



PHOTO: VIVIANA WEINSTEIN
 Denver, see p. 8.

Muslim Lives Matter

By Monica Moorehead

The heinous, senseless murders of Deah Shaddy Barakat, 23, of Syrian descent; his spouse, Yusor Mohammad Abu-Salha, 21; and her sister, Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha, 19, of Palestinian descent and all Muslim, near the campus of the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill on Feb. 10, has evoked shock, sadness and outrage worldwide. Protests and vigils have been held in the U.S. and throughout the world, including Occupied Gaza, to expose the root cause — Islamophobia — of the execution-style murders of these young people.

The local police attempted to downplay the motives of the admitted murderer, Craig Hicks, a white neighbor, as a parking dispute. But the family of the two sisters and others dispelled that notion by pointing out that on more than one occasion, Hicks targeted them specifically by coming to their apartment and brandishing a gun in his belt. The families are demanding a federal investigation of the murders as a hate crime against Muslims.

These murders have also helped to expose the callousness and indifference of the big-business media. Following the murders, there were no breaking news announcements in the electronic press, online or on TV. These murders were treated like any news story.

Compare that to the Paris killings at the Charlie Hebdo office on Jan. 7 in response to the magazine's satirical Islamophobic cartoons. Unlike the North Carolina incident, non-stop for hours upon hours, days upon days, all news was relegated to the back burner except for Paris. The mainstream media, the mouthpiece for the ruling class and Western governments, had a virtual field day using the killings as a political pretext for spewing anti-Muslim rhetoric and racism. This propaganda is itself an act of terrorism at home and abroad.

In response to this blatant slap in the face by the powers that be, the people made Twitter the social media center for sharing criticism against the local police, the government and the media for downplaying the North Carolina murders. #ChapelHillshootings and #MuslimLivesMatter became two of the top trends worldwide. That's what every interested person was following.

When we consider these recent mur

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WW PHOTO: ANDY KATZ
 Clockwise from top: Deah, Yusor, and Razan; New York anti-Islamophobia protest; Vigil in Chapel Hill, N.C.

5,000 oil workers on strike



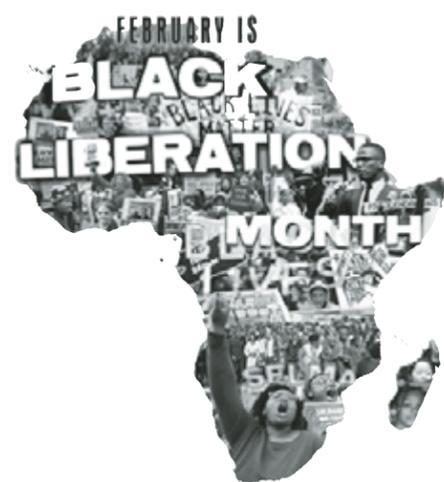
WW PHOTO: MARTHA GREVATT
 Toledo, Ohio, Feb. 16. Job safety is major issue in oil strike.

By Martha Grevatt
 Toledo, Ohio

Since Feb. 1, thousands of oil workers across the country — members of the United Steelworkers union — have been on an unfair labor practice strike. This is a big strike involving 5,000 workers at 11 refineries in California, Texas, Kentucky, Washington state, Indiana and Ohio. Initially, Shell, Tesoro and LyondellBasell were hit with picket lines; on Feb. 7, two BP facilities were added to the strike.

"Shell refused to provide us with a counter-offer and left the bargaining table," stated Steelworkers President Leo Gerard, explaining this was an unfair labor

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BLACK LIBERATION MONTH

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ALABAMA

Same-sex marriage wins

Martha Grevatt

The number of states that deny couples of the same sex the most basic human right to marry continues to shrink. Only 13 states are left. By federal court order, on Feb. 12, Alabama became the 37th state to begin issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

On Jan. 23, U.S. District Judge Callie Granade struck down Alabama's marriage ban, which voters passed in 2006. State officials then asked the U.S. Supreme Court to stay Judge Granade's ruling and prohibit county courts from issuing licenses until the high court rules on marriage equality cases from four other states later this year. The Supreme Court denied the stay on Feb. 9.

After some county courts began granting marriage licenses to all couples, Chief Justice Roy Moore of the Alabama Supreme Court ordered all probate courts to deny licenses to same-sex couples. In true Confederate fashion, Judge Moore raised the banner of "states' rights."

Moore gained notoriety in 2002 for refusing to obey a federal court order to remove a huge monument to the Ten Commandments from the grounds of his courthouse. The Ku Klux Klan of Mississippi has issued a "call to arms" to "white Christians" to rally behind Judge Moore for "resisting [the] Imperialist Communist Homosexual agenda," reported the Southern Poverty

Law Center's Hatewatch blog, on Feb. 10.

On Feb. 12, Judge Granade ruled against Moore, stating that all probate courts must issue same-sex marriage licenses. At last count, all but 17 of Alabama's 67 counties were honoring Granade's order. This includes Mobile County, where Kim Gebauer and Regina Gebauer stayed all day for four days at the probate court until the clerk opened the window and gave them a license. The window had been closed after Moore's order, making it also impossible for heterosexual couples to wed.

Despite the latest federal ruling, the state Supreme Court agreed 7-2 to hear petitions from two right-wing Alabama groups seeking to retain the marriage ban.

Given how much bigotry against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people still lingers in the Bible Belt South, couples such as the Gebauers are showing tremendous courage when they make their commitments in the public eye.

In April, the U.S. Supreme Court will hear marriage rights' cases from Ohio, Michigan, Kentucky and Tennessee, with a ruling expected in June. The Alabama win, the latest in a string of victories, has the LGBTQ movement even more convinced that same-sex marriage will soon be legal throughout the country. That may well be the case, but the movement and its allies should be prepared to rise up if a court decision comes down otherwise. □

Black History Month matters: Support WW



The Black Lives Matter movement, which started in response to the killing of unarmed Michael Brown by a racist cop in Ferguson, Mo., is the latest heroic chapter in the centuries-long struggle to end the vile saga of racism and national oppression, including slavery, that permeates the history and everyday reality of life in the United States.

Black History Month, founded in 1926, is in essence Black Liberation Month. As part of our commemoration, Workers World has been writing about some of the many sacrifices and struggles carried out by people of African descent to throw off their chains and end institutionalized racism.

But WW doesn't just cover the Black struggle in February. We write about the struggle against racism in depth all year, every year. WW has had continual coverage of the ongoing protests in Ferguson and the national movement that exploded after grand juries failed to indict the racist cops who killed Brown

and unarmed Eric Garner in Staten Island, N.Y.

Our coverage of the Black struggle here and around the world is based on the principle of supporting national self-determination:

Oppressed people have the right to fight to end all forms of inequality and injustice — by any means necessary. Those words were first spoken by the great Malcolm X, assassinated 50 years ago on Feb. 21, 1965.

If you appreciate this coverage, it's time to join the Workers World Supporter Program.

Please help us continue to publish anti-racist, working-class truth and build the struggles needed to make revolutionary change.

For the past 38 years, WW subscribers have helped maintain the paper by joining the WW Supporter Program. We invite you to sign up today! Write checks to Workers World Fund Drive. Send them to Workers World, 147 W. 24th St., 2nd floor, New York, NY 10011. Include your name and address. Or donate online at workers.org/articles/donate/ It's also possible to contribute there by joining the Workers World Supporter Program and giving either a lump sum or a monthly donation. Be sure to check it out. **And thanks!**

WORKERS WORLD PARTY

Who we are & what we're fighting for

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

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

We fight every kind of oppression. Racism, sexism,

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

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

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Striking oil workers win support in Texas

By Gloria Rubac
Houston

As you enter the United Steelworkers Local 13-227 union hall in Pasadena, Texas, just outside Houston, the signs and notices announce that oil workers are on strike. Entering strike central, a large room with a big table in the middle, you see and hear the low-level but constant buzz of organizing activity. Union Vice President Jeff Lewis is signing in workers who come in for their picket shift. Another union worker is on the phone reminding workers when their shift is scheduled.

Of 11 facilities involved in the national oil strike, five of them are in the Houston area, where the union represents 5,000 oil workers.

As plant gates are assigned, a few workers eat a meal of spicy boudin, a Cajun sausage that someone has prepared for the strikers. The shuttle driver comes in to find out who needs a ride to the Shell plant gate. A community activist supporting the strike brings in a \$25 donation for the strike fund before he volunteers to walk a picket line.

One striker told Workers World that he has been forced to work 36 hours straight. “I was operating a control board with buttons, and after 24 hours the buttons started to blur into each other. I was so sleepy I literally couldn’t see.”

Tensions heated up this week at the Shell Deer Park refinery when officials



Houston’s youth and political activists support oil workers’ struggle.

ordered strikers off the picket line with fabricated stories of workers blocking entrances.

Community supports strikers

The union together with the community has held several protests, a major one at Shell headquarters in downtown Houston led by U.S. Reps. Gene Green and Al Green. Over 300 workers, their families and community leaders and activists surrounded the square block occupied by the major oil company, chanting, singing and carrying picket signs.

The Oil Workers Strike Solidarity Committee was formed in Houston to organize support and build community solidarity by walking the picket lines at the refineries. One young activist, Ma-

rie Brignac, grew up with a father who worked for Shell. As she walked the picket line to honor him, she recalled worrying as a child if her father, a refinery worker, would come home safely from work or be injured in an explosion.

After putting in 35 years with Shell, her father was fired for trying to enforce safety on the job.

In the Houston area, workers who are not on strike are showing solidarity by cooking food, barbecuing, getting food donated to the strikers and even baking cookies. Others are finding temporary jobs for strikers.

Texas has never had a high rate of union membership. Politicians often brag that the low rate of unionization is one of the state’s biggest assets in at-

tracting new business. Lately, however, union membership has been slowly increasing, going from 518,000 in 2013 to 543,000 last year, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The oil industry is the richest industry in the world, but the owners’ greed and their bad faith bargaining have prevented efforts to improve serious health and safety challenges in workplaces. This endangers not only the workers but people living in proximity to facilities.

While I walked the picket line, one of the workers pointed out the irony that Shell and the other companies where workers are striking could afford to pay for extra security at each of the plant gates for 24 hours a day, yet they couldn’t pay for more workers to cut the forced overtime in their plants.

The five largest oil companies — BP, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, Exxon Mobil and Shell — made a combined total profits of \$93 billion in 2013, or \$177,000 per minute, according to American Progress.org. But the big five’s profits declined by 27 percent in 2014, so they’ll probably use this decline to pressure Congress to retain their \$2.4-billion-per-year tax breaks, opines American Progress.

As one of the strikers said, “Yes, we do make good wages, but the profits of the oil industry are so astronomical that the refusal to cut forced overtime and consider worker safety as well as the safety of the community is criminal.” □

5,000 oil workers out on strike

Continued from page 1

practice dispute. “We had no choice but to give notice of a work stoppage.” (abc7.com/news) Shell is the lead negotiator for the affected oil companies.

The Steelworkers’ master oil contract covers 30,000 oil workers at 230 refineries, pipelines, terminals and petrochemical plants. They have been represented by the USW since the union absorbed PACE (Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Workers International Union) in 2005, itself a merger of several unions including the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers. The 65 refineries involved in the negotiations produce 64 percent of the oil in the United States.

The main issue in contention is safety on the job. At one of the struck facilities, a Tesoro refinery in Anacortes, Wash., seven workers were killed in a 2010 explosion.

USW International Vice President Gary Beevers explained, “This work stoppage is about onerous overtime; unsafe staffing levels; dangerous conditions the industry continues to ignore; the daily occurrences of fires, emissions, leaks and explosions that threaten local communities without the industry doing much about it; the industry’s refusal to make opportunities for workers in the trade crafts; the flagrant contracting out that impacts health and safety on the job; and the erosion of our workplace, where qualified and experienced union workers are replaced by contractors when they leave or retire.” Beevers leads the Steelworkers’ National Oil Bargaining Program. (abc7.com/news)

The workers are standing strong and winning support in what is the first national oil industry strike since 1980. At the BP refinery in Whiting, Ind., the union has almost 6,000 “likes” on its USW Local 7-1 Strike Support Facebook page. Pictures on the page show delegations of supporters from Lake Central Teachers Association,

National Association of Letter Carriers Local 1326 and United Auto Workers Local 551 picketing with the oil workers.

