

Obama's inaugural: Corporate politics in disguise



Tony Savino / Socialist Action



Tony Savino / Socialist Action

BY JEFF MACKLER

President Barack Obama's Inaugural Address on Jan. 21 represented a verbal departure from the record of corporate subservience that marked his first four years in office. His 2009 inaugural opened with, "I thank George Bush for his service to our nation," a promise to the corporate elites who run the United States that Obama's policies would differ little, if at all, from those of the previous Republican administration.

But this time, Obama's speech writers, for the "historic record" and for those who retain illusions that the first Black president could actually become a champion of the poor and oppressed, portrayed Obama as a man of the people, vitally concerned with human rights, democracy, world peace, and prosperity for all—immigrants and gays included!

"Each time we gather to inaugurate a president, we bear witness to the enduring strength of our Constitution. We affirm the promise of our democracy," said Obama, who neglected to review his record in signing on once again to the anti-democratic Patriot Act, his personal "kill list," the mass interrogation and harassment of 700,000 Muslim-Americans since 9-11, racist stop and frisk laws, and the increasing obliteration of voting rights for Blacks across the country. The violations of fundamental democratic rights became the common currency of state and federal policy during his administration, notwithstanding the few words of "concern" that he uttered.

"The patriots of 1776 did not fight to replace the tyranny of a king with the privileges of a few or the rule of a mob," Obama declared. But under his administration the distribution of the

(Photos) Despite Obama's rhetoric about "democracy," he has signed onto numerous infringements of civil liberties, including systematic harassment of Muslim Americans.

nation's wealth was nothing less than Robin Hood in reverse, with the .001 percent ripping off a greater percentage than anytime in the modern era.

"Through blood drawn by lash and blood drawn by sword, we learned that no union founded on the principles of liberty and equality could survive half-slave and half-free," Obama stated, claiming a piece of the Lincoln legacy. Yet today's increasingly privatized U.S. prison-industrial complex incarcerates the largest number and percentage of the country's population in the world. The majority of prisoners are Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Ameri-

(continued on page 4)

INSIDE SOCIALIST ACTION

Health-care unions — 2
Right to bear arms — 3
Spain / Egypt — 4

Black self-determination — 6
Books: *Purity Myth* — 8
Honduras — 8

Films: *Django, Les Mis*' — 9
Tar sands / Canada — 10
Lynne Stewart / Greece — 11

MALI

See page 12.

Health-care unions merge; wage fight against Kaiser

By MARIE MARTIN

Kevork Djansezian / Getty Images

On Jan. 3, the CNA (California Nurses Association) issued a press release to announce their fightback campaign against California's large hospital chains such as Kaiser and Sutter Health. They were also announcing an affiliation agreement with NUHW (National Union Of Healthcare Workers).

This is not a new relationship, as the two unions have worked together and conducted strikes against Kaiser Permanente in the past. The Kaiser health-care chain has made \$6 billion in profits since 2009 and continues to demand job cuts and givebacks.

There was a time when NUHW was part of SEIU. They were SEIU 250, and then SEIU/UHW (United Healthcare West)—one of the largest and most powerful health-care unions in California. Sal Roselli led the union in criticizing SEIU International President Andy Stern on issues of internal democracy and too many concessions to management in national union contract settlements in return for "union growth" agreements. UHW believed that fights could be won with greater militancy and member involvement.

In return, Andy Stern started laying the groundwork for seizing the headquarters of UHW. Stern—who had been rapidly moving towards running SEIU like a corporate board, cutting pro-management deals and only consulting with a select group of the International Executive Board—was now faced with something he had never seen before. UHW mobilized rank-and-file members to actively resist the hostile takeover. They sent Stern a public letter (printed in *The New York Times*) asking for "respect for legitimate and principled dissent" and claiming that trusteeship of their local "would show that internal democracy is



not valued or tolerated in SEIU."

On Jan. 27, 2009, 100 elected leaders of UHW were removed in Stern's imposed trusteeship. Not caught unaware, they immediately formed NUHW. CNA continued their close relationship with NUHW, and then SEIU launched attacks on both unions. Some of the attacks were violent. They culminated in a near riot at the 2008 Labor Notes Conference when a busload of SEIU members crashed through a crowded room to try to stop CNA's Executive Director Rose Ann De Moro from speaking—ostensibly because she was a union

buster. De Moro was speaking through a video hook-up and was not even in Detroit.

In 2010, after Andy Stern resigned in the middle of his term, Mary Kay Henry announced that she would run against Andy Stern's endorsed candidate, Anna Burger. When I heard Henry speak about why she was running and her vision for SEIU, she stated, "To restore our relationships with the rest of the union movement and our progressive allies." That is the phrase that brought the rank and file to their feet.

I never met a rank-and-file member who liked or respected Andy Stern. He was always "the guy who held that press conference with Walmart corporate executives." And no one was surprised when he accepted a paid position on the board of directors of the biochemical company SIGA, owned by billionaire Ronald Perlman's private equity firm, after he resigned from SEIU.

In some areas of the country President Henry has restored relations with other unions. But California is not one of them—specifically at Kaiser Permanente, where there is now a united fightback alliance between CNA and NUHW. But SEIU/UHW Kaiser workers are also in a contentious election. The NLRB has scheduled an election for 43,000 Kaiser workers to decide whether to remain with SEIU/UHW or to join CNA/NUHW.

There are SEIU locals that have an empowered rank and file. They exist in areas where dissent is allowed, and where they have used an organizing model, not a servicing model, to keep members involved. They have histories of strikes and have hated the vision of a corporate structure for SEIU. They want Mary Kay Henry to complete her campaign promise so we can all unite and fight. Meanwhile, we should all be watching the two unions who will be uniting to fight back against the real enemy—Kaiser management. ■

A WORKERS' ACTION PROGRAM TO FIGHT THE CRISIS

We propose an EMERGENCY CONGRESS OF LABOR to discuss and take steps to implement the following demands —

- 1) Bail out the people, not the bankers! Open the account books of the banks to full public inspection. Nationalize the banks to be supervised by workers' committees.
- 2) No foreclosures! No forced evictions! Cancel usurious debt payments, and reduce mortgage payments in proportion to their capitalist-caused decline in value.
- 3) Full employment at union wages! An emergency public works program to employ all jobless workers and youth! Employ people to build what we need — low-cost quality housing, efficient mass transportation, cheap and renewable sources of power, schools, clinics — and to conserve our water, forests, farmland, and open space.
- 4) Immediate withdrawal of all U.S. troops and mercenaries from Iraq & Afghanistan! No war on Iran! Close all U.S. bases abroad! No money for the military — use funds instead for public works! Convert the war industries to making products for people's needs and to combat global warming.

5) Reduce the workweek to 30 hours with no cut in pay, and cut the retirement age to 55. Provide unemployment and retirement payments at the level of union wages and benefits.

6) To combat inflation: A sliding scale of wages and pensions that matches the rises in consumer prices. To combat high medical costs: A free, universal, public health-care system.

7) Immediate citizenship for all undocumented workers. No job discrimination; equal pay for equal work — regardless of gender, sexual orientation, skin color, or national origin.

8) Nationalize manufacturing, big agribusiness, energy, and transportation corporations and place them under the control of elected committees of workers.

9) To mobilize support for the demands it adopts, the EMERGENCY CONGRESS should organize ACTION COMMITTEES in every workplace and neighborhood threatened by the crisis. These committees can draw up more concrete demands than the ones outlined above.

10) To put all these measures into effect, we need a LABOR PARTY — based on a fighting union movement and all people who are oppressed and exploited. For a workers' government!

SOCIALIST ACTION Closing news date: Feb. 2, 2013
Editor: Michael Schreiber Canada Editor: Barry Weisleder

Socialist Action (ISSN 0747-4237) is published monthly by Socialist Action Publishing Association, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610. Postmaster: Send address changes to: Socialist Action, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610. RATES: For one year (12 issues, 1st-class mail): U.S., Canada, Mexico — \$20. All other countries — \$30. Money orders and checks should be in U.S. dollars.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of Socialist Action. These are expressed in editorials. Socialist Action is edited, designed, and laid out entirely by volunteer labor.



For info about Socialist Action and how to join: Socialist Action National Office, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610, (510) 268-9429, socialistaction@gmail.com.

Socialist Action newspaper editorial offices: socialistactionnews@yahoo.com
Website: www.socialistaction.org

WHERE TO FIND SOCIALIST ACTION

- ASHLAND, Ore.: damonjura@earthlink.net
- BOSTON: bostsocact@gmail.com (781) 630-0250
- CARRBORO, N.C.: (919) 967-2866, robonica@lycos.com
- CHICAGO: P.O. Box 578428 Chicago, IL 60657, chisocialistaction@yahoo.com
- CONNECTICUT: (860) 478-5300
- DULUTH, MINN.: wainosunrise@yahoo.com, www.thenorthernworker.blogspot.com
- KANSAS CITY: kcsa@workernet.org (816) 221-3638
- LOUISVILLE, KY: redlotus51@yahoo.com, (502) 451-2193
- MADISON, Wis.: Northlandiguana@gmail.com
- MANKATO, MINN.: Misshbradford@yahoo.com
- MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL: (612) 802-1482, socialistaction@visi.com
- NEW YORK CITY: (212) 781-5157

- PHILADELPHIA: philly.socialistaction@gmail.com
- PORTLAND, ORE.: (503) 233-1629 gary1917@aol.com
- PROVIDENCE: ADGAGNERI@GMAIL.COM (401) 592-5385
- SALEM, ORE.: ANNMONTAGUE@COMCAST.NET
- SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA: P.O. Box 10328, OAKLAND, CA 94610 (510) 268-9429, sfsocialistaction@gmail.com
- WASHINGTON, DC: christopher.towne@gmail.com, (202) 286-5493

SOCIALIST ACTION CANADA

NATIONAL OFFICE
526 Roxton Road, Toronto, Ont. M6G 3R4, (416) 535-8779
<http://socialistaction.ca/>

Subscribe to Socialist Action

— \$10 for six months — \$20 for 12 months
— \$37 for two years

Name _____ Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ E-mail _____

I want to join the Socialist Action Newspaper Supporters Club.
I enclose an extra contribution of: \$100 \$200 Other

Clip and mail to: Socialist Action newspaper, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610.

Why oppressed communities need to safeguard their right to bear arms



By DANIEL ADAM

The Newtown, Conn., shooting on Dec. 14 has produced a wave of fear. Like other violent tragedies that shake confidence in humanity and heighten feelings of vulnerability, the shooting has widened openings for reactionary politics that threaten the struggles of working and oppressed people.

The two prominent responses to the Sandy Hook shooting appear to be opposed, but are in fact based on compatible political outlooks. Right-wing racists promote the arming of “law-abiding citizens” as the only defense against the “unlawful” and “criminal.” Liberals instead call on the bosses’ state to protect these same “law-abiding citizens” from “criminals” by disarming civilians, or at least by confiscating as many of the more high-powered weapons as possible.

Despite their strategic (and often merely tactical) differences, both perspectives are based on fear of the dispossessed and poor, and lack of confidence in ruling institutions. While right-wingers like Alex Jones may rail against the government, they are very careful to restrict their defense of armed civilians to those holding American citizenship who “abide by U.S. law.”

Anyone familiar with law and the criminal justice system of the United States knows which groups are on and off this list. While the wealthy can steal and murder with impunity, the poor get prison time for unpaid parking tickets, sending their kid to the wrong school, and falling down the stairs while pregnant.

Jones’s formula effectively excludes anyone from the right to bear arms who is targeted for state repression. This of course includes political dissidents, whose activity is periodically outlawed.

Both liberal gun-control proponents and right-wing arms-rights advocates call for the capitalist state to decide who will have arms. This is the political reality underlying the euphemisms of “gun rights” and “gun control.” It’s one reason expanded criminal background checks have emerged as the most politically viable solution: Both sides agree that the oppressed and disobedient are not fit for gun ownership, and that the bourgeois state should decide who is.

To see where these two paths meet, we need only look to Maricopa County, Ariz., where anti-immigrant sheriff Joe Arpaio has combined the best of both worlds—an armed volunteer force of 3000 to patrol areas around schools—the same force he uses to carry out anti-immigrant raids.

The left wing of gun-control advocacy may recognize the serious threat that state-backed armed racist vigilantes pose to immigrants, people of color, student activists, teachers, staff, and their unions (to name a few groups). Yet the state that sponsors these vigilantes is the same state that they call on to enforce gun regulations, and with all the force and selectivity and that it enforces other laws.

History shows that the capitalist class and its state apparatus often employ violence to repress militant mass movements for workers’ rights and significant social change. Such repression is generally carried out by police and the military, but when these means



are insufficient, the ruling power unleashes racist vigilantes and fascist thugs.

The fascists have little to fear from the capitalist state. On the contrary, they are its most valuable defenders, its defense of last resort. Apart from the capitalist class itself, they are the most loyal social base available. In Greece, where the class struggle is reaching a breaking point, the police have begun openly facilitating the fascist Golden Dawn’s many physical assaults on immigrants, journalists, and others. In some neighborhoods the Golden Dawn appears to have become the de facto police force.

Labor unions and other organizations of struggle have found through bitter experience that they often needed to possess arms in order to survive these attacks. The U.S. civil rights movement of the 1950s and ‘60s provides an example that is often overlooked.

Guns and the civil rights movement

In a 1988 interview with Judy Richardson, Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture), a former leader in the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, explained how SNCC workers persistently found themselves working with local community members who would return fire against white supremacists. One activist, in grappling with this question, asked other members of SNCC, “If they are returning fire, the terrorist groups, what is my position as a SNCC person?”

Said Carmichael: “Nobody in SNCC answered the question. Nobody. And when the question was not answered, it was clear then every SNCC person should make their own individual decision and the decisions were clear ... we began to carry guns, ah, probably even a little bit before this statement, which is in the early ‘60s, but I’m sure that by 1963, I would say 90 percent of your field staff in SNCC were carrying guns.”

Carmichael related how SNCC organized protection for voters when the Lowndes County Freedom Organization was running Black candidates. In the run-up to elections, white terrorist groups made it clear that Black voters would face serious violence on election day. Recognizing that the Klan was likely to draw on its forces from not just Lowndes County but all across the state, SNCC recruited serious Black youth from several Northern cities to defend voters. Carmichael

Two examples of Black self-defense:

(Left) Lowndes County Freedom Organization ran candidates in 1966 elections but had to counter threats of violence from the Klan.

(Below) Robert F. Williams, head of Monroe, N.C. NAACP in 1950s and ‘60s. Activists used arms to defend the community against racist terror.

stated: “They brought heavy guns, much materials. And we also let it be known to the terrorist groups that we were bringing people with guns and we were going to meet fire with fire.”

Like everyone else in the community, the local members of Lowndes County Freedom Organization, many of whom were quite elderly, were already well armed. Carmichael recalled: “You know, the law said, you have to leave your guns X number of feet away from the polling place. So all of them, old women, brought their guns. And this really shocked these young brothers and sisters who were in Chicago and New York and thought, to see these old people carrying guns.”

This kind of practice was hardly confined to SNCC. In “The Deacons for Defense: Armed Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement,” Lance Hill argues that the appearance of a consistent and pure practice of non-violence was cultivated as part of a political strategy to appeal to white liberals, despite the reality that civil rights activists commonly possessed arms for self-defense against racist violence.

Among numerous other cases Hill cites an account by a visitor to Martin Luther King’s home during the much earlier Montgomery Bus Boycott, who was “alarmed to find an “arsenal” of weapons and discovered that King himself had requested gun permits for his bodyguards.”

Hill’s main subject, the Deacons for Defense, originally formed in 1964 on a low-key basis to defend civil rights activists in CORE and other organizations. Even when they went public in 1965, they initially justified their defense work in the terms of non-violent strategy. This changed as the segregationist forces became more violent. Increasingly, the Deacons made their defense measures more public and turned them into a political issue, even engaging local police in armed confrontations.

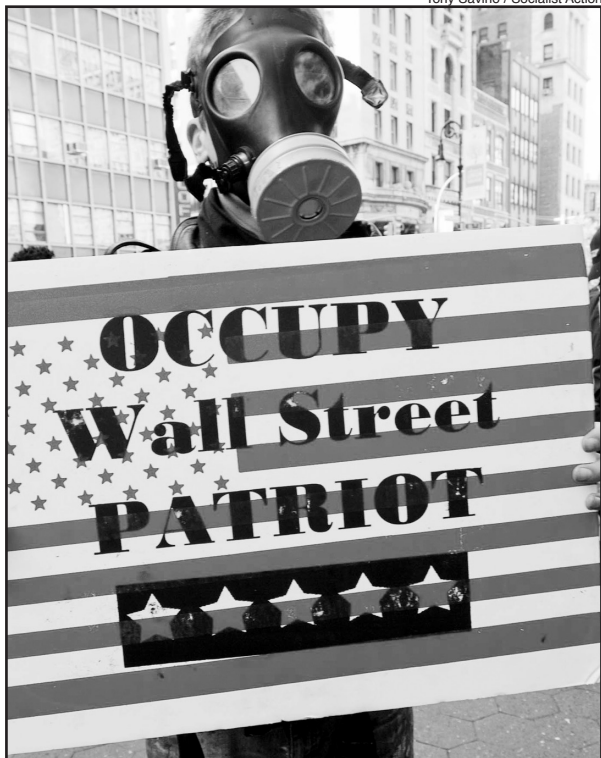
Hill shows how the Deacons’ challenge to white supremacists dramatically pushed back vigilante activity and inspired Blacks in a fundamentally different way than non-violent civil disobedience had done. He also makes the case that their public presence as a Black armed group forced the federal government into the first significant steps to neutralize the Klan.

The struggle of the Deacons also shows how gun control is implemented in real life. During a heated struggle in July 1965, the Mississippi governor ordered state police to seize all weapons found in cars or on persons in the city of Bogalusa, saying, “We’re going to run the Deacons out of business and anybody else that’s got pistols and rifles and shotguns.” People knew that this talk of disarming everyone was only a cover to dismantle the one armed Black group in town. And so the Voters League organized a non-violent march on July 14 to oppose the seizure of weapons.

Hill comments: “Nonviolence was ultimately a coalition-based legislative strategy cloaked as religion. In their attempt to assuage white fears of black violence, the national organizations took a stand against self-defense that placed them at odds with local movements besieged by police and Klan violence and hobbled by passive stereotypes. ... In truth, defense groups like the Deacons used weapons to avoid violence. And they raised important and legitimate questions about a strategy that pinned its hopes on liberals, organized labor and federal government.”

Politics is primary. No amount of guns can substitute for a clear political program and the ability of a political movement to connect to broad masses. Legal, non-violent tactics are usually preferred when possible. Still, we can learn from the civil rights movement that there are times when the armed self-defense of social movements is not only possible, but necessary.

It is certainly true that much of gun culture in the United States has its roots in white supremacist vigilantism. But the bourgeois state is not an ally that can be counted upon to disarm these groups or defend the targets of their terror. In the final analysis that task is up to the oppressed themselves. ■



(continued from page 1)

cans, who are compelled to perform near slave labor for corporate business and agriculture at an average wage of 50 cents per hour. Deduct the cost of trivial prison commissary items, and slavery has all but been re-introduced into the fabric of American society. The prison population has doubled over the past decade, and more prisons are built than schools.

Obama proclaimed, "Together, we determined that a modern economy requires railroads and highways to speed travel and commerce, schools and colleges to train our workers." But the Obama team increasingly joins the richest corporate magnates in the nation in campaigns to privatize for profit the nation's schools, to gut state and federal education budgets, and to preside over massive tuition increases that keep working people out of college. Meanwhile, it subordinates the construction of environmentally sustainable public transportation systems to the fossil-fuel-guzzling auto and trucking industries and the super-highways designed for their use.

"Together [together with whom?] one might ask the president], we discovered that a free market only thrives when there are rules to ensure competition and fair play." Competition? The norm in the U.S. and world capitalism today is monopoly, not competition. The ever-increasing direction of U.S. law is to advance monopoly control in order to best promote U.S. corporate interests against global competitors. Indeed, giant corporations that drive competitors out of the market have been given preference in the courts in the name of defending the "national security interests" of the U.S. That is, the little guy is driven from the market by monopoly practices to ensure that giant multinational corporations gain advantage at the expense of international competitors.

"Together, we resolved that a great nation must care for the vulnerable, and protect its people from life's worst hazards and misfortune," said Obama. Hazards? U.S. corporations employ some 50,000 carcinogenic materials in the course of their daily operations. Under the Obama administration the historic protection of workers afforded by trade unions has been decimated. Today, only 6 percent of the private sector workforce is unionized, as compared to 36 percent in 1955. A near majority of states today operate as open-shop "right to work for less" bastions to serve the profit interests of the elite.

"A decade of war is now ending," Obama proclaimed. The imperialist wars that the Obama administration pursued in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya have reduced those nations to poverty and ruin while U.S. corporations emerged with the lion's share of the conquered and occupied nations' resource wealth. The Iraq war killed 1.5 million Iraqis to ensure that U.S. oil monopolies would gain major control of that nation's oil reserves—the second largest in the world. Afghanistan's rare earth metals, critical for the manufacture (abroad) of computers and related technology, are valued at \$3 trillion. And the profits from Libya's oil, in the main, will now be in U.S. corporate coffers.

These wars are far from over. Half of the 120,000 military forces in Afghanistan are U.S.-funded mercenary death-squad armies—sometimes politely referred to as "military contractors"—the largest private army in U.S. history. The occupation of Iraq continues with now-off-shored troops poised to re-enter as required to maintain in power the U.S.-puppet Nouri al-Maliki regime.

Today, U.S. forces are on the increase in Africa and Latin America. Seven new U.S. military bases have been constructed in Colombia as the advance contingents for future wars aimed at re-established U.S. he-



... Obama's inaugural Corporate politics in disguise

gemony in the region. The U.S.-operated African Command (AFRICOM) last month approved sending 3500 U.S. troops, assisted by Predator drones, to 35 African nations. These are but the advance guard of the tens and hundreds of thousands to come in the course of U.S. efforts at re-colonization of that continent.

The U.S. spends \$1 trillion annually on its war machine, exceeding the combined total expended by the rest of the world. In truth, another decade and longer of wars and occupations is in preparation. The U.S. has every intention of remaining the "cop of the world."

"An economic recovery has begun," asserted the president, although a week later, the fourth-quarter figures affirmed a GDP decline, along with a continued fall in manufacturing investments. To the extent that there is an economic recovery it is limed to the ruling rich and their stock market manipulators, who engage in vast speculative machinations with capital that cannot be put to profitable use in the real economy. There has been no recovery for working people, unless the vast increase of minimum wage below subsistence and largely part-time work in the food and other service industries is considered a "recovery."

"For we, the people," says Obama, "understand that our country cannot succeed when a shrinking few do very well and a growing many barely make it." This super-rich "shrinking few" multi-billionaire and perhaps soon to be trillionaire ruling class in the U.S. and worldwide—based on the exploitation of the earth's billions of workers—has no alternative but to inflict ever-increasing measures to keep their system going. But Obama's recent and temporary "fiscal cliff" solution to the manufactured deficit crisis granted additional billions to the ruling rich while extracting billions from workers by ending the Bush-era payroll tax cuts. The average working American will now pay \$1000 more in taxes in the coming year.

Obama's deal with his Republican associates included some \$80 billion more to the "few" he appears to chastise, with the graphic example of the fine-print wording that gave the Amgen pharmaceutical corporation \$500 million by delaying for two years a government-mandated reduction in the cost of Amgen pills used in the kidney dialysis process. The \$500 billion, of course, will be paid to Amgen by Medicare funds, further increasing the deficit.

"We will respond to the threat of climate change, knowing that the failure to do so would betray our children and future generations"—a pitifully grandiose remark, if ever there was one. Obama campaigned for the presidency under the banner of being a bigger friend of the oil industry than Romney or Bush. During his final presidential debate, he publicly championed Big Oil as few candidates before him had ever done.

The president's first term, Obama bragged, saw increased domestic fossil fuel production, not counting the billions of barrels spilled into the Gulf Coast during the British Petroleum super-spill. His administration has promoted the water-table poisoning and environmentally catastrophic fracking and tar sands processes. The stated policy of Obama and virtually all candidates and parties of the ruling rich is to dramatically increase fossil fuel production and use by 25 to 40 percent over the next 10 years, a deadly scenario for the continuance of life on earth.

"We, the people," Obama insisted, "declare today that the most evident of truths—that all of us are created equal—is the star that guides us still; just as it guided our forebears through Seneca Falls, and Selma, and Stonewall; just as it guided all those men and women, sung and unsung, who left footprints along this great Mall, to hear a preacher say that we cannot walk alone;

to hear a King proclaim that our individual freedom is inextricably bound to the freedom of every soul on Earth."

However, no such truths have been put into practice by Obama or his predecessors. The state of Black America—last hired, first fired—has dramatically worsened under his administration, with every conceivable reactionary law put into place to increase the incarceration rate and numbers of the oppressed in prison (e.g., "three strikes," "stop and frisk," etc.) The income gap between Black/Latino and white is ever widening, while all workers are living or barely living through hard times imposed by the inherent inequalities that come with capitalist racist exploitation and oppression. Schools are increasingly re-segregated and failing, teachers are fired, affirmative action gutted, and social programs eliminated. Dr. King would be horrified!

Obama's tip of the hat to LGBT America has been taken at best. "Our journey is not complete until our gay brothers and sisters are treated like anyone else under the law, for if we are truly created equal, then surely the love we commit to one another must be equal as well," he stated. Yet his "equality" exists in word only, while thousands of laws remain on the books that discriminate against LGBT people in myriad ways.

The nation's 12 million "illegal" immigrants were also given an inaugural nod: "Our journey is not complete until we find a better way to welcome the striving, hopeful immigrants who still see America as a land of opportunity—until bright young students and engineers are enlisted in our workforce rather than expelled from our country." Under Obama, 400,000 immigrants were deported in each of the past two years. His new proposals for "Comprehensive Immigration Reform" amount to nothing less than continued oppression and use of immigrants as low-wage "guest" workers employed in the least desirable jobs—essentially denied the right to organize collectively.

For those necessary low-wage workers, Obama offers little or nothing. His "path to citizenship" includes requirements that are near impossible to meet, including payment of back taxes, mandatory facility in English, interminable waiting periods of perhaps 10 years, rejection of amnesty for all, forced military service (Dream Act), not to mention the massive militarization of the border.

For those potential immigrants with great skills—"engineers," said Obama—capitalism makes its exceptions, maintaining its "brain drain" policies to encourage a privileged few to desert their own countries in search of a way out of a poverty that is greatly exacerbated, if not caused, by imperialist pressure and control over underdeveloped nations.

"With common effort and common purpose, with passion and dedication, let us answer the call of history and carry into an uncertain future that precious light of freedom." With these concluding words, President Obama, the chief executive officer of the U.S. ruling class, concluded his oration, fully satisfying the liberal elite, who need to refurbish their tarnished party's image every four years. At the same time, the speech infuriated the Republican diehards, who serve capitalism best by pushing the country's overall agenda to the right—with Obama's compliance.

Despite Obama's rhetoric on this special occasion, there will be no real freedom in the U.S. or anywhere on earth until this corrupt assemblage of America's super-rich and their twin parties of hate and plunder—including its titular leaders like Obama—are removed by a mass mobilization and replaced by a government of working people. ■

By CHRIS HUTCH

MADRID—"Health care is not to be sold, it is to be defended!" demanded the lead banner that thousands of health-care workers marched behind in on Jan. 7. These health-care workers are known as the "Marea Blanca" or "White Tide" because of the white lab coats many wear during the protests. They are the voice of opposition to the planned privatization of the present health system in Madrid.

Spain consists of 17 autonomous regions, which are now having difficulty borrowing money following the economic crisis of 2008. The crisis was caused by predatory lending in real estate and wild speculative gambles in the financial sector. Furthermore, the Spanish state has assisted the U.S. in an unjust war in Afghanistan to the tune of 3.5 billion euros. The capitalist class, which caused the crisis, is now demanding that the working class make concessions in housing, education, jobs, and health care.

Health-care workers are standing up and saying, "No more concessions!" Many feel as though this is just the beginning of the move to a much larger privatization. The *Washington Post* reports, "The region of Madrid proposes selling the management of six of 20 large public hospitals in its territory and 27 of 268 health centers."

The planned privatization of Madrid's hospitals and auxiliary health centers spells disaster for the working class. Closing hospital facilities means longer waits for medical attention and an overall lesser quality of care. Already, massive unemployment and housing evictions are stretching Spanish workers to the limit psychologically and physically, which is evident by the rising suicide rates of the past year.

The Marea Blanca organized by the group Sanidad en Lucha has been in the streets for months, including a two-day strike in November as well as an unsuccessful attempt to win over elected officials through a massive petitioning effort, in which they collected over 1 million signatures.

Therefore, all recognize the need for continued mobilizations, strikes, and other actions. The Jan. 7 action, which started in Madrid's Neptune Plaza and ended in the Puerta del Sol, was filled with determination to continue the fight for their human right to good quality health care. The majority has spoken, and it will be difficult for the Spanish state to turn back this rising tide.

Political propaganda

SALAMANCA—Stickers, like politically charged graffiti, have played a dynamic role in reaching the masses with important messages. In Spain one can still see, stuck to drainpipes and street signs, calls to mobilize for the Nov. 14, 2012, general strike against austerity.

This tradition has a long history in Spain, and currently the Center of Historical Memory in Salamanca has an exhibition of political stickers from 1976 to 1982. The display examines political propaganda from the transition period between the end of the Franco regime to the consolidation of the social democracy and continuation of capitalist rule. The exhibition represents a wide range of movements—nationalist, feminist, socialist, anarchist, and workers'—that emerged full force as the stranglehold of the Franco regime loosened.

Spain's health workers: No cutbacks!



This exhibition appears at time when the global economic crisis, caused by the anarchic system of capitalