



Cleveland, May 23. WW PHOTO: SUSAN SCHNUR

## Activists say 'better, but not enough'

# LA struggle wins wage increase

By John Parker  
 Los Angeles Workers Assembly

All the pressure created by organizations and individual activists fighting for a \$15 minimum wage, starting with the heroic fast food and Walmart workers demanding \$15 and a union, has forced the City Council of Los Angeles to offer what is so far the largest increase in the minimum wage in the country.

However, the increase to \$15 per hour, stretched out into segments of about \$1 per year, starting at \$10 in 2016 and ending in 2020 with \$15, then remains stagnant until 2022, when cost of living increases begin. This falls far short of the immediate need to end poverty and starvation wages, long overdue for an increase.

For the past 35 years, real wages have gone down while profits have soared, leaving the greatest gap in history between rich and poor. Even as the Black Lives Matter movement has highlighted the unequal treatment of people of color regarding law enforcement, here in Los Angeles and around the country people of color have suffered most from the growing gap in incomes. According to a study commissioned by the city of Los Angeles last year, 83 percent of workers making less than \$13.25 an hour in the city are people of color; the majority are women.

However, all workers would benefit from an increase in the minimum wage, since all wages are depressed by the low level of the minimum wage.

Which is why this fight is about more than gaining a dollar per year. It's about continuing to build a movement that can win a real livable wage — so that working and poor people can live. What's lost in the corporate media debates about the necessity for or against a minimum wage is the fact that this is about survival for the nearly half of the workforce in the country who receive low wages.

This compromise proposal by the City Council, which is up for a second vote in June, sidesteps the overwhelming demand for \$15 now.

This is why some labor leaders have already expressed dissatisfaction with this gradual timeline set by elected leaders for raising base wages, as reported in an article in the Los Angeles Times on May 19. This is also why unions like the United Teachers of Los Angeles and the

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March in Philadelphia after cops riot and beat protesters, May 21. Page 6.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE



'Stop killing Black people,' Coney Island beach protest, Brooklyn, N.Y., May 25.

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Since 1959, Workers World has reported on and supported the struggles of the working class, with special attention to movements led by people of African descent, Latino/a, Asian, Arab and Indigenous communities.

This newspaper focuses on the fight for justice for immigrants, who face low wages, harassment, detentions and deportations.

Our pages promote the Fight for \$15/hour minimum wage for immigrants, people with disabilities, youth and all low-wage workers, including women, the majority earners of \$7.25 per hour or less.

Workers World reports on the growing Black Lives Matter Movement, which protests the epidemic of racist police and vigilante violence and mass incarceration throughout the U.S.

The newspaper presents anti-imperialist news and analysis, siding with workers and oppressed people

abroad who face capitalist globalization's low wages and austerity, as well as U.S./NATO drones, wars and occupations.

Workers World boldly states that socialism is the only way to guarantee jobs, food, housing and medical care for the majority of people — and end the rule of the super-rich 1% and their racism, sexism, anti-LGBTQ bigotry, the gouging of workers and war.

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

We fight every kind of oppression. Racism, sexism,

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

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

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## Washington State

# Tens of thousands strike for school funding

By Jim McMahan  
Seattle

Some 6,000 Seattle school teachers held a one-day strike on May 19, defying the Washington State Legislature. Along with student allies, they marched to demand adequate school funding.

After a noon rally, the Seattle Education Association was joined by teachers from Issaquah and Mercer Island as they marched from Seattle Center to downtown and back again.

The action was part of statewide “rolling walkouts.” Washington Education Association President Kim Mead said over half of its 85,000 members had walked

out so far in April and May, with more scheduled.

Across the country, teachers’ unions and parents are fighting for funding for education as state politicians impose budget cuts while slashing taxes for the rich. With the impoverishment of students, families and communities, public schools are now seen as society’s basic safety net.

Several years ago the WEA and other public education supporters brought a lawsuit that forced the state Supreme Court to mandate increased funding for K-12 public education. This included re-resources for students and compensation for teachers.

The state Legislature, filled with lackeys

of big business, has failed to do this. Instead, their agenda is to divest from public education while maintaining tax breaks for Boeing, Microsoft and Amazon. So the Legislature has now been found in contempt of court. (In contempt of students, teachers and communities as well!)

But the Supreme Court has yet to issue any penalty. So the teachers and their allies are now ratcheting up the pressure. In addition, an initiative the teachers got on the ballot mandating lower class sizes was approved by the voters. But the state Legislature hasn’t done anything to lower the very high class sizes either.

The Seattle walkout began at 8 a.m. with picketing at many schools and

marching past other schools. Dozens of strikers carried “Black Students’ Lives Matter” signs. Jesse Hagopian, a teacher at Garfield High School, told KIRO-TV: “It’s simply outrageous that the state Legislature has given itself an 11 percent pay raise while offering a measly 1.8 percent for teachers.” The teachers’ pay ranks 42nd in the country. School paraprofessionals protested having to live on public assistance and being homeless.

On May 22, 1,000 teachers and students marched in Kennewick in eastern Washington when teachers struck there. Spokane teachers in the state’s second-largest district have voted to strike on May 27. Teachers’ unions in 64 districts have voted to walk out. □

# Milwaukee schools under attack

By Workers World Milwaukee Bureau

The “Opportunity Schools Partnership Program” was introduced to the Wisconsin Legislature’s Joint Finance Committee on May 19. With only an hour for committee members to read the plan, “debate” began at about 8:15 p.m., with an affirmative vote at 2 a.m. No public comment was allowed at the hearing. The plan has been sent to the Senate and Assembly, with the goal of being included in the 2015-17 state budget.

The Milwaukee Teacher Education Association said: “This motion is one of the most extreme collections of anti-public education legislation the state has seen. It includes the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) takeover plan, special needs vouchers, and statewide expansion of vouchers. ... Legislators intensified their war against Wisconsin’s public schools ..., using the budget to avoid a democratic process, dismantle public education and attack some of the most vulnerable students in our state.” (mtea.weac.org, May 20)

Modeled after similar austerity legislation and policies in cities with large communities of color, such as Detroit and Philadelphia, the Milwaukee plan would take over so-called “failing” schools in the Milwaukee Public School system and hand them over to capitalist corporations to operate.

The OSPP would be run by a commissioner to be appointed by Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele, a leading capitalist in the Wisconsin Democrat-

ic Party. The commissioner would have parallel authority with the elected MPS School Board and would be accountable only to the county executive.

### Racist attack on public education

The schools listed as potential targets — 55 public schools — have predominantly Black or Latino/a student populations and are in parts of the city devastated by decades of deindustrialization and lack of social-safety nets. All MPS workers at schools taken over would be fired and forced to reapply for their jobs. They would have to waive their right to be represented by a union to be considered for rehire. (fightbacknews.org, May 20)

Gov. Scott Walker’s proposed 2015-17 budget includes numerous other attacks on public education, including the proposed elimination of Chapter 220, the only educational program in Milwaukee designed to reduce racial segregation in public schools and improve equal opportunity for oppressed students.

This latest attack on MPS is part of a decades’ long war by Wall Street on public education in Milwaukee targeted specifically at Black and Brown communities and unions. This industrial city was the first major urban center in the United States used as a laboratory for “school choice.” In 1990 Milwaukee became the first city with a “voucher” program for parents to use toward tuition at a private or religious school. The top Wisconsin court gave its OK to this program.

Since their implementation in Mil-

waukee, “voucher” schools have taken more than \$1 billion in taxpayer money away from public schools, with minimal public accountability. The defunding of public schools has resulted in larger class sizes, less individual attention to students and less access to art, music, libraries and physical education in the city’s public schools.

### Fightback emerging

Milwaukee Public School system has suffered the severest budget cuts in its history since Wall Street-servant Walker became governor in 2010. Not only has it lost funding of hundreds of millions of dollars, it’s been forced to lay off hundreds of teachers and close several schools.

Higher education in Wisconsin has suffered the most cuts in its history during this period as well.

A mass people’s fightback is emerging, centered in Milwaukee, that is demanding the OSPP be taken out of the state budget. The MTEA, Wisconsin Jobs Now and student groups like Youth Empowered in the Struggle, all members of the Schools and Communities United coalition, are leading the fight against the latest austerity proposal.

A school defense rally will take place May 27 at Auer Avenue Elementary School. The event is called “Auer Community Is Not Your Colony.” Participants,



PHOTO: YES

Members of Youth Empowered in the Struggle (YES) fight takeover of Milwaukee schools by Wall Street.

including parents, students, community and union members, plan to physically surround the school in solidarity with each other.

In a statement about the action, organizers say this effort “will be the first in a series of citywide actions to raise public awareness of what our schools and communities are facing, and how all of our communities can join in the fight to keep democratic control of our schools. OUR SCHOOLS, OUR SOLUTIONS! Join us!” (stopmpstakeover.com)

YES is supporting the May 27 Auer action and mobilizing for it citywide. It statement reads: “Wealthy right-wing politicians want to take away our public schools. Join us to defend Auer Avenue School (24th Street, just north of Burleigh). We will fight the takeover school by school!” (YESstudents on Facebook)

For more information, visit schoolsandcommunitiesunited.org and #DontMessWithMPS, #NoMPSTakeover. □

# Detroiters protest Chase banksters

By Kris Hamel  
Detroit

Protesters greeted banksters arriving at the JPMorgan Chase annual board of directors meeting on the morning of May 19 at downtown Detroit’s swanky Book Cadillac Hotel, where the gathering of thieves was held.

“Chase got bailed out! We got sold out!” and other angry chants took aim at Chase Bank and all the banks involved in the home foreclosure megacrisis. These foreclosures and evictions devastated Detroit’s neighborhoods. The crisis was caused by the deliberately racist, sexist, usurious subprime mortgages sold here and across the United States by Chase and other big financial institutions.

Protesters also indicted Chase as the leading holder of interest rate swaps worldwide, including the swaps that bankrupted the Detroit water department, causing the city’s mass water shutoffs.

City of Detroit retirees had their pensions and medical insurance slashed to pay debt service to the banks as part of Detroit’s municipal bankruptcy.

The Moratorium NOW! Coalition, which called the demonstration, says Chase has made trillions of dollars worldwide, robbing cities and whole countries through its interest rate swap swindles.

In Detroit, Chase and three other banks were given \$537 million out of the water department’s \$1.1 billion bond deal earmarked for infrastructure repairs in 2011-2012. Moratorium NOW! has continually

called the banks the real culprit behind the mass water shutoffs as well as the city’s mortgage and tax foreclosure crises.

The tax foreclosure of 20,000 to 25,000 occupied homes is scheduled for June 8. These seizures have been postponed twice due to community outrage and protests. An additional 25,000 water shutoffs are also slated.

Nasdaq, the second-largest stock exchange in the U.S., was the only media outlet to report on the demonstration. This voice of finance capital even quoted a Moratorium NOW! activist in their coverage of the Chase board meeting. The article was later reposted by the Wall Street Journal.

The “International Social Movements Gathering for Water and Affordable Hous-



WW PHOTO: KRIS HAMEL  
Detroit city retiree Bill Davis speaks out against Chase, May 19.

ing” will be held in Detroit from May 29 to 31. The event will be hosted by the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization and the Detroit People’s Water Board. See social-movementsgathering.info.

To get involved in the ongoing struggle against mass tax foreclosures and water shutoffs in Detroit, contact Moratorium NOW! at 313-680-5508 or visit moratorium-mi.org. □

## McDonald's workers push back

# Demand \$15 and a union

By G. Dunkel

Chanting “We work! We sweat! Put \$15 in our check!” as they marched behind a banner reading “McDonald’s: \$15 and union rights, not food stamps,” thousands of McDonald’s workers and their supporters marched on the fast food chain’s corporate headquarters in Oak Brook, Ill., on May 20.

They carried a petition signed by 1.4 million people supporting their demands, which they delivered to a McDonald’s representative.

A smaller demonstration took place the

next day when McDonald’s had its annual meeting in Oak Brook, west of Chicago.

Mary Kay Henry, president of the Service Employees International Union, which has financed many of the protests against McDonald’s, called on it to bargain and give its workers a bigger share of its profits.

The NAACP also supported this protest. Many of the workers engaged in the struggle are Black.

“Even when we get \$15 and a union, we will keep fighting,” said Henry. “It doesn’t matter to us [what union the workers join]. What matters to us is that these

workers win a union.” (Chicago Tribune, May 21)

McDonald’s, whose financial gains are lagging, has a new CEO, Steve Easterbrook, who wants to reinvigorate the company. He has announced a dollar-an-hour raise over the minimum wage — which varies from locality to locality — as well as benefit increases for the 90,000 workers the company directly employs.

But 80 percent of McDonald’s workers are employed by franchise owners, and they will not be getting this increase.

The SEIU is pursuing a legal strategy before the National Labor Relations

Board to get around this issue by declaring McDonald’s a “joint” employer with the franchisees.

McDonald’s workers are applying direct pressure on the company with numerous nationwide strikes, protests and occupations. In retaliation, the company has accused the SEIU of spending millions of dollars to injure its brand. (CNN Money, May 21)

McDonald’s wanted to use its wage hike to present itself as a progressive burger company, but the two days of militant protests in Oak Brook exposed its pretenses. □

## Victory in struggle to save Berkeley P.O.

By Judy Greenspan  
Berkeley, Calif.

The information booth is still standing. The occupation of the front of the Berkeley Main Post Office by “First They Came for the Homeless” continued into May. But the main battle to save this historic building was won on April 14. In an historic decision, a federal court dismissed a lawsuit filed by the Berkeley City Council and the National Trust for Historic Preservation — because the plaintiffs had already won.

Judge William Alsup ruled that the United States Postal Service “had to formally rescind its decision to relocate the post office.”

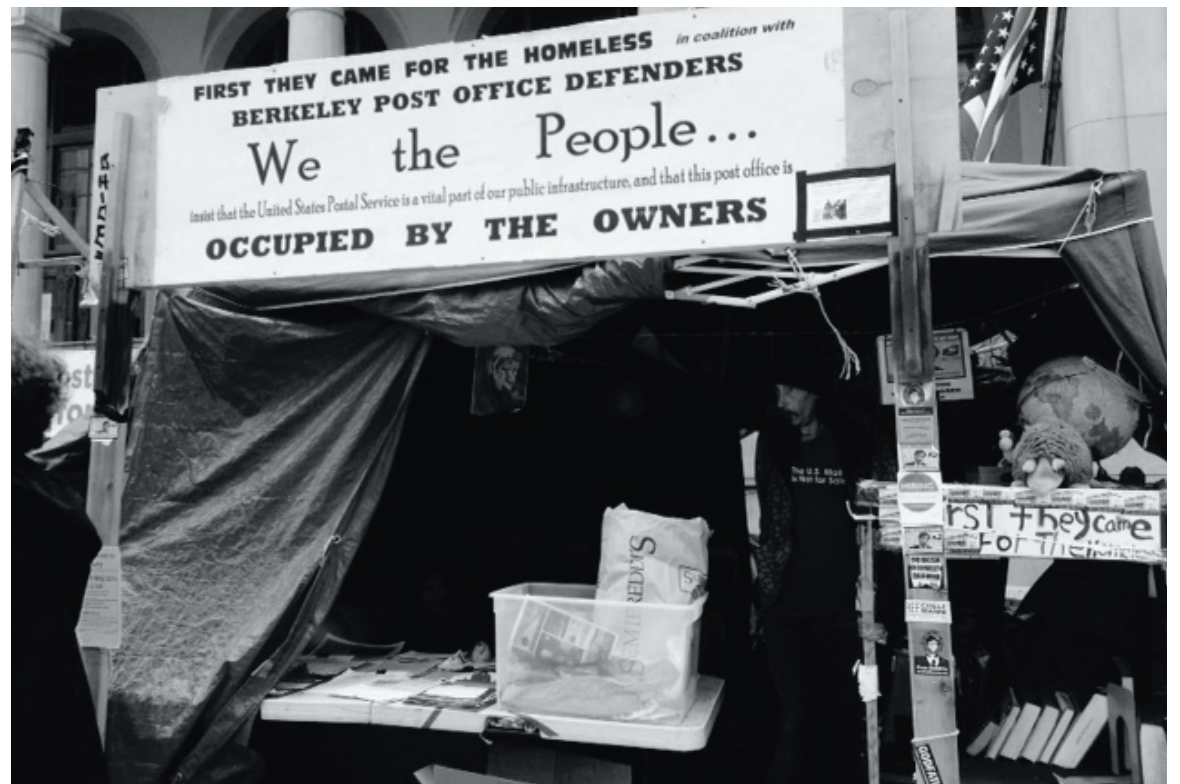
And to celebrate this victory, a large group of community activists, lawyers, postal workers and homeless advocates held a victory rally May 9 on the steps of the post office.

The struggle to save the Berkeley Main Post Office started the day that the USPS announced its plans to sell the building in the summer of 2012. The campaign took many forms, including rallying City Council support, outreach to the postal workers’ union and the Bay Area labor councils, setting up two encampments on the grounds of the building, filing a lawsuit, organizing rallies and posting YouTube sing-out videos.

According to Dave Welsh, a retired letter carrier who was very involved in the fight to save the post office, “Our victory is a result of nearly three years of intense political activity by the people of Berkeley, including two lengthy encampments. I think people have had enough of privatization. We all wanted to keep the post office as a public place. I hope this will be the beginning of many victories across the country.”

Susan Hammer, a shop steward of the American Postal Workers Union, thanked everyone for their hard work and talked about what this victory means for the Berkeley post office workers. Mike Zint, a leader of “First They Came for the Homeless” who has been part of the encampment, pointed out that this court decision is also a victory for the rights of homeless people.

As J.P. Massar of Occupy Oakland observed at the victory rally, “It takes a



Information booth at Post Office set up by homeless and union members.

WW PHOTO: JUDY GREENSPAN

great many people — with different skills and temperaments — to create resistance. From people willing to litigate to people willing to face arrest. From people who can write to people who can draw, to people who can sing. From people who can organize to people who can disrupt.”

He continued, “Not everyone is going to agree all the time. ... But if everyone fighting for the same thing can hold it together, then sometimes we can make progress. And we’ve done just that here!”

For more information, check out the Save the Post Office Facebook page. □

## Activists say ‘better, but not enough’ - LA struggle wins wage increase

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Electrical Workers union (UE), Local 1077, in addition to church groups including the Interfaith Communities United for Peace and Justice, had already endorsed a \$15 minimum wage ballot initiative introduced by the Los Angeles Workers Assembly and approved by the City Clerk last August. This is the campaign that forced the mayor to offer \$13.25 back in September.

Unlike the County Federation of Labor-led campaigns to compromise with the City Council, this initiative is required to be on the ballot or be immediately adopted by the City Council, if 62,000 signatures are collected. If the union initiative had concentrated on getting those signatures collected last year, it would have already been on the ballot and up for a vote, meaning that the final decision for a \$15 minimum wage would be decided by the people and not the politicians.

Given current inflation rates, \$15 would amount to less than \$14 per hour by 2020.

Why is it so important that a livable wage be implemented now, rather than years in the future? The \$15 wage demand did not come out of thin air. It is actually the minimum necessary for basic human needs in current dollars, according to a report sponsored by the AFL-CIO in 2013.

The city government knows this. In fact, the city of Los Angeles’ own Charter and Administrative Code back in 2009 stated that a livable wage at that time would be between \$11 to \$16 for airport workers not receiving health benefits.

Last September, out of a concern for business interests who threaten the loss of jobs, Mayor Eric Garcetti, responding to the ballot initiative, said that raising the wage to \$15 immediately would not be “responsible” and that a much slower approach was needed. He proposed \$13.25 by 2017.

Why are concerns about job losses only raised when workers want a raise? The fear of job loss never gets raised when

businesses are allowed tax incentives to ship jobs abroad. It’s never raised by the Chamber of Commerce or politicians when corporations execute massive layoffs to maximize already swollen profits.

A report last year by the Economic Policy Institute states that CEO compensation at the largest corporations has ballooned by 937 percent since 1978, when adjusted for inflation.

Appealing to the conscience of the mayor and City Council, the Raise the Wage Campaign and the County Federation of Labor got 100,000 signed petitions and on May 1 presented them to City Hall. Although these petitions helped force the City Council into action, this effort did not require any action by city officials. It just contained suggestions to the politicians, giving them the room to stretch out their proposal to 2020.

If the money and energy spent collecting those 100,000 suggestions had gone instead to getting the current ballot initiative for a \$15 minimum wage on the

ballot, the headlines today would probably be a little different and a little more exciting for working people.

This is why union rank-and-file members must continue to pressure their union leadership to support the \$15 Minimum Wage Ballot Initiative. It’s not too late; the initiative is still active and ready to win a real livable wage. The United Teachers of Los Angeles and the Electrical Workers union have provided a great example for unions in Los Angeles. In fact, a UE Local 1077 resolution of May 16 ends with the statement: “Furthermore be it resolved, UE Local 1077 Executive Board encourages all members that live inside the city limits of Los Angeles to sign and circulate petitions to get \$15/hr on the ballot.”

It’s good to see the city government responding to pressure from low-wage workers demanding \$15 and a union. But five more years of severe poverty, to be followed by more poverty, is not acceptable. □

## U.S. air and naval threats in Pacific

# Stop Pentagon war moves against China!

By Fred Goldstein

The Pentagon in the third week of May sent a U.S. Navy P-8A Poseidon surveillance plane near Fiery Cross Reef in the South China Sea — called the East Sea by Vietnam. The Fiery Reef is in the archipelago called the Spratly Islands by the U.S., the Nanchan Islands by China and the Truong Sa Islands by the Vietnamese.

As the U.S. surveillance plane approached the area of the reef, a Chinese radio dispatcher warned: “Foreign military aircraft, this is the Chinese Navy. You are approaching our military alert zone. Leave immediately!” (Los Angeles Times, May 21)

The U.S. military replied that the plane was over international waters, even though it was close to 12 miles from the reef. “I am a military aircraft conducting lawful activities,” added the U.S. plane. The Chinese warned the spy plane off eight times, to no avail.

The U.S. surveillance flight came less than a week after the USS Fort Worth, a Navy littoral combat ship designed for near-shore operations, passed close to the islands, where the Chinese are dredging sand and building up five reefs.

### Provocation part of planned campaign

These were deliberate provocations staged by the Pentagon as part of a planned campaign to escalate Washington’s military pressure on the People’s Republic of China. It is the implementation of the so-called “Asian pivot” announced by President Barack Obama.

According to a May 12 article in the British paper The Guardian, “Ash Carter, the defense secretary, had requested options that included sending ships and aircraft within 12 nautical miles of reefs that China has been building up in the disputed Spratly Islands. ...

“We are considering how to demonstrate freedom of navigation in an area that is critical to world trade,” [a] U.S. official said, speaking on condition of anonymity, adding that any options would

need to be approved by the White House.”

To unfold such a plan under the banner of defending “freedom of the seas” is ludicrous. For one thing, the U.S. is one of the few countries that has not signed the 1982 U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea, although it participated in drafting much of the language.

This is a reflection of the imperialist arrogance and presumptuous, great-power chauvinism of Washington. The Pentagon regards the Pacific as a “U.S. lake.” What else could explain the military challenging China’s right to build up islands a few hundred miles from its shore, when California is more than 6,000 miles away? What right has the U.S. ruling class to have its Navy conduct patrols in the Pacific region to “ensure freedom of the seas,” but not allow China to promote its interests in the region?

