in the 30th anniversary observation of the May 13, 1985, police bombing of a MOVE home in Philadelphia that killed 11 adults and children and destroyed 61 homes.

Nothing 'routine' about deadly traffic stops

Jerame Reid was killed within a minute of the time police pulled over the car in which he was a passenger, allegedly for failing to come to a full stop at a traffic sign. The incident was captured by a patrol car camera that showed Reid was unarmed and had his hands up when Bridgeton police officer Braheme Days repeatedly shot him as he stepped out of the passenger's side of the car.

Just 15 days earlier, Philadelphia police had shot and killed Brandon Tate-Brown after pulling his car over for allegedly driving with his headlights off, on Dec. 15, 2014. Speaking at the rally, Tate-Brown's mother, Tanya Brown Dickerson, noted that many fatal conflicts with police start from so-called "routine" traffic stops. She noted that surveillance video obtained by the family since her son's murder showed that the lights of his car were on, contrary to police claims.

Brown Dickerson challenged Philadelphia Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey to hold police officers accountable for the crimes they commit. "They should not be considered above the law just because they are police," she said. "They have no constitutional right to act as judge, jury and executioners."

In yet another incident, on Sept. 16, 2014, Kashad Ashford, 23, was shot nine times and killed after crashing into a police car in Rutherford, N.J. Ashford's mother, Regina Ashford, described the killing as "execution style," noting that her son was unconscious at the time and no threat to police.

Larry Hamm, with the People's Organization for Progress, closed the rally with a reminder to participants of the long history in the U.S. of police attacks on peaceful protesters, including those marching for voting rights in Selma, Ala. "They were not afraid to march in Alabama 50 years ago and we are not afraid to march in New Jersey today." □

Civil rights activist denied appeal bond

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire
St. Joseph, Mich.

A motions hearing in Berrien County, Mich., on Feb. 27 denied bond to imprisoned community leader Rev. Edward Pinkney, pending the outcome of an appeal to overturn his conviction on five felony forgery charges.

The courtroom was packed with Pinkney's supporters. At least 30 people waited outside because there was no room inside. Pinkney was given a standing ovation when he entered the courtroom wearing handcuffs and prison clothes.

Pinkney was convicted by an all-white jury in November and sentenced to 30 to 120 months in prison. He is currently housed at Marquette Correctional Facility, a 10-to-12-hour drive from his home in Benton Township.

He was indicted after a group of residents collected signatures of registered voters seeking the recall of Benton Harbor Mayor James Hightower. Dissatisfaction with Hightower stemmed from poor economic conditions in the majority African-American city, where unemployment and poverty are widespread. St. Joseph, the nearby seat of the county, is nearly all-white and far more affluent.

Over 48 percent of the residents of Benton Harbor live below the poverty line, with a median annual household income of \$18,000. (U.S. Census) The estimated per capita income is \$9,500.

Political implications of Pinkney's case

Pinkney heads the Black Autonomy Network Community Organization (BANCO) in Berrien County. He allegedly changed the dates of five signatures on the recall petitions. During his trial, not one witness claimed to have seen him change any dates.

As the result of a Michigan appeals court decision, the recall election was cancelled and Hightower remains in office, although he is facing re-election later this year. Sup-

porters of the recall, including BANCO, accuse Hightower of being a surrogate of Whirlpool Corp. based in Benton Harbor.

During the course of Pinkney's trial, prosecutor Michael Sepic asked witnesses about their views on Whirlpool and BANCO's political outlook toward the multinational firm. Judge Sterling R. Schrock allowed the questions into the court record.

BANCO has opposed numerous policies carried out by Benton Harbor and Berrien County officials.

In 2010, the publicly owned Jean Klock Park was turned into the Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf Course on Lake Michigan. In 2012, Pinkney and BANCO organized "Occupy the PGA" demonstrations when senior golf tournaments were held in Benton Harbor.

BANCO's recall campaign came after Hightower refused to support a measure that would tax corporations in order to create jobs and rehabilitate the infrastructure of the blighted and economically depressed municipality.

The city has a long and sordid history of racism and police misconduct. In 2003, people rose up in rebellion after an African-American motorcyclist was chased to his death by several law enforcement agencies in the region.

The Michigan American Civil Liberties Union filed an amicus curiae brief in support of Pinkney being released on bond. It

argued that, even if Pinkney had committed the alleged offense, it would only be a misdemeanor punishable by 93 days in jail. Although the judge set an evidentiary hearing on two of the motions filed, he would not set an appeal bond for Pinkney.

The ACLU argued, "Rev. Pinkney's likelihood of success on appeal in this case is extremely high. ... If bond pending appeal is not granted in this case, Rev. Pinkney will suffer irreparable harm because he will have served much more than a 93-day sentence."

The immediate issue during the Feb. 27 proceedings was to have the 66-year-old released until a Michigan appeals court makes a decision on the constitutionality of his conviction. There was also a request to have Pinkney moved to a correctional facility closer to Berrien County so his family and legal counsel can consult with him on important matters. Judge Schrock refused.

People attended the hearing from throughout Michigan and Illinois. Many organizations had representatives, including BANCO, the Moratorium NOW! Coalition, National Lawyers Guild, Michigan Welfare Rights Organization and the People's Tribune newspaper.

The evidentiary hearing on two of the motions filed is scheduled for April 14. Local and national civil rights and human rights activists are urging people to continue to build support for the BANCO leader.



Beach, Calif.

U.S. to join Colombia 'peace process' in Havana

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

The U.S. State Department announced on Feb. 20 that it would send a representative to the peace talks between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army) to be held in Havana, Cuba. That same day, the Peace Delegation of FARC — which is the revolutionary opposition to the Colombian government — issued a statement saluting this step and saying in part, "We consider it a necessity, given the presence and the permanent impact that the United States has in the political, economic and social life of Colombia, that the U.S. would now be able to contribute to the establishment of social justice and true democracy, and to overcome inequality and poverty, which is the right way to open the path to peace."

U.S. perspective is different

During a meeting in December 2014, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos asked of U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry that the U.S. "take a more direct role in and be more directly in support of the peace process." (state.gov)

For this role the U.S. chose Bernard Aronson, former assistant secretary of state for Inter-American Affairs from 1989-93, who was involved in the peace processes in El Salvador and Nicaragua. In El Salvador, Aronson refused to sign an order to cut U.S. funding for death squads. In Nicaragua he is notorious for his statement: "The great myth of the 20th century is that left-wing fascism is different from right-wing fascism." ("Contra Aides," Mother Jones, October 1987)

Aronson is on the Board of Directors of the National Democratic Institute, an organization created by the U.S. government through the infamous National Endowment for Democracy that provides funding for opposition right-wing groups in Latin America. He also has financial connections, having served as director for the investment firm Goldman Sachs and having founded his own firm, ACON Investments.

But it was Aronson himself during the Feb. 20 press conference who revealed the U.S. role in Colombian negotiations. By saying that the U.S. will stand by the Santos government, he already made its partisan intent clear. He reinforced that stance by declaring that it is time that the FARC forever renounce violence, without even mentioning the violence of the Colombian state. He ended his talk by referring to the riches of Colombia, saying, "The World Bank said that Colombia is the best place in Latin America to do business." (state.gov)

While the U.S. presence is important for the peace process, for the reasons stated by the FARC, it is essential to briefly review the role of U.S. intervention in Colombia in order to clearly highlight its character.

U.S. intervention in Colombia

To show how extensive the U.S. role is, it is only necessary to mention a few facts to remind us that much of the suffering of the Colombian people was conceived of in the White House, the Pentagon and the offices of the major mining, petroleum and chemical transnational corporations,

as well as the U.S. agricultural monopolies, with the complicity of the Colombian elites and the Colombian government.

This started with the violations and massacres of banana farmers by the United Fruit Co. in 1928, when some 2,000 workers were killed. It continues to the most recent terrorist acts of Chiquita, Dole, Del Monte and Coca Cola corporations, which pay paramilitary squads to beat up and even murder their workers.

The suspected role of the CIA in the assassination of the popular political leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitan in 1948 is still under investigation. At issue is the CIA's refusal to disclose classified documents about that murder, which opened the door to what is known as the "Great Violence," which has lasted until today.

Also important is the U.S. role in the establishment of the paramilitary forces themselves, even before the founding of the FARC-EP, and the so-called LASO Plan of bombings and annihilation used against peasant resistance in Marquetalia province, which led to the founding of the FARC insurgency.

We should not forget Washington's Plan Colombia, which began in 1999 and has resulted in an escalation of social conflict with enormous implications in terms of increasing poverty, disease, violations of human and labor rights and massacres; mass poisonings and destruction of food crops by Monsanto chemicals; and the internal displacement of millions of Colombians.

It is because of this U.S. responsibility for perpetuating the war against the Colombian people that Washington must be part of the peace process.

Achievements of peace talks

The talks began with exploratory meetings in 2011. They have brought hope to the Colombian people that they will finally achieve the peace that they seek, which has been so elusive. It has been a unique process with breakthroughs as well as huge obstacles and difficulties.

Up to now, the talks have achieved partial agreements in the areas of agricultural development, political participation of the insurgency in Colombia's future and a solution to the problem of illicit drugs. Currently they are discussing questions involving the victims of the conflict.

How the peace process has developed deserves a separate article. However, it is necessary to mention the active participation of several organizations and of the Colombian people themselves, including victims of the conflict, who have enriched the discussions with their contributions. Five groups of victims traveled to Havana on several occasions to intervene directly in the process.

During these years various forums were held in Colombia to provide suggestions. A subcommittee on gender was formed to ensure that the new Colombia arising out of these dialogues is a country without gender discrimination. There have been special hearings with organizations of women and the lesbian, gay, bi and trans population in Colombia. A Historical Commission of the Conflict and its Victims was established to study the causes with a view toward ending the conflict.

The FARC has proposed holding a constituent assembly where the people decide the future of the implementation of the agreements.

Although the process is making gains, it still confronts powerful forces. The FARC has demanded a bilateral ceasefire so that negotiations can be held in an atmosphere of peace. So far, the government has rejected this proposal. On Dec. 17, however, the FARC insurgency announced a unilateral and indefinite ceasefire to demonstrate its desire to achieve peace.

Now in Spain, President Santos said, "We are nearing the time for starting the discussion of a bilateral ceasefire. Precisely tomorrow morning, Tuesday, five active-duty generals and an admiral will

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U.S.-Cuba talks proceed— End the blockade!

Continued from page 1

and overthrew the Libyan government, leaving the land in chaos.

In the Western Hemisphere, the U.S. trained military forces throughout Latin America and the Caribbean to carry out torture and coup d'états.

The School of the Americas Watch described this branch of terrorism in a December 2014 press release: "[T]he Pentagon was forced to release seven Spanish-language training manuals that were used at the School of the Americas. They explicitly recommended abusive and unlawful interrogation techniques such as torture, extortion, blackmail and the targeting of civilian populations."

There have been many protests at the "School of the Americas," now in Georgia, and, since 2001, renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation.

Throughout the 1970s the U.S., in collusion with the military and intelligence services of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, carried out "Operation Condor" that led to the murder of 60,000 people, mostly left political activists and union leaders, as Larry Rohter wrote in his Jan. 24, 2014, New York Times blog.

The U.S. government began a terror campaign against the Cuban people soon after its 1959 revolution. Jane Franklin's "Cuba and the United States: A Chronological History" details the campaign against Cuba that killed more than 3,000 people, touching almost every Cuban family. (janefranklin.info/Cuba.htm) Florida is home to Luis Posada Carriles, an admitted bomber of a Cuban airliner whom the U.S. protects.

Release of last of the Cuban 5

The Cuban 5 are state security agents who had been sent to the U.S. to infiltrate Florida-based paramilitaries actively engaged in bombing hotels and restaurants in Cuba. After being imprisoned since 1998, the last three of the five were released on Dec. 17 as key to opening U.S.-Cuba negotiations. This change in U.S. policy was an admission that terror against Cuba had failed to achieve the overtly stated U.S. goal of starving Cuba's people into a pro-capitalist rebellion.

It was a first step in ending the U.S. economic, financial and commercial blockade of Cuba, which is still very much in place. The Cuban Interests Section in Washington, D.C., has been forced to conduct its consular work issuing passports and visas without access to a bank. All has been done on a cash basis for more than a year because its bank accounts were closed and no other bank would accept Cuban accounts. The U.S. government claims to be helping, but nothing has changed.

A small minority in Congress are scurrying to block diplomatic relations — while attacking the Obama administration — by further vilifying Black liberation activist Assata Shakur, who received asylum in Cuba. Neither right nor center, of course, will admit to U.S. state-supported terrorism.

Underlying the issue of removing the SST designation, normalizing banking and all the topics planned for discussion is the fundamental respect for Cuba's sovereignty. It is not negotiable. End the blockade!

Cheryl LaBash is a co-chair of the National Network on Cuba and an organizer with the International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban 5.

Dominicans join Haitians to protest lynching

By John Catalinotto

Haitian and Dominican organizations in New York held a rally at noon and later a vigil at the Consulate of the Dominican Republic on Feb. 26 to protest against the lynching of a Haitian man in the Dominican Republic earlier in February. The lynching of Henry Claude-Jean "Tulile" followed his burning of a Dominican flag to protest anti-Haitian legislation that revoked citizen rights of Haitians who had resided for a long time in the Dominican Republic.

The Haitian American Lawyers Association of New York and the organization "We Are All Dominican" — a group of university students, mostly from John Jay College, and young community members who support the rights of Haitian-origin people living inside the Dominican Republic — sponsored and came to the Feb. 26 actions.

In a statement explaining its goals, the Dominican group wrote that they oppose the "Dominican Constitutional Court's decision to strip tens of thousands, and possibly hundreds of thousands, of Dominicans of Haitian descent of their nationality, violating fundamen-

tal human rights."

HALANY says on its website that it was "founded to promote and encourage participation by Haitian Americans and other ethnic minorities in the judicial and legal system." It also opposes the Dominican court's decision for putting the security of about 200,000 people at risk.

In an earlier statement, We Are All Dominican wrote that they "are in solidarity with all migrants in the Dominican Republic and denounce any form of violence regardless of their legal status. At the same time we want to ensure that Dominicans of Haitian descent are legally recognized as Dominican nationals and not migrants, as the DR proposes to do." They also advocate "an inclusive Dominican national identity that recognizes and celebrates our diversity."

Also in response to the lynching of Henry Claude-Jean, Dominican citizens living abroad wrote a letter to Dominican Republic President Danilo Medina expressing their concern and making public their "condemnation of the dangerous hate campaign unleashed in our country," including death threats against journalists who advocate for the rights of those whose citizenship rights are threatened. □

German imperialism and the Greek debt crisis

By Fred Goldstein

For five years the European Central Bank, dominated by German finance capital, has engineered bailouts and imposed austerity on Greece, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Italy. And for five years various establishment economists, politicians and pundits in the U.S. like Paul Krugman and James Galbraith have been frustrated and perplexed.

Their complaint? Capitalist Europe is in an economic crisis. Austerity will make the crisis worse. Why don't the German bankers and the ECB listen to reason? Why pursue such a destructive policy, which harms the economy and causes untold mass suffering?

They cannot understand why German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble and Chancellor Angela Merkel are ruthlessly inflexible, taking a hard line with Greece, despite Greece's being in its own Great Depression.

But it is not a question of temperament or bad judgment. It is a question of economics.

The answer to this question can be found in the nature of finance capital itself. Bankers are bankers, whether they are German, French, Dutch, Italian, U.S. or Japanese. They live on parasitical interest payments. They will stop at nothing to extract every last nickel from the masses.

Just look at the merciless housing foreclosures on millions of people in the U.S. during the latest economic crisis. Or look at the millions of repossessions of autos from workers laid off during the present crisis. Or look at the destruction of whole cities like Detroit by greedy bankers. These examples should be proof enough of the insatiable drive for profit of the bankers.

The destruction of wages, benefits and social services throughout the bailed-out countries of Europe, regardless of the human and economic consequences, in order to collect debts incurred by capitalist governments shows that finance capital knows no morality except parasitic profit gouging.

German imperialist capitalism triggered two world wars

But within the general framework of financial aggression, the expansionist nature of German capitalism and imperialism occupies a special place — as does U.S. finance capital, the number one militarist and imperialist power in the world today.

German capitalism triggered two inter-imperialist world wars.

In World War II Hitler tried to subjugate Europe, as well as the Soviet Union, the Middle East and North Africa. The German ruling class got behind the Nazis because Hitler had a program of making the German bosses the rulers of a vast empire. This expansion was called "Lebensraum" — room for German capitalism to live in.

Hitler's war drive was a continuation of the German imperialists' struggle for "a place in the sun," as German Foreign Minister Bernhard von Bulow put it in an 1897 debate that eventually precipitated World War I.

A "place in the sun" for Germany by 1914 was the "sun" of colonial empire. The British and the French had the lion's share of colonies conquered during the 19th century in Africa, East Asia, South Asia and the Middle East. German capitalism came late on the scene as a developed industrial country. But by 1900 it had surpassed Britain's productive force, having the strongest industrial base in Europe. It had a developed scientific-

technological establishment behind its industry and at the service of its military.

It had all the prerequisites for becoming a premier imperialist power.

But despite all its industrial and military potential, it had relatively few colonies. Colonies were the key to exporting capital — to grabbing natural resources, cheap labor, big profits and imperialist power.

The German ruling class wanted to reverse its situation by ripping the colonies from England and France through military force, as well as by absorbing Eastern European countries, subjugating Russia and seizing industrial areas in Belgium. Of course, British and French imperialists were determined to sacrifice their own working-class youth to keep ownership of their colonial possessions.

Germany, and its allies in Ottoman Turkey and Austria-Hungary, were defeated in World War I, with the help of the intervention of U.S. imperialist troops at the end of the war. The German imperialists lost what few colonies they had — Tanganyika (Tanzania), Southwest Africa (Namibia), Cameroon and other smaller territories. These colonies all went to the victorious robbers, British and French colonialists.

German capitalism was disarmed by its imperialist rivals after the war. Following this defeat and 15 years of intense class struggle in Germany, Hitler and his Nazi Party won over the German ruling class by showing they could smash working-class organizations. They got the go-ahead to establish a fascist regime, subdue the working class and rearm Germany to try again for world conquest. This set the stage for World War II.

Nazi Germany was thoroughly and definitely defeated militarily in World War II, mainly by the Soviet Red Army, which repelled and destroyed over 200 Nazi divisions, while the USSR suffered 20 to 25 million killed. In the aftermath of the war, Washington, Wall Street and the Pentagon became the masters of world imperialism. German capitalism was disarmed but allowed to revive economically as a partner in the Cold War.

Germany became a forward base for the Pentagon and NATO in the struggle against the USSR and the socialist camp. West Germany also became a showcase for Western capitalism in the struggle with the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) and other socialist countries in eastern Europe.

From military aggression to economic aggression

During WW II German imperialism invaded the rest of Europe with tank divisions and fast-moving massive ground troops, backed up by its air force and V-2 rockets. Today German capitalism is trying to subdue Europe, especially southern Europe, with debt collectors. The Frankfurt banks, the Bundesbank (German Federal Bank) and the European Central Bank, all dominated by German bankers, are holding Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Ireland in debt bondage engineered during a series of government and bank bailouts beginning in 2010.

German finance capital is struggling to dominate Europe through the use of the euro, the common currency used in 19 eurozone countries. The euro was supposed to be a competitive reply to the dollar. It was supposed to give economic weight to Europe as against Wall Street. And to some extent it has.

But the German ruling class was the architect of the eurozone. Putting the eurozone countries on a currency controlled

During WW II German imperialism invaded the rest of Europe with tank divisions. Today German capitalism is trying to subdue Europe, especially southern Europe, with debt collectors.

from Germany's financial center in Frankfurt was a formula for future domination by Berlin, Germany's political capital. As the strongest financial and industrial power on the continent, it was inevitable that German finance capital would gain a stranglehold over much of Europe, especially the weaker capitalist economic powers. These weaker powers effectively gave up a large part of their sovereignty, having lost control over their currencies and their ability to self-finance.

The European Central Bank is controlled financially and politically by its largest contributors. Germany has the largest contribution, France is right behind Germany and the rest of Europe is far behind. So German bankers dominate the ECB, the euro and the eurozone economically.

German capitalism has not changed its nature

The nature of German capitalism, although it has been militarily disarmed since the two world wars, has not changed its need to expand. It has the strongest industrial-technological base in Europe. It has the most advanced capitalist economy. And it has never ceased to look for its "place in the sun."

In addition to lauding it over the weaker imperialist countries in western and southern Europe, Germany has expanded since the 1989-1991 collapse of the USSR into the dependent central and eastern European countries with investments, exports and outsourcing to take advantage of drastically lower wages in Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary and so forth. In this sphere, it is in competition with U.S.-Anglo capitalism.

In its struggle to be "competitive" and invade southern Europe with its commodities, investments and finances, the so-called "miracle" of the German ruling class has been to lower wages at home.

The stereotypical view of Germany is that of a prosperous country with high wages. This is because during the struggle with the socialist camp, before the collapse of the USSR and Eastern Europe, German capitalism had to compete with the full employment, free health care, day care centers, generous vacations, sports and cultural development, and many other social benefits that workers in the German Democratic Republic enjoyed.

This is what forced the West German bosses to make concessions to the unions and keep wages and unemployment benefits at a relatively high level. Once the Berlin Wall came down, the basis for concessions to the working class evaporated.

Today the reality for German workers is just the opposite of what it was during the Cold War.

The entire German ruling class and all its political parties and media made a sharp right turn in 2003 and opened up a campaign to drive down the wages of German workers, slashing unemployment benefits and pushing back labor unions.

Agenda 2020: Bosses' united front to lower wages

This campaign, known as "Agenda 2020," was introduced by Social Democratic Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder. At the time there was very high unemployment in Germany. The German Social Democratic Party, the Green Party, the Christian Democratic Party, the Christian Union and the entire establishment media got behind "Agenda 2020." They strong-armed the labor unions into going along.

So-called "mini-jobs" were created, where workers worked for 450 euro a month, which was the low end of the wage scale. These workers could only get health insurance if they paid 140 euro a month. Millions of unemployed workers, who earlier could count on years of living-wage unemployment benefits, were instead forced to take "mini-jobs." Unemployment insurance benefits were lowered. Part-time jobs were expanded and pushed by the bosses in place of previously stable full-time jobs.

Today, poverty stalks German workers. According to the Institute for Employment Research, the research arm of Germany's federal employment agency, 25 percent of all German workers earn less than 9.54 euros (\$10.68) an hour. In Europe, only Lithuania has a higher percentage of low-wage earners — who earn less than two-thirds of the national average wage. (The Guardian, Aug. 13, 2013)

"Between 1999 (when the euro launched) and 2010, unit labor costs increased 20 percent in Spain, 25 percent in Italy and a more modest 5 percent in France; Germany's barely budged at 0.6 percent. All Mediterranean economies currently have higher unit labor costs than Germany." (Investopedia, Dec. 3, 2012) That is because unions in those countries resisted austerity more strongly.

Low wages at home and control of the euro allowed the German bosses to use their powerful, dynamic industrial base to make semi-colonies out of their poorer imperialist rivals on the continent.

The expansion of trade and investment into southern Europe is part of the same "Lebensraum" tendency described earlier — only expressed economically instead of militarily. It is driven by the same ruthless, aggressively expansionist character of German capitalism that led to the two wars.

And that is why, to the puzzlement of bourgeois experts, Chancellor Angela Merkel, Finance Minister Schäuble and the Frankfurt bankers are running roughshod over the Greek people and all the poorer countries of Europe and causing devastation to the working class, without the slightest inhibition or regret, regardless of the consequences. Nothing less than a full-scale revolt of the working class can stop them. It is hoped that the push-back by the masses in Greece will be the beginning of a broader struggle against the banker-imposed austerity program of Merkel and company. □

What women are fighting for

International Women's Day is a good time to examine some crucial struggles for women, including pay equity and livable wages.

This topic arose starkly at the Feb. 22 Academy Awards when a well-known actor, Patricia Arquette, stressed in her award acceptance speech that it's time for women in the U.S. to have wage equality and equal rights. True.

After the ceremony, the actor talked backstage of ageism in Hollywood, where female actors' salaries shrink substantially as they get older. But she added that it was time for "all the gay people and the people of color that we've fought for to fight for us now."

This set up an "us vs. them" scenario, implicitly leaving women of color and those in the lesbian, bisexual, transgender communities out of the "we" category. It put the onus on those who are most oppressed, discriminated against — and among the lowest paid — to fight for high-paid celebrities.

Immediately, social media was atwitter with objections to these remarks by African-American women, Latinas and LGBTQ people. These communities have been strongly fighting for decent jobs, pay equity, as well as an end to bigotry and discrimination.

The "Black Lives Matter" protests against racist police killings, as well as brutality against LGBTQ individuals, show starkly that deep oppression continues. It is every progressive person's duty to support such struggles wholeheartedly — in words and in deeds. Opposing police brutality IS a women's issue!

As for pay equity, women overall earn 78 cents for each dollar men make in the U.S. However, African-American women earn 64 percent of white male workers' salaries; for Native women it's 59 percent and Latinas 54 percent.

Women make up two-thirds of those earning minimum wage (\$7.25 an hour) or less, and often involuntarily work part-time jobs with no benefits. Thirty percent of single mothers, 35 percent of Native women, 25 percent of African-American women and Latinas, and 20 percent of women immigrants live under the poverty level.

Who benefit from paying women lower wages, doubly exploiting women of color? The capitalist owners of corporations, banks and property. Their CEOs do very well, too. The bosses rake in megaprofits from all workers' labor and pay them only a fraction of the value they produce.

That's the basis of the for-profit capitalist system and how multimillionaires are made. While the net worth of the richest 400 individuals in the U.S. in 2014 was \$2.29 trillion, up \$270 billion from the year before, says Forbes, working people are losing real income.

If all 72 million women in the workforce were paid the same rate as the highest-paid male workers, that would total hundreds of billions of dollars. If all workers were paid the full value of what they produce, it would amount to trillions. But these corporate parasites will underpay every employee, going as low as they can — unless there is a struggle to wrench higher wages from them.

Look at Walmart: 500,000 workers just won an immediate wage hike to \$9 per hour, going to \$10 next year, through strong, brave protests, with community

and union support. Yet even with these raises, can single mothers, many only assigned part-time work, pay rent and cover their children's needs?