Local 551 rank-and-file activist and Ford electrician Scott Houldieson has already visited the picket line several times, always with a new delegation. On one occasion his local president joined him to present the striking workers with a \$900 donation.

“On Tuesday [Feb. 10] I went to the picket line before work,” Houldieson told WW. “I met four BP electricians. We started talking about the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill that killed 11 workers and the Texas City refinery explosion that killed 15 workers and injured scores more. It became clear that this was not just a strike about wages and working conditions. This was not just an issue for BP workers, but an issue important to the surrounding communities that could be gravely impacted by a calamity at the huge refinery.”

In Toledo, Ohio, where another struck BP refinery is located, 150 members and supporters of USW Local 1-346 rallied and marched in near-zero temperatures. Speakers from the striking local and other Steelworker locals, as well as USW District Director Dave McCall, were upbeat about the strike and stressed the overriding issue of worker and community safety. Workers chanted “No contract, no peace” and “Safe refineries save lives” as they marched. Steelworkers drove over an hour from USW Local 1299 in Detroit and parts of Ohio to stand out in the bitter cold with the Toledo strikers.

Solidarity is growing around the country. In Boston, USW Local 8751 members who comprise Team Solidarity, the Voice of the United School Bus Workers, stated in a solidarity statement: “The oil workers’ strike is a frontline battle deserving the solidarity of every worker and every sector of society. Team Solidarity stands ready to assist in this heroic and important strike in any way we can.” □

Muslim Lives Matter

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE



Solidarity demonstration in Philadelphia.

Continued from page 1

ders and the violence and bigotry against Muslim people in general, especially since the 9/11 attacks in 2001, the main question we should ask is not why the Feb. 10 tragedy happened, but when it would happen again and under what circumstances — if we don’t mobilize to stop it.

The North Carolina killings cannot be separated from the murders of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, John Crawford III, Jessie Hernandez and even the most recently videotaped murder of Antonio Zambrano-Montes. These well-known cases and countless others are linked to growing racist state repression, legal and extra-legal. The untimely deaths of these victims will help forge a broader multinational, working-class fightback against the entire rotten capitalist system, which was initiated by the Black Lives Matter movement.

Protests around the U.S.

Already there have been mobilizations protesting the North Carolina killings in

which Workers World correspondents participated.

Thousands turned out Feb. 11 at a vigil at UNC in Chapel Hill, N.C., in remembrance of the three young Muslims murdered near the school. Another vigil was held the evening of Feb. 12 at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, where Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha was a student.

Some 100 students and community members came out for a vigil on Feb. 12 in Philadelphia despite frigid weather. They gathered at the base of Temple University’s Bell Tower in solidarity with the three Muslim students murdered in Chapel Hill.

In New York City on Feb. 14, more than a thousand people, many of them women from nearby Muslim communities, gathered in front of CNN’s New York headquarters near Columbus Circle and then marched to Fox News at 1211 Sixth Avenue. The protest demanded an end to media outlets spreading Islamophobia and for fair and balanced reporting by the media. The call was to “Humanize Deah, Yusor and Razan.”

Andy Katz, Joe Piette and John Catalinotto contributed reports.

Indiana woman criminalized after miscarriage

By Sue Davis

An outrageous miscarriage of justice occurred Feb. 3 in Indiana based on a real miscarriage. Purvi Patel, a 33-year-old, unmarried woman of South Asian-American descent, was found guilty of two contradictory crimes: feticide and neglect of a child. In March she could be sentenced to 70 years in prison.

On July 13, 2013, Patel went to the emergency room at St. Joseph Hospital in Mishawaka, Ind., with heavy bleeding after delivering a stillborn fetus and depositing the remains in a bag in a dumpster.

After questioning by medical personnel, police homicide detectives interrogated Patel and found, after searching

her home and mobile phone, that she had obtained drugs from Hong Kong which she took in an attempt to abort the fetus. That led to the charge of feticide, even though blood tests revealed no such drugs in her system.

The charge of neglect of a child was based on what can only be called “junk science.” The court pathologist used a “whole lung float test” to determine that the baby was born alive. But, according to RH Reality Check senior legal analysts Jessica Mason Pieklo and Imani Gandy, who discussed the case in a Feb. 9 podcast, that “test has been discredited since the 1980s.” Besides, Patel testified that the fetus was not breathing when it was expelled from her body.

Yet a jury took only five hours to deliver a guilty verdict on both counts. That means the jury discounted testimony absolving Patel of both charges and believed she was criminally liable for wanting to self-abort an unexpected pregnancy.

Criminalizing pregnant women

How could this happen in the U.S. in 2015? How could a fetal homicide law intended to protect an unborn child be turned upside down to apply to a pregnant woman? According to Indiana attorney Kathrine Jack, the feticide law, initially used to prosecute illegal abortion providers, was later expanded to cover men who were violent with pregnant partners. It was never “intended to apply to pregnant women. ... To use feticide charges in this way is bad for public health. Women will become afraid to go to their doctors for fear of arrest.” (Guardian, U.K., Aug. 26)

This criminalization of pregnancy could be repeated in 38 states that currently have fetal homicide laws. Alabama, Mississippi and South Carolina have already sent mothers to jail — mostly for abusing drugs or alcohol while pregnant.

A peer-reviewed study published in 2013 by the National Advocates for Pregnant Women documented 413 arrests or other police actions that denied pregnant women of “physical liberty” between 1973, when *Roe v. Wade* was decided, and 2005. Since 2005, NAPW has identified an additional 380 cases, with more every week. Data reveal that targets of so-called “pro-life” laws are predominantly low-income women and women of color. (advocatesforpregnantwomen.org, Feb. 4)

Patel, a woman of color who had a relationship with a married man, lived in a strict Hindu community where sex before marriage and a baby born out of wedlock were taboo. Patel, who may have felt deep

shame, had very little knowledge of menstruation and pregnancy since no sex education is provided in Indiana schools. She had no prenatal care and only limited access to costly abortion services.

RHRC legal expert Pieklo noted that the prosecution, rather than sticking to concrete evidence, made “assumptions about how an appropriate mother behaves. ... They said that [Patel] didn’t cry enough, that she was having a difficult time looking doctors in the eye when she was talking to them, that she was very cold in her demeanor. They spun that to say she was a murderer. [But] those are also classic trauma symptoms.”

It is an understatement that cultural issues separated Patel from the jury.

“This case and the verdict should send shockwaves through everyone who has an opinion about the right to choose abortion,” reads the NAPW statement. Because the state of Indiana did not prove Patel gave birth to a live baby who was then neglected, but did “set precedent for harsh punishment of women who have abortions or experience pregnancy losses,” NAPW will support an appeal of the case.

But this travesty of justice should never have come to trial. Patel should not have been forced to endure the intense public humiliation of a very private, exceedingly personal experience.

Misogyny on steroids characterizes today’s dead-end capitalism. It seeks to terrorize and criminalize poor, working-class women, especially from oppressed nationalities, as well as all other “outsiders” in this society, in a desperate attempt to keep the wealthy, white, male ruling class intact. The only solution to guarantee reproductive justice for all women is a revolution that eventually establishes a compassionate, classless society. □

On the Picket Line

By Matty Starrdust and Sue Davis

Record snowfall burdens low-wage workers

As many feet of snow continue to bury the Northeast, hourly workers are among those most affected. For far too many low-wage hourly workers, closed roads and suspended mass transit mean longer commutes to and from work, resulting in less time on the clock. Workers who are unable to get to their jobs or whose workplaces are closed due to blizzards are often forced to dip into their sick days or vacation time — if they’re fortunate enough to have paid time-off. When schools are closed, workers with children are often faced with either hiring a sitter or taking time off to care for their children, both of which are unaffordable for many.

A study by the American Highway Users Alliance estimated that the delays and closures in late January and halfway into February have cost the city of Boston \$265 million per day, two-thirds of which is lost wages for hourly workers. With more snow forecast, low-wage hourly workers will continue to be unfairly penalized through no fault of their own. (wbur.org, Feb. 11)

Daycare workers still waiting for pay, benefits

After workers at Square One child care facilities in Massachusetts were misclassified as temporary employees and denied fair wages, benefits and the protection of their co-workers’ United Auto Workers contract for four years, they took to the courts to resolve the issue. On March 21, 2013, Administrative Law Judge Michael A. Rosas agreed with the workers and ordered Square One management to grant back pay and benefits to the misclassified workers. But the employer filed for an exemption. Two years later, the workers are still waiting for what is rightfully theirs. UAW Local 2322 has circulated a petition demanding that the National Labor Relations Board enforce the judge’s ruling and hold Square One management responsible for its blatant and ongoing violations of the National Labor Relations Act. Sign the petition online at tinyurl.com/UAW2322.

Staples will fire workers to dodge health care mandate

A recently leaked internal memo from Staples management threatens part-time workers with disciplinary action and even termination if they are caught working more than 25 hours a week at the big-box office supply stores. The start of the new hardline policy coincides with the provision of the Affordable Care Act, effective Jan. 1, 2015, which requires employers to offer health care to employees who work at least 30 hours per week — or incur a \$3,000 penalty per employee. It seems Staples, which pulled in more than \$23 billion in sales in 2013 and employed 46,361 full-time and 36,647 part-time associates as of Feb. 1, 2014, would sooner cut hours and fire workers rather than provide basic health coverage.

One Staples worker, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said, “Before January, it was a smack on the wrist if anyone went over 25 hours — they got an email scolding them, saying, ‘You went over 25, try not to do that.’ But now it’s become really serious.” According to a report released by pollster FiveThirtyEight, several hundred thousand workers are scheduled for fewer hours as employers like Staples try to dodge the health care mandate. (buzzfeed.com, Feb. 9)

\$15 minimum wage wouldn’t cause layoffs

Amid a growing movement coast to coast calling for a raise in the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour, researchers Robert Pollin and Jeannette Wicks-Lim of the Political Economy Research Institute examined the real consequences if the fast food industry more than doubled the minimum wage. Their report, released in January, demolishes the age-old argument that higher wages would cause mass layoffs and reduced revenue. According to the report, the industry could easily absorb the cost of a \$15 minimum wage. Higher wages would result in higher productivity and lower employee turnover rates, which together would allow restaurants to cover 20 percent of the wage hikes. This, along with modest price increases of 3 percent a year and an already-projected 2.5 percent a year sales growth, would fully cover a \$15 minimum wage in the fast food industry. Opponents of raising the minimum wage need to revise their anti-worker scare tactics in light of the study’s findings. (pbs.org, Jan. 28; peri.umass.edu) □



The first major protest against Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan took place outside the Redford Theater the evening of Feb. 10 as Duggan delivered his second annual “State of the City” address. Duggan is the first white mayor of Detroit in 40 years and a political cohort of right-wing Gov. Rick Snyder.

Protesters demanded the mayor declare a state of emergency in the city due to 30,000 water shutoffs last year; 62,000 tax foreclosures looming this year; and no end to chronic unemployment and growing poverty. They demanded Duggan stop all water shutoffs; put a moratorium on foreclosures; restore retirees’ pensions and health benefits stolen by the banks during the city’s recent bankruptcy; and boot the Veolia corporation out of the Detroit Water and

Sewerage Department.

The boisterous demonstration was multinational, with youth and older activists crowding the sidewalk by the theater, undeterred by the large police presence. “Corporate money well spent, Duggan works for the 1 percent!” was one of the popular chants. The protest ended with a “people’s state of the city speak-out.”

Initiated by the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions & Utility Shutoffs, the action was endorsed and participated in by such other groups as Detroit Active and Retired Employees Association (DAREA); Detroit Eviction Defense; People’s Water Board; FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together); and the Detroit Light Brigade.

