

WORKERS WORLD



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Developing a fightback strategy

Detroit people's assembly to challenge banks' rule

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

Sept. 30 — Activists in this beleaguered city are in the final days of organizing for an International People's Assembly Against the Banks and Against Austerity. It is set for Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 5 and 6, at Grand Circus Park in downtown Detroit. The event coincides with the Oct. 5 five-year anniversary of the federal bailout that netted the biggest banks more than \$700 billion in workers' tax monies.

Participants are coming from coast to coast, as well as from metro Detroit and other cities in Michigan. Organizers report solidarity messages are arriving from around the world, including from workers' organizations in Panama, Lebanon, France, Indonesia, Brazil and elsewhere.

This People's Assembly will meet in a city devastated first by the corporations and then by the banks, which are now poised to swoop in and suck out its remaining lifeblood.

The city of Detroit is under the control of an Emergency Manager appointed by reactionary Republican Gov. Rick Snyder. Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr has filed the largest municipal bankruptcy in U.S. history, abrogating collective bargaining agreements, overturning workers' pensions and threatening to sell the city's assets — all on behalf of the bankers, who are bent on taking every last dollar from the workers and poor.

Detroit, a majority African-American city and once a stronghold of the Black Liberation movement and the union movement, lost one-quarter of its population in the last dozen years as a direct result of more than 100,000 home foreclosures. Some 73 percent of the city's residents had been lured into predatory subprime, often fraudulent loans written by every major bank.

After destroying most of its neighborhoods, the banks came after the city itself, sucking it into predatory bond deals such as interest rate swaps and pension obligation certificates. That left the city paying hundreds of millions of dollars in hedging derivatives and termination fees to the very banks that profited from the financial collapse they had caused.

Administration officials come to Detroit

The Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions and Utility Shutoffs issued a call for a demon-

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stration when high-ranking officials from the Barack Obama administration came to Detroit on Sept. 27 for a meeting at Wayne State University with Gov. Snyder, EM Orr, Mayor Dave Bing and others. The invitation-only gathering was a media spectacle to announce that over \$300 million in federal funds would be released to assist the city.

This visit signaled the de facto support of the Obama administration for the imposition of an emergency manager over the city, the overriding of elected city officials, and the federal bankruptcy filing.

Nevertheless, a majority of Detroiters have rejected the idea of bankruptcy. Voters statewide overturned the emergency manager law last November, only to have the

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WW EDITORIAL

SHUTDOWN Who suffers?

Unable or unwilling to reach an agreement to extend government spending, the U.S. Congress has provoked a government shutdown. It will quickly "furlough" 800,000 government workers, keep others working without pay, and threaten cuts to some essential social programs like Women and Infants Care and institutions like the Centers for Disease Control, already diminished by the sequester.

The conflict in Congress pits the Tea Party Republicans against the Obama administration, with the other Republicans — so far — going along with their most reactionary and intransigent wing. The Tea Party dregs in Congress seem not to worry that they could pay a political price if their obstructionism slows growth in the already fragile capitalist economy — as it may if there is an extended shutdown.

This grouping, funded by ultraright billionaires like the Koch brothers, has especially targeted the new health-care act. Obamacare has many flaws and complications that were created when the Democrats let the pharmaceutical, medical and insurance industries design it. Had the new plan simply extended

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Native people take on Big Oil



The Nez Perce tribe in Idaho refused to let huge oil-drilling equipment be trucked across their land. See article, page 8.

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ANATOMY OF TWO SHOOTINGS

WORKERS WORLD
this week...

By Larry Hales

Two shootings occurred within days of one another in the United States that have been classified as mass shootings. The first was on Sept. 16 at the Washington Navy Yard, allegedly committed by Aaron Alexis. The other was Sept. 20 in Chicago, allegedly committed by more than one person.

Both shootings have reignited the debate around gun control between the two dominant political parties and in the media.

Most of the time — when there is an analysis — it is not deep and probing or meant to study the root causes of these acts but stops after pointing to a culture of violence, a gun culture or something similar, without looking at the social system in the U.S. — at its current level of development. Nor does it examine the effect of U.S. wars on the human psyche.

U.S. capitalism was built by extreme and naked brute force and violence. Thus, woven within the fabric of the U.S. is an ideology that has been used to justify brutal subjugation, enslavement and genocide. Throughout U.S. history, this ideology has been — and continues to be — used as a weapon.

Throughout its history, this country has been in a constant state of war to gain or maintain global political, economic and military hegemony. This isn't just true in its imperialist adventurism. The anti-colonial movement of Indigenous people, the anti-slavery struggle, the union and progressive movements, and those growing out of communities of color — oppressed nationalities — have been besieged with violence from police, paramilitaries like the KKK, white citizens' councils, or in earlier times, armed colonialists or slave masters.

A distinction must be made regarding violence.

That distinction is between the violence used to maintain a racist, sexist, homophobic, oppressive and exploitative status quo — and the related rife displays of violence on television, movies and in video games — and the violence that arises from people who buck such a system.

The primary purpose of the state and its police, courts, jails, prisons and military is to keep in place the rule of a small percentage of the population — the bankers and owners of the means of production.

The antagonisms between those who rule or enslave and those ruled or enslaved cannot be reconciled but are maintained through highly trained and organized violence.

Behind the Chicago shootings

Most articles mention “gang warfare” and violence in Chicago — which has definitely seen an uptick the last five years or so — and they stop there.

Rahm Emanuel, former White House Chief of Staff and now mayor of Chicago, said: “For a city to have a sense of civility, a sense of community, it must live by a moral code, not a code of silence. We cannot allow children in the city of Chicago and we will not allow children in the city of Chicago to have their youthfulness, their optimism, their hope taken from them. ... That's what gun violence does.” (NBCChicago, Sept. 20)

Not inadequate housing or lack thereof. Not school closings, lack of access to stimulating after-school activities or healthy and safe places to go. Not stifling poverty

and unemployment. Not police brutality, police occupation and profiling. Not systemic racism. Surely, none of these things are part of the root cause of the rise in violence in communities.

Chicago Teacher's Union President Karen Lewis dubbed Emanuel the “murder mayor,” saying of him: “Look at the murder rate in this city. He's murdering schools. He's murdering jobs. He's murdering housing. I don't know what else to call him. He's the murder mayor.” (CBSChicago, March 22)

PART ONE CHICAGO

WW COMMENTARY

Referring to the Emanuel administration's decision to close 54 schools, mainly in Black communities in a school district that is 91 percent people of color, Lewis said, “This policy is racist. It's classist, and we have to continue to say that our mayor, who was away on a ski trip, dropped this information right before spring break.” (NBCChicago, March 22)

The shooting took place in a neighborhood with a 40.7 percent poverty rate, nearly twice that of Chicago as a whole. Unemployment is high, and several schools have been closed there.

Chicago's answer is not to alleviate the conditions that give rise to the violence, but to unleash more police patrols in neighborhoods. In recent years, police brutality and police shootings of Black people have increased. In 2011, 80 percent of those injured by police shootings were Black.

Capitalism brings with it increasing alienation from one generation to the next; it arises from the social relations in society.

Workers become alienated from one another as competition for jobs increases and well-paying jobs become scarcer.

The more developed the country — especially one that has passed into the imperialist phase — the more decadent the society grows, and with that comes the prevalence of social illness.

This is how culture seems to be moving backwards in a technologically advanced society.

The means of production are overproducing, actually becoming too productive, glutting markets with items much sooner than in earlier times. Add to this that the means of production have become more costly. Also, the economic, political and military hegemony of the U.S. is increasingly being challenged.

The drive for expansion and war is increasing. This is why the U.S. is pushing to engage in Syria, where its proxy forces seem to be losing against a government that is outside the sphere of U.S. influence.

Materially, for people in the U.S., it means that well-paying jobs are becoming scarcer, and workers are expected to be more productive for lower wages. This is why the bosses and their politicians recently moved to make Michigan — once a bastion of private sector unionism — a “right-to-work” state.

It also means that the banks and financial institutions that have saddled governments at every level with debt are now pushing more aggressively for financial returns. Hence, the situation in Detroit, where public works are up for sale, public workers' contracts are being torn up, pensions are being gutted, and schools are closing.

Next: Navy Yard shootings

Read the entire article at workers.org

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Workers World
147 W. 24th St., 2nd Fl.
New York, N.Y. 10011
Phone: 212.627.2994
E-mail: ww@workers.org
Web: www.workers.org

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Closing date: Oct. 1, 2013
Editor: Deirdre Griswold

Technical Editors: Lal Roohk, Andy Katz
Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, LeiLani Dowell, Leslie Feinberg, Kris Hamel, Monica Moorehead, Gary Wilson
West Coast Editor: John Parker
Contributing Editors: Abayomi Azikiwe, Greg Butterfield, Jaimeson Champion, G. Dunkel, Fred Goldstein, Teresa Gutierrez, Larry Hales, Berta Joubert-Ceci, Cheryl LaBash, Milt Neidenberg, Betsey Piette, Minnie Bruce Pratt, Gloria Rubac
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Supporter Program: Sue Davis, coordinator

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National Office
147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl.
New York, NY 10011
212.627.2994
wwp@workers.org

Atlanta
P.O. Box 5565
Atlanta, GA 30307
404.627.0185
atlanta@workers.org

Baltimore
c/o Solidarity Center
2011 N. Charles St.
Baltimore, MD 21218
443.221.3775
baltimore@workers.org

Bay Area
1305 Franklin St. #411
Oakland, CA 94612
510.600.5800
bayarea@workers.org

Boston
284 Amory St.
Boston, MA 02130
617.286.6574
boston@workers.org

Buffalo, N.Y.
367 Delaware Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14202
716.883.2534
buffalo@workers.org

Chicago
27 N. Wacker Dr. #138
Chicago, IL 60606
chicago@workers.org
312.229.0161

Cleveland
P.O. Box 5963
Cleveland, OH 44101
216.738.0320
cleveland@workers.org

Denver
denver@workers.org

Detroit
5920 Second Ave.
Detroit, MI 48202
313.459.0777
detroit@workers.org

Durham, N.C.
804 Old Fayetteville St.
Durham, NC 27701
919.322.9970
durham@workers.org

Houston
P.O. Box 3454
Houston, TX 77253-3454
713.503.2633
houston@workers.org

Los Angeles
5278 W Pico Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90019
la@workers.org
323.306.6240

Milwaukee
milwaukee@workers.org

Philadelphia
P.O. Box 34249
Philadelphia, PA 19101
610.931.2615
phila@workers.org

Pittsburgh
pittsburgh@workers.org

Rochester, N.Y.
585.436.6458
rochester@workers.org

Rockford, IL
rockford@workers.org

San Diego
P.O. Box 33447
San Diego, CA 92163
619.692.0355
sandiego@workers.org

Tucson, Ariz.
tucson@workers.org

Washington, D.C.
P.O. Box 57300
Washington, DC 20037
dc@workers.org

Another bipartisan capitalist atrocity

Food stamps cut as hunger rises

By Kathy Durkin

Cupboards will be bare next year for nearly 4 million people in the United States if the bill cutting the food stamp program, which was passed by the Republican majority in the House on Sept. 19, becomes law. They voted to cut this life-saving program by \$40 billion over 10 years.

The bill would deny food aid to poor adults, including 170,000 veterans. Cut off would be 1.7 million jobless adults living in high-unemployment regions, as well as 2.1 million people in low-income families, most with underpaid working adults and/or low-income seniors. About 210,000 children in these families would also lose free school lunches. Some unemployed parents who can't find jobs would lose benefits, which would affect their children.

Some state governments are already following suit, moving to limit food stamp eligibility, including in jobless areas, and imposing stringent tests.

Besides whatever Congress eventually votes to cut, there will also be a 13 percent reduction in benefits for all recipients when a section of the 2009 stimulus package ends in November. This will hurt millions; for instance, a family of four will lose \$36 worth of food per month.

In the House vote, wealthy Congress members increased the gigantic sums allotted to agribusiness companies, and then separated food stamps from the farm bill so they could make deep cuts. Yet, these politicians of the superrich, who think nothing of spending thousands of taxpayer dollars a year on lavish dinners, are aiming vile attacks at food stamp recipients, yelling "fraud" and "abuse" and excoriating them to "go get a job" — as if the economic crisis and lack of livable-wage jobs were their fault.

