

Venezuela votes Massive support for Constituent Assembly

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

The sound of trumpets at dawn on July 30 began a day of voting to elect delegates to Venezuela's new Constituent Assembly. These delegates will take on the great responsibility of representing the people as they make changes to the current Bolivarian Constitution, established in 1999 under the leadership of the late President Hugo Chávez.

The Chavista and Bolivarian people came down from the hills, crossed rivers and went through mountainous roads on foot or by bicycle in order to cast their ballots. They overcame all obstacles imposed by the fascist opposition and resolutely voted for the Constituent Assembly.

The National Electoral Council and the relevant state bodies had established thousands of polling stations around the country, including contingency sites for voters who could not cast their ballots in their locality due to roadblocks — which included closures of voting stations by the counterrevolutionary forces. In fact, some sites in neighborhoods dominated by opposition administrations — mayors or governors hostile to the government — were unable to open. The largest alternate voting center in Caracas was the Polígono, where thousands of voters came to heroically challenge counterrevolutionary violence and cast their votes.

As of the evening of July 30, voting sites were still open, so voting totals were uncertain. Through different television broadcasts and digital social networks, however, it was easy to perceive the enormous enthusiasm of the people and see the huge lines that indicated broad popular participation.

Thanks to cyberspace, Workers World/Mundo Obrero was able to speak directly with people who conveyed that enthusiasm. Jacobo Torres, a representative to the Constituent Assembly from the industrial workers sector told WW/MO: "The people defeated terror and bet on peace. On July 31 you will see a beautiful Bolivarian, anti-imperialist and deeply Chavista dawn!"

Compañera Yosmary Guevara, national spokeswoman for the women's organization UNAMUJER and coordinator of the Bolivarian Women's Force, expressed the opinion of revolutionary women: "Today is a glorious day, where the people's love overflowed in the streets. ... It was the hour of the people, to defend the legacy of Comandante Chávez. We want no more violence, no fascism, none of the terrorism that is an integral part of the

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Voting for Venezuela's new assembly: 'All power to the people!'

PHOTO: TELESUR



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Building a Workers World: Philadelphia Marxism School trains future leaders

By Scott Williams
Philadelphia

Since the beginning of 2017, Workers World Party has seen significant growth across the organization. What is unique about joining WWP is that these new members are joining a cadre organization that focuses on membership development.

The party spends a significant amount of time training and developing new leaders through a candidacy process that involves intensive focus on theory and practice, including organizing and activist work, all the while bolstering theoretical training in revolutionary ideology identified with the names of Karl Marx and V.I. Lenin — Marxism-Leninism — and other revolutionary fighters and theoreticians from Asia, Africa, Europe and the Western Hemisphere.

On July 23-24, some 45 new candidates and members from Baltimore, Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., met for a weekend in the Philadelphia branch office for a series of classes, workshops and discussions.

Topics included LGBTQ and women's oppression; WWP's orientation to national liberation struggles; the Marxist conception of the state as a tool of capitalist repression and oppression; writing for Workers World newspaper; using social media; the Global Class War tendency and the party's approach to opposing U.S. imperialism; Black Reconstruction and the contributions of W.E.B. DuBois; and some WWP history, including its support for the Attica Rebellion and its resistance within the military to the Vietnam War.

Christa Rivers, a candidate for WWP, reflected on the importance of the weekend: "It is important to study Marxism because it has provided essential analyses of the ways in which capitalism has wreaked havoc on the earth by polluting it through endless war; has wreaked havoc on our families, communities, and peoples by creating divisions — borders, classes, races — to keep us from uniting against this death machine; has destroyed cultures, decimated populations and created a system that entirely



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Some of the new candidates who attended the Marxism School.

relies upon the exploitation of the many by the few.

"Marxism has also given us hope: Capitalism will be defeated by socialism, which will then be followed by communism. Only through these economic systems can we achieve true liberation. Socialism and communism put the collective needs of the people first."

One of the major focuses of the weekend was countering the efforts by U.S. imperialism to turn back the gains of the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela. Candidates studied the gains of the anti-imperialist, pro-socialist Bolivarian Revolution and discussed ways to build solidarity with the movement there as an essential part of being a revolutionary party in the center of imperialism.

In a class on National Oppression, new members discussed such current terms as "identity politics" and raised up the importance of understanding the complexities and connections of various forms of oppression, such as ableism, racism, sexism, ageism, anti-LGBTQ oppression and more. The class discussed how special focus on these oppressions is revolutionary and necessary, while labeling struggles against oppression as merely "identity politics" is reactionary. Not only is it harmful to the oppressed, but it holds back the potential for revolutionary solidarity.

As WWP continues to grow as a multigenerational, multinational, multigender combat party, political education and practical development of party cadre will increasingly become a focus of the organization. □

MUNDO OBRERO WORKERS WORLD

Workers World Party is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a multinational, multigenerational and multigendered organization that not only aims to abolish capitalism, but to build a socialist society because it's the only way forward!

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.

Join us in the fight for socialism!

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.

Since 1959, Workers World Party has been out in the streets defending the workers and oppressed here and worldwide. If you're interested in Marxism, socialism and fighting for a socialist future, please contact a WWP branch near you. □

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Heroes of the struggle for HEALTH CARE

By Kathy Durkin

Who are the real heroes in the struggle to stop the attacks on the health care system?

Although the corporate media hailed three Republican senators and 48 Democrats for defeating the “skinny” repeal of key parts of the Affordable Care Act on July 28, that’s not the real story.

It was the activists who organized, marched, sat in, got arrested, made phone calls, wrote emails and raised a ruckus who made the difference, not the politicians. The grass-roots movement fought hard against all Republican “repeal and/or not replace” anti-ACA bills. Organizations began mobilizing to save Obamacare last December. In the states, people rallied at town hall meetings, besieged congress members’ offices and used social media to save the ACA.

After a National Day of Action on March 23 in Washington, D.C., and 40 cities, the struggle continued. Activists not only targeted anti-ACA Republicans, but also pressured Democrats to protect health coverage.

Planned Parenthood, Housing Works, National Nurses United, UltraViolet and many other groups organized against every right-wing attempt to overturn or weaken the ACA. Hospitals, especially rural facilities that depend on Medicaid reimbursements; doctors and other medical personnel; health advocacy organizations; as well as community and senior groups, such as AARP, opposed gutting the ACA.

ADAPT: ‘Save Medicaid!’

Special recognition must be given to the heroes of National ADAPT (Americans Disabled for Attendant Programs Today), which organized sit-ins and die-ins in Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell’s office and at Republican senators’ offices countrywide. TV and online media showed courageous activists, many of them women, being arrested and often mistreated by police.

Chants of “Save Medicaid” resounded at their 40 actions, where they put their bodies on the line to save the program, a life-and-death issue for them. Medicaid provides medical care, caretakers, equipment and more to 10 million people with disabilities. (Alternet, July 28)

Protests stepped up around the country from July 17 through July 27. Hundreds were arrested in Washington during that period. On the July 25 National Day of Action, when senators voted to take up the first anti-ACA bill, 95 people were arrested. Police grabbed 31 protesters in the Senate chambers as they chanted, “Kill the bill! Don’t kill us!” Then 64 people were arrested in the Hart Senate Office Building, as they yelled they would “rather go to jail than die without Medicaid.” National ADAPT and the National Center on Independent Living/Advocacy co-coordinated these protests and others on the following two days, with support from allies.

This resistance is in response to seven years of attempts by reactionaries to get rid of Obamacare. The right wing has been so hostile to the ACA that misogynist officials threatened to physically assault the two Republican women senators who opposed the law’s repeal.

White male millionaire senators, led by McConnell, conspired to concoct bills to overturn or severely limit the ACA’s benefits. Under those bills from 16 million to 32 million people could have lost health insurance, including Medicaid re-



Fighting to win the basic right to health care for all in the United States. Demonstrations like these blocked attempts to gut already inadequate access to health care.

Cuba — still sharply blockaded by complex U.S. laws — prioritizes universal, free health care and education for all Cubans.

ipients. Every bill would have harmed people with disabilities; African-American, Latinx and other oppressed people; members of the LGBTQ community; women; children; seniors; and low-income workers.

However, all Congress members made sure to exempt themselves and their staffs from cuts to their comprehensive, government-financed health care coverage.

ACA benefits women

The ACA brought health coverage to over 20 million people. At least 10 million got Medicaid through its expansion, while many people got government subsidies to purchase insurance. The ACA bars using pre-existing conditions as an excuse for denial of coverage.

Women benefit, as the law requires employers’ insurance plans to pay for contraception. The law’s elimination of co-payments for mammograms has resulted in more breast cancers being diagnosed at an earlier stage than pre-ACA. (New York Times, June 27) The ACA also mandates funding for Planned Parenthood, an organization despised by the right wing, which provides basic health care to over 5 million low-income people, the majority women.

However, the ACA is a capitalist measure. It’s based on people buying coverage from insurance companies, whose goal is to maximize profits. Some plans are very expensive, with high premiums and deductibles. Hard hit are those who must buy costly policies, but cannot obtain subsidies. People who do not buy insurance are fined — but the very reason for not purchasing insurance is usually prohibitive cost.

The ACA mandated states to expand Medicaid, but the Supreme Court in 2012 allowed them to opt out, which 19 reactionary state governments did. This has left millions of low-income workers, disproportionately African American and Latinx, without health insurance or subsidies. Thousands of former prisoners have no coverage. Undocumented workers are barred from having Medicaid — and even from purchasing private policies. In some states, no insurer will sell



PHOTOS: PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION/WHO



Typical polyclinic for specialized care, Havana. Cuban internationalist doctor in Haiti (upper right) and Latin American School of Medicine debt-free graduate from Detroit (lower right).



policies as part of the ACA.

This is the wealthiest country in the world with the most expensive medical care system. Nearly all other advanced industrialized countries have some form of health care system, such as Britain’s National Health Service, which provides care to everyone, with residents taxed to pay for it.

But in the U.S., the super-rich are determined to obtain huge tax cuts for themselves, and are aiming to gut hundreds of billions of dollars from Medicaid and other government programs in order to do so.

‘Medicare for all!’

An improvement for the U.S. would be “Medicare for all.” Because of rising consciousness around the country due to the recent struggle, 60 percent of the U.S. population now supports government-sponsored health care. Many people are catching on to the idea of a single-payer system. The health care advocacy movement would advance the struggle by pushing for this.

Medicare for all is worth fighting for and is possible under capitalism. It would be easier and less costly to administer than the current system and would cover everyone.

Health care is a human right. It should

be provided to everyone like sanitation and fire-fighting services, libraries, public schools, roads and parks.

The optimum solution would be a system of socialized medicine, resembling what Cuba provides for its people. Quality care there is accessible to every person and is subsidized by the government. There are no profits going to insurance or pharmaceutical companies, and health care is not a commodity to be bought and sold. It is a service provided to the people.