— Story and photo by Kris Hamel

Wisconsin students, workers resist Gov. Walker's austerity axe

By Bryan G. Pfeifer

Resistance to Gov. Scott Walker's 2015-17 budget proposal — Senate Bill 21, released in early February — is ongoing across Wisconsin.

Walker wants to cut a minimum of \$300 million from the 26-campus University of Wisconsin system — attacking faculty, staff, students and their communities.

Walker's aggressive campaign against unions, the public sector and communities of color has already won him support from the big financial and industrial capitalists who control U.S. politics, as reflected in speculation that he could be a 2016 Republican contender for president.

Walker calls his proposals "Act 10," after the Jim Crow austerity law that drew hundreds of thousands of labor, community and student protesters from around the world to the state Capitol in Madison in 2011.

Act 10 cut wages for public sector workers by increasing health care and pension payments, eliminated payroll dues deductions for public sector unions and forced the unions to annually secure the votes of 51 percent of the entire bargaining unit, not just of those who voted. Among other union-busting provisions, it mandated that, if certified, these unions could only bargain over wages up to the rate of inflation.

As a result, membership in public sector unions, such as the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, plummeted to the lowest level in 20 years, health and safety measures have declined, privatization has taken place in the university system, and poverty — especially for children and communities of color — has skyrocketed. (wccf.org)

In the 2011-13 state budget cycle, the largest cuts to the UW system in history took place. K-12 public education was also subjected to massive cuts, while charter schools were increased.

State support for public education has greatly declined in Wisconsin over three decades, under both the Democrats and

the Republicans. Skyrocketing tuition and student debt make access to higher education increasingly out of reach for poor and working-class families.

Attacks on public education and the unions have a disproportionate effect on people of color, women and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer communities even as services and policies such as affirmative action, resource centers and cultural programs are reduced and/or eliminated.

Fight the bondholders!

The implementation of Act 10 has cut the power of public sector unions, such as AFSCME and the American Federation of Teachers, on UW campuses. Along with hundreds of millions of dollars in budget cuts, privatization of administrative services has increased, with possibly grave consequences to the Wisconsin Retirement System, a defined-benefit pension



"Fight the Cuts" protest at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, Feb. 4.

system. The capitalists and their servants like Walker want to take away even more from the people and hand it over to the banks and bondholders.

In the fall of 2014, UW-Superior and UW-Wausau privatized their custodial services. The new hires receive as little as \$8 an hour, with inferior and more costly benefits. As private sector employees, they are no longer in the state health and retirement systems. (wseu-24.org)

As of last July 1, all two-year colleges in the UW system and one four-year col-

lege had privatized all the formerly campus-owned bookstores.

Many union manufacturing jobs in Wisconsin were decimated by a combination of the North American Free Trade Agreement, multiple forms of outsourcing and replacing workers with technology in this era of dead-end capitalism. Black workers have taken the brunt of the unrelenting capitalist austerity, with the highest percentage of incarceration, one of the highest infant mortality rates and thousands of home foreclosures in Milwaukee.

Classified staff jobs in the UW system are often the only living-wage opportunities available — with such benefits as state health insurance and a pension — for women and workers of color in urban, rural and semi-rural areas. Many campus administrators who are either capitalists themselves or sympathetic to running universities like banks and corporations have expressed willingness to go along with the "restructuring" of the UW system.

But outrage and resistance are building statewide.

'They say cut back. We say fight back!'

On Feb. 4, the day after Walker's gubernatorial address, hundreds of students at UW-Milwaukee protested his proposed cuts to the university system. With community, staff and faculty support, protesters marched through the student union and rallied at Spaight's Plaza to demand, "No ifs, no buts, no education cuts!"

Members of the Progressive Students of Milwaukee unveiled a banner over a third-floor railing that read: "They say cut back. We say fight back! No cuts to UW."

In the evening, hundreds more protested. The administration responded by



Brandi Grayson of the Young, Gifted and Black Coalition, speaking to hundreds of protesters at the state Capitol in Madison, Feb. 14.

calling out campus and Milwaukee police. (fightbacknews.org). Another mass protest took place at UWM on Feb. 7.

On Feb. 6, students, faculty, labor and community members — carrying signs reading, "No cuts, no layoffs, no privatization" and chanting, "Hey, hey, ho, ho! Walker's cuts have got to go!" — gathered outside the UW Board of Regents' meeting in Madison. Board members, most of whom come from banking and corporate interests, barred them from the public meeting.

The same day, the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association held a community strategy session that drew over 400 public educators and their supporters.

Protests have also taken place at UW-Eau Claire and other locations.

On Feb. 14, in subzero temperatures, hundreds protested at the state Capitol in Madison. Speakers included faculty, staff, students and community members, including "Young, Gifted and Black" Coalition leader Brandi Grayson, who linked the struggles of the the "Black Lives Matter" movement to the fight to fully fund public education.

The Wisconsin Bail Out the People Movement put out a statement titled "Fight austerity! Fight the banks and corporations! Education is a human right! Build a global people's movement!" (<http://tinyurl.com/owwcegk>).

For more information and updates, see at [facebook.com/OccupyRiverwest](https://www.facebook.com/OccupyRiverwest), or [facebook.com/psmuwm](https://www.facebook.com/psmuwm). Twitter: #saveouruw Web: overpasslightbrigade.org, and wibailoutpeople.org.

Bryan G. Pfeifer is a UW-Manitowoc and UW-Milwaukee alumnus. He was editor-in-chief of the UWM Post and co-coordinator of the Progressive Student Network at UW-Milwaukee.

Mini lockouts: Has Walmart come to the waterfront?

By Cheryl LaBash

On Feb. 14, President Barack Obama dispatched Secretary of Labor Tom Perez to meet with the International Longshore and Warehouse Workers Union and the Pacific Maritime Association "to urge them to resolve their dispute quickly at the bargaining table." (joc.com)

The longshore workers' labor contract expired July 1 and contract provisions were not extended.

This government intervention is being demanded by corporate interests, not labor. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Retail Federation, which includes Walmart and other capitalist interests, are clamoring for a settlement because of the disruption in the critical international supply chain.

The backup of unloaded ships is growing. Dozens are anchored offshore waiting for ILWU members to unload them, blocked from working by the

PMA's mini lockouts.

On Feb. 12, 14, 15 and 16, the PMA inflicted a four-day "mini lockout" on West Coast dockers and their union, leaving Feb. 13 as the one day out of five that the PMA would allow them to work. It was the second week in a row the PMA refused to call ILWU members to work container cargo on weekends, holidays or any night shifts. According to ILWU rank and filers, as early as last fall the PMA even began sending work gangs home after four hours.

The PMA's mini lockout campaign is now longer than its 2002 ten-day lockout that led to the Bush administration imposing an anti-labor Taft-Hartley cooling off period.

Norm Parks, a longshore retiree who participated in the negotiations for seven coastwide contracts, local contracts and served over 25 years on the International Executive Board, among other elected posts, commented to WW: "I have a theory that McKenna and the

steering committee have utilized the mini lockouts to create uncertainty and doubt among the rank and file and as a consequence caused chaos among shippers and retailers. The employer has taken the role the union used to have. PMA is adopting strategies, long associated with ILWU's militant job actions, such as withholding labor."

"The ports work seven days a week, 24 hours a day depending on the number of ships in port," pointed out current ILWU Local 10 rank and filer, past secretary/treasurer and executive board member, Clarence Thomas. He went on to tell WW: "Traditionally, jobs are dispatched from the ILWU hiring hall whenever ships are in port for loading and unloading. Now, the PMA is treating the longshore workers as if they are nonunion employees of Walmart by telling us when we can work, how many hours and what days on short notice even though there is work to be done."

The only publicized sticking point in

the negotiations involves a union demand to get rid of area arbitrators who have been shown to be biased in favor of the PMA. For example, Terry Lane, the area arbitrator for the Port of San Francisco, is a former vice president of the PMA. (Journal of Commerce, July 23, 1998) The PMA represents its 72 member companies, including cargo carriers, terminal operators and stevedores, in contract negotiations with the ILWU. (pmanet.org)

Impartial area arbitrators are vital for any new agreement. The PMA's reason for foot dragging negotiations on this issue is made clear in a Feb. 5 article: "The ILWU on July 1, 2014, refused to extend its previous contract. 'With no contract in place, there is no arbitration system in place,' [PMA Pres.] McKenna said. 'Without an arbitrator, the union can essentially do whatever they want, and that includes staging devastating slowdowns up and down the coast,' he said." (joc.com) □

African-American jockeys battle racism

By Dolores Cox

The Saratoga Race Course in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2013. It opened in 1863, and became a summer getaway resort for tourists and wealthy socialites like the Vanderbilts and Rockefellers.

In Long Island, N.Y., horse racing dates back to 1665 and was the country's initial pastime. During the Civil War, race tracks were closed down in the South, where horse racing had been quite popular. However, the sport was revived in the North; New York became the racing center.

Enslaved Africans on Southern plantations who worked in horse stables often trained horses and rode in informal races. In the early 1800s, horse racing became an organized sport. Black jockeys, the first professional athletes, came to dominate horse racing for two centuries. The earliest known Black jockey star in the 1800s was only known as "Simon."

Black jockey Isaac Burns was born on a Kentucky farm in 1861. His father was a free Black man and bricklayer, who joined the Union Army and died in a Confederate prisoner-of-war camp during the Civil War. As a tribute to his grandfather, Green Murphy, Burns changed his name to Murphy when he started racing horses.

America Burns, Murphy's mother, worked at a stable in Lexington, Ky. There, Eli Jordan, a Black trainer, prepared Murphy for his first race in 1875. By the end of 1876, he had won 11 races.

In the first Kentucky Derby, held in 1875 at Churchill Downs in Lexington, 13 of the 15 jockeys were African Americans. From then

until 1902, more than half of the winning horses at the Derby were ridden by African-American jockeys.

Murphy's win in 1879 at the Saratoga Race Course brought him national attention. In 1884, he won first place in the Kentucky Derby. Subsequently, he won the American Derby four times in Chicago. In 1890, after winning a race against a white jockey, racial hatred caused his popularity to fall, and he was forced to retire in 1895.

Murphy was the first jockey to win the Kentucky Derby three times. He had the best winning average in history. In 1955, he became the first Black jockey to be inducted into the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame in Saratoga Springs. The second Black jockey to be so recognized posthumously was Willie Simms in 1977. He had won the Kentucky Derby in 1896 and 1898.



Isaac Murphy



Jimmy Winkfield, an African American, born in 1882 in Kentucky, was a self-taught jockey. His father was a sharecropper and had watched thoroughbreds parade down the roads. Winkfield jumped fences, chased horses and rode them bareback.

In 1898, at age 16, Winkfield rode his first race in Chicago. A year later, he rode in the Kentucky Derby and won the race back-to-back: in 1901, at age 19, and then again the following year. In 1902, he was the last African American to win the Kentucky Derby. Winkfield was one of only five men, including Murphy, to win the Kentucky Derby in consecutive years — marks of best career performances.

Racism drove Black jockeys off the race tracks

In the early 1900s, opportunities for Black jockeys began to disappear. White horse owners and trainers preferred white jockeys. On the tracks, Winkfield became the target of racism by white jockeys. He also received death threats from the Ku Klux Klan. He fled to Europe, where he won horse riding championships in Russia, Poland, Germany and France.

In 1941, following Germany's invasion of France, Winkfield returned to the U.S., where he became a horse groomer and trainer. In 1953, he returned to France and opened a jockey training school.

In 1961, Winkfield returned to the U.S. to watch the Kentucky Derby. However, when he and his daughter, Liliane Casey, arrived at the race course, they were told they could not enter through the front door. Once inside, nobody spoke to them.

Winkfield died in France in 1974. In 2004, he was posthumously inducted

into the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame.