The answer is that it has no right, except the right based on military force by a power that has devastated Asia, beginning with the U.S. intervention in China during the Boxer Rebellion of 1898-1900 followed by the slaughter in the Philippines in 1898-1902 and colonization of that country — to say nothing of the atomic bombing of Japan in World War II, the brutal Korean War, the genocidal Vietnam war, the bombing of Laos and Cambodia, and the CIA-backed massacre of a million people in Indonesia in 1965-66.

### Council on Foreign Relations unveils new strategy

The Council on Foreign Relations is the think tank of a major section of the U.S. ruling class. Its members include former Defense secretaries, former heads of the State Department, generals, admirals, ruling-class military intellectuals, strategists, etc.

In April the CFR released a report titled “Revising U.S. Grand Strategy Toward China,” written by Robert D. Blackwill; Henry Kissinger, Senior Fellow for U.S. Foreign Policy; and Ashley J. Tellis, Senior Associate, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

gime barred them from walking across the DMZ and passing through Panmunjom, where the 1953 armistice had been signed ending combat in the Korean War.

South Korea instead sent a bus that ferried the delegation to a customs area connected to Kaesong Industrial Zone. South Korean police and army cars flanked the bus, joined by U.N. Joint Command officials outside the demarcation line.

They were then greeted by hundreds of south Korean women, who joined them in walking the one and a half miles to Imjingak Nuri Peace Park in Paju for a welcoming ceremony. Some 1,000 people sang, “Our Wish Is Unification.” (Hankyoreh, May 25)

The delegation promoted the need for a peace treaty, not just an armistice, to officially end the 1950-53 Korean War.

### U.S. divided Korea

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the U.S. military occupation of southern Korea at the end of World War II, which led to the division of the country. U.S. troops have remained there ever

*Continued on page 10*

**The goal of U.S. and European capitalism is to destroy the state enterprises in China, privatize them, undermine the Chinese Communist Party and politically enthrone the capitalist class.**

The core of the report is summarized as follows:

**Strengthen the U.S. military.** “Congress should remove sequestration caps and substantially increase the U.S. defense budget. ... Washington should intensify a consistent U.S. naval and air presence in the South and East China Seas” and “accelerate the U.S. ballistic-missile defense posture” in the Pacific.

**Expand Asian trade networks.** “U.S. grand strategy toward China will be seriously weakened without delivering on the TPP [Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement]. A major push by the White House for ratification should therefore begin immediately in the new Congress, including seeking trade promotion authority.”

**Create a technology-control regime.** “Washington should pay increased attention to limiting China’s access to advanced weaponry and military critical technologies.” The United States should encourage its allies “to develop a coordinated approach to constrict China’s access to all technologies, including dual use.”

**Implement effective cyber policies.** Washington should “impose costs on China that are in excess of the benefits it receives from its violations in cyberspace ... increase U.S. offensive cyber capabilities ... continue improving U.S. cyber defenses” and “pass relevant legislation in Congress, such as the Cyber Information Security Protection Act.”

**Reinforce Indo-Pacific partnerships.** “The United States cannot defend its interests in Asia without support from its allies” and “should build up the power-political capabilities of its friends and allies on China’s periphery.”

The report has the earmarks of the campaign that was devised to bring down the USSR. It is formulated by former Cold Warriors. It aims to promote military encirclement, which would divert economic resources and disrupt national economic planning. During the time of the USSR, the U.S. set up a wide blockade on technology transfer, with the aim of depriving the Soviet Union of modern economic tools for national development. And, of course, Washington fashioned global alliances such as NATO directed at the USSR. What is being proposed by the CFR is a milder version of the Cold War full-court press. But the goal is clearly to undermine the People’s Republic.

The problem for the imperialists is that China already has the technological and industrial capability to withstand such a campaign, should it be implemented. But the important point is to be aware of the aggressive thinking in the highest imperialist circles concerning China. And to note that the recent provocations are not just arbitrary or momentary. They are part of a longer-range plan.

### U.S. views Russia and China differently

Washington regards China as a hostile class power — unlike Russia, which is a fully capitalist country with imperialist investments and an upstart oligarchic ruling class. Created on the ruins of the nationalized economy of the Soviet Union, it is looking for its place in the sun

of imperialism. Wall Street and the Pentagon have a different idea. They want to take Russia over. Thus Russia is in conflict with the U.S. imperialists on many fronts, and the oppressed countries can and should take full advantage of this.

But China is more or less a compromise of socialism with capitalism. The socialist foundation must be defended against counterrevolution. The planning principle and state-owned enterprises dominate the economy, although it is riddled with capitalism and corruption. The Communist Party of China, the state banks and big state industries are combatting the current economic slowdown and trying to advance employment.

China is managing this slowdown while economic stagnation and recession are plaguing the capitalist world. This includes Russia, which is in the grip of an economic crisis, with its gross domestic product, sales and wages falling — unlike China, where wages are rising.

The goal of U.S. and European capitalism is to destroy the state enterprises in China, privatize them, undermine the Chinese Communist Party and politically enthrone the capitalist class.

Both China and Russia must be defended against imperialism when they are under attack. But no one should overlook the difference between a distorted socialist country with capitalist inroads and a state fully in the hands of an exploiting class.

### China ignores Vietnam’s sovereignty in island dispute

While the overriding threat in the Pacific right now is the provocation by U.S. imperialism against China, the fact that China is expanding into territory long claimed by Vietnam and within Vietnamese territorial waters must not be lost sight of.

China may have legitimate commercial and defense interests in building up the Spratly Islands/Truong Sa Islands. But it is incumbent upon China, both as a great power and as a country with claims to socialism, to defer to Vietnam and to work out territorial relations under conditions that are mutually acceptable and agreed upon.

It is one thing to expand military and commercial positions to be better able to protect against imperialist incursions. It is another thing to expand territorial claims far beyond any legally recognized boundaries and disregard the territorial claims of Vietnam, or the other nations that have claims on the islands, including the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei.

Acting in a high-handed manner with respect to small nations, especially with respect to a sister socialist country like Vietnam, both demeans China and increases the space for U.S. imperialism to create divisions and conflict.

Washington is fishing in troubled waters by sending its military into a contested region. It has no business in these waters. Its aggressive military and political maneuvers that foster division are meant to serve imperialist purposes and should be shunned by China first of all. □

## Women’s peace walk crosses DMZ

By Kathy Durkin

Thirty women peace activists from 15 countries crossed the demilitarized zone separating north and south Korea on May 24. They called for an official end to the Korean War, the signing of a peace treaty and the reunification of Korea.

On May 19, Women Cross DMZ was warmly greeted in Pyongyang, capital of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, where they held a symposium with north Korean women’s organizations and then visited a hospital, kindergarten and other facilities. They also visited the birthplace of Kim Il Sung, leader of the Korean Revolution, and joined an international women’s march for reunification and peace on May 23. A roadside sign read, “Let us reunify the divided country as soon as possible!”

The delegation had planned to walk across the DMZ into south Korea on May 24, the International Women’s Day for Peace and Disarmament. They started their walk, singing and carrying peace banners, together with north Korean women. However, the south Korean re-

## Cleveland double murder

# Killer cop walks free, scores of protesters arrested

By Susan Schnur  
Cleveland

After the complete acquittal on May 23 of Cleveland killer cop Michael Brelo, the streets of Cleveland were thick with anger. Brelo was the main triggerman in the brutal police slaughter of unarmed African-Americans Malissa Williams and Timothy Russell on Nov. 29, 2012.

Police fired at least 137 bullets into the Chevy that Russell was driving. Brelo fired 49 times, the most of all 13 police officers — none of them African American — involved in the killings. None of the others has even been charged for anything serious and only five for dereliction

of duty. During the police barrage, after firing 34 shots, Brelo reloaded his Glock 17 (a machine gun in pistol form), jumped on the hood of Russell's car and fired 15 more bullets into the lifeless bodies. Russell was hit a total of 23 times and Williams 24.

The verdict was issued in a nonjury trial by Judge John P. O'Donnell. Although at least two bullet wounds were proven to be caused by Brelo's gun, O'Donnell justified his ruling that Brelo was not guilty of voluntary manslaughter by saying it wasn't proven that Brelo's bullets killed the pair.

Brelo was even found not guilty of felonious assault, which he clearly committed. The judge claimed Brelo's actions were "constitutionally reasonable." The

most infuriating of O'Donnell's statements implied that Brelo was the victim, "sacrificed" because of the public outcry on police killings around the country. (indychannel.com, May 23)

It was an expected but still disgusting verdict. Hundreds of African-American youth and their anti-racist supporters demonstrated throughout the day. Fully equipped riot cops were deployed around downtown — which has been prettified while the neighborhoods of Cleveland are falling apart.

A sit-down protest against the verdict also took place outside the Quicken Loans Arena, site of an Eastern Conference Finals game between the Cleveland Cavaliers and Atlanta Hawks, on May 23.

By nightfall, orders were given to break up the protests as angry demonstrators were getting too close to the playgrounds of the well-to-do. Seventy-one people were arrested and taken to an abandoned school building. The closed Aviation High School, once a popular magnet school where young people were trained for aerospace careers, is now a symbol of neglect of Cleveland's youth.

Throughout the day, pictures of young Tamir Rice were displayed. Tamir was the 12-year-old African American who



WW PHOTO: SUSAN SCHNUR

Rally May 23 outside the Cudell Recreation Center, where 12-year-old Tamir Rice was killed by a cop six months ago.

was gunned down by a white cop outside a Cleveland recreation center in late November. It has been six months since Rice was fatally shot in cold blood, but his body has still not been released to the family for burial. The sheriff's department, which is investigating Rice's killing, claims they still have much work to do before presenting evidence to the prosecutor.

How much can there be to investigate? The videotape showing the horrifying scene of his being shot two seconds after the police car approached him is on social media for all to view.

No matter how long the investigation takes, the people of Cleveland are watching and waiting. They will not let go of their demands: Justice for Timothy and Malissa, justice for Tamir Rice and justice for Tanisha Anderson, killed by Cleveland police in front of her children.

Martha Grevatt contributed to this article.

## Mumia still in danger



municado at the Geisinger Medical Center, where he was shackled to his bed as he underwent medical tests and was being treated for a severe skin disorder. He was not allowed to communicate with family, lawyers or even doctors who had been advising him. On May 20, he was transferred back to the prison infirmary.

The transfer occurred after hundreds of supporters from around the world contacted prison and government officials by phone and email. In addition, a lawsuit was filed May 18 seeking an end to the violation of Abu-Jamal's constitutional right to contact his lawyer and family.

Jamal ended her report with a plea to "Free Mumia before they kill him."

— Report and photo by Joe Piette

Wadiya Jamal was finally allowed to visit her spouse, Mumia Abu-Jamal, on May 21. "He was in a wheelchair; his legs are swollen; his hands are blistered and dried up and they hurt," Jamal told supporters after leaving SCI Mahanoy prison in Frackville, Pa.

For a week starting May 12, the internationally known African-American journalist had been held virtually incom-

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## Police riot in Philadelphia,

By Betsey Piette  
Philadelphia

At the start of the Memorial Day weekend, established to honor veterans, Philadelphia police demonstrated their "respect" by arresting a Black homeless veteran who had just been thrown off a public bus for lacking the \$2.25 fare.

Several anti-police-brutality activists, who happened to be walking near Temple University in North Philadelphia around 9:30 p.m. on May 21, stopped to question why police were arresting the man, who had already been put off the bus. The police responded by brutally attacking and beating members of the group.

Nearly 50 police rushed to the scene, accompanied by two police helicopters overhead. Two women were pushed to the ground, one suffering a broken wrist in the process. Five people, including the woman with the broken wrist, were arrested.

When activists gathered outside the 22nd Police District to show solidarity with those arrested, police responded by arresting three more people and seizing the bullhorn they were using. One transgender individual was punched in the face and suffered a black eye and contusion. Two of those arrested were put in chokeholds by the police in clear violation of department policy.

Witnesses at the scene described it as a "police riot." After 22 hours in jail and faced with multiple charges, the last of those arrested were finally released on their own recognizance, with no bail required. They were welcomed by dozens of area activists who had maintained jail solidarity at two separate holding centers.

Workers World spoke with the women as they came out of the main police jail. They

described police behavior as outrageously racist, misogynist and disrespectful. They had repeatedly been called "bitches" and threatened with further assault. They were driven around in a police van for hours and told they would be sprayed with mace if they complained about the conditions in their cell, which had only one bare metal "bed" for four women.

**Vigil for Black women, transwomen, children murdered by police**

The confrontation with the police had begun to develop over an hour earlier, before the bus incident, toward the conclusion of a two-hour #SayHerName vigil in remembrance of Black women, transwomen and children murdered by racist police and vigilantes.

Nearly 50 demonstrators had gathered at the corner of Cecil B. Moore and N. Broad streets to light candles and chalk the names of hundreds of victims on the surrounding block. Toward the end of the event, people took turns reading the names of the victims, including women and children who had been lynched by racist mobs.

The event was organized by the REAL (Racial, Economic and Legal) Justice Coalition as part of the National Day of Solidarity with Black Women and Girls to remember police brutality victims, including seven-year-old Aiyana Stanley Jones, killed in her sleep by police in Detroit on May 16, 2010. Speakers also called out the name of Rekia Boyd, killed by Chicago police who were never charged for her murder.

Just days earlier, a transgender woman, London Chanel, had been brutally stabbed to death not far from the rally site, a victim of domestic violence.

As the event was winding down, three

# Black women and girls' lives matter

By Monica Moorehead

Malissa Williams, a 30-year-old woman, tragically lost her life on Nov. 29, 2012, in a hail of bullets, along with her 43-year-old companion, Timothy Russell, at the hands of nine white Cleveland police officers.

One of those officers, Mark Brelo, was acquitted on May 23 for his part in the shooting by a judge in a nonjury trial. Protests against this travesty of justice occurred right after the verdict, resulting in the arrest of more than 70 activists.

Natasha McKenna, a 37-year-old African American diagnosed at age 12 with schizophrenia, died on Feb. 8 in a hospital after being Tasered four times by police on Feb. 3 in a Fairfax, Va., county jail. At five feet, three inches tall, she had reportedly been handcuffed and shackled head to foot before being Tasered. Instead of receiving any kind of humane medical treatment, she had been in jail since Jan. 26 due to events reflecting her declining health.

Rekia Boyd was fatally shot in the back of the head by a Chicago police detective, Dante Servin, in March 2012. Servin was acquitted of all charges. Boyd was just 22 years old.

Shantell Davis, 23, was shot to death by police in East Flatbush, Brooklyn, in June 2012 during rush-hour traffic. Yvette Henderson was fatally shot outside an Oakland, Calif., Home Depot by police on Feb. 3. Aiyana Stanley Jones, age 7, was shot in the head in May 2010 by a Detroit cop while sleeping on her grandmother's

couch. The cop walked free.

A motorist used his cell phone to record Marlene Pinnock, 51, being straddled by a white police officer and savagely beaten on the side of a highway in Los Angeles on July 1, 2014.

These names and many more, such as Kyam Livingston, Renisha McBride and Eleanor Bumpurs, may not yet be embedded in mass consciousness like Michael Brown, Freddie Grey, Tamir Rice, Trayvon Martin or Eric Garner. But they should be.

These African-American women and girls, along with Black transwomen and girls, represent an alarmingly growing number of victims of police murders and legal or extralegal violence. They are all casualties of the racist war against people of color, regardless of nationality, gender or gender preference, sexual orientation, abilities, health and age.

## BLM Movement founded and led by women

A National Day of Solidarity with Black Women and Girls was called by groups associated with the Black Lives Matter Movement on May 21 to demand justice for all Black women and girls and raise consciousness that Black women's lives matter, too. Some of these actions took place in New York, the Bay Area (Calif.), Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Miami, Columbus, Ohio, and Lexington, Ky. The day also recognized that the Black Lives Matter Movement was founded and led by Black women and Black transwomen.

Racist, trans-hating violence against

Black transgender women is also gaining greater awareness, thanks to the BLM Movement. At least 12 Black transwomen have reportedly been killed by vigilantes since last August. These murders have not been taken seriously by the mainstream media and the police.

Some of these victim's names include Islan Nettles, Tiffany Edwards, Cemla Dove, Betty Skinner, Brittney Nicole Kidd-Stergis, Ty Underwood, Lamia Beard and Michelle Vash Payne. Black transwomen are often labeled as men by the police, and when incarcerated with men, they are subject to brutal sexual assaults.

CeCe McDonald, a Black transwoman, was attacked by neo-Nazis in Minneapolis in June 2011. When she killed one of her attackers in self-defense, she was incarcerated for several years before being released in January 2014. Most of her imprisonment was spent in solitary confinement in a men's prison.

ment in a men's prison.

This racist and sexist war against Black women is also reflected in the mass incarceration epidemic. The Sentencing Project Research and Advocacy for Reform website reports that more than 1 million women are under the "supervision" of the criminal justice system — that is, in prison or on parole or probation.

While African Americans make up less than 15 percent of the general population in the United States, African-American women constitute 30 percent of the overall women's population in state and federal prisons. The sentencingproject.org states that Black women are more than three times likelier than white women to be incarcerated in prison or jail.

The Black Lives Matter upsurge is unifying the movement by demanding justice for Black women, girls and transwomen who have been killed or brutalized by police or racist vigilantes. □

## 'Home Depot guilty of murder' of Yvette Henderson

By Judy Greenspan  
Emeryville and Oakland, Calif.

A National Day of Solidarity with Black Women and Girls, including Black transwomen, who were victimized or murdered by the police or other state-sanctioned violence, was commemorated with two actions in the Bay Area on May 21.

A late afternoon rally was held outside the Emeryville Home Depot in Emeryville, near San Francisco, to draw attention to the murder of Yvette Henderson, who was killed Feb. 3 by local police for allegedly "shoplifting." Henderson, an Oakland mother of four and a grandmother, was assaulted by a Home Depot security guard and later killed by the Emeryville police. The rally was organized by the Anti-Police Terror Project.

Protesters held a speak-out highlighting the cases of many Black women and girls who have been killed by the police. Speakers included Cat Brooks, of the Onyx Organizing Committee and APTP; Cadine Williams, the sister of O'Shaine Evans, who was killed by San Francisco police in 2014; and La Meshia Irizarry, director of the Idriss Stelley Foundation, named after her son who was killed by the police. All the speakers agreed that "Home Depot is guilty of murder."

Following the rally, people began leafleting and talking to shoppers about Henderson and other Black women who have been victims of state violence. Within 10 minutes, Home Depot closed its doors, only opening to allow the last group of shoppers to exit. To date, Home Depot refuses to release any security footage about the shooting.

### 'Breaking the silence'

Later that night, a large crowd gathered at Oscar Grant Plaza in downtown Oakland to attend a rally organized by the Black Youth Project as part of the national day of actions.

"We are here mourning the lives of all Black women and girls who were victims of state violence," said Alicia Bell, one of the BYP organizers, in her opening remarks at the rally. "Black women and girls, Black transwomen have all faced police repression. It's time to break the

silence."

The young BYP organizers unfurled a big scroll with the names of Black women and children who have been killed by the police. The names of these victims of state violence rang out over the plaza — "Kayla Moore, Yvette Henderson, Brandy Martell, Aiyana Jones, Renisha McBride, Eleanor Bumpurs," just to mention a few.

The May 21 protest also highlighted violence faced by Black transwomen. Jannetta Johnson, program director of the Transgender Interfaith Justice Project, spoke in opposition to a new jail being built in San Francisco. "Transgender women are being incarcerated at a very high rate," she stated.

Following the rally, the women of the BYP led a march down Broadway to the Oakland Police Department headquarters. Evening marches are very common in Oakland. However, for this rally, the police instituted the mayor's new tactic — blocking demonstrators from marching in the streets after dark, allowing them only on sidewalks. Police immediately got on their loudspeaker and declared the march an unlawful assembly in violation of the city code. The marchers at first ignored police warnings, which were continuous and very loud.

However, when the marchers got within two blocks of the OPD, a line of over 100 police stopped the demonstration. People were told they would be arrested if they continued marching in the street. The organizers decided to continue their march on the sidewalk.

At a rally in front of the OPD, Cat Brooks of APTP called on the crowd to challenge the new police tactics of imposing an evening demonstration curfew. "Oakland's new mayor, Libby Schaaf, has implemented a new protest ordinance," Brooks said. "We have a lot of organizing to do this summer."

Brooks and others called the ordinance a racist action, pointing out that it was first imposed when Black women and Black children organized a march.

Since the National Day of Solidarity with Black Women's Lives Matter, initiated by #SayHerName, nightly marches have been held in Oakland to defy the evening ban on demonstrations. □

## attack peaceful protesters



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Chananiah Maxwell, Andrea Jacome and Cindy Miller after 23 hours in Philly jails.

cop cars suddenly showed up and officers aggressively approached the peaceful gathering, demanding to know who was in charge. Demonstrators responded with chants of "Hands up, fight back" and "The cops and the Klan work hand-in-hand." While no arrests were made then, witnesses reported that more police were massed a short distance away.

Nevertheless, people peacefully concluded the vigil and many headed home, only to get calls a short time later alerting them to the arrests at the bus stop and the need to be present outside the precinct where the arrestees had been taken. Despite the late hour, nearly 60 people turned out, with many staying into the night.

In addition to the police assaults, witnesses reported that the fire department showed up and hosed away the hundreds of names that had been chalked on the sidewalk, apparently so that Temple students would not see them as they passed by. Chalking on sidewalks is not considered illegal in Philadelphia, where it's common for people to use this form of expression.

In response to the police riot, Megan

Malachi, a member of REAL Justice and Action Against Black Genocide, stated, "The police conspired to destroy a peaceful vigil honoring the lives of Black women, girls and transgendered individuals. They disrespected our sacred place and became violent when people resisted their aggression. The police have once again demonstrated their lack of respect for the people they are charged to protect and serve."

This massive, militarized and overly aggressive response by Philadelphia police comes just two months after the release of a U.S. Department of Justice study of the Philadelphia police department's use of deadly force, which claimed over 400 victims from 2007 to 2013. The DoJ study made 91 recommendations to address what it called "serious deficiencies in the department's use of force policies."

Apparently Philadelphia Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey, who co-chairs President Barack Obama's task force on 21st century policing, which is supposedly designed to "improve police and community relations," has failed to address any of the recommendations made by the DoJ to improve his own department. □

## Puerto Rico, the colony

# Part 1: The 'miracle' of indebtedness

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

In the late 1940s, the United States baptized Puerto Rico the "Showcase of the Caribbean." It was to be a role model for countries in the Caribbean and Latin America. This would supposedly be the outcome of the miracle of industrialization that the giant capitalist benefactor from the North carried out in a poor, colonized, underdeveloped small island.

It was a false miracle.

### Colonial economy

After destroying Puerto Rico's agriculture, Washington encouraged foreign investment — that is, U.S. investment — which initiated a model that first set up light industries such as textiles, then imposed pharmaceutical and petrochemical companies, and later biotechnology and electronic firms.