Walmart is owned by the Walton family. Four of its members, worth a total of \$158 billion, are in Forbes' top 10 list of the U.S.'s wealthiest people. Their riches come from exploiting their workers, especially women. In 2011, 1.5 million women sued Walmart for wage and other discrimination, but the pro-corporate Supreme Court refused to back them.

Congress blocks equal rights, pay hikes

What is wrong with this picture? There is not even an Equal Rights Amendment on the books, a simple law stating women's equality, because right-wing millionaires mounted a campaign to defeat it. Their politicians in Congress have also obstructed the Paycheck Fairness Act because it would give women more legal tools to fight wage discrimination. They refuse to raise the federal minimum wage to \$10, which would help all low-wage workers, although it still wouldn't pay today's bills.

Reactionary bosses have fought every measure that would help women gain equal rights and pay equity, while trying to erase women's reproductive and other health care. Their cronies in 22 state legislatures refuse to expand Medicaid for low-income people, including single mothers.

On this International Women's Day, in the spirit of sisterhood, let us all join in the fight for a \$15 an hour minimum wage, full-time jobs, expanded social programs and an end to all forms of discrimination. This is time for women to unite and fight for real equality, to stand in solidarity with our most oppressed sisters — and oppose this racist, sexist, homophobic and xenophobic system.

That is what International Women's Day stands for and what its socialist founders intended it to be. Fighting women's hardships, poverty and oppression is a cornerstone of the struggle to end this vicious capitalist system. □

Stop cops from killing people with disabilities

By WWP People with Disabilities Caucus

A case before the U.S. Supreme Court seeking police exemption from the Americans with Disabilities Act has critical importance for all those seeking to stop unwarranted police killings. This case involves police shootings of people with mental illnesses. Intervention is needed to stop the high court from using this case to strengthen the hand of the police and lessen police accountability in the killings of people with disabilities. Many of those killed were people of color.

Oral arguments are set for March 23 in the case of Sheehan v. San Francisco, brought before the Supreme Court by the city of San Francisco.

More than 40 civil rights and disability activist groups have signed a letter urging San Francisco officials to drop the appeal. They ask that concerned people join this write-in campaign. (tinyurl.com/k8pdg8s) The Workers World Party People with Disabilities Caucus is one of the groups circulating and getting signatures for this letter.

Please join this crucial effort. Copy and sign the letter below and mail or email it to San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee and City Attorney Dennis Herrera.

ADA should be expanded and enforced, not gutted!

The letter begins here:

Ed Lee, Mayor, City and County of San Francisco
 City Hall, 1 Doctor Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 200
 San Francisco, CA 94102 mayoredwinlee@sfgov.org
 Dennis Herrera, City Attorney, City and County of San Francisco
 City Hall, 1 Doctor Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 234
 San Francisco, CA 94102 cityattorney@sfgov.org

Dear Mayor Lee and City Attorney Herrera:

I/we join more than 42 civil rights and disability rights groups and many progressive individuals in urging you to withdraw your appeal in the case of City and County of San Francisco v. Sheehan currently pending in the U.S. Supreme Court. Your appeal could result in the Supreme Court exempting police from the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the most comprehensive civil rights law for individuals with disabilities. Your appeal puts the ADA at risk, and could lead to an increase in unwarranted police killings of people with disabilities.

People with disabilities need the ADA's protections when they encounter law enforcement. A 2013 study by the Treatment Advocacy Center and the National Sheriff's Association revealed that at least half of the people shot and killed by police are people with mental disabilities. Many times these police had been called to help a person in psychiatric crisis. Often police who are first on the scene quickly respond with deadly force, without waiting for a unit specially trained to deal with people with disabilities to arrive.

In San Francisco, the figures are even higher. A local review of 51 San Francisco police-involved shootings between 2005 and 2013 found that 58% of the 19 shootings of people killed by police had a psychiatric disability.

People with many types of disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, emotional disabilities, psychiatric disabilities, diabetes, epilepsy and deafness, face dangerous and often deadly consequences when law enforcement officials fail to honor the ADA.

The ADA needs to be expanded and honored, especially when it comes to encounters with police. Having a disability must not be a death sentence!

Three pigs that snatched \$803 million

By Stephen Millies

The three founders of the Carlyle Group — William Conway, Daniel D'Aniello and David Rubenstein — raked in \$803 million last year. (New York Times, Feb. 26)

Did this trio find a cure for cancer, perhaps? No, not exactly. With much less effort, they used other people's money to gamble on the stock market.

It would take 53,249 workers earning the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour to earn what Conway, D'Aniello and Rubenstein got. That's assuming that all these miserably paid workers were able to work 40 hours a week throughout the year. But the reality is that hundreds of thousands of Walmart employees are forced to work part time in spite of their need for full-time employment.

The Carlyle Group is a "private equity firm" that controls nearly \$200 billion in assets. Founded in 1987, Carlyle really took off when former Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci became vice chair in 1989 and then chair in 1993.

With Carlucci on board, the Carlyle Group became the 11th-biggest defense

contractor. Big bucks were made dealing with merchants of death like Northrop Grumman and General Dynamics. Even The Economist magazine — a ruling-class mouthpiece — admitted that "the secretive Carlyle Group gives capitalism a bad name." (June 26, 2003)

Raoul Peck's award-winning film "Lumumba" named Carlucci as one of those responsible for the assassination of Congolese independence leader Patrice Lumumba.

Along with Dick Cheney, Carlucci helped Donald Rumsfeld dismantle the "War on Poverty" program during Richard Nixon's presidency. After waging war on poor people in the U.S., Carlucci, Cheney and Rumsfeld became successive heads of the Pentagon and waged war on poor people around the world.

A whole stable of influence peddlers

Carlucci was just one of Carlyle's fixers. Former President George H. W. Bush became a "senior advisor" to Carlyle's Asia Board, while his secretary of state, James Baker, became a "senior counselor."

Before he became Texas governor and

executed 152 people, George W. Bush was a board member of Carlyle's Caterair International subsidiary. Bush is such a dolt that Rubenstein later admitted he had to kick him off the board. (Democracy Now! July 3, 2003)

But the younger Bush's stupidity didn't prevent Texas from pouring hundreds of millions into Carlyle's coffers. Last year, the state's Board of Education invested \$75 million in one of Carlyle's real estate funds. (Pensions & Investments, July 18, 2014)

Former British Prime Minister John Major brought to Carlyle his expertise in giving away the nationalized British railroads to speculators. This fire sale led to a series of deadly crashes, while Major went on to become chairman of Carlyle Europe.

Other members of Carlyle's stable included a former head of the German central bank, a brother of French ex-President Nicolas Sarkozy, two former prime ministers of Thailand and former Philippines President Fidel Ramos.

