



PHOTO: HAITI LIBERTE
 Women's meeting, Canaan, Haiti. 8

Ferguson community resists police terror

By Abayomi Azikiwe

The police occupation of the Black community of Ferguson, Mo., is just as intense now as it was in the aftermath of the murder of Michael Brown last August. The Ferguson police arrested 20-year-old Jeffrey Williams for shooting two police officers on March 12. The officers were at the front of police headquarters during a demonstration celebrating Chief Thomas Jackson's resignation.

As the crowd thinned out, shots rang out, fired from afar and hitting two officers. Although police representatives claimed the officers were lucky to be alive, both were treated and released from the hospital with non-life-threatening injuries hours after the shooting.

Police immediately sought to connect the shooting to the anti-racist demonstrations. Ferguson organizers reject the association between their work and the incident.

Mass protests, civil disobedience and rebellions have taken place in Ferguson and other U.S. cities since Aug. 9 when a white police officer, Darren Wilson, shot 18-year-old African-American Michael Brown. Despite a St. Louis County grand jury investigation and federal government probe, Wilson has not been charged with a crime. He resigned from the police department.

Chief Jackson stepped down in the wake of a scathing Department of Justice report that documented systematic racial profiling and collusion targeting the majority African-American population in Ferguson and other St. Louis County suburbs. Activists have demanded the removal of Jackson and Ferguson's mayor.

St. Louis County Prosecutor Robert McCulloch claimed that Williams told authorities he was firing at someone else with whom he had a dispute and was not aiming at the officers. "We're not sure we completely buy that part of it," McCulloch retorted, saying his office believed others were in a vehicle with the suspect. (USA-Today, March 15)

Williams was indicted on two counts of first-degree assault and three other counts of armed criminal action. Mc-



Manila, Philippines, March 8. Read more on page 8.

Culloch's office says the investigation is incomplete.

Police raids after shootings

Ferguson residents say the police conducted heavy-handed raids searching for the suspect. Photographs of SWAT teams breaking into homes were publicized throughout the media.

The March 13 British Guardian reported police misconduct during an unjustified raid on a Ferguson house. Police pulled three people out and questioned them; they were later released.

This article reports, "Lamont Underwood, Iresha Turner and Martez Little said they were the trio seen handcuffed by St. Louis County officers and taken from a house on Dade Avenue as part of the early-morning swoop by heavily armed police. Turner said that she and her six-year-old son had the red laser sights of police rifles trained on their chests as they emerged into their garden under orders from the officers, who arrived in military-style vehicles."

Underwood told the Guardian that he told the police they were at the demonstration, but did not know who shot the officers. He felt disrespected by the Ferguson police who stormed his home and took its three residents into custody.

Iresha Turner told the Guardian she was lying in bed at 3 a.m., and there was a sudden banging at the door. The police said, "We know you're in there, come out." She saw six or seven police. "They had a tank-style vehicle, a truck and a helicopter. ... We were forced outside." I saw "a red dot on my chest. I said I surrender ... please don't shoot me. I said I'm not the shooter. I'm not involved. They said we were acting shady, but I said what would you do if 15 police were outside your door with guns."

Despite the DOJ's failure to indict anyone for killing Michael Brown or for other

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WISCONSIN

Ongoing fightback vs anti-worker law

WORKERS WORLD this week



Madison protest, Feb. 28.

PHOTO: JENNA POPE

**By Workers World Staff
Madison, Wis.**

Despite overwhelming public opposition, Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker signed a racist, anti-worker, right-to-work-for-less bill on March 9. It went into effect immediately. The RTW bill stipulates that workers aren't required to pay union dues but still have to be represented by unions at private sector employers if there is a collective bargaining contract in place.

The Wisconsin AFL-CIO and two unions have filed a lawsuit seeking to temporarily stop implementation of the RTW law. This attack against organized labor and their communities is a continuation of austerity policies in Wisconsin that include Act 10 in 2011, which gutted collective bargaining for most public sector employees.

In late February and early March, thousands came out to protest against RTW in Madison in freezing weather at numerous rallies and other actions sponsored by the Wisconsin AFL-CIO and the "Defeat 'Right To Work' in Wisconsin" coalition.

In open displays of how capitalist democracy really works, in response to the mass opposition to RTW, the Senate and Assembly in the Wisconsin Legislature "fast-tracked" the RTW bill, shut down public hearings or simply didn't have them and had public galleries in legislative chambers cleared by police.

Despite these setbacks, the people of Wisconsin continue to fight back against Wall Street austerity and the political servants of the rich.

For more information: facebook.com/defeatrighttowork, wibailoutpeople.org; wisafclcio.typepad.com. □

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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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Another unarmed Black man fatally shot by police

GEORGIA

By Dianne Mathiowetz

Yet another Black man has been shot and killed by a DeKalb County policeman, provoking outrage and street protest. Just over two months ago, Kevin Davis, a popular restaurant worker, was killed by a DeKalb County cop after he called 911 to report that his girlfriend had been stabbed by a roommate.

On March 9, in the early afternoon, 27-year-old Anthony Hill, an Air Force veteran who was being treated for a bipolar disorder, was seen naked, jumping from his second floor apartment

balcony and crawling on the parking lot pavement.

Neighbors and workers at the Heights at Chamblee, a mostly working-class Latino/a apartment complex, called for help. The man they knew as “Tony” was a pleasant, friendly guy who played soccer with their children and was always smiling.

Witnesses say that when police Officer Robert Olsen arrived on the scene, Hill was on his hands and knees and got to his feet as Olsen approached him. Olsen ordered him to stop. Some say Hill had his hands up as he came towards the officer. Others say they were outstretched.



PHOTO: STEVE EBERHART

March 11 protest that took over the streets surrounding the downtown Decatur Square area.

Olsen said he “feared” for his life and shot Hill twice.

Residents were shocked that a clearly unarmed man showing obvious signs of mental distress — who had caused no harm to anyone or anything — would be gunned down in front of them.

Their anger grew as Hill’s naked body continued to lie on the apartment complex parking lot, uncovered, even as their children’s school bus arrived to drop them off. The police finally allowed a sheet to be placed over Hill to prevent the kids from seeing their dead friend.

Protests erupted the following morning at the DeKalb county commission meeting. Youth who have led the militant demonstrations and direct actions in response to the killings of Michael Brown in Ferguson and Kevin Davis in DeKalb County organized a speakout and march in downtown Decatur on March 11.

There were two disruptions March 13 at the national meeting of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, headed by Cedric L. Alexan-

der, who is also the DeKalb County chief of police.

A protest march was held March 14 at the apartment complex where Hill lived and was killed. Dozens of his neighbors — men, women and children — joined the demonstration as it spilled out onto a busy, major thoroughfare in the Atlanta suburb of Chamblee, disrupting traffic.

As evening approached, police ordered the marchers onto the sidewalk and arrested seven, including a 14-year-old girl, when they did not move quickly enough.

Bridget Anderson, Hill’s girlfriend, said the evening of March 9 was when they had planned to cook dinner together to celebrate their three-year relationship. She said Hill was having trouble with the side effects of the medication prescribed for him at the Veterans Administration but that there had been no indication of any previous erratic behavior.

Anthony Hill — Afghanistan war veteran and aspiring musician — was buried on March 15, near his family’s home in Moncks Corner, S.C. □

Ferguson community resists police terror

Continued from page 1

atrocities committed by the Ferguson or other regional police and national guard forces deployed in the area since August, Attorney General Eric Holder condemned the shooting of the two police personnel. At a press conference Holder said the DOJ’s and FBI’s “full range of investigative resources” would be mobilized to apprehend shooting suspects. (Huffington Post, March 12)

Holder claims that Ferguson was on the verge of improving police-community relations and that the officers’ shooting “turned his stomach.” The Obama administration never used such words of condemnation about Michael Brown’s killing or the brutal police or national guard tactics in attempts to quell the demonstrations and rebellions.

Recall the mayor

Mayor James Knowles is the target of a recall campaign, says the Organization for Black Struggle, an area activist group at the center of demonstrations against police violence. Knowles emphasizes that he will not resign despite departures of police officers, civil servants, a municipal judge, the police chief and the city manager.

Five Ferguson residents submitted an affidavit demanding Knowles’ removal, saying, “We cannot describe how disgusted we are with you. We now ask that you vacate the office.” (afp.com, March 15)

Ferguson is a majority African-American suburb dominated by a white municipal government and police force. African Americans are discriminated against through racial profiling by police, which is then reinforced by the courts.

Some local leaders are seeking the three City Council seats up for election. Some believe the best route to reforms is by electing officials to local governmental positions.

The March 13 Wall Street Journal reported a meeting in Ferguson where candidates and community leaders discussed running campaigns for the City Council, which has only one African-American member.

“Let’s show the world what change can and will look like,” stressed Wesley Bell, an African-American municipal judge seeking a City Council position. “If there’s no confidence between the community and law enforcement, there’s no justice.”

The article continues, “The candidates and many in the audience said real change can happen with the city council — not out on the streets. They said such institutional change can heal the city,

breaking down the racial barriers that have festered here for years but which only rose to the surface last summer.”

It was the mass demonstrations and rebellions that swept St. Louis County and other cities that brought world attention to racism and national oppression in the U.S. There are historical lessons from cities that have elected African-American mayors and other local, state and congressional representatives in the last five decades: Until the structural problems of unemployment, poverty, police violence directed at oppressed communities, corporate impunity and predatory lending are overthrown, there is little hope for fundamental change that could enhance living standards and foster stability. □

Youth target killer cops, economic injustice

Special to Workers World Madison, Wis.

Hundreds of youth, students and workers marched on March 11 to demand justice for Tony Robinson and Dontre Hamilton, both fatally shot by police. The march also raised “\$15 and a union,” adequate funding for public education and other demands. The day’s events were sponsored by the Coalition for Justice, the Young Gifted and Black Coalition and Wisconsin Jobs Now.

The protests began with high school and college students walking out of classes and converging on the Department of Corrections building, demanding an end to the racist “New Jim Crow” and the prison-industrial complex.

Carrying a massive “Black Lives Matter” banner, the multigenerational, multinational crowd then marched to Worthington Park for a rally. Members of all three sponsoring organizations and many others spoke out against low wages, police terror and austerity.

Protesters came from Chicago as well as Milwaukee, Wausau, Racine and many other cities in Wisconsin.

“We will not be who the media already says we are. We are sending a new message. We must move together in solidarity. Today we stand strong, and we stand together,” said Brandi Grayson, a leader of the YGB Coalition.

Andrea Irwin, mother of Tony Robinson, invited the public to the March 14 funeral services for her son, a 19-year-old,

WISCONSIN


PHOTO: LESLIE AMSTERDAM

At the Wisconsin Department of Corrections, March 11.

African-American man killed by police on March 6 in Madison. “I want everyone to be there,” said Irwin.

At the services, over 1,000 people came out to pay their respects to the family and to honor Robinson. Jennifer Epps-Addison, executive director of Wisconsin Jobs Now, said the March 11 protest was just the beginning of a coordinated effort around the state. She denounced the signing of union-busting, misnamed “Right to Work” legislation by Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker on March 9. When union membership is not allowed to be a condition of employment — as in “right to work for less” states that now also include Michigan — bosses take advantage of labor’s weaker position and loss of resources. Unions call it “right to work for less” because of what statistics confirm: when unions are undermined, wages fall.

“We need to be bold in our action all over Wisconsin,” Epps-Addison said.

“It’s all about helping the people who need help the most.”

After the rally, the crowd marched to various fast food restaurants, demanding \$15 and a union, ending at the governor’s mansion, where racist union-buster Walker currently resides. There, a speakout featured Nate and Maria Hamilton, Dontre Hamilton’s brother and mother.