Beside causing enormous environmental destruction, this process contributed nothing at all to the real development of

the island. It did generate increased revenue for one sector of the working class — those in industries based on foreign capital that are export-oriented. They don't produce what is needed on the island nor do the products of their labor benefit the economy of Puerto Rico — only Wall Street.

With regard to technology, we should look at what Sam Marcy, founder of Workers World Party/Mundo Obrero, wrote in his book "High Tech, Low Pay." He showed that these industries neither improved the infrastructure nor introduced new knowledge necessary for Puerto Rico's ability to master high technology, which it would need to develop its own initiatives.

### The broken island

That's the true reality of the colonial state. Puerto Rico is now bankrupt, with a debt of over \$73 billion — four times more than Detroit's debt, which made the city declare bankruptcy two years ago. The debt is owed to the financial vultures

of Wall Street as payment on municipal bonds, which come with a high interest rate.

However, because Puerto Rico is a colony, unlike Detroit, it cannot declare bankruptcy to renegotiate the debts. This became clear when the colonial administrator in office, Gov. Alejandro Garcia Padilla, signed a bankruptcy bill called "Creole" into law. This law was subsequently rejected by the Federal Court in San Juan. The Puerto Rican government is now appealing that decision to the Court of Appeals in Boston.

### Economic situation

The serious crisis underway has been brewing for some time, intensified by the worldwide economic crisis since 2008. The colonial government has been paying its current debts by taking out new loans it cannot repay. It is selling bonds, but the credit rating companies continually reduce the classification of these bonds to progressively lower levels of junk bonds, which in turn makes the government pay higher interest, like a dog chewing its own tail.

But already there is nowhere to get more money in Puerto Rico to pay bondholders the payments that, according to the colonial Constitution, should take priority over the people's welfare.

According to figures from the Federal Bureau of Statistics, unemployment in Puerto Rico is 11.8 percent. These "official" numbers understate reality. They count underemployment as employment, reduced hours as full-time, etc. Beside this, U.S. entrepreneurs have flooded into Puerto Rico to take advantage of government incentives, like huge tax breaks, that lackey Garcia Padilla has offered.

More than 20 percent of Puerto Rico's jobs have disappeared since 2006. Some 387 jobs are now lost each day. (NCM News, April 27)

There is a massive migration of Puerto Ricans to the South of the U.S., totaling 144,000 in 2014. Many of them are young college graduates, representing a real brain drain on Puerto Rico's future. The Puerto Rican people are paying for their education to benefit the empire!

According to Dr. Victor Ramos, president of the Medical Association of Puerto Rico, "Last year we estimate that 361 doctors left the island; this is one per day. This year we expect 500 or more." (Independent.co.uk, May 25)

There is only one pediatrician for every 900 children on the island. The infant mortality rate is 8.2 per thousand live births. There is a general deterioration of health in the population, including mental health, which presents itself as an increase in depression and suicide.

Because of the high cost of living and loss of income, families are losing their homes. "For the first time in Puerto Rico, the value of foreclosed properties has exceeded \$900 million." (En Nuevo Día, May 23) Families often have to choose between paying the mortgage or paying for health or education.

On May 21, while Puerto Rico's teachers celebrated the Week of the Teacher, Education Secretary Rafael Román Meléndez announced the closure of 94 public schools and the "reconfiguration" of 502. Previously the Boston Group — a management consulting group based in Boston and active worldwide — had recommended the school closures and austerity measures.

*Next: The people resist.*

## U.S.-Cuba talks proceed

By Cheryl LaBash

The third round of talks between Cuba and the U.S. to normalize diplomatic relations took place at the U.S. State Department on May 21 and 22. In press conferences at the close of the meetings, the chief negotiators of both delegations characterized the meetings as professional, respectful and productive.

However, no date was set for upgrading the interests sections in Washington and Havana to embassies. And the U.S. blockade of Cuba is still in effect.

Cuban negotiator Josefina Vidal stated, "These talks were held after the U.S. government, in compliance with its international legal obligations under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, issued a license to one bank to resume the banking services to the Cuban Interests Section in Washington under the conditions of the financial blockade in force."

The Cuban Interests Section in Washington had been functioning without any bank account since February 2014.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roberta Jacobson declared the State Department would continue "to request funds from Congress for various activities in support of the Cuban people," as it has since 1996. These activities have, in fact, been intended to undermine the Cuban people's socialist revolution and advance U.S. corporate interests.

The Congressional Accountability Office reports that from 1996 to 2011, Congress appropriated \$205 million for Cuban "democracy" assistance. Most of this went to the U.S. Agency for International Development, long exposed as a front for CIA operations. Congress has also allocated more than \$25 million per year to fund TV Martí and Radio Martí, propaganda beamed from the U.S. to Cuba.

Some of the not-so-stellar use of U.S. tax dollars attributed to USAID and brought to light by AP investigative reporters are the smuggling into Cuba of illegal military grade communication devices by Alan Gross, which landed him in a Cuban prison, and the ZunZuneo caper to set up a Cuban "Twitter," secretly paid

for by the CIA.

Congress also voted money to send dissident recruiters disguised as Latin American youth AIDS educators to Cuba, the country with the most extensive, thorough health system, which distributes free condoms and successfully controlled the spread of HIV/AIDS early on. Students in the U.S. staggering under education debt or Detroit residents facing tax foreclosure and denial of water service could use that money right here.

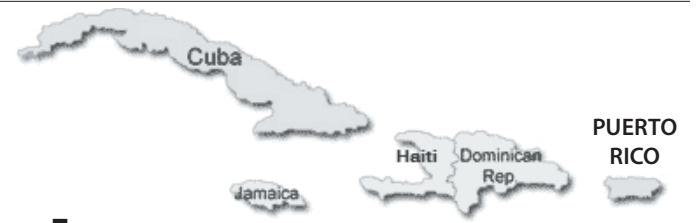
None of those millions of dollars eased the hardships inflicted on the Cuban people by the U.S. blockade. These hardships were reported in detail to the United Nations in support of the annual resolution calling on the U.S. to end the blockade. Since 1992, the United Nations General Assembly has told the U.S. government in nearly unanimous votes to end the genocidal, unilateral commercial, economic and financial blockade. (See reports and news at cubavsbloqueo.cu.)

As of May 29, Cuba's name will no longer appear in the U.S. government's list of countries that supposedly "sponsor terrorism." Including Cuba demonstrated that the list has not been based in fact, but is a weapon of imperialism that should not exist at all. In fact, it is the U.S. that sponsors terrorism. More than 3,000 Cubans have been killed in U.S.-sponsored terror attacks since 1959.

Cuba expects to be regarded and treated as an equal, a sovereign independent country, not a potential colony. That is the context for the talks that began on Dec. 17. The world is behind Cuba's right to exist, especially the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Step by step, Cuba is moving forward.

The same united voice opposed the Obama administration's March 9 executive order putting sanctions on Venezuela with the claim that it is a threat to the U.S., the biggest economic, military, nuclear-weapon-equipped force in the world.

As difficult as sorting out diplomatic relations may be, the biggest test of U.S. intentions comes over the question of its unilateral economic, commercial and financial blockade of Cuba. Before there can be full normalization, the blockade must go. □



## Talking peace, U.S. attacks Venezuela

By Cheryl LaBash

Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro has called on supporters to join a campaign rejecting a smear campaign against the Bolivarian Revolution. Maduro was responding to a lengthy May 18 Wall Street Journal article that falsely accuses National Assembly President Diosdado Cabello of drug trafficking and money laundering and that slanders Bolivarian Venezuela as a "global cocaine hub."

"Whoever messes with Diosdado, messes with all of us, messes with me," emphasized Maduro." (Telesurtv.net/English)

One Twitter comment quoted in the Journal pointed out how the "evidence" is being gathered: "We all know that whoever wants his green card and live in the US to visit Disney can just pick his leader and accuse him of being a narco. [Drug Enforcement Administration] tours will attend to them."

The Venezuela News Agency AVN pointed out on May 22 that a campaign to demoralize and divide is a preparation for a military attack. The corporate media are vehicles for repeating lies in order to make them believable.

The current media campaign attempts to build on a March 9 executive order issued by President Barack Obama "declaring a national emergency with respect to

the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States posed by the situation in Venezuela."

This disinformation campaign, besides being aimed at Venezuela, is meant to confuse and disorient people in the United States and around the world who are looking for a path out of the misery of capitalism and who oppose U.S. schemes to reconquer Latin America and the Caribbean.

It isn't working. On May 15, 16 U.S. congressional representatives signed a letter to President Obama opposing unilateral sanctions on Venezuela. The letter says that "regional opposition to the sanctions at the Summit of the Americas was virtually unanimous" and goes on to list condemnation of the sanctions by regional bodies. These include the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, which represents every independent nation of Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Group of 77 developing countries in the United Nations, led by the Latin American delegation.

As another sign of the unbreakable bond between socialist Cuba and Bolivarian Venezuela, all five Cuban heroes, who had been imprisoned in the United States, traveled to Venezuela with their families after the May Day celebration in Havana, along with President Raul Cas-



# Irish reject homophobia and colonial oppression

By Sue Kelly

The people of the Republic of Ireland have stunned the world by making it the first country to say “Yes” to gay marriage by a popular, nationwide vote. Nineteen other nations have legalized same-sex marriage, but none by popular vote.

On May 22, over 62 percent of those voting cast ballots in favor of changing the Irish Constitution to define marriage as a union between two people, regardless of their gender. Twenty-two years ago, Ireland decriminalized homosexuality.

Jubilant crowds jammed Dublin as the results were announced. Some media had predicted an urban-rural split, with rural areas less willing to support gay marriage. However, while the yes vote was somewhat greater in the urban areas, only one county voted no, and by a slim majority. In County Dublin the “Yes” vote was over 70 percent.

## Standing up to Church, colonialism

Why did so many Irish men and women

turn out to say “Yes” to gay marriage?

Many people point to the extensive use of social media and the high turnout among young, many of them first-time, voters as the primary reason for the referendum’s success. Clearly, this was a factor, but, with support coming across age and rural-urban lines and in defiance of the Catholic Church, other factors were also in play.

Ireland is nominally one of the most Catholic countries in the world, with the Church claiming membership among 85 percent of the population. But today’s empty pews tell a different story. And so does the gay marriage referendum vote.

No surprise that the Church hierarchy opposed the referendum. The archbishops sent a letter to all 2,500 parish churches opposing a “Yes” vote. But the Church in Ireland today is widely discredited for its complicity with centuries of British rule, as well as the scandal involving widespread sexual abuse of children by priests. In rejecting the Church’s position, the Irish took a stand against the old colonial

ideas of racism, sexism and homophobia.

“The Church is a foot soldier for colonialism,” said Ed Childs, a Workers World Party member in Boston who studies and speaks out on the liberation of Ireland. “Colonialism today comes from England and its dominant partner, the U.S.”

The Irish have resisted English oppression for 900 years, and the Irish people today are very aware of their proud history of fighting for independence. A major attraction for tourists, both foreign and homegrown, in Dublin is Kilmainham Jail, where the leaders of the 1916 Easter Rebellion were executed by the British. Tour guides speak passionately of the injustices done in that dungeon, where even small children served time for “crimes” like stealing a loaf of bread in a time of famine.

Big plans for celebrating the freedom struggle are already underway for next year, which will mark the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rebellion, a dramatic step in the armed struggle for Ireland’s freedom.

The fundamental reason for that oppression was — and is — economic exploitation. The control of English lords over much of Ireland’s agricultural land, the Penal Laws and other measures resulted in starvation and death. In the 1840s, during the “Great Hunger,” 4 million people — half the population of Ireland — either starved to death or were forced to emigrate, while food continued to be exported from Ireland to England.

One of the most celebrated cultural figures in Ireland today is the Irish author, playwright and poet Oscar Wilde, who at the height of his career in the 1890s was sent to prison in London for two years’ hard labor on charges of “gross indecency” — he was gay.