The politicians who voted to increase hunger represent the richest 1% of the 1%, the ruling class. They are on an offensive to gut essential safety net programs

won by workers' movements, including unemployment insurance, so they can transfer more government money to the super-rich banks through interest payments and bailouts, all while satisfying the Pentagon thirst for weapons and war funds.

The Democrats voted against the House resolution. Allegedly, they will block such a dire cutback in the Senate, where they hold a majority.

If the Democrats are serious, they can still vehemently oppose these cuts in every way possible. They could filibuster, as Sen. Wendy Davis did recently to oppose cuts in reproductive health services in Texas, refusing to agree to any cutbacks or compromises. They could walk out en masse in protest.

However, Democrats already agreed in June to allow food stamp cuts of \$400 million a year over the next five years. And it was a Democrat, President Bill Clinton, who pushed the so-called "welfare reform" act in 1996 that severely rolled back public assistance benefits and restricted food stamp eligibility. It also denied food aid to most documented immigrants, who had been eligible.

Vital benefits under siege

Any cuts to food stamps are an attack on the working class, especially the poorest people, who need food aid for survival and health.

The Census Bureau reports that nearly 47 million people — 15 percent of the population and 22 percent of those under 18 — lived in poverty in 2012. On Sept. 4, the Department of Agriculture stated that last year 49 million people lived in households where some members didn't get enough to eat due to lack of funds, despite many getting food stamps.

Last year, a near record 47.76 million people got food benefits averaging \$133 a month — about \$1.40 per meal. Half were children and teenagers living in low-income families, many with an underpaid employed parent; 10 percent were seniors;

others were people with disabilities; some unemployed adults and veterans.

With the benefits, many people are just scraping by. Without them, millions would face worse hunger and hardships, including serious health problems. As it is, many parents skip meals so their children can eat. The Children's Defense Fund asked on Sept. 19 how Congress could dare cut this aid for children when the Census Bureau reports that "child poverty rates remain at record highs and Black, Hispanic and children under six suffer the most."

Some 5 million of those over 60 don't get enough to eat — mostly women, African Americans and Latinos/as, rural dwellers and others with low incomes, says the National Foundation to End Senior Hunger.

People's movements won food stamps

From 1939 to 1943, a modest Food Stamp Program — where workers bought stamps discounting food prices — resulted from mass struggles during the Great Depression. Then, in 1964, the Food Stamp Act was passed, along with Medicaid, Head Start and the Job Corps. These programs were won by 1960s mass movements, including the strong Civil Rights Movement. The FSP was expanded in 1974, then again in 1977, when stamps were distributed free. But they were restricted in Clinton's war on the poor in the 1990s. In 2008, the FSP was renamed the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Since the financial crisis of 2008, food stamps have become crucial. The number of recipients rose from 26 million in 2007 to nearly 48 million now. Millions of people who worked before the crisis still can't find jobs or are now involuntarily underemployed and/or underpaid.

Yet, with racist, sexist and classist demagoguery, the wealthiest 1% contemptuously blame the workers, including the poorest, for increasing food stamp enrollment. The "recovery" has increased their riches, but nothing has "trickled down"

to the workers. Economic inequality has skyrocketed.

According to Mark Bittman in the July 26 New York Times, "The recession killed 60 percent of \$15-\$20-an-hour jobs. ... Around 20 percent have returned, but the rest are being replaced by those paying less than \$13 an hour. Thus median income for working-age households fell more than 20 percent from 2000 to 2010."

Clearly, food stamps are still crucial to the unemployed and millions who have jobs but pay exorbitant housing, medical and other costs. Some 14 percent of food industry workers, who average \$9.65 an hour, rely on food stamps to help feed their children.

'Food is a right'

Workers World Party has supported successful lawsuits to force the federal government to release warehoused surplus food, and it initiated distributions of produce, under the slogan "Food is for people, not for profit." In the early 1970s in Buffalo, N.Y., party members in Women United for Action helped obtain tons of surplus apples and potatoes — donated by farmers who otherwise would have destroyed them, because they couldn't be sold profitably — and distributed them free to people hit by plant closings, wage freezes and high prices.

Under capitalism, food is a commodity. Although it is plentiful — on farms, store shelves and restaurant tables — millions can't afford to buy it. There is more than enough to satisfy everyone's health and nutritional needs. WW says "Food is a right" and every person is entitled to sufficient, nutritious food. Ultimately, WW stresses, food should be free to all; it's a basic human right.

SNAP benefits should be expanded, not cut, along with Meals on Wheels and Women, Infants and Children food programs. It took a strong, unified struggle to win these benefits, and a fightback would galvanize the forces needed to stop the cutbacks. □

Behind the New Haven rail fiasco

By a railroad worker

Metro-North Railroad's New Haven line, the busiest commuter line in the United States, came to a halt on Sept. 25. Con Edison's 138,000 volt feeder cable in West Mount Vernon, N.Y., failed, cutting overhead power to electric trains on an 8-mile stretch.

Over 60,000 people who use this line to travel between New York City and Connecticut have been scrambling ever since to find a way to work or school.

Amtrak's service between New York and Boston has also been affected. Acela express trains were canceled until Sept. 30, and other Amtrak trains had delays, since diesel engines had to be coupled and then uncoupled to equipment.

Con Ed workers are erecting transformers at Harrison, N.Y., to bring some power back to the overhead catenary wires. But even with this temporary fix, only half of the usual trains will be able to run.

Con Ed's management had taken an additional feeder out of service, leaving no back-up when the cable failed.

Utility Workers Union Local 1-2 spokesperson John Melia pointed out that Con Ed has cut its union workforce. "This catastrophic failure is a symptom of [Con Ed's] whole mindset, which is we

will operate it in a 'just-in-time' fashion," said Melia. "Things like this are going to happen over and over again." (Bloomberg.com, Sept. 27)

Last summer, Con Ed CEO Kevin Burke tried to bust the utility workers' union, forcing a four-week lockout that ended only when a dangerous storm was imminent. That's how reckless and vicious these capitalist utilities are.

Looting the New Haven

The New Haven line was electrified between Woodlawn, N.Y. — where it connects with the line to Grand Central Terminal — and Stamford, Conn., in 1907. Electrification was extended to New Haven by 1914.

This was the first alternating current electrification of a U.S. railroad and one of the first in the world. The New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad, which completed this pioneering project, had a virtual monopoly on transportation in southern New England.

J. P. Morgan, the most powerful U.S. banker at the time, was looting the New Haven. Morgan stogee Charles S. Mellen, New Haven's president, set up hundreds of dummy companies. These outfits siphoned off funds and provided a least \$1 million in commission fees to Morgan's

bank, which is now the \$2.5 trillion monster called JPMorgan Chase. Beginning in 1907, future U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis exposed this fraud. ("House of Morgan" by Ron Chernow)

This financial skullduggery included building the parallel New York, Westchester and Boston Railway, which was abandoned in 1938, except for a segment in the Bronx that is used by the no. 5 Dyer Avenue subway line. It cost the New Haven over \$50 million, of which a quarter was never accounted for. ("New Haven Railroad" by Peter E. Lynch)

The New Haven plunged into bankruptcy twice, in 1935 and 1961. Another crooked New Haven railroad president — Patrick McGinnis — was later sent to jail for looting the Boston & Maine Railroad.

These troubles prevented the New Haven from electrifying the line from New Haven to Boston, which was only completed by Amtrak in 1999.

Socialist China's high-speed rail

Ironically, the day before Metro-North lost electrical power, the Sept. 24 New York Times lavished deserved praise on China's high-speed rail network. Close to 50 million people a month ride these trains, some of which average 186 miles per hour.

Train tickets are cheap so workers can buy them. "Li Xiaohong, a shoe factory worker, rides the 430-mile route from Guangzhou home to Changsha once a month to visit her daughter," reported the Times. It takes less than two and a half hours.

China has already built 5,900 miles of high-speed rail and is expected to have 11,000 miles by the end of 2015. The more than \$100 billion a year that's being spent on the state-owned high-speed rail system has meant hundreds of thousands of jobs for Chinese workers. Only the Chinese Revolution made this possible.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon spent \$105.7 billion last year to occupy Afghanistan.

The U.S. rail network has shrunk, and Amtrak provides just a fraction of the passenger service that was available 60 years ago.

The capitalist United States is decaying while the socialist People's Republic of China is rapidly growing.

Poor and working people in the U.S. need a revolution, too. Union-busting Con Ed CEO Kevin Burke got \$14.84 million last year. (BloombergBusinessWeek) That equals the total wages of 984 minimum-wage workers, if they were lucky enough to work all year at 40 hours per week. □

Workers Assemblies, Oct. 24 and the fight to raise workers' wages

The following is taken from a talk by Sharon Black given at the Sept. 27 Workers World Party public forum in New York City. Black is a member of the Baltimore Workers Assembly and attended the 2013 AFL-CIO convention in Los Angeles.

I want to read a passage from "The History of the Russian Revolution" by Leon Trotsky that has meaning for our discussion today. It explains part of the revolutionary process that illuminates not only revolutionary situations in particular but contradictory phenomena in general — of which the union movement and the U.S. working-class movement are an example.

"The swift changes of mass views and moods in an epoch of revolution thus derive, not from the flexibility of and mobility of the human mind, but just the opposite, from its deep conservatism. The chronic lag of ideas and relations behind new objective conditions, right up to the moment when the latter crash over people in the form of a catastrophe, is what creates in a period of revolution that leaping movement of ideas and passions which seems to the police mind a mere result of the activities of demagogues."

The AFL-CIO and the union movement in this country — which is not homogeneous at all — are filled with contradictions. Take the so-called "immigrant rights" bill, S-744, which many in grassroots immigrant rights groups are bitterly opposed to, and rightfully so. The union movement has decided to embrace the bill with the philosophy that anything is better than nothing.

Or look at the issue of Obamacare, which will deeply hurt a number of union-contracted health care plans. The top union officials have basically capitulated to the Democratic Party and dropped fighting for a single-payer plan, or health care for all.

But perhaps the biggest elephant in the room at the time of the convention was the refusal of the leadership to take on the issue of opposition to the war on Syria, which in essence let right-wing demagogues seem to lead the opposition to it.

But it would be erroneous to view the union movement solely based on its problems and mistakes. There were other developments at the convention that deserve embracing and deepening. The decision by the AFL-CIO to attempt to broaden itself and bring into its top leadership groups that prior to this did not have a seat at the table — workers' groups like the Taxi Drivers Association and others like the NAACP, NOW and the Sierra Club — was important, especially the seat representing young workers.

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka's words were something like "In the past labor set the agenda and then we went to our allies and partners and told them what we needed. Now we want to sit down together and set the agenda together."

The AFL-CIO's attempt to reconfigure itself is based on major difficulties and the cold, hard reality that union membership and consequently its influence are shrinking.

But the problem goes deeper than that. Whether the AFL-CIO states it openly or not, it's the changes in the capitalist system itself. A larger and more impoverished global working class has been forced to compete with each other. It is largely atomized and low wage. This has created an almost insurmountable challenge to the unions in terms of even defending old gains, given that the union movement is fighting under the same old capitalist constructs.

I'll give a very concrete example. Look at the situation in Detroit, where bankruptcy proceedings have threatened the pensions of city workers.

It's of course possible to arouse the workers who are losing their pensions. But that is limited. If you look at this from a distance, what's needed is to arouse the entire working class. But a large percentage of the workers now — especially those who are young and most oppressed — provided that they are working at all, earn less on a monthly basis than what some pensioners get. That's not to say that pensioners have adequate incomes. It's to show how difficult it is for union

workers to win over non-union workers.

What came out of the Baltimore Workers Assembly

It's in this context that I want to explore the importance of the Workers Assemblies and raise the critical questions: Can they be helpful in deepening this needed development in the union movement to broaden the movement's scope? Can Workers Assemblies provide the vehicle for the working class to find a political expression that has the potential to take on capitalism?

Let me switch gears and discuss what came out of the Baltimore Workers Assembly on Sept. 1, and also what Oct. 24 is about.

The assembly came to a consensus and voted for three things: 1) to wage a campaign for a \$15-an-hour minimum wage; 2) to make Oct. 24, the 75th anniversary of when the first minimum wage was enacted, National Raise Workers' Wages Day; and 3) to build the Workers Assembly movement both locally and nationally.

