

Venezuela resists U.S. sabotage

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Never before has the Venezuelan Bolivarian process faced such a dangerous threat as it does today. This is true even though U.S. imperialism and its collaborators in Venezuela have imposed a continuous siege on the country ever since Hugo Chávez became president in 1999. Their hostile actions included a coup d'état, which was quickly defeated, and sabotage of Venezuela's nationalized oil company.

Now that campaign has intensified and includes the possibility of direct military

intervention to achieve their goal of "regime change." For the last two months those opposing the revolutionary process, led mainly by the so-called Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD), have committed violent actions daily.

Fascist acts of terror

These criminal acts have been directed with surgical accuracy against people identified as pro-Chavista. The reactionaries have targeted state establishments, too. The criminals have burned or destroyed everything — from entire fleets of public buses and offices of the government party, the United Socialist Party of

Venezuela (PSUV), to maternity and children's hospitals. They recently burned down Chávez's childhood home.

These terrorists have already killed about 60 people. Their cruelty is unimaginable, as is their terrible racist character.

After identifying a young Afro-Venezuelan as a Chavista, the criminals set him on fire, chased him and then stabbed him. When some women from the wealthy sector of Altamira in Caracas saw an Indigenous woman, a well-known artist, they shouted at her, insulted her, and kicked and hit her with flag poles.

Paid criminal gangs and Colombian paramilitaries are also involved in these

terrorist acts. The Venezuelan government denounced the use of children in these attacks to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (Diario Octubre, May 25)

It is important to emphasize that although the corporate media present these terrorist acts as chaos at the national level, they are generally limited to the areas where the mayor's or governor's office is in the reactionary opposition's hands. In the neighborhoods where poor people live, they are not joining in these acts of terror.

The attacks against the Bolivarian revolution have taken place not just inside Venezuela, but the country's embassies and consulates have been targeted as well,

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Charges have been dropped on three of the protesters seen above, who were arrested at the ICE office on May 1. See page 2.

ALERT! For information on actions in defense of VENEZUELA, visit iacenter.org.



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Victory in Baltimore Charges dropped for May Day protesters

By Baltimore Workers World bureau

Three demonstrators who were arrested while protesting at the Immigration and Customs Enforcement office on May 1 won their cases in court on May 22.

Those whose charges were dismissed include the Rev. C.D. Witherspoon, a noted Baltimore activist and former president of the Baltimore Southern Christian Leadership Conference; Rasika Ruwanpathirana, an immigrant, filmmaker and representative of Workers World Party; and Andrew Mayton, a union activist. A fourth protester, Baltimore law student Alec Summerfield, is scheduled to go to court in June. All four had been charged with “failure to obey.”

On May 1, after hundreds marched from downtown Baltimore, the four were arrested at Baltimore’s ICE office as they demanded that ICE shut down. They were also demanding a \$15-an-hour minimum wage and an

end to racism and police terror.

Sharon Black, speaking for the Baltimore People’s Power Assembly, the organizer of the demonstration, said, “ICE is the notorious agency that has brutally separated immigrant families and deported scores of immigrants under new orders from the Trump administration.”

Black continued, “This is a victory today. Our demand to stop deportations is all the more urgent since the Trump administration is considering ending the Temporary Protected Status on Haitian immigrants.

“The Haitians eligible for TPS, who are mainly survivors of natural disasters in Haiti that made their lives there impossible, have recently had their status extended, but only for six months. The People’s Power Assembly and Workers World Party point out that if their TPS is withdrawn, it would put some 58,000 Haitian people at risk for immediate deportation.” □

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- If you hate the class system that keeps women and people of color in low-wage jobs
- If you oppose the blatant warmongering targeting Syria, north Korea and Afghanistan
- If you worry that the capitalist crisis is only getting worse under the Billionaire in Chief
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Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the never-ending quest for ever-greater profits. Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, joblessness and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism.

The U.S. is the richest country in the world, yet no one has a guaranteed right to shelter, food, water, health care, education or anything else — unless they can pay for it.

Wages are lower than ever, and youth are saddled with seemingly insurmountable student debt, if they even make it to college. Black and Brown youth and trans people are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis.

WWP fights for socialism because the working class produces all wealth in society, and this wealth should remain in their hands, not be stolen in the form of capitalist profits. The wealth workers create should be socially owned and its distribution planned to satisfy and guarantee basic human needs.

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Trump: Front man for Wall St., Pentagon

By Fred Goldstein

Donald Trump came back from his overseas trip to Saudi Arabia, Israel and Europe resuming his plans to launch full-scale attacks on the workers and the oppressed through his budget, his health care bill and tax cuts for the rich.

That being said, he has also managed to make two major foreign policy moves that push U.S. imperialist policy further to the right.

In Saudi Arabia, he formalized and weaponized an anti-Iranian alliance with the House of Saud and the royal oil puppets in the Gulf States. The U.S. has had an alliance with the Saudis for 70 years. The reactionary monarchy has been a pillar of U.S. imperialism, the Pentagon and Big Oil, with four huge U.S. military bases in the country. This new outsourcing to the Saudis of U.S. military intervention is a further turn toward U.S. proxy war and aggression in the region.

In addition, Trump managed to do severe damage to the Washington-Berlin-Paris alliance as expressed in NATO. He went to Brussels and chewed out the European imperialist rivals for being deadbeats — i.e., not paying their NATO bills. This is great-power chauvinism run wild.

The U.S. ruling class and the Pentagon will have to ponder this. Angela Merkel, chancellor of Germany, made a speech after Trump's trip saying that Europe would have to rely on itself.

U.S. imperialism has relied on NATO for decades. NATO has troops in Afghanistan. It was key to the destruction of Yugoslavia. NATO was used to stop the Portuguese revolution in 1974 and the French workers' uprising in 1968. French and British imperialism hold down the struggle in Africa using NATO.

The Pentagon needs NATO and they know it. Secretary of Defense Gen. James Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson have both pledged loyalty to the alliance.

From the point of view of the workers and the oppressed, anything that weakens imperialism is a positive development. We should not moan over Trump's boorishness and undiplomatic insensitivity. That is a problem for the ruling class.

A further problem for big sections of the corporate ruling class is Trump's refusal to say that he will stay with the Paris climate accords. Many of the Fortune 500 corporations, such as GM, Microsoft, DuPont, Amazon, etc., are moving toward low carbon and renewable energy as a matter of policy. Almost half of the Fortune 500 companies have adopted at least one climate or clean-energy goal, with 23 of them pledging eventually to run their businesses on 100 percent renewable energy, including Walmart, Bank of America and Google.

Whether or not these pledges are fulfilled, it represents a recognition by the bosses that climate change is a real threat to them and their profits. Even companies in Appalachian coal country are not using coal any more. (New York Times, May 26)

Trump is opening a full-scale assault against the workers and oppressed. The anti-Russia campaign is the last thing the movement should be pursuing in its struggle against him.

Key sections of the ruling class are finally taking seriously the climate danger, just when Trump wants to wreck any progress in environmental protection.

These developments may intensify the contradictions in the ruling class here and feed ruling class opposition to Trump. They fear that getting rid of him could create further instability in the political system. Again, that is their problem. The job of the workers and oppressed is to take advantage of the situation and expose the capitalist system for what it is.

Fronting for military-industrial complex and big business

Back from his overseas trip, Trump faced the relentless anti-Russia campaign that anti-Trump forces in the ruling class are using to push him back or bring him down.

This is a deepening of the great "Russia" diversion in the struggle against Trump. At a time when Trump is opening a full-scale assault against the workers and oppressed, the anti-Russia campaign is the last thing that the movement should be pursuing in their struggle against Trump. The Democratic Party leadership is in the vanguard of this diversionary anti-Russia campaign.

He is planning to cut \$800 million from Medicaid, which would destroy rural hospitals and nursing homes. He wants to cut back drug clinics, cancer research, environmental protection, job safety and student loan forgiveness, among many other things. His budget would wipe out Meals on Wheels, cut SNAP (food stamps) by billions of dollars and attack women's health care around the world. And this after returning from a foreign trip where he served as a front man for big business and the Pentagon war makers.

At the very moment that his administration was planning massive tax cuts for the rich and major cutbacks for the poor, Trump was in Saudi Arabia heaping praise upon one of the most reactionary monarchies in the world. He was wine and dined and stroked by the royal princes of the feudal-capitalist patriarchal Saudi clan.

Women are the virtual property of men in Saudi Arabia. Trump made not even a mention of the status of Saudi women.

The princes rolled out the red carpet, gave him a sword to dance with, projected a 175-foot picture of him on the side of a building, drank toasts to him and had photo ops of him sitting surrounded by royalty and luxury in the palace in Riyadh.

Pentagon \$110 billion sale

In return, the monarchy got \$110 billion worth of weapons to wage a war of aggression against the people of Yemen and raise the military threat to Iran.

The military-industrial complex, the Pentagon death machine, was able to sell Abrams tanks, combat ships, missile defense systems, radar, and communications and cyber security technology, among other things. The Saudis are also getting a billion-dollar THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) system like the one the Pentagon just rushed into south Korea, as well as \$500 million worth of precision-guided bombs.

Much of this military package was already approved by the Obama administration last fall. Obama offered the Saudis \$115 billion in military aid (Reuters, Sept. 16, 2016), but held up on sending precision-guided bombs and other weapons. Trump just went to Saudi Arabia to bask in the deal. Trump's Pentagon-guided White House and cabinet, with three ranking generals, included the precision bombs even as the Saudis are escalating the massive killing of civilians in Yemen. The generals also added in the THAAD system.

Big business and banking alongside Trump

In addition to the military contracts, the Saudi sovereign wealth fund also signed contracts with U.S. corporations worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

Dozens of the biggest names in U.S. business went in Trump's entourage. Jamie Dimon of JPMorgan Chase, Michael Corbat of Citigroup, James Gorman of Morgan Stanley, Andrew Liveris of Dow Chemical and Stephen Schwarzman of Blackstone were among the U.S. chief executives attending a business forum, along with General Electric vice chair John Rice. The heads of military contractors Lockheed, Boeing and Raytheon also went along.

The deals included agreements between Saudi Aramco, the state energy giant, and U.S. companies. They involve oil services groups Schlumberger, Halliburton and Weatherford International, drilling contractors Nabors Industries and Rowan Companies, and engineering and construction companies KBR, Jacobs Engineering Group and McDermott International. (New York Times, May 17)

The Saudi-U.S. CEO Forum was held on the same day that Trump met King Salman of Saudi Arabia. The Saudi chief executives attending included Amin Nasser of Saudi Aramco and Yousef



Al-Benyan of Sabic, a chemicals, plastics and fertilizer group that plans to build the world's largest ethylene plant in Texas, jointly with Secretary of State Tillerson's former firm, ExxonMobil.

Trump cutbacks destroy jobs

Trump and Tillerson tried to justify these deals as creating jobs. Trump made a grinning triumphant remark about his deals creating "jobs, jobs, jobs." Actually, the Trump health care plan and his budget are job destroyers. Cutbacks in Federal employment endanger tens of thousands of government workers, from the Environmental Protection Agency and National Institutes of Health to Forest Protection Service, the Labor Department, the National Endowment for the Arts and other targeted government departments. Trump wants to cut \$54 billion in federal spending in order to make up for the increase of \$54 billion to the Pentagon.

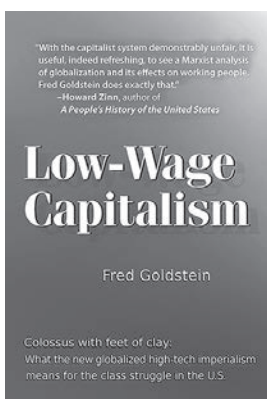
His health care cutbacks will not only throw 23 million people off the health care rolls but will also throw millions out of work. Health care created more jobs than any other sector in 2016, helping to drive total annual job growth to 2.2 million, according to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

A report released by the Commonwealth Fund and the Milken Institute School of Public Health at George Washington University found that repealing key provisions of the Affordable Care Act, including the insurance premium tax credits and Medicaid expansion, could lead to 2.6 million people losing their jobs by 2019. By 2021, nearly 3 million jobs in health care and other sectors could be lost. (Modernhealthcare, Jan. 6)

Trump rages against China and Mexico for destroying jobs at home. He is scapegoating these countries in order to whip up workers and pander to his racist base. Trump says protectionism is the answer. Actually, the real job destroyer is technology. Far more jobs have been destroyed by automation than by offshoring. One authoritative study says that 13 percent of job losses in the U.S. come from trade while 87 percent have been lost to automation. (New York Times, Dec. 21, 2016)

Furthermore, capitalist overproduction is destroying jobs at this very moment. The auto industry has recently peaked and production is beginning to contract. Overproduction of malls and

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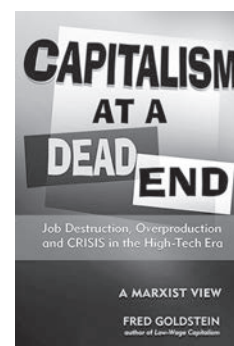


Low-Wage Capitalism describes in sweeping detail the drastic effect on the working class in the United States of new technology and the restructuring of global capitalism in the post-Soviet era. It uses Karl Marx's law of wages and other findings to show that these developments are not only continuing to drive down wages but are creating the material basis for future social upheaval.



El capitalismo en un callejón sin salida

Fred 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.



Capitalism at a Dead End

Job destruction, overproduction and crisis in the high-tech era

For more information on these books and other writings by the author, Fred Goldstein, go to LowWageCapitalism.com. Available at all major online booksellers.

ILWU Local 10 halts work to fight racism

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

In a stunning worker action against racism, about 100 members of International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 walked out May 25 at one of the largest and busiest terminals in the Port of Oakland. They suspended all operations there and brought international container traffic to a complete standstill for hours. Container trucks were backed up all around the port and on Interstate 880.

The ILWU called the shutdown to protest blatant racist acts at the job site, including the discovery that morning of a noose, a despicable symbol of white supremacy and lynching, inside a truck used by ILWU members. According to Derrick Muhammad, the union's secretary-treasurer, about 60 percent of the ILWU local is African American. (KPIX 5)

Muhammad noted that an unspecified number of nooses have been found at the terminal in recent weeks. They have been left on a fence, on the ground and on trucks. Another noose was found as recently as May 15. In late 2015, someone had spray painted a piece of equipment with a racist slur against African Americans. (East Bay Times, May 25)

Muhammed said that longshore work is already inherently dangerous, and all workers need to know that their co-workers "have their backs." He stressed that "every worker has the right to work in a safe environment." He pointed out that this fact makes the racist acts "a bonafide health and safety issue because of the history behind the noose and what it means for Black people

in America." A health and safety issue is an acceptable reason for a job walkout under standard union contracts.

The East Bay Times reported that ILWU International President Robert McEllrath issued a statement that "the ILWU is a progressive and diverse union, and we reject in the strongest possible terms racism in all its forms. The display of a hangman's noose for the second time in two weeks at the work site is inexcusable and expressly prohibited conduct under the terms of the ILWU-PMA collective bargaining agreement. The Union is committed to securing a non-discriminatory work environment for all individuals working at the ports."

ILWU Local 10 has a long and militant history of progressive work actions, from its leadership in the 1934 San Francisco general strike under Marxist Harry Bridges to its boycotts of South African apartheid cargo, starting in 1962.

More recently, in 2010 the local shut down the port to protest the murder of Oscar Grant, an African-American man killed by cops at Oakland's nearby Fruitvale Station. Last year the local affirmed its support for Indigenous sovereignty at Standing Rock, N.D., and this year refused to work on Jan. 20, Inauguration Day, to protest the election of Trump and the ramping up of attacks on working and oppressed people, especially unions.

Every racist act or symbol at a workplace is significant because racism is always an attack on the solidarity and unity of workers. The recent action by Local 10 is a call to all workers to fight against racism and for solidarity at their jobs with creative and militant actions. □



PHOTO: ABOVE, LAURA A. ODA/PHOTO: LEFT, INGRID TAYLAR/TELESUR
Longshore workers shut down container truck traffic over racist acts at the Port of Oakland in California.



Trump: Front man for Wall St., Pentagon

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retail stores, together with online buying, have led to tens of thousands of layoffs and tens of thousands more to come.

Trump has no answer to other bubbling crises. For example, student loans have reached \$1.3 trillion. In the first quarter of 2017, consumer debt rose to \$12.73 trillion, exceeding its peak in the third quarter of 2008. (New York Times, May 17)

Booming auto sales have more to do with low rates and easy financing than they do with the urge to buy a new vehicle. In the last few years, car buyers have borrowed nearly \$1 trillion to finance new and used autos. Much of that money was lent to borrowers who have bad credit ratings and might not be able to repay the debt. There has been a recent surge in delinquencies among subprime borrowers whose loans were packaged into bonds and sold to investors. (Counterpunch, March 18)

Expanding the debt of the masses is how cap-

italism is staying afloat. The expansion of debt is calculated to compensate for overproduction in the economy. It helps keep people buying things and thus keeps the circulation of capital going. It keeps profits rolling in, but sooner or later these various debt bubbles will burst.

How can students who have tens of thousands of dollars in debt buy much, let alone start a household? How can workers who owe the auto loan sharks money buy enough to create jobs for other workers? How can people who are up to their eyeballs in credit card debt keep the system afloat by further purchasing? There is no public tally for debt due to health care costs, but a leading cause of household debt is often the astronomical cost of medical care.

Trump has no answer for all this. It is doubtful he is even aware of it, let alone trying to deal with it. His preoccupation is with making money now and getting re-elected in 2020. □

On the picket line

By Sue Davis

Yale grad students demand contract

About 1,100 people marched and rallied May 22 before the Yale University commencement ceremony in support of the newly formed union of graduate students who teach as part of their Ph.D. candidacy. UNITE HERE Local 33 members called the protest to send a strong message to Yale to begin bargaining. Eight students have currently been on a hunger strike, consuming only water; two dozen have fasted in two-week shifts since April 25.

Eight departments voted to unionize in February under a National Labor Relations Board order. The workers want a secure living, including equal pay for equal work and fair benefits, and a collaborative negotiating process. One disingenuous reason the university gives for opposing the union is that all 2,600 graduate students did not vote. Union advocates focused only on departments where they had support.

Members of Local 33 were joined by union members from across Connecticut and from New York City, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. After leading the march in wheelchairs, the eight union activists who were fasting took to the stage to break their fast. (Hartford Courant, May 22) Stay tuned.

Self-defense for D.C. housekeepers

Housekeepers at 30 Washington, D.C.-area hotels represented by UNITE HERE Local 25 now have "panic buttons" strapped to their wrists. Often working alone, the women are frequent targets for sexual harassment and attacks. In fact, there was an international incident in January when a D.C. hotel guest was charged with misdemeanor sexual abuse for manhandling two housekeepers. Union surveys in some cities show that more than half the workers, predominantly women of color and immigrants, report aggressive sexual behavior by guests. (nbcwashington.com, May 23)

Help Twin Cities janitorial workers at Home Depot

Members of CTUL (Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en Lucha), which organizes immigrant workers in low-wage industries in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota, attended the Home Depot shareholders meeting on May 18. They are contracted to do janitorial work for Home Depot though Kimco Services, which refuses to raise their low wages or give them benefits like paid sick days or vacation time. CTUL successfully negotiated with Target in 2014 for a Responsible Contractor Policy, which it is organizing so other large retailers like Home Depot will adopt it. While standing up for their rights as workers, they also addressed Home Depot's support for Trump's agenda, which attacks immigrants, women and workers' rights. To show support for CTUL workers in their struggle with Home Depot, sign their petition at tinyurl.com/y7mhrts.

Defend grievance system for VA workers

Senator Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) has proposed S. 1094, which would allow managers at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, often political appointees, to fire staff by lowering the evidence standard currently required for firing. As the 700,000-member American Federation of Government Employees notes, the bill stacks the deck in favor of "bad political appointees ... to improperly punish good civil servants." Under the bill, the penalty doesn't need to reflect the charge; the time frame for the grievance process is decreased, which would limit time workers need to mount a defense; and negotiated contracts with AFGE could be overruled. While AFGE calls the bill "a major threat to ... the right of employees to a fair judgment," it also asserts it would "hurt veterans as the VA is successful because of its employees." (afge.org, May 19)

NY City Council passes Fair Work Week Package

The New York City Council passed a comprehensive, first-in-the-country law May 23 that seeks to correct unfair working conditions faced by thousands of workers in fast food and retail industries. One provision bans the practice of on-call scheduling ("clopenings") where workers have fewer than 11 hours between shifts. Employers will have to pay an extra \$100 to staff who voluntarily work such shifts. Another provision requires that employees be given an estimate of their work schedule upon hiring and receive a work schedule 14 days in advance (including regular and on-call shifts). The work schedule must be posted in a place accessible to all employees, and staff must be paid a premium for schedule changes made less than 14 days before the next shift. The law was developed in collaboration with unions and workers' organizations to serve as a national model. (council.nyc.gov, May 23) □

'We must combat violence against trans women'

The following excerpts are from a talk by Cosmia Bohannon-Blumke on "Trans liberation and Mx. Bostick" at a May 20 Workers World Party forum in New York titled "Black Lives Matter! Trans Lives Matter! USA out of Everywhere!"

A few weeks ago, a trans person of color was brutally assaulted on the street in the Chelsea district of Manhattan and, despite being brought to a hospital and treated, didn't survive. This person, believed to be a trans woman, was dubbed Mx. Bostick by local trans advocacy communities, because their gender was unknown.

This tragedy almost went unnoticed, as virtually no news outlets reported on it. Even the trans community only received word of it well after the fact, and it took much investigation to learn any details about the victim that might give clues about who they were. Those of us who advocate for the lives of trans women of color are more than aware that this was not some isolated incident.

The number of trans women of color living in the United States who are murdered each year is not a figure that is easy to calculate, largely because their deaths are all too often not reported or are misreported, and they are often branded by their birth names and misgendered as gay men.

Frequently they are isolated from their families due to rejection, and the only hope of them being remembered as they lived falls upon their local trans communities, who have no choice but to memorialize one of their sisters. Mx. Bostick had few connections to such communities here and nearly fell through the cracks. It's certain that others have been less lucky, and for this reason those counting deceased trans people often end their toll with the terribly familiar phrase "that we know of."

Capitalist system targets trans people

Why does this happen? Why are trans women of color so frequently targeted for deadly violence, and what can we do, not just as individuals, but as an organization, to combat it?

The answer is complex, but not impenetrable. It's not difficult for one to see the ongoing cultural and political war against trans people in which they are mocked, excluded, portrayed as a symptom of patriarchal society in decay, even blamed for the shortcomings of certain liberal politicians. But the social perception of trans women is not the primary catalyst of this oppression; for trans oppression, like any other, including racism, goes far deeper than individual bigotry. Transphobic violence appears in many, often much more insidious, forms, including medical pathologization, legal discrimination and, ultimately, economic exploitation.

Trans people face repression at the hands of the medical state apparatus, which labels "gender dysphoria" a medical disorder, just as it once did homosexuality. Most medical institutions are not well equipped to deal with trans patients, and access to gender-affirming therapies and procedures are still gate-kept behind absurd requirements and waiting times, forcing trans patients to go without essential services simply to demonstrate that their suffering is genuine.

Even when one is able to acquire a hormone prescription, the trials don't end there. "Shortages" of injectable hormones such as estrogen are not uncommon. These aren't always simple cases of scarcity, however, for cisgender patients with hormone deficiencies often have far easier access to similar resources. The materials for effective trans care already exist, but they are not effectively distributed to those in need.

Additionally, trans people are still sub-

ject to housing discrimination in myriad ways, despite gender-based discrimination in the housing market being illegal. This, combined with the gentrification of urban areas, including here in New York, makes it far more difficult for struggling trans people to find a stable living situation, fueling the already astronomical levels of homelessness among the general trans population, which overwhelmingly affects working-class, Black and Brown trans women.

Meanwhile, similarly ubiquitous job discrimination, including obstacles to applicants, harassment and firings, prevents trans people from finding reliable employment. The violent criminalization of sex work, which sectors of the trans population often turn to, also adds to the crisis. In addition to putting trans women in harm's way at the hands of abusive clients, the longterm ramifications ultimately lead to more trans women subjected to the horrors of the prison system.

Mx. Bostick was homeless at the time of their assault, and a leading theory is that their assailant met them prior to the incident in a local homeless shelter. The life of Mx. Bostick might not have been cut short had they not been homeless. So why are so many working-class trans people, even those lucky enough to not have been rejected by their families, impoverished and without housing?

The answer is economic exploitation, a concept which is key to understanding any form of oppression, because it allows us to see how its manifestations are connected. In addition to the crises of capitalism faced by underpaid workers and discrimination faced by people of color, the aforementioned high cost of trans medical care, along with housing and job discrimination, form a virtually unbreakable cycle of poverty and homelessness. This perspective reveals that the fault lies not simply with the perpetrators of these individual injustices, but with the entire capitalist system that permits them.

Socialist Cuba combats transphobia

In order to achieve trans liberation, we must achieve socialism.

As an example of the struggle for trans liberation outside of capitalism, we look in particular to the socialist nation of Cuba, which in recent years has taken crucial steps toward actively combating transphobia, passing comprehensive legal protections on behalf of trans people, and incorporating gender-affirming hormone therapy and surgeries into its socialized medical care system.

This last point is perhaps the most stark difference between the standing of trans people in the U.S. and in Cuba. Hormone replacement therapy and sex reassignment surgery are provided in Cuba completely free of cost to transgender people upon request. This is because health care and housing are provided to all Cuban citizens. There is no medical industry to exploit transgender patients, there are no landlords to exclude transgender tenants, and there are widespread progressive measures such as inclusive education and raising public awareness of the trans struggle.

Just a few weeks ago, thousands marched in Havana for the 10th annual March Against Transphobia and Homophobia. The achievements of LGBT people in revolutionary Cuba are a shining beacon that reminds us that gay and trans liberation are not only achievable,

but already happening.

The tremendous obstacles faced by trans people in order to survive are not individual issues to be tackled one by one. While championing legislation that offers protections to trans people can be beneficial in the short term, this cannot be the extent of our praxis. There is only so much we can accomplish within the confines of

a fundamentally unjust and exploitative system, because the root of the problem lies in the system itself. We should not view the struggle for justice as individual battles to be fought, but a war to be won.

Trans liberation will not be achieved in the courts and legislatures of the capitalist ruling class. It must be fought for. □

Defend Jaan Laaman: political prisoner censored, segregated

By Prison Radio

Jaan Laaman, lifelong, left political activist, political prisoner and Prison Radio correspondent, has been put in the SHU (Segregated Housing Unit) at the U.S. Penitentiary in Tucson, Ariz., after months of escalating censorship and increased repression.

Laaman was sent to the SHU because of two short messages recorded for Prison Radio. One, his "Farewell Thoughts to My Friend, Lynne Stewart," honored the people's lawyer who defended activists from the Black Panthers to the Weather Underground. The other, on the Day Without a Woman Strike, was printed in the New York City Anarchist Black Cross. Listen to Laaman's Prison Radio commentaries at tinyurl.com/yaat997l.

Raised near Buffalo, N.Y., Laaman as a young person was sentenced for a minor offense to infamous Attica Prison in New York state. There, one of his cellmates was Sam Melville, a white leftist radicalized by the struggle against apartheid South Africa. After release, Laaman became active in Students for a Democratic Society in college, and led a 1970 campus strike against the U.S. bombing of Cambodia and the National Guard killings of anti-war student strikers at Kent State and Jackson State. Laaman was further politicized by the police murder of prisoners, including Melville, during the 1971 Attica Uprising.

In 1977, while incarcerated for political

Prison Radio is asking for actions to demand that Laaman be placed back into general population immediately, that his email and phone rights be reinstated, and that he face no further repression. To take action:

Send a postcard or write a letter of support to:

Jaan Laaman (10372-016) • Tucson USP, P.O. Box 24550 • Tucson, AZ 85734

Call and write the Warden & BOP Directors:

USP—Tucson, Warden

Write: 9300 South Wilmot Rd., Tucson, AZ 85756

Email: TCP/ExecAssistant@bop.gov • Phone: 520-663-5000 • Fax: 520-663-5024

Mary M. Mitchell, BOP Regional Director

Write: BOP Regional Office, 7338 Shoreline Dr., Stockton, CA 95219

Email: wxro/execassistant@bop.gov

Thomas R. Kane, BOP Director

Write: Federal Bureau of Prisons, Central Office HQ

320 First Street NW, Washington, DC 20534 □

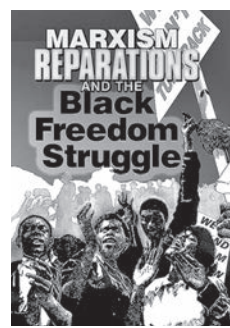


PHOTO: PRISON RADIO
Jaan Laaman.

acts, Laaman won an important prisoner rights case when he sued to demand reading material he had been refused. His case later served as a basis for offering college level education in state prisons and for other U.S. prisoner rights cases.

After his release, Laaman continued a radical political path as a member of the United Freedom Front, a revolutionary political group originally named the Sam Melville/Jonathan Jackson Unit. Jonathan Jackson was the younger brother of imprisoned Soledad Brother and Black Panther leader George Jackson. Jonathan was killed trying to free his brother from prison in August 1970. UFF members known as the Ohio 7 were convicted in 1986 of actions protesting U.S. support for apartheid South Africa, U.S. attacks on Nicaragua and U.S. repression of supporters of Puerto Rican self-determination.

Laaman, imprisoned for 33 years, is one of the two Ohio 7 political prisoners still incarcerated.



Graphic by Sahu Barron

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MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper. Edited by Monica Moorehead.

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Black Youth: Repression & Resistance LeiLani Dowell

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Harriet Tubman, Woman Warrior Mumia Abu-Jamal

Alabama's Black Belt Consuela Lee

Are Conditions Ripe Again Today? The 1965 Watts Rebellion John Parker

Massive protests demand ouster of president and dire

By John Catalinotto

May 29 — In one of the largest demonstrations in decades in Brazil's capital of Brasilia, some 150,000 workers, farmers, youth and members of social organizations protested on May 24 the attack on Brazil's social security programs and laws protecting workers. They demanded that unelected president Michel Temer get out, and his ouster be followed by direct elections for that office.

The mass response to ruling-class attacks continues to grow in Brazil. The ruling-class parties are all involved in a corruption scandal, and the economy is in free-fall. The possibility that this struggle will go far beyond replacing an individual — Temer — is a reality.

The May 24 protest was immediately met by an attack from police, who injured 49 people and killed one, using rubber bullets, tear and pepper gas, and clubs. People fought back, occupying some government buildings.

Temer took the drastic step of order-

ing 1,500 army and navy troops into the streets. Memories of Brazil's 1964-1985 military dictatorship aroused more resistance. The congressional opposition, even from his own party, forced Temer to withdraw the troops within hours.

According to the May 26-30 issue of the newspaper Hora do Povo, the march was organized by the central unions and federations: "Metal workers, chemists, domestic workers, teachers, nurses, construction workers, security and service workers, students, women's movements and party leaders came in caravans from all the states to Brasilia to say in a loud and clear tone: 'No' to government attacks on welfare programs and labor rights."

The Brasilia protest was a follow-up to the very successful April 28 general strike involving some 35 million to 40 million workers. The strike called for defense of public welfare programs and of the CLT — the collection of laws that protect workers' rights — and the ouster of the Temer government.

A public meeting on May 28 led by

musicians and other artists gathered 100,000 people in Rio de Janeiro and ended with people shouting what have become the unifying demands of the left and workers' movements: "Temer out!" and "Direct elections now!" (Vermelho, May 28) The demand for direct elections is for the president to be elected by the people instead of by the Congress.

Will Temer leave office?

Temer, never a popular politician, has hit a new low. According to the May 27 New York Times, polls show that 88 percent of the people want him out; other polls show only 5 percent support him. Brazil's economy shrank by nearly 8 percent in the last two years, and unemployment stands at 14 percent. (Al-Jazeera, May 28)

Even sectors of the ruling class that had earlier backed Temer are beginning to desert him. They seek to replace him with someone who would defuse the growing popular revolt, while leaving a regime in place that continues his anti-poor,

pro-imperialist austerity program.

According to the May 5 Workers World: "The austerity measures include extension of the working day and the working week, reduction of the required lunch break time, raising the minimum retirement age to 65, pension reductions, lower pay for outsourced workers and lowering the restrictions on outsourcing, and no longer requiring bosses to extend benefits to workers hired for 240 days or less. These policies aim to further destabilize the precarious and low-wage workforce of Brazil. The workers, with good reason, are outraged."

The biggest of the powerful ruling-class media firms, O Globo, has called Temer "discardable." But O Globo wants the Congress to name Temer's successor. This would be an "indirect" election.

Temer claimed on May 26 that he wouldn't step down, which is no surprise since he faces corruption charges that could land him in jail if he's no longer president. The longer he clings to the office, however, the longer a mass struggle

Venezuela resists U.S. sabotage

Continued from page 1

including the consulate in New York City. Physical attacks or insults have been leveled against Venezuelans and other people who are seen as being in solidarity with Bolivarian Venezuela, such as filmmaker Oliver Stone.

Washington's hostile plans

Through the Organization of American States and its president, Luis Almagro, the U.S. has mounted an international campaign to impose the so-called "OAS Democratic Charter" on Venezuela and to involve other countries in its hostile plans.

This is particularly true regarding Colombia. A few days after Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos met with U.S. President Donald Trump on May 18, Santos ordered the army to deploy its armored tanks to the Venezuelan border. Venezuelan Foreign Minister Delcy Rodríguez immediately denounced this provocation by the neighboring country.

Trump's meetings with key Venezuelan opposition figures have also exposed U.S. assistance to these forces. He met with Julio Borges, opposition president in Venezuela's National Assembly, and with Lilian Tintori, spouse of Leopoldo López, currently imprisoned for inciting violent protests in 2014 that caused 43 deaths. Violence inside Venezuela increased significantly after the meetings with Trump.

Corporate news reports, especially by CNN's Spanish network, blame President Nicolás Maduro for the violence, calling it "state repression." Faced with this false news, Workers World/Mundo Obrero interviewed a leader of the famous Neighborhood 23 de Enero (January 23), to gain a view of how working-class communities are assessing the situation and acting.