The joy in Ireland over the recent vote reflects pride and confidence in the people. The popular vote showed that working people can overcome divisive prejudices and strengthen their unity to fight back against the reactionary austerity drive being imposed on so many countries by the imperialist banks and corporations. □

# A tribute to ‘Ghost’ Commander Mozgovoi

By Greg Butterfield

When I learned that Donbass militia leader Alexei Mozgovoi had been assassinated, I immediately thought of Joe Hill’s famous last words: “Don’t mourn, organize.”

I had been talking with Mozgovoi and his press secretary, Anna Aseva-Sameiyuk, to arrange an interview that would allow him to speak directly to U.S. workers about the life-and-death struggle against NATO imperialism and 21st century fascism in Ukraine and the Donbass People’s Republics.

The last message I received from Anna was sent just hours before she and Commander Mozgovoi were killed.

Like Joe Hill, Mozgovoi was a singer, a poet and a warrior. And like that famous Wobbly musician murdered by U.S. mining bosses, he offered an example of strength, determination and modesty in life and in the face of death. He will continue to inspire working people around the world long into the future.

Alexei Borisovich Mozgovoi, commander of the Novorossiyan Ghost Brigade, died on the afternoon of May 23 when his car was attacked with mines and machine guns on the highway between Alchevsk and Lugansk in the Lugansk People’s Republic. He was 40 years old.

Four Ghost Brigade members accompanying him were also killed: press secretary Aseva-Sameiyuk, an activist, journalist and mother of three, said to be a key political leader of the Ghost Brigade; bodyguards Alexei Kalascin and Andrej Rjajskih; and driver Alexander Yuriev.

Two civilians driving along the same road, a pregnant woman and her spouse, were also killed.

A Ukrainian fascist group called “The Shadows” claimed responsibility, but this has not been confirmed. An investigation



Alexei Mozgovoi.

by the Lugansk authorities, with cooperation from Ghost, is ongoing.

## Origins of the Ghost Brigade

During his all-too-brief leadership of the Ghost Brigade, Mozgovoi displayed many of the qualities of revolutionaries like Che Guevara and Thomas Sankara, with a seemingly inexhaustible integrity, uncompromising principles and ability to inspire and rally people to his cause.

Born and raised in Lugansk, and trained as a singer and a soldier, Mozgovoi emerged as a leader of the anti-fascist militia movement shortly after the junta in Kiev launched its bloody war on Donbass in 2014.

He enjoyed recounting how the Ghost Brigade earned its name. After repeated claims by the Ukrainian military that they had wiped out the armed resistance in Lugansk, his fighters always re-emerged to strike back like phantoms.

Mozgovoi did not call himself a communist or Marxist, yet he displayed a deep class consciousness and openness to learn and grow politically. He welcomed the Volunteer Communist Detachment into the Ghost Brigade and worked closely with its commanders, Pyotr Biryukov and Alexey Markov, who also became deputy leaders of the Brigade.

Mozgovoi put Biryukov in charge of military operations during the successful campaign to liberate Debaltsevo, Donetsk, from Ukrainian occupation forces this February.

After militant Donetsk militia leader Igor Strelkov was forced out by conser-

vative forces in Donbass and the Russian Federation, Mozgovoi upheld the anti-fascist banner. He attracted many of the fighters most dedicated to serving the people and seeing the struggle through, from the liberation of historic Novorossiya all the way to Kiev, including international volunteers.

During an interview with a correspondent of Russian Planet, Mozgovoi joked that after the liberation of Kiev it might be necessary for Ghost to continue marching west to liberate Warsaw and “little hamlets” like Berlin, Paris and London.

Mozgovoi was outspoken in his opposition to the oligarchy and fascist reaction in Ukraine. He was unafraid to criticize the Minsk ceasefire agreements, which he saw as an unnecessary and damaging concession to the Kiev junta and U.S. imperialism. He denounced what he saw as the encroachment of oligarchic forces that simply want to remake Donbass in the image of corrupt, capitalist Ukraine, as it existed before the U.S.-backed coup, not as truly liberated people’s republics.

## Class conscious and internationalist

In videos, teleconferences and interviews, Mozgovoi reached out to the workers and soldiers of Ukraine on a class basis, stating that there could be no winners in a bloody civil war and the common people should unite to fight the oligarchy and neo-Nazis.

From Ghost’s base in Alchevsk, Lugansk, he led the Brigade in supporting the local population. They established social canteens where militia and civilians eat side by side, preventing starvation and malnutrition due to the war and blockade. His team pioneered the efficient procurement and distribution of international humanitarian aid to hospitals, schools and pensioners.

In the last video Mozgovoi made before his death, he talked about Ghost’s efforts to help revive the local economy and develop self-sufficiency in food production by reopening a large poultry farm.

As a person of revolutionary integrity and popularity, faced with such challenging wartime conditions, Mozgovoi had a target on his back and enemies on all sides. He survived several earlier assassination attempts, most recently in March,

near the spot where he was killed.

In his last days, he welcomed the Second Antifascist Caravan to Donbass and hosted the May 8 International Solidarity Forum on “Antifascism, Internationalism, Solidarity,” with delegates from more than a dozen countries — after anti-communist forces in Lugansk tried to shut it down.

In defiance of his political opponents, Mozgovoi held a spirited, internationalist parade in Alchevsk on May 9, the 70th anniversary of the Soviet Union’s defeat of German fascism.

In a video statement after Mozgovoi’s death, communist co-commander Alexey Markov said: “A person can be murdered, but not his ideas — the ideas Alexei Mozgovoi had been carrying on since last year, the ones which brought thousands of people to join us.

“With the death of one person, the ideas will not die. We are going to carry them through the war, through the misery, through the death. With these ideas, we will live, and build a better life.”

Co-commander Pyotr Biryukov noted: “The Ghost Brigade, and communist unit as part of it, will not disappear as a force against fascism. Our volunteers are the proof of this fact, and the people who help us, who trust us and rely on us to defend them.

“One of the combatants of the brigade has been killed; the commander. But his work lives with us. We will carry it on.”

“Our flag resists,” added Markov. “The Ghost Brigade’s flag will be seen in Lysichansk, Kharkov and Kiev very soon, and will be the best memorial for our commander.”

Thousands honored him and his fallen comrades at a public memorial in Alchevsk on May 24 as true inheritors of the best qualities of the Soviet Union and the Great Patriotic War against fascism.

Mozgovoi’s spirit of defiance and internationalism will also fuel an international day of solidarity with Donbass called to coincide with the commander’s funeral on May 27. And, no doubt, many battles still to come.

For more information, videos and translations about Alexei Mozgovoi and Ghost Brigade can be found at [redstaroverdonbass.blogspot.com](http://redstaroverdonbass.blogspot.com).

tro and President Maduro.

The recent “news” reports attacking Venezuela show the U.S. still considers Latin America and the Caribbean to be imperialism’s “backyard” as it arrogantly issues unilateral lists and sanctions against sovereign countries. The people united can stop it. □

# WORKERS WORLD

## editorial

### Monopoly and 'free trade'

With the Obama administration seemingly hell-bent on getting its "Trans-Pacific Partnership" bill passed, which many critics say is not a trade bill at all but a giant giveaway to the corporations, we reprint below excerpts from an August 1993 article by Sam Marcy on "Free trade, monopoly and NAFTA." Marcy was a leading Marxist thinker, organizer and the founder of Workers World Party. His perspective on that "free trade" agreement is equally illuminating today.

#### Freedom or free trade?

In the contemporary world struggle, the bourgeoisie still postures as the champion of free trade. But it is not the free trade of the old, competitive stage of capitalism. It is the free trade of giant imperialist monopolies.

Free trade as it existed before the middle of the 19th century has virtually disappeared. Its replacement by giant, marauding imperialist monopolies has meant an increasingly restricted role for the smaller nations of the world and increased domination by the most powerful imperialist monopolies throughout the globe.

Small-scale production, which had a more or less stable role in the epoch of the classical competitive stage of capitalism, has an altogether unstable and precarious existence in the epoch of the imperialist monopolies. What has given it an extension of life, so to speak, is the growth of the service sector. But that is dependent on the stability of the capitalist monopolies. A serious economic crisis would almost certainly result in a catastrophic situation for small business as well as the service sector.

Most important, monopoly capitalism has meant a restricted role for the working classes, given the virtual omnipotence of the monopolies that control the imperialist governments of the world lock, stock and barrel. It is in this contemporary context that we should view the attempt by the U.S. to create a sort of "free trade zone" among the U.S., Canada and Mexico.

#### Labor and NAFTA

A great deal of importance has been attached to the North American Free Trade Agreement, originally negotiated by the Bush administration. The Clinton administration, after making a few changes of its own, is pushing hard for the U.S. government to adopt this agreement.

The organized labor movement is opposed to it. Nevertheless, the Clinton administration is moving swiftly to get the agreement adopted.

It is important, however, to consider it from the viewpoint of the interests of the working class, not only in the U.S. and Canada, but most particularly in Mexico.

Trade between Mexico and the U.S. has increased sharply since 1986, when the Mexican government began to lift what Washington considered restrictions against U.S. exports. ... This means that

the Mexican government opened up its economy in a big way to the penetration by U.S. capital.

#### Attitude of U.S. workers

What should be the U.S. working class' attitude? From a class point of view, neither the agreement nor any of its side or supplemental agreements should be supported. We should not support the expansion of U.S. capitalism anywhere — north, south, east or west.

The U.S. working class' task is to increase its role in the struggle against monopoly — not to conduct a struggle on behalf of extending monopoly capitalism. It is good that the AFL-CIO opposes NAFTA. But it's on very narrow grounds — how NAFTA affects the particular unions. In discussing relations among the U.S., Canada and Mexico, however, the unions are inevitably drawn into the vortex of world politics. They are obliged to take a position on the role U.S. imperialism plays in the contemporary world. ...

#### No chance of tranquil development

All the talk that NAFTA will inevitably create jobs in the U.S. and Mexico as a result of Mexico lifting restrictions against U.S. corporations is unwarranted. It entirely leaves out of consideration the nature of capitalist development, which is marked by inevitable crisis.

Capitalism not only moves upward; it can also decline to abysmal levels. That's the only one aspect of it. Another is that the capitalist class will abandon one market for its products, no matter how lucrative, in the interest of another more lucrative market where the rate of profit is even higher.

The objective of imperialist diplomacy, and of U.S. diplomacy in particular, is to aid the capitalist monopolies wherever they seek to broaden their influence. It's in their nature to pull out of Australia and go to New Zealand, or go from New Zealand to Nicaragua or Mexico if the rate of profit is higher. This is the motive force of capitalist development.

It was good for the AFL-CIO and all its affiliated unions to at least oppose the agreement, even if only on narrow trade-union grounds. But that is inadequate, considering the agreement's dimensions. To go along is to become a silent partner to the devastating role of U.S. finance capital abroad — and at home.

Labor's real objective should be to forge a solidarity agreement among the trade unions of the U.S., Canada and Mexico. It must take into consideration, first and foremost, that Mexico is an oppressed country and that the U.S. and Canada are imperialists, although Canada is a junior partner in the struggle. ...

From all this it should follow that the only salvation for the working class and the oppressed countries, as Marx pointed out in the Communist Manifesto, is "Workers of the world, unite!" Lenin added "oppressed people and workers of the world, unite" to bring this slogan into the imperialist epoch. □

### Eyewitness: A crime against humanity

## Saudis block rescue ship from reaching Yemen

By Caleb Maupin  
Djibouti, on the Red Sea

May 23 — From the port of Djibouti in the Horn of Africa, it is with great sadness and burning outrage that I announce that the voyage of the Iran Shahed Rescue Ship has ended. We will not reach our destination at the Port of Hodiedah in Yemen to deliver humanitarian aid.