There are many worthy proposals on how to improve the ACA and lower medical costs, but the malevolent right wing continues to maneuver to weaken the law. After the recent survival of the ACA, the Trump administration is threatening to withhold payments to insurers that aid low-income customers and to let Obamacare “implode.” Tom Price, head of the Department of Health and Human Services, has “made changes that would reduce benefits and the number of people signing up for coverage.” (New York Times editorial, July 29)

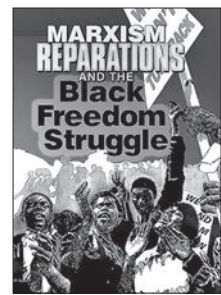
For now, activists know they must be vigilant and keep the pressure on the government. DC Metro ADAPT activist Laura Halverson vowed, “We’re not stopping. We know that the fight is not over, so we’re going to keep on keeping on.” (Alternet) □

MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

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COVER GRAPHIC: SAHU BARRON

U.S. threats and sanctions grow with isolation

By Sara Flounders

A new round of harsher, economically disruptive U.S. sanctions against Russia, Iran and People's Korea has met with anger, even from traditional U.S. allies. The denunciations expose both the growing isolation and the increased military threat coming from U.S. imperialism. The raw display of power by the White House, Congress and the Pentagon is raising tensions on an international scale.

The U.S. House of Representatives on July 25, in an almost unanimous vote — 419 to 3 — confirmed just how bipartisan both Republican and Democratic politicians are when it comes to U.S. aggression. The bill was similar to one passed on June 17 by the Senate, in which Republicans and Democrats joined forces to approve, by 98 to 2, a sweeping sanctions bill that punishes companies doing business with Iran and Russia through an array of financial penalties.

Both bills would require a congressional review of any attempts to ease or end the imposed restrictions. This is considered an extremely unlikely possibility.

Immediately, editorials in the Washington Post and the New York Times praised the sanctions votes, confirming the aggressive stance of major forces within the ruling class.

More money to Pentagon

The same House, including Republicans and most Democrats, voted 344-81 to approve the largest military appropriations bill in U.S. or world history.

The National Defense Authorization Act would allocate \$696 billion for “defense” spending in fiscal year 2018. That far exceeds even Trump’s \$603 billion budget proposal, which has been described as a “historic increase in defense spending.”

Yet this monstrous, bankrupting allocation of funds quietly sailed through Congress almost unreported, while media attention focused on Democratic Party grandstanding to preserve the meager provisions of the Affordable Care Act.

This military budget far exceeds long-standing caps on “defense” spending in Congress. Since 2011, spending had been capped at \$549 billion. The cap, however, was regularly violated with supplementary budgets.

All the politicians know that, even without Trump’s appointees wreaking havoc on social, environmental and infrastructure programs, the latest military appropriation requires deadly cuts in all other government programs in order to reduce the budget deficit.

The ascendancy of military options, war threats and a wildly inflated military budget was made clear when Trump named former four-star Marine Corp Gen. John Kelly to serve as White House Chief of Staff. Gen. Kelly had earlier been named by Trump to the powerful position of Secretary of Homeland Security. Before that, he headed the U.S. Southern

Command, in charge of military operations in 32 countries in the Caribbean, Central America and South America.

Gen. Kelly will be the first general to fill the post of White House chief of staff since Alexander Haig took over in the final stretch of the hated Nixon administration.

The corporate media were again unanimous in their praise. The New York Times lauded Kelly as a “beacon of discipline.”

Sanctions are a form of war

Economic sanctions are a violent war option of powerful countries against rivals that are economically weaker. Such sanctions seek to create shortages, wild inflation, hunger, unemployment, economic dislocation and shutdowns in vital industries by suddenly restricting credits, loans and trade.

Sanctions lay bare the real relations under capitalism. Capitalist competition is intended to shut down competing industries and drive out rivals.

It is an illusion that capitalism creates prosperity or democratic participation. Capitalism historically has expanded through war, theft, rape and pillage. Creating artificial shortages and sabotaging production are also business as usual.

The U.S. has used starvation and disease against Indigenous nations since its founding. But with U.S. global dominance since World War II, the imperialists here have sought to involve other imperialist forces.

For decades there were concerted efforts to strangle the USSR with trade restrictions. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, U.S. imperialism colluded with the European Union and monarchies of the Gulf States to economically strangle Iraq, Iran, Libya and Syria. Such coordination meant the sanctions were imposed through the United Nations, forcing all nations to comply or face economic isolation.

Economic rivalry heats up

The European Union is a collaborator with the U.S. in looting the developing and formerly colonized countries. But it is also an economic rival in a world of shrinking markets and commodity surpluses.

U.S. imperialism’s global economic position is slipping. As a major oil exporter, much of it based on environmentally destructive fracking, it must find major markets.

Capitalist crisis is the essential issue behind the charges of Russian “hacking,” Iran’s nuclear energy program and the DPRK’s efforts to defend itself against U.S. nuclear threats.

A third of the European Union’s natural gas currently comes from Russia. Central and Eastern European nations rely on energy supplies from Russia.

This new set of sanctions imposed by the U.S. will wreak havoc on European energy companies and the banks that contracted to finance the complex construction plans to pipe in gas and oil from Russia.

Past sanctions were carefully calibrated between the United States and its European allies to keep everyone on board and preserve a united response against a targeted country. Those days are now past.

The new bill would allow the U.S. to sanction any company involved in the maintenance or development of Russia’s energy export pipelines. That could cripple the construction of Nord Stream 2, a colossal natural gas pipeline planned to pump Russian gas to Germany beneath the Baltic Sea. The project is owned by Russian energy giant Gazprom and financed by European investors. It will affect other major natural gas projects outside of the Baltic states.

The new sanctions target any company that contributes to the development, maintenance or modernization of Russia’s energy export pipelines. They add punishments against Russian and EU energy, financial, rail, shipping, and metals and mining sectors.

Sanctions could also undermine partnerships between EU and Russian firms to develop offshore energy projects in Egypt. And they could prevent Italian and Russian companies from working together on the so-called Southern Gas Corridor, which would go through Turkey to southern EU states.

Iran sanctions violate P5+1 accord

Many European countries currently have machinery and transport sales and major projects with Iran. The export of crude oil from Iran to European countries now exceeds its pre-sanctions levels.

According to Iranian Minister of Petroleum Bijan Zanganeh: “The pace of growth in Iran’s crude oil production and exports has amazed international observers who did not think Iran could raise its production by 1 million barrels per day within three to four months after the removal of sanctions.” (iran-daily.com, April 3)

Abbas Araqchi, the Iranian deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs, said the “hostile” move with new sanctions amounted to a breach of the P5+1 nuclear deal of 2015 between Iran and the six world powers — the U.S., Britain, France, Russia, China and Germany.

The overwhelmingly bipartisan sanctions votes in the Senate and House are a sign to U.S. allies that U.S. oil and gas companies are determined to shut down other suppliers in order to market U.S. supplies. Economic and military confrontation to back this up is escalating.

On the same day, July 25, as the sanctions vote in the House, a U.S. Navy ship fired warning shots at an Iranian vessel in the Persian Gulf. U.S. officials said it was the first such incident since President Donald Trump took office in January.

EU response

The congressional votes brought howls of denunciation from U.S. allies like Germany, Austria, France and South Korea, along with the targeted countries themselves.

A leaked European Union memo reported that European Commission Chief Executive Jean-Claude Juncker said the EU “should stand ready to act within days” of the bill’s passage, and that the sanctions “could impact a potentially large number of European companies doing legitimate business under EU measures with Russian entities.” A senior EU official said that the European commissioners were united in their views. (Financial Times, July 27)

The EU could impose outright bans on

doing business with certain U.S. companies. “If our concerns are not taken into account sufficiently, we stand ready to act appropriately within a matter of days. ‘America First’ cannot mean that Europe’s interests come last,” said Juncker.

Suddenly these European imperialist powers, complicit in past U.S. sanction wars, are citing the illegality of sanctions in international law.

In a joint statement, Austrian Chancellor Christian Kern and German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel said, “We can’t accept the threat of illegal and extraterritorial sanctions against European companies,” adding that fining European companies participating in the Nord Stream 2 project “introduces a completely new, very negative dimension into European-American relations.” (U.S. News, June 15)

The same article reported that several European countries, in an unprecedented move, issued a joint statement invoking sovereignty: “Europe’s energy supply is a matter for Europe, and not for the United States of America.”

France has raised doubts about the legitimacy of new U.S. sanctions against Iran and Russia, saying they do not conform to international law, due to their extraterritorial reach. (presstv.com, July 26)

Reuters of July 27 had two articles: In one Russian President Vladimir Putin described the bill as an attempt to safeguard U.S. geopolitical interests at the expense of its allies. In the other, an influential industry association in Germany accused the U.S. of aiming to improve its liquid gas exports to Europe through sanctions.

U.S. threats on Korea

New, harsher sanctions on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in the north are intended to sabotage any lessening of tensions within the Korean peninsula.

In mid-July the newly elected south Korean government of President Moon Jae-in proposed military talks with the DPRK in its first formal overture to the north. The proposal was to discuss ways to avoid hostile acts near the heavily militarized DMZ border. Moon proposed that hostile military activities at the border be ended on July 27, the anniversary of the 1953 armistice agreement ending the Korean War.

The south Korean defense ministry proposed talks with the north on July 21 at Tongilgak to stop all activities that fuel tension at the military demarcation line.

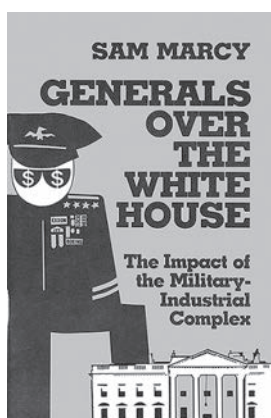
The U.S. response was to announce that it is preparing new sanctions on Chinese banks and firms doing any business with People’s Korea.

The U.S. Air Force flew B-1B bombers over the Korean Peninsula, accompanied by South Korean and Japanese jet fighters, as a provocation on July 30.

The Wall Street Journal on July 24 reported on preparations by China in the event of a U.S. war against the DPRK. China also staged joint military operations with Russia in the Baltic Sea.

The threats against past U.S. allies as well as the escalation of threats on every targeted country, from Venezuela to Iran, to Syria, to the DPRK, and increasingly toward Russia and China, reflect a growing desperation in U.S. ruling circles.

While the global position of U.S. corporations and banks is shrinking, the influence of the generals over the White House and the sheer size of the U.S. military machine are growing. This is a danger to all humanity. □



GENERALS OVER THE WHITE HOUSE 1980

The new militarism differs from the old militarism only in form. As against the crude, vulgar, and offensive outpourings of the type of General Patton, the new militarism handles itself with urbanity and goes out of its way to cultivate its long-standing ties with the universities, the press, and other public institutions of the capitalist establishment.

The structure of capitalist society, that is, the relationship between the basic classes, between exploiter and exploited determines the politics of the capitalist state. This policy is inevitably imperialist and today inexorably serves the military-industrial complex, which, willy-nilly, is propelled in the direction of imperialist war.

<http://tinyurl.com/GeneralsOverWhiteHouse>

Billionaire wants to drive out Detroiters

By Chip Jengel
Detroit

Billionaire Dan Gilbert and his company, Quicken Loans, are hailed across the U.S. as the “saviors” of Detroit. However, a recent court case exposed their role in racist, predatory lending that destroyed Detroit’s neighborhoods with 65,000 mortgage foreclosures from 2005 to 2009, and the tens of thousands of property tax foreclosures that ensued.

These predatory practices, of which Quicken is one of many perpetrators, led to 56 percent of Detroit mortgage-foreclosed homes between 2005 and 2014 becoming blighted, demolished or foreclosed for nonpayment of taxes. (Detroit News special report, June 2015, goo.gl/A8oJgd)

In July, a federal court ruled in favor of West Virginia plaintiffs suing Quicken Loans in a class-action lawsuit for inflating property values by fabricating

“owner estimated” home values to appraisers. The court gave Quicken an \$11 million fine and called Quicken’s actions “unconscionable” and “truly egregious.” Attorneys for the plaintiffs have said that Quicken’s practices in the case were consistent across the country. By Quicken artificially inflating home values without carrying out a true appraisal, homeowners were subjected to foreclosure when their mortgage payments were adjusted upward and they could not refinance their fraudulent subprime loans. (metro-times.com, July 26)

How Gilbert sees Detroit

Gilbert insists that Quicken is “one of the good guys” and denies liability for the company’s predatory practices. In fact, Quicken directly carried out 1,058 foreclosures in Detroit, 52 percent of which were on subprime loans. (Subprime loans have interest rates at least 3 percent above the prime rate.)

But that only tells part of the story. From 2003 to 2008, Quicken Loans approved subprime mortgage loans, sold them immediately to banks Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac, and faced no consequences when an estimated 70.6 percent were foreclosed within 24 to 36 months of originating. (Mortgage Fraud Investigations Miami, Feb. 2015) This practice, done by mortgage companies everywhere, was one of the biggest causes of the 2008 housing crash.

The subprime loans based on inflated appraisals that Quicken originated also led to the highest number of property tax foreclosures in the city of Detroit since the Great Depression. Between 55 percent and 85 percent of these foreclosures were done at a rate higher than the 50 percent market-value limit set out in Michigan’s Constitution. (illegalforeclosures.org)

Since Gilbert and others caused so many homes to be blighted, the Obama

administration in 2013 convened the Detroit Blight Removal Task Force, funded primarily with hundreds of millions of dollars in federal Hardest Hit Funds originally intended to keep families in their homes. Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan appointed none other than Dan Gilbert as a chairperson of the task force.

The Duggan and Gilbert collusion goes deeper than letting Gilbert be the one to develop the homes that he helped blight. If the Gilbert empire isn’t destroying homes through the blight task force, they are buying up unconstitutionally foreclosed homes for pocket change through auctions. People who have been foreclosed are barred from participating in these auctions.

On July 21, Bedrock, one of the main companies of the Gilbert empire, revealed a racist Freudian slip when they put up a mural on a downtown building declaring “See Detroit Like We Do” and depicting only white people. □

50 YEARS AGO

Why rebellion broke out in Detroit

Excerpts from an article published in Ghana News this July about the Detroit rebellion that erupted on July 23, 1967, at the United Community League for Civic Action on 12th Street and Clairmount.

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Rebellions had erupted in numerous cities around the U.S. in the previous four years leading up to the summer of 1967. Detroit had avoided large-scale unrest in early August 1966 on the eastside. However, three racial incidents in June and July of 1967 served to enflame tensions within the African-American community, [including two attacks by racist white mobs and] an African-American woman shot to death by a white police officer.

Once again the African-American community was outraged. These developments were occurring with the backdrop of urban rebellions breaking out in numerous cities every day in June and July of 1967, including on July 12, when Newark, N.J., erupted in response to the arrest of an African-American taxicab driver. For five days the city was wracked with arson and property damage. Scores of Blacks were beaten, injured and killed from targeted gunfire by Newark police, New Jersey State Troopers and National Guard soldiers who fired into public housing complexes and commercial streets. Consequently, only a spark was needed to ignite a rebellion in Detroit.

From 1947 to 1963, the city of Detroit lost 134,000 manufacturing-related jobs. In most cases African Americans were the last hired and first fired. They were confined to the menial and unsafe categories of employment.

Henry Ford I had built his mansion on Edison and Second in 1908 and lived there until 1915. Other wealthy families such as the Kresges, Fishers and Dodges had homes along Boston Boulevard, Chicago Boulevard and Longfellow Street during the earlier decades of the 20th century.

Contrastingly, just a few blocks away on 12th, 14th and Linwood, sections of housing and commercial establishments fell into disarray. Municipal services were neglected.

Many of the apartment units in the Virginia Park district were split up into spaces that were 50 percent to 25 percent smaller.

In 1967 there were approximately 1,640,000 people living in Detroit, where 35 percent were African Americans, whose rate of joblessness was 11.7 percent as contrasted with the white community at 5.7 percent.

Police raid sparks uprising

At 9125 12th Street, where the rebellion erupted, was a two-story commercial building located between Clairmount and Atkinson. In the early morning hours of Sunday, July 23, the location was the scene of a party hosted to celebrate the return of two military veterans fresh from serving a tour of duty in Vietnam. Alcohol was being served, which was prohibited after 2 a.m.

Soon enough at around 3:45 a.m. police arrived to carry out a raid. When the



Listening to Marvin Gaye, a Vietnam veteran returning to Detroit sing; ‘What’s Happening Brother.’ The song talks about conditions that precipitated the rebellion.

law enforcement agents knocked down the door and climbed the stairs to the second floor, they were amazed that 83 people were occupying the second floor. The police announced their presence and placed everyone under arrest.

While the arresting process dragged on for an hour, hundreds of people gathered outside the building across the street on 12th. As the crowd grew larger, people began to shout at the police. As the last transport vehicle left the 12th and Clairmount area, missiles were tossed at a police vehicle, breaking the rear window.

Within minutes of the police departure the situation at the intersection grew increasingly agitated as groups of youth began to break into stores along 12th Street. By dawn thousands of people were converging on the street where they broke windows and began to take merchandise from the stores.

By midday the rebellion began to spread into the Linwood corridor just three blocks west of 12th Street. By early afternoon organized groups of youth began to firebomb stores along 12th Street and similar events unfolded on Linwood.

U.S. Congressman John Conyers Jr. and Assistant Detroit Public Schools Superintendent Arthur Johnson drove into the center of the rebellion on 12th Street by midday on Sunday, July 23, climbing on top of a vehicle and pleading with the crowd to leave the area. They were shouted down and the thousands of people continued to defy the police.

Governor calls out National Guard, asks for U.S. Army

By early afternoon Mayor Cavanaugh appealed to Republican Governor George Romney to deploy the Michigan National Guard and State Police units to the affected areas of the city. National Guard troops attempted to sweep Linwood and 12th Street as the evening approached. By this time fires were raging through several blocks on both commercial strips. The rebellion was expanding throughout large swaths of the city from the westside to the eastside.

Gov. George Romney, a former chief executive of American Motors Corporation, came to Detroit and toured the hardest hit sections of the city, concluding that the situation was getting beyond the capacity of local and state authorities, including the National Guard, to control. He sent a telegram to President Lyndon Johnson asking for the assistance of federal troops to put down the rebellion.

Johnson was reluctant initially to send in troops from the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions of the U.S. Army. By late afternoon on Monday, July 24, soldiers were flown into Selfridge Air Base awaiting orders to enter the city.

In the meantime thousands of National Guardsmen, State Police and local law enforcement patrolled the city. Firefighters attempting to put out hundreds of fires were attacked by residents with missiles and sniper fire.

The first deaths in the rebellion occurred during the evening hours of July 23. As the days passed, brutal reprisals by police officers and guardsmen resulted in the deaths of scores of residents, who in many cases were not guilty of any crime. Mass arrests for looting and arson took place. Many were kept on buses for days and in makeshift facilities on Belle Isle. Gross abuse and brutality by police and guardsmen became common in the detention facilities and on the streets.

Merchants still operating in the impact-

Continued on page 6



Art museum firings set off blaze of solidarity, resistance

By Gery Armsby
Boston

Over 50 art enthusiasts, community members and labor activists came out to a July 29 rally and informational picket in support of Carlos Oviedo, a worker recently fired from the Museum of Fine Arts here.

Oviedo is a member of the Museum Independent Security Union (MISU) and has been a guard at the MFA for more than 17 years. His firing comes amid the union's communications with OSHA regarding asbestos concerns at the museum, making him the most recent victim of management's search-and-destroy tactic. He is the fifth union museum worker to be fired over a two-year period for what the union insists are "non-issues."

While the museum says Oviedo was late for a shift, the union has cried "foul." Oviedo maintains he not only arrived on time for work, despite facing significant transportation delays, but also followed museum protocol by calling well in advance of his shift to let supervisors know that his Orange Line train was being taken out of service and he might be late. But because he wasn't "in uniform" when he arrived for the guards' roll call, he was marked as tardy for his shift and was fired.

Since 2016, the Orange Line — one of Boston's subway lines serving many working-class communities across the city — has operated with more than half of its trains out of service due to disrepair. Despite receiving over \$80 million in subway engine upgrades last year, Boston's ailing subway system daily threatens the livelihoods of tens of thousands

of workers like Carlos Oviedo, with track malfunctions, voltage spikes and train breakdowns. Why should workers, who already pay skyrocketing subway and bus fares, be answerable for tardiness they have no control over?

These kinds of miniscule infractions — often overlooked by most employers who depend on workers to make businesses profitable — are being used solely to target the union.

The rally on July 29, organized by MISU, was the third action pushing for Oviedo's reinstatement. It is part of a larger effort to support MFA guards who are being threatened with multiple disciplines for their union activity as well as their communications with OSHA. Having recently won reinstatement for dismissed museum worker John Powhida, the campaign is gaining steam and is spreading to organized labor, social justice organizers and cultural workers, who can all relate easily to the issues at hand.

Genevieve Lechat, a Harvard union member and MISU supporter who attended the rally, explained that "union work is urgent as ever."

"These workers stand all day," she continued. "Their work has ergonomic, health and safety issues. When a rich institution like the MFA doesn't do its share, workers need publicly funded services to get by while the 'non-profit' employer — whose director usually makes close to \$1 million — accumulates more and more wealth, tax-free, giving nothing back to the community. The union is exposing that."

Museum collections are guarded by workers of many nationalities with richly varied life experiences. Most have other

jobs where they perform unpaid and underpaid work. They include artists, musicians, teachers, single parents, seniors, students and youth. Several of the union guards have worked at the MFA for more than 35 years, while many younger ones have been there less than five years. The union that proudly and vigorously represents them is led by MISU President Evan Henderson. Now 26 years old, Henderson has been a museum guard at the MFA since he was 21.

"The union has many pending grievances with the museum," Henderson explained to Workers World. "The MFA is denying nearly every single one of them, which brings these grievances to the level of arbitration. Arbitrations are expensive for the union, and take a good chunk out of its finances. Museum management realizes it has much more money and power on its side and likely sees this as an opportunity to bankrupt the union and completely bust it."

"This is a very typical union-busting tactic," Henderson further observed, "and it is very blatantly occurring right before our eyes."

Organizers and supporters alike are hopeful they can win reinstatement for Carlos Oviedo and continue to educate the museum-going public about the MFA's harsh retaliatory practices.

When asked how more people can support the campaign to reinstate Oviedo, organizers pointed directly to their fliers and emails, which ask people to "Demand justice for the guards!"

Readers wishing to tell the Boston MFA to reinstate Carlos Oviedo can call 617-369-3200 or write to mteitelbaum@mfa.org. □

Hundreds p

By John Steffin
New York

With New York City subways in crisis, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority board met again on July 26. Hundreds of people, including many with disabilities, came out to protest.

It doesn't bother the MTA board that the transit fare now costs 55 times what it did in 1948. Or that only one-out-of-four subway stations are accessible to people for whom navigating stairs is a problem. (AM New York, July 20)

The MTA board's fundamental job is to ensure that \$2.2 billion in tax-free interest is paid to the banks every year on its \$34 billion debt. (Gothamist, Feb. 12, 2015)

The day before the board meeting, MTA Chairperson Joe Lhota announced his plan to meet the subway emergency. Lhota, who was racist Mayor Rudy Giuliani's right-hand crony, finally recognized that more workers had to be hired.