Joe Drape stated in "Black Maestro: The Epic Life of an American Legend," his biography of Winkfield, that the jockey's skill was secondary to his skin color: "An Anti-Colored Union was in place, with the goal of running black riders off the race-track. It had begun earlier in the year at the Queens County track when the white jockeys ... put the word out that if owners wanted to take home first-place purses, they'd best not ride the colored jockeys."

The book notes, "Sometimes [the white jockeys] pocketed, or surrounded, a black jockey until they could ride him into and over the rail. Their whips found the thighs, hands, and face of the colored boy next to them more often than the horse they were riding. Every day a black rider ended up in the dirt; and every day racing officials looked the other way." (William Morrow/HarperCollins, 2006)

From the early 1900s through the late 1940s, Black jockeys were excluded from major tracks in the Jim Crow South. Beginning in 1908, anti-gambling legislative bills led to shutdowns of race tracks. In New York, the tracks were closed in 1911. But when they reopened in 1913, notable African-American jockeys did not return. Black jockeys, in general, began to disappear. Racial prejudice drove nearly every Black jockey out of the profession.

Arthur Ashe, the late Black professional tennis player, said: "The sport of horse racing is the only instance where the participation of Blacks stopped almost completely while the sport itself continued — a sad commentary on American life. ... Isaac Murphy, so highly admired during his time for his skills and character, would have been ashamed of his sport." (Edward Hotelling, "They're Off! Horse Racing at Saratoga." Syracuse University Press, 1995) □

'THE BOOK OF NEGROES' TV miniseries tackles historical myths

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

"The Book of Negroes" miniseries by Lawrence Hill, director Clement Virgo and executive producer Damon D'Oliveira. The cast includes Aunjanue Ellis, Cuba Gooding Jr., Lyriq Bent and Louis Gossett Jr.

This six-part, historical fiction, television series recently concluded its premiere over the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation network. It airs over Black Entertainment Television beginning on Feb. 16.

"The Book of Negroes" is based on a novel of the same name by Lawrence Hill, an African-Canadian writer. It dramatizes the actual history of those captured into slavery on the West Coast of Africa, continuing through their journey to the Carolinas, New York, Nova Scotia in Canada and then to Sierra Leone.

The series examines the brutality of the 18th-century Atlantic slave trade and the nature of the system of human bondage and racism in what were then British colonies in North America. The principal character, Aminata Diallo, played by Aunjanue Ellis, is captured at the age of 11 in Guinea and shipped off to the Southern colonies in the 1750s.

During the course of the story, families are broken up, children are sold from their parents, and women are harshly exploited and assaulted — all while the knowledge and skills of the enslaved Af-

ricans are utilized to further enhance the profitability of the plantation economy.

Despite these horrors, the Africans continue to resist their enslavement through various forms of rebellion, from the slave ships to the plantations, where the rich landowners seek to dehumanize the Africans they designated as their property.

Different view of 'American Revolution'

An often-hidden historical fact brought out is that more Africans fought alongside the British during the colonial war than with the future rulers of the United States. The British promised emancipation to those slaves who joined their ranks after 1776.

Some historians, such as Gerald Horne, maintain that the colonists wanted independence in order to preserve slavery. During this period, a debate was developing in England over the abolition of slavery there.

In his book entitled "The Counter-Revolution of 1776," Horne emphasizes that "for European colonists, the major threat to security in North America was a foreign invasion combined with an insurrection of the enslaved. And as 1776 approached, London-imposed abolition throughout the colonies was a very real and threatening possibility — a possibility the founding fathers feared could bring the slave rebellions of Jamaica and Antigua to the 13 colonies. To forestall it,

they went to war."

Horne challenges the official narrative of the "War of Independence," suggesting, rather: "The so-called Revolutionary War was in large part a counterrevolution, a conservative movement that the founding fathers fought in order to preserve their liberty to enslave others — and which today takes the form of a racialized conservatism and a persistent racism targeting the descendants of the enslaved. The Counter-Revolution of 1776 drives us to a radical new understanding of the traditional heroic creation myth of the United States."

Hill's novel rests on the actual "Book of Negroes," a document containing the names of Africans who were slated for freedom once the British monarchy won the war. However, Britain lost the war and the monarchists later took thousands of former slaves with them to Nova Scotia, another British colony, where they suffered extremely cold weather, near famine conditions and vicious racism.

In an interview with a British newspaper, Hill recalled that he "used 'The Book of Negroes' as the title for my novel, in Canada, because it derives from a historical document of the same name kept by British naval officers at the tail end of the American Revolutionary War. It documents the 3,000 blacks who had served the King in the war and were fleeing Manhattan for Canada in 1783." (Guardian, May 20, 2008)

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He added, "Unless you were in 'The Book of Negroes,' you couldn't escape to Canada. My character, an African woman named Aminata Diallo, whose story is based on this history, has to get into the book before she gets out."

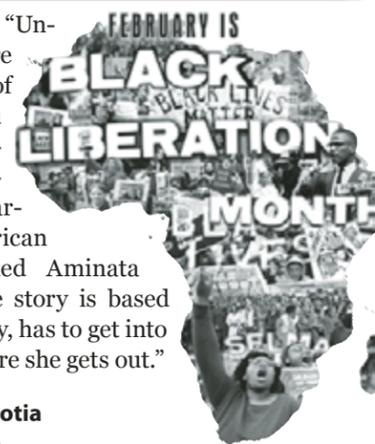
From Nova Scotia back to Africa

After the war, these Africans were taken by the British army to Nova Scotia in Canada, where slavery still existed. The harsh conditions in Nova Scotia are illustrated in the series.

The conditions were not conducive to agriculture, and the weather was colder than most had ever experienced. The whites in the colony themselves struggled to survive and viewed the newly arrived Africans as competitors for jobs and other economic opportunities.

Louis Gossett Jr. plays an elderly minister who holds the African community together. He later accepts the British offer to repatriate thousands back to West Africa — to establish yet another colony for London.

When they arrive in Sierra Leone, the Atlantic slave trade is even more widespread than during the previous decades. They quickly realize that real safety and security



A VIOLENT HISTORY

New report reveals extent of racist lynchings

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

The Equal Justice Initiative published a report entitled “Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror” on Feb. 10. It illustrates the need to re-examine a sordid period in U.S. history, which has never been officially acknowledged. (ejl.org)

Although this horrendous practice originated during slavery, after the Civil War concluded and the Reconstruction began, extra-judicial killings of African Americans became integral to the exploitation and social containment of formerly enslaved people. The Ku Klux Klan was formed in 1866 as a secret organization led by former plantation owners and Confederate military officials.

This study places the rise of lynching within a historical context. After the Civil War and the legal abolition of slavery, reactionary whites sought to re-establish their dominance over African people. In the section “Second Slavery after the Civil War,” the authors emphasize that “white southern identity was grounded in a belief that whites are inherently superior to African Americans.

“Following the war, whites reacted violently to the notion that they would now have to treat their former human property as equals and pay for their labor. Plantation owners attacked black people simply for claiming their freedom. In May 1866, in Memphis, Tennessee, forty-six African Americans were killed; ninety-one houses, four churches, and twelve schools were burned to the ground; at least five women were raped; and many black people fled the city permanently.” (p. 7)

Ida B. Wells began anti-lynching campaign



This report continues the work done by other scholars and Civil Rights organizations since the late 19th century. By 1892, public lynchings attracted the attention of African-American journalist Ida B. Wells. She started an international campaign after African-Americans Tom Moss, Calvin McDowell and Henry Stewart were taken from a jail cell in Memphis and fatally shot by law-enforcement agents.

A 2002 PBS documentary, “The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow,” tells of Moss, McDowell and Stewart who were “arrested for defending themselves against an attack on Moss’ [grocery] store. Moss was a highly respected figure in the black community. ... A white competitor, enraged that Moss had drawn away his black customers, hired some off-duty deputy sheriffs to destroy the store. Moss and his friends, not knowing the men were deputies, resisted. A gun battle broke out and several deputies were wounded.

“Moss, his two friends, and one hundred other black supporters were arrested. Several nights later, masked vigilantes dragged Moss and his two friends from their cells,” and shot them in a deserted railroad yard.

A few months later, Wells’ Memphis newspaper offices were firebombed by a white mob empowered by a local magistrate. She was driven out of the city for exposing the false pretexts under which many lynchings were justified. In Chicago, Wells continued her work.

However, the terrible events in Memphis led thousands of African Americans to subsequently leave the city and migrate to Oklahoma.

In 1893, Wells toured Britain to lecture on U.S. lynchings, revealing to an international audience the plight of African Americans. Two years later, she wrote an important pamphlet entitled “The Red

Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynching in the United States.” It was a comprehensive study of racist mob killings of African Americans.

Wells co-founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909. The organization campaigned for decades against lynching and

pushed unsuccessfully for federal legislation to outlaw it.

Sponsored by the Civil Rights Congress, attorney William L. Patterson, Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois and cultural worker and activist Paul Robeson published “We Charge Genocide” in 1951. This historic petition, which was submitted to the United Nations, documented years of racial violence against African Americans, carried out with impunity in full view of white officials, law-enforcement agencies and the courts.

Even during the height of the Civil Rights Movement from 1955 to 1968, white police officers and racist mobs murdered African Americans and their allies.

Study reports nearly 4,000 lynchings

The EJI blog notes, “Researchers documented 3,959 racial terror lynchings of African Americans” in 12 Southern states “between 1877 and 1950 — at least 700 more lynchings of black people in these states than previously reported in the most comprehensive work done on lynching to date.” This work asserts that “lynching of African Americans was terrorism, a widely supported phenomenon used to enforce racial subordination and segregation.”

In compiling information on the newly revealed lynchings, the report’s authors acknowledged the works of academic Stewart E. Tolnay and Tuskegee University. They also drew on additional cases written about in the African-American press.

Legal lynching today: death penalty, police terror

During World War I, the Great Migration of African Americans began — from the rural South to urbanized Northern and Western U.S. regions. Public lynchings declined then, but these acts of racial terror continued through other means, including state-sanctioned executions.

The EJI reports, “By 1915, court-ordered executions outpaced lynchings in

the former slave states for the first time. Two-thirds of those executed in the 1930s were black, and the trend continued. As African Americans fell to just 22 percent of the South’s population between 1910 and 1950, they constituted 75 percent of those executed in the South during that period.” (p. 21)

This study documents how this vile process continued into the modern era: “In the 1987 case of *McCleskey v. Kemp*, the Supreme Court considered statistical evidence demonstrating that Georgia decision makers were more than four times as likely to impose death for the killing of a white person than a black person. ... [T]he Court described racial bias in sentencing as ‘an inevitable part of our criminal justice system’ and upheld Warren McCleskey’s death sentence because he failed to identify a ‘constitutionally significant risk of racial bias’ in his case.”

The EJI report reaffirms that today’s wave of police killings and other racist attacks are part of the system of national oppression and social control used by the ruling class to exploit and contain African people since the 19th century. Despite Civil Rights legislation passed in the 1950s and 1960s and the ascendancy of African-American elected officials, including the president, justice is still denied to many.

Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Aiyana Stanley Jones, Tamir Rice and countless others have been killed by police officers who remain unscathed by prosecutors and the courts. The Justice Department has not brought charges against these officers after local authorities failed to indict and arrest the perpetrators.

It will take a revolution to overthrow the legacy of racial terrorism in the U.S. African-American and other oppressed peoples must be totally liberated from national oppression before they can expect any real justice that protects and values their lives from the ravages of state-supported repression and violence. □

Black History Month forum on racism & low wages

By **J. White and R. White**
Chicago

A Workers World forum celebrating Black History Month was held at Malcolm X College in Chicago on Feb. 7. The forum called for an end to the war on youth, including racist police terror and low-wage slavery.

Lamont Lilly from the Workers World Party branch in Durham, N.C., made opening remarks that engaged students in a lively discussion of what circumstances currently exist for youth of color, and all youth in poor and working-class communities. He tied together the current lack of jobs and support for students with the violence perpetrated by the police.