The unsuccessful conclusion of our mission is the result of only one thing: U.S.-backed Saudi terrorism.

Yesterday, as it appeared our arrival in Yemen was imminent, Saudi forces bombed the port of Hodiedah a total of eight times during the day.

The total number of innocent dock workers, sailors, longshore workers and bystanders killed by these eight airstrikes is still being calculated.

Furthermore, the Yemeni revolutionaries arrested 15 people who were part of a conspiracy to attack our vessel. The plan was to attack the Iran Shahed when we arrived and kill everyone on board.

With its many criminal threats and actions, the Saudi regime was sending a message to the crew of doctors, medical technicians, anesthesiologists and other Red Crescent Society volunteers onboard the ship: "If you try to help the hungry children of Yemen, we will kill you."

These actions, designed to terrorize and intimidate those seeking to deliver humanitarian aid, are a clear violation of international law. I can say, without any hesitation, that I have witnessed a crime against humanity.

In the context of extreme Saudi threats and after lengthy negotiations taking place around the clock in Tehran, it has been determined that the Red Crescent Society cannot complete this mission.

The 2,500 tons of medical supplies, food and water are being unloaded and handed over to the U.N. World Food Program, the largest humanitarian organization fighting hunger worldwide, which has agreed to distribute them on our behalf by June 5.

#### Djibouti and U.S. imperialism

Here in Djibouti, I can clearly see what the people of Yemen and Iran have been fighting against for so long. Unlike in Tehran, here in Djibouti I see masses of desperate, starving people. Impoverished Africans, who are desperate for a day of work, are lined up outside the port. They are joined by Yemeni refugees, who are living in tent cities.

There is a huge U.S. military base here in Djibouti, and this small country of only 3 million people is well under the control of Western neoliberalism. This country was basically carved into the maps of the world by the imperialists. As the European plunderers divided up the African conti-

ment for themselves, they created this tiny country so that naval bases could be conveniently placed in a strategic location on the Red Sea.

The living conditions here are horrific in comparison to those in Iran. Iran has broken the chains of imperialism, and has been independently developing since its popular revolution in 1979.

Since the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2003, Iran has opened its doors to 3 million refugees, most of them steadily employed. Iran's oil resources have been utilized to create a vast apparatus of social programs.

One of the Red Crescent Society volunteers told me: "The Iranian government has a department to make sure that everyone in our country who wants to work can work." Iranian mothers are given a guaranteed stipend for each child. Education in Iranian universities is absolutely free, and the Ministry of Health provides free medical care to everyone in the country.

Compared to the millions of enslaved guest workers in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, or the impoverished people throughout the African continent, Iran has been able to guarantee its people a great deal of economic security by breaking from neoliberalism.

#### Message to Yemen: 'We're on your side'

If the resistance forces are successful in their fight against the Saudi onslaught, Yemen will join Iran in becoming an independent country. The logo of the Ansarullah organization shows a hand holding a rifle to represent armed resistance. Perpendicular to the rifle is a stalk of wheat to represent "economic development."

It's no secret that Yemen has vast, untapped oil resources. If the resistance forces are victorious, they can seize these resources and start using them to build up Yemeni society. Yemen can then begin to do what the people of Venezuela have done — transform their country with public control of natural resources.

As the ship prepares to return to Tehran, I have become even more convinced of the need to overthrow the system of Western monopoly capitalism. I am reinvigorated in my belief that there must be a global alliance of all forces that oppose imperialism. All progressive forces fighting the continued domination of the planet by Wall Street bankers must stand firmly together.

The people of Yemen, like the forces of resistance in so many other parts of the world, have refused to surrender. As they face a horrendous onslaught of U.S.-made Saudi bombs, I hope that news of our peaceful, humanitarian mission has reached them. I hope they are aware that in their struggle against the Saudi king and the Wall Street bankers, they are not alone. There are millions of people across the planet who are on their side. □

### Women's peace walk crosses DMZ

Continued from page 5

since. Some 4 million Koreans died in the 1950-53 war, in which the U.S. sent almost 6 million troops to battle the socialist Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the north. The war ended in a stalemate — the first time that U.S. imperialism had failed to win a military victory.

Since the war's end, hundreds of thousands of soldiers from the north and south, as well as U.S. troops, have faced each other across the DMZ. It is therefore not surprising that the peace delegation

was heavily criticized by the U.S. corporate media, officials and reactionaries, as well as south Korean conservatives in and out of government.

However, the activists assert that their trip was a "triumph" in promoting peace and reunification. The delegation included Gloria Steinem from the U.S. and Nobel Peace Prize laureates Mairead Maguire from northern Ireland and Leymah Gbowee from Liberia. Christine Ahn was the principal organizer of the peace walk. □

## Burkina Faso

# Sankarist parties form united front

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

Ten political parties claiming to uphold the political legacy of martyred Burkina Faso Marxist and Pan-Africanist revolutionary Thomas Sankara have formed an alliance.

The unity agreement came several months after a national uprising which ousted former coup-leader-turned-president Blaise Compaoré, who is now living in exile in neighboring Ivory Coast.

Compaoré was forced to flee after a people's rebellion in late October and early November, when hundreds of thousands of youth and workers took to the streets demanding that he not stand for another term. When it appeared that the parliament would allow Compaoré to run again, the building was attacked, occupied and set on fire.

Continuing unrest prompted two military coups over the following days. Many protesters demanded the immediate return to civilian rule. A coalition of military and political leaders established an interim government mandated to hold elections on Oct. 11, 2015.

Between the years of 1983-87, Sankara had led a revolutionary movement that took power and sought to transform the postcolonial agricultural state into a resource for the improvement of the living conditions of the people and a model for other nations in Africa. However, Sankara, known as the "Che Guevara of Africa," was assassinated along with 12 other military and political officials in a counterrevolutionary coup led by Compaoré, who remained in power for over 27 years.

Even the Associated Press noted in a report: "Sankara was a Marxist, anti-imperi-

alist revolutionary who in four short years in power doubled the number of children in schools, reduced infant mortality, redistributed land from feudal landlords to peasants and planted 10 million trees that still help shade Ouagadougou, the capital." (May 25)

His policies drew the ire of the government of neighboring Ivory Coast, a client of French imperialism. The Ivory Coast regime has always been suspected of playing a role in the coup that removed Sankara from power.

After Sankara was murdered on Oct. 15, 1987, the country reverted to being an outpost of French and U.S. imperialist intrigue. During the tenure of Compaoré, Burkina Faso became the leading producer of gold on the African continent. The neocolonial state served as a base for French military intervention in neighboring Mali.

The widow of Captain Sankara, Mariam Sankara, who often speaks out on various aspects of Burkinabe politics, urged the parties to come together in order to challenge the parties backed by the imperialists in the upcoming elections.

Me Benewende Stanislas Sankara was recently endorsed as a candidate by the 10 political parties that claim to be heirs of the ideology of Burkina Faso's martyred leader. Me Sankara, no relative of the former revolutionary leader, is an attorney involved in demanding that an inquiry be conducted into the October 1987 coup and assassinations. Me Sankara is one of the lawyers representing Thomas Sankara's family.

### Exhumation of alleged grave site

After a judicial order in March by the Burkinabe courts, a grave reported to contain the remains of Thomas Sankara and other leaders killed on that fateful day in 1987 was exhumed on May 25. This is the

first phase in efforts to determine if in fact Sankara was buried at this location and what were the real causes of his and the others' deaths.

According to a report published by Reuters on May 25, "Sankara's relatives have for years pressed for his body to be tested, saying they suspect it may not be that of the former president." Sankara's sons, Philippe and Auguste, are providing DNA samples for comparison.

### Recent biography of Sankara published

A biography of Sankara was released in late 2014 chronicling his political life: "Thomas Sankara, An African Revolutionary," by Ernest Harsch, a long-time researcher and analyst of African affairs.

The book comes as mass discontent is growing among youth and workers throughout Africa. The uprising in Burkina Faso reflected the failure of the neocolonial African nation-states to address the fundamental needs and aspirations of the majority.

Sankara sought to rapidly advance Africa's development by breaking ties with imperialism, which continues to hamper the forward progress of the continent. Over the last seven years, since the formal founding of AFRICOM (the U.S. Africa Command), the Pentagon and the CIA have escalated U.S. intervention in Africa, severely weakening the capacity of African states to resolve their own national security imperatives.

Events in Mali, Burundi, the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of South Sudan, Somalia and other states demonstrate that, without unity and self-determination, there can be no genuine sovereignty for the formerly colonized nations. To organize the people of Africa on

an anti-imperialist basis there has to be an ideological reorientation toward socialism to restructure society in the interests of the workers, farmers and youth.

Harsch's book chronicles Sankara's journey from his youth to his recruitment into the military, rising political consciousness, and burgeoning anger with the country's — then called Upper Volta — poverty, underdevelopment and economic corruption. During his rise to power, Sankara utilized these conditions to organize the people for revolutionary change to defeat the antiquated neocolonial system.

Sankara and his comrades instituted economic and social ideas that steered away from dependency on the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. They relied instead on Burkina Faso's resources to construct educational institutions, hospitals and state-directed projects aimed at improving the quality of life and the liberation of women.

Not surprisingly, Sankara's revolutionary ideology and practical programs gained tremendous support both inside Burkina Faso and throughout Africa. Unfortunately, a myriad of opponents, including dissident factions within his own political camp as well as the military, finally moved to overthrow the national democratic revolution. Nonetheless, during the uprising in 2014, thousands of youth and workers held banners and wore shirts with the image of Sankara.

For the upcoming elections, it is essential that a political program is developed that can win over the majority of working people, farmers and youth inside the country. A breakthrough in Burkina Faso toward a revolutionary vision of the future would have a profound impact on Africa and the international scene. □

# An assassination full of lies

By **Gene Clancy**

On May 2, 2011, a team of U.S. Navy SEALs, acting under the direction of the CIA, carried out a raid on a compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, and assassinated Osama bin Laden.

Although it violated international law as well as Pakistani national sovereignty, the assault, which included the killing of several civilians, was lauded by the U.S. government and most of the big business media as a victory in "the war against terrorism."

Four years later, this "victory" has been challenged by a narrative that is stunningly different than the official one released by the U.S. government immediately after the raid.

The new report, written by Seymour Hersh and published by the London Review of Books, basically asserts that almost everything the public was told about the raid was a lie.

Hersh is an experienced investigative journalist who has published articles that have exposed and embarrassed the U.S. military and the CIA for a large number of atrocities and misdeeds. Among his most famous stories were those of the My Lai massacre of hundreds of Vietnamese men, women and children by U.S. troops in March 1968, and the tortures carried out by the U.S. military at the Abu Ghraib prison during the war in Iraq in 2003-2004.

Since the publication of this newest account, the U.S. government and most

of the corporate media have howled with indignation, falling over each other in a rush to attack Hersh and his article. He has been accused of outright fabrication and relying on "unnamed sources," including a retired CIA officer.

Of course, the use of government leaks and unnamed sources in the media is quite normal. Indeed, in its initial press briefing following the bin Laden raid in 2011, U.S. officials insisted on it. The transcript of a May 7, 2011, background briefing with a senior intelligence official at the Pentagon on intelligence aspects of the U.S. operation involving Osama bin Laden reads: "This is a traditional background briefing, no video or audio from out of here, no photographs please, no taping is permitted by video. ... The briefener can be referred to and attributed as a senior intelligence official." (defense.gov)

The attacks have come from across the bourgeois political spectrum. Fox News, which seldom has anything good to say about President Barack Obama, actually praised the bin Laden raid.