But Lhota's other "solutions" include ripping out seats on subway cars to create more standing room. Workers, particularly the elderly, shouldn't have to pay \$2.75 to travel in sardine cans.

The MTA needs to order hundreds of new subway cars and buses. The R32 cars, for example, in service on the A, C, J and Z trains, are 52 years old.

Many of the subway lines are at least a century old. The MTA blames delays not on deferred maintenance but on commuters who drop litter on the rails, which can cause track fires. One MTA board member, Charles G. Moerdler, even called passengers who eat on the train "pigs."

The MTA has actually guaranteed more

Why rebellion broke out in Detroit

Continued from page 5

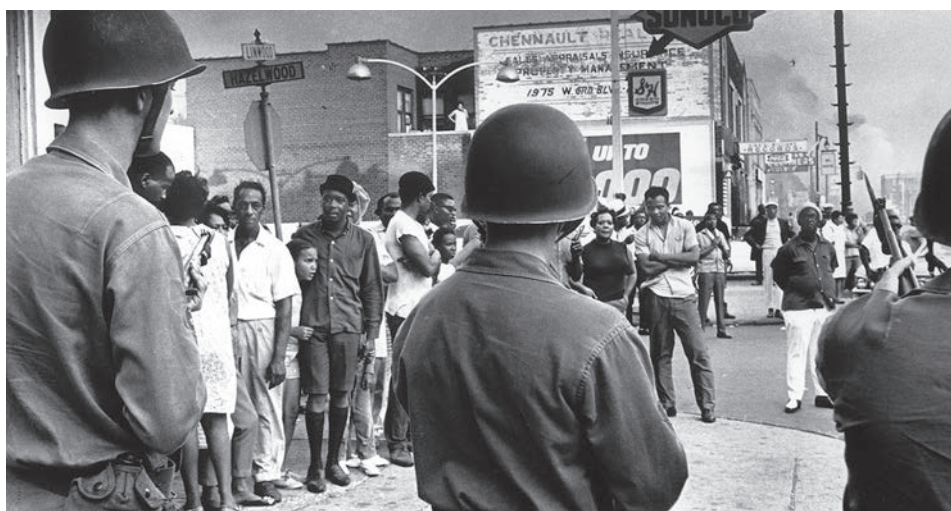
ed neighborhoods inflated prices of staple goods such as bread and milk. Shortages in these communities created conditions of food and material deficits, so humanitarian agencies and churches set up aid distribution centers. As a result of fire and other forms of property damage, several hundred people were left homeless and in need of temporary shelter.

One European-American woman, Helen Hall, 51, visiting the city on business in the New Center area was struck by a hail of National Guard fire while merely peering out of a Harlan House Motel window overlooking the John C. Lodge Freeway near West Grand Boulevard. Four-year-old Tanya Blanding was being held by her father in an apartment unit on 12th Street and Blaine. Guardsmen operating in panic mode opened fire on the building, killing the young girl; they said a flash inside the building from lighting a cigarette was mistaken for sniper fire.

'Algiers Motel Incident'

Perhaps the most egregious act of racist, murderous violence against the people took place at the African-American-owned Algiers Motel on Woodward Avenue and Virginia Park. The establishment was a Black-owned business on the major thoroughfare dividing the east from the west sides of the city.

Several youth had taken up residence in the annex of the Algiers Motel on Virginia Park, which was a spacious house



next to the main building sitting directly on Woodward. On the fourth day of the rebellion, during the early morning hours of July 26, several African-American teenagers were gathered in the annex along with two teenage white women.

Eyewitness reports came from survivors of what became known as the "Algiers Motel Incident," labelled as such by writer John Hersey, who published a book on the events the following spring in 1968.

Shots from a harmless device [a starter pistol] may have possibly been heard by someone outside the facility, leading to a police radio call saying there were snipers firing weapons from the annex of the motel. Detroit police, state police and guardsmen stormed the building on Virginia Park.

[By the end of the incident,] 17-year-old Carl Cooper was shot dead, 19-year-old Au-

brey Pollard and 18-year-old Fred Temple were found dead [killed by the cops].

Leading community activists, progressive lawyers, family members of the victims and their friends met together in the weeks following the Algiers Motel massacre. Eyewitnesses were placed in hiding in order to protect them from retaliatory actions by the police.

The massacre at the Algiers Motel was symptomatic of the security situation in Detroit after July 23. A largely white police and National Guard force engaged in random and targeted killings on a routine basis. Many people who died from July 23 to 30, the authorities claimed, were looters, arsonists or snipers.



Protest as MTA board tries to ignore them

litter by ripping out trash cans at several stations, including the very busy Main Street stop in Flushing, Queens. Lhota wants to crack down on littering “pigs” by encouraging the real pigs to hand out more littering tickets.

“Broken windows” police harassment won’t prevent derailments like the one in Harlem this June. And killer cops can’t use their weapons to fix and maintain the signal system.

At its meeting in May, the MTA board cut off public comments before all speakers had an opportunity to express their concerns, and its members left the room to finish their meeting elsewhere. It’s clear that most MTA board members are not listening to people’s concerns.

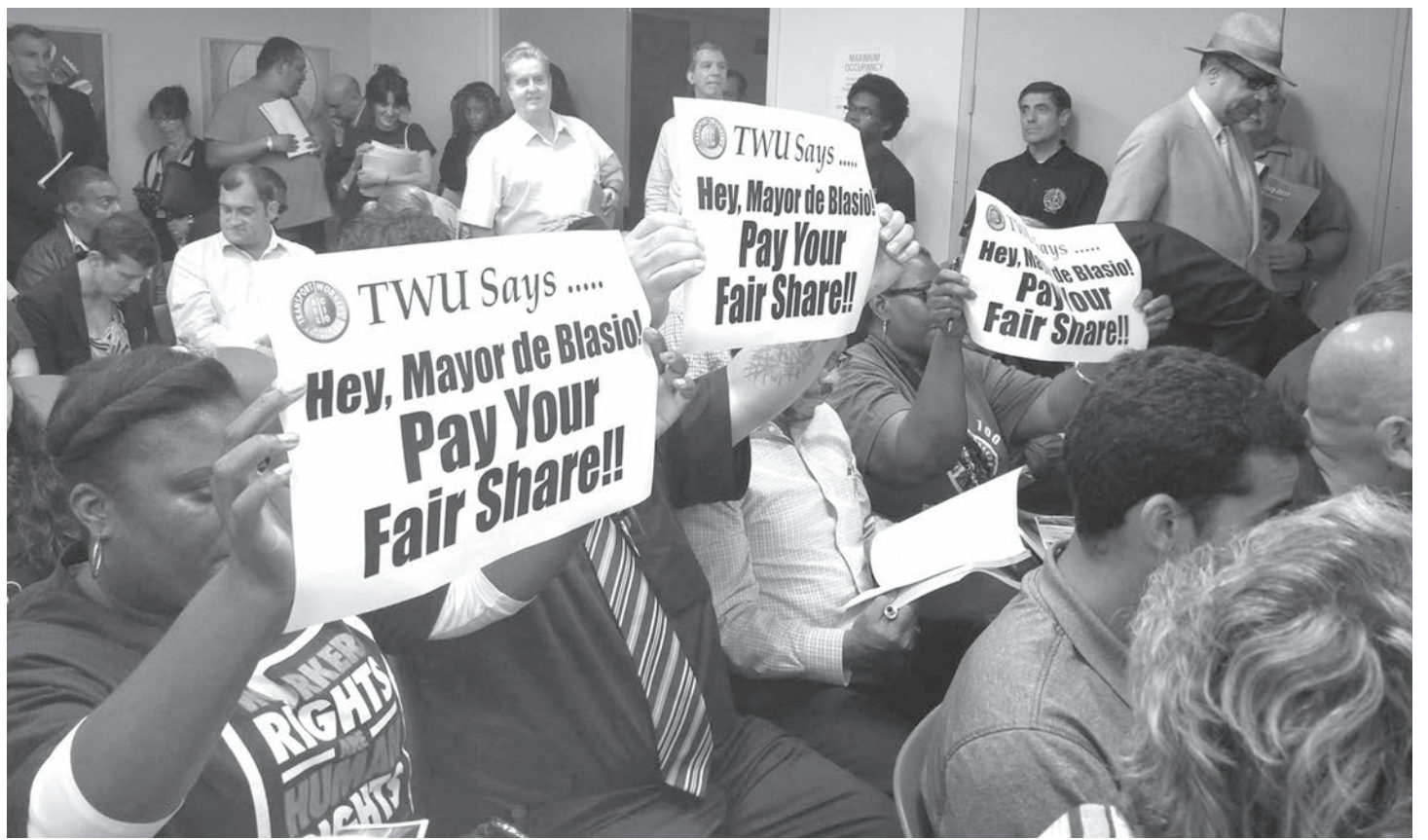
But the people demanded that they be heard, and on July 26 some 61 speakers signed up for public comments.

A member of Transit Workers Union Local 100, Vanessa Jones, brought to the board’s attention the physical and verbal abuse that MTA workers face from frustrated commuters.

A representative from the Access-a-Ride Reform Group (AARRG!), Yesenia Torres, called for a declaration of a state of emergency for the Access-a-Ride system until needed changes are made. Disability rights groups have been turning out for every meeting for the last three months. They said they will continue to pack the board meetings until their demands are met.

Steve Millies, a member of the Workers Defense Committee, added to this, saying it was outrageous that Chairperson Lhota’s plan did not include anything about the Access-a-Ride system.

The Workers Defense Committee,



Members of Transport Workers Union at MTA hearing.

WW PHOTO: TARYN FIVEK

which formed on May Day this year to protect striking workers, is currently raising funds and helping with the legal defense of Darryl Goodwin, an MTA worker and member of TWU Local 100. Goodwin was charged with obstruction of justice, assaulting a police officer and resisting arrest for allegedly failing to help a New York Police Department lieutenant get through a turnstile in pursuit of a shoplifter. Police charged Goodwin even though all cops have MetroCards and gate keys and Goodwin was assist-

ing a passenger at the time. According to MTA rules, assisting a passenger takes priority before helping anyone requesting gate access.

Other speakers criticized the board’s plan to expand the number of cops in the subway. They emphasized that the real crime was the high fare, and placed the blame on the banks and the enormous portion of the MTA budget that goes toward debt servicing.

“We hear in the media arguments about \$450 million that’s supposed to

come from the city ... but that’s a drop in the bucket compared to the tens of billions of dollars that the MTA owes to the banks and Wall Street in debt service,” said Tony Murphy, another member of the WDC. “The banks are looting public transportation.”

It’s clear that the real representatives of the people were in the boardroom that day, but they weren’t the ones convened around the table. If all groups attending the meeting started working together, New Yorkers could have a real People’s MTA. □

Poems by Lamont Lilly



‘HONOR IN THE GHETTO’

panther men

they weren’t scared
of no police dogs.
they didn’t bow to no pigs
and wooden batons.
no fear of fire hoses
silver bullets and steel cuffs
they were different.
those negroes looked like men.
like BLACK MEN
who knew exactly
where they came from.
like BLACK MEN
who knew exactly
where they came from
and didn’t take no shit.
from nobody.
from nobody.