One student spoke at length about a recent incident with police involving a profiled stop and search of her car. This has resulted in felony charges against her, seizure of her car and costly legal expenses. She is a daycare worker who had not been paid in a month because Illinois ran out of Daycare Action funds. This was a perfect example of how police harass-

ment of young people of color, trying to work low-wage jobs and go to school, have their lives thrown into financial and legal chaos.

Tommy Cavanaugh from “Fight Imperialism, Stand Together” (FIST) in nearby Rockford, Ill., spoke about the struggle of low-wage youth workers and the need for a livable minimum wage. He documented the current plight of young workers of color and the undocumented. The extremely low pay of this workforce lowers wages for workers in general, so solidarity and unionization of all workers is most important.

Abayomi Azikiwe from Detroit, the editor of Pan African News Wire and a contributing editor to Workers World newspaper, couched the current struggle against police terror within the history of the Black Liberation Movement. He traced the teaching of Malcolm X from



Lamont Lilly and Abayomi Azikiwe

WW PHOTOS: J WHITE

his departure from the Nation of Islam to the formation of the Organization for Afro-American Unity and his goal to build a movement that included recognition of internationalism.

Kye K from Malcolm X College encouraged students to get involved in the current “Black Lives Matter” activities. She talked about the inspiration that becoming politically active has brought to her life. The meeting was followed by a lively discussion with many comments from the audience. □

PROTESTERS ASK, 'Who killed Brandon Tate-Brown?'

By **Betsey Piette**
Philadelphia

Organizers of a “Philly after Ferguson” town hall meeting at the Catalyst for Change Church on Feb. 11 was billed as an opportunity for dialogue on community-police relations “in the post-Ferguson era.” Dozens of protesters in the largely African-American audience used the event to demand police officials on the panel release the name of the officer who fatally shot Brandon Tate-Brown.

On Dec. 15, Tate-Brown, 26, was headed home around 3 a.m. when police in Philadelphia’s Mayfair district pulled him over for allegedly driving without his headlights on. Police claim they saw a handgun in the center console of his car and asked him to get out.

According to police accounts, Tate-Brown complied but struggled with the officers before running back toward his car. Claiming they felt threatened, the officers shot Tate-Brown in the back of his head.

To date, police have refused to release the name of the officers involved or surveillance video from a gun shop that may have caught the encounter.

Repeatedly chanting, “Who killed Brandon Tate-Brown?” people at the meeting, including Tanya Dickerson, his mother, and even some communi-

ty-based panel members demanded that police release the officer’s name as well as the video.

Deputy Police Commissioner Kevin Bethel and Thomas Nestel III, chief of police for Philadelphia’s transit system, were both on the panel, along with Kelvyn Anderson, head of the city’s civilian police oversight board; Daily News Editor-in-Chief Michael Days; activists from Philadelphia’s Black Lives Matter movement; and others.

Bethel was repeatedly challenged as members of the audience demanded transparency from the police. Derision greeted his statement that the department could not release the officer’s name out of “concern over cop safety.”

Nestel was denounced for posting racist remarks on Twitter in support of a pro-police rally held at the site where Tate-Brown was killed.

Dickerson, given an opportunity to address the gathering, spoke of her pain on first learning that her son had been killed from the morning news on her way to work. She condemned the police for not having the courtesy to notify her.

“Brandon was tried, judged and condemned by police, not a judge. So who judges the police, who holds them accountable?” Dickerson asked the panel.

“Right to know” requests to obtain sur-

veillance footage that might show the incident were denied by police on Feb. 6. Greg Brinkley, a private investigator hired by Brown’s family, said they plan to reveal more information on the case soon: “Circumstances surrounding Brandon Tate-Brown’s death are not consistent with the police account.”

Dickerson also suspects that if video exists to support the police version, they would have released it to shut her up.

Surveillance video that did lead to indictment

Surveillance video contradicting the police version of a case surfaced in February when a grand jury arraigned two Philadelphia policemen for the May 2013 beating of Najee Rivera, a Latino.

The assault fractured an orbital bone in Rivera’s face and left him with numerous lacerations on his head. He was charged with assaulting the officers and resisting arrest.

The officers who lied to cover up their attack on Rivera might have gotten away with it, except that Rivera’s companion canvassed the neighborhood where the incident took place and discovered secu-



Brandon Tate-Brown

rity camera video that disputed the officers’ accounts. Charges against Rivera were dismissed.

The grand jury charged officers Sean McKnight and Kevin Robinson each with eight separate charges for the alleged assault and subsequent cover-up. Both officers received citizen com-

plaints since being hired, and both were found to have previously violated the department’s “Use of Force” policy.

Without public oversight there is no guarantee that if video obtained by police disputes their version of events, it will ever see the light of day — as with Tate-Brown’s fatal shooting.

Dickerson and her family made it clear they are not giving up. “The police have the power of finance behind them. I have the power of strangers, coming together and organizing for change. The activists and organizations made it quite clear that we are serious; it is not going away.”

On Saturday, Feb. 21, the 50th anniversary of Malcolm X’s assassination, a major march calling for “Justice by Any Means Necessary” will take place in the Mayfair area, starting at 6600 Frankford Ave. at 2 p.m. For more information, contact PhillyforREALJustice@gmail.com. □

From Denver to Ferguson

Fight for victims of police violence

By **Viviana Weinstein**
Denver

In the last seven months since July, the Denver police have fired four times into moving cars, killing two youth of color and injuring three more.

A demonstration of over 400 young people took to the streets of Denver on Feb. 14. They blocked the main downtown streets and intersections, stopping at the detention center, the court buildings and the Denver Police Department to shout their anger and to demand justice for the dead and the two survivors who remain in jail.

The crisis point came when, on Jan. 26, Jessie Hernandez, a 17-year-old gender-nonconforming Latina, was shot to death. This was the fourth shooting by Denver police into a moving car, an action which is illegal according to police policy.

The surviving occupants of the car said

that Jessie was shot, and only then did the car go out of control. Jessie’s family has asked for a federal investigation due to their mistrust of the Denver police and prosecutors. Jessie’s mother broke down as she spoke to the crowd about raising money to bury her child. The community distrusts the Denver Police Department’s many differing versions of the story and feels that Jessie was shot for being Latina and gender nonconforming.

In July 2014, Ryan Ronquillo, 20 years old, was shot twelve times by Denver police as he sat in his car in front of a funeral home where services for his best friend were taking place. Denver police cars sped into the lot, crashing into his car. Then the police jumped out and shot Ryan to death.

In January 2015, Sharod Kindell had been working to buy a new car. He was continually stopped and harassed by the police while driving the car, a total of

40 or 50 times. He sold the car, hoping to avoid further trouble but was again pulled over by the Denver police on Jan. 9. He gave them his ID. He used his rights and refused to exit the vehicle and put his hands up for the police not to shoot.

The police opened the door of the car and when they pulled him off the brake, the car rolled. Then the police shot him four times. He was seriously wounded but rapidly removed from the hospital ICU and sent back to jail. He now awaits trial.

The shouts of the demonstrators reached Sharod in the jail and caused great excitement as he called out to thank everyone.

Lastly, two brothers, Joel Jurado, age 26, and Carlos Jurado, age 20, were shot and wounded as Denver police surrounded their car while they had their hands up to surrender. Carlos was released, but Joel remains in jail.

All the victims were young people of

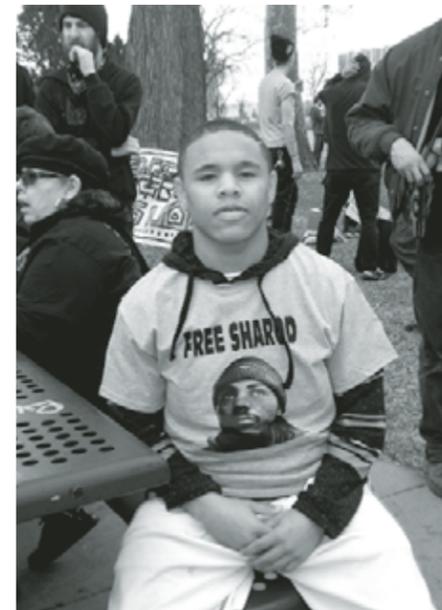


PHOTO: VIVIANA WEINSTEIN

color. All the incidents involved police shooting into cars and all appear to involve one police officer, Jeffrey Di Manna, who currently remains on the job.

A study in 2010 showed that the Denver police force used greater amounts of excessive force as compared with other U.S. cities. □

Pasco, Wash.

Community demands justice for farm worker

By **Jim McMahan**
Seattle

The community of Pasco, Wash., is outraged. Hundreds of residents of this largely Latino/a community have taken to the streets to protest the Feb. 10 police murder of unarmed Antonio Zambrano-Montes, a 35-year-old farmworker. An even larger demonstration took place on Feb. 14.

On that day, about 1,000 protesters, mostly Latinos/as and supporters and allies from across the state, joined to-

gether in Volunteer Park, outside Franklin County Hall in Pasco. Speakers and signs linked Zambrano-Montes’ death to the 2014 police killings of African-Americans Michael Brown, in Ferguson, Mo., and Eric Garner, in Staten Island, N.Y. Some placards read: “Justice for Antonio!” and “Ferguson is everywhere!”

The strong crowd chanted, “Black lives matter! Hispanic lives matter!” and “Hands up! Don’t shoot!” as they marched to the intersection of 10th Street and Lewis Avenue, the location of the fatal shooting. Zambrano-Montes’ family

members led the rally, and they called out, “¡El pueblo unido jamás será vencido!” (“The people united will never be defeated!”)

On Feb. 10, Zambrano-Montes had thrown a few rocks or dirt clods at vehicles. The police claim he threw rocks at them. In a video posted on YouTube by eyewitness Dario Zúñiga, Pasco cops can be seen chasing him a short distance, and then shooting him in cold blood after he had stopped running, turned around and then held out his empty hands to show he was unarmed. Dozens of passersby wit-

nessed this police slaying. Many say the police fired at least 13 shots. To date, more than a million people have seen the video.

Zambrano-Montes’ family filed a “wrongful-death” claim on Feb. 13 against the city of Pasco, suing for \$25 million, saying “the police used excessive and unnecessary force.” (Guardian.com, Feb. 14) Their legal claim says police shot him “execution style” — that he posed no threat to them — and that despite this, the police handcuffed him as he lay bleeding to death.

Continued on page 10

VENEZUELA

U.S.-backed coup attempt stopped

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Ever since Comandante Hugo Chavez became president of Venezuela in 1998 and the Bolivarian Revolution began, there has been no time that the opposition — supported and, to a large extent, led by the United States — has stopped trying to overturn the revolutionary process. It is a story repeated many times in Latin America — so much so that there's a joke that "the U.S. is the only country where there are no coups because there is no Yankee embassy there."

The latest attempted coup aimed at Venezuela was revealed this past Feb. 12, when Youth Day is commemorated, just a year after the start of violent street demonstrations known as guarimbas. The right-wing opposition used these street actions in an attempt to overthrow the government of President Nicolás Maduro. They killed 43 people and injured hundreds. This Feb. 12 Maduro told the people his government had dismantled another attack. He released details about recently discovered plans and the role of the U.S. government.

According to President Maduro, the coup was to unfold in three phases: The first would be the publication of the "Program of the Transitional Government" in print, followed by the second phase, an attack with a Tucano fighter plane on the president's Miraflores Palace and more than a dozen other places, including government departments and the central station of Telesur, the Bolivarian media organization. The third phase would be the publication of a "video of a general who had confessed and been convicted of a coup last year, who would report that a military force had revolted against President Nicolás Maduro and had overthrown him." (Telesur, Feb. 12)

Diligent work by Bolivarian government intelligence officials, combined with the loyalty of young army officers, succeeded in dismantling the planned coup. The evidence obtained, including guns, computers, etc., along with confessions of some detained officers, leave no doubt about the details of the plan, its authors and its financing. Some of those involved, including military aviation officers, are in the hands of the courts, which continue the investigation.