Since 2001, Arthur Levitt — former chair of the U.S. Securities and Exchange

Despite reported decline

Struggle against Ebola continues

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

African leaders, health care professionals, international humanitarian organizations and others have praised the work battling the latest and most deadly outbreak of Ebola.

In Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia, the epicenters of the latest outbreak of the deadly pandemic, a dramatic decrease in the number of cases had been reported. The World Health Organization and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that some 9,500 people have died of the 20,000 infected over the last year.

Nonetheless, even as borders reopen throughout West Africa and life returns to some form of normalcy, experts and leaders warn that vigilance is still required. An increase in new cases in Sierra Leone over the last several weeks in February has once again prompted concern.

According to WHO's Feb. 25 Situation Report, the number of cases in Sierra Leone from December to the end of January were constant, with transmission widespread. In Guinea cases continue to arise from unknown chains of transmission. In Liberia, transmission continues but at very low levels, with only one new case reported in the week up to Feb. 22.

Renewed alert in Sierra Leone

The new outbreak of cases in Sierra Leone is of unknown origin. It is suspected that the virus is being transmitted by workers in the fishing industry who have traveled inland to the capital of Freetown.

There were 14 confirmed new cases in Freetown the week ending Feb. 22, with additional infections discovered from what is described as unknown chains of transmission in the capital and other locations. So serious is the current threat that Vice President Samuel Sam-Sumana placed himself in quarantine after one of his security guards died from Ebola on Feb. 24.

Sam-Sumana's office released a statement on March 1: "This virus has affected thousands of our people and has nearly brought our country to its knees. We all have a collective responsibility to break the chains of transmission by isolating the sick and reporting all known contacts, by not touching the dead. ... We cannot be complacent. We must work together as a nation to end Ebola now."

As pension cuts start

Detroit retirees keep fighting

Continued from page 4

cy, warnings were issued by protesters that Detroit was just the beginning and that, if the bankers were successful here, pensions across the country would fall victim to looting by Wall Street, with the cooperation of the federal courts. An article on the front page of the New York Times Business Day section of Feb. 26 confirmed this, beginning: "First in Detroit, then in Stockton, Calif., and now in New Jersey, judges and other top officials are challenging the widespread belief that public pensions are untouchable."

In Stockton, the city itself did not even try to go after pension funds in its bank-

Liberia reports rapid decline in cases

At the same time transmissions continue at very low levels in Liberia, with only one new confirmed case reported the week ending Feb. 22. Liberia, which has had the highest number of deaths, succeeded in bringing the number of confirmed cases to almost zero, while reopening schools as well as its borders with contiguous states.

Liberia has been a major partner with the Pentagon through the U.S. Africa Command. Thousands of Pentagon troops were deployed to the country at the height of the outbreak; many have now been withdrawn.

Ebola vaccine trials are underway in Liberia, where some 27,000 people may participate in a study to test the effectiveness of an experimental drug.

Although several Ebola outbreaks have been reported in Africa since 1976, originating in the Democratic Republic of Congo, then known as Zaire, the 2014-15 pandemic has been the most virulent, widespread and long lasting.

President Johnson-Sirleaf has discussed with U.S. officials the need to invest in medical, communications and educational infrastructure in Liberia. The West African state, which was founded by Africans who had been enslaved in the U.S. during the early decades of the 19th century, has been largely under the control of Washington for nearly a century through control of its rubber and mineral production.

The legacy of colonialism and neocolonialism has underdeveloped Africa, while European and North American states have grown wealthy as a result of the exploitation of agricultural commodities, mineral resources and labor. At present the Pentagon, the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency are engaging in massive military and surveillance operations across West Africa under the guise of the so-called "war on terrorism."

Instability is increasing throughout the region, and only a resurgence of anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist sentiment can move the people toward genuine independence and sovereignty. □

U.S. to join Colombia 'peace process'

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go to Havana to initiate this process." (Telesur, March 2)

On Oct. 24 in Havana, the FARC brought 18 new members to serve on the Technical Subcommittee on bilateral ceasefire and surrender of weapons. Their aim is "to contribute to the analysis of experiences, generate and discuss initiatives and proposals [and] give input, expedite and facilitate discussions of the plenipotentiaries of the national government and the FARC-EP, to permit the implementation of agreements leading to the end of the conflict." (resistencia-colombia.org)

As stated, the talks are at a crucial stage when solidarity movements, particularly in the United States, have an essential role to express solidarity with the insurgency and the Colombian people, expose the criminal role of the U.S., and pressure the White House to abandon any attempt to undermine the negotiations. □

Three pigs

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Commission — has brought a legal veneer as a Carlyle "senior advisor."

The Carlyle Group is named after the favorite hotel of Conway, D'Aniello and Rubenstein, located on New York City's snooty Upper East Side.

This super luxurious hotel was named after the super racist Thomas Carlyle, who once wrote an essay entitled "The N—r Question," lamenting the abolition of slavery in the British West Indies. (See the classic, "Capitalism and Slavery," by Eric Williams, pp. 195-196.)

The next time you see someone forced to fish for discarded food in a garbage can, think about the \$800 million in loot raked in by the bosses of Carlyle. And then fight like hell for socialism. □

Interview with Geraldine Blankenship

Women and the Flint sit-down strike of 1937

Continued from page 5

whacked and it killed him.

My dad told my mother, "You know, some of these guys, their wives are threatening to leave them." She said, "Jay Green, if you come out of that plant I will divorce you." She was great, because she had led that little strike back when she was 15 years old, and she never forgot how important it could be to stand up to the company.

When the strike started my sister volunteered, she went up to the [union] office. She would work and she would walk out to the plant and then picket. Those were long days for her.

I was only 17 when the strike started. I helped my mother, because we had pickets [who] came up from Ohio. They stayed at our house. They actually slept in shifts. We'd get out of bed in the morning, and the pickets would come and take over our bed.

I heard about [the Emergency Brigade] of course and I signed up. They were a great bunch of gals. Yep, they were fighters. I mean, they would have done anything necessary to back up those guys. They did a lot: they cooked; they took food over to the plant. It was a lot of work and they had kids they had to take care

of, too, so it was not an easy time for them either. And had it not been for them that strike would have been lost.

I feel proud of [my red beret from the brigade], and I wear it at all the union things. Not very many 17-year-old girls had opportunities to be in something that was that important.

On "White Shirt Day," the annual observance of the sitdown victory, workers wear a white shirt to demonstrate they are just as important as "white shirts" — the bosses. Until 1977, when Genora Johnson Dollinger came with the National Organization for Women, the celebrations downplayed the role of women.