The people's voice

Juan Contreras is a member of the Simón Bolívar Coordinadora, a grassroots social organization that has supported the Bolivarian process for 18 years. He was a deputy in the National Assembly. The January 23 Neighborhood is of vital importance in the revolutionary historical process. The Cuartel de la Montaña, where Commander Chávez is buried, is located there.

To put the current situation in context, Contreras told Workers World: "What happens today in Venezuela involves a

counteroffensive that the Yankee empire has been promoting." He listed the right-wing coups that overthrew progressive governments in Paraguay and Honduras and the ouster of Brazil's former President Dilma Rousseff.

"And what is still missing?" he asked. "The crown jewel, Venezuela. For more than two decades, since Hugo Chávez became the 'bad example.' Thanks to the Bolivarian Process, these processes have spread to the Caribbean and Latin America and been established in Paraguay, Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador and El Salvador. The Sandinistas returned in Nicaragua. Cuba remains the moral and ethical beacon for our peoples."

"The Bolivarian Process spread to our Latin America and Caribbean, and today the U.S. empire wants to end all these processes."

Contreras emphatically declares the hostile forces in Venezuela to be counterrevolutionaries, not just opponents. He compares the current situation with "what happened in Nicaragua with the counterrevolution sponsored by the U.S. empire, which armed the 'contras' at the border, and sabotaged the work in the factories and the planting of the fields [agriculture] from within the ministries."

Resistance to the attacks

"[This] is financed by the empire. They just approved more than \$500 million for the counterrevolution," Contreras continued. "Even though there is scarcely half a year left until the general elections, they are determined to demand elections now. What is now underway in Venezuela is a massive subversive process, trying to wear people down, and aimed at the overthrow of the Bolivarian process. But the people here are resisting the empire's attacks."

Contreras explained, "[The contras] are using economic warfare, hiding food and medicine." He also mentioned the media war that attempts to portray Venezuela as a failed state, a "narco-state," with an alleged "humanitarian crisis" meant to justify foreign intervention. "The empire believes this is the moment for the final thrust because there is no Commander Chávez. But President Maduro cannot be Commander Chávez. He must carry on with his own leadership style."

Former U.S. President Barack Obama

declared Venezuela a "threat to the U.S.," noted Contreras. "But it's such nonsense to say that Venezuela is a threat to the principal imperialist power of the world."

"But the people here are still betting on this revolution, which has helped the 80 percent excluded during the Fourth Republic [pre-1999] to have access to health care and education," he stressed.

Maduro calls for a Constituent Assembly

"President Maduro, aiming for peace, has called for a Constituent Assembly in the framework of the failure of dialogue between the opposition and the government." Contreras believes that during the dialogue "the possibility of reaching any agreement was zero because only the government and the counterrevolutionaries were present. There was no direct participation of the people, our workers, Indigenas people, peasants, students, people of the neighborhoods. The shirtless, the toothless, the ones the bourgeoisie does not want. They are the ones who were missing at the discussion table. That's why it was condemned to fail."

"The Constituent Assembly is a great meeting of a national character where people's representatives dictate the guidelines that should mark the coexistence between governed and governor. The popular sectors have the hope of achieving peace through this Constituent Assembly."

"But," Contreras warned, "if that Constituent Assembly does not have the presence of the people, it will be a complete failure. There can be no favoritism; you cannot impose the individuals you want. The people who go there must be those who have maintained this process for 18 years. Because they are the ones who know what are the problems affecting the Bolivarian process. Legality is one thing, but our people have the political knowledge. That is why there should be a people-based Constituent Assembly. It has to be the people [the poor] who design the path to follow."

Contreras also suggested that members of the Constituent Assembly must not have held public office for at least two years.

The Constituent Assembly, Contreras pointed out, in seeking to include measures not now in the Constitution, such as appropriate punishment of perpetrators of terrorism, must also include punishment

for those who commit acts of corruption. He gives an example of those who — after stealing from the people, using the cheapest dollars granted by the government to import essential products — did not fulfill that obligation. They only brought part of the products into the country and kept the rest of the money. They went abroad to live and then returned to Venezuela without being punished.

How can the people be included in the Constituent Assembly?

"This is a class struggle and my class is one of those at the bottom," stressed Contreras. "We must now allow the people to express themselves. From below, we want a Constitution that protects the Revolution and allows building on the theme of peace, not to where those fascist sectors want us to go."

To include the people in the Constituent Assembly, Contreras explained, "We are holding assemblies across the country where the people discuss the issues. Here in the 23rd de Enero we have already held two. The 23rd is divided into organized sectors. In one sector we held a forum with a constitutional lawyer to which 325 people came. This was under the difficult conditions in which the country finds itself. There are 13 sectors in the neighborhood (parish), and we will visit it sector by sector to hold debates on the Constituent Assembly. Then we will hold a larger assembly where all the sectors and all the organizations that are part of the 23rd come."

"The life of the [revolutionary] process itself is at stake in this Constituent Assembly. The possibility that an alternative model can be developed in Latin America and the Caribbean is at stake."

"These debates are taking place in the factories, in the fields, in the universities. They are responding to President Maduro's call for a discussion."

"In contrast with neoliberal models, where they bet on the individual, here we bet on the construction of an alternative model with new values within society, values of solidarity, and for moving forward to build a different economic, social and political model."

"I believe that this is the path that Comandante Chávez told us to build — the communal state as a transitional process for advancing Bolivarian socialism." □

ct elections

can develop that unites the workers, landless peasants, farmers, women, youth and all the left political parties.

Temer is president now because last August the Brazilian ruling oligarchy conspired to oust elected President Dilma Rousseff of the Workers Party and replace her with someone who would, without hesitation, cater to the interests of imperialism and Brazil's super-rich. Their goal was an open attack on Brazilian workers and farmers, with freedom to pillage the natural resources of this vast country whatever the cost to the environment.

Internationally, the parliamentary coup against Rousseff also strengthened U.S. imperialism in Brazil and all Latin America, where Brazil's role is so important. This maneuver had the blessing of U.S. politicians and Wall Street — as could be seen in the many articles pro-capitalist Forbes magazine published in 2016 attacking Rousseff.

Corruption and impeachment

Last year Congress impeached Rousseff, accusing her of corruption based on a technicality. She had made administrative adjustments to the national budget that were standard presidential practice and normally not legal grounds for impeachment. Rousseff had already made concessions to Brazilian capital, but they were insufficient to stop its assault. These concessions, however, did weaken mass support for her and for the Workers Party.

More than 200 representatives in the Congress that impeached Rousseff were themselves facing investigation for their role in actual crimes. They impeached Rousseff to try to stop the investigations.

The politician who led the impeachment battle, Eduardo Cunha, has subsequently been convicted of corruption and sentenced to 15 years in prison. A similar fate hangs over Temer.

Former President Luis Ignacio da Silva (Lula) of the Workers Party is still a popular favorite for the regularly scheduled 2018 presidential elections. There is some discussion of arranging an agreement between Lula and another former president, a conservative, to replace Temer.

If the ruling class is unable to arrange a smooth ouster of Temer, and instead mass action throws him out, this will open space for a bigger working-class struggle and victory. □

WHO Public Health Prize goes to Cuba

By Cheryl LaBash



Cuban medical professionals mobilized for New Orleans, 2005.



PHOTO: L. CIPRIANI/WHO

Dr. Roberto Morales Ojeda, Minister of Health of Cuba, and Dr. Felix Baez, Henry Reeve International Medical Brigade, receive World Health Organization Prize for Public Health.

At its 70th World Assembly in Geneva on May 26, the World Health Organization unanimously bestowed its Public Health award on Cuba's Henry Reeve Brigade.

The brigade won wide recognition and even favorable corporate news headlines in 2014 for providing West Africa with 250 frontline fighters against the Ebola epidemic, which had threatened to spread across the globe. Dr. Felix Báez Sarría, member of the brigade, accepted the presentation with Roberto Morales, Cuba's minister of public health. After surviving an Ebola infection, Dr. Báez Sarría voluntarily returned to the West African frontlines.

Fidel Castro, the historical leader of the Cuban Revolution, formed the Henry Reeve Brigade on Sept. 19, 2005. At that time, nearly 2,000 Cuban medical professionals had been assembled to assist the people, most of them Black, who were stranded on New Orleans rooftops and packed into the sports coliseum because of hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

But President George Bush rejected Cuba's offer.

These volunteers then became the Henry Reeve Brigade, named for a young internationalist combatant from the U.S. who died in 1876 fighting for Cuban independence from Spain. Shunned by the Bush administration, the Cuban doctors preparing to help the people of New Orleans were instead deployed to help earthquake survivors in Pakistan, high in the Himalayan mountains.

According to a May 26 Prensa Latina report, the 7,254 Cuban medical profes-

sionals honored had assisted in emergency situations in 19 countries, including twice each in Haiti and Chile. "They attended to more than 3.5 million people and saved the lives of about 80,000 patients, according to estimates."

U.S. spends on military, Cuba on health

The U.S., the richest imperialist country in the world, has a military budget that far exceeds the other top nine military spenders combined. President Donald Trump has just arranged to sell the Saudi kingdom, which has been slaughtering people in Yemen, \$110 billion in new military hardware. Yet the budget being sent to Congress slashes domestic and international spending on health care, which impacts heavily on women.

Spending for HIV/AIDS and malaria is being reduced. Cuban doctors have pointed out that deaths from malaria in Africa far exceed those from Ebola, but Ebola became the international priority when it was feared that the epidemic would spread beyond Africa.

The U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary, Dr. Tom Price, spoke at the WHO assembly, saying the U.S. government was committed to "a cooperative, transparent and effective international response to outbreaks of infectious disease. These threats do not respect borders between countries, and can spread rapidly to endanger people anywhere around the globe."

However, Dr. Price is an advocate of dismantling the Affordable Care Act, thus denying health care to as many as 23 million U.S. residents. The U.S. is the only

industrialized country without a national health system.

By contrast, Dr. Morales Ojeda of Cuba told the assembly's plenary session on May 24: "Cuba supports the strengthening of systems geared toward achieving universal health coverage, recognizing that health is a fundamental human right and at the center of public policies for sustainable development. ... We have 493,000 health care sector workers and over 50,000 collaborators offering services in 63 countries."

Cuba's Latin American School of Medicine also trains doctors from underserved communities around the world — including U.S. inner cities and rural areas — so they can return home to serve the people.

Cuba's international health solidarity is a reflection of its internal commitment. Providing health care through a centralized, socialist, planned system has resulted in health statistics equal to or exceeding those in the U.S.

Dr. Morales Ojeda reported that by the end of 2016, life expectancy at birth in Cuba was 78.45 years. Cuba has an immunization program that protects against 13 diseases. It produces most of the vaccines used, providing 98 percent of the population with coverage.

In 2015, Cuba became the first country in the world to officially eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis.

"The foundations for the National Health System in Cuba were drawn up in 1959, the driving force behind which was the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz," Morales Ojeda told the assembly. □

Homeland Security threatens to expel Haitians

By G. Dunkel

John Kelly, secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, has told the 58,000 Haitians living in the U.S. under Temporary Protective Status to get their travel documents in order and be prepared to leave in six months. The TPS allows these Haitians to work, drive and pay taxes in the U.S.

Kelly claims that the economy and social conditions in Haiti have improved so much that this is a reasonable time limit. But his order is widely condemned as unjustifiably short by the Haitian community. Conditions in Haiti are still dire in many ways.

While the rubble from the 2005 earthquake has finally been cleared, the tens of thousands of houses destroyed in the quake have not been replaced. Housing all over Haiti is in desperately short supply.

Cholera, introduced into Haiti by United Nations forces in 2010, will remain even when Minustah, the military occupation of Haiti under U.N. command, is

replaced in October by a smaller "police" force. The cholera epidemic killed close to 9,000 Haitians, with hundreds of thousands sickened. All that had a consequently profound impact on the economy.

In 2016, Hurricane Matthew devastated Haiti's breadbasket in the southwest, its most productive agricultural area. Nine hundred people died and tens of thousands lost their homes. Roads, bridges and all kinds of economically necessary facilities were either damaged or destroyed. Food prices in Haiti spiked; high prices have continued.

The government of Haiti controls the price and distribution of gas and diesel. In May, it significantly raised the price of these items — more than 60 percent for gasoline. This will produce an additional general price rise in all manner of goods, from rice to oil and toilet paper.

Since May Day, the textile workers at the maquiladoras in the Sonapi Industrial Park in Port-au-Prince have risen up and been joined by workers in the Caracol Industrial Park on the northeast coast

near the Dominican Republic border.

These workers are demanding that the minimum wage for garment manufacturing be more than doubled, from 300 gourdes to 800 gourdes a day — 300 gourdes come to less than \$5 U.S. and 800 gourdes come to around \$13 U.S..

Factory owners are opposed to the increase on the grounds that it will reduce Haiti's attractiveness to investment in "low-cost" manufactured goods. They want the so-called Superior Council of Salaries to maintain the current low-wage schedule.

But the workers have taken to the streets and confronted the policies and the cops.

Protests have grown so intense and militant that the bosses have had to close the plants from time to time over the past two weeks. President Jovenel Moïse gave a televised address on May 25 urging a "dialog" between the bosses and the workers.

Meanwhile, the tens of thousands of Haitian-Dominicans expelled from the Dominican Republic in the past two

years are stuck in camps on the Dominican-Haitian border. The Haitian economy still has not been able to absorb them.

For the U.S. head of Homeland Security to declare the economy of Haiti has "improved" ignores the hundreds of workers already in the streets who are protesting being paid less than \$5 a day. It also ignores the fact that 25 percent of Haiti's gross domestic product comes from money sent home from its workers in the U.S. According to the World Bank, this is the highest percentage of any Latin American, Central American or Caribbean country. (tinyurl.com/y76quyppw)

If the U.S. expels the 58,000 Haitians now living under TPS protection, it will be another act in the long line of U.S. crimes against Haiti, dating back to the first U.S. blockade imposed on the country in 1804, when the Haitian people won their independence from slavery and colonialism.

One small act of reparation would be to grant Indefinite Temporary Protective Status in the U.S. to any Haitian who wants TPS. It is their right. □

Syria, the Kurds and U.S. divide-and-conquer

By D. Angelopoulos

For the past six years, the United States, Israel, NATO and the Gulf Cooperation Council have waged an unrelenting proxy war against the sovereign, secular state of Syria. The U.S.-funded Free Syrian Army, called “moderate rebels” in the corporate-owned media, fights openly alongside forces backed by U.S. allies Saudi Arabia and Turkey. These forces, really mercenaries or contras, which include the Islamic State, Jabhat Al-Nusra (al-Qaida in Syria), Jaysh al-Islam and others, are largely constituted of foreign fighters.

There is one front in this proxy war, however, that should be included in an anti-imperialist analyses. It's the front in the north contested by the Islamic State, Turkey, U.S. imperialism and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) — the last group mainly includes Kurdish forces.

The SDF's largest fighting force is the YPG (the Kurdish acronym for the People's Protection Units). The YPG is allied with the Democratic Union Party (PYD), and both are allied with the Kurdish Worker's Party (PKK). The PKK has been engaged in a decades-long fight for self-determination of the Kurdish region inside Turkish boundaries against the brutally oppressive Turkish state.

In a sign of the contradictions inherent in U.S. imperialist policy toward Syria, on April 25 Turkish planes attacked units of the YPG in northern Syria, killing as many as 70 fighters. While U.S. diplomats said they raised concerns with NATO-ally Turkey regarding this strike, nothing concrete was done to stop future Turkish attacks against Kurdish fighters. (Reuters, April 25) This is one example in Washington's long history of apparently backing one oppressed people and then turning on them.

Many progressive people see the YPG, which is mostly made up of Kurdish fighters but includes other ethnic minorities as well as Western “foreign volunteers,” as representing the just struggle for Kurdish national liberation. Organized along democratic principles without a vertical chain of command, the forces of the YPG and their movement in northern Syria claim to model their “non-state” on anarchist, eco-socialist principles.

The YPJ, the Women's Protection Units, provide an active leadership role for women in their struggle.

The Kurdish nation

The Kurds are a historically oppressed nation of 30 million to 35 million people. They are the world's largest nation without a state. Most live in the contiguous, underdeveloped, mountainous region spanning four countries and speak their own language. About 14.5 million to 16 million Kurds live in Turkey, 6 million in Iran and 5 million to 6 million in Iraq. The 1.5 million to 2 million Kurds in Syria are the smallest grouping of this nation.

During the Kurdish people's fight for liberation from Turkey, Washington has supplied arms, logistical and satellite assistance, and political support for the Turkish ruling classes against the PKK, which the U.S. labels as “terrorist.” Yet in Syria, Washington has a cynical, opportunistic alliance with the YPG, using those forces to accomplish its aims of destroying the Syrian state.

At times, the Syrian Democratic Forces/YPG have coordinated with the Syrian Arab Army in the fight against IS and other mercenary armies. However, SDF/YPG now operate in coordination with the U.S. military. Despite the SDF/YPG's progressive principles and organizational structure, the Pentagon's aim is to have it

function as an effective proxy for the U.S. geopolitical goal of dismantling the Syrian state.

It is not obvious what aggression the U.S. plans next for Syria after its deadly April 6 strike on the Sharyat airfield and the May 18 bombing of a Syrian government convoy. If Washington significantly steps up direct U.S. intervention, it will expect cooperation from the SDF in providing ground forces. The Pentagon has already been able to build two air bases in northeastern Syria in the past few months.

Mercenaries and ‘invaders’

Since at least two years ago, the U.S. has been sending special forces troops to northern Syria. As Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has stated since the U.S. sent several hundred more ground troops to Syria in the beginning of March, “All foreign troops coming to Syria without our invitation ... are invaders.” Assad, who is constantly demonized in the U.S. corporate media, is the democratically elected leader of the people of Syria.

The YPG has been bolstered not only by U.S. special forces but also by foreign volunteers including people from the U.S., Canada, Britain and other countries.

Among them is Brace Belden, who had a Rolling Stone magazine centerfold feature on his role and inspired an upcoming Hollywood film starring Jake Gyllenhaal as the “punk florist-turned-revolutionary.” Another volunteer is Gill Rosenberg, a Canadian-Israeli woman and former soldier in the Israeli Defense Forces, and the first foreign volunteer in the Women's Protection Units. These individuals violate Syrian sovereignty and package the U.S. invasion of Syria as a progressive, “socialist” struggle against Islamic state fascism.

Is U.S. planning to split up Syria?

The Rand Corporation think tank has drawn up various “peace plans” throughout the war, detailing the U.S. and its allies' latest plans for the partition of Syria. The most recent, dated this year, projects large swathes of Kurdish-administered territory extending about halfway to Raqqa in the south and almost to Manbij in the west, as well as a corner encompassing Azaz in northwestern Syria.

Buffering these zones are “proposed international administration” zones, code words for NATO occupation and Turkish-controlled areas. Notably, these “Kurdish

zones” in northeastern Syria encompass much of the country's greatest natural wealth, including its largest oil reserves.

If the U.S. aids the SDF to annex northeastern Syria, this will not lead to any meaningful form of Kurdish independence. Rather, it will mean the Kurdish forces will be subordinate to and will collaborate with the U.S., much as the Kurdish regime does inside Iraq. Meanwhile, the U.S. will destroy what remains of Syria and purge any progressive forces in the Kurdish movement.

At this point, Washington sees the claims to a separate Kurdish region based out of northern Syria as fitting its goal of dividing Syria. With the Syrian state under siege, the attempt to create a Kurdish “autonomous” zone under U.S. guidance is in direct contradiction to the preservation of Syrian sovereignty in defense against imperialism. The U.S. has made this abundantly clear, saying that it plans to station its forces in Syria even once IS has been eliminated.

Moreover, all of these events obscure the fact that the Syrian government and Kurdish groups have negotiated greater autonomy for the latter on their own terms before. If there is to be any change in the relationship between the Syrian state and its Kurdish inhabitants, it is clear that this change cannot be imposed by the imperialist powers. The U.S., NATO and their allies should have no say in this history.

The imperialists in the U.S. and elsewhere have planned a grim end for Syria: the destruction of the sovereign secular state in favor of ethnic enclaves in the manner of Iraq, Libya, Yugoslavia and any other state that has defied destruction and imperialist plundering since the fall of the Soviet Union. This includes the current aggression against Syria, Venezuela and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

There can be no genuine liberation for any peoples — Arab, Kurdish or otherwise — until imperialism is defeated in the region and the right of self-determination is fully realized and respected. Anti-war and other activists in the U.S. and NATO states must stand in full solidarity with the right of all nations to develop their collective livelihood, culture and economy without interference from imperialists.

Hands off Syria! All mercenaries out of Syria! Uphold self-determination! □

Speakers hit U.S. wars in Syria, Yemen

By WWP Wisconsin Bureau

In Madison, Wis., Workers World Party members Joe Mshahwar and Randi Nord lectured on the causes and costs of the wars against Syria and Yemen. The speakers stressed the particular, human significance of these U.S.-funded “shad-

ow wars” for people living in the two countries, as well as the global significance of these wars for all oppressed people, including in the U.S. The talks were given at the Wil-Mar Community Center on May 20 to a supportive audience. The Madison meeting was part of a regional tour by the two speakers. □

After 40 days of #DignityStrike

Palestinian prisoners declare victory

By Joe Catron

The Palestinian prisoners' movement and its supporters celebrated victory on May 27. A series of concessions by both the Israeli Prison Service and the International Committee of the Red Cross had brought the Strike of Freedom and Dignity, Palestinian political prisoners' biggest mass hunger strike in five years, to a close after 40 days.

As part of the deal, the ICRC, which coordinates family visits to Palestinians in Israeli prisons, will restore the bimonthly service, after cutting visits to most prisoners to one per month a year ago.

The IPS will improve prisoners' education, family visits, food, health care, recreational facilities, telephone access, transportation and overall conditions, the Palestinian Prisoners Affairs Commission director, Issa Qaraqe, said at a press conference in Ramallah.

Among other changes, the IPS agreed to lift its ban on visits by over 140 chil-

dren of prisoners, to install cooling and ventilation systems in prisons, and to give prisoners meals and bathroom access during their transportation between prisons and courts, Qaraqe said.

He added that prisoners had achieved “80 percent of the demands” of the strike. (samidoun.net)

The IPS confirmed an agreement on visitation, but denied it had negotiated with the prisoners.

The U.S. Palestinian Community Network said in a statement that the IPS “claims that the agreement was not made with the prisoners themselves, but between Israel, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Palestinian Authority (PA).

“We reject this boldfaced lie, and also condemn the role of the ICRC, which was responsible for cutting the second monthly family visit in the first place.” (uspcn.org)

Ahmad Sa'adat, the imprisoned general secretary of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, who joined the strike on May 4, in a statement hailed “the collective fruit of the efforts of the Palestinian people who rallied around the strike.

“It came through the support of Arab popular forces throughout the Arab world, and through the support of all of the forces of freedom in the world, including popular movements and organizations, solidarity committees, parliamentarians, social justice movements confronting imperialism and globalization, and the international boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement,” he wrote from Ramon Prison.

“To all of those who participated in the actions of solidarity with our strike to bring it to its honorable conclusion, we send all of our greetings and appreciation, especially to the families of the

martyrs, the wounded and the prisoners.” (freeahmadsaadat.org)

Building forward

After more than 1,500 prisoners led by imprisoned Palestinian parliamentarian Marwan Barghout launched the strike on April 17, Palestinian Prisoners' Day, it sparked demonstrations of support both under Israeli occupation and throughout the world.

These ranged from weekly protests organized by Samidoun: Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network in New York to massive “days of rage” and general strikes across Palestine.

Students in Europe and North America, as well as public figures like Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarch Gregory III Laham, Palestinian resistance icon Leila Khaled and Greek Orthodox Archbishop

Continued on page 11

What is Trump's line toward China?

By Deirdre Griswold

The establishment news media in the U.S. that usually echo the government's line on foreign policy — especially the New York Times and Washington Post — have been yoyoing over the Trump administration's stance toward the People's Republic of China. No wonder. The administration's own statements and actions toward China have been all over the map.

Back in January, before and after the Inauguration, Trump and his nominee for secretary of state, former ExxonMobil CEO Rex Tillerson, laid out a hard line against China. At one point Tillerson even threatened a blockade of islands in the South China Sea claimed by China and reinforced by its navy. A blockade would be an act of war.

Then, as the corrupt Park regime in south Korea was being swept away by massive demonstrations, the U.S. scrambled to put in place a THAAD missile battery there, supposedly to guard against an attack from north Korea, but widely seen in Asia as an aggressive move aimed at China and Russia as well.

At the same time, the Pentagon was carrying out huge war exercises with south Korea and Japan aimed at the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the north. Openly advertising these war "games" as simulating the "decapitation" of the DPRK leadership, the U.S. threats reached a crescendo when, on April 9, the U.S. commander of the Pacific Fleet announced that the aircraft carrier Carl Vinson, with its wing of fighter jets, had been diverted

Having abandoned its futile attempt to stifle China economically, U.S. imperialism is ratcheting up military pressure. But China is not Afghanistan or Libya or Iraq.

from a course toward Australia and was steaming toward the waters off Korea.

All this enormous military pressure came to a head while President Xi Jinping of China was meeting with Trump at his Florida estate, during which Trump announced on April 7 that "we have made tremendous progress in our relationship with China." This prompted much media speculation that China was going to help Washington in its dealings with the DPRK, which has developed nuclear weapons and the missiles to deliver them.

The DPRK knows what war is like. The U.S. sent millions of troops to invade Korea from 1950 to 1953 in an effort to completely destroy the socialist revolution that had liberated the northern half of the peninsula from Japanese colonial rule. After millions of deaths, this war ended in a stalemate — the first real defeat for the seemingly all-powerful U.S. military. In that war, a million Chinese volunteers fought alongside the Koreans.

The Korean War has never officially ended, and 28,000 U.S. troops remain stationed in the south. The north Korean leaders opted for developing a nuclear defense only after all their efforts to engage

the U.S. in negotiations for a peace treaty were ignored by Washington.

The DPRK has pledged no first use of nuclear weapons. The U.S., with a stockpile of 6,800 nuclear warheads, refuses to make such a pledge. Trump himself leaked recently that at least two U.S. nuclear-armed submarines were in the waters off Korea.

China responds to U.S. warplanes

Three actions in late May by the Chinese military reveal that Trump's sweet talk can't disguise the aggressive moves taken by U.S. imperialism toward China as well as north Korea.

All three involve Chinese fighter jets moving close to U.S. warplanes, in one case even flying upside down over the U.S. plane. The first occurred as U.S. jets flew over China's territorial waters near islands in the South China Sea. The second was when a U.S. "sniffer" plane, built to detect radiation particles, flew close to both China and the DPRK in the North China Sea. The most recent happened as U.S. warplanes flew close to Hong Kong.

The U.S. government and media treat all these events as signs of China's belligerence.

But these were not Chinese planes flying off the coast of the U.S.! Just imagine the outcry if that were to happen.

No, these incidents involved China defending its own air space as U.S. warplanes flew near its coasts and territorial waters.

Behind all the maneuvering by Washington and the Pentagon is the plain fact that China, a deeply impoverished country just two generations ago, has developed at a phenomenal rate, raising 800 million people out of deep poverty over the last 38 years, according to the U.N. Development Program. At the same time, Western capitalist economies, while producing huge fortunes for a few, have stagnated with high levels of unemployment and low wages.

So, having abandoned its futile attempt to stifle China economically through the ill-fated Trans-Pacific Partnership, U.S. imperialism is ratcheting up military pressure.

But China is not Afghanistan or Libya or Iraq. It is the most populous country in the world. After a great and earthshaking revolution that lasted decades and was led by communists, it has built a socially owned infrastructure and a formidable ability to plan, coordinate and carry out vast development projects that have transformed the land and its people.

No wonder the Trump administration of warhawks and reactionary billionaires, whose fortunes come from exploiting workers all over the world, is having a hard time figuring out what to do about the rise of People's China. □

Filipino groups condemn martial law

BAYAN-USA, Anakbayan-USA and GABRIELA USA issued a statement on May 23 condemning the imposition of martial law in Mindanao by Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's administration. Headlined "Filipino Americans to Duterte: Revoke martial law in Mindanao," it is posted at bayanusa.org. Below are some excerpts.

Bernadette Ellorin, BAYAN-USA chairperson, states: "Martial law will never lead to peace in Mindanao. It will only aggravate the roots of the armed conflict in the region and place thousands of innocent civilians in danger of violent attack."

Irma Shauf-Bajar, GABRIELA USA chairperson, says, "With more military operations, women and children will be even more vulnerable to rape, harassment and other sexual abuse."

The organizations call on Duterte "to pursue diplomatic and peaceful means to address not only the attacks by the Maute group in Marawi, but also the roots of the armed conflict in Mindanao. This includes implementing urgent reforms outlined in the "Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms." Discussion of these reforms is part of the ongoing peace negotiations between the

Philippine government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, "which include respecting the Moro people's right to self-determination and respect for ancestral domain."

Adrian Bonifacio, Anakbayan-USA chairperson, says, "The declaration of martial law throughout the island of Mindanao denies the historic right of the Moro people to self-determination, and it puts those who continue to legitimately fight for their right to land and self-determination, including the Moro people and the Lumad, at increased risk of state repression."

"The social unrest and armed conflict in the Bangsamoro region of Mindanao must be placed within the proper socio-economic and historical context. Lanao del Sur, the province where the Maute group operates, has the highest poverty rate in the Philippines, yet remains one of

the most resource-rich in the country, a prime attraction for foreign corporations for lucrative investments and large-scale extractive operations."

Poverty, landlessness amidst natural wealth

A 2006 WikiLeaks cable revealed the Liguasan Marsh has "the largest deposits of oil and natural gas in the Philippines and in the region, worth hundreds of billions in U.S. dollars."

Ellorin explained: "The armed conflict in the Bangsamoro territory ... is essentially rooted in the Moro people's legitimate struggle for self-determination, including aspirations for genuine sustainable development that would allow for [their] livelihood off of their own land. It would also mean freedom from over a century of U.S. counterinsurgency operations that continue until this day, designed to keep the natural resources of the region under foreign control." [Mindanao has the largest concentration of U.S. military personnel in the Philippines.]

Stop U.S. military intervention

Ellorin asserted: "But the U.S.-backed mainstream media and die-hard militarists in the Duterte administration ... opportunistically distort the narrative into one of so-called Islamic extremism, so-called terrorism and drumbeat a pretext for greater militarization, especially U.S. military intervention."

BAYAN-USA, Anakbayan-USA and GABRIELA USA call for "greater vigilance against increasing U.S. intervention in the region, as the Trump administration recently increased the U.S. defense budget by \$59 billion, resulting in \$639 billion for U.S.-led war and militarization abroad, and especially in Asia."

Bonifacio stressed, "The Trump administration's increase in military spending goes hand in hand with a proposed \$9.2 billion cut in the national budget for public education, alongside cuts to other social services. We condemn the diversion of funds that should be spent on the people toward war and militarization in the Philippines and around the world." □

Protest over martial law in Philippines

Several dozen people picketed the Philippines Consulate in Chicago on May 25 demanding an end to martial law in Mindanao, the second-largest island in the Philippines. President Rodrigo Duterte declared martial law in all of Mindanao on May 23. This has already led to increased human rights abuses, mass detention, torture, sexual abuse and extrajudicial killings. Speakers emphasized that the weapons being unleashed against the Filipino people have been provided by the U.S. military, using tax dollars that rightfully should be for education and health care here in the U.S. The vigil was organized by Anakbayan Chicago.

— Report and photo by Jeff Sorel



WORKERS WORLD editorial

A tragedy and a victory

Both white supremacy and bigotry against Muslims and other immigrants are not just deplorable. They are murderous and must be fought. Recent weeks have seen both a tragedy and a victory in this all-important struggle.

In Portland, Ore., three white men who came to the defense of two Muslim women on a commuter train on May 26 were stabbed, two of them to death, by a white man shouting anti-Muslim hate speech. There can be no doubt that such vicious, violent behavior has been stimulated and reinforced by the Bigot-in-Chief in the White House.

But it also shows that there are many brave people in this country willing to stand up against the racist offensive that Trump and his ruling-class buddies have deliberately unleashed in order to divert attention from their criminal dismantling of the social safety net that millions rely on, inadequate as it is.

In the same period, a historic people's victory against white supremacy was won on May 19 in New Orleans.

That day the statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee was hoisted from its pedestal and removed to an unknown location. Lee was the commander in chief of the armies of the 19th-century slave-owning, secessionist "Confederate States of America." His statue was the last of four prominent CSA monuments to be removed recently in New Orleans.

For the last six decades anti-racist, civil-rights activists have fought for the removal of these racist symbols. The latest struggle, led by Take 'Em Down NOLA, began in 2015.

This coincided with a wave of actions against Confederate flags and monuments sparked by white-supremacist Dylann Roof's mass murder of Black worshippers at a Charleston, S.C., church on June 17, 2015. Activist Bree Newsome heroically scaled the Statehouse flagpole in Columbia, S.C., 10 days later and physically removed the Confederate flag flying there.

Long history of racism and fightback in New Orleans

NOLA campaigners against the Confederate statues possessed similar guts and determination as they persisted with marches and rallies for removal, even as city and state authorities allowed gun-carrying racists, neofascists and Ku Klux Klan members to camp out for weeks to "guard" the monuments.

The racists seemed ready to shoot people — in order to keep in place more than just the looming monuments, more than just a lying version of history that deliberately fails to remember that New Orleans was once the biggest U.S. "market" for the selling of enslaved African people.

What these right-wingers want to preserve is the system of intertwined racism and economic oppression the monuments continue to represent.

Can we forget the murderous treatment of Black people in New Orleans during and after the Hurricane Katrina disaster? Institutionalized racism has a long history.

After the abolition of slavery and the Civil War's end, and during the ensuing Reconstruction Era, the economic powers-that-be struggled to deny legal and economic freedom to people of African descent in the U.S. South, and by extension the entire country. One tactic was the infamous 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court that gave the go-ahead to racist separate-and-unequal "Jim Crow" laws. The case was originally brought by Homer Plessy, a free man of color arrested and convicted after he challenged segregation by deliberately sitting in a "white" railroad car in New Orleans.

It is significant that the first Confederate statue taken down in New Orleans celebrated the Battle of Liberty Place, when an 1874 insurrection by a paramilitary, racist white organization attempted to topple the biracial Louisiana state government elected by free Black people and white allies.

It is no accident that at present there is increased organizing by right-wing fascist and neo-Nazi elements, some of it in defense of Confederate flags and monuments. These tactics are meant to prevent worker solidarity by creating divisions across lines of nationality, religion, unionized and low-wage temp work, and other differences.

This increase in terrorist reaction comes at a time when workers and oppressed people are rising up as corporations cut jobs in search of greater profits and the Trump administration attempts to savage the social safety net in order to fund the imperialist war machine. Once again, big business needs on-the-ground, KKK-style threats against progressive advances.

But we have to remember that Klan-minded "leaders" are also in suits, uniforms and judicial robes. They are present in corporate boardrooms, legislatures, courts and police forces.

Directives and laws forbidding removal of CSA monuments have been OK'd by the governor of Alabama and the legislature of North Carolina. On a national level, the blatantly racist Trump administration attacks oppressed peoples and workers, attempting to push back the gains of decades.

We are not in a struggle about "symbols." We are in a fight for justice and freedom that has been waged in this land ever since the first European "conquerors" invaded the home of Native peoples, and proceeded to enrich the existing European ruling classes using genocide, enslavement and oppression.

New Orleans offers us another history, if we will learn. The largest U.S. rebellion of enslaved people occurred there in 1811, led by Charles Deslondes. Called the German Coast Rebellion, it was carried out by a heroic army of more than 200 people battling with hoes, axes and cane knives for their freedom — physical, legal and economic.

As the statues come down, New Orleans offers us the lesson of continued resistance — and the example of victory. □

Portuguese revolutionary Miguel Urbano Rodrigues, 1925 - 2017



The following obituary about the life of Miguel Urbano Rodrigues was published on May 27 by the editors of the Portuguese-language website ODiario. It was translated by WW managing editor John Catalinotto, who participated in the three conferences at Serpa described below and is a contributor to the ODiario.info site.

ODiario.info informs its readers and friends of the death of its founder and publisher Miguel Urbano Rodrigues.

Born in Moura, in the Alentejo region of Portugal in 1925, the son of a journalist father and writer, in the midst of a family of well-to-do republican [anti-monarchy] farmers, he lived through the establishment of the Estado Novo [fascist] dictatorship while absorbing the influence and inspiration of the people of his native soil who refused to submit.

Miguel Urbano Rodrigues attended the Faculty of Letters of Lisbon. He came to be editor of *Diário de Notícias* (beginning in 1949) and editor-in-chief of *Diário Ilustrado*. A young man endowed with unusual intellectual curiosity and talent, and committed to the causes of the people, he found himself constrained and threatened by the fascist regime that gagged and imprisoned his country.

Exiled in Brazil, he was an editorialist of the daily newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo* (1957 to 1974) and international editor of *Visão* magazine (1970 to 1974). During this period, he accompanied or intervened in key events weakening the fascist regime on the international arena, namely the assault on the regime's ship "Santa Maria" and the progression of the MPLA [Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola] and PAIGC [liberation organization in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde] struggle against Portuguese colonialism. In 1963 he joined the Portuguese Communist Party.

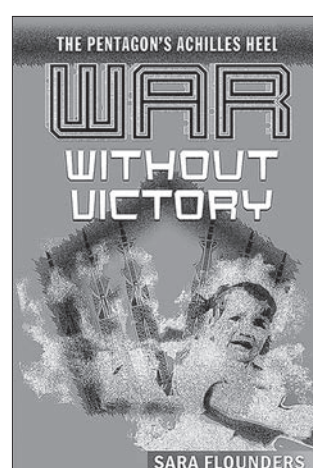
He returned to Portugal shortly after April 25, 1974, at the height of the explosion of popular enthusiasm, incorporating himself in the construction of the democratic regime as a militant communist. He was the editor of the PCP weekly

newspaper, *Avante!* in 1974 and 1975 and director of the newspaper *O Diário* from 1976 to 1985. He was president of the Municipal Assembly of Moura [the equivalent of mayor] from January 1986 to June 1988, a member of the Assembly of the Republic from 1990 to 1995, and also a member of the Parliamentary Assemblies of the European Council and the Western European Union.

While in exile he developed a vast network of working contacts and ties of friendship and cooperation with numerous progressive political personalities of Latin America. On his return to Portugal he carried out numerous missions of a political or journalistic character and expanded his vast network of international cooperation and solidarity.

Miguel Urbano Rodrigues was the founder of the website *periodical resistir.info* in 2002 and of the site *ODiario.info* in 2006. He was the main promoter of the memorable "Civilization or Barbarism" meetings at the small city of Serpa [in the Alentejo] in the years 2004, 2007 and 2010, where numerous local activists and some of the most prominent progressive intellectuals from the five continents of the world gathered to discuss the issues of the revolutionary transformation of society.

A tireless traveler and observer, an exceptional intellectual who nevertheless assumed and demanded no special attention in all the latitudes in which he lived or visited, he leaves us an extensive work encompassing diverse genres, always inspired by the understanding and celebration of the condition and action of the individual in the revolutionary transformation of humans and society, in the supreme achievement of Justice and Happiness. □



WAR WITHOUT VICTORY

by Sara Flounders

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

— Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,
President, U.N. General Assembly, 2008-2009;
Foreign Minister of Nicaragua's Sandinista government.

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The 'New Media' from freelancer to mercenary

The following slightly edited talk by journalist Taryn Fivek was given at a May 20 Workers World forum in New York City titled "Black Lives Matter, Trans Lives Matter, USA out of Everywhere!"

Human beings are extremely sensitive to propaganda. It's how we make sense of the world around us — by receiving input from other people. If I'm having a hallucination that there's a pink elephant hanging out here in the back of the room, the only way I'll be talked down is when everyone else confirms to me that there is, indeed, no pink elephant in the room. Sure, we can run tests, but in general this is how we orient our reality, by interacting and consulting with others, by receiving information.

With this input comes the ideology of the ruling class. It's really clear what that is in this country. You see it every waking moment of every day on the subway, on the internet, on television, just walking down the street: white supremacy, misogyny, LGBTQ phobia, xenophobia, dehumanization, shame, war.

As Marxists, we understand that everything happens for a reason. So why have the bourgeois media been so totally complicit, so criminally negligent about the war against our class both at home and abroad in recent times?

First, we should understand that when we speak about the media, we are not speaking of a single entity or concept. We are speaking about hundreds of thousands of people worldwide who depend on the media for their livelihood. Whether they are working in sales or, rarely, reporting from the frontlines, they need to eat, and, well, it doesn't hurt that everyone wants to be famous nowadays.

But just as there were many who worked in the Detroit car industry, it was the bosses who cashed in on selling out the workers. A sliver of super-rich, super-powerful capitalists made the deci-

sion for the rest of us. They were driven by what always drives them: the need to maximize profit.

When the internet came around, print media got scared. When high-speed internet arrived, television media got scared. Raise your hand if you own a TV. Raise your hand if you've bought a magazine in the last week. That's my point.

So these huge conglomerates got scared and have been scampering ever since to try and figure out a way not to close shop. But the news media will never go away. They are a de facto arm of the government — what's called the fourth estate. The state and the capitalists need the media to jam all this racist, sexist, warmongering bullshit down our throats so that we'll keep working, keep spending, keep living life in fear and anxiety.

But the media are supposed to be privately owned. Sure, we have a few public entities rolling around out there, but in general they are supposed to be independent. People turn up their noses at the idea of "state-run media," but it doesn't really matter all that much anymore, as no media are independent.

In 2012, a major news magazine was facing serious financial ruin. This publication had been around since 1843. It's a seriously important organ for ruling-class ideology, even if it's not widely read. But after the financial crisis of 2007-08 and the huge growth of the internet, even it was scrambling. Enter content marketing.

The Economist was saved by a huge, multimillion-dollar-cash infusion from both a major transnational and a government in the Gulf part of the Middle East. In return, the magazine would write stories that their patrons asked for (albeit with disclaimers), deliver white papers, and even offer internships.

The only thing is that The Economist doesn't use bylines. So who can be sure if the person writing the story for pay is

the same one who's supposed to be doing "journalism" on the same subject? What does it matter? You'll certainly feel pressure either way.

The media have always taken money from sponsors who run ads, but this was different.

I'd like to bring up another aspect: the freelancer. With the advent of "New Media," staff layoffs ensued, bureaus closed and suddenly a salaried position turned into a \$200-a-pop freelance deal. If that. Major publications were even trying to not pay a dime to journalists. And I ask, how are you supposed to do good, honest, investigative journalism on \$200 a story?

Enter PR — public relations firms.

Role of 'White Helmets'

White Helmets is a great example, which helps segue into our main subject.

Shortly after the creation of the Central Intelligence Agency in 1947, the U.S. Congress passed what was called the Smith-Mundt Act, which outlined what the U.S. government was allowed to do in terms of directly propagandizing people who live in the United States. In 2013, it was partially repealed. Months later, the Syria campaign called White Helmets was set up in London, run by a PR firm in New York. It targeted young, Occupy-era journalists who were eager to make more than \$200 writing a story. Suddenly, they were given plane tickets around the world, exclusive access to people who, the PR firm said, could give them the real story.

Anecdotally, a journalist I know told me of another journalist who had been approached and offered more than \$10,000 a month to move to Turkey and write press releases for the U.S.-backed "Free Syrian Army." There are no editors to make such reporters disclose their sources. There are no funding inquiries these PR firms are required to answer.

If you're a freelance journalist, you suddenly find yourself competing in a very different job market. Now you're a mercenary, and you better stay on the boss's good side to keep getting paid. While journalists are supposed to ask questions, suddenly you'd better not to keep your job.

Last December, before Barack Obama left office, he repealed the rest of the Smith-Mundt Act.

What we have now are more and more journalists working in an intense state of anxiety and fear. They are either freelance, in which case they have to constantly appear marketable while firing off tweets and Facebook updates, making sure they appeal to potential clients. Or they are employed by institutions and watch other freelancers face life in prison for doing real reporting jobs, like on January 20 at the inauguration of Trump in D.C. That makes them ever more eager to please their bosses, who are now dependent on what amounts to block grants from governments and major corporations.

This is a serious challenge that needs to be tackled: How to spread socialism in this day and age when some "journalists" are too terrified to report the truth and their editors focus more on money than integrity? Social media represent a dead end, unfortunately, as we simply create feedback loops. We are preaching to the choir when what we need are new audiences. We need to reach out to the people somehow, sidestepping this craven bourgeois media, new or not.

Workers World newspaper is more important than ever, as is "in your face" news reporting. There's a need to agitate within people's field of vision. We need to get people off their phones, where the science of getting and holding their attention has pushed people deeper into isolation and fear, and we need them to start paying attention to what real socialism looks like. □



After 40 days of #DignityStrike Palestinian prisoners declare victory

Continued from page 8

Atallah Hanna, launched fasts in solidarity, while thousands, including 25 at New York City's Solidarity Center, joined the "saltwater challenge," a series of videos in support of the prisoners, who drank salt water to stay alive while fasting.

Irish Republican political prisoners in Maghaberry Jail and and Filipino political prisoners at Camp Bagong Diwa sent messages of solidarity, with the latter holding a one-day sympathy fast.

Inside Palestine, Israeli repression claimed the lives of three Palestinian protesters: 20-year-old Saba Abid, 23-year-old Mutaz Bani Shamsa and 15-year-old Raed Ahmad Radayda, killed by occupation forces and a settler as they demonstrated for the prisoners on May 12, 18 and 23.

In the aftermath of the strike, supporters of the prisoners say continued mobilization is crucial, both to secure the gains of the May 27 agreement and to support ongoing and future struggles.

"It is important to build forward based on the prisoners' victory and place the prisoners' cause as a central issue in our Palestinian, Arab and international struggles for justice in Palestine," Khaled Barakat, international coordinator of the

Campaign to Free Ahmad Sa'adat, told WW.

Samidoun in New York will continue its weekly demonstrations in solidarity with the prisoners' movement, held every Friday at 5:30 p.m. outside the Best Buy store in Union Square.

For more announcements of events and activities in support of the prisoners, as well as information on the hunger strike and other Palestinian prison struggles, visit Samidoun's website at samidoun.net and subscribe to its email newsletter at eepurl.com/XFJr9.

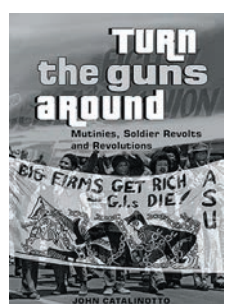
Catron is an organizer with Samidoun: Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network.

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Mujeres chavistas.

Venezuela resiste al sabotaje

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

Nunca antes el proceso bolivariano de Venezuela ha estado amenazado con tanto peligro como ahora. Si bien desde el triunfo de Hugo Chávez a la presidencia del país en el 1999, el imperialismo estadounidense junto a sus colaboradores criollos ha impuesto una continuada campaña de asedio que incluyó un golpe de estado y un sabotaje petrolero, ahora esa campaña se ha recrudecido con la posibilidad de una intervención militar para lograr lo que siempre han ansiado, un cambio de régimen.

Ya van dos meses de actos violentos cometidos diariamente por la oposición al proceso revolucionario, liderada mayormente por la Mesa de la Unidad Democrática (MUD).

Terrorismo fascista

Los actos vandálicos van quirúrgicamente dirigidos contra personas identificadas con el chavismo y contra establecimientos estatales. Se han quemado o arruinado desde flotas enteras de autobuses públicos y oficinas del PSUV (partido del gobierno), hasta centros de salud materno-infantil. Recientemente también quemaron la casa donde Chávez vivió en su infancia.

Ya se cuentan alrededor de 60 personas asesinadas durante estos actos terroristas. La crueldad de estos ataques es inimaginable. Un elemento primordial de éstos es su terrible carácter racista. A un joven afro venezolano que fue identificado como chavista, le prendieron fuego, lo persiguieron y luego lo apuñalaron. A una mujer indígena, artista reconocida, unas mujeres del sector pudiente de Altamira le gritaron insultándola, pateándola y golpeando con los palos de las banderas que llevaban.

En estos actos terroristas están involucradas además bandas criminales a sueldo, y paramilitares colombianos. También se ha visto el empleo de menores de edad, algo que Venezuela ha denunciado a la UNICEF.

Es importante destacar que contrario a lo que los medios corporativos presentan como un caos a nivel nacional, estos actos terroristas está generalmente limitados a las zonas donde la alcaldía o la gobernación están en manos de la oposición. En los barrios populares, es decir, el pueblo pobre, no es parte de estos actos de terror.

Los ataques contra la revolución no se han limitado a Venezuela, sino que también se han atacado embajadas y consulados, incluyendo al consulado en la Ciudad de Nueva York. Personas reconocidas venezolanas o que han sido solidarias con Venezuela han sido atacadas físicamente o insultadas, incluyendo recientemente al cineasta Oliver Stone.

Papel de EUA

A través de la OEA y su presidente Luis Almagro, Estados Unidos ha montado una campaña internacional para imponer la llamada Carta Democrática de la OEA contra Venezuela, e involucrar a otros países en su plan hostil.

Esto es particularmente cierto con Colombia. A los pocos días de que el presidente colombiano Juan Manuel Santos se reuniera con el presidente Trump el pasado 18 de mayo, Santos ordenó movilizar tanques blindados del ejército a la frontera con Venezuela. La canciller venezolana Delcy Rodríguez inmediatamente respondió denunciando esta provocación por el hermano país.

La asistencia de EU a la oposición venezolana también se ha evidenciado por las reuniones de Trump sostenidas con figuras claves de la oposición venezolana. Una con Julio Borjes, presidente opositor de la Asamblea Nacional de Venezuela, y otra con Lilian Tintori, esposa de Leopoldo López, quien está en prisión por incitar a la violencia que causó 43 muertes en las protestas del 2014. Fue notable el aumento de la violencia en Venezuela tras estas visitas.

La voz del pueblo

Frente a esta oleada de reportajes de los medios noticiosos corporativos, especialmente la cadena CNN en español, que culpa al presidente Nicolás Maduro de los violentos actos tildándolos de 'represión estatal', WW-MO entrevistó a un líder de la famosa Parroquia 23 de enero para tener una visión de lo que las comunidades de clase trabajadora piensan y cuáles son sus acciones.

Juan Contreras es militante de la Coordinadora Simón Bolívar, una organización social de base que apoya al proceso bolivariano desde hace 18 años. Contreras fue diputado a la Asamblea Nacional. La Parroquia 23 de enero tiene una importancia crucial en el proceso histórico revolucionario. El Cuartel de la Montaña, donde está sepultado el Comandante Chávez se encuentra en este barrio.

Para poner la situación actual en contexto, Contreras dijo a Mundo Obrero que "Lo que ocurre hoy en Venezuela tiene que ver con una contraofensiva que viene agilizándose el imperio yanqui". Nombró los golpes que derrocaron los gobiernos progresistas en Paraguay y en Honduras y la destitución de Dilma Rousseff en Brasil.

"¿Y qué falta? La corona, Venezuela. Por más de dos décadas, desde que Hugo Chávez se convirtió en el "mal ejemplo". Gracias al proceso bolivariano se constituyen estos procesos, en Paraguay, Brasil, Bolivia, Ecuador, el regreso de los sandinistas, El Salvador. Con Cuba que sigue siendo el faro moral y ético para nuestros pueblos.

El Proceso Bolivariano contagió a esta América Latina y el Caribe y hoy el imperio estadounidense quiere dar por terminado todos estos procesos".

Contreras no califica a estos grupos como opositores; es muy enfático al decir que son contrarrevolucionarios, comparando la situación actual con "lo que sucedió en Nicaragua con la contrarrevolución auspiciada desde el imperio EUA quien armó la contra en plena frontera, sabotaba desde los ministerios, las labores del trabajo, la siembra en el campo..."

"Está financiado por el imperio; acaban de aprobar más de \$500 millones para la contrarrevolución. Cuando apenas queda medio año para las elecciones generales, ellos [la contra] se empeñan en pedir elecciones ahora".

"Lo que está en marcha en Venezuela es un gran proceso insurreccional, de desgaste, que lleva consigo el derrocamiento del proceso bolivariano. Pero aquí hay un pueblo que está resistiendo los embates del imperio.

"Nos han querido golpear con la guerra económica, escondiendo alimentos, medicinas". Contreras menciona también la guerra mediática que intenta pintar a Venezuela como un estado fallido, un 'narco-estado', con una supuesta 'crisis humanitaria' que facilite la intervención extranjera. El imperio cree que este es el momento de la estocada final porque no está el Comandante Chávez. Pero el Presidente Maduro no puede ser el Comandante Chávez, sino que tiene que realizar su propia gestión".

Recuerda que ya Obama había declarado a Venezuela como una 'amenaza para los EUA', "semejante tontería, decir que es una amenaza para la principal potencia imperialista del mundo" dice Contreras.

"Pero este pueblo sigue apostando a esta revolución que ha ayudado a que ese 80 por ciento de pueblo excluido durante la cuarta república, haya recuperado salud y educación".

Llamado a una Constituyente

"El Presidente Maduro, apostando por la paz, ha llamado a una Constituyente en el marco de haber fracasado los diálogos entre la oposición y el gobierno.

"Por cierto, yo soy de los que dice que en esa mesa de diálogo la posibilidad de llegar a acuerdos era nula porque era solo el gobierno y la contrarrevolución y ahí no estaba expresado el pueblo, nuestros obreros, indígenas, campesinos, estudiantes, la gente de los barrios. Los descamisados, los desdentados, los que la burguesía no quiere, esos son los que faltaban en la mesa. Por eso estaba condenado a la derrota.

"Yo digo que la Asamblea Constituyente es una gran reunión de carácter nacional con representantes populares para dictaminar las pautas que deben marcar la convivencia entre gobernados y gobernante. Los sectores populares tenemos la esperanza de lograr la paz por esa constituyente".

Contreras advierte, "Pero si esa constituyente no tiene el rostro del pueblo, va directamente al fracaso. No puede haber dedocracia, no se pueden impon-

er la gente que quisieran. Aquí debe ir la gente que ha sostenido este proceso por 18 años. Porque es ese pueblo quien sabe cuáles son las problemáticas que hoy afectan al proceso bolivariano. Lo jurídico es una cosa, pero el conocimiento político lo tiene nuestro pueblo. Y por eso se debe apostar por una constituyente popular. Tiene que ser el pueblo el que marque el camino".

Contreras señala que el producto de esta constituyente que busca incluir medidas más específicas que no se encuentran en la constitución actual, como el castigo apropiado a los perpetradores de terrorismo, tiene también que incluir el castigo a quienes cometan actos de corrupción. Da como ejemplo a quienes después de robarle al pueblo usando los dólares más baratos concedidos por el gobierno para la importación de productos esenciales, no cumplieron con esa obligación trayendo solo parte de los productos mientras se quedaban con el resto del dinero y se iban a vivir en el exterior. Luego regresaban a Venezuela, quedando impunes.

Opina además que para ser constituyente, debe haber estado fuera de un cargo público por lo menos 2 años.

¿Cómo incluir al pueblo en la Constituyente?

"Esta es una lucha de clases, y mi clase es de la de los de abajo.... debemos dejar ahora que el pueblo se exprese".

"Desde abajo tenemos una apuesta a una constitución que blinde a la Revolución y que permita construir el tema de la paz, no a donde nos quieren llevar estos sectores fascistas".

"A lo largo y ancho del país se están haciendo asambleas donde se discuten los temas. Aquí en el 23 ya hemos realizado dos. El 23 está dividido por sectores que se organizan. Ya en uno de los sectores hicimos un foro con una abogada constitucionalista al cual acudieron 325 personas.

Esto bajo las condiciones difíciles en que se encuentra el país. Son 13 sectores en la parroquia, y vamos visitando sector por sector para dar el debate sobre la constituyente. Luego celebraremos una asamblea donde estén todos los sectores y todas las organizaciones que son parte del 23.

"Nos estamos jugando el proceso en esta constituyente. La posibilidad de que se siga desarrollando un modelo alternativo en América Latina y el Caribe. Eso es lo que está en juego.

"Estos debates se está dando en la fábricas, en el campo, en las universidades. Respondiendo al llamado del Presidente Maduro al debate.

"Frente a los modelos neoliberales, donde hay una apuesta a lo individual, aquí hay una apuesta por la construcción de un modelo alternativo con nuevos valores dentro de la sociedad, de solidaridad y avanzar a construir un modelo económico, social y político diferente.

"Yo creo que ese es el camino que nos hablaba el Comandante Chávez de construir el estado comunal como un proceso de transición de avanzar al socialismo bolivariano". □