Dontre Hamilton was murdered by police Officer Christopher Manney on April 30, 2014, at Red Arrow Park in Milwaukee. Milwaukee County District Attorney John Chisholm declined to indict Manney in December. Manney was fired last fall, but he has an appeal hearing that begins March 19. The Coalition For Justice is organizing to protest it.

For updates, events and information: #justice4tony; facebook.com/justicefordontre; facebook.com/fergusontomadison;wibailoutpeople.org; facebook.com/wisconsinjobsnow. □

Detroit

Plans made to stop tax foreclosure tsunami

By Jerry Goldberg
Detroit

A dynamic “Emergency People’s Assembly to Stop Tax Foreclosures” on March 14 planned a series of actions to demand a moratorium on all tax foreclosures in Detroit and all of Michigan’s Wayne County. The assembly also voted to demand the release of the \$251 million in unspent federal “Helping Hardest Hit Homeowner” funds by the state of Michigan to help meet the crisis.

With its neighborhoods already devastated by years of mortgage foreclosures due to racist, predatory lending by the major banks, Detroit is now being threatened by an unprecedented wave of property tax foreclosures. These foreclosures are a direct result of Detroit’s primarily African-American homeowners being forced to pay property taxes based on assessments that dramatically overstate the actual value of their homes.

Sixty-two thousand Detroit homes are scheduled to go into tax foreclosure on March 31; 37,000 of them are occupied and 18,000 are owner-occupied. The Wayne County treasurer acknowledged that as of March 10, even after placing numerous homeowners in payment plans (delaying the inevitable), over 10,000 homeowners still face the loss of their homes, along with 19,000 other families

facing evictions who are renters or on land contracts.

What makes this situation even more disgusting is that federal funds are available to pay off delinquent property taxes on occupied homes! When the banks were bailed out by the federal government for \$700 billion in 2008, the Treasury Department allocated about \$50 billion to keep families in their homes.

Beginning in 2010, the state of Michigan received \$498 million in Helping Hardest Hit Homeowner funds, which can be used to prevent tax foreclosures. Incredibly, as of January, Michigan still had \$251 million in unspent Hardest Hit funds according to the most recent Treasury report.

Assembly adopts emergency actions

The emergency assembly was co-chaired by Abayomi Azikiwe from the Moratorium NOW! Coalition and Rebecca Fritz, a mother of five who took over an abandoned Detroit house and turned it into a home for her family when they were confronted with homelessness after exhausting their allowance for remaining in a homeless shelter. Fritz has been defying efforts to remove them for the past year.

Other homeowners challenging eviction as a result of tax foreclosures spoke out, including Kenny Brinkley, an 80-year-old Motown musician who,

along with his partner Sandi Combs, are fighting to stay in their 60-year family home. A military veteran with disabilities and his partner testified how they lost their home to an “investor,” as is the pattern with many tax foreclosures. Detroit Eviction Defense has led many demonstrations that have prevented the evictions of these families.

Vanessa Fluker, a leading anti-foreclosure attorney, reported how she has been contacted by African-American churches in Detroit facing tax foreclosures, despite their tax-exempt status. That is because their water bills are being illegally treated as tax liens by Wayne County.

Cecily McClellan, a former Detroit city worker, spoke of how she formerly worked in the city’s Department of Human Services, where she would help process emergency needs requests that would disburse federal funds to keep people in her homes. McClellan lost her job when DHS was privatized after the state began withholding emergency needs funds from Detroit. Alice Jennings, lead attorney in the class action challenging water shutoffs, reported how the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department has announced plans to resume the shutoffs with the end of winter, targeting 38,000 additional families with deprivation of this most basic human necessity. Pat Driscoll, a retired steelworker and

leader of Detroit Eviction Defense’s tax foreclosure committee, explained how the foreclosure process operates, and the outreach DED has been doing throughout the community to fight the epidemic.

The assembly adopted the demands of calling for a moratorium on tax foreclosures of all occupied homes, and immediate release by the state of the federal Helping Hardest Hit funds to keep families in their homes. It adopted the suggestion by Wayne County Commissioner Martha Scott to pack the commissioners’ next meeting on March 19 to press these demands, and a resolution brought by G. Errol Jennings of the Russell Woods Community Association to pack the Detroit City Council meeting on March 24.

The assembly called for a demonstration on Tuesday, March 31, the last day before the foreclosures go into effect, at the Wayne County Treasurer’s office, to demand they be suspended and that the treasurer join the people in demanding release of the Hardest Hit funds.

The gathering also supported a petition campaign initiated by the Detroit People’s Platform demanding a halt on the foreclosures. It adopted a resolution brought by Jean Vortkamp from Moratorium NOW! inviting Leilani Farha, U.N. special rapporteur on housing, to come to Detroit and investigate the foreclosures as violations of international law. □

Anti-eviction campaign uses web, direct action

Special to Workers World
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Residents of the Fort Greene, Bedford-Stuyvesant and Clinton Hill neighborhoods of Brooklyn are facing a crisis of gentrification. On Feb. 22, organizers with “Before It’s Gone, Take it Back: Documenting Brooklyn, Fighting Gentrification” (B4G) met with 60 residents of the area to launch a web-based and direct action “This Is a No-Eviction Zone” campaign.

The resident-led group “Equality for Flatbush” initiated “This is a No-Eviction Zone.” Its six-point platform calls for Brooklyn residents to stand with their neighbors “against foreclosures, forced evictions, buyouts and price-outs” by supporting and/or participating in “lawsuits, letter-writing campaigns, picket lines, rent strikes, eviction blockades, lobby days and other tactics to hold corporate developers and greedy landlords accountable.”

The platform also calls on residents to support and patronize “businesses that are essential to low-to-middle-income people in my neighborhood” and “to pledge not to allow the NYPD [the New York Police Department] to unlawfully harass or violate the civil rights of my neighbors or myself. ... Studies have shown that gentrification and police harassment go hand in hand.”

Flyers, stickers and window signs in Spanish, Urdu, Russian and English were distributed to the crowd.

B4G meetings are scheduled for other impacted neighborhoods in Brooklyn, including East New York on March 29 at 3 p.m., co-sponsored by Crystal House, an East New York project of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, and Flatbush on April 18, at 6:30 p.m., at the Third Root Community Health Center.

On March 17, the Brooklyn Pride Center is hosting a B4G organizing forum

on gentrification for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer Brooklyn residents. The meeting will kick off a 10-week series entitled “Documenting Queer Brooklyn: Before It’s Gone, Take It Back.”

A main goal of the B4G project is to launch a website hub — beforeitsgone.com — that would serve as a self-documentary art archive for Brooklyn residents to share stories celebrating their lives and resilience in the wake of gentrification. The site would also provide vital housing, legal and organizing resources to help keep Brooklyn residents in their homes. Currently, organizers are engaged in a series of fundraisers and a crowdsourcing campaign to raise \$8,000 by May 1 in order to finish construction, gather resources and launch the site.

According to the “Equality for Flatbush” Tumblr page, gentrification is defined as a “concerted and deliberate effort to price out low-to-middle-income residents from neighborhoods by city government, corporations, real estate developers, and landlords in favor of renting, selling, and catering to people of higher and/or more flexible incomes.

We know from first-hand experience that the same unscrupulous property owners who use tactics to force longtime older tenants of color out of their rent-stabilized apartments will turn around and illegally overcharge incoming younger white tenants for the same apartment. For this very reason, we believe that all of us — longtime and new residents, communities of color and white communities, low-income and middle-class people — have a stake in the urgent struggle to save affordable housing in Brooklyn.”

Victor Moses, a 24-year-old resident of East Flatbush and recent Morehouse College graduate, says: “I was born and raised in Brooklyn. My heart has been set on living and starting a family here, like my parents did. But with rents the

way they are, I can’t manage that. That is something that I can’t and won’t accept — that’s why I fight.”

Katie Hydell, a 34-year-old special education teacher who is a new B4G organizer and has lived in Bushwick for the last two years, says: “I believe that affordable housing is a human right for all. It is time to show the people at the top that having all the money does not mean having all the power and we will fight until we win.”

Brooklyn residents can receive “No-Eviction Zone” signs, flyers and stickers, schedule a community meeting and get involved in the campaign by calling or texting Equality for Flatbush at (646) 820-6039 or en español (513) 445-8532. Emails can be sent to flatbushequality@gmail.com. On social media follow the hashtags: #BeforeIts-

Gone, #NoEvictionZone and #BrooklynisOURS

The Equality for Flatbush project (E4F) is a people of color-led multinational grassroots organization which does anti-police repression, affordable housing and anti-gentrification organizing in the Flatbush and East Flatbush neighborhoods of Brooklyn. E4F was founded in June of 2013 and seeks to “organize our communities for social change and justice through street outreach, social media campaigns, political advocacy and direct action.”

Brooklyn residents can call E4F to consult or ask for organizers to help organize No-Eviction Zone strategies in their neighborhoods. E4F also currently offers housing, legal and community organizing resources to Brooklyn residents. □

In Charleston, W.Va.



PHOTO: UE LOCAL 170
Charleston, W.Va.,
March 7.

Thousands protest ‘right-to-work’ bill

Special to
Workers World
Charleston, W.Va.

An estimated 7,000 people showed up at the Capitol building in Charleston, W.Va., on March 7 to picket the state Legislature’s consideration of a “right-to-work” (for less!) bill, as well as a number of other reactionary laws that have been proposed in this session.

Called the “Mountaineer Workers Rising Rally,” every union in the state was well represented, including the United Electrical Workers Local 170, the Unit-

ed Food and Commercial Workers, the Service Employees District 1199 OH/WV/KY, the American Federation of Government Employees, the Teamsters and others. Every union hoisted its own banner and wore a particular color to express solidarity and distinguish itself in a united front fashion. There were also trade unionists from surrounding states in attendance.

National union leaders were featured speakers: AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, National Education Association President Lily Eskelsen Garcia, American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten, Teamsters Secretary-Treasurer Ken Hall and United Mine Workers

Slowing world capitalist economy puts workers in danger

By Fred Goldstein

The big business media have been crowing recently about the fall in the prices of crude oil and gasoline. They promote the idea that this will help workers and play a part in reviving the economy.

Big business economists, on the other hand, are buzzing with concern that the fall in crude oil prices represents a world capitalist downturn that will threaten the anemic recovery taking place in the U.S.

What the economists know is that the drop in oil prices is a symptom of capitalist overproduction. The oil and gas industry was chasing after superprofits when, before last June, crude oil was still priced at \$115 a barrel and gasoline was \$4 a gallon.

They have been deep drilling and hydrofracking for oil and natural gas everywhere, from farmers' fields to the melting Arctic Ocean, in order to cash in on high prices. When the smoke cleared over the last few months, the world was awash in oil and gas, but the world capitalist economy had begun a slowdown.

"Much of the improvement in demand has been driven by refiner profits and purchases of crude to keep in storage, rather than an increase in fuel use by consumers," says the International Energy Agency. (Bloomberg News, March 18)

Price decline and capitalist overproduction

What the economists know is that the decline in the price of oil and gas is a sign of creeping global capitalist overproduction, which can lead to a decline in profits, production cutbacks, further lowering of wages and more layoffs — if not a full-blown economic crisis. They are worried that after trillions of dollars of government economic stimulus, with virtually free money given to the bankers and bosses at close to zero interest rates, there is no economic boom and no rise in inflation. This is what would happen if there were a normal recovery.

The drop in oil prices cannot be isolated from the general decline in commodity prices globally. According to the International Monetary Fund Indices of Primary Commodity Prices of March 12, commodity prices have dropped not just in oil, but in a wide array of nonfuel commodities over the last four quarters.

For example, China had its slowest economic growth in 24 years in 2014. Its oil imports for January declined by 8 percent from the previous month. The

Market Realist of Feb. 24 revealed: "An unexpected fall in most of China's commodity imports indicates that the largest economy in the world is still losing momentum."

World capitalist slowdown

Seven years after the global financial and economic crisis struck the capitalist world, and five years after the so-called "recovery," capitalism is still at a dead end — stuck in a condition of mass unemployment, wage suppression and slow-to-no growth. The decline in commodity prices flows from the global capitalist slowdown.

The 19 eurozone countries and Japan are struggling to keep out of recession. U.S. capitalism is struggling, unsuccessfully, to get into strong growth mode. Russia is in a recession. Brazil, the seventh-largest economy in the world and the largest in Latin America, has slowed down to an almost no-growth quarter. South Africa grew only 1.5 percent in 2014. Indian capitalism is struggling to hold onto its 7.5 percent growth rate, while poverty stalks hundreds of millions there.

It is hardly any wonder that commodity prices are sliding, as global capacity for production expands and global demand from the workers and the middle class contracts.

The IMF has revised its estimate of world economic growth down for the year 2015. The March 12 report shows a decline in prices in the last three to four quarters in every economic category: agriculture, food, vegetable oils, meat, agricultural raw materials, metals, etc. Prices declined in everything from copper to iron ore, coal, lumber, cereals, lamb, sugar and cotton.

This is a sure sign of growing capitalist overproduction — decline in the ability of the masses to buy the products they create, competitive pressure on the capitalists to hold back price increases in order to protect market share, and growth in the ratio of unused means of production and services.

Why price declines are a threat: the Marxist view

What Wall Street and the bosses are worried about is that the slowing increase in prices, which means slowing inflation, will turn into an absolute decline and trigger a global crisis.

Why is this decline a danger sign to workers? Because under the global cap-

italist system, a decline in prices under conditions of overproduction and low wages signals a decline in profits. And a decline in profits is a harbinger of wage reductions, layoffs and attacks on the workers in general.

If prices begin to decline, the bosses are deprived of the ability to raise prices in order to sustain their profit margins. If they can't do it by raising prices, the only ways left to them, as capitalist exploiters, are to lower wages, speed up production, cut benefits or get rid of workers. Instead of raising prices, they lower costs. And the only cost they control and can lower is the cost of labor. If they take losses, they will shut down altogether.

For workers it is best to understand the danger from the point of view of working-class economics: the Marxist labor theory of value.

What are prices and how are they set? The capitalist sets the price. There is no guarantee that the commodity or service will be sold at that price. But here is how the price is determined.

Under normal conditions the boss, or multinational corporation, sets the price in order to get back all the costs of production or service plus a profit. The profit consists of the unpaid labor time of the workers.

Unpaid labor time results from the fact that the boss pays the workers just enough to live on (and maybe less) and keeps the revenue from all the new value that the workers create in the economic process. The workers apply labor power to the material elements of production. (Marx called these constant capital.) These elements of production represent old value already created by other workers.

In creating new products, the workers add new value. The value the workers need to live on is created in just one part of the work day. But the workers must work the whole day — or the whole week or whole month, depending on the working arrangement.

The boss then sells everything created, pays the workers their wages and keeps the rest of the money, which includes the value of unpaid labor. That surplus value goes to the boss when the product is sold for a profit.

The boss must also pay the other costs of production, beside wages. These costs cannot be gotten around: materials, technology, shipping, etc. The prices of these products have been set by other capitalists and cannot be changed. So after selling all the commodities, whose value has

been created by the labor of the workers, the boss must pay off all the vendors who sold him things. What is left over is the profit — or the value, in money, of the unpaid labor of the workers.

But suppose the price set by the boss to bring a handsome profit is too high to find buyers. Suppose the workers and the middle class cannot afford the price set by the boss. Then the boss has to drop the price. But the boss still has to pay off the landlord, the bankers, the vendors, etc. If the price is so low that it eats deeply into profits and the boss has to use up what was supposed to be profit or surplus value, then costs must be lowered. Wages have to be lowered, workers have to be laid off or, in drastic cases, the whole enterprise has to be shut down.

This is why the capitalists fear "lowflation" as they call it, or falling prices that squeeze their profits. And workers should be concerned about this threat to their own class interests even more.

Little need to hire workers

The Toronto Globe and Mail of Jan. 23 summed it up: "The bottom line, economists say, is that the global economy still has excess capacity. While many economies, especially in the developed world, shed substantial capacity during the recession's deep downdraft, there is more capacity to produce than there is demand for that output. The IMF estimates that the world's advanced economies are still operating at about 2.5 percent below their capacity — and chronically below-normal global growth means demand hasn't been sufficient to close that gap.

"The continued overcapacity has meant little need to hire more workers. The International Labor Organization reported this week that the global labor market still hasn't fully recovered what it lost in the 2008-09 crisis. It said global employment is 61 million jobs below its long-term trend line, reflecting the gap that opened up during the crisis and has never closed. The global unemployment rate of 5.9 per cent is still above pre-crisis levels (5.5 percent in 2007), and the global labor force participation rate remains below pre-crisis levels, indicating that an additional nearly 40 million people worldwide have abandoned looking for jobs entirely."

The international workers' movement must prepare to resist a new round of attacks signaled by creeping capitalist overproduction. The fall in commodity prices may be a harbinger of just such an attack. □

President Cecil Roberts, among others. State leaders also spoke.

West Virginia is one more state that has been caught up in the right-wing wave of anti-union legislation, similar to the struggles in Wisconsin and Indiana. Other legislative initiatives that were protested are the introduction of charter schools, the elimination of the prevailing wage, the so-called "Teach for 'America'" program, the eradication of payroll-dues deduction, the attack on existing environmental regulations and the weakening of workplace safety rules, particularly in coal mining. Two days after the rally, a coal miner was killed as a result of a roof top collapse in Cameron, W.Va.

In addition to the anti-union/RTW legislative proposals, people took issue with other appalling pieces of legislation. In West Virginia, where nearly one-third of the state went without normal water service last winter as a result of a chemical spill, the arch-reactionary and corporate-funded legislators gutted a bill by

nearly 75 percent that would have regulated above ground, toxic chemical tanks. At another low point in regressive legislative action, a 20-week abortion ban was passed, vetoed by the governor, and then the veto was overwhelmingly overridden by both the House and the Senate.

At the beginning of the session, a modern-day McCarthyite type bill was introduced that would prohibit K-12 teachers from mentioning socialism, communism, labor history, the United Nations or the Great Depression. If found "guilty," according to this despicable bill, the teacher would be charged with a misdemeanor, would lose her or his teaching license for a minimum of one year and could possibly face jail time.

A theme that was repeated throughout the rally event was "Stop the War on Workers." And it truly is a global class war happening from Wisconsin to Ferguson, Mo., to Occupied Palestine. Working and oppressed people have a world to win through struggle. □

New York City

WW PHOTO: ANNE PRUDEN

Liberato protest.

Immigrant workers win concession

By G. Dunkel

Since April 2014, Liberato restaurant workers, mainly immigrants from Latin America, have protested wage theft, retaliation and sexual harassment that their employer engaged in. They have been assisted by the Laundry Workers Center.

The Liberato restaurant is located in the Bronx, N.Y.

The picketing and other protests were so effective that Liberato filed a Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act complaint against the LWC, charging it with waging class warfare against a local business, using slander and harassment.

The LWC filed a National Labor Relations Board complaint against Liberato. The NLRB recently decided to hear the complaint.

At a March 12 hearing on the RICO charge, a worker told owner Antonio Liberato, "We are suffering because we're not being paid the minimum wage, and we are suffering harassment. That is what I know, and it's the truth." (LWC Facebook page)

The workers and the LWC have another response to the RICO charges. They restarted picketing and meeting in front of the restaurant March 16. □



Dinah, Bett and Albany, N.Y., slave rebellion

By Chris Fry

On March 14, 1794, two young slave girls were hanged in Albany, N.Y. One was named Dinah, aged 14. The other was named Bett, just 12. A month later, a 16-year-old male slave named Pompey was hanged as well.

Yes, ten years after the so-called “American Revolution,” New York was a slave state. According to the first U.S. census in 1790, Albany had a population of about 3,500, of which 572 were slaves and 26 were “free persons of color.” (“History of the 1793 Fire in Albany,” hvmag.com, Feb. 14) All the wealthy families in Albany had slaves.

The slave owners were afraid, and for good reason. In 1741, there was a slave rebellion and fire in New York City. And in 1791, there was the start of the great slave revolution in the French plantation colony of Haiti. There the slaves fought off three European armies and won independence, one of the greatest events in human history.

So when a fire broke out on Nov. 17, 1793, that burned down a large part of downtown Albany, including offices, stores and 26 homes, causing the huge sum of \$250,000 worth of damage, the slave-owning city leaders quickly concluded that it had been set by slaves.

All the slaves in the town were subjected to a rigid curfew, rounded up and interrogated. After a few days, the child Bett signed a “confession” that also implicated Dinah and Pompey in setting the fire. They were put on trial on Jan.

6, 1794.

The girls both confessed, throwing themselves on the “mercy” of the court. But of course there was no mercy from the cruel slavers. Pompey pled innocent, but was quickly convicted by the all-white jury. They were all sentenced to death.

Of course, Bett’s statement must be treated with great skepticism. There is much speculation that she was both threatened as well as promised freedom if she would confess. But even that statement explains the motive for the fire was to win freedom for themselves.

Testimony shows Bett stated that Pompey had been approached by two white men. One had a grudge against wealthy Leonard Gansevoort. He promised a valuable pocket watch if he would set fire to Gansevoort’s home.

Bett said that she and Dinah set Gansevoort’s stable on fire rather than his house, so that the family could escape. With that, they showed far more humanity than the slavers. And despite the large amount of damage when the fire went out of control, nobody was killed or injured.

At the time, the one way that a slave could win her or his freedom was to “buy” herself from her “master.” If Bett’s statement was true, then clearly that was their intent — to sell the pocket watch and use the money to free themselves.

After the trial, the girls both announced that Pompey was not involved. Then Pompey “confessed,” saying the young girls were innocent. But it was all for naught. And the white men involved were never even arrested.

Bett and Pompey were both hanged from “Hanging Elm Tree” in downtown Albany. But for Dinah, whom the slavers considered the most “rebellious,” it was different. A gallows was built on Pinkster Hill, which is now the location of the New York State Capitol. That is where she was killed.

Why there? Since the early 1600s, enslaved and free Black people in Albany took off work together and held a week-long “religious” festival on Pinkster Hill. There they ate and drank, sang, held parades and performed African dances.

So the Albany slavers consciously decided to execute Dinah on Pinkster to send a message of fear and intimidation to the Black community of Albany.

They failed. The African community continued the Pinkster festival right through 1811, when the city finally banned it for 200 years.

The Black community never forgot the young people who were lynched. In 1803, nine years after the executions, Absalom Aimwell (probably a pseudonym) wrote a satirical, abolitionist poem titled “The Pinkster Ode.” In it is a stanza dedicated to young Dinah and indeed to every Black woman. Benezet and Ley, two prominent Quaker anti-slavery activists who lived in the mid-1700s, are also mentioned.



*“Enough, says I, to Dinah’s shade,
Thou too, wilt drudge no more,
with spade,
Nor hoe, nor pot, nor washing tub,
Nor clean away — nor sweep,
nor scrub.
Sleep on good wench, or only doze,
I’ll not disturb thy blest repose.
“Thy honest soul has wing’d
its flight,
Beyond the reach of tyrant’s sway;
In realms of everlasting light —
To meet good Benezet and Ley.”*

BOOK REVIEW

Vera’s Will Shows a better life’s in birth

By Susan Schnur

The main challenge in reviewing the wonderful new novel, “Vera’s Will” (Hamilton Stone Editions, 2015), by Shelley Ettinger is to not issue spoiler alerts before every paragraph. This is difficult because “Vera’s Will” is not only well-written and often poetic, but is also a great page-turner.

Readers will want to know what happens, not only to Randy Steiner, the present-day narrator and Vera Resnick Steiner, Randy’s grandmother, but to all the others populating the three generations

of immigrant and U.S.-born characters.

Both Vera and Randy are Jewish, and that becomes an integral part of character development. Ettinger shows great dexterity in weaving the experiences and political activism of early 20th century immigrants into the fabric of the story.

Vera and Randy are also lesbians. How this plays out in their lives is likewise told in the context of the political struggles of the last century. And this is what ultimately gives “Vera’s Will” its optimistic tone.

Yes, there are setbacks and personal heartache, and that includes love. As Vera

struggles with hateful anti-lesbian bigotry, she confides to her African-American sister-in-law Dorothy — with whom she has maintained a close friendship, writing regularly for years — that Vera is unable to change this “affliction.”

Ettinger describes, in Vera’s voice, the correspondence that followed yet another blow from Vera’s ignorant family: “The only thing I can think is that I still want what I can never have. I wish I could ac-



cept that I just don’t fit, stop wishing for, well you know, Dee.”

The character, Dorothy, responds: “The reason you can’t is simple. You’re human. You want love. If that went away, if you gave up, you’d hardly be alive at all.” That takes place in 1954.

The novel’s optimism comes from showing, through the vehicle of fiction, the victories of political struggle and how they impact individuals. This is Randy’s coming-out journey, a journey that began before she was born. Life is lived in the past and present — and in preparing for the future because “a better life is in birth.”

To organize and fight for a world without bigotry, violence and exploitation, to struggle for socialism, is how to be fully human and a path to living a good life.

Thank you, Shelley Ettinger, for this great novel that will hopefully reach many hands. It will certainly touch many hearts.

“Vera’s Will” received a starred review from the Library Journal at tinyurl.com/pmklexg. More information about the book is available at shelleyettinger.com; order from online booksellers.

Susan Schnur’s roots are Jewish, planted in the same part of Eastern Europe as Vera’s family.



Human trafficking law promotes reproductive injustice

By Sue Davis

The Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015 (S. 178) was considered a bipartisan bill when it was introduced in the U.S. Senate on Jan. 13. When an anti-abortion provision was discovered on March 10, protests from human rights, civil rights, legal, reproductive health and women’s groups erupted.

If passed, the bill would discriminate against victims by denying essential medical coverage for abortions, and it could expand the Hyde Amendment far beyond its current scope. The amendment currently restricts federal Medicaid funding for abortions for poor women.

In a survey of 67 sex trafficking victims conducted by Laura J. Lederer for the Department of State, more than half reported having had abortions. About three out of four women said they’d had at least one pregnancy while being trafficked, and 20

percent reported five or more. Amnesty International estimates 60 percent of women and girls who come across the border report being raped. (fusion.net, March 11)

The stated goal of the JVT, which passed the House earlier this year, is to go beyond earlier bills in addressing child abuse and protections for victims of trafficking. One provision is funding programs for victims by using fines charged to traffickers. That sounds innocent enough. But by including fees and fines, not just taxpayer funds restricted by Hyde, pro-choice groups fear that could entrench the Hyde amendment and lead to many more abortion restrictions in the future. (thinkprogress.org, March 11)

Reproductive health care activists have fought to repeal Hyde since it was passed in 1976. It was the first major national attack on access to abortion, which unfairly discriminates against those who have the least financial resources — women of col-

or, young, immigrant, disabled, rural and transgender women.

Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas) denies tacking on the provision in a sneak attack on abortion rights. Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas, executive director of the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, told fusion.net the provision is “inexcusable.” “Even more so given the high rates of sexual abuse experienced by Latina survivors. Women, not politicians, should make our own decisions when it comes to pregnancy.”

Kate Stewart of Advocates for Youth said, “Human trafficking survivors, overwhelmingly young women, deserve to have all reproductive health options available to them. This move by politicians is an underhanded attempt to harm women most in need.” (thinkprogress.org)

To sign a reproductive justice petition condemning the provision, visit allaboveall.org.

Palestinian activist Rasmea Odeh to appeal unjust conviction

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

Federal Judge Gershwin Drain sentenced Palestinian American activist and community leader Rasmea Odeh to 18 months in prison, revoking her citizenship and imposing \$1,100 in fines at a March 12 hearing in Detroit.

Odeh remains out on bond pending the outcome of an appeal of her conviction on immigration fraud charges. The Chicago resident was accused of not revealing on her Immigration and Naturalization Services application that she was tried by a military tribunal and sent to prison by the Israeli regime some 45 years ago.

The courtroom was packed with another overflow area filled as well where her supporters anxiously awaited outside the outcome of the sentencing hearing. As part of its argument for a harsh sentence, government prosecutors presented clips of a documentary on the Palestine liberation struggle during the late 1960s and early 1970s where veteran activists talked about their efforts to free Palestine.

Consequently, the hearing was highly politicized along with the trial. Government prosecutors claimed that Odeh was a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, one of the key organizations in the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Drain said the sentencing guidelines mandated a 15 to 21 month sentence in such a conviction, rejecting the government's request for a five to seven year prison term. He also said that Odeh violated his direction not to talk about the plight of Palestinians on the stand or that she was tortured by the Israeli military while held in detention.

Odeh testified during the trial in late 2014 that she misunderstood the questions on the immigration forms. Experts also testified that she suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder resulting from her brutal treatment by the Israeli authorities.

The judge acknowledged the flood of letters he received in support of Odeh from across the country representing people from all walks of life, Drain noted. Nonetheless, he said on the bench that Rasmea had been a "terrorist" but had changed her life.

"She was a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. I think she was involved in some terrorist activity," Drain declared before sentencing.

The judge said that the case was about lying and not politics. Despite this, he allowed the prosecution to introduce a smear campaign against the PFLP into testimony.

Life under racist occupation

Odeh was allowed to make a statement to the court before sentencing. She chronicled her life in conjunction with the history of Palestine under Israeli occupation.

She stressed that her family was expelled from their home in 1948, when the state of Israel was established. They lived

GAZA Symbol of Resistance

A book of articles from WW,
edited by Joyce Chediak

Here is the story of the most heroic resistance since 1948 to unrelenting Israeli oppression and violence designed to drive Palestinians from their homeland.

gazaresistancebook.com — Ramsey Clark
Available at major online bookstores

in a refugee camp, forcing her father to leave to come to the United States during the early 1950s, breaking up the family.

They were again displaced in 1967 with the expansion of the occupation into the West Bank and Gaza. Forced into exile by these circumstances, she eventually came to the U.S. to take care of her father, who was suffering from cancer during the 1990s.

She was arrested and charged in the bombing of a supermarket in 1969. She was forced to confess as a result of torture, spending a decade in the Israeli prison system. Odeh was released in 1979 in a prisoner exchange between the PFLP and Tel Aviv.

After coming to the U.S. in 1995, she became a leading figure in the Palestinian and Middle Eastern immigrant community in Chicago, assisting thousands of Arab women to adjust to life in the U.S.. Many of these women attended the trial and the March 12 sentencing hearing.

At the time of her 2013 arrest by federal agents, Odeh administered the daily operations at the Arab American Action Network in Chicago. Supporters with the Rasmea Defense Committee, which hosted an Arab American Museum fundraiser on March 11 in suburban Dearborn outside Detroit, described her as a well-loved leader and mentor.

Appealing the conviction

Judge Drain agreed to extend the bond which obtained Odeh's release after her conviction last year. She spent five weeks in U.S. government detention and testified at the sentencing hearing that the



Rasmea Odeh thanks supporters at court house, March 12.

WW PHOTO: ABAYOMI AZIKIWE

experience was horrible, and "I thought I was going to die."

Defense attorney Michael Deutsch said the conviction will be appealed. It will take at least five months for a determination to be made as to whether the appeals court accepts the filing.

Prior to sentencing, Deutsch argued that oppressed peoples throughout history have resisted injustice and occupation. He evoked the struggles of African people under Portuguese colonialism and Southern African apartheid.

Deutsch mentioned that the late Nelson Mandela, the former African National Congress leader and the first Black president of a nonracial South Africa, was once considered a "terrorist," but was actually a freedom fighter.

Supporters of Odeh rallied outside the federal court after the sentencing. She told over 100 people: "I'm positive we will win the appeal. With you it will be easy, and we will win!"

Hatem Abudayyeh, executive director of the Arab American Action Network and a leading member of the Rasmea Defense Committee, said of the government actions: "We've never believed that this is an immigration case. The immigration charge was nothing but a pretext to attack a leading member of the Palestinian community, one who has represented the cause of Palestinian liberation from Israeli occupation, colonialism, racism and apartheid for almost 50 years."

Cheryl LaBash, a Workers World contributing editor, assisted in this report.

RASMEA ODEH'S

International Working Women's Day message

Excerpts from a statement issued on March 8, four days before Odeh's conviction in Detroit.

I'm so grateful for the support, care, and endless love you have shown me, and for so much of the time and effort you have dedicated to the case since my arrest in October 2013. Your support gives me important strength, and continues to allow me the resilience to achieve justice.

I want to tell you that your activism and creative support changed the negative reaction against me, especially when I was in the detention center. Your intensive phone calls and demonstrations, and the support letters that I received from you, played a great role in breaking the isolation and providing a warm feeling in my heart and mind in the freezing cell. With your support, I was able to face all of the challenges and difficulties that threatened my life and my morale!

You are all coming together today to celebrate International Women's Day, to support me and my legal team, and to stand up for justice. Justice is not a gift or handout that we wait for someone to give to us! Justice is a human right that must be fought for and won. The way women all over the world are fighting for their rights and the rights of their people. I especially want to recognize the dozens of Palestinian women who are political prisoners in Israeli jails. I lived that for 10 years, and I know how difficult it is. They need your support and your solidarity. Together we will achieve justice and freedom and make positive change and a better future for our communities all over the country and the world.

Challenges are not frightening, as long as we believe in our rights and the principles that we stand for, have confidence in ourselves, and rise up together. We become stronger and more effective. Then we can achieve miracles.



Palestinian women protest at Qalandiya checkpoint, Occupied West Bank, March 8.

When I was incarcerated, I learned from my attorneys that people and families in Illinois and other states pledged their businesses and properties to get me released on bail. When the government refused this and asked for cash, a special one of you donated his life savings to get me released. All this incredible support from my closest friends is extremely appreciated! You are helping me to stand up strongly, whether during the

incarceration as I defeated the sealed and frozen cell, or as I continue to fight for my freedom with my brilliant legal team.

Unite against racism

We all need to continue to work hard to eliminate the disease of racism and national oppression against Palestinians, Arabs, Muslims, Black people, Latinos/as, and other people of color in this country.

On a daily basis, we watch the hate crimes that kill innocent people, just like those three beautiful Arab-American, Muslim young people in North Carolina. Or the institutional police violence that killed Michael Brown in Ferguson, Eric Garner in New York, and so many other mostly Black men in the U.S. These tragedies and others reflect the extreme hate that some in this country have for Arabs, Muslims, African Americans, and others. The hate is not just from individuals, though. It is encouraged and supported in many political and media circles that we know are sometimes responsible for the way our communities are treated! They make us out into criminals to support their political agendas, so we should recognize this, and unite to resist it.

We all stand for social justice and liberation in this country the same way my people have dedicated their lives to the liberation of Palestine. □

On March 8 worldwide Women resist all forms of oppression

By Kathy Durkin

Struggle. Solidarity. Capitalist governments omit those words in their glossy, superficial receptions on International Women's Day, March 8. However, those words convey the very essence of this important day for working and oppressed women worldwide.

International Women's Day was founded by European socialists in 1910; they sought to build global solidarity among women and promote their struggles for equal rights. It has also been marked by marches, rallies and sit-ins against war, occupations, political repression, corporate globalization and more.

For more than a century, women have marched for jobs, livable wages, humane working conditions and unionization. Migrant workers decry abusive treatment and racism. Women from oppressed and Indigenous nations demand their rights. Women worldwide call for a halt to all forms of gender discrimination and anti-woman violence.

A United Nations analysis issued on March 9 revealed a stunning global statistic: One of every three women has experienced domestic and/or sexual abuse or harassment. If that study included violence against women caused by imperialist wars and occupying armies, repressive governments and their police or corporate exploiters, the figures would be much, much higher.

Below are some of this year's highlights.

Palestinians resist

Palestinian women's determination and strength are lauded worldwide. On March 7, 1,000 of these courageous women marched to Qalandiya checkpoint, which separates Jerusalem and Ramallah. They protested Israel's brutal occupation of their lands on the West Bank and the siege of Gaza. Freeing their imprisoned sisters was another demand.

Some 500 Palestinians and Jewish supporters marched to meet them from the Israeli side. But Israeli soldiers blocked the two groups from uniting. As women neared the gates, some trying to hang Palestinian flags, soldiers violently attacked them, firing rubber bullets, tear gas and stun grenades. Thirty women were injured, 10 hospitalized.

As Israel confiscates more land in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, our sisters will keep on resisting. They deserve world support.

From Turkey to Indonesia

In Istanbul and other cities in Turkey, women protested gender inequality, domestic abuse, sexual assaults and the rising rate of femicide. Activists denounced President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has publicly stated that women are not equals of men. Women say the government's anti-woman policies are causing erosion of their rights, growing inequities and disregard of violence against women.

Bangladeshi garment workers, labor activists and other women rallied in Dhaka on Women's Day for comprehensive equal rights, equitable wages, safer working conditions and legal protections from sexist violence.

Nearly two years ago, the world watched in horror when 1,135 garment workers were killed and 2,500 injured in the Rana Plaza building collapse. To date, 5,000 disabled workers or relatives of the deceased have received merely 40 percent of compensation due them by super-rich global brands. The struggle goes on.

Gabriela, the Philippines' mass women's organization, coordinated demonstrations in Manila and countrywide to demand that President Benigno Aquino III resign. They want an end to his pro-

U.S., pro-corporate policies, and call for economic relief for one-fourth of the population who are impoverished.

Moreover, activists object to growing U.S. intervention, which brings more soldiers, leading to increased sexual exploitation of women.

Promoting the rights of the 300,000 women migrant workers in Hong Kong was the focus of the Women's Day demonstrations there.

Indonesian women in Jakarta marched for legal protections and livable wages for the country's 2.5 million domestic workers, often abused and unpaid.

Africa

On the African continent, many commemorations took place.

In the Northwest, Saharawi women demonstrated against global companies that aid Morocco's 40-year occupation of their homeland and plunder of their resources in the Western Sahara.

In the South, an event in Zimbabwe highlighted governmental measures designed to advance gender equality and women's rights and to make up for past inequities. Constitutional amendments in 2013 were intended to help achieve these goals in education, employment and participation in government.

A lecture was held in Limpopo on March 12 in memory of Albertina Sisulu, anti-apartheid and African National Congress leader and spouse of 25-year-imprisoned hero, Walter Sisulu. Zingiswa Losi, Congress of South African Trade Union second deputy president, called for recognizing women's role in the struggle, their equality with men and the need for unity within the union. She emphasized, "Comrade Albertina Sisulu participated in the struggle as an equal to all other leaders, both men and women of her time." (sabc.co.za, March 13)

Caribbean, Latin America

"Women, strengthening our leadership to change our lives" was the theme of an International Women's Day meeting organized by women in Canaan, Haiti — a city largely inhabited by people displaced by the 2010 earthquake.

"We want to organize ourselves to tell Haitian authorities that we are entitled to basic services. We cannot accept the marginalization which is inflicted upon us in Canaan," stressed Erlande Brutus, representative of the city's women's groups.

Saniece Little Phat, coordinator of Solidarite Fanm Lakay, explained Haiti's unique women's movement. Geraldine Sainville, a leader of Group for Repatriates and Refugees (GARR), encouraged women's participation to strengthen their leadership, which "is the first step in being heard." They emphasized building solidarity, too.

Socialist Cuba is a beacon of progress for women. The Federation of Cuban Women, founded in 1960 by Vilma Espin, has been instrumental in this process. International Women's Day is observed everywhere. The Revolution's achievements are profound. Notably, Cuba ranks fourth in the world in the number of women parliamentarians with 48.9 percent and second in the Americas to Bolivia with 53.1 percent.

In Mexico City, mothers of Ayotzinapa's 43 "disappeared" students led a march on March 8. At an event the previous day, they pledged to keep searching for their children and asked supporters to maintain unity and keep organizing, as "the Ayotzinapa movement will not stop."

In Tegucigalpa, women rallied for Gladys Lanza, coordinator of the Honduran Women's Committee for Peace "Visita-



Left to right: Madrid, Spain; Kurdish women march in France; and mothers of Ayotzinapa's 43 "disappeared" students in Mexico City.

cion Padilla," and an anti-imperialist and former union leader. Juan Orlando Hernandez's U.S.-backed coup government wrongly prosecuted her for slander for defending a woman whom a government ally sexually harassed. Women's and human rights' organizations and the popular resistance say, "Drop the charges!" against Lanza, 73, who faces imprisonment, reported Lucy Pagoada, of Honduras Resistance USA.

Defend Venezuela

Despite heightened U.S. sanctions and coup threats, the Bolivarian government keeps advancing women's roles. International Women's Day was the final day of an 8,000-strong National Women's Congress in Caracas. Women's defense of the revolutionary process was highlighted. Rural and urban workers, mothers, youth, militia members and Indigenous women attended; they agreed on proposals to further empower women.

The National Women's Union was founded, which President Nicolás Maduro told participants would have its own

"structures" throughout society. He agreed on initiatives for women's progress, including that they comprise half of the National Assembly.

Already, women receive six months' paid maternity leave, free health care and food subsidies. Mothers are eligible for full rent coverage and are protected from eviction.

Fight austerity

European demonstrators deplored austerity layoffs and service cuts imposed by capitalist bankers and their own governments. Women marched for equal rights, political representation, jobs, pay equity, reproductive justice and an end to anti-woman assaults. Australia's actions opposed domestic violence, too.

Women's oppression is rooted in unequal class society. Corporate globalization, imperialist exploitation and oppression of nationalities further affect women. It is time to intensify the struggle against horrific capitalism — in the spirit of International Women's Day, as its socialist founders intended. □

New York City

Women's inspiring role in Cuban revolution



WW PHOTO: ANNE PRUDEN

Maritzel González from Federation of Cuban Women, March 14.

By Dolores Cox
New York City

Annually each March during Women's History Month, the Federation of Cuban Women sends a delegation to New York City to attend the United Nations Commission on the Rights of Women. A forum was held March 14 honoring the federation hosted by the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization at Fordham University Law School.

The federation was established in 1960 as the national collective to drive, secure and protect the rights of women in the new revolutionary Cuban society. The federation continues to fight for women's liberation, social justice and equality for women, including ending violence against women. In 1965, Cuba declared that abortion is a woman's right. The rights of women are protected by Cuba's constitution and laws. In 1997, the federation acquired nongovernmental organization status at the U.N.

The federation played a central role in Cuba's effort to eliminate illiteracy. It has been involved in developing Cuba's outstanding medical care infrastructure and voluntary health missions worldwide. The women were also instrumental in mobilizing support for the Cuban 5 political prisoners held in the U.S.

Cuba's revolutionary ideals have resulted in women being involved in economic and cultural decision making. Equal rights have resulted in increased employment opportunities in all occupations and professions. Women are well represented in politics and government in the Parliament. The Cuban Communist Party decides the norms of the economic and polit-

ical revolution, with women participating fully in the party.

At the March 14 forum the Cuban women discussed the challenges they face and their accomplishments. In responding to questions regarding President Obama's recent announcement of normalizing relations with Cuba, the Cubans commented that the U.S. still has the same objectives and intentions as in the past, which are to destroy the Cuban revolution; but now by different tactics, they stated. The U.S. sees Cuba as its backyard and has always interfered in Cuba's affairs.

Even now with state to state U.S.-Cuba discussions underway, Cuba is subject to automatic sanctions from the U.S. list of countries unilaterally deemed to support "terrorism." The more than 50 year commercial, economic, financial and commercial blockade is still in place. The women pointed out that President Obama doesn't need congressional approval to end many aspects of the blockade.

Regarding U.S. sanctions against Venezuela, the women replied that Cuba takes a protective stance toward President Maduro and the Bolivarian Revolution. Since 1959, there has been unity with Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa.

The Federation of Cuban Women state they support the U.S. re-establishing diplomatic relations with Cuba, but only on an equal basis with mutual respect, not subject to conditions set by the U.S.

Cuba will maintain its principles, ideals and autonomy. The revolution is not negotiable, the women emphasized. They are committed to continue working toward a world of peace, justice and equality. □

What's behind the Likud-Republican alliance

By Bill Dores

The world is awash in oil and gas. Prices are plummeting. The Keystone XL pipeline is dead. Dreams of trillion-dollar returns on investments in fracking and tar sands are fading away. Oil tycoon Harry Hamm of Continental Resources lost \$9.6 billion in six months. Schlumberger, the biggest oilfield services company, cut 9,000 jobs in January.

These facts, not fear of a nonexistent bomb program, are why Republican lawmakers are desperate to sabotage nuclear negotiations between the U.S. and Iran. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who murdered 514 Palestinian children in Gaza last summer, is eager to help. The racist state of Israel wants to exploit offshore gas fields that belong by rights to the Palestinian people.

The headline of an opinion piece in the March 13 Washington Post declared the real agenda of the Republicans and Netanyahu's Likud party: "War with Iran Is Our Best Option." It was written by Joshua Muravchik of the Journal of International Security Affairs. The Washington Post is basically the house organ of the Pentagon.

On March 9, 47 Republican senators signed an "open letter to the leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran." They apparently didn't know or couldn't spell the

names of Iran's top jurist Ali Khamenei or elected Prime Minister Hassan Rouhani. The arrogant and condescending letter lectured Iran's leaders about the U.S. Constitution. But it violated that Constitution when it told them the GOP would undercut any agreement between the U.S. and Iranian governments.

The letter's signers, such as John McCain, Lindsay Graham and Rand Paul, are the worst racists, sexists and labor-haters in the Senate multimillionaires' club. They also get the biggest handouts from the oil and gas industry. Energy firms gave Tom Cotton, who wrote the letter, \$540,000 to run for the Senate. McCain has gotten more oil money in his career than any other legislator.

Six days earlier, all 299 Republican lawmakers packed the Capitol to hear Netanyahu denounce the U.S.-Iran negotiations. House Speaker John Boehner invited the Israeli prime minister to address Congress without first telling President Barack Obama. Obama, Vice President Joe Biden and the Congressional Black Caucus boycotted the session. The Republicans not only showed up, they gave the Butcher of Gaza 29 standing ovations.

Most Democratic leaders, including Senate Minority leader Harry Reid, also showed up to cheer Netanyahu. The Democrats are not a party of peace. Last

summer, when Israel's war machine rained white phosphorous, flêchette bombs, fuel-air explosives, dense inert metal explosives and other U.S.-made weapons of mass destruction on the imprisoned Palestinians of Gaza, the White House and congressional Democrats were happy to pay for it. The White House allowed the racist state to replenish its artillery shells from the Pentagon.

War with Iran is a different matter, though. Gaza's children don't have missiles that can hit U.S. aircraft carriers. Democrats also know that when they start a war, Republicans win the next election.

U.S. waged war to restrict oil supply

Both sides of the congressional aisle supported the Bush regime's 2003 invasion of Iraq. That war destroyed Iraq's state-owned oil industry. Oil went from \$30 to \$147 a barrel in four years. Oil company profits rose nearly 300 percent. The war made profitable the boom in hydraulic fracturing — fracking — that has made the U.S. the world's largest oil and gas producer.

But capitalists will do what capitalists do. When profits and prices are booming, they produce "more than the market can bear." The third quarter of 2008 saw a global capitalist economic

crisis and oil prices began to fall.

Like the Bush regime before it, the Obama administration lashed out at independent producers. The 2011 bombing of Libya, U.S.-funded wars in Syria and Ukraine, destabilization in Venezuela and sanctions on Iran and Russia slowed the decline, but couldn't reverse it.

Last September, Russia and China broke ground on what is planned to be the world's biggest pipeline. It will supply China with Siberian natural gas.

The U.S. is using falling oil prices as an economic wrecking ball against the economies of Iran, Russia, Venezuela, Ecuador and many other countries. The GOP is more belligerent, but both capitalist parties seek to maintain U.S. monopoly capital's rapidly eroding position at the center of the world economy. This can only be done by more and more destructive wars.

At the same time, the racist war against the most oppressed sectors of the working class here is producing more police killings of Black and Brown youth.

Only a mass and militant people's movement can stop the bosses' offensive. On March 21, the 12th anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, anti-war protests will be taking place in several cities. Stop the wars of predatory monopoly capitalism, at home and abroad! □

Ukraine

Is the U.S. preparing a new war?

By Greg Butterfield

As activists, students and workers gather in Washington, D.C., for the "Spring Rising" anti-war mobilization March 18 to 21, many are probably unaware that 300 U.S. troops arrived in Ukraine this month, with another 300 expected to join them shortly.

The U.S. soldiers are stationed at the Yavoriv Training Area in Lviv, near the Polish border in western Ukraine. Their mission, according to the Pentagon, is to train divisions of the Ukrainian National Guard.

But their presence also establishes a provocative U.S. military "footprint" in this key agricultural and industrial country on the Russian Federation's western border.

The first open and public U.S. military presence on Ukrainian soil comes amid a civil war raging in former southeastern Ukraine, now the independent Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics, also called Novorossiya. It's accompanied by unprecedented NATO war games and military buildup threatening Russia.

All this despite a ceasefire agreement, negotiated by Russia, Germany and France, which went into effect Feb. 15. As happened during previous ceasefires, the U.S.-backed government in Kiev routinely violates the terms and is using the "breathing spell" to rebuild its military forces to assault the embattled Donbass mining region.

"Before this week is up, we'll be deploying a battalion minus ... to the Ukraine to train Ukrainian forces for the fight that's taking place," the U.S.'s

173rd Airborne Brigade commander, Michael Foster, told a meeting of the Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank in Washington on March 3. (Global Research, March 3)

U.S. forces are scheduled to stay six months. But discussions are underway about "how to increase the duration and the scope of the training mission," Foster said, echoing remarks made in January by former Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Derek Chollet.

Meanwhile, in London, Prime Minister David Cameron told a House of Commons committee on Feb. 24 that up to 75 British soldiers would be sent to Ukraine to develop "an infantry training program with Ukraine to improve the durability of their forces," the BBC reported.

"Today's announcement builds upon the work that we have already undertaken through NATO and bilaterally," added British Defense Secretary Michael Fallon. (Sputnik, Feb. 24)

Poland, too, plans to send military instructors to train Ukrainian soldiers, Boguslaw Pacek, advisor to the country's defense minister, told Reuters on Feb. 26.

NATO provocations

Throughout Europe, the Baltic and Central Asian states bordering Russia, and even on U.S. soil, an unprecedented volume of provocative war games are underway, all clearly threatening Moscow.

Why? Because the real aim of the U.S. power play in Ukraine is to establish NATO military power on Russia's border, with the aim of fomenting re-

gime change aimed at breaking up the Russian Federation into pliable, profitable pieces that can be easily dominated by Wall Street and its European junior partners.

That's why since day one of the Ukrainian crisis, Democrats, Republicans and the corporate media have united to turn reality on its head by portraying Russia as the aggressor — a Big Lie to cover up their own role.

In February, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko inked an arms agreement with the United Arab Emirates, a U.S. client state that frequently serves as a hub to funnel advanced weaponry to right-wing regimes and counterrevolutionary movements supported by Washington.

On March 11, Obama approved \$75 million in additional "nonlethal" military aid to Ukraine, including secure communications equipment, drones, counter-mortar radars, night-vision goggles, and military ambulances, to be delivered in the next six to nine

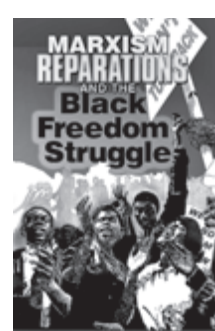
months. He also approved the provision of 30 armored and 200 unarmored Humvees, Sputnik reported.

The same day, the U.S.-dominated International Monetary Fund approved a new \$17.5 billion financial aid package for Ukraine in exchange for additional painful austerity measures. (RT.com, March 11) This is meant to ensure that Kiev will remain solvent enough to continue its proxy war in the coming months, despite its collapsing economy.

Whether or not the U.S. openly arms Ukraine with offensive weapons, or continues to do so covertly and through third countries, is far less significant than the blatant war moves of U.S. and NATO forces in the region.

Every day, it grows more urgent for the anti-war forces in the U.S. to stand up and demand: Stop the weapons, stop sanctions, stop provocations against Russia! Stand with the people of Donetsk and Lugansk resisting austerity and genocide! □

MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle



GRAPHIC BY SAHU BARRON

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WORKERS WORLD

editorial

Oklahoma University and society racism

When a vile, racist video by members of the Oklahoma University chapter of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon (SAE) fraternity was put online, strong demonstrations by students, teachers, community members and even the school football team expressed outrage. Many on Twitter condemned the message. The video showed fraternity members on a chartered bus singing a song filled with the “N” word and promoting the lynchings of African Americans.

The video was exposed to the public by the student activist group, “Unheard OU.” This group organized the first demonstrations against the fraternity.

In the face of the protests over this video, the university administration shut down the fraternity and expelled two students who were clearly leading this “song.” That action is, of course, altogether right and proper.

But these racists found defenders. Several pundits have declared this to be a “free speech” issue. And members and alumni of the SAE fraternity have hired Stephen Jones, the same lawyer who defended Timothy McVeigh, who in 1995 set off the bomb in Oklahoma City that killed 168 people and wounded 680 others. Jones has also worked for Richard Nixon and Donald Rumsfeld, as well as three Oklahoma Republican governors. (oklahomacity.suntimes.com, March 14)

Jones is already threatening a lawsuit “to protect the due process rights, the first amendment rights and the 14th Amendment rights of the fraternity members.” Of course, this is nonsense. This racist video was nothing but an open threat of extreme violence against the Black community, backed up by hundreds of years of “legal” KKK lynchings. Racists should have no right to free speech; therefore, the Oklahoma video footage should be deemed a hate crime, punishable with jail time for those promoting racist violence.

Record of racist, anti-woman assaults

The SAE fraternity has a sordid history mired in racism. It was the only fraternity founded in the pre-Civil War South. When the war broke out, SAE had 400 members, 369 of whom joined and fought in the Confederate army. After the war, the fraternity moved north, but retained its segregationist roots. Several members of the Dartmouth College SAE chapter, for example, still refer to the Civil War as the “War of Northern Aggression.”

In 1982, the University of Cincinnati suspended SAE for organizing a racist party on Dr. Martin Luther King’s birthday, with a flyer asking people to “bring such things as a canceled welfare check.”

In 1992, the Texas A&M chapter hosted a “Jungle Fever” party, which included “black face, grass skirts and ‘slave hunts.’” (insidehighered.com, March 10).

In 2000, SAE members at Oglethorpe University threw bottles at Black athletes and yelled racist slurs at them during a cross country meet. In 2002, SAE members at Syracuse University wore black face out to local bars. In 2009, the Valdosta State chapter flew a Confederate flag on its front lawn. In 2014, 15 SAE members broke into a Jewish fraternity at the University of Arizona and physically attacked its members while shouting an-

ti-Semitic slurs.

On Feb. 25, SAE members at the University of Washington shouted from their frat house windows racial slurs and made obscene gestures at a Black Lives Matter march that was passing by.

Right after the Oklahoma University video was released, a Confederate flag was hung in a window of the OU SAE chapter house.

And there are reports that the racist song used at OU is identical to one used by the SAE chapters at Texas universities.

Sexism is also the operating mode for SAE. On some campuses, the fraternity’s initials have been translated as “Sexual Assault Expected.” There are reports that the Oklahoma SAE racist song was used at the SAE fraternity house at Dartmouth with the lyrics changed to promote violence against women.

An analysis by Bloomberg News service in 2013 found that SAE is the leading fraternity in deaths caused by a culture of heavy drinking, drug use, sexual assault and hazing. (Bloomberg.com, Dec. 30, 2013)

Yet the fraternity remains “in good standing” at some 200 college campuses.

Smash white supremacy

Racism is not just a group of white thugs — be they in fraternities like SAE or in police departments — chanting bigoted slurs and threats. It is an ideology embedded in the fabric, the heart, the very bowels of the capitalist social and economic system. It is the grotesque and obscene conception that Black people’s lives don’t matter compared to whites.

This ideology was spawned to spur slavers to capture African men, women and children, chain them like animals, ship them across the ocean in the most heinous conditions, and then force them with unbelievable brutality to labor in the “New World.” Why? It was all done to amass vast wealth among plantation masters, factory owners, banks, insurance companies and other sectors of the ruling class, wealth that they horde to the present day.

Racism was used to “motivate” the beatings, the rapes and the murders by slave owners, the overseers and the slave catchers. And it was and is fashioned by the political and economic elite of this country into laws and customs, into Jim Crow and segregation, into courts, prisons and of course into the indoctrination of the police occupying forces right down to the present day, from Los Angeles to Staten Island, N.Y., to Ferguson, Mo.

Racism remains the main tool by the “master class” to maintain and protect its rotting system of exploitation and oppression. It is no accident that fraternities like Sigma Alpha Epsilon, incubators for the future financial and corporate elite, ground their members in racist bigotry so they can more effectively take up the reins of power in the future.

But they face strong and determined opposition from the African-American community and from many progressive supporters. And that opposition is part of a social movement that is destined to smash racist ideology in all its forms along with the social and the capitalist economic system that sustains it. □



From left, Ana Elisa Osorio, on National Committee of the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV); PSUV Vice President Rodrigo Cabezas, Berta Joubert-Ceci, name unknown, John Catalinotto.

Call for massive day of solidarity April 19 — Venezuela!

By John Catalinotto
Mexico City

A broad spectrum of political parties meeting in Mexico City called for solidarity actions with Venezuela against U.S. attacks, including a day of international solidarity on April 19.

The 132 political parties from 40 countries and five continents meeting at the international seminar, “The Parties and a New Society,” taking place in Mexico City on March 12-14, held a news conference to state their solidarity with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela following the March 9 threats made by President Barack Obama.

The parties said they “energetically reject” Obama’s “Executive Decree” calling Venezuela “an extraordinary and unusual threat” to the national security of the U.S. They said instead that it was U.S. imperialist aggressions that threatened the national security and sovereignty of Latin America and the Caribbean and to all the peoples of the world, “in its desperate search to maintain its declining hegemony and to control the strategic resources of the planet.”

They added that they “stand in militant solidarity with the Venezuelan people and express our firmest and unbounded support for the Bolivarian and Chavista government that is headed by President Nicolás Maduro.”

A Workers World Party representative at the seminar, Berta Joubert-Ceci,

spoke at the news conference, saying, “It is a great travesty when Obama calls Venezuela a threat, when within the USA every 28 hours a Black person is being killed by governmental or private repressive forces. People in the USA whose lives were saved when they received heating oil from Venezuela, know very well who their enemy is. It is not Venezuela. It is their own government who denies full access to basic human needs. They and thousands of people in the USA stand in solidarity with the Bolivarian government and will do whatever is necessary to expose the USA’s lies and defend Venezuela!”

Call for solidarity actions April 19

Prensa Latina reports that on March 16, the São Paulo Forum working group, which often meets following the seminar, and which gathers Latin American political parties, joined the condemnation and called for the following actions:

1. An anti-imperialist summit of Latin American popular organizations and movements in Managua, Nicaragua, on March 20 and 21.

2. A “World Great Day of Solidarity with Venezuela and Condemnation of U.S. Intervention” on April 19 with the slogan “Peoples of the World United on Venezuela.”

3. An extraordinary and extended meeting on April 13 in Caracas to express their support for President Nicolás Maduro and the Venezuelan people. □

Solidarity with Black Lives Matter movement

At the seminar, the WWP representatives raised a resolution to send “a message of condolence to the families of the African-American and Latino/a victims of police killings in the United States” and “declaring our solidarity with the just struggle of the Black Lives Matter movement for civil and human rights and against impunity” for the police. The resolution received unanimous support from the 132 parties. □

Koreans in U.S. tell Obama ‘Normalize relations with the DPRK’

By Deirdre Griswold

Just this past Dec. 18, the lone opposition party with seats in the South Korean parliament was banned by the right-wing government there and its leaders arrested. Shortly after that, the self-proclaimed “democratic” regime in Seoul deported a Korean-American woman who had the courage to publicly say some kind words about the government in the north of the divided peninsula, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

The repression in south Korea has been so severe that the voices of those seeking detente with the north are seldom heard. This has also been true here in the United

States, which has militarily occupied the southern half of Korea for 70 years, relying on brutal military dictatorships for much of that time.

But the voice of progressive opposition has finally broken through here, in the form of a full-page ad purchased by Korean Americans in the March 14 edition of the New York Times. It calls on President Barack Obama to abandon Washington’s hostility to the north and open a dialogue toward normalizing relations with the DPRK, similar to his new tack with regard to socialist Cuba.

The “Open Letter to President Obama” calls on him to carry through on promises he made to Korean Americans during

U.S. delegates report: Four years of Syrian resistance to imperialist takeover

By Sara Flounders and Lamont Lilly

U.S. efforts to overturn the government of Syria have now extended into a fifth year. It is increasingly clear that thousands of predictions reported in the corporate media by Western politicians, think tanks, diplomats and generals of a quick overturn and easy destruction of Syrian sovereignty have been overly optimistic, imperialist dreams. But four years of sabotage, bombings, assassinations and a mercenary invasion of more than 20,000 fighters recruited from over 60 countries have spread great ruin and loss of life.

The U.S. State Department has once again made its arrogant demand that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad must step down. This demand confirms U.S. imperialism's determination to overthrow the elected Syrian government. Washington intends to impose the chaos of feuding mercenaries and fanatical militias as seen today in Libya and Iraq.

A delegation from the International Action Center headed by former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark traveled to Syria in late February to present a different message.

Visits to hospitals, centers for displaced families and meetings with religious leaders, community organizations and government officials conveyed the IAC's determination to resist the orchestrated efforts of U.S. imperialism acting through its proxies in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan and Israel.

The IAC's opportunity to again visit Syria came following its participation in a packed and well-organized meeting of the International Forum for Justice in Palestine, held in Beirut on Feb. 22 and 23. The conference was initiated by Ma'an Bashour and the Arab International Centre for Communication and Solidarity and again confirmed the centrality of the burning, unresolved issue of Palestine in the region.

The solidarity delegation to Syria included Cynthia McKinney, former six-term member of the U.S. Congress; Lamont Lilly, of the youth organization FIST – Fight Imperialism, Stand Together; Eva Bartlett, from the Syrian Solidarity Movement; and Sara Flounders, IAC co-director.

The delegation traveled the rutted, mountainous, blacktop road from Beirut to Damascus to the Lebanon-Syria border. On the Syrian side, this road was a modern, 6-lane highway, a reminder of

Syria's high level of infrastructure development. Even after four years of war, this is still a well-maintained highway. Due to sanctions against Syria, hundreds of trucks attempting deliveries stretched for miles on both sides of the border.

Compared to two years ago, when the IAC visited Damascus, this year we didn't hear the constant thud of incoming rockets from mercenary forces shelling the city. These military forces have been pushed back from their encirclement of the capital. Syrian military units, checkpoints, sandbags, blast walls and concrete blocks were now less pervasive. Markets were full of people and held more produce.

A visit to Damascus' largest hospital showed the cumulative impact of four years of devastation. At the University Hospital, where children with amputated limbs receive treatments in the ICU, many children had been brought in maimed from explosives and with shrapnel wounds from mortars and rockets fired on Damascus by terrorist forces.

At a visit to a center for displaced families at a former school, we met with university students, who provide sports, crafts, tutoring and mentoring programs. Medical care, free food and education programs are provided by the centers. But conditions are desperately overcrowded. Each homeless family, often of 6 to 10 people, is allocated a single classroom as housing. Almost half the population has been displaced by the terror tactics of mercenary forces.

A Mosaic of cultures

A theme in almost every discussion was Syria's heritage as a diverse, rich mosaic of religious and cultural traditions. Sectarian divisions and intolerance are consciously opposed. One can see the determination to oppose the rule of foreign-funded forces.

A visit with Syria's Grand Mufti Ahmad Badr Al-Din Hassoun and Syrian Greek Orthodox Bishop Luca al-Khoury reflected the centuries of religious harmony that previously existed in Syria.

Mufti Hassoun stressed the need for reconciliation. He described to the visitors the assassination three years ago of his 22-year-old son, Saria, who "had never carried a weapon in his life." Saria was gunned down after leaving his university. At the funeral, Mufti Hassoun declared he forgave the gunmen and called on them to lay down their weapons and rejoin Syria. He described his Greek Ortho-

dox counterpart, Bishop Luca al-Khoury, as his cousin and brother.

Bishop Khoury described the ease with which he received a visa to the U.S., while Mufti Hassoun was denied a visa, although both are religious leaders. "Why do they differentiate between us?" said Khoury. "It's part of the project to separate Christians and Muslims here. It's over gas pipelines which are supposed to run through Syrian territory. This will only happen if there is a weak Syrian state.

"If the Syrian government would agree to give a monopoly to France to extract gas from Syria, then you would find [President François] Hollande visiting Syria the next day. If the Syrian government would give the monopoly to [the United States of] America, [President Barack] Obama would declare President al-Assad as the legitimate ruler of the Syrian people."

"Turkey is warring on us," Khoury continued, "with financial support from Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and political support from America, Europe and Britain. Drones cross our borders daily, providing coordinates for the terrorists as to where to strike."

Both religious leaders declared, as did many others in Syria, that the only solution is an international effort to stop the flow of arms: "If the American government would like to find a solution for the Syrian crisis, they could go to the Security Council and issue a resolution under Chapter 7 for a total ban of weapons from Turkey to terrorists in Syria. In one week this would be over."

Syria's accomplishments

Political and media adviser to President al-Assad, Dr. Bouthaina Shaaban, described the problem of stopping the weapons and mercenaries flooding into the country: "With external support and financing, and an over 800-kilometer border with Turkey, it's very difficult to stop the flow of terrorists.

"Syria was formerly one of the fastest developing countries in the world," Shaaban continued, "and one of the safest. We have free education and health care. We did not know poverty; we grew our food and produced our own clothing. At universities, 55 percent of the students were women. In whose interest is it to destroy this heritage? Who is the beneficiary of this?"

Shaaban described her time as a Fulbright scholar at Duke University in

Durham, N.C., and later as professor at Eastern Michigan University: "I always wanted to be a bridge between Syria and Western cultures. At the beginning of the crisis, they tried to buy me. They urged me to 'come to a civilized place,'" she said. "We have baths which are over 1,000 years old and still functioning. I studied Shelley: They didn't have baths 800 years ago in England. We did. We were having baths and coffee. tinyurl.com/m4mpqjx

The delegation headed by Ramsey Clark also had an important opportunity to meet with Abu Ahmad Fuad, deputy general secretary of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and Abu Sami Marwan, of the Political Bureau of the PFLP, and hear of the ongoing developments in Palestine and the region.

According to a Feb. 25 statement released by the PFLP after the meeting, "The PFLP leaders discussed the nature of the U.S./Zionist aggression against the people of the region, their intervention in Syria and the attempts of colonial powers to impose their hegemony by force and military aggression, through division of the land and people, and by pushing the region into sectarian or religious conflict.

"This U.S. policy is nothing new." The Front noted that the colonial powers have waged an ongoing war against the Arab people to prevent any real progress for the region on the road to liberation, self-determination and an end to Zionist occupation.

"The U.S. delegation discussed the urgent need for building ongoing solidarity with Palestine in the United States and internationally," continued the release, "in particular to confront the deep involvement of the United States — militarily, politically and financially — in the crimes of the occupier, and to end its attacks on Syria, Iraq and the people of the entire region.

"The solidarity delegates noted that there is a colonial scheme to divide and repartition the region according to the interests of major corporations and imperial powers, targeting the resources of the people, sometimes through blatant political interference in the affairs of the region and other times through wars and military attacks on states and peoples.

"The two sides emphasized the importance of communication between the Palestinian Arab left and progressive and democratic forces in the United States to confront Zionism and imperialism in the U.S. and in Palestine alike."

Ramsey Clark described the aim of the visit: "To find more opportunities for dialogue and coordination among the Syrian and American people. We saw culture and credibility in Syria and we appreciate the struggle of this people. We will disallow them to shift Syria into Iraq or Libya."

Cynthia McKinney, former member at the U.S. Congress, said that she appreciated "Syria's heroic stance, as people and leadership, in its war against U.S. imperialism. The Syrian people are exceptional in their capability of resistance as the acts during four years have failed to achieve their goals." □

WAR WITHOUT VICTORY

by Sara Flounders

"By revealing the underbelly of the empire, Flounders sheds insight on how to stand up to the imperialist war machine and, in so doing, save ourselves and humanity."

– Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, Available online and at bookstores. PentagonAchillesHeel.com

his first election campaign, when he indicated he would seek a normalization of relations with the north. It describes their keen "disappointment" that instead Obama has tied his stance on Korea to his so-called Asia Pivot Policy, aimed at China.

"In terms of your policy toward North Korea," the ad says, "sanctions and embargoes were tightened; dangerous military maneuvers were held seasonally right at the doorsteps of North Korea, including flights of nuclear bombers near North Korean air space. Almost every channel of contact with North Koreans, official or otherwise, has been closed."

Recalling that the 1950-53 Korean War ended with only an armistice agreement, it adds that "a peace treaty and diplomatic normalization between the U.S. and the DPRK would allow the DPRK to reduce its defense spending and move on with its economic agenda."

The ad contains statistics showing that "liberation from external threats, most of them coming from the U.S., is needed in order to restore the economy and shift resources from defense spending to fulfilling human needs." It points out that while the north spends about 30 percent of its GDP on national defense, it has only half the population and a much smaller economy than the south, which spends four times as much money on its military.

This explains, says the ad, why the DPRK "is in such a tight economic bind, and why loosening it requires liberation from external threats, sanctions and embargoes, most of them imposed by the U.S. over the past 70 long years!"

In spite of this, the ad says, "The DPRK has sustained its national integrity, and its model socialist political and economic system has emerged intact, after 70 years."

It reminds Obama that in his speech on

Cuba he stated that isolation, sanctions, embargo and military pressure failed to achieve regime change. "This is the case in North Korea as well as Cuba. ... This success of North Korea is not achieved only through military strength, rather, it depends on the willingness and determination of the North Korean people to bear and accept continued economic hardships."

The ad is signed by a large number of Korean-American individuals and organizations. It is notable that it appears at a time when the demonization of the DPRK by the U.S. government and the imperialist media, including Hollywood, has reached scandalous proportions.

In south Korea, the signers of this ad could face prosecution under the anti-communist National Security Law. They have spoken out bravely and need support from the progressive movement here, in the belly of the beast. □



Presidente Nicolás Maduro de Venezuela en Clausura de Congreso de mujeres, 8 de marzo.

¡A Defender a Venezuela y poner fin a las sanciones!

El Presidente Nicolás Maduro de Venezuela merece los mayores elogios y el apoyo por rechazar firmemente la última ronda de presiones de Estados Unidos diseñada para socavar y derrocar a la Revolución Bolivariana.

El 9 de marzo, la administración Obama anunció más sanciones contra Venezuela, calificando al país y a sus dirigentes como “una extraordinaria amenaza a la seguridad nacional de Estados Unidos”.

Esta declaración no es sólo una increíble y crasa mentira. También es la clase de lenguaje que permite que las ramas del gobierno estadounidense aumenten sus esfuerzos subversivos contra Venezuela de modos muy materiales —a través del sabotaje económico, operaciones clandestinas e incluso movimientos militares.

El presidente Maduro respondió a este ataque, diciendo: “El Presidente Barack Obama, representando a la élite imperialista de Estados Unidos, personalmente ha decidido asumir la tarea de derrotar a mi gobierno e intervenir en Venezuela para controlarla”. Lo calificó como un “error colosal” y una “arrogancia imperialista”, felicitando a los funcionarios

venezolanos que enfrentan las sanciones de Estados Unidos como “héroes”. “Los felicito”, dijo el ex conductor y líder sindical, agregando que “es un honor” ser incluidos en la lista de sanciones de Estados Unidos.

¿Qué es la Revolución Bolivariana de todos modos? Es un valiente esfuerzo por las masas venezolanas y sus dirigentes de romper con la dominación del capital estadounidense y reorientar su país hacia la construcción de cooperación con otras naciones en la región. Es una lucha para superar la terrible herencia de siglos de explotación, saqueo de la tierra y el exterminio de los pueblos originarios que caracteriza a todas las Américas. Se trata de un movimiento para unir a todos aquellas/os que han sido oprimidos y explotados para establecer nuevas relaciones basadas en la solidaridad y el respeto mutuo.

Fue la elección de Hugo Chávez por cuatro períodos como Presidente, con apoyo de las masas para sus planes revolucionarios, que abrió la puerta para que Venezuela asumiera este papel. Durante décadas, este país rico en petróleo había estado bajo la dominación de los EUA. Estaba marcadamente dividido entre

una clase pequeña, muy privilegiada de funcionarios bien pagados haciendo la licitación de los monopolios imperialistas petroleros y millones de pobres urbanos y rurales, que carecían de alimentos, escuelas, atención médica y participación política.

Chávez mismo se había reforzado en su oposición a los gobiernos entreguistas cuando, como oficial en el ejército, fue llamado a sofocar disturbios sobre alimentos en Caracas en febrero de 1989. El pueblo venezolano, incluso aquellos en la ciudad capital, se moría de hambre.

Hoy en día, el subsidio del Gobierno Bolivariano sobre los precios de los alimentos, para que todo el mundo se alimente, es criticado en los medios de comunicación imperialistas como una fuente de la crisis económica. No, son las sanciones estadounidenses y el precio decreciente del petróleo en el mercado mundial que han creado dificultades para el pueblo venezolano —esto y el sabotaje deliberado de la economía por elementos contrarrevolucionarios quienes quieren volver a los terribles viejos días cuando la clase rica dominaba las masas despóticamente. Esta élite ha recibido todo tipo de apoyo clan-

destino de las agencias de inteligencia de Estados Unidos.

La acusación de Maduro que EUA ha estado tratando de derrocar a los gobiernos progresistas bolivarianos no es ninguna fantasía, a pesar de los constantes desmentidos estadounidenses y los reportes por los medios corporativos. Cualquiera interesada/o en los detalles los puede encontrar fácilmente en venezuelaanalysis.com, que publica entrevistas extensas en línea con expertos como el ex-oficial de la CIA Philip Agee, que describe detalladamente cómo tal subversión trabaja.

Por ejemplo, la USAID —conocida durante mucho tiempo como un frente de la CIA— ha desarrollado elaborados planes de cambio de régimen a través de su Oficina de Transición Alternativa. Envolviendo siempre sus esfuerzos contrarrevolucionarios sangrientos en términos como “la promoción de paz y democracia”, estos documentos, disponibles a través de Wikileaks, confirman lo que Maduro y otros venezolanos dicen.

¡Ahora es el momento! ¡A la calle para apoyar a la Revolución Bolivariana de Venezuela!

Puerto Rico: Siete generales rumbo al Caribe

Por Jesús Dávila

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico, 10 de marzo de 2015 (NCM) — La anunciada llegada de siete generales —entre ellos los jefes de los comandos Sur y Norte — para las maniobras militares apenas días después del decreto del Presidente Barack Obama de una emergencia nacional en Estados Unidos por la crisis de Venezuela, obstaculiza el propósito de que Puerto Rico pase desapercibido en la próxima Cumbre de las Américas.

Tampoco es de mucha ayuda para la estabilidad colonial que las prácticas militares, en que se ensayarán respuestas a una catástrofe que afecte las operaciones del Estado y la continuidad del gobierno, coincida con un ambiente cargado de protestas y que la Casa Blanca mantenga en su portal cibernético un pedido para que se inicie el proceso de destitución del Gobernador, Alejandro García Padilla, que ha recibido ya decenas de miles de mensajes de respaldo.

Lo más que el gobierno autonomista logró de los militares es que durante la maniobra no se practique una operación de “rescate” del Gobernador con un helicóptero que le sacaría del Palacio de Santa Catalina, de acuerdo al informe obtenido de una fuente de alto nivel.

La confirmación de la presencia de los siete generales que llegarán desde EEUU la dio la coronel Marta Carcana, quien indicó que ese número podría aumentar. Además de los jefes del Comando Norte y el del Comando Sur, estará presente el general que comanda la Escuela de Logística y se pondrá a prueba el sistema de comandante único (“dual status com-

mander”) de todas las fuerzas militares, que corresponderá al general de brigada Isabelo Rivera.

Según el informe de la jefa de la Guardia Nacional, tropas de varios puntos de EEUU practicarán en un escenario de un terremoto y un tsunami —por supuesto, imaginario — que causa miles de víctimas, daños a la infraestructura y afectaría la continuidad de las operaciones gubernamentales. Cuando se le preguntó si se ensayaría también qué hacer sobre la continuidad del Gobierno, contestó, con la típica circunspección militar, un lacónico “Sí”.

La respuesta de la jefa castrense causó cierta sorpresa en el Palacio de Santa Catalina, donde un portavoz había dicho primero que se buscaban alternativas para que la participación del Gobernador García Padilla fuese lo más discreta posible. Poco después cambió la versión para garantizar que la maniobra se haría “a menor escala” y “no va ningún evento simulado” relativo al “orden constitucional” de sucesión.

Mientras tanto, la fuente que reveló que lo que se hizo fue descartar el “rescate” del Gobernador, dijo que ese evento se sustituiría por la participación oportuna de un funcionario de menor rango.

En círculos diplomáticos no ha escapado el hecho de que la maniobra se produzca en momentos en que la Casa Blanca ha endurecido su asedio al gobierno venezolano y que en el pasado Puerto Rico fue utilizado para apoyar intervenciones en países latinoamericanos. Estos problemas potenciales de seguridad regional dan mayor relevancia a la pregunta de por cuánto tiempo foros internacio-

nales como la Organización de Estados Americanos podrán evadir el tema de la condición colonial de esta pequeña nación isleña, ubicada en el noreste del Mar Caribe y equidistante de Guantánamo y de Caracas.

Los mandos militares y el Departamento de Seguridad de la Patria (Homeland Security) insisten que será una maniobra para medir la preparación ante un desastre natural, aunque en la rueda de prensa se explicó que la práctica sería de utilidad también con respecto a eventos de “terrorismo”. Medios noticiosos que se han caracterizado por tendencias oficialistas han aportado la publicación recortada de la información de la maniobra o no publicarla y punto.

De todas formas, en los ambientes sociales y políticos se va desarrollando un simulacro de otro tipo de tsunami. Crece la oposición a la subida de los impuestos y en poco más de una semana, decenas de miles han participado en manifestaciones de protesta, mientras el Gobierno insiste en implantar un impuesto al valor añadido de 16 por ciento, con la característica de que estaría prohibido que se le notifique a la gente la cantidad que ha pagado por el mismo, además de otra medida para que el impuesto al petróleo suba de forma automática si la gente no consume suficiente gasolina para llegar a los recaudos que se esperan.

Al cobro secreto de un impuesto y el aumento automático de otro se suma también una medida pendiente para que se entregue al Banco Gubernamental de Fomento la potestad para designar “cualquier individuo” como administrador de emergencia de agencias, corporaciones y

municipios por un período de hasta dos años, con poderes plenos y sin siquiera tener que pasar por la nominación del Gobernador y confirmación del Senado.

A la planteada renuncia a poderes constitucionales por parte del propio Gobierno se suma la petición que fue enviada al portal cibernético de la Casa Blanca por un residente de la ciudad de Guaynabo a mediados de febrero pasado. La petición, para que la Casa Blanca y el Congreso inicien el proceso de residencia con el propósito de destituir al Gobernador había pasado sin pena ni gloria, hasta que el domingo se convirtió en “viral” y en apenas 48 horas acumuló más de 50.000 firmas electrónicas de respaldo.

Desde los años treinta del siglo pasado, no se producían desde Puerto Rico gestiones intensas para pedir a Washington la destitución del Gobernador. En aquellos tiempos, el presidente de EEUU designaba a los gobernadores de Puerto Rico.

García Padilla, por su parte, responde a los opositores tildándolos de ignorantes, “evasores” y personas de “mentes insularizadas”, mientras no contesta el llamado a negociar del cónclave de prelados de las iglesias.

El ambiente general, ciertamente, no es el mismo de los tiempos de auge del autonomismo bajo la figura carismática de Luis Muñoz Marín, quien fue instrumental para las políticas estadounidenses en la región, desde la promoción de la democracia en Venezuela hasta el envío de aviones de la Guardia Nacional para el derrocamiento del gobierno constitucional de Guatemala. □