Bobby Seale and Huey Newton — Black Panther Party founders.

old black wall street

we don’t own
the convenience stores
in the ghetto.
we don’t own
the smoke shops
nail salons
and beauty supply spots.
we own the churches
the good word
and dreams deferred.
we own the pain
poverty and crime
against each other.
we own the
nickels and dimes
that allow others
to own us.
we don’t own
a goddamn thing
here anymore.
black wall street
has now become brooklyn
harlem, u street.
merely a shell
of their old selves.
gone.
merely a shell
of their old selves.
gone.

PART 1

coup d’état

there can be no peace
until every child
has a hot meal
there can be no treaties
until we sit down
and negotiate the revolution.
not one hostage
shall be released
until you hang those
policemen.
until those judges
mayors and corrupt officials
are all buried
alive.

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Lamont Lilly was the 2016 Workers World Party U.S. vice presidential candidate. In 2015 he was an Indy Week “Citizen Award” winner for his activism and journalism. The selections presented are from his forthcoming book of poetry, “Honor in the Ghetto.” Contact the writer at llilly1@eagles.nccu.edu.

Honoring Che, brigade will visit Cuba in October

By Cheryl LaBash

Alberto Korda's image of the heroic guerrilla fighter Che Guevara is known and reproduced in every corner of the globe on T-shirts, flags and posters. Now, 50 years after Che's death at the hands of the U.S. CIA in Bolivia in October 1967, his image is still a symbol of internationalist struggle for socialist revolution.

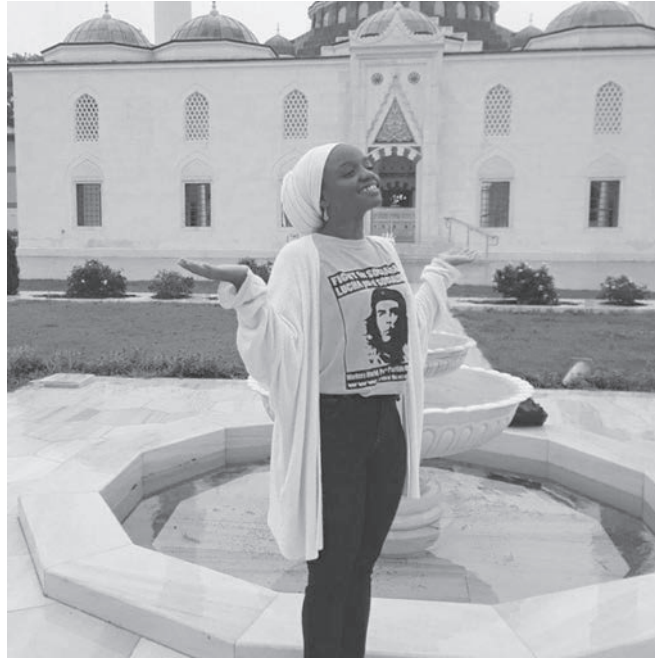
Hundreds of people from around the world — including at least 50 from the United States — will gather in Cuba this Oct. 1-15 for the Footsteps of Che Brigade to learn more about Che and the Cuban Revolution.

Although he was a medical professional born in Argentina, Che's name will forever be entwined with the success of the Cuban Revolution, side-by-side with its historic leader Fidel Castro and many other women and men. The contributions of the revolutionaries who lost their lives in the battle to overturn the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship are not forgotten.

In Pinar del Rio province on July 26, the anniversary of the 1953 attack on Batista's Moncada Barracks, a series of presenters solemnly read the names of each of the fallen as the crowd responded, "Presente!"

Che's writings and speeches applied Marxist economic theory to the arduous, real-life task of building a socialist society in Cuba from an economy and human beings ground down by underdevelopment, slavery, colonialism and capitalist exploitation. And this new society took root just 90 miles from the U.S. imperialist behemoth, bent on global economic and political domination.

For two weeks in October, the brigadistas will live collectively at the Antonio Mella International Camp near Havana. They'll also travel to historic sites linked to Che Guevara in the provinces of Havana, Pinar del Rio, Santa Clara and Sancti Spiritus. Sites will include the first village liberated by Che's troops in central Cuba; bases under Che's command before 1959, including base camp La Hormiga and the local community in the Escambray mountains; Las



Korda's Che image, worn here by Baltimore socialist organizer Basma Gregg. Gregg is going to Cuba in October.

Villas university; a museum at the site where Che and his troops carried out a successful assault on an armored train full of soldiers and ammunition; the Che Guevara Studies Center; and many others.

In Santa Clara on Oct. 8, the Day of the Heroic Guerrilla, brigadistas will participate in the central national event honoring Che's death.

Meeting with the Cuban people

Combatants who fought alongside Che in various campaigns of the revolutionary war and internationalist volunteers who fought with him in Congo will meet with the brigade. Another highlight will be exchanges with members of the Cuban Workers Central Union, the Federation of Cuban Women, university and high school student organizations, the Union of Young Communists and community activists from the Committees to Defend the Revolution.

October 10 is a national holiday commemorating the declaration of Cuba's independence from Spain by Carlos Manuel de Cespedes. On that date in 1868, Cespedes freed enslaved Africans, who then joined him in the ensuing Ten Years' War of liberation from Spain. Brigadistas will find out why Cespedes is considered the father of Cuba and will learn some of the history of Cuba, Latin America and the Caribbean — a history of rebellion that culminated in the 1959 Cuban Revolution.

Some in the United States may know that all Cubans receive medical services and education through college level free of charge. But few know that the Cuban people also enjoy a right to sports and culture. The brigadistas' stay at the camp will include a talent night and an international night, as well as cultural exchanges with brigadistas from other countries.

The brigade is hosted by the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples. U.S. organizers include the Chicago Cuba Coalition and this writer. Workers World Party is actively participating in this brigade with 20 members, mostly young people of color who are experts in the hardships of living under capitalist rule.

Your financial support will help introduce new generations to the reality of the Cuban Revolution, which every day proves that another, much better world really is possible. For more information and ways to help fund the WWP delegation, contact 2017CheBrigade@gmail.com. □

July 26 commemorated in Chicago

Dozens of people turned out in Chicago on July 26 for a program commemorating the 64th anniversary of the armed attack on Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista's Moncada Barracks in 1953. That heroic act failed, but it triggered the beginning of the Cuban Revolution. At his trial, the leader of the attack, Fidel Castro, made a ringing and detailed declaration on why the dictatorship must be overthrown. His speech, titled "History Will Absolve Me," was widely published and became the manifesto for the revolution.

The 26 of July program was organized by the Chicago Cuba Coalition and

co-sponsored by the Venezuelan Consulate in Chicago, Workers United (an SEIU affiliate), Black Lives Matter Chicago, the Chicago ALBA Solidarity Committee, the Mexico Solidarity Network, the National Boricua Human Rights Network, the Puerto Rican Cultural Center and Workers World Party. Speaking in the photo is José López Rivera, director of Chicago's Puerto Rican Cultural Center and brother of recently released political prisoner Oscar López Rivera.



— Report and photo by Jeff Sorel

Rally protests Israeli occupation of Palestine

By Basma Gregg
Washington, D.C.

A crowd of over 200 people, organized by American Muslims for Palestine, gathered around the Israeli Embassy in Washington on July 28 to protest the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

Members of the Jewish community, Christians and Muslims all joined together in solidarity in response to recent attacks imposed on the Palestinian people by Israeli troops.

For more than two weeks, Israel had imposed restrictions on Palestinians seeking access to the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. Palestinian worshippers were unlawfully prohibited access to their place of worship by the Israeli government.

Just the day before the demonstration in Washington, "Israeli forces stormed into the masjid [mosque], firing rubber-tipped bullets, and injuring close to 100 worshippers," said Kristin Szremski, director of media and communications for the AMP.

Individuals of both the Jewish and Muslim communities were enraged upon learning of these and other unjust occur-



Palestinians resist Israeli forces denying them access to al-Aqsa mosque.

rences against the Palestinian people. These include a bill before Congress that would make boycotts against Israel and Israeli goods illegal and punishable by up to 20 years in prison.

In response to these issues, the AMP organized the July 28 demonstration with the goal of "educating the public and media about Palestine and forwarding the Palestinian narrative, so that the media and the people start getting the full story," said Szremski about AMP's overall mission.

During the demonstration, short speeches were given by members of the AMP and other organizations. Afterward, over 200 Muslim men, women and children joined together despite harsh



weather conditions for their congregational Friday prayer. After the prayer ended, the crowd began to passionately chant in protest against the Israeli occupation, demanding justice for Palestine.

Even as the demonstration was taking place, the Israeli government announced it was finally ending its restrictions on the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The following day, thousands of Palestinians crowded into the mosque in East Jerusalem for noon prayers.

Al-Jazeera reported July 30 that over

the two weeks: "Israeli forces often met protesters with rubber-coated steel bullets, tear gas, and stun grenades. In some areas, live rounds were also used, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent.

"At least six Palestinians were killed during the two weeks of protests across occupied East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and at least four were killed in alleged attacks on Israeli forces.

"According to the Red Crescent, more than 1,300 Palestinians have been injured during demonstrations since July 14." □

U.S. corporations aim to plunder Afghanistan

By Chris Fry

Dissatisfied with the Pentagon's inability to defeat the insurgent Taliban fighters, the Trump administration is reportedly studying ways to change military policy in Afghanistan.

That does not mean that the president plans any let up on attacks against the Afghan people. Instead, he intends to further enrich the military-industrial complex by hiring mercenary private armies to wage war in Afghanistan, managed by the brutal and corporate-friendly CIA.

The new U.S. regime invited Erik Prince and Stephen Feinberg into the White House. Prince is a founder of the infamous Blackwater International Co., and billionaire financier Feinberg is head of the military contracting firm DynCorp International.

According to a July 25 New York Times article, Trump is salivating over a trillion dollars' worth of minerals in Afghanistan

and wants to use these private armies to guard the mines while U.S. corporations steal vast wealth from one of the most impoverished countries on earth.

From the start of his term in office, the president has openly boasted of his gangster strategy. When he made a January speech to the CIA, he criticized past U.S. administrations for not seizing Iraqi oil wells. He declared: "The old expression 'To the victor belong the spoils.' You remember?" (nytimes.com, July 25)

That's how the profiteers see the war. How does it look to the Afghan people?

When fighting erupted near his home near Tarinkot in the south of Afghanistan on July 13, Faiz Muhammad sent his family to the forests in Sajawal for safety while he stayed home to tend to the cattle. That night he heard warplanes and found out there was a U.S. air raid on Sajawal.

To his horror, he learned the next day that eight members of his family had been killed: his wife, a daughter-in-law,

four sons and two young grandsons. Five others in his family were wounded. (nytimes.com, July 17)

For nearly 16 years, U.S. troops have waged a war of occupation in Afghanistan. Currently, there are 13,000 NATO troops in the country, which include 6,900 U.S. so-called "trainer" soldiers. Another 1,500 U.S. troops conduct military operations under U.S. command in Afghanistan. (aljazeera.com, May 25)

The Pentagon has stepped up its airplane and drone war in 2017. "As of June 30, U.S. and coalition aircraft had dropped or expended 1,634 munitions in Afghanistan so far this year, according to U.S. Air Force numbers. By comparison, in 2015 and 2016, that figure was 298 and 545, respectively." (washingtonpost.com, July 17)

Tens of thousands of Afghans have been killed by the U.S. war in Afghanistan since the October 2001 invasion. The U.N. Assistance Mission reported that 95

civilians were killed and 137 wounded during the first six months of this year, a 67 percent increase in 2017 over the same period in 2016.