Of course I always go to White Shirt Day. Monroe [husband] and I went to the 40th anniversary. Genora got up and made a speech. But there was some controversy over it, too. There was a group from NOW up on the left hand side, right in front of the stage, and in the balcony. After that [Genora] joined NOW. She was a tireless fighter for women's rights.

I told the head of Planned Parenthood here, "If you got anything that I can do, why, let me know." I made me two trips to Washington for big marches, one in 1992 and the other one in [2004]. [At that

from the criminal bankers' actions.

These same banks also trapped many municipalities into high-interest loans and "bond swaps" that jacked up the debt. Then, when it became difficult to pay on this ballooning debt, the courts and bankers conspired to loot the one place there is still some money stored: public workers' pension funds.

Only a massive national fightback against the banks, the corporations and their tools in government and the courts can hope to stop the destruction of pensioners and the other victims of the capitalist system.

Sole is a retired Detroit water department worker.

one], I was afraid I couldn't walk that far, but my niece's son wheeled me around in a wheelchair. That's something I believe in so strongly. No woman should have a child she doesn't want just because some man puts one in her. No way."

[Right up to her death at 95, Geraldine believed in justice for all people.] I wonder about a fellow; he didn't want Blacks in the neighborhood, so he sold his house. I'd like to see him in a cardboard box. Well, I've always been taught not to be a racist.

It's a disgrace, so many people hungry, trillions for that oil, for that [Iraq] war. Our grandchildren, great-grandchildren, are going to be paying for it forever. Oil companies making billions and billions and billions, and don't even have to pay taxes. But you better pay yours, or you're going to be in trouble. You just got to keep fighting.

[In 2012, 17,000 workers amassed at the Michigan State Capitol to oppose "Right-to-Work" for- less legislation. Then 92, Geraldine delivered greetings.]

Martha Grevatt is a 27-year UAW Chrysler worker and author of the pamphlet "In Our Hands Is Placed a Power: The Flint Sit-Down Strike."



WW PHOTO: KRIS HAMEL

Syriza cede ante banqueros de euro

Por Fred Goldstein

24 de febrero — El gobierno izquierdista Syriza en Grecia ha aceptado una retirada negociada de sus promesas electorales después de un cara a cara con los banqueros europeos, liderados por el capital financiero alemán. Esto pone fin a esta última fase de la lucha del pueblo griego contra la austeridad. Pero esta lucha, si bien puede ser una pausa, no debe permitirse que muera.

Lo que ha terminado es la idea de salir de la esclavitud de la deuda que les ata a los rapaces banqueros de Europa a través de las negociaciones, sin totalmente romper con la eurozona.

La fase de conciliación — de tratar de aplacar a los poderes financieros en Berlín, París, Roma, Madrid y Ámsterdam a través de negociaciones y apelaciones a la razón a fin de obtener su consentimiento para levantar las cadenas de la esclavitud de la deuda impuesta a las masas griegas — ha demostrado ser ilusoria. Aunque las negociaciones puedan prolongarse durante un tiempo, esta estrategia no podrá tomarse más en serio por la población griega.

Después de dos semanas de negociación con 18 gobiernos y ministros de finanzas hostiles, el gobierno recién electo encabezado por Alexis Tsipras revirtió sus posiciones fundamentales. Había prometido romper con el régimen de austeridad impuesto a Grecia por la Troika — el FMI, el Banco Central Europeo y la Comisión Europea. Regímenes anteriores aceptaron estas condiciones onerosas a cambio de préstamos de rescate.

Al salir el dinero de los bancos griegos a una velocidad de €2 mil millones por semana y el BCE suspender todo el crédito, el nuevo gobierno se estaba quedando rápidamente sin dinero. Los banqueros alemanes exprimían tan fuerte a Syriza, que enfrentaba un colapso financiero o una humillación política — si aceptaba permanecer en la eurozona.

En el convenio, cautelosa y condicionalmente acordado ahora por los ministros de finanzas europeos, el gobierno Syriza se ha comprometido a vivir dentro de los lineamientos básicos de austeridad establecidos por y bajo la supervisión de la Troika, que cambió de nombre a “instituciones” en una medida para guardar las apariencias. El FMI y el BCE ya han expresado su preocupación sobre el acuerdo.

El gobierno griego ahora será elegible para un préstamo de €7 mil millones que iba a ser pagado el 28 de febrero. Pero el BCE y la CE han dicho que no se pagará hasta que se implementen las concesiones señaladas por Syriza. Al escribir estas líneas, no se ha especificado cómo el gobierno va a evitar un incumplimiento inminente, pero se supone que esto se ha resuelto.

Syriza dada cierta latitud

Syriza conservó cierta flexibilidad para permitir que el gobierno griego de forma a los términos de su programa de austeridad, con sujeción en todo momento a la verificación y aprobación de las “instituciones”. Syriza enfatizó en el acuerdo que buscaría impuestos sin pagar por los ricos, enfrentaría el fraude corporativo y tomaría otras medidas para aumentar los

ingresos que no tuvieran un impacto negativo en las masas.

Hay tanta corrupción en la sociedad capitalista que Syriza puede ser capaz de exprimir miles de millones de la clase dominante y la burocracia griega con el fin de entregar una buena cantidad de dinero a los banqueros europeos.

Syriza ha escrito en el acuerdo el derecho al aumento del gasto público y la distribución de ayuda a las/os pobres a través de (lentamente) aumentar el salario mínimo, las pensiones, prestar atención sanitaria y otras medidas posibles para aliviar de inmediato la crisis económica en sectores de la población. Pero todo esto debe ser aprobado por la Troika.

Así que todas las promesas originales de Syriza — no trabajar con la Troika, exigir una reducción de la deuda, rechazar el rescate y revertir las medidas de austeridad impuestas al pueblo griego — han sido abandonadas en cara de la extrema extorsión financiera de los banqueros europeos.

Aunque no hay justificación para esta retractación, hay que señalar que se hizo bajo coacción extrema. Syriza estaba en el poder por sólo un mes y no tenía tiempo para tener un control sobre el gobierno o sus finanzas, ni hablar de prepararse para la agresión económica después de una ruptura de negociaciones. La mayor parte del mes se consumió en discusiones con banqueros. Así que Syriza no estaba preparado para defenderse del estrangulamiento económico amenazado por Berlín.

Gran cambio hacia Syriza siguió las elecciones

Este acuerdo con las “instituciones” es inestable. Podría ser alterado por una rebelión entre las masas griegas o por una intervención aún más dura de los banqueros, o por ambas.

Pero por el momento hay una pausa temporal en la lucha. Y es necesario evaluar lo sucedido para seguir adelante. Hay muchos aspectos de la lucha para examinar.

En primer lugar, ¿qué significó la victoria de Syriza? y más importante, ¿qué significó el aumento de la popularidad de Syriza después de hacer promesas audaces de desafiar y hacer retroceder la austeridad, lo que catapultó a Syriza hace un mes con el 36 por ciento de los votos?