The struggle to raise workers' wages in this country is critical. According to the Huffington Post, the median annual income is \$26,364, which means that at least half the workers in this country make less than the \$15 an hour we are demanding. The difference in wages for the most oppressed is incredible, with a gap of between \$10,000 and \$15,000 less a year for Black and Latina/o workers, which illustrates the tremendous need to fight racism.

Why did we choose \$15? We could have said \$21.74. One study shows that the minimum wage would have to be raised to \$21.74 to keep up with increased worker productivity. Or if we had just followed a current AFL-CIO petition, we would

have called for \$10 and some change. On the other hand, if we based it on ending exploitation and paying workers the full value of what they produce, it would be much higher.

But the main reason we chose \$15 was to show support and solidarity for the very heroic fast food workers' struggle, which has raised \$15 prominently. In addition we based it on our direct discussions with workers in the streets prior to the Baltimore Workers Assembly.

There is a lot of discussion on the strategy of the Service Employees union and of OUR Walmart started by the United Food and Commercial Workers — their good points, the in-between and the bad. That's not the job of this report.

What is their real problem? The real problem is the need to engage the whole working class. That is their best chance of winning. Low wages are a classwide problem — actually a worldwide problem. Look at the great struggle going on in Bangladesh by workers fighting to raise wages.

This makes Oct. 24 a very important effort and the Workers Assemblies an important vehicle.

Ultimately, the main problem for the working class is capitalism and imperialism. We cannot give up on or ignore this — ultimately the political struggle for power is crucial. What is taking place internationally, including the threat of imperialist war, is critical to our day-to-day struggles. A war such as the one on Syria and the entire region has the potential of subverting the class struggle — but it also has the potential for undoing the imperialists' aims through international working-class solidarity.

Next: *The potential of the Workers Assemblies for the unions and the broader movement.*

WASHINGTON STATE

Low-wage workers battle for justice in the fields

By Jim McMahan
Seattle

The migrant farmworker organization Familias Unidas por la Justicia (Families United for Justice) has been fighting for the rights of workers at the corporate Sakuma Brothers Berry Farms in Burlington, Wash., for over 11 weeks. The workers have gone on strike three times in an ongoing struggle against poverty wages, racist treatment and terrible housing conditions.

The nearly 300 workers are Triqui and Mixteco Indigenous workers, originally from the Mexican state of Oaxaca. They are up against Sakuma's \$6.1 million, 1,500-acre operation, one of the state's largest strawberry, blueberry and blackberry farms. They have received support from around the region, especially from Community to Community Development. Its director, Rosalinda Guillen, is a veteran farmworker organizer.

The spark that ignited the first strike came on July 11, when a worker asked for a raise and was fired on the spot. The piece rate pay the workers were getting was well below the minimum wage. They went out on strike and also held a "people's movement assembly" at which a mass of grievances against Sakuma came out.

They drew up a list of 14 demands dealing with their issues as migrant workers and as tenants with families at the farm. And they formed the new organization, Familias Unidas, electing their own leadership.

The strike won the rehiring of the fired worker, Federico Lopez, and improvements in some of the housing conditions. Youth pickers received back wages due them, and other wage errors were corrected.

Meanwhile, Sakuma brought in "labor consultants" — hired goons — and other security personnel to intimidate the workers. On Sept. 25, Familias Unidas won a court injunction ordering Sakuma to remove security personnel from workers' housing and public highways.

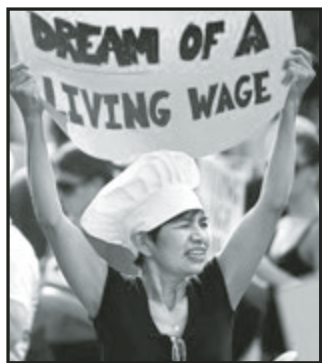
Hourly wage at issue

On Aug. 5, Sakuma was due to introduce 160 "guest" workers they had previously contracted to hire from Mexico. Familias Unidas workers were demanding a \$14 hourly wage, but the new workers were contracted to work at \$12, the "prevailing" Washington State wage mandated in U.S. immigration law. It's much less in some other states.

The lower wage proved to be the limit, not just for the new workers, but for all

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On **OCTOBER 24**
the 75th Anniversary of the Minimum Wage:



NYC RALLY to RAISE the MINIMUM WAGE

\$15 an hour because
'We can't survive on \$7.25'

Thursday **OCT 24 @ 4 PM**

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Support underpaid workers fighting for a livable wage

WORKERS NEED TO STICK TOGETHER

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www.peoplespowerassemblies.org/

Facebook event page: <http://tinyurl.com/nqgtafy>

Endorse Oct. 24: <http://tinyurl.com/nhvrfrfc>

Developing a fightback strategy

Detroit people's assembly to challenge banks' rule

Continued from page 1

governor and state legislature stampede through a new EM law against the will of the people. The EM is commonly referred to as the “emergency dictator” by residents of Detroit and other cities.

Advancing concrete, doable demands

“The visit of Obama administration officials to Detroit,” read a Moratorium NOW! statement calling for the Sept. 27 demonstration, “can be an important development in restoring hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funds to the City of Detroit to alleviate the financial crisis facing the city. But this will not be the case if Obama’s officials choose to meet with and listen to Gov. Snyder, EM Orr, Mayor Bing and other officials who have deliberately withheld federal funds from Detroit to further their agenda of privatization, union busting and subsidies for the banks.”

The coalition statement also addressed what actions benefiting workers and residents could be implemented immediately if the political will existed to do so. All these demands have been raised by the coalition during the ongoing struggle over the last several years.

The coalition stated: “Here is a list of concrete ways the Obama administration can funnel needed funds to Detroit. All of these can be done by executive action and do not require approval of the reactionary Republican House of Representatives:

- “The administration can order the release of hundreds of millions of dollars of Community Service Block Grant funds to Detroit, under the auspices of the City and administered by City workers. In October 2011, State Dept. of Human Services head Moira Corrigan illegally withheld these funds from Detroit in an effort to force the city to give up the right to administer the grants. As a result, funds have been withheld from the neediest Detroiters for whom CSBG grants offer rental, heat, and food assistance. Bing and City Council capitulated to Corrigan’s illegal acts. Restoring the CSBG grants to the administration of the city, by the same workers who effectively worked the program for years (perhaps minus a few rotten supervisors), would mean dozens of workers would be restored to the city’s workforce. Their wages and benefits would be paid out of the federal grant, helping to put a halt to the deliberate depleting of the pension fund by Snyder.
- “Similarly, the Obama administration can restore the administration of the Detroit Head Start program to the City of Detroit, which administered it for over 45 years until Mayor Bing inexplicably and illegally ceded control to a Denver-based outfit with the consent of the Obama administration. Restoring the administration of the Head Start program to the City would immediately bring \$25 million in funds to the city, and employ 40 City workers.”

Save peoples' homes, investigate the banks!

- “President Obama could order Snyder and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority to immediately remove the impediments they imposed on the release of the \$500 million in federal Helping Hardest

Hit Homeowner Funds to serve their purpose, helping homeowners remain in their homes. Some 10,000 Detroit homeowners face losing their homes to tax foreclosures despite the availability of hundreds of millions in federal funds to pay delinquent property tax bills. Snyder’s and MSHDA’s deliberate withholding of these funds is contributing to the loss of homes, decline in neighborhoods and depletion of Detroit’s population and tax base. It is also contributing to the City’s deficit as Detroit is paying \$82 million in chargebacks to Wayne County for lost value of tax-foreclosed homes, which could be avoided if the Hardest Hit funds were released.

- “The Obama administration, through the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Department of Justice, could order an investigation of the banks whose subprime lending practices were the major factor in destroying the City’s tax base over the last decade. Similarly, the SEC and DOJ could launch similar investigations to those carried out across the U.S. regarding municipal bond practices of banks like Chase, UBS and Bank of America, LIBOR manipulation by the banks with regard to Detroit’s bonds, and the use of the ISDA Fix by the banks to calculate termination fees on interest rate swaps. In addition the SEC and the Justice Department should investigate the role of the ‘ratings agencies’ Standard and Poors, Moody’s and Fitch, in encouraging subprime mortgage lending in Detroit, as well as ‘encouraging’ the City to be placed in onerous interest rate swaps in 2005-2006, then lowering the City’s bond rating, placing these bond deals in default to benefit the banks who pay the agencies.”

Stop gov't. foreclosures, moratorium now!

- “Whenever a State of Emergency is declared, it is the policy of the HUD Secretary to place a 90-day moratorium on foreclosures and foreclosure-related evictions, which can be extended by executive order. Foreclosure moratoriums were put into effect after Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy. The basis for placing an Emergency Manager and subsequent bankruptcy on Detroit was Snyder’s declaration of a state of financial emergency. Based on this emergency declaration, HUD Secretary Donovan should immediately impose a moratorium on foreclosures and foreclosure-related evictions.
- “In addition, because Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, agencies of the federal government, along with HUD, own the vast majority of mortgage loans in Detroit, the Obama administration should stop all foreclosures and foreclosure-related evictions by these federal agencies. Considering the fact that virtually all residential mortgages in Detroit are severely underwater, contributing to people abandoning their residences, the Obama administration should also reduce the principal on all mortgage loans owned by Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac or backed by HUD, to the actual value of the home.”



Sept. 27 protest.

WW PHOTO: KRIS HAMEL

Meet with the people, not big business!

Moratorium NOW! organizers were joined at the Sept. 27 demonstration by activists from Detroit Eviction Defense, along with municipal workers, retirees and members of other organizations from around metro Detroit. They demanded that the president’s officials meet with the workers and city residents instead of representatives of big business and the banks.

The results of the high-level meeting were as organizers expected. Obama administration officials pledged additional grants on top of the already-unutilized grants provided to the city. Private capitalists, including Dan Gilbert, founder of Quicken Loans, were appointed to help head up a “blight removal” program to tear down the more than 70,000 abandoned homes and structures in Detroit at a cost of \$150 million.

Quicken Loans, instead of being punished for its role in the demise of the city, has been rewarded with oversight of this public money. Roy Roberts, the former emergency manager of Detroit Public Schools, will be the new “chief land officer” for the city. Organizers characterized the meeting as “typical” of how the right-wing agenda of privatization, cutbacks, austerity and enrichment of the banks is moving full steam ahead in Detroit.

Fightback vs. banks, austerity

Abayomi Azikiwe, a Moratorium NOW! leader and a main organizer for the People’s Assembly, told Workers World that the Oct. 5-6 gathering in downtown Detroit “will focus on a fighting program to take on the banks — the very pinnacle of finance capital — in the struggle against banker-imposed austerity and cutbacks. It will link with the struggles of people around the U.S. and the world who face similar plights at the hands of the capitalists and their political backers.”

Azikiwe continued: “It’s our hope that people will go away from this assembly with a greater commitment to fight against emergency management, which is the bankers’ rule of Detroit. Hopefully this will set a precedent for other cities that are facing similar crises, because not only Detroit is under threat, but urban areas throughout the U.S. are facing pension cuts, disempowerment of communities, destruction of neighborhoods, theft of pensions, etc. We want to build greater awareness to fight against austerity and the banks.”

Organizers say a major demonstration, backed by the Moratorium NOW! Coalition; the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 25; and Detroiters Resisting Emergency Management, will be called for Oct. 23 outside the federal bankruptcy court as the bankruptcy eligibility trial takes place.

For more information on the Oct. 5-6 International People’s Assembly and the struggles against emergency management and municipal bankruptcy, visit these websites: moratorium-mi.org, internationalpeoplesassembly.org and detroitdebtmoratorium.org. □

On the Picket Line

By Sue Davis

Nurses hold global day vs. austerity

Nurses and health care workers in 14 countries petitioned, marched and rallied on Sept. 17 to stop the harmful effects of austerity and cuts in health care services, to improve patient care, and to promote economic healing and recovery. This was the first event organized by Global Nurses United, founded in San Francisco on June 26, which represents leading nurse and health care unions on all continents. Actions ranged from the Philippines and Australia to Brazil and the Dominican Republic, Ireland and Canada. For example, on the second anniversary of Occupy Wall Street, actions calling for a Robin Hood tax — which would raise hundreds of billions of dollars from a tax on bank and stock market transactions to be used for health care — took place in Seoul, south Korea; Cape Town, South Africa; Guatemala City; and New York City. (nationalnursesunited.org, Sept. 18)

Home health care aides get raise

For the more than 2 million home health care aides, personal care aides and certified nursing assistants — 90 percent women and 50 percent people of color — federal Labor Department rules issued Sept. 17 go a long way toward correcting longtime injustice. Now these workers, who sometimes toil 100 hours a week, are supposed to receive overtime pay and at least minimum wage. This change has been advocated by unions, workers’ rights and women’s rights groups for years. (Union City, online weekly newsletter of Metro Washington Council AFL-CIO, Sept. 23) Now the federal minimum wage needs a boost from a stagnant \$7.25 an hour to a livable wage of \$15. All out on Oct. 24, the 75th anniversary of passage of the minimum wage law, for what is called “Workers demand a raise day.” (peoplepowerassemblies.org)

New laws help low-paid California workers

During the last week of September, two bills were signed into law that will help low-paid workers in California. On Sept. 25, Gov. Jerry Brown signed AB 10 that will raise the state minimum wage to \$10 an hour in 2016, up from the current \$8 an hour. While the bill was opposed by such big-business bullies as the California Chamber of Commerce and the California Restaurant Association, it was widely hailed by unions and workers’ rights groups. (Los Angeles Times, Sept. 25) The next day, bill AB 241, the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights, was signed into law after seven years of lobbying and two vetoes. Promoted by the National Domestic Workers Alliance, it stipulates that housekeepers, child care providers and caregivers must receive overtime and have regular meal/rest breaks and adequate sleeping conditions for live-in workers. It is only the second bill of rights for these workers in the country. (blog.aflcio.org, Sept. 26) Now the struggle will be to enforce it.

Cablevision workers take on CEO

For the last 18 months, the 300 Cablevision workers in Brooklyn, N.Y., have been demanding their first union contract after voting to be represented by the Commu-

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NORTH CAROLINA

Fightback Conference unites workers

By Dante Strobino
Raleigh, N.C.

Workers from across North Carolina joined together on Sept. 21 for a statewide Workers Fightback Conference hosted by the Southern Workers Assembly.

In the last few months, over 950 people were arrested in protests at the State Capitol and tens of thousands took to the streets as part of the Moral Monday movement. At the same time, the SWA was building a campaign to elevate the struggles for workers' rights, including having many rank-and-file workers arrested in the civil disobedience actions.

Gathered for this important conference were members of the N.C. Public Service Workers Union-UE Local 150, the N.C. Association of Educators, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee of the AFL-CIO, the Carolina Workers Organizing Committee (which is helping fast-food workers organize), OUR Walmart of the United Food and Commercial Workers, the International Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees Local 322, as well as unorganized workers, the unemployed, youth, and community and faith leaders.

President Angaza Laughinghouse of



The Southern Workers Assembly.

WW PHOTO: DANTE STROBINO

UE Local 150 said there had been an intensified legislative assault on unions in the state this year: "The workers' movement is currently at a critical juncture here in the 'right-to-work' for less state of North Carolina. This convening of rank-and-file union leaders, organizing workers and activists to share lessons and plan action, is a strategic response. Today's Workers Fightback Conference is an important step to resist this ongoing war against workers."

Laughinghouse added, "Today we must develop our broad campaign to oppose House Bill 6, which would put right-to-

work, the ban on collective bargaining rights for public employees, and a ban on card check neutrality for union recognition into this state's constitution."

Conference participants discussed how workers' democracy and power must be promoted as an essential tenet of a democratic society. This is especially important now, with the attacks on democracy driven by the economic crisis and the capitalist push for austerity given as a solution.

According to a conference document, "North Carolina workers and workers throughout the South, in addition to having the worst labor laws and anti-union

climate in the country, are now undergoing further attacks on workers' rights. N.C. is a testing ground for the introduction and passage of the most extreme right-wing and racist laws. Its open declaration of corporate control of state government was made clear by the governor's appointment of multimillionaire Art Pope — who is the state's single largest donor and a founding board member of the Koch brothers' Americans for Prosperity and Tea Party — in charge of the state's budget as deputy budget director.

"The right-wing push to make right-to-work part of the N.C. Constitution must be described as a major attack on labor and worker rights. The passage of a referendum constitutionalizing right-to-work would be a serious political blow to the labor movement in N.C. and throughout the U.S., as it would be defined as a people's mandate, siding with the right of the employers to exercise total power over workers."

An opening panel of the conference focused on the struggle of workers to fight for family-supporting wages. The "Low Wages Have to Go!" panel featured Jessica Benton, a Millbrook Elementary School teacher and member of NCAE and Organize 2020; Terrance Kellon, a fast-food

PENNSYLVANIA

Black school revives civil rights lawsuit

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

A broad coalition of students, alumni, faculty, staff, politicians, religious leaders and community supporters of Cheyney University gathered for a press conference outside the federal court building in Philadelphia on Sept. 23. Named "Heeding Cheyney's Call," the group put Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Corbett on notice that they intend to restart a major civil rights lawsuit that seeks additional funding for the traditionally Black, state-owned school.

The coalition charged that, despite austerity measures under Corbett's administration that impacted all 14 state schools, the 13 with predominantly white enrollment share a \$100 million budget surplus, while Cheyney faces a \$14 million deficit. When asked the reason why, Cheyney alumnus Michael Coard, lead lawyer for the lawsuit, replied, "Racism!"

A civil rights lawsuit filed on behalf of Cheyney in 1980 successfully charged the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania with racial discrimination in violation of the

Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, and other federal and state laws. It cited the state's unlawful and inequitable actions against the traditional Black university, compared to its treatment of traditionally white state-owned schools.

That lawsuit resulted in a binding agreement in 1999 with the Office for Civil Rights that funneled \$36.5 million to Cheyney for building and academic upgrades. However, plaintiffs in the 1980 case — many of whom attended the press conference — charged the Commonwealth has continued to maintain an illegal and racial "dual system" of higher education, to Cheyney's detriment.

Coard stated that the Commonwealth "has affirmative obligations to ensure that Cheyney University becomes and remains equitably comparable to the traditionally white institutions in Pennsylvania." Calling a 60 percent drop in Cheyney's enrollment — from 3,000 students in 1977 to 1,200 today — "shocking," Coard blamed recent state tuition rate increases, which he described as "oppressively high for Cheyney students."

Coming from families with average household incomes of under \$40,000, more than 80 percent of Cheyney students rely on financial aid. To comply with the 1999 settlement, the HCC coalition calls for a major revision of the state's funding-per-enrollment formulas that benefit larger schools.

"The Commonwealth says they can't give more money because there are not enough students. We say there are not enough students at Cheyney because there is not enough money," Coard said. "We are calling on the federal government to force the Commonwealth to come back to the table and reach an equitable agreement with Cheyney that complies with the 1999 agreement they signed."

Coard explained that the group chose Sept. 23, the 33rd anniversary of the 1980 case, "to give notice that the Commonwealth continues this pattern of discrimination through underfunding," leaving "Cheyney University with all-time low student enrollment and an all-time high budget deficit."

"We are trying to make sure that Cheyney is treated not just fairly, not just

equally, but equitably," said Coard.

Founded as the African Institute in 1837, Cheyney is one of the oldest historically Black colleges in the U.S. Reinstated under the state system as Cheyney University in 1983, the school offers 33 majors for undergraduates, as well as a master's in Educational Leadership and Public Administration, helping to prepare much-needed African-American and other students of color to become leaders in education.

As the HCC press conference got underway, the pressing need for more Black administrators was underscored by news that two white school officials in the nearby Coatesville school district were caught texting messages containing racial slurs about students and staff. Some 47 percent of Coatesville's 7,000 students are African-American.

In Philadelphia, dozens of schools have been closed and layoffs of nearly 4,000 support staff have resulted in class sizes of over 40 students with no counselors, supplies or even textbooks. Schools most impacted are in African-American communities. Coard challenged the state's

'Save the Bronx Post Office' rally held

By Johnnie Stevens
Bronx, N.Y.

"The Postal Service is under siege" was how Chuck Zlatkin, political director of the NY Metro Area American Postal Workers Union, characterized the struggle to save the U.S. Postal Service on Sept. 21. Zlatkin was chairing a forum at the Lincoln Hospital Center in the Bronx.

Following the forum, postal workers and community supporters held a spirited march across East 149th Street to the Bronx General Post Office, chanting, "Whose post office? Our post office."

Then they held a speakout addressed to the public there.

The meeting was held to protest the fact that the historic Bronx General Post Office at 149th Street and the Grand Concourse has been put up for sale. It's historic because during the 1930s Great Depression, the federal government funded New Deal programs that hired artists to decorate public buildings, including 1,100 post offices. The Bronx office is especially renowned for the murals painted by artists Ben Shahn and Bernarda Bryson, and has been designated a historic site.

Among the speakers at the forum was

U.S. Rep. Jose Serrano, who pointed out that "most of the Postal Service's financial problems come from a 2006 law that requires it to pay for its pension and health benefits 75 years in advance." Serrano has introduced legislation that would increase scrutiny of the Postal Service's attempt to sell off buildings to mostly private real estate interests.

Jacquelyn McCormick from Berkeley, Calif., executive director of the National Post Office Collaborative, told of similar struggles in her region and of a lawsuit to stop the "dismantling, relocation, closure and sale of the USPS, including historic

and architecturally significant properties and artwork." A 31-day tent city in Berkeley fought efforts to turn that landmark post office into a restaurant.

Jonathan Smith, president of the NY Metro Area Postal Union, noted that postal workers are 20 percent Black, 8 percent Latino/a and 40 percent women. Saving these jobs is part of the struggle for civil rights.

Many community representatives also spoke out, including Julio Pabon, president of South Bronx Community Association, and Rosa Maria la de Torre, of Community-Labor United for Postal Jobs

Mass pressure wins new trial for Marissa Alexander

worker with Carolina Workers Organizing Committee; Meliton Hernandez, a 14-year farmworker with the Farm Labor Organizing Committee; and Larry Mackey, a utilities worker in the city of Charlotte and member of UE Local 150.

“Whether I have to go to jail, or whatever it takes, I am going to fight for fast-food workers to get a raise,” said Kellon, a Little Caesar’s employee. “We want to form our own union and come together with other unions.”

Workers in North Carolina have no majority sign-up or collective bargaining rights. The conference discussed how to build campaigns that elevate rights at work and also working conditions, using Workers Bill of Rights campaigns. Currently being utilized by state mental health workers and municipal workers in UE Local 150, such campaigns can be a major step forward in the process of building collaboration between groups in the labor movement.

In the closing section of the conference, participants adopted a six-month plan to develop local Workers Assemblies in Charlotte, Goldsboro and Durham, N.C., to bring workers in those areas together to discuss actions and local working conditions as part of a Workers Democracy Campaign. □

By Monica Moorehead

Marissa Alexander, the 34-year-old African-American woman who was sentenced to 20 years in prison for defending herself against her former abusive spouse, has been granted a new trial. This announcement came 12 days after a Sept. 14 Nationwide Day of Rallies for Marissa Alexander. Many cities held support actions demanding “Let’s get her out!”

Even before this call was made on Facebook, thousands of people here and around the world signed petitions and held numerous protests — including the youth-led Dream Defenders who sat in at the Florida State Capitol this summer — demanding that her outrageous conviction be overturned.

This case has truly shone a bright light, nationally and internationally, on the issues of racism and sexism deeply embedded within the Florida judicial system.

On Aug. 3, 2010, in Jacksonville, Fla., Alexander, who had survived many years of domestic abuse, fired a single shot into a wall in self-defense to warn off her estranged spouse, Rico Gray, during a dispute at which two of their children were present. Gray violated a court injunction granted to Alexander after a beating she had received from him during her third pregnancy. A week before the incident, she had given birth to a premature baby. Alexander used a gun registered in her name. No one was injured.

During her trial in August 2011, Alexander’s legal defense introduced the “stand your ground” law, which states that anyone who feels threatened with violence has the right to defend herself or himself without reprisal. However, the trial judge denied Alexander immunity from prosecution under this law, saying that her decision to go back into the house armed with the gun was “inconsistent with a person in genuine fear of his or her life.” (Tampa Bay Times)

Alexander was convicted of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. The prosecution was led by Florida State Attorney Angela Corey — who was also part of the prosecution team in the trial of Trayvon Martin’s killer, George Zimmerman. Corey also accused Alexander of child abuse.

The reason given by the Florida First District Court of Appeals for its Sept. 26 opinion reversing the conviction was that the jury received erroneous instructions shifting the burden of proof for self-defense onto Alexander. Judge James H. Daniel will be announcing the new trial date. Alexander’s lead appellate lawyers, Faith E. Gay and Bruce Zimet, will be heading up her defense.