At the same time, in those 15-plus years some 2,400 U.S. soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan, with nearly 18,000 wounded. (icasualties.org)

An "errant" U.S. airstrike in Helmand province on July 21 killed a dozen Afghan National Police officers and wounded two others. (msn.com, July 22)

All of this has failed to stop the Taliban, which, according to the Post article, now controls territory "at its highest in the country since U.S. forces invaded the country in 2001."

The latest escalation of this horrible war shows that a strong, united anti-war movement inside the U.S. is needed to stop this imperialist military adventure and end the reign of terror that Washington has visited on the people of Afghanistan. □

U.S. and the DPRK A crack in the bluster

By Deirdre Griswold

Well, well, well. It's taken them far too long, but at last the editors of the New York Times have spoken up on Korea.

This newspaper of the imperialist, ruling-class establishment, which has been so closely embedded with U.S. foreign policy for over a century, is telling the Trump administration to "drop the bluster and dispatch Secretary of State Rex Tillerson or some other high-level envoy to Pyongyang to explore whether there is any basis for negotiations." (New York Times editorial, Aug. 1)

Of course, the Times itself is guilty of a lot of "bluster." Its reporting on the DPRK, like that of the rest of the capitalist media, routinely demonizes that country's leadership. The Times also claims that China's refusal to carry out punishing sanctions on the DPRK comes out of its fear that sanctions could cause the regime to "collapse," sending millions of Korean refugees to China.

Dream on, Times. The DPRK is not about to collapse. Its leaders are not irrational or weak. And just as important, the independent government of the DPRK survived a horrible, devastating war from 1950 to 1953 along with almost seven decades of military and economic aggression from the U.S. because it has a strong Workers' Party at the helm.

The DPRK has seen the horrible destruction that the imperialists try to wreak on a country that defies them. The Pentagon has reduced nation after nation to rubble to get the "spoils," as Donald Trump recently admitted. Destroy the government, disable the country and then go for the profits — Afghanistan's minerals, Iraq's oil and cultural treasures, Libya's oil.

The people of the DPRK take all this very seriously. They have long been on the U.S. hit list of countries that George W. Bush infamously slandered as "the Axis of Evil." The Koreans need to have a strong deterrent, no matter the cost,

to stop Washington from waging another war against them. So the scientists and technical workers of the DPRK have mastered the technology of building both nuclear weapons and an intercontinental missile delivery system that together can deter a U.S. attack.

The strategists for U.S. imperialism have completely exploded in frenzy over this. The media — including the Times — have speculated about the U.S. going to war, how many casualties there would be, and so on.

It seemed like the last thing the Times would consider is that maybe the U.S. should pull back from threatening to "decapitate" the DPRK — the stated objective of the Pentagon's last round of massive war exercises in Korea. Maybe they should consider negotiations, maybe even — and this really sticks in their craw — sign a peace treaty with the DPRK to end the state of war that has existed between the U.S. and People's Korea since 1950.

After the DPRK's latest successful test

of an ICBM, Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina talked tough on NBC's "Today" show on Aug. 1: "There is a military option to destroy North Korea's [missile] program and North Korea itself," blustered the senator.

But then he added, "You can stop North Korea militarily or diplomatically. I prefer the diplomatic approach."

Make no mistake — imperialist diplomacy has the same objective as imperialist war. If negotiations are to take place, either openly or secretly, the DPRK will have to weigh every word very carefully before agreeing to anything with the treacherous and arrogant bunch of marauders who run the U.S. government.

But the Koreans know all that.

What's important is that an influential section of the ruling class here has come to the conclusion that they need to "drop the bluster" — that is, the threats of nuclear annihilation that have come from Washington since 1950 — and get real. That's a victory for the DPRK. □

'Say no to THAAD, stop the war games!'

By Terri Kay
San Francisco

Korean anti-war groups in New York, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Seattle held actions on July 27 opposing the deployment of the U.S. THAAD missile system in their homeland. Here in San Francisco, the event at the south Korean Consulate involved the Hella Organized Bay Area Koreans (HOBAK) and their supporters.

The date was the 64th anniversary of the Korean Armistice, which was supposed to have ended hostilities between the armed forces fighting in Korea from 1950 to 1953. The key demand was for the new south Korean president, Moon Jae-in, to push for a Korean peace treaty and stop deployment of the THAAD system. Additionally, they called on President

Moon to "Stop the war games, end the travel bans, blacklisting and the National Security Law. Let Juyeon J.C. Rhee in, and finally put an end to the violence and displacement caused by this unended war." Rhee, a Korean American, was denied entry to south Korea on July 25 after spending 25 hours at the Incheon International Airport.

HOBAK read a letter to President Moon that a delegation tried to bring inside, along with a basket of locally grown Korean melons. They were not allowed to enter, but a consulate employee finally came out to accept the letter and the fruit. Meanwhile, the Korean drumming group ieuksae performed a compelling and rhythmic series outside the consulate.

Io Ruiz Sunwoo, one of the drummers, reported back from a recent trip Sunwoo had made to south Korea, where they



WW PHOTO: TERRI KAY

Protest at Korean Consulate in San Francisco.

visited the village which was the site of the THAAD installation. Sunwoo described how small the village was and how the mostly elder population has been

steadfast in their resistance to THAAD, welcoming countless anti-war activists while still having to work their fields and maintain their own livelihood. □

WORKERS WORLD editorials

A cop in the White House

Donald Trump gave a bone-chilling speech at Suffolk County Community College on Long Island, N.Y., on July 28, exposing the fact that he is nothing more than a cop occupying the White House. In front of an audience of police officers, Trump spoke on why his administration is pushing for more repression against migrants, especially along the U.S.-Mexico border. He is scheduled to give similar talks elsewhere around the country.

He referred to MS-13, a group of Honduran and Salvadoran youth based in Los Angeles also known as La Mara Salvatrucha, as a “gang” of “animals” and “thugs.” In doing so, Trump continues to push the racist, xenophobic narrative of “protecting American lives” as he moves to add 10,000 more armed border patrol agents and 5,000 more Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents to arrest and deport migrants.

Trump ran a racist presidential campaign of labeling migrants as “murderers,” “drug dealers” and “rapists.” Then, during his first 100 days in office, ICE arrested 41,318 immigrants, up 37.6 percent over the same period in 2016. (Washington Post, July 28)

Back in the late 1980s, Trump referred to the Central Park Five, Black and Brown youth falsely accused of raping a white woman, as “animals.” They were finally exonerated, but he refused to apologize.

Trump made other remarks in the same speech so brutal that some police publicly tried to distance themselves from them. Talking about the way they make arrests, Trump said, “Please don’t

be too nice. When you guys put somebody in the car and you’re protecting their head, you know, the way you put their hand over? ... Like, don’t hit their head, and they just killed somebody. I said, you can take the hand away, okay?” As he was speaking, Trump mimed the physical motion of an officer preventing a suspect’s head from bumping against the squad car.

Some individual cops may have been upset with Trump’s words. But he was only acknowledging in his own crass way what happens every minute of every day inside the U.S.: The police can and do get away with all forms of racial profiling, including stop-and-frisk, beatings, Tasering and outright murder, with impunity, because the rules that repress the poor, the workers and the oppressed do not apply to the police.

Trump’s words should bring to mind for revolutionaries what Karl Marx wrote during the 19th century about the state — the armed bodies of men and women, including the police, prisons, courts, army and so on. It is “an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another ... and this power, arisen out of society but placing itself above it, and alienating itself more and more from it, is the state.”

Trump also reinforces the inevitable truth that the workers and oppressed, as a class, are the ones who will be the gravediggers of the capitalist system — which elevates the police as armed occupiers of oppressed communities, especially those full of Black and Brown people, whether U.S. or foreign born. □

Answering anti-LGBTQ despicables

The Trump administration’s bigotry was blasted at LGBTQ people on July 26 when the president tweeted in early morning that he was barring transgender individuals from the U.S. Armed Forces. Later in the day Attorney General Jeff Sessions and his Department of “Justice” issued a legal brief arguing that employers could discriminate against LGBTQ workers.

These attacks could result in over 15,000 people being expelled from the U.S. military and in LGBTQ people no longer having protection in housing, education or jobs. Until now this protection has been interpreted as covered by the Fair Housing Act and the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Title VII and Title IX.

Director James Esseks, of the American Civil Liberty Union’s LGBT and HIV Project, said July 26 “will go down in history as Anti-LGBT Day.” (commondreams.org)

But we’ve already had an avalanche of virulently anti-LGBTQ action by this administration during the last six months. Hours after Trump’s inauguration, all mention of LGBTQ issues was erased from the White House website. Hundreds of millions in funding have been slashed from government initiatives to help people with HIV and AIDS. LGBTQ people have been excluded from government data collection, including the U.S. Census Bureau, blocking documentation of the need for funding and support. Title IX protections for trans students in schools have been rolled back.

The Trump administration is stacked with anti-LGBTQ despicables, including, notably, Vice President Mike Pence, Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch and, of course, Attorney General Jeff Sessions, a racist admirer of the Ku Klux Klan.

In a stand similar to that of Pence when he was governor of Indiana, Sessions as a U.S. senator supported a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage, voted against workplace protections for LGBTQ people, voted to keep the U.S. military’s “don’t ask, don’t tell” anti-gay policy and twice voted against expanding hate crimes to include attacks based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

The most obvious engine for the rabid anti-LGBTQ actions of Pence and Sessions is their shared commitment to “Christian nationalism,” a far-right ideology with a U.S. history of violent racism against African Americans, virulent anti-Semitism, persecution of women who reject patriarchal rule and a sentence of damnation to LGBTQ people. (Washington Post, July 4) In this belief system, the U.S. was founded as a “Christian” nation, and only those believers deserve full citizenship.

This far-right, near-fascist ideology of Trump, Pence and Sessions is a resurgence of earlier death-dealing campaigns against immigrants, African American and other people of color, workers, rebellious women and others criminalized as sex and gender outlaws. One such campaign was carried out by the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s, which dominated U.S. politics in that era. That campaign, funded and sanctioned by big business, was put in motion to break up any working-class unity among new immigrants, African Americans fleeing oppression in the U.S. South and newly industrialized “native-born” workers.

It’s hard to remember, but Trump literally wrapped himself in the LGBTQ rainbow flag during his presidential campaign at a rally in Colorado. But his only promise to LGBTQ people, made as he accepted the Republican presidential nomination, was to “protect” them against the “foreign ideology” — of Islam.

There is no protection for LGBTQ people in a white-supremacist “nation” that put Trump, Pence and Sessions in office. There is no safety for LGBTQ people in a “capitalist democracy” that continues to exist through brutal oppression, inside and outside the U.S.

LGBTQ people in the U.S. are multinational, multigendered and overwhelmingly workers — whether employed or desperately needing work. The only way LGBTQ people will get the safety, work, health care, housing and education they need is through solidarity with other oppressed people and with their class — the multinational working class — together on the path toward socialism. □

Trans veteran speaks out on 45’s anti-trans tweet

Transgender spokesperson Renée Imperato gave this interview to Workers World Managing Editor John Catalinotto on July 29, following the president’s July 26 tweet barring transgender people from the U.S. Armed Forces. Imperato spent a year in Vietnam in 1969 and became an active-duty war resister and GI organizer. Imperato is currently a veteran with disabilities active in the Transgenerational Theater Project, SAGE (Advocacy & Services for LGBT Elders) and the struggle for veterans’ medical care.

Reaction to president’s tweet

I haven’t been back to the Veterans Administration hospital since the tweet. But, in general, over the past year, in the lobbies of most VA hospitals, where they have TVs on and people are sometimes listening to the news, I can say without any hesitation that the most dramatic, derisive dialog heard anywhere is hurled against Trump.

How much this man is despised and hated! A vocabulary I won’t even repeat is used. It’s off the charts — the contempt and disgust at his presidency, especially but not exclusively from Black and Brown veterans.

The tweet is another attack by the president on the LGBT+ community. We should handle it in a principled manner. We

shouldn’t talk about how transgender people can serve the country. Those who are in the military are serving the interests of Wall Street. The first thing I would advise a trans person who was thinking about going into the military is “Don’t go in.”

However, I support trans people’s right to be in the military, but only as a civil rights issue — no group of people should be denied “equal access” because of discrimination. Only in that regard would I support any transgender person who is in the military. As someone who is anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist, that’s as far as I could go.

Beyond that, what would I want any trans person in the military to do? Organize against the officers. Organize against the war. Organize against racism.

Chelsea Manning tweeted in response to Trump’s attack:

‘Today is further reason we should dismantle the bloated and dangerous military/intel/police state to fund #healthcare for all.’

I would want anyone who goes into the military to subvert it.

Suppose a trans person is part of a U.S. military force that invades Syria or any other country. The people of Syria have the right to fight to expel them by any means necessary. We can’t support transgender people in an army that plunders, rapes, destroys and kills hundreds of thousands of people, just because they are trans. I say to them: “Don’t put yourself in that position.”

What was learned in Vietnam

When I was a GI resister and we were organizing the American Servicemen’s Union [around] 1970, what we would come in contact with were people who became leaders in the anti-war struggle inside the

military. But maybe when they joined the military in 1967 or 1968, they had accepted the official ruling-class explanation of the war, hook, line and sinker.

What I myself saw in Vietnam was the U.S. military slaughtering Vietnamese people on the land they were raised on and lived on. The invading imperialist army did it for many reasons, including to control oil drilling in the South China Sea. And for domination of the world, which is what the U.S. ruling class really wants.

The U.S. Armed Forces is an imperialist army basically fighting to ensure the profit margins of U.S. corporations and Wall Street.

Sometimes what happens when someone joins the military is that a radical-

Continued on page 11

Venezuela votes: Massive support for Constituent Assembly

Continued from page 1

empire. The anti-imperialist and deeply feminist patriot women, who are Chavistas, are in permanent combat to propel our heroic people forward.”

A young citizen who walked to a polling place, Javier Ochoa from Yaracuy, summarized what millions also think: “Venezuela does not surrender. Today more than ever the struggle is vindicating the dignity of a people that says NO to capitulation and YES to peace. Venezuela continues to be an example of struggle in the region, for the world’s politically conscious peoples.”

Constituent Assembly: Power of the people

In general, the Constituent Assembly is a peaceful and fundamentally democratic political mechanism to resolve intense political crises, to change the Constitution for society’s improvement. The Venezuelan crisis is due to daily terrorist attacks by the fascist right wing — the most extreme elements of the right-wing opposition to the Bolivarian government — which has been trying to overthrow the government since April 1, sowing death, destruction and economic crisis throughout the country.

Article 348 of the current Constitution establishes the right of the Executive Power to convene a Constituent Assembly. President Nicolás Maduro called for this on May 1, during the celebration of International Workers’ Day.

The most significant aspect of this action is that the president summoned the sovereign power of the people, who will henceforth determine the future of the revolution. All power to the people!

This concept is extremely important. It is not a law imposed from above, or merely a remedy for the crisis. It is the search for a profound transformation of the foundations of the revolution — from the economy, based until now on income from oil, to the transformation of structures of the state. This is the crucial importance of the development of this Constituent Assembly. This is what is at stake.

In addition, the purpose of the Constituent Assembly is greater than seeking

peace for the people confronted by fascist attacks. It seeks, among other things, to assure the achievements of the Bolivarian Revolution, by raising the constitutional level of the popular Missions that aid Venezuela’s poor as well as expanding the justice system to eliminate impunity for the rich and corrupt who commit crimes against the people and against the homeland in general — for example, corruption, smuggling, speculation, drug trafficking, etc.

These are crimes that the right-wing oligarchy commits against the poor. They run the gamut from the theft of U.S. dollars to subsidized, preferential prices for importing essential products, to hoarding of food, medicine and other goods. This rampant criminality is the cause of the shortages, which are intended to create an atmosphere of despair among the masses, in the hope that wear and tear will cause the people to rebel against the Bolivarian government.

Through a universal, direct, secret and free ballot, the July 30 vote will elect 364 candidates to represent the country’s territories as well as 173 for different sectors of the population. These sectors include workers, peasants, fisher people, students, people with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, retirees, small-business people, communes and communal councils. This representation of sectors is something very new and ensures the inclusion of the interests of each of these groups.

Imperialist agenda

The counterrevolutionary right, however, does not act alone. Serving its true master, U.S. imperialism, the right has tried — without success — to reverse the Bolivarian process since Chávez’s ascension to power. We need to remember that the right followed up their failed coup of 2002 by sabotaging the oil industry in 2003. Well-known disbursements of huge sums of U.S. government money via the U.S. State Department and its agencies that promote destabilization on the continent, such as the National Endowment for Democracy and the U.S. Agency for International Development, have facilitated Venezuelan opposition organizations. A

long list of hostile U.S. government policies toward Venezuela has been a constant, through all U.S. administrations, both Republican and Democratic.

Since the Obama administration, these hostilities have been intensifying, reaching the point of attempting to intervene, even with military threats, against the Bolivarian Revolution.

Key figures from the Venezuelan opposition have met with Trump and other U.S. politicians in order to intensify their efforts to oust President Maduro. Even Venezuelan right-wing politicians residing in the U.S. publicly and brazenly call for U.S. intervention.

This activity came to rotten fruit in April, when the counterrevolution increased its attacks, which since then have been daily. They include burning buildings, destroying state properties that offer public services, such as mother-child centers, and unleashing destructive “guarimbas” — violent acts of sabotage. Attacking the police and the Bolivarian National Guard, the terrorists have been assassinating people who are perceived as Chavistas, shooting and even burning them alive — a macabre and cruel expression of their fascist character, similar to the KKK in the U.S. South.

Now, the U.S. and right-wing agenda is to isolate Venezuela by accusing it of being undemocratic for convening the Constituent Assembly. Trump openly threatened to impose serious economic sanctions if the Bolivarian government carried out the Constituent vote. The U.S. president imposed sanctions on 13 senior officials of the government, the military and the nationalized oil company, the PDVSA (Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A.).

The CIA has also announced that it’s working with the governments of Mexico and Colombia in the campaign against Venezuela. Panama and Peru are also part of this hostile conspiracy. The U.S.-led media disinformation campaign obscures the true terrorist and murderous face of the Venezuelan opposition, while distorting the highly democratic reality of the Chavista population, who are pursuing their sovereign and constitutional right to hold a Constituent Assembly.

ExxonMobil and Wall Street are unwilling to overlook the existence of a Constituent Assembly that can defend the full right of the people to their sovereignty, defend the wealth of the nation for the welfare of the great masses — and not the profits of transnational monopolies — and establish a truly socialist base. Because of that, U.S. imperialism manipulates its puppet governments in the region, both inside and outside of Venezuela, as well as all organizations at the international level that respond to Yankee interests,



Young Venezuelan holds up her voting card.

PHOTO: TELESUR

especially the infamous Organization of American States through its right-wing secretary, General Luis Almagro.

Measures such as cutting air travel to Venezuela have already been imposed. Colombia’s Avianca and Delta Airlines of the U.S. left hundreds of passengers stranded at the Caracas airport on July 26 when they ceased operations without prior notice.

But U.S. sanctions do not end in Venezuela. The Foreign Affairs Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives on July 27 passed the “Nica Act,” imposing sanctions on Nicaragua for its solidarity in support of the Venezuelan government.

International support from the people

However, the vote for the Constituent Assembly has aroused a higher commitment of solidarity on the part of revolutionary peoples. This includes the governments of the Caribbean countries — small in geographical terms — which have demonstrated with dignity their great courage, defending Bolivarian sovereignty by opposing imperialist interventionist maneuvers.

Popular movements, especially in Latin America, have been very successful in defending the Bolivarian people’s right to self-determination. Pickets, forums, demonstrations, television and radio programs are continuing. Social networks are filled with messages and expressions of solidarity.

All these movements have emphasized the relevance of the Bolivarian Revolution as an example of the awakening of the peoples. People are confronting the increased threats posed by capitalism in its decadent phase, which is nevertheless still virulent as it tries to recover losses due to the achievements of social-movements.

The same forces also see the success of the Constituent Assembly and the Bolivarian Revolution as their own triumph. Should there be, in the worst case, a defeat, they will view it as a setback for their own popular movements. And that’s why other peoples feel in their own skins the pain of the interventionist attacks of global capital.

Yes to the Constituent Assembly! Forward! Long live the Bolivarian Revolution and international solidarity! □

ization process takes place. A perfect transgender example of that is Chelsea Manning, who was patriotic when she joined up but learned of, was disgusted by and then exposed the war crimes of the U.S. military in Iraq when she understood better what was happening.

Chelsea Manning had a different description for what the Pentagon called “collateral damage.” She called it “collateral murder.” The military brass couldn’t tolerate that kind of description.

What about discharges? Medical care?

If transgender people are pushed out of the military, what kind of discharges are they going to get? Dishonorable or bad conduct? These discharges follow people later on in life after they leave the military.

The president tweeting that he wants to cut off medical care [in particular to] transgender troops as a way of saving money is absolutely ridiculous. “Nominal” would be the minimum description for how insignificant [that amount of money] is.

I spend a lot of time in the VA medical system. I was hurt in Vietnam. I have Agent Orange poisoning. I’ve been diagnosed with severe neuropathy from a head trauma — they call that traumatic brain disease. I have limitations in movement of my body, and for over 20 years I’ve been a PTSD [post-traumatic stress

disorder] patient at the VA hospital.

So an important question that comes up now is what will happen to programs [and care] for trans people in the VA?

Exposing hypocrisy

The president’s tweet is exposing some of the contradictions among the veterans. The white racist veterans who support him have had their hypocrisy exposed. For years they ranted against people who resisted or avoided the draft 50 years ago or those who went into exile in Canada. Now they let a rich, white, racist president get away [with] having five draft deferments during the Vietnam War — he didn’t serve a day in the military. As so-called “commander in chief” — some of us in the VA call him “rapist in chief” — he assesses prisoners of war as “losers.” Even some conservative white veterans hate him for that.

People should follow this issue of trans people in the military raised by Trump. Regarding the rest, we should work to “turn the guns around.” I recommend that people read your book to learn about that struggle.

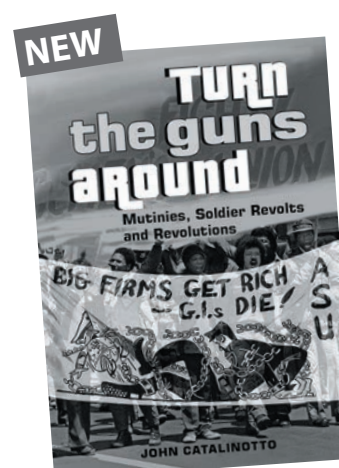
Catalinotto is author of “Turn the Guns Around: Mutinies, Soldier Revolts and Revolutions,” which includes some of Renée Imperato’s story. The book was published in 2017 by World View Forum.