¡Después que ganó y continuó haciendo declaraciones, su popularidad subió al 75 y 80 por ciento! Las personas que se cambiaron a Syriza después de la votación eran principalmente seguidores del Nuevo Partido Democrático de centro-derecha. Así que un amplio sector de las masas, a pesar de su identificación con los grandes partidos capitalistas, apoyaron la lucha de Syriza contra la austeridad, una vez vieron que no eran sólo promesas, sino medidas concretas que se estaban programando.

Las/os marxistas deben saber que este enorme y repentino cambio en la orientación política de la población indicó que las masas griegas estaban llegando al punto en que no podían seguir por el viejo camino y estaban dispuestas a cambiar su lealtad a un partido que pensaban podría aliviar su sufrimiento. El hecho de que el pueblo se equivocara sobre Syriza no debe hacer que otras fuerzas de iz-

quierda ignoren esta dramática señal. Al contrario, deberían aprovecharla.

Entre las lecciones de la lucha es que la victoria parlamentaria por sí sola no puede sostenerse sin la lucha de masas en las calles, y que será necesario intensificar la lucha de clases para hacer retroceder la austeridad.

El contexto para el cambio político hacia Syriza es el hecho de que Grecia está viviendo ahora el equivalente a la Gran Depresión. La producción ha caído un 25 por ciento en cinco años. El desempleo oficial es 25 por ciento; el desempleo juvenil oficial es más del 50 por ciento.

Casi la mitad de la población vive en o debajo de la línea de pobreza. La gente ha estado en busca de alimento y leña en los bosques, buscando en vertederos de basura y comiendo en comedores sociales. Están viviendo sin cuidado de salud, servicios sociales, electricidad, transporte y así sucesivamente. En estas condiciones, la campaña de Syriza contra la austeridad provocó una masiva oleada hacia delante.

Respiro para prepararse a luchar

Ahora mismo hay un “espacio para respirar” de cuatro meses antes de la próxima batalla sobre austeridad con los banqueros europeos. Es cuando el actual contrato de préstamo se agota. Ese espacio se debe utilizar para prepararse para la siguiente fase de lucha — si la lucha no comienza antes.

Los banqueros alemanes y otros europeos no tienen ninguna intención de dejar que Syriza de al pueblo griego ningún alivio fundamental en las condiciones generales de austeridad. Estos banqueros tratan de exprimir cada euro posible de las masas griegas. Las condiciones de penuria continuarán y el descontento de la población se profundizará.

No basta con simplemente denunciar Syriza

El denunciar a Syriza y mantenerse al margen diciendo que la lucha está perdida sería negligente. En este sentido, es importante analizar las posiciones adoptadas, sobre todo por las organizaciones marxistas que han denunciado a Syriza por no luchar por el socialismo y confinar la lucha en el capitalismo.

Eso equivale a una racionalización para no dar a esta lucha un apoyo revolucionario crítico porque está siendo liderada por Syriza. La lucha entre el capitalismo y el socialismo nunca ha sido el eje de esta lucha. El foco central de la lucha es contra la austeridad impuesta por la Troika.

Es ridículo que izquierdistas acusen a Syriza de no luchar por el socialismo y que lo usen como pretexto para alejarse de la lucha. El liderazgo de Tsipras nunca iba a luchar por el socialismo. Su liderazgo es eurocomunista originalmente. El eurocomunismo, que dio la espalda al campo socialista y la URSS, abandonó la lucha de clases como forma de lucha. Toda/o izquierdista marxista podía anticipar que el liderazgo de Syriza iba a permanecer dentro de los límites del capitalismo.

La cuestión, en cuánto a las masas y objetivamente se refiere, era cómo hacer retroceder a los banqueros y aliviar las horribles condiciones de esclavitud de la deuda impuesta al pueblo griego. Esto

debería haber sido una señal para las/os marxistas a integrarse completamente en la lucha, para exigir la salida de la eurozona, mientras paciente y persistentemente explicaran a las masas que el camino correcto es salir de la empuñadura del capital financiero europeo y luchar contra el capitalismo como el único camino para poner fin a la austeridad.

Cualquier partido que trajera ese mensaje a la lucha hubiera sido verdaderamente reivindicado por el actual giro de acontecimientos y hubiera podido aumentar su influencia y la influencia del pensamiento revolucionario en la Grecia de hoy. Hacer eso hubiera sido seguir la táctica leninista de dar apoyo crítico revolucionario a una lucha iniciada por los opositores políticos, no importa cuán reprecensibles sean, mientras se mantiene un programa revolucionario independiente.

Si las masas están siguiendo con afán a los socialdemócratas por falta de conocimiento, entonces las/os revolucionarios tienen que encontrar una manera de obtener una audiencia y traer ese conocimiento. Para eso, las/os marxistas deben estar en la lucha contra la austeridad al lado de las masas. Esa es la forma de vincular la lucha contra la austeridad con la lucha contra el capitalismo y por el socialismo.

Al alejarse de las masas, la izquierda permite que el liderazgo de Syriza tenga el monopolio de la línea política. Así se entrega la lucha política a la socialdemocracia. Pero el objetivo es ganar a las masas y distanciarlas de los socialdemócratas.

Mientras las/os marxistas traen su programa completo para la lucha contra la austeridad es erróneo condicionar que las/os reformistas hagan la misma asociación. Es precisamente porque son reformistas que no hacen esos vínculos.

Cuando un agravio inmediato como la austeridad, se enfrenta a las masas, y los opositores están liderando la lucha contra la austeridad, es erróneo que las/os socialistas exijan que esos opositores luchen por el socialismo como condición para entrar en un bloque con ellos contra el agravio inmediato. Eso desacredita el socialismo.

Martillos y hoces necesarios en las calles

Esperemos que en la próxima fase de la lucha, los banqueros euro vean una escalada de la lucha de masas, con martillos y hoces en las calles entre las masas populares en una lucha continua para hacer retroceder la austeridad. La amenaza de una lucha anticapitalista podría convertirse en un factor que hace a los banqueros vacilar en su campaña de agresión económica.

Si es posible aglutinar a las masas para forzar una ruptura con la eurozona, el gobierno tendrá que estar preparado para tomar medidas fuertes como la nacionalización de los bancos y las grandes empresas y establecer controles para mantener el flujo de salarios, mantener los precios bajos y evitar el acaparamiento. Habrá que pensar en las relaciones comerciales internacionales y todas las demás medidas que tendrán que adoptarse si Grecia rompe con la eurozona en la próxima ronda de lucha.

Esto se puede poner en marcha en el marco del capitalismo pero puede ser un puente hacia la revolución socialista. □