In an interview with Shepard Smith on youtube.com, retired Navy SEAL Robert O'Neill viciously attacked Hersh, stating that "the story our president told [about the raid] was the truth!" O'Neill has bragged that he personally killed Osama bin Laden.

Hersh is not the only journalist to have contested the White House/CIA/Pentagon version of bin Laden's killing. As early as August of 2011, a blogger named R.J. Hillhouse, using different sources,

challenged almost all of the same official report points that Hersh did. At the time, the corporate media ignored Hillhouse's article. (thespywhobilledme.com, May 11)

### A pack of lies

Among the points on which Hersh and Hillhouse contradict the official reports are the following:

- A walk-in informant identified bin Laden and his location. The government instead claimed that they tracked bin Laden down after years of earnest intelligence work in which a "courier" was tracked to bin Laden's location.
- Bin Laden was gunned down in a hail of bullets. U.S. officials, while admitting that he was unarmed, claimed he was shot following a "fierce firefight." (Background Briefing, May 2011) Hersh asserts that there was no firefight at all.
- Pakistan knew about, and aided, the operation. Although they changed their story several times, U.S. authorities officially maintain that Pakistan knew nothing about the raid until it was carried out.
- The Pentagon said that it flew bin Laden's body to the USS Carl Vinson, where it was buried at sea "in strict conformance with Islamic precepts and practices." (New Yorker, Aug. 8, 2011) But bin Laden wasn't buried at sea, per Hersh, who says that members of the SEAL team boasted of tossing some body parts out of the helicopter over the Hindu Kush mountains.
- Washington has tried to justify the

raid by claiming that a large number of tapes, laptops, thumb drives, etc., were recovered at the compound and that these were of great value to U.S. intelligence about ongoing al-Qaida operations. Per Hersh, there was no "treasure trove" of al-Qaida documents found in the bin Laden compound.

One need not depend on inside informants to cast doubt on the veracity of the U.S. government's explanation. On close examination, the whole incoherent edifice collapses, weighed down by its own implausibility.

Eleven days after the raid on Abbottabad, the U.S. military's top special operations officer, Admiral William McRaven, ordered subordinates to destroy any photographs of bin Laden's body or burial following an Associated Press request for the documents. (Daily News, Feb. 10, 2014)

It is clear that the CIA/Pentagon raid on bin Laden's compound was a targeted assassination, which had as one of its primary goals the intimidation of any person or entity that could potentially challenge U.S. imperialism and hegemony.

The U.S. president recently was given additional legal authority to secretly order the assassination of virtually anyone in the world, including U.S. citizens.

Seymour Hersh, R.J. Hillhouse and others have drawn renewed attention to the network of lies with which the imperialists attempt to cover up their nefarious acts. Progressive and oppressed people around the globe must continue their vigilance and oppose these militaristic killings, whether they be abroad or on the streets of U.S. cities. □



Óscar López Rivera

# Puerto Rico, la colonia

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

Hacia finales de los años cuarenta, Estados Unidos bautizó a Puerto Rico la “Vitrina del Caribe”, como ejemplo a seguir por todo el Caribe y Latinoamérica. Era supuestamente el milagro de industrialización que ejecutaba el benefactor gigante capitalista del norte en una isleta pobre, colonizada y subdesarrollada.

Luego de destruir la agricultura puertorriqueña, Washington fomentó la inversión extranjera, léase estadounidense, iniciando un modelo de industrialización, al principio con industrias livianas como la textil, para luego imponer farmacéuticas, petroquímicas y más tarde firmas biotecnológicas y de electrónica.

Aparte de la gran destrucción del medioambiente por estas compañías, ese proceso en nada contribuyó al verdadero desarrollo de la isla, aunque generó un aumento en los ingresos de un sector de la clase trabajadora. Son industrias con capital extranjero orientadas hacia la exportación, y que ni producen lo que se necesita en la isla, ni sus ganancias redundan en beneficios para la economía de Puerto Rico, sino para Wall Street.

Y con respecto a las tecnológicas, como lo escribía Sam Marcy, fundador del Partido Workers World-Mundo Obrero en su libro *High Tech, Low Pay*, no incorporan la infraestructura, ni los nuevos conocimientos necesarios para que Puerto Rico tenga un dominio de esa alta tecnología necesaria para poder desarrollar sus propias iniciativas.

## La isla quebrada

Esa es la verdadera “vitrina” que expone la realidad del estado colonial. Ahora Puerto Rico está en bancarota con una deuda de más \$73 mil millones, cuatro veces más que la deuda que hizo a Detroit declarar bancarota hace 2 años. Adeudados a buitres financieros de Wall Street por el pago de bonos municipales que tienen un altísimo rendimiento.

Sin embargo, por su condición de colonia, PR, a diferencia de Detroit, no puede declararse en bancarota para poder renegociar la deuda. Esto quedó claro cuando el administrador colonial de turno, el gobernador Alejandro García Padilla, pasó una Ley de Quiebra “Criolla”, pero fue prohibida por el Tribunal Federal en San Juan. El gobierno de PR ahora la está apelando en el Tribunal de Apelaciones de Boston.

## Situación económica

La grave crisis se viene gestando desde hace tiempo, intensificada por la crisis económica a nivel mundial desde 2008. El gobierno colonial ha ido pagando sus deudas metiéndose en nuevas deudas impagables, vendiendo bonos que las casas de evaluación crediticia constantemente reducen su categoría a diferentes grados de chatarra, lo que hace que el gobierno a su vez tenga que pagar mayores dividendos. Es como el pez que se

muerde la cola.

Pero ya no hay de dónde sacar más dinero en Puerto Rico para pagar a los bonistas, pagos que según la constitución colonial, son prioritarios y van por encima del bienestar del pueblo.

Según las cifras del Negociado Federal de Estadísticas, el desempleo es del 11.8 por ciento. Sin embargo, como siempre, estos números “oficiales” no reflejan la realidad. Se cuenta el subempleo como empleo, las jornadas cortas como tiempo completo, etc. También hay que tener en cuenta la inundación de emprendedores de EUA que por los incentivos del gobierno lacayo de García Padilla se han mudado a PR con enormes alivios tributivos.

Se han perdido más del 20 por ciento de los puestos de trabajo desde el 2006. Actualmente se pierden 387 puestos al día. (NCM Noticias: Jesús Dávila, Borrón sin cuenta nueva)

Hay una migración masiva hacia el sur de EUA de boricuas, ciento cuarenta y cuatro mil en 2014. Muchas/os de ellos jóvenes acabados de graduar de universidad. Una verdadera fuga de cerebros y de futuro. ¡El pueblo de PR paga por su educación para que beneficien al imperio! Según el Dr. Víctor Ramos, presidente del Colegio de Médicos de PR, “El año pasado calculamos que 361 médicos abandonaron la isla, esto es uno por día. Este año esperamos 500 o más”. (independent.co.uk) Solo queda un pediatra por cada 900 niñas/os y el índice de mortalidad infantil está en 8.2. Hay un deterioro general de la salud en la población, incluyendo en salud mental que ha visto un aumento de depresiones y suicidios.

Las familias están perdiendo sus hogares por el altísimo costo de vida y la pérdida de ingresos. “Por primera vez en PR, el valor de las propiedades repositadas ha superado los \$900 millones”. (El Nuevo Día, 23 de mayo, 2015) Las familias muchas veces tienen que escoger entre pagar la hipoteca o los gastos de salud o educación.

El 21 de mayo, mientras las/os maestras de PR celebraban la Semana del Maestro, el secretario de educación Rafael Román Meléndez, anunció el cierre de 94 escuelas públicas y la “reconfiguración” de 502. Ya anteriormente el Grupo de Boston – un grupo de asesoría de gestión basado en Boston y activo en todo el mundo – había recomendado los cierres escolares como medidas de austeridad.

## Medidas del gobierno

Puerto Rico se ha ido vendiendo desde los años noventa cuando se privatizó la Compañía Telefónica bajo el gobernador Pedro Roselló. Desde entonces todas las administraciones han ido privatizando todos los bienes públicos incluyendo el aeropuerto, servicios de salud, carreteras, la preciada industria de la piña, etc. La consigna del movimiento progresista e independentista desde entonces ha sido “Puerto Rico no se vende”.



13 de mayo, Puerto Rico.

La “reconfiguración” de las escuelas es realmente otro intento de privatizar la educación. Las pocas agencias que quedan sin privatizar lo están gracias a la incesante lucha de sus trabajadoras/es, como la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica que el sindicato clasista UTIER ha defendido con uñas y dientes.

Aparte de las ventas, el gobierno ha querido pagar la deuda aplicando medidas impositivas al pueblo trabajador. Mientras gigantes compañías transnacionales y megatiendas como Wal Mart sacan miles de millones en ganancias pagando impuestos irrisorios, si lo pagan; al pueblo se le ha obligado una carga de 11.5 por ciento de Impuesto de Ventas y Usos, IVU, con la posibilidad de una imposición de IVA, Impuesto de Valor Agregado más tarde. De hecho, el 16 por ciento de IVA que García Padilla quería imponer fue rechazado por la legislatura a mediados de mayo gracias al rechazo enorme de la población.

Estas medidas son sumamente excesivas y con consecuencias nefastas para la población que ya de por sí esta empobrecida.

## El pueblo rechaza medidas

Aparte del consenso general del pueblo en contra del IVA de 16 por ciento, la resistencia se hace más fuerte por parte de estudiantes y sindicatos.

Al tiempo en que se escribe este artículo, las/os estudiantes de la Universidad de PR, UPR, conocidos por su militancia que evitó la privatización de la UPR hace solo pocos años, están reunidas/os en asamblea para determinar cómo van a proceder en la lucha en contra de las nuevas cargas impositivas. Ya desde semanas se han estado organizando por recintos (son 11), y uniéndose a estudiantes de otras escuelas. Diferentes acciones han tomado, incluyendo paros de 48 horas y una gran movilización al Capitolio el 13 de mayo.

Su consigna es “Ni IVU ni IVA, que pa-

guen los de arriba”. No sólo repudian las mediadas, sino que ofrecen al gobierno alternativas para enfrentar la crisis como “que se eliminen las exenciones contributivas a empresas multinacionales hoy mantenidas por el Estado. .... también se avaló que se enmendara el Artículo 6.8 de la Constitución, el que prioriza el pago de la deuda por encima de los servicios al pueblo”. (Facebook: Radio Huelga)

Las/os maestras, por otro lado, liderados por EDUCAMOS y ÚNETE, están convocando a maestras/os, madres y padres para una movilización en repudio del cierre escolar para el 26 de mayo frente al Departamento de Educación.

En un artículo, el puertorriqueño Nelson A. Denis, autor del exitoso libro recién lanzado ‘War Against All Puerto Ricans’, da una fácil solución para solucionar la crisis de endeudamiento: terminar con la Ley de Cabotaje. Esta Ley, mejor conocida como la Ley Jones de 1920, obliga a que toda mercancía que transite entre EUA y PR, lo haga en barcos con bandera estadounidense. Aunque es complicado explicar todos los detalles en este poco espacio, resumiendo, el valor de las cuotas proteccionistas de EUA, impuestos, tarifas y recargos de barcos y puertos, el más caro del mundo, tendrán que ser transferidos al pueblo consumidor puertorriqueño, lo que encarece sobremedida la mercancía.

Concluye Denis, “Desde 1970 hasta 2010, la Ley Jones costó a Puerto Rico 29 mil millones de dólares. Proyectada desde 1920 hasta el presente, este costo se convierte en \$75,8 mil millones de dólares. Irónicamente, este costo de \$75,8 mil millones es superior a la cantidad de la actual deuda pública”. (latinorebels.com)

La Ley Jones no es sino una expresión más del colonialismo. Así que para solucionar la deuda de una vez por todas, es imprescindible la independencia de Puerto Rico.

¡Viva Puerto Rico Libre! □