Involved in the coup attempt are such right-wing assembly members as Julio Borges, a deputy to the National Assembly from the right-wing party Primero Justicia; 17 active military officers who had already obtained visas from the U.S. State Department; plus retired officers such as Major General Maximiliano Hernández, who is now incarcerated; businessman Parsifal D'Sola; Maria Corina Machado, a known oppositionist who receives funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development; Leopoldo Lopez, in prison

now for promoting violent guarimbas in 2014; and others.

The latter two people, together with the metropolitan mayor of Caracas, Antonio Ledezma, signed on Feb. 11 the "Call for Venezuelans to a National Agreement for the Transition," a program aimed at reversing the gains of the Bolivarian Revolution and restoring neoliberalism to Venezuela, including the "insertion" of the country in international organizations like the International Monetary Fund.

U.S. role in attempted coup

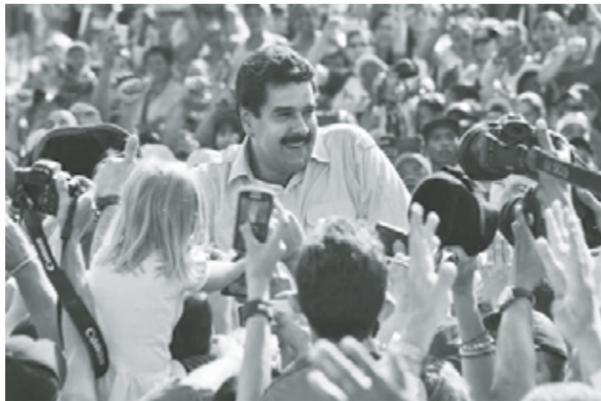
On Feb. 14, President Maduro announced on Telesur: "We're just about to capture the person who brought the script that the officers were to read, which a counselor of the Embassy of the United States edited." Maduro assured the people that all those captured have admitted their role, and so far the authorities already know "how much money was paid in dollars and where the money came from."

An article published Feb. 14 on aporrea.org, headlined "Blackwater USA appears to own the Tucano aircraft that was to be used to bomb Caracas and overthrow Maduro," reports that the plane "would be provided by a private U.S. security contractor that obtained the aircraft in order to train pilots."

Beside granting visas to the coup officers, the U.S. showed its role in Venezuela with the White House statement about its "National Security Strategy" of February 2015, which leaves no doubt of the U.S. government's position: "We are with the citizens where democracy is at risk, as in Venezuela."

The Bolivarian people respond

This latest attempted coup and U.S. intervention have sparked a wave of indignation and solidarity throughout the world. Governments of the countries



President Nicolás Maduro on election day in April 2013.

that are members of the progressive regional organizations ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America), UNASUR (Union of South American Nations), CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) and MERCOSUR (Common Market of the South), and popular movements worldwide have spoken out in support of the Venezuelan government and the Bolivarian people. Many organizations have simply sent photos showing signs that read: "Je suis Telesur." (I am Telesur).

But it is in Venezuela itself where support for the government has been crucial. The Bolivarian youth, leftist political parties such as the United Socialist Party of Venezuela, the Communist Party of Venezuela, Patria Para Todos, the Movement of Rural Women, the Social Movement of African Descendants and others have taken to the streets and have made public statements supporting the government and opposing U.S. intervention.

On Feb. 15, Workers World spoke with Juan Contreras, the deputy to the National Assembly for the Simón Bolívar Coordination (CSB). Based in the historic January 23 neighborhood in Caracas, CSB represents the aspirations of Venezuela's poor people.

Contreras mentioned three factors that are strangling Venezuela's economy: low oil prices, food smuggled from Venezuela to neighboring countries, and the economic war by merchants who try to hide food in the distribution chain to cause

famine among the people. Together they have aroused a great mobilization of the people. Contreras said, "The only way to curb the pretensions of the unpatriotic sectors led by this rotten bourgeoisie who follows a script provided from the North has been the mobilization."

So far, despite U.S. support, the bourgeoisie has not triumphed thanks to two important keys of the Bolivarian process, Contreras continued. "One is readiness of the people for change, and second, the civilian-military unity that at this time has put the brakes on those who want to take power by the easy route through a coup, a violent solution and by destabilizing. Sectors of the Venezuelan bourgeoisie and the U.S. empire have both attempted these ploys."

Contreras ended with a call for solidarity. To the people of the U.S., he requested that they "know the reality of the Venezuelan people, who are determined to build another world, another society that we have said is the Bolivarian Revolution, the Bolivarian socialism. And we are building it in peace and we want to continue building it in peace. Do not be deceived by your government nor by these large international corporations that blatantly lie about the reality of Venezuela."

The Venezuelan Bolivarian process is a living process, and as such it is dialectical. This is a continuous struggle that needs the solidarity of all peoples.

The public declaration by the Simón Bolívar Coordination about the coup attempt ends with the following paragraph: "We call on our comrades, friends and brothers in the struggle to redouble our connections with our people mobilized on the street to confront any attempt to destabilize the government we elected to lead the Bolivarian process; in addition, we will work to expose and correct errors such as corruption, impunity and making the process bureaucratic — scourges that make the task easier for the enemies of the people." It is signed by the Simón Bolívar Coordination: "Liberarian, Revolutionary, in Solidarity, Indigenous, Popular and Socialist." □

Teachers win a victory in Mexico

By Donna Lazarus
Mexico City

Some 10,000 teachers converged on Mexico City on Feb. 9, and immediately set up hundreds of tents in the intersection of the city's main avenues: Insurgentes, Paseo de la Reforma and Bucareli. Their occupation demanded higher salaries and payment of wages owed, government funding for public education and an end to state terrorism.

The National Coordination of Educational Workers (CNTE), the national union of teachers based in Oaxaca, organized this demonstration. The largest contingent was from Oaxaca, but teachers came from all over the country, including a delegation from the Yaqui Indigenous group of northern Mexico.

As chartered buses dropped the teachers off close to Mexico City's landmark Monument to the 1916 Revolution, 2,700 city police and 800 federal police, armed and helmeted and with shields, lined the streets leading to the city's central square, the Zócalo. This site was the scene of the months-long protest in 2006 against the fraudulent election of Felipe Calderón, who stole the election from An-

drés Manuel López Obrador of the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD).

Oaxaca's teachers were leading participants in the demonstrations that shook that state in 2006, and were again on strike in 2013. Determined to stop the teachers from attempting to take over this public space as they did in 2013, the repressive forces of the state presented a daily visible threat.

Sit-in participants in Mexico City's center raised banners calling for an end to state terrorism and elaborating on this message to say, "If there is no peace for the people, there will be no peace for the government." Other banners voiced solidarity with the 43 disappeared students in the state of Guerrero, known as the 43 of Ayotzinapa. The same sentiment was expressed on banners hung in front of union halls throughout the city, including at the national union of telephone workers.

Struggle won salary hikes and back pay

The union leadership announced on the evening of Feb. 10 that it had reached an agreement with the federal and state governments for a raise in teachers' sala-

ries and a settlement of back pay owed to teachers from Oaxaca for the last year up to and including January 2015.

As the teachers packed up tents and loaded buses on Feb. 11, Section 22 of the CNTE was already planning a mass meeting in Oaxaca for Feb. 14 to pursue their demands for better conditions and an end to the Education Reform Act of 2013. This act includes compulsory performance-based tests for teachers and could result in mass layoffs due to the decrepit state of many rural Indigenous schools.

According to the Feb. 10 issue of *Excelsior*, the leading Mexican newspaper, 48 percent of Indigenous primary schools in the state of Puebla have no bathrooms; 31 percent have no running water; and 46 percent lack drainage.

Although leading headlines in the daily press blamed teachers for abandoning their classes for three days during the sit-in, all evidence shows that the Mexican government has abandoned the education of poor and working-class children and youth. It is these courageous teachers who are leading the struggle for this basic right for all children. □

WAR WITHOUT VICTORY

by Sara Flounders

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

— Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann

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WORKERS WORLD editorial

Hatching new wars

Capitalist crises engender war. To the profiteers, war spoils and the selling of war materiel are the answer to sagging markets and declining production.

The war drive of U.S. imperialism has kicked up a notch even as we write. Long U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq created horrendous conditions for the people there. Now much of the Middle East is in flames, with all the Western imperialists, Washington leading the pack, trying to grab a piece of the action.

By pouring in weapons and money against secular postcolonial governments, from Iraq to Syria to Libya, the U.S., its NATO allies and Israel have spawned mercenary armies of every stripe that are beholden to the imperialists and their collaborators. Now the enemy, at least for the purposes of war propaganda, is “Islamic terrorism” — which U.S. intervention helped to create.

But selling weapons and forcing open markets are not enough for U.S. warmakers. They foresee the further disintegration of their global empire and are laying the basis for bigger wars.

Thus the Obama administration, which gets its marching orders from Wall Street just as the Republicans do, is seeking broader powers for the president to make war without actually declaring it. Called “Authorization for the Use of Military Force,” it would make official what has

become almost routine: the president’s ability to sidestep Congress and carry out aggression.

The AUMF would include not just setting up proxy armies but authorizing U.S. troops on the ground. Where will they intervene next? In Ukraine, if the right-wing, U.S.-created regime in Kiev can’t subdue rebellious forces in the east seeking autonomy? Washington is already talking about sending Ukraine heavy weapons.

Or maybe Libya? The parliament of Italy, the former colonial power in Libya, is already talking of sending troops under United Nations aegis. Egypt’s generals, who blasted back to power with Washington’s blessings in 2013, are already bombing there.

The Democrats have long been associated with starting wars, especially wars with “humanitarian” pretexts. Republicans find other pretexts, isolationist rhetoric aside. House Speaker John Boehner’s invitation to Israel’s Netanyahu made clear that Republicans want war against Iran. And Sen. John McCain, who got shot down terror-bombing Vietnam and built his political career on being caught, calls for direct U.S. intervention in Ukraine.

What can stop this grim trajectory? Making resistance to militarism part of every social struggle. Jobs and justice, not racism and war! □

Stop U.S. arms to Ukraine



The International Action Center held a protest Feb. 17 before CNN headquarters near Columbus Circle in New York City to demand that the U.S. desist from providing weapons to the Kiev coup government of Ukraine.

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

Baltimore’s young people enjoy history



Feb. 14 — The Baltimore Peoples Power Assembly held a special event for children and youth to commemorate Black History Month. It was an opportunity for youth and children to open up about issues that affect their communities, such as police brutality, homelessness and joblessness. The group showed a film on Black history with excerpts about Malcolm X and many other highlights, told stories and participated in arts and crafts.

Kira Lynae helped to lead the storytime, along with IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) members. UNITE HERE Local 7 members and organizers of the Baltimore International Women’s Day march donated refreshments; and Angel Disquissepe helped edit and put together the

film shown by the group. Supplies were donated by the local Maryland Institute College of Art.

Sara Benjamin, a PPA organizer and mother of 5-year-old Imari Rucker, asserted, “Today’s event has been a big success. Children and youth need the information — they need empowerment and hope.”

— Report and photos by Sharon Black

Quebec protest rejects gov’t austerity

By G. Dunkel

Around a thousand people protested the Quebec government’s austerity program in front of the National Assembly in Quebec City on Feb. 12, the day the parliament opened its 2015 session.

The coalition, “Let’s Refuse Austerity,” is also planning major, provincewide but region-based protests on International Women’s Day, Earth Day and May 1.

Back in November, the coalition had organized major protests involving tens of thousands of people in Montreal and other Quebec cities. And on Feb. 6, when Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard went to Abitibi-Témiscamingue, a small city in the western part of the province, over 200 protesters showed up in snowy, harsh cold to say that he shouldn’t cut jobs, health and other social services and education.

Some 500 militants from the Federation of Health and Social Services, a component of the Confederation of National Unions (CSN), occupied the offices of 16 members of the National Assembly during the week leading up to the Feb. 12 conference and protest. [“National” in these names refers to Quebec, not to Canada.]

The National Assembly is considering a law, PL10, that would drastically cut health care services. For example, the Côte-nord — the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, between Saguenay Fjord and Labrador, the second-largest region of Quebec — would be reduced to just one health center for 146,000 square miles. (refusons.org)

Besides the CSN, another significant member of Let’s Refuse Austerity is the Association of Student Union Solidarity (ASSE), one of the leaders of a successful and militant student strike in 2012 that brought thousands of students into the streets for protests that lasted for months.

A spokesperson for ASSE said at a press conference on Feb. 12 that the students would engage in “economic disruptions,” including blocking bridges, as they did in 2012. Camille Godbout, their spokesperson, said they would not rule out any tactic. (Huffington Post Quebec) The ASSE is also calling for actions Feb. 23-27, as well as supporting the other mobilizations.

Pasco, Wash.

Protest demands justice for farm worker

Continued from page 8

The claim also asserted that the city kept on the force police officers who had violated the civil rights of Latinos/as and had “[allowed] and [fostered] overt racial [animus]” towards the Latino/a community. (cnn.com., Feb. 14)

Zambrano-Montes was from Michoacán, Mexico, and had lived in Pasco for about 10 years. On Feb. 13, Mexico’s President Enrique Peña Nieto

reiterated his country’s “condemnation of the disproportionate use of lethal force’ on a Mexican citizen by Pasco police,” reported the Seattle Times. (Feb. 13)

This is the fourth police killing since last summer in this city of 68,000. None

The president of the Federation of Quebec Workers (FTQ) and the president of the CSN, the two largest labor federations in Quebec, both spoke at the Feb. 12 rally.

Daniel Boyer of the FTQ said the government has chosen the wrong strategy. Rather than austerity, it should look to increase revenue.

He said, “The richest of our society should pay more taxes, businesses should pay more taxes. It is abnormal that over 1,000 businesses each year pay no taxes.” (La Presse, Feb. 12)

Boyer charged that the government was attacking the poorest members of Quebec society and cutting social programs built up over decades. (Radio Canada, Feb. 12)

Jacques Létourneau, president of the CSN, claimed that Premier Couillard was “playing with words” when he claimed that “Quebec’s government will work out a plan for economic growth in the next few weeks.”

“A government which is cutting employment, which is shutting down services, in our opinion, is not a government which is pushing forward this idea of relaunching economic activity,” Létourneau concluded.

The fall of oil prices has caused major economic difficulties in Canada, especially in the Western provinces. Canada’s currency has slipped by 20 percent in relation to the U.S. dollar. However, while Quebec has to pay more for imports, its exports are more valuable.

Quebec in many ways is a distinct society inside Canada. A majority of Quebec’s residents speak French. The immigrants it attracts are mainly from places like Haiti and North Africa, where French is a common second language. It has a historical trajectory that is unique in Canada, going from a conquered province to a recognized part of Canada.

Its union movement grew up and struggled hard not just in the major cities of Montreal and Quebec, but also in the woods and in small isolated settlements, where unions provided the only protection workers had against the Catholic Church and local banks.

Relying on deep traditions of solidarity, the union movement and progressives in Quebec are trying hard to build a movement to defeat austerity. □

of the officers involved in the other three shootings have been held responsible.

This brutal police killing of an unarmed Latino worker has spurred national outrage. Yet, to date, no prominent politicians or officeholders in the United States have issued condemnations of this cold-blooded act.

However, the struggle on the ground continues. Another demonstration will be held in Westlake Park in Seattle on Feb. 18 called by “Justice for Antonio Zambrano-Montes-Seattle.” Progressive organizations around the country should take up the call for “Justice for Antonio!” as they demand an end to racist police violence against all African-American and Latino/a communities. □

Predatory lenders demand austerity

Problems of the Greek crisis

By Fred Goldstein

Feb. 16 — The eyes of both world finance capital and class-conscious workers and revolutionaries have been on Greece in its struggle against austerity.

The central focus of that struggle has been in Brussels this past week, with tense negotiations between Greece's social-democratic Syriza government and representatives of the other 18 eurozone countries, their bankers and finance ministers.

Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis has been under intense pressure from the Troika — the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank and the European Commission — to request an extension of Greece's bailout program, which carries with it harsh conditions of austerity. This same bailout program has brought about 26 percent unemployment and a 44 percent poverty level, while aggravating a 25 percent drop in Greece's production over the last five years.

The Greek government has said it cannot and will not submit to this kind of extension. "Final" negotiations were supposed to take place on Feb. 16. It was expected that the negotiations would last into the night. Instead, the talks broke up after three and a half hours, when Varoufakis denounced the proposal put forward by the bankers. The two sides could not even agree on some perfunctory statement to paper over differences.

Predatory lenders

The bankers of Europe are true predatory lenders. They loaned money to the Greek government because the government owed money to the banks. So the bankers really made the loans primarily to bail themselves out. Furthermore, Greece owes 323 billion euros, equivalent to 175 percent of its gross domestic product. Everyone knows Greece cannot pay this debt. But the bankers want their money — especially the interest payments.

The debt was magnified by previous Greek governments whose dealings with Goldman Sachs and other banks were secret, fraudulent schemes to hide government debt by using credit default swaps and other financial sleight of hand. The Greek government was able to keep the borrowing off the books, thereby making its official debt appear within the limits allowed by the eurozone.

But when the financial crisis hit in 2008, the scheme fell apart. The Greek government debt turned out to be twice as large as was previously reported. The same types of financial schemes were cooked up by J.P. Morgan in Italy; other banks concocted similar fraudulent lending schemes across Europe.

This did not stop the European banks and the IMF from then forcing austerity measures on the Greek government in return for loans Greece desperately needed, partly because of bank fraud.

Now the new Greek government is in negotiations with these same financial predators, trying to get them to allow Greece to reverse the devastation wrought by the austerity measures dictated under the terms of the loans. Syriza took early bold steps by defying the Troika, putting forward a program of restoring the minimum wage, hiring 300,000 new workers, and giving food, health care and housing to the homeless and the poor. The Syriza government also announced that it would end the privatization of national assets and other measures that were conditions for receiving the so-called "bailouts."

Syriza declared it would not apply for the last 7 billion euro due the government under the bailout because of the attached austerity conditions.

Syriza has backed down from its original demand that the debt be reduced by half and offered other concessions. It has tried to appear reasonable by pledging its loyalty to "Europe," which means the eurozone run by the bankers. But the German bankers and their allies in the eurozone have been adamant. At best they have offered cosmetic modifications, but have not given an inch in their demands that Greece apply for a continuation of the bailout agreement, which is scheduled to terminate on Feb. 28.

Failure to renew would leave Greece in default to the bankers. No one knows how that would ripple through the financial system in Europe and beyond.

Mass mobilization needs to be sharply escalated

No sooner was the breakdown in negotiations announced than a new set of negotiations was scheduled; nevertheless, there may be a compromise. But regardless of the outcome of these negotiations, there are a number of problems that will ultimately have to be resolved if the outcome is to be favorable for the masses in Greece.

One problem is that, given the relationship of forces between the Greek government and the other European imperialists, negotiations with the bankers by themselves cannot have a favorable result in the struggle against austerity.

The election of Syriza, its legal standing, its popular support and the justice of its claims are hardly sufficient to move the Troika and the bankers of Europe.

What is needed is a sharp escalation of the mass struggle in Greece in order to let the powers know that they are not dealing with government officials alone but with an aroused population.

In the past week there have been several mass demonstrations in Athens, Thessaloniki and other Greek cities. The demonstrations — 20,000 in Athens and 10,000 in Thessaloniki — have been a good start. But Athens has a population of 665,000 in the city proper and 3.75 million in the metropolitan area.

The size of the demonstrations so far, relative to the population and relative

What is needed is a sharp escalation of the mass struggle in Greece in order to let the European powers know that they are not dealing with government officials alone but with an aroused population.

to previous demonstrations in 2014 and before, shows insufficient mass mobilization by the revolutionary left and other forces. For example, the trade unions have had many general strikes in the past several years against austerity. If there was ever a time for a general strike to push back the bankers, the time is now. Such a strike would be greeted enthusiastically by the people — it would push the struggle forward and send a sharp message to Brussels and Berlin.

Patiently explain limitations of Syriza's demands

Right now the masses are very much in support of the Syriza government. They must understand that so long as Syriza accepts the framework established by European finance capital, and is committed to abide by its fundamental regulations, there can be no break with the debt slavery the masses are suffering under. There can, at best, be a loosening of the chains of that slavery.

What Syriza is aiming at is a "new deal." Its struggle to push back austerity must be strongly supported in the streets. But what is needed is to break the chains of debt slavery altogether. Slogans must be raised denouncing the debt, declaring refusal to pay, showing that the debt is illegitimate and is legalized robbery. Demands must be raised for cancellation of the debt or a lengthy moratorium and, of course, for dramatically raising the standard of living of the population as a whole in every way.

So long as the masses rely on negotiations to bring an end to austerity, they will be operating under illusions. It is the independent action of the workers, the students, the youth, the communities that can play the decisive role. The revolutionary left, while being alongside the masses in the anti-austerity struggle, must patiently explain the class truth to them about breaking with the European capitalist establishment.

Prepare to combat economic sabotage

Finally, breaking with European capital, with the euro and the European Union is easier said than done. It cannot be done without a monumental struggle. Preparations for such a struggle must be thought through now.

During the run-up to the election on Jan. 25, when Syriza won 36 percent of the vote, the right wing was passing out pictures of food lines in Venezuela and threatening voters with the prospect that if Syriza left the euro it would bring about economic disaster.

This brings up the need for the people to be prepared to defend against economic aggression, not only from the European bankers at large, but from their own capitalist class and their own bankers.

One of the things the European banks did to both Ireland and Cyprus during their debt crises was threaten to destroy their banking systems. Both countries gave in and signed structural adjustment austerity programs.

Under eurozone rules, the ECB can stop loans to private banks and central banks if they cannot ensure repayment.

Right now the ECB has extended loans to hard-pressed Greek banks in the present crisis. But the ECB could turn the spigot off overnight.

If the Greek government tries to regain sovereignty over its currency and return to the drachma, and if economic aggression is launched by the euro bankers and Greek capitalists, strong defensive measures have to be in place.

For example, right now it is estimated that 2 billion euro a week are fleeing from Greek banks. Under these conditions it would be perfectly legitimate, as a defensive measure, to nationalize the banks. In fact, nationalization of the banks is in Syriza's 40-point program. Instead of letting this demand lie dormant, it should be enforced in order to prevent the financial resources of the country from being drained by the rich.

There are many other measures that can be taken as a way of preparing to defend against economic aggression. Syriza has said it will make the notoriously tax-evading Greek corporations and the rich pay up. Untold millions of euros could immediately be reclaimed for the Greek treasury if delegations of workers, accompanied by accountants and financial experts, examined the books of the bankers, the industrialists, the shipbuilders, the tourist industry and so on to collect the taxes owed.

Securing the proper production and distribution of food, the delivery of health care and social services, etc., must be prepared if there is going to be a battle with the euro bankers and the Greek capitalists.

The most important aspect of any defensive strategy against economic sabotage would be to involve the workers in the process of enforcement. As the struggle intensifies, the organization of the workers will be crucial in dealing with the police and the military — the repressive arms of the capitalist state that will no doubt be called upon to protect capitalist interests against the intervention of the workers.

To be sure, Syriza shows no signs of being anywhere near such measures. Nor are the masses prepared for this right now. But this struggle is not going to be concluded just because negotiations end in Brussels. The hard question of austerity still has to be fought from below, no matter what happens at the top. And the question of leadership will be decisive.

There is a great deal of potential in the struggle against austerity. It could easily mushroom from being at a stalemate in negotiations to become a struggle in the streets. Should such a struggle break out in Greece, this could be a clarion call to the long-suffering workers and middle classes of Portugal, Spain, Italy and other European countries. By the same token, it would stimulate crucial international solidarity, already begun in Spain — as shown through the protest held by Podemos — and recently seen in Paris, London and Lisbon.

This is what has the euro bankers worried, even though they will never admit it. But everything must be done to make their worst nightmares come true. □

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Relevancia de Puerto Rico en Cumbre de la CELAC

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

Hay mucho desconocimiento a nivel internacional, de la lucha por la independencia de Puerto Rico. Esto muchas veces lleva a nociones y críticas simplistas y a veces hasta negativas hacia la lucha boricua sin tratar de entender la gran complejidad de una lucha que por más de un siglo se ha librado dentro de lo que es vivir en una colonia.

Una lucha que ha costado muchas vidas en masacres y asesinatos por los EUA, largos encarcelamientos en prisiones del imperio, casos fabricados, señalamientos y carpeteos (recopilación de información sobre personas vinculadas a organizaciones políticas relacionadas al Independentismo), constante seguimiento por agencias represoras federales y locales, aparte del continuo hostigamiento de independentistas.

La imposición del estado colonial ha sido un crimen de lesa humanidad por parte del imperio estadounidense, robándole no solo su fuerza trabajadora, sus recursos y su soberanía, sino intentando despojarle de su propia historia e identidad afro-taína-caribeña. La lucha por la independencia en Puerto Rico ha sido y sigue siendo una batalla cuesta arriba.

Incluso en la CELAC (Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños), organismo que intenta unir en acción todos los países del continente americano alejándolos de la injerencia de los Estados Unidos y Canadá, no fue hasta esta reciente Cumbre, la 3ra desde que la CELAC fue creada en el 2011 por iniciativa del fenecido presidente Hugo Chávez, que hubo presencia activa de independentistas puertorriqueños. Recordemos que en la Cumbre del 2011 en Caracas, el grupo

musical puertorriqueño Calle 13, junto al afamado director de orquesta venezolano, Gustavo Dudamel, abrieron la conferencia con la canción 'Latinoamérica' de los puertorriqueños, sin embargo, no había una silla para esa nación.

La estrategia de EUA siempre ha sido la de aislar a PR y sus luchas, de sus vecinos. Por décadas, PR fue visto como un apéndice de los EUA, fuera del contexto latinoamericano y caribeño. Es por eso que lo ocurrido este pasado 28 de enero durante el primer día de la reunión de jefas y jefes de estado tiene gran importancia.

La Cumbre, celebrada en Costa Rica tenía por tema 'América Latina, libre de pobreza extrema'. Durante su discurso, el presidente de Nicaragua Daniel Ortega, luego de enfatizar que la CELAC debe seguir sus políticas progresistas y estar atentos a las conspiraciones de EUA, dando como ejemplo el continuo bloqueo a Cuba y los planes desestabilizadores contra Venezuela, llamó al líder del Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño Rubén Berríos, diciendo: "¡Venga, Rubén, concluya mis Palabras!"

Berríos entonces expuso la necesidad de que la CELAC actúe en solidaridad con la independencia de PR y la liberación del prisionero político independentista Oscar López Rivera quien lleva ya 34 años en prisión.

Al finalizar, el presidente de Costa Rica y anfitrión del evento, Luis Guillermo Solís, regañó a Ortega por no seguir los "procedimientos" de la Cumbre. A lo que Ortega le respondió "usted habla de procedimientos" pero "decidió darle la palabra a la OEA, el instrumento de colonia de los yanquis". Ortega luego dijo: "la voz de Puerto Rico es la voz de Nicaragua". Días después nombró a Berríos asesor para

Nicaragua en asuntos de descolonización.

Este incidente, junto a los desacuerdos de algunos países sobre apoyar o no la independencia para Puerto Rico, muestra la mano oculta de Estados Unidos tratando de intervenir en este foro. De hecho, como no hubo el consenso obligatorio, la declaración final adoptada sobre PR fue la misma de la Cumbre del 2014 en La Habana: "Reiterar el carácter latinoamericano y caribeño de Puerto Rico y, al tomar nota de las resoluciones sobre Puerto Rico adoptadas por el Comité Especial de Descolonización de las Naciones Unidas, reiteramos que es asunto de interés de CELAC".

Sin embargo, el muro del silencio sobre Puerto Rico se rompió, al menos parcialmente cuando la discusión entre Ortega y Solís fue ampliamente cubierta por medios internacionales, excepto en EUA donde solo CNN reportó algo. Pese a todo, la lucha por la independencia ahora es parte de las tareas de la CELAC, cuando Cuba, Venezuela y Ecuador, este último presidiendo pro tómpore el organismo, avalaron la propuesta de Nicaragua de incluir la exigencia de soberanía para Puerto Rico.

Crisis en Puerto Rico

La realidad de la gran crisis social, financiera y económica por la que atraviesa la nación puertorriqueña en estos momentos hace que este incidente tenga una especial connotación. Esta crisis ha sido provocada no por las políticas erradas del actual gobierno que de hecho son enormes, sino por el estado colonial, con la consecuente falta de soberanía para poder resolver sus problemas en beneficio de su pueblo.

Larga es la lista de los gigantes problemas, destacándose entre ellos, las privatizaciones de agencias y servicios públicos, altísimo costo de vida, aumento del de-

semplo, violencia generada mayormente por el incremento en el mercado de drogas, y una enorme deuda pública que según un amplio reportaje en El Nuevo Día del 5 de febrero, sobrepasa los \$160 miles de millones (elnuevodia.com). A esto se suma el desangre de la población, con un porcentaje de las/os migrantes, la mayoría entre las edades productivas de 20 a 44 años. Según el periódico arriba mencionado, en el 2013 salieron de PR más de 73,000 mayormente hacia estados del sur de EUA. Al mismo tiempo, el gobierno de PR, trata de incentivar la mudanza hacia PR de ricos negociantes estadounidenses.

El NYT en un artículo del 6 de febrero titulado "Mientras la clase media huye, Puerto Rico trata de atraer a gente rica" (As Middle Class Flees, Puerto Rico Tries Luring Rich People) ilustra una de las políticas erradas del gobierno, que con la excusa da traer inversionistas y empleos, básicamente tendrá como consecuencia la sustitución de la población muy semejante a lo ocurrido en Hawaii. El artículo despierta una gran indignación cuando se sabe que miles de puertorriqueñas/os se van de la isla precisamente por falta de trabajos y por el gran costo de vida. Esta sustitución ya está viendo resultados políticos y sociales extremadamente negativos en Culebra, Vieques y en la isla grande (PR).

Es por esto que la lucha anticolonial necesita más que nunca la solidaridad internacional. Como finalizó Berríos: "hacer la independencia nos compete a los puertorriqueños, a la América Latina y al Caribe sin embargo, le corresponde ser solidaria con nuestro derecho a la independencia y con nuestra exigencia a los EUA de ponerle fin al coloniaje".

¡Viva Puerto Rico libre! □

Corporaciones reciben créditos, las masas sufren

Por Kris Hamel

Detroit – Los capitalistas no tienen vergüenza cuando se trata de tomar de las/os más pobres para dárselo a los ricos.

Por décadas, Michigan ha sido devastada por cierres de fábricas, desempleo masivo y pobreza creciente. Al igual que en otros estados y a nivel nacional, se utilizó la crisis económica del 2008 y años siguientes como excusa para aumentar los recortes a los servicios sociales, al mismo tiempo que rescataban a los mismos bancos y corporaciones que crearon el colapso económico capitalista.

Desde el 2000 al 2010, Michigan sufrió su mayor pérdida de empleos desde la Gran Depresión de la década de 1930. Aproximadamente, se eliminaron 750.000 puestos de trabajo, principalmente empleos industriales con salarios dignos. Durante esa misma década, debido al desempleo masivo y los desalojos por las ejecuciones hipotecarias causadas por préstamos predatorios racistas, Detroit perdió 237.000 residentes. Para el 2009, la General Motors, Chrysler y Ford –llamadas las "Tres Grandes" compañías de automóviles – eliminaron 112.000 puestos de trabajo en el estado, que es el 52 por ciento de su fuerza laboral en Michigan. (Reporte de Paul Traub, Federal Reserve Bank of Michigan 24 de enero de 2012)

Los servicios sociales en Michigan

fueron grandemente recortados como resultado de la crisis financiera causada por esta pérdida masiva de empleos. Sin embargo, desde el 2003 hasta el 2013, el gobierno del estado desvió a las arcas del Estado 6.200 millones dólares en fondos destinados a la participación en los ingresos a las ciudades. Solo la ciudad de Detroit, fue privada de \$732 millones en fondos de participación de los ingresos durante esos años, un factor muy importante en la precipitación de Detroit en la crisis financiera y la quiebra definitiva, con la devastadora reducción de las pensiones para sus jubiladas/os que le siguió. ("The Great Revenue Sharing Heist," by Anthony Minghine. Michigan Municipal League, March 2014)

Además, ciudades afroamericanas como Detroit, Flint, Benton Harbor y Pontiac se colocaron bajo la gestión de emergencias para facilitar los ataques a las pensiones de las/os trabajadoras y los servicios básicos.

Sin embargo, las corporaciones que causaron estos recortes y pérdidas de empleos fueron recompensadas con masivos recortes de impuestos.

¿Cómo sucedió esto?

El estado de Michigan se enfrenta a un déficit presupuestario de \$325 millones este año, y déficits similares en años venideros, ya que las empresas han comenzado a sacar provecho de los enormes créditos fis-

cales ofrecidos por la anterior gobernadora demócrata, Jennifer Granholm, y el actual gobernador republicano Rick Snyder. Un crédito fiscal es una reducción directa de la contribución total de la corporación.

Bajo la Autoridad de Crecimiento del Empleo de Michigan (MEGA por las siglas en inglés), las empresas podrían reclamar los créditos fiscales sobre los impuestos municipales debidos por un período de hasta 20 años si sólo se comprometen a mantener el 70 por ciento de sus niveles de empleo posteriores a la recesión. Si una empresa no era rentable en un año, podría quedar el crédito fiscal para la siguiente.

Hay \$4.9 mil millones de dólares en créditos fiscales bajo MEGA, con \$3.3 mil millones sobrantes de la época de Granholm y \$1.6 mil millones en créditos adicionales desde que Snyder asumió el cargo en 2010. Además, hay \$1.7 mil millones adicionales en recortes de impuestos para las corporaciones cuando Syder eliminó el impuesto de negocio único en 2010.

Al regresar las ganancias automotrices a niveles enormes – \$2.8 mil millones para GM en 2014 (incluso después de la cancelación de \$2.8 mil millones para pagar por la retirada de vehículos defectuosos), \$ 3.2 mil millones para Ford y \$1.2 mil millones para Fiat-Chrysler (incluso con la cancelación de \$1.2 mil millones en contribución al fondo de atención de la salud del sindicato United Auto Workers) – las compañías

automotrices están ahora haciendo cola para iniciar el cobro de sus créditos fiscales.

GM, Ford y Chrysler pueden reclamar créditos fiscales reembolsables por un total de \$4.5 mil millones si retienen 86.000 puestos de trabajo en Michigan, o el 70 por ciento de su fuerza laboral actual, hasta el 2032. Se informó que una corporación "sin nombre", sin duda una de las empresas automotrices, reclamó \$224 millones en créditos fiscales para el 2014, en gran medida, creando el déficit fiscal del estado, a costa de las/os pobres. (Detroit News, 5 de febrero)

General Motors y Chrysler fueron rescatadas a un costo para las/os contribuyentes de \$9.3 mil millones dólares como parte de la quiebra diseñada por el gobierno federal – en 2009, lo que es especialmente reprochable que las compañías automotrices estén sacando provecho de enormes créditos fiscales en los próximos años a expensas de de servicios humanos desesperadamente necesitados en Michigan.

Un sistema económico organizado racionalmente para cubrir todas las necesidades humanas, incluidos los empleos o ingresos y las pensiones para todas/s, es lo que hará que Detroit y todo Michigan se recupere de años de crisis capitalista, codicia y explotación. Ese sistema se llama socialismo, donde el pueblo está primero y no los chupasangres corporativos. □