While every activist and revolutionary is heartened by this welcome development, a looming, larger issue is why should Alexander spend one more day or one more hour in prison for justifiably defending herself and her children from more abuse. Women, especially women of



Marissa Alexander

color, face a double standard of injustice when it comes to the courts, police and the law, especially where domestic violence is concerned.

To add insult to injury, a Florida clemency board panel refused to hear a request that she be pardoned just one day before the Sept. 26 ruling. Alexander has been detained and imprisoned since her arrest in 2010. Three horrific years have been stolen from her life and the time she should have been with her children. Should not time served have been the basis for her being pardoned, similar to the case of Gladys and Jamie Scott in Mississippi, who were falsely convicted of robbery?

Winning a new trial does not automatically mean freedom for Marissa Alexander. Just as intense mass pressure on social media and being visible in the streets won her right to a new trial, that same kind of pressure must continue, especially during her new trial, until she is freed and allowed to be with her children. □

priority of spending more money on incarceration than education.

Attacks on Black colleges mount

Cheyney is not the only Black university impacted by racism where inequitable funding is involved. The Coalition for Equity and Excellence in Maryland Higher Education recently filed a federal lawsuit seeking \$1 billion to make up for disparate funding for that state’s four Black colleges and universities. In 2000, Maryland promised to rectify these concerns, but plaintiffs charge that little progress has been made.

Noting that the Maryland \$1 billion lawsuit covers four schools, Coard suggested that for Cheyney alone, “\$250 million would be a nice, round number” to help upgrade physical facilities and provide support for students.

Coard said that the coalition is giving the Commonwealth a 10-calendar-day notice to respond. Pointing to a group of eight lawyers gathered behind him, Coard stated, “We have an army of lawyers with us. We want the governor to know that we are coming!” □

& Services, who recently returned from mobilizing support for the postal workers and community struggle at the AFL-CIO convention in Los Angeles. There, activists leafleted the delegates and affiliates and “got 400 signatures to save postal services and jobs.”

One of the many speakers at the GPO speakout was Eleanor Bailey, a retired postal worker who was a key organizer of the 1970 national postal strike that took on President Richard Nixon and the National Guard to win collective bargaining rights. Representatives of the National Alliance of Letter Carriers were also present. □

‘They shot him unlawfully’

Parent describes cop killing of 16-year-old

By Terri Kay Stockton, Calif.

James Earl Rivera was only 16 years old and unarmed when he was shot to death by two Stockton police officers, Gregory Dunn and Eric Azarvand, and San Joaquin County Sheriff John Nesbitt. A total of 48 rounds hit the van that James was driving on July 22, 2010, including 18 that pierced his body. The coroner’s report found that the lethal shot was to his head.

Carey Downs, Rivera’s stepfather, recounted to Workers World what the family has been able to piece together about that awful day. Police claimed they were chasing a suspected carjacker: “The initial report was five people and one guy jumped in a van and took off. They claimed [Rivera’s] car fit the description, but James didn’t fit the description of the carjacker. They initially stopped him and let him go.”

Downs continued, “When they started chasing him again, police did a ‘pit’ maneuver and smacked [his vehicle] through two mailboxes and two garages. Police claimed that he appeared to be backing up and feared for their lives, but clearly James was already injured. ... There were several different agencies out there, including highway patrol. They’re claiming they had to put the van in ‘park’ after they no longer detected movement in the vehicle. They claimed they tried to revive his lifeless body by slapping him in the face.”

Downs described how Dion Smith, Rivera’s mother, received a call “that the po-

lice are chasing one of your sons. As she rushed to the scene, she heard the shots as she was approaching, initially thinking they were just fireworks.” The officers wouldn’t acknowledge her as they put Rivera into the ambulance, and later Smith was threatened with a ticket for following it. Downs said they have never released Rivera’s personal property, dash cam videos or the police report to the family.

Downs said of the coroner’s report, “No details were included on the type of ammunition used. The huge hole in his head was evidently shot by a larger gun. The family has a picture of Officer Azarvand putting an AR-15 back in a vehicle.”

Fighting for justice

The family has held numerous speakouts all over the East Bay. “We have blown up the morgue pictures and shown them to people, wanting to demonstrate the brutality used against our son. We have worked with other families [victims of police killings], like the Duenezes and Kenneth Harding’s family. We went to Anaheim [for a statewide protest against police killings]. We are working with other families struggling to find funds for funerals



James Earl Rivera, another young victim of police, holding baby.

al arrangements and deal with their grief.

“On Aug. 31,” Downs continued, “we had a barbecue and backpack giveaway with over 200 kids, talking about issues and injustices in the community. When we then tried to march, police formed a line with riot gear, slapping their billy

clubs against their hands.”

He added, “Our son is innocent; they shot him unlawfully; we want to know why. We’re going to keep fighting until we get some answers. We stand with others, too. We want the families to know they have some other support. It’s not easy, but we’re there for them as well.”

When asked about their objectives for participating in an upcoming Oct. 22 statewide protest against police brutality, Downs said the family wants to “bring to light that the officers had cameras, and how they need drug testing; limit the police bill of rights; [and demand] an oversight committee to investigate officer-involved shootings. We need someone on the community side involved, so it’s not just them in the room. Whatever story they spin, it’s their law and that’s what happened. Protection for whistleblowers as well.” □

South African miners continue job actions

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

Labor militancy is continuing in the Republic of South Africa, which has the largest industrial working class on the continent. Some 20,000 coal miners have been involved in an intense standoff with their bosses, demanding pay increases and better working conditions. The workers are represented by the National Union of Mineworkers, the largest labor organization in the Congress of South African Trade Unions.

Negotiations between NUM and the coal mining firms, including Anglo American and Glencore Xstrata, continued on Sept. 30. Offers of a pay increase between 7 percent and 11 percent were designed to avoid a strike. These pay increases are above the rate of inflation, now at 6.4 percent.

NUM had demanded a 15 percent wage increase for veteran workers and 60 percent for entry-level employees. A strike would have impacted the country's energy industry along with coal supplies to Europe and Asia. Eskom, the South

African energy company, relies on coal production for 85 percent of its power source. Overall the country produces 68.3 million tons of coal for export from the Richards Bay Coal Terminal.

South Africa is the world's fifth-largest producer of coal. This sector, along with gold, platinum and iron ore, constitutes the bulk of the country's gross domestic product.

AMCU walks out

In the Rustenburg area, the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union led workers in a strike that began Sept. 27. The AMCU has achieved a majority status among miners in the area and has become the principal workers' representative, outstripping NUM.

Rivalry between NUM and AMCU has been a source of struggle in the Northwest province. AMCU leadership rejected the 8 percent pay hike won by NUM in the mining areas in other regions of the country and embarked upon a separate strike.

A major issue in the Rustenburg strike is the announcement by management

that 3,300 jobs would be lost in the Anglo American Platinum (Amplats) mines in the region. Since early 2013, the mine bosses have threatened cutbacks that initially would have involved over 14,000 employees.

With threats of strikes and further unrest, the company's retrenchment plans were reduced to lower numbers. Nonetheless, the threat of layoffs has been a major source of tension for members of both NUM and AMCU.

Amplats CEO Chris Griffith said in a statement on Sept. 27 that the firm would continue to engage AMCU. He later renewed threats of downsizing by claiming that the corporation could not afford the demands of the workers: "We have previously stated that the company is under tremendous economic pressure. Strikes and work stoppages will result in further losses that will hamper plans for future sustainability and further threaten the future of our 45,000 employees." (bdlive.com.za)

Settlement reached with injured workers

In a landmark legal decision, 23 miners from South Africa and neighboring Lesotho have won a settlement against Anglo American for injuries that occurred on the job. The amount of the settlement is undisclosed and the company was not required to admit guilt.

This was the first such compensation settlement in South Africa. The settlement could open the way for compensation claims by thousands of other miners who contracted lung diseases while employed by Anglo American.

These claimants were represented by attorney Richard Meeran of the London-based firm Leigh Day, which brought the initial case in 2004. Most of the in-

juries stemmed from apartheid-era conditions that prevailed in the mines. Since the collapse of apartheid and the rise to power of the African National Congress, many say that conditions have improved in the mining industry.

"In a technical and legal sense it's currently the first settlement of this type in South Africa," Meeran said. "After this settlement you'd have to wonder why Anglo or other companies would contest similar cases — it would defy logic." (Christian Science Monitor, Sept. 27)

Socialism needed in South Africa

These developments in South Africa illustrate the need to continue the national democratic revolution in the direction of socialism. Because the mines are privately owned, mine owners in the gold sector have been able to close facilities and downsize their workforce.

Anglo American, which was formed in South Africa under settler colonialism in 1917, relocated its headquarters to London in 1999, just five years after the African National Congress came to power. The corporation sold off its South African gold mining interests to other capitalists, though it still has substantial interests in the platinum, iron ore and thermal coal sectors.

Under socialism the mining companies and their facilities could be nationalized by the government and turned over for full management and operation by the workers. As the capitalists continue their predatory actions aimed at maximizing profits and disempowering workers, the issue of workers' control of the mines and other means of production in South Africa will become the only solution to preserve jobs and improve working conditions. □

Nez Perce resist GE and Big Oil



PHOTO: OCCUPY.COM

By **G. Dunkel**

In early August, hearing news that General Electric was planning to move a megalo-load of oil refinery equipment — 255 feet long, 21 feet wide and 23 feet tall, weighing 320 tons — over their land on Idaho's Route 12, "a wild and scenic two-lane highway," the Nez Perce Council met and voted to block the load with their bodies.

News spread like wildfire through the reservation, fueled by social media. Over 200 members, plus supporters from Occupy Idaho and the environmental movement, showed up to put their bodies on the line. Whole families came — grandmothers with their grandkids, elders and youth.

Some 28 people were arrested over two nights of protest, including eight of the nine members of the Nez Perce Council.

Commenting on the protests, Silas Whitman, chair of the council, who was one of those arrested, told the Sept. 25 New York Times, "The development of American corporate society has always been — and it's true throughout the world — on the backs of those who are oppressed, repressed or depressed."

After the first shipment destined for the tar sands of Alberta, Canada, made it through, the Nez Perce went to court, and on Sept. 13 a federal court blocked a

second shipment. However, an appeal is in process.

A series of articles in the Idaho Statesman in August and September make the economic stakes of this dispute clear. GE, which manufactured the equipment, told the court it would save \$3.6 million by going through Idaho. Other articles project that as many as 1,000 megalo-loads are possible over this route, turning it into a major industrial corridor.

The Nez Perce, Whitman made clear in an opinion piece in the Sept. 8 Idaho Statesman, are not opposed to economic development and jobs, but they want to control what happens to their people and their land. They want their rightful say.

He wrote, "The tribe has been ignored by the outside interests who will reap profits at the expense of the region's resources. This exclusion led to frustration that spilled over into acts of civil disobedience so the tribal voice was heard. The tribe refuses to be excluded any longer."

As big oil and its allies, like the pipeline companies and equipment manufacturers, have spread their tentacles and operations over areas of the United States that used to be considered isolated, they are encountering more and more people — especially Native people — who oppose their destruction. □

Haitians seek reparations from U.N.



Around 100 people, mainly Haitian, gathered in New York's Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, opposite the U.N. headquarters, for an eight-hour demonstration on Sept. 26. They called for that body to pay reparations for the cholera that soldiers from Minustah — the U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti — brought to Haiti in October 2010.

The resulting epidemic is the world's worst outbreak of the disease, having killed more than 8,300 and sickened

more than 680,000. Despite legal actions against it, the U.N. has refused to admit responsibility for unleashing the epidemic or to pay reparations.

The demonstration was called by a broad Haitian community alliance that includes the Coalition to Support the Haitian People's Struggle (KAKOLA), the International Support Haiti Network (ISHN), Haïti Liberté, and leading members of the Lavalas Family Party in New York.

— Report and photo by **G. Dunkel**

Bangladesh workers strike back

By Chris Fry

\$38 a month!

That's the monthly minimum wage for more than 4 million garment workers in Bangladesh, most of whom are women. Many children also work in these factories. This is the lowest clothing industry pay in the world, less than half the pay in many other formerly colonized countries.

Bangladesh, with a population of 160 million, is the second-largest clothing-producing country after China. Global corporations like H&M and Walmart reap billions in profits off the backs of these workers.

\$38 a month! Less than 22 cents an hour. And that's just for a 40-hour work week. Bangladesh workers often endure forced overtime with no increase in pay.

They slave away in some of the most unsafe sweatshops in the world. A fire last November killed more than 120 workers. A factory building collapse last April killed almost 1,200 more, nearly all women.

In September a collection of transnational corporations announced they were refusing to offer any compensation to the

victims of this terrible "accident." (Reuters.com, Sept. 23) In their eyes, the lives of thousands of workers are a necessary sacrifice on the altar of super-profits.

\$38 a month! Less than \$1.76 a day.

It is no surprise, then, that more than 50,000 garment workers shut down the factories and poured into the streets beginning Sept. 21 demanding an immediate increase in pay — to an extremely modest \$100 a month. Authorities were forced to close more than 100 factories in Dhaka's industrial districts of Gazipur and Narayanganj.

"We work to survive, but we can't even cover our basic needs," a protesting woman worker told Reuters.

The enraged workers blocked major roads and hurled shards of bricks at police, who fired rubber bullets and tear gas and attacked the crowds of workers with clubs. Cars were overturned and set afire. Factory equipment was reportedly damaged. Dozens were injured, including police. The workers remain on strike.

Workers even seized weapons and ammunition from government guard stations and from a paramilitary group

known as the Village Guards in Gazipur.

\$38 a month!

Company owners expressed their fear of missing shipments to the U.S. and European companies they and the Bangladesh government dutifully serve. They have offered workers a 20 percent increase in pay, which the workers have rejected as "inhuman and humiliating." And no wonder. Their pay would go up to \$45.60 a month, only 27 cents an hour. They would still be the lowest-paid garment workers in the world.

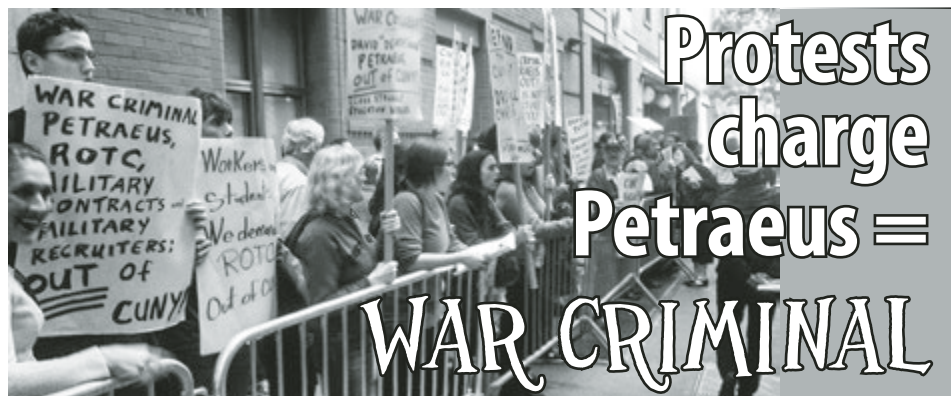
\$38 a month!

This obscene pay rate is the very essence of the global economic and social system that is imperialism. "It is the

ugliest race to the bottom because the financial crisis in America and Europe means that people are getting very scared of buying expensive things," said Sanjiv Prandita, executive director of the Hong Kong-based Asia Monitor Resource Center. (U.S. News, Sept. 24)

\$38 a month!

By forcing workers around the world to compete for jobs at the lowest rate of pay, these parasites squeeze greater and greater profits from the workers' production. The only answer to this nightmare is class solidarity. We must stand together with our struggling sisters and brothers in Bangladesh and elsewhere and drive this for-profit system out of existence. □



Whether he shows his face in Los Angeles or New York, David Petraeus — the retired general who commanded U.N. and U.S. troops in Afghanistan and then served as head of the CIA — has to confront protesters who call him a mass murderer, war criminal and liar.

At the University of Southern California, Petraeus was scheduled to speak at a Veterans Club luncheon on Oct. 10, the twelfth anniversary of the U.S. invasion. Within a day of the news leak, with thou-

sands in the street, USC vets canceled the event.

In New York, where Petraeus teaches a seminar at the City University of New York's Macaulay Honors College once a week, an ad hoc coalition has come together to confront him as a war criminal at every class he gives. During a protest at a gala dinner CUNY held Sept. 17, six students were attacked by cops and then arrested.

— Report and photo by G. Dunkel

German elections

Merkel's victory hides uneasy future

By John Catalinotto

Angela Merkel's third election as chancellor of Germany with the victory of her center-right CDU-CSU party opens a window on the class struggle in the European Union's most powerful economic state and the world's fourth-largest economy.

The continued control of the German administration by Merkel, Germany's first female chancellor, gives the illusion of stability. Given the German economy's dependence on exports, however, the EU's expected economic downturn won't stop at the German border. This makes it unlikely Merkel's third term will be as calm as the first eight years.

The fiction behind Merkel's election propaganda was that her policies kept Germany's capitalist economy growing and unemployment low, even as the economies of the EU's Mediterranean countries were collapsing.

There is no doubt that Merkel's performance satisfied the German ruling class. Just as in U.S. elections, the weight of ruling-class opinion and the corporate media's influence pull the electorate toward the right. In Germany, the CDU-CSU voters even included many union members.

In Greece and Portugal, by contrast, workers hold mass protest demonstrations every time German politicians and bankers visit. They carry posters showing Merkel draped in Nazi swastikas.

Who the different parties are

Merkel's party, a permanent partnership between the Christian Democratic Union and its sister party in Bavaria, the Christian Social Union, is roughly equivalent to the Republican Party in the U.S. Their main rival, the Social Democratic Party (SPD), is roughly equivalent to the U.S. Democratic Party, though with stronger roots in the trade unions. The party now in fourth place is the Green Party, which began as a progressive environmentalist protest party but has evolved to become pro-establishment.

Although these political rivals differ

on many details, they are all pro-capitalist parties that support NATO and have backed German involvement in the wars against Yugoslavia and in Afghanistan. They have also supported most of the major cuts in social welfare programs since West Germany annexed the German Democratic Republic in 1990 and the competition with the socialist camp was eliminated.

Another party in basic agreement on these issues — but pushing for tax cuts for the bosses — is the pro-laissez-faire Free Democrats (FDP), which for the first time in its history did not get the 5 percent of votes needed to win seats in the German parliament, the Bundestag.

The only party in the Bundestag that opposes war, NATO membership and the social cuts is the Left (Die Linke), which came in third. Die Linke also expresses solidarity with workers' struggles in Greece and Portugal.

A new party, the Alternative for Germany (AfD), campaigned against "helping" Greece and other countries in Europe's South avoid bankruptcy and also against supporting the euro throughout Europe. Such a program would in reality reduce German exports to other EU countries and reduce the profits of German industries and banks. The AfD, whose future is uncertain, got nearly enough votes, representing isolationist sentiment, to enter the Bundestag.

Even though the CDU-CSU gained 72 seats in this election, the loss of 93 FDP seats left Merkel without a coalition partner and five seats short of a majority. She will need to form either a "grand coalition" with the SPD or a normal majority coalition with the Greens. Rivalries among these parties complicate each solution.

None of the three pro-imperialist parties in the Bundestag has offered to build a coalition with Die Linke, nor has Die Linke asked to join one. Participation in any national government would quickly cost Die Linke its role as an anti-war and pro-worker pole of attraction.

PARTY NAME	% votes 2009	% votes 2013	Seats 2009	Seats 2013
The Left (Die Linke)	11.9	8.6	76	64
CDU-CSU	33.8	41.5	239	311
Free Democrats (FDP)	14.6	4.8	93	0
Social Democrats (SPD)	23	25.7	146	192
Greens	10.7	8.4	68	63
Alternative for Germany (AfD)	—	4.7	—	0
Other parties	6.0	5.3	0	0

Germany's true role in the world today was exposed by a former president — a mostly ceremonial post — whose frank comment resulted in his forced resignation in mid-2010. After visiting German troops in Afghanistan, Horst Köhler told the media that "a country of our size, with ... dependence on foreign trade, has to be aware that ... military deployment is also necessary to protect our interests." (The Local, May 27, 2010)

Köhler thus revealed that Germany, now the second-largest exporter behind China, had to risk the lives of its youth by joining U.S.-led military adventures, not to serve some "humanitarian" goal, but to maintain its share of imperialist plunder worldwide.

Within the EU, Germany is the most powerful industrial and banking center. Germany's bosses have kept their competitive edge not through Merkel's genius or German ingenuity, but by lowering wages and expanding inequality at home while controlling the European currency.

In the Sept. 3 Financial Times, Adam Posen, of the Peterson Institute for International Economics, wrote: "Since 2003 a falling unemployment rate [now 5.3 percent in Germany] has been the consequence of the creation of a large number of

low-wage and part-time or flex-time jobs, without the benefits and protections afforded earlier postwar generations. Germany now has the highest proportion of low-wage workers relative to the national median income in western Europe."

German capitalists, unconstrained as there is no national minimum wage, also pay wages far lower than German standards for foreign guest workers hired for temporary jobs, such as those in slaughterhouses or — as more recently in the news — working at Amazon during the holiday rush. As the current strike wave at Amazon shows, the class struggle is alive and well in Germany.

Elections in imperialist countries at most can only reflect — distorted as in a funhouse mirror — the political consciousness of the population. The German election showed a rightward shift, although this too was contradicted by a poll in which a majority backed a national minimum wage, which the SDP supports.

During the election campaign, the pro-capitalist parties in Germany avoided discussing the big economic changes looming in Europe and the world. The changes themselves are unavoidable, and neither they nor the class struggle will stop at Germany's borders. □

Defiant voices at the U.N.

U.S. military threats against Syria dominated the opening of the United Nations General Assembly debates on Sept. 24, but voices from Latin America and the Caribbean answered them, loud and clear.

Bolivian President Evo Morales put the responsibility for war and devastation squarely on U.S. imperialism. He called for a “court of the people, of major defenders of human rights” to file a case against the U.S. government for crimes against humanity.

“Who did the oil in Libya belong to before and who does it belong to now? At least the people of Libya profited from its oil. Now who is? What happened in Iraq?” asked Morales.

“Capitalism wants to emerge from its crisis through war and armed intervention. We must ask ourselves, who benefits from the wars? Who distributes the natural resources after the interventions? Whose hands do they end up in?”

He went to the heart of the class question: “Who is really governing the United States? ... Those who finance political campaigns, election campaigns are bankers and big businessmen. They are the ones setting policy. ... Who has the greatest nuclear arsenal in their hands? Who invented chemical weapons? Who industrialized these weapons that put an end to human life? ...

“I’d like to ask the people of the United States — how is it possible when there are so many unemployed, for your government, for your president, to spend \$700 billion on the military? ... [T]here are so many brothers and sisters in the United States without homes, without jobs, without schooling. ... I simply cannot understand how they can spend so much money to interfere in other countries while leaving their own unprovided for.”

In July, Washington’s European allies refused to allow the Bolivian presidential plane, which was carrying Morales back home from a meeting in Moscow, to land and refuel. U.S. “intelligence” thought that Edward Snowden, the former contract worker turned international whistleblowing hero, was on the plane. He wasn’t.

Puncturing U.S. professions of democracy

Morales asked how the U.S. could talk of democracy “when the espionage services of the United States violate human rights, privacy and security of others using private companies. Not only do they spy on democratic governments, but even on their own allies, their own citizens and the United Nations itself. ... Not only do they spy, they hatch coup d’etats.”

Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff also expressed outrage at the spying,

which she said included sensitive corporate and economic information that could be used by capitalist competitors.

Morales called this a “new moment in geopolitical imperial distribution. And now once again [the imperialists] want to split it all up with military intervention and putting in military bases.”

Morales later told Russian Television: “At the General Assembly Obama said that the U.S. ‘is prepared to use all elements of our power, including military force, to secure these core interests’ in the Middle East. Among the core interests, he mentioned ‘the free flow of energy from the region to the world.’”

Morales said that Obama’s statement should worry any country possessing natural resources, like the oil-producing countries of Bolivia, Venezuela and Ecuador, which have formed a solidarity trading partnership called the Bolivarian Alliance for Our Americas, or ALBA.

The U.S. has yet to recognize the election of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro after the death of Hugo Chavez. In September the U.S. denied permission for the Venezuelan president’s plane to fly over the U.S. colony of Puerto Rico en route to a state visit in China. Afterward they “blamed the victim” for not making the request properly. When serious defects in the plane were found, Maduro had switched to an ALBA plane from Cubana Airlines for the trip.

Just as racism is not imaginary for oppressed people, imperialist hostility to the independence of Latin America and the Caribbean is a reality. The U.S. even requires some heads of state to apply for visas to attend U.N. meetings. It then lets them stay only a few days and does not guarantee their security — a fact that contributed to Maduro canceling a recent New York trip.

In 2006 Maduro, then foreign minister of Venezuela, had been threatened with a strip search at Kennedy airport and was not allowed to board his return flight to Venezuela, even after showing his diplomatic credentials.

The United Nations General Assembly is but another arena of struggle — one where the U.S. is increasingly opposed. On Oct. 29 a resolution to end the blockade of Cuba will once again be on the GA agenda. For more than 20 years it has passed with overwhelming support, with only the U.S., Israel and one or two very small, dependent countries voting against it. However, the General Assembly is only a forum. It has no power compared to the more exclusive Security Council, which since the 1950s has served as a tool for aggression by the imperialists. So who will enforce the General Assembly resolution? □

Shutdown: Who suffers?

Continued from page 1

Medicare to the entire population, it would have aroused medical industry opposition but been extremely popular with the working class, just as Medicare and Social Security are.

The administration has taken steps to keep the repressive machinery of the state working. Obama signed a bill just before the shutdown to continue to pay all active-duty military. Drones that fire rockets in Pakistan and Yemen will still be funded, as will missiles pointed at Damascus, Syria. Veterans, on the other hand, will experience delays in receiving benefits, and 400,000 civilian employees of the Pentagon will be sent on unpaid vacations.

Although the focus of the Republican attack is on the Affordable Care Act, the real issue is about the budget and how it is funded. Though they disagree about whether some taxes should be increased, who should be taxed, or how quickly programs should be cut, the Tea Party, the Republicans and the Democrats themselves share a basic program. They agree in principle that the budget deficit should be minimized and that the government’s

priority should be to continue paying interest on bank loans while funding the military machine.

As a result, they cut the deficit by attacking all existing programs that either provide benefits to the workers and poor — like food stamps, WIC, school lunches — or that monitor the crimes of the bosses — like food inspection and environmental monitoring — or that provide essential services like the Post Office and the Centers for Disease Control. If these cuts happen, the government becomes, even more than now, a tool solely of the banks and the super-rich.

These attacks make the Tea Party and Republicans obvious enemies of the poor and the workers. Yet the Democratic Party, just as it gave away the best parts of a universal health-care plan, can be expected to concede parts of the programs that aid the workers, even Social Security and Medicare.

The lesson of the shutdown, then, is the need for workers, communities and all poor people to organize independently of the big capitalist political parties to defend their class interests, such as by organizing people’s and workers’ assemblies. □

Film review: ‘After Tiller’

A powerful defense of women’s right to choose

By Sue Davis

The documentary movie “After Tiller” chronicles the profoundly important story of four doctors in the U.S. who risk their lives daily to provide third-trimester abortions and the desperate women who need them.

The title of the award-winning film, which was released commercially in late September, refers to Dr. George Tiller, who was assassinated on Sunday, May 31, 2009, while serving as an usher in his church in Wichita, Kan. Dr. Tiller had long been a target of anti-abortion terrorists because he was one of the few U.S. doctors who did abortions after 24 weeks. His killer is now serving a life sentence.

All four doctors, who had worked with Tiller or knew him personally, were determined to carry on his work despite life-threatening stakes. Like Dr. Tiller, whose motto was “Trust women,” all four believe they must provide vital health-care services for the less than 1 percent of women who seek third-trimester abortions.

What makes the film emotionally gripping and incredibly effective is how filmmakers Martha Shane and Lana Wilson chose to tell the story. Rather than focus on the polarized politics of abortion, they went behind the headlines and profiled the doctors — as they carefully, thoughtfully counseled patients or figured out whether to take or refuse them; as they talked about why they were inspired to continue Dr. Tiller’s work and the personal risks involved in doing so; and as they relaxed at home with their loved ones whose daily support and sustenance they rely on.

Equally important, the filmmakers allowed the physicians’ patients to speak for themselves. Their stories will make you weep. Three women describe (only their voices are heard) why they came to the painful decision to end wanted pregnancies because tests or sonograms

showed severe fetal abnormalities. One couple, “born-again” Christians, state that they “know abortion is wrong” and they feel terribly guilty, but after weighing all the options, they must abort their son who would be born without a brain.

Meanwhile, a young woman promises to report the rapist who impregnated her, while a 16-year-old from a Catholic family, who has been in deep denial about being pregnant, finally decides she must have an abortion.

Each of the doctors is an articulate, compassionate, real-life hero: Dr. Warren Hern in Boulder, Colo.; Drs. Susan Robinson and Shelley Sella in Albuquerque, N.M.; and Dr. LeRoy Carhart, formerly of Bellevue, Neb., who, when abortions after 20 weeks were banned there, relocated to Germantown, Md.

Each of their stories tugs at your heart: Dr. Hern, whose aging mother worries about him; Dr. Robinson, who candidly admits, “Nobody wants to have an abortion”; Dr. Sella, a lesbian who started her career as a midwife; and Dr. Carhart, who says, in a soft but firm voice, that he could not continue without his spouse of 50 years, his childhood sweetheart, Mary.

The film’s major contribution is that it puts the spotlight where it truly belongs — on women and their doctors. In order to counter the escalating demonization of women who seek abortions and the misogynous crusade to outlaw all abortions, not just late ones, this film should have the widest possible distribution — in schools and colleges, on public television and cable, on the internet.

Shane and Wilson deserve accolades for creating a compelling portrait of women’s lives that has never before been so starkly, so compassionately and so honestly revealed. (aftertillermovie.com) Four stars!

Davis, a longtime reproductive justice activist, has self-published a pro-choice novel, “Love Means Second Chances.”

On The Picket Line

Cablevision workers take on CEO

Continued from page 5

nication Workers union. On Sept. 24, CWA launched a fightback strategy at a City Hall press conference. It seems that Cablevision CEO James Dolan, who also owns Madison Square Garden, receives a \$17 million annual property tax break for MSG going back to 1982. To stop such corporate welfare and force Dolan to the negotiating table, CWA has

lined up 40 legislators who have signed on to a state bill ending this permanent, one-of-a-kind tax giveaway. A number of City Council members also support the bill. Meanwhile, on Sept. 25, the workers held yet another demonstration at their Canarsie worksite demanding Cablevision offer a decent contract. (CWA press release, Sept. 24; report from Anne Pruden) □

Women were the first slaves

By Bob McCubbin

Part 18 of this series dealt generally with the historic innovation of private property, specifically with the treatment of human beings as property, and alluded briefly to the use of marriage as a political and economic tool in the interests of maintaining ruling-class political and economic power in societies based on slave and serf labor.

This installment will focus on a frequently ignored aspect of the institution of slavery: its origins and economic basis in the exploitation of women. In Gerda Lerner's fact-filled book, "The Creation of Patriarchy," she devotes a whole chapter to "The Woman Slave." Her general assessment of slavery coincides with that of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. She writes: "However oppressive and brutal it undoubtedly was for those victimized by it, it represented an essential advance in the process of economic organization, an advance upon which the development of ancient civilization rested." The sources of slave labor that she lists are "capture in warfare; punishment for a crime; sale by family members; self-sale for debt; and debt bondage." (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 76)

With regard to the handling of war captives, Lerner notes the historical evidence contrasting the treatment of men and women. Male captives were most often put to death. "Even where the economic need for a large slave labor force existed there was not enough male labor power available among the captors to watch over the captives day and night and thus ensure their harmlessness. It would take different peoples different lengths of time to realize that human beings might be enslaved and controlled by other means than brute force." (p. 79)

Captured women suffered a cruel fate

The subjugation of captured women through rape and the severing of their family ties was another matter. "Since their male kin had been slaughtered, these

[women] captives could have no hope of rescue or escape. Their isolation and hopelessness increased their captors' sense of power. The process of dishonoring could in the case of women be combined with the final act of male dominance, the rape of captive women. If a woman had been captured with her children, she would submit to whatever condition her captors imposed in order to secure the survival of her children. If she had no children, her rape or sexual use would soon tend to make her pregnant, and experience would show the captors that women would endure enslavement and adapt to it in the hope of saving their children and eventually improving their lot." (p. 78)

While Lerner has elaborated here a credible basis for the historical precedence of female enslavement before that of men, what is missing is any acknowledgment that, just as some women and groups of women must have resisted as best they could the imposition of patriarchal marriage relations, there must have been many examples, unfortunately lost to history (a record, we need to remember, written chiefly by men), of women, individually and in groups, rebelling against their enslavement.

As Lerner notes, the institutionalization of female slavery had meaning above and beyond its value as a source of unpaid labor power. It also impinged as a social/sexual factor on the gender asymmetry of monogamous marriage: "Historians writing on slavery all describe the sexual use of enslaved women. ... The Babylonian slave woman could also be hired out as a prostitute for a fixed price, sometimes to a brothel owner, sometimes to private clients, with the master collecting her pay. This practice was pervasive throughout the Near East, in Egypt, Greece, and Rome of antiquity, in fact wherever slavery existed." (p. 87) Further along, she adds, "There are, of course, in more highly developed slave systems many instances of male slaves being sexually used and abused by master or mistress, but these are exceptions. For women, sexual exploitation marked the

very definition of enslavement, as it did not for men." (pp. 88-89)

Women's oppression institutionalized in early state societies

With slave women viewed as commodities, it required no great transformation in social values for wives and women in general and their children to be viewed similarly. In the chapters following her exploration of female slavery in early class society, Lerner analyzes at length the Mesopotamian and Hebraic laws accompanying the rise of state-based class societies in Southwest Asia and, in particular, the meaning of these laws for women in the context of patriarchal marriage. She summarizes: "We see then, in the thousand-year span we are discussing, how patriarchal dominance moved from private practice into public law. The control of female sexuality, previously left to individual husbands or to family heads, had now become a matter of state regulation. In this, it follows, of course, a general trend toward increasing state power and the establishment of public law." (p. 121)

The laws, of course, were drafted by the slave owners and landlords, potentates of the Middle Eastern city-states and warring empires. The laws legitimized the political power of the rich and shackled their subjects, women and men, slaves and nonslaves alike: "In the lower-class family, where property was insufficient or nonexistent, persons (children of both sexes) became property and were sold into slavery or degraded marriages. ... All women are increasingly under sexual domination and regulation, but the degree of their unfreedom varies by class. ... The married wife is at one end of the spectrum, the slave woman at the other, the concubine in an intermediate position." (p. 112)

Elaborating on concubinage, Lerner writes: "Obviously, the increasing impor-

tance of keeping private property within the family spurred the development of concubinage as an institution for the preservation of patriarchal property relations. A couple's childlessness, with its implications of loss of property in the male line, could be remedied by bringing a concubine into the household. ... What is of particular interest here is that the concubine serves a dual function: she performs sexual services for the master, with the knowledge and consent of the wife, and she is a servant to the wife. This differs greatly from the relations between first and succeeding wives in many polygamous societies, in which the status of second and third wives is co-equal with that of the first wife." (pp. 91-92)

What about marriage among slaves? Orlando Patterson describes its tenuous character in his book, "Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study": "The refusal formally to recognize the social relations of the slave had profound emotional and social implications. In all slaveholding societies slave couples could be and were forcibly separated and the consensual 'wives' of [male] slaves were obliged to submit sexually to their masters; slaves had no custodial claims or powers over their children." (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985, p. 6)

We might note here, as one of the most outrageous and repugnant of the "marriage" practices of slave and feudal society patriarchs, the imposition of "the right of first night." This "custom," whereby the slave owner or feudal landlord could demand and receive sexual access to a subject bride on her wedding night, was dramatically portrayed in Soviet director Sergei Eisenstein's epic, though never completed, film "¡Que Viva México!" Outraged by the affront to their comrade's wife, Mexican peasants living under the feudal dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz organized an armed uprising against the hacienda's owner. □

WASHINGTON STATE

Low-wage workers battle for justice in the fields

Continued from page 4

the workers, who struck on July 20. But while striking a second time, the workers ran into great resistance and broken promises on the general pay increase. Soon the strikers went back to work while continuing to negotiate over wages.

But workers and solidarity activists saw some gains from this. Federal regulations prevented Sakuma from bringing these workers in during the labor dispute. The application to bring the guest workers in was suspended until both sides settled in late July. "That's why Sakuma negotiated," said Guillen. "They had to end the labor dispute. ... They negotiated with us, which is a big achievement." (aljazeera.com, Aug. 19)

But the workers are still receiving poverty-level wages, since Sakuma won't raise the piece rate for berries. Since August, Familias Unidas has called for a boycott of Sakuma berries to force them to negotiate.

On Sept. 13, 350 workers from Familias Unidas struck again and won pay increases. The previous day Ramon Torres, president of Familias Unidas, had been fired. On Sept. 14, a worker and community march and rally went to the Sakuma Brothers Farms Stand to demand a just contract and an end to retaliation. Speaking at a recent Seattle fundraiser, Torres said, "We can't always stay hidden. I was fired for leading a strike. I will remain at the front and continue to lead the committee."

The boycott includes Driscoll's berries and Haagen Dazs, which buys berries for its ice cream from Sakuma. Three Seattle retail outlets recently agreed to remove Sakuma berries after boycott picket lines were set up. The boycott is taking place in the Burlington area, Bellingham and elsewhere, but it needs to expand to really put pressure on Sakuma. For more information and to support, go to food-justice.org. □

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- Uniting all workers – organized & unorganized; undocumented & documented

Registration, plenaries, breakout groups & workshops:

Saturday, November 16: 8 am - 7 pm

Sunday, November 17: 9 am - 3 pm

Go to workers.org/wwp for more updates.

Las verdaderas armas de destrucción masiva

Durante las próximas semanas jefes de estado y ministros de relaciones exteriores de los depredadores países imperialistas y de las naciones en desarrollo tratando de defender su soberanía hablarán en el podio en las Naciones Unidas al reunirse la Asamblea General.

Los medios corporativos están llenos de especulaciones sobre lo que dirán representantes de Washington e Israel sobre el plan anunciado por Estados Unidos y Rusia y que acordó en principio el gobierno sirio, de que supuestamente se va a aplacar la crisis de guerra al entregar las reservas de gas venenoso a una agencia internacional.

¿Qué condiciones impondrá Estados Unidos a Siria? ¿Washington estará de acuerdo en poner fin a su apoyo a la oposición armada que sigue asolando el país? ¿Cómo afectará esto a la actitud de Estados Unidos hacia Irán? Irán ha sufrido bajo severas sanciones económicas desde hace años, supuestamente por haber desarrollado la capacidad de fabricar armas nucleares, pero recientemente ha manifestado su voluntad de discutir su programa nuclear.

Las palabras “armas de destrucción masiva” serán escuchadas muchas veces, lanzadas indignadamente contra Siria, Irán y otros países. Pero la característica más impresionante de este bombardeo de los medios de comunicación es que el tema de las armas nucleares de Estados Unidos e Israel nunca aparece.

Sólo un país en el mundo ha utilizado armas nucleares. Sólo dos bombas de Estados Unidos arrasaron las ciudades japonesas de Hiroshima y Nagasaki y a cientos de miles de personas en ellas al final de la Segunda Guerra Mundial.

Este acto horrendo, cuando Japón estaba preparándose para rendirse, es ampliamente visto por los/as historiadores/as como el comienzo de la Guerra Fría contra la Unión Soviética y los/as comunistas chinos/as, quienes se habían hecho fuertes al luchar contra los invasores japoneses imperialistas y los brutales teratenientes de China y sus colaboradores capitalistas.

La Institución Brookings estima que el gobierno de los Estados Unidos, entre 1940 y 1996, gastó al menos \$8,52 billones de dólares (millones de millones, valor actualizado) para desarrollar, probar y construir unas 70.000 armas nucleares.

La horrible destrucción causada por sólo dos de estas bombas ha forzado desde entonces a países que sabían que podrían estar en la mira del imperialismo, a contemplar la construcción de sus propios arsenales defensivos, a pesar de los enormes gastos requeridos.

Aún después de la caída de la URSS en 1991 y un acuerdo entre Estados Unidos y Rusia para desmantelar sus armas nucleares, Estados Unidos desde 2010 sigue manteniendo más de 5.000 ojivas nucleares y las instalaciones para su construcción y diseño.

Israel es el único estado en el Medio Oriente que se sabe que posee armas nucleares. Ese país no lo confirma ni lo niega, pero no ha firmado el tratado de no proliferación nuclear por lo que no está obligado a permitir inspecciones.

Según el profesor Avner Cohen, del Instituto de Estudios Internacionales de Monterey, California, quien ha escrito dos libros sobre el arsenal nuclear de Israel, el tratado fue ratificado por Estados Unidos en un acuerdo de 1969, que aún permanece secreto, entre la primera ministra israelí Golda Meir y el presidente Richard Nixon, cuando Washington estuvo seguro de que Israel poseía bombas nucleares.

Cuando el técnico nuclear israelí Mordechai Vanunu filtró información sobre el programa a los medios de comunicación en 1986, fue secuestrado por agentes israelíes en Italia, llevado de vuelta a Israel para un juicio secreto, fue condenado y cumplió 18 años en la cárcel en su mayoría en confinamiento solitario. (¿Y las armas nucleares de Israel? Washington Post, 31 de agosto, 2012)

Irán, por el contrario, firmó el tratado de no proliferación y ha accedido a inspecciones periódicas de sus instalaciones. Pero esto no es suficiente para los imperialistas.

Siempre hablando de paz, tanto Estados Unidos como Israel muchas veces han utilizado su formidable aparato militar para atacar a otros países que obstaculizan su agresivo expansionismo capitalista.

Estos son los hechos acerca de las verdaderas “armas de destrucción masiva” que amenazan al mundo hoy. □

Anuncio del Banco de Reserva Federal oculta mal pronóstico económico

Por John Catalinotto

El anuncio del Banco de la Reserva Federal el 18 de septiembre sorprendió a inversionistas y a muchas otras personas y condujo a un rápido aumento en los mercados de valores. El mensaje subyacente sin embargo, es que la economía capitalista mundial y la porción estadounidense realmente no se han recuperado de la crisis del 2007 y quizás esté enfrentando otro colapso.

Durante los últimos seis meses, el presidente del Banco, Ben Bernanke había más que insinuado que el Banco reduciría gradualmente su programa de compras de bonos que lo había comprometido a comprar \$85 mil millones en bonos cada mes. Basó este paso en las expectativas de que las tasas de empleo continuarían mejorando y ya no sería necesario mantener bajas las tasas de interés sobre los préstamos.

El cambio de rumbo del Banco, que fue respaldado por 12 de los 13 miembros de la Junta de la Reserva Federal, es una señal de que su anterior panorama optimista sobre la economía había sido engañoso. El Banco también redujo sus estimaciones de crecimiento económico para el resto del 2013 y todo el 2014.

En una declaración después de su anuncio, el Banco dijo, “el endurecimiento de las condi-

ciones financieras observadas en los últimos meses si se mantiene, podría desacelerar el ritmo de mejoría de la economía y el mercado laboral”. (Reuters, 18 de septiembre) Esto es lo más optimista que el Banco podría hacer parecer la noticia.

Puesto que los muy ricos han estado haciéndose aún más ricos durante la supuesta recuperación — y este grupo de la población tiene la voz más fuerte — muchos economistas burgueses han salido con proyecciones optimistas infundadas. Sobre el resto de nosotros, señalan la mejoría en la tasa de desempleo, que en agosto había caído al 7,3 por ciento.

Sin embargo, como Bernanke señaló en el comunicado, “la tasa de desempleo no es necesariamente una buena medida en todas las circunstancias del estado del mercado laboral en general”. (Wall Street Journal, el 19 de septiembre)

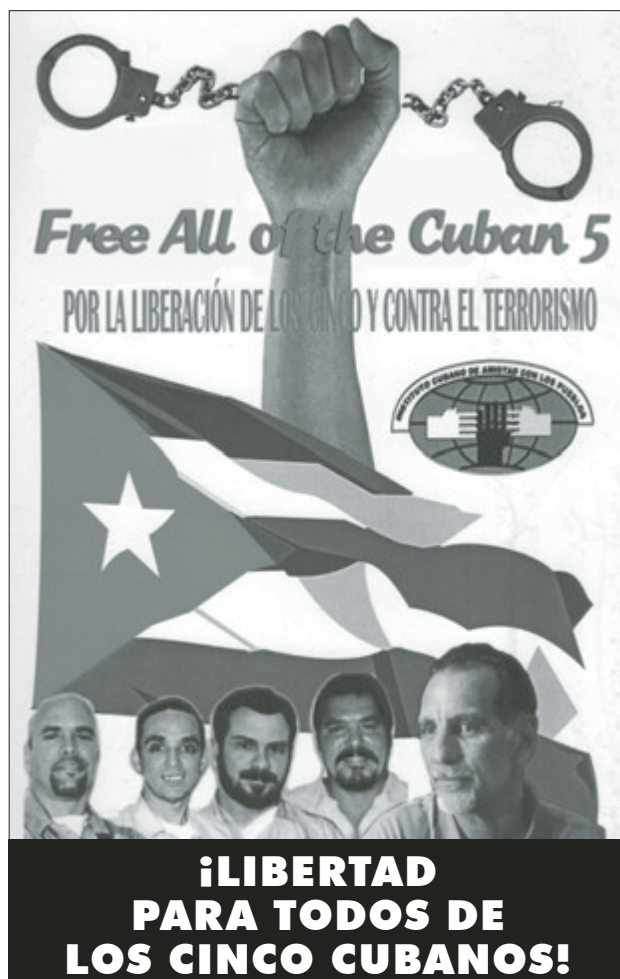
A lo que Bernanke se refería es que este índice en particular es engañoso puesto que mide sólo aquellas personas desempleadas que activamente están buscando trabajo. Una mejor medida de una economía robusta proveniría de la porción de la población en la fuerza laboral activa. Ese número descendió de poco más del 51 por ciento en enero del 2007, a un poco por debajo del 49 por ciento en agosto. Ha continuado decreciendo a pesar de mejo-

rarse la tasa de desempleo oficial.

Básicamente, no ha habido ninguna mejoría real en el mercado de trabajo, con la posibilidad de que otra crisis enfrente a la clase obrera. Entre 6 y 15 millones de trabajadores/as han “desaparecido” de la fuerza laboral de Estados Unidos.

No todos los economistas burgueses están felices. William White, ex economista jefe del Banco de Pagos Internacionales que está basado en Suiza, el “banco de los bancos centrales”, dijo: “Esto me parece el 2007 de nuevo, pero peor aún”. White había reconocido las inversiones riesgosas antes de la caída del 2008. (British Telegraph, 15 de septiembre)

Como Fred Goldstein ha demostrado mediante un enfoque marxista en su obra “Capitalismo en un callejón sin salida”, debido a los rápidos avances tecnológicos en la producción, el sistema capitalista mundial ha estado imposibilitado desde el 2007 de iniciar negocios rentables consistentemente. Esto ha creado una crisis económica que no es simplemente una desaceleración cíclica, sino un estancamiento permanente. La lección es que los/as trabajadores/as sólo pueden contar con su propia lucha — no con un repunte capitalista — y que una perspectiva revolucionaria es necesaria para superar la crisis y el mismo capitalismo. □



El capitalismo en un callejón sin salida

La tesis de este libro es que la crisis económica, que se inició en agosto de 2007, marcó un punto de inflexión en la historia del capitalismo. El autor sostiene que el sistema no se recuperará, no volverá al ciclo capitalista normal de auge y caída.

Durante décadas, la clase capitalista ha utilizado la revolución tecnológica digital para aumentar la productividad del trabajo a un ritmo récord. Menos trabajadores producen más bienes y servicios en menos tiempo con salarios más bajos.

El resultado es una serie de “recuperaciones sin empleos” que hace que las cosas vayan aún peor.

Goldstein utiliza las leyes de la acumulación capitalista de Marx, y la tasa decreciente de ganancia, para demostrar por qué el capitalismo global ha llegado finalmente a un punto de inflexión.

El continuo estancamiento y el desempleo generalizado provocarán inevitablemente un resurgimiento de la lucha de clases que no se ve en EE.UU. desde la década de 1930; esta vez se dirigirá contra el propio sistema.

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