TURN THE GUNS AROUND Mutinies, Soldier Revolts and Revolutions by John Catalinotto

Weaving together GI letters, interviews and first-hand narratives with historical research, the author brings to life GI resistance in the Vietnam War era, shows its relation to capitalist state power and highlights why breaking the military chain of command is an essential step to ending oppression around the globe.

“If schools in the United States really wanted to impart historical truth, Catalinotto’s ‘Turn The Guns Around’ would be required reading. He tells the true story of this epoch. Few participants know more about the massive GI rebellion against the Vietnam War, the anti-war veterans’ movement or the history of soldier revolts from the Paris Commune to the Portuguese coup.”

— Pvt Larry Holmes GI resister and organizer for the American Servicemen’s Union 1972-74.



Available at online booksellers



Venezuela a las urnas

Apoyo masivo para la Asamblea Constituyente

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

El domingo 30 de julio, el sonido de la diana en la madrugada dio inicio a la jornada de votación para la elección de delegadas/os a la Asamblea Constituyente que asumirán la gran responsabilidad de representar al pueblo en la modificación de la actual constitución bolivariana creada en 1999 bajo el liderazgo del ahora fenecido presidente Hugo Chávez.

El pueblo chavista y bolivariano bajó desde los cerros, cruzó ríos, pasó por caminos montañosos, fue a pie o en bicicleta, venciendo cada obstáculo impuesto por la oposición fascista, yendo a votar firmemente por la Constituyente.

El Consejo Nacional Electoral (CNE) y los órganos estatales relevantes, habían establecido miles de mesas de votación alrededor del país, incluyendo además sitios de contingencia para las/os electores que no pudieran emitir su voto en su localidad debido a los tranques de caminos e incluso cierres de lugares de votación por la contrarrevolución. De hecho, algunos sitios no pudieron abrir en los vecindarios dominados por administraciones – alcaldías o gobernaciones – de la oposición. El centro más grande de contingencia en Caracas fue el Polígono, donde acudieron miles de votantes que heroicamente desafiaron la violencia contrarrevolucionaria y acudieron a emitir su voto.

A la hora de escribir este artículo, aún se encuentran abiertas las mesas de votación, por lo que nos abstendremos de mencionar cifras de votantes. Sin embargo, a través de diferentes transmisiones televisivas y de redes sociales digitales, se puede percibir el enorme entusiasmo del pueblo y ver las enormes filas que aseguran una amplia participación popular.

Gracias a ese espacio cibernético, Workers World-Mundo Obrero pudo hablar directamente con voces que transmiten ese entusiasmo. Jacobo Torres, constituyente del sector de trabajadores le dijo a WW-MO: “¡El pueblo venció el terror y apostó a la paz; el 31 de julio verá un hermoso amanecer bolivariano, antiimperialista y profundamente chavista!”.

La compañera Yosmary Guevara, vocera nacional de UNAMUJER y coordinadora de la Fuerza Bolivariana de Mujeres comentó el parecer de las mujeres revolucionarias: “Hoy es un día glorioso, donde el amor del pueblo se desbordó a las calles... Llegó la hora del pueblo, de defender el legado del Comandante Chávez. No queremos más violencia. No al fascismo, no al terrorismo enquistado por el imperio. Las mujeres patriotas chavistas, antiimperialistas y profundamente feministas estamos en combate permanente para impulsar nuestro heroico pueblo”.

Y un joven ciudadano de a pie, Javier Ochoa desde Yaracuy resumió lo que millones también piensan: “Venezuela no se rinde; hoy más que nunca está vigente la lucha reivindicando la dignidad de un pueblo que dice NO al entreguismo y SÍ a la paz. Venezuela sigue siendo ejemplo de lucha en la región, para los pueblos conscientes del mundo”.



FOTO: AVN

Constituyente, poder del pueblo

En general, una Asamblea Constituyente (AC) es un mecanismo político pacífico y democrático elemental para resolver intensas crisis políticas, transformando la Carta Magna en pro de la mejora de la sociedad. En el caso de Venezuela, esta crisis se debe a los diarios ataques terroristas por parte de la derecha fascista – la parte más extrema de la derecha opositora al gobierno bolivariano – que ha venido intentando derrocar al gobierno desde el 1º de abril sembrando el país de muertes, destrucción y crisis económica.

Por el artículo 348 de la actual Constitución, que establece el derecho del Poder Ejecutivo a convocar a una AC, el presidente Nicolás Maduro convocó ésta el 1º de mayo, durante la celebración del Día Internacional de las y los Trabajadores.

Lo más significativo de esta acción es que aquí el Presidente convocó al poder del pueblo, al soberano, quien será de ahora en adelante quien delinee el futuro de la revolución. ¡El pueblo al poder! Esto es sumamente importante. No es una ley impuesta desde arriba, ni sólo un remedio a la crisis. Es la búsqueda de una transformación profunda de las bases de la revolución. Desde las bases económicas hasta ahora rentistas petroleras, hasta la transformación de las estructuras estatales. He ahí la importancia crucial del desarrollo de esta Constituyente. Esto es lo que está en juego.

Además, el propósito de la AC, fuera de ir en búsqueda de la paz para el pueblo frente a los ataques fascistas, es entre otros, asegurar las conquistas de la Revolución Bolivariana, al elevar a nivel constitucional las Misiones y ampliar el Sistema de Justicia para erradicar la impunidad de los delitos contra las personas, y contra la patria en general – por ejemplo corrupción, contrabando, especulación, narcotráfico, etc.

Crímenes que la oligarquía derechista ha cometido en contra del pueblo pobre. Desde el robo de dólares a precios preferenciales subsidiados para la importación de productos esenciales, hasta el acaparamiento de alimentos, medicinas y otras mercancías para provocar el desabastecimiento y crear un ambiente de desesperación en las masas, con la esperanza de que esto haga al pueblo rebelarse contra el gobierno bolivariano.

Mediante el voto universal, directo, secreto y voluntario, estos comicios elegirán 364 candidatas/os para representar los territorios del país y 173 para los

diferentes sectores. Éstos sectores son los siguientes: trabajadoras/es; campesinas/os y pescadoras/es; estudiantes, personas con discapacidad, pueblos indígenas, pensionadas/os, empresarias/os; y comunas y consejos comunales. Estas divisiones en sectores es algo sumamente novedoso y asegura la inclusión de los intereses de cada uno de estos grupos.

Agenda imperialista

Pero la derecha contrarrevolucionaria no actúa sola, sino que está al servicio de su verdadero amo, el imperialismo estadounidense que desde la ascensión de Chávez al poder, ha tratado – sin éxito – de revertir el proceso bolivariano. Sólo cabe recordar el intento de golpe en 2002 y, frente a su fracaso, el sabotaje petrolero de 2003. Sabido son también los desembolsos de enormes sumas de dinero que el gobierno estadounidense, a través del Departamento de Estado y sus agencias promotoras de desestabilización en el continente como la NED y la USAID, facilitan a las organizaciones opositoras venezolanas. Una larga lista de políticas hostiles del gobierno de EUA hacia Venezuela ha sido una constante a través de todas las administraciones estadounidenses, tanto republicanas como demócratas.

Desde el gobierno de Obama se vienen intensificando estas hostilidades, llegando ahora a un intento de mayor intervención, incluso con amenazas militares, en contra de la revolución Bolivariana.

Figuras claves de la oposición se han reunido con Trump y otros políticos de EUA con el propósito de aumentar el esfuerzo de derrocar al Presidente Maduro. Hasta la derecha venezolana que reside en EUA pide pública y descaradamente la intervención estadounidense.

Esto ha rendido sus podridos frutos desde abril cuando la contrarrevolución arreció sus ataques, que desde entonces han sido diarios, incendiando edificios, destruyendo propiedades del estado donde se ofrecen servicios públicos como centros materno-infantil, haciendo guarimbas, obstruyendo el libre tránsito, atacando a la policía y la guardia nacional bolivariana, e incluso, asesinando personas que son percibidas como chavistas, disparándoles y algunas hasta quemándolas vivas – un macabro y cruel recordatorio de su carácter racista y fascista semejante al KKK del sur estadounidense.

Ahora, la agenda es aislar a Venezuela acusándola de antidemocrática por convocar la Asamblea Constituyente. Trump amenazó abiertamente al gobierno bolivariano de imponer graves sanciones económicas si se celebraba la AC; imponiendo además sanciones a 13 altos oficiales del gobierno, militares y de PDVSA.

La CIA además anunció que estaba trabajando conjuntamente con los gobiernos de México y Colombia en esta campaña

contra Venezuela. Además Panamá y Perú son parte de este conjunto hostil. La campaña mediática de desinformación a nivel internacional, pero liderada por EUA, oculta la verdadera cara terrorista y asesina de la oposición venezolana, a la vez que esconde la realidad sumamente democrática del pueblo chavista y su opción soberana por una constituyente.

El resultado de una Constituyente que defienda el pleno derecho a la soberanía del pueblo, a su defensa de las riquezas de la nación para ser utilizadas en pro del bienestar de la mayoría y no para enriquecer a las transnacionales, y la posibilidad incluso del establecimiento de una base realmente socialista, es una amenaza que Exxon, Wall Street y sus corporaciones no están dispuestas a pasar por alto. Y para eso el gobierno EUA utiliza a sus monigotes en la región, tanto dentro, como fuera de Venezuela, además de todas las organizaciones a nivel internacional que responden a los intereses yanquis, como la infame OEA, a través de su derechista portavoz Luis Almagro.

También, medidas como el cese de vuelos aéreos a Venezuela ya han sido impuestas. Sin previo aviso, las líneas Avianca de Colombia, y Delta de EUA, dejaron cientos de pasajeras/os varados en el aeropuerto de Caracas el pasado 26 de julio al cesar sus operaciones.

Pero las sanciones estadounidenses no terminan en Venezuela. El 27 de julio, el Comité de Asuntos Exteriores de la Cámara de Representantes aprobó el “Acta Nica”, para imponer sanciones a Nicaragua por apoyar al gobierno venezolano.

Apoyo internacional de los pueblos

Sin embargo, la celebración de la AC ha suscitado un elevado compromiso solidario por parte de los pueblos revolucionarios. Incluso de gobiernos de países caribeños que aunque pequeños en términos geográficos, han demostrado su gigante valor en dignidad al defender la soberanía bolivariana oponiéndose a las maniobras intervencionistas imperialistas.

La defensa de la autodeterminación del pueblo bolivariano por movimientos populares, sobretodo en América Latina ha sido realmente exitosa. Se han celebrado piquetes, foros, manifestaciones, programas televisivos y radiales. Las redes sociales se han llenado de mensajes y expresiones de solidaridad.

Todos estos movimientos han recalorado la relevancia de la Revolución Bolivariana como ejemplo del despertar de los pueblos. Y con la creciente amenaza del capitalismo en su fase de decadencia, pero no por eso menos virulento, que intenta recobrar las pérdidas causadas por los logros de los movimientos sociales, ven a la Constituyente y a la Revolución Bolivariana, como el triunfo – o en el peor de los casos – el fracaso de los movimientos populares. Y por eso sienten en su propia piel los ataques intervencionistas del capital global.

¡La Constituyente SI VA! ¡Viva la Revolución Bolivariana y la solidaridad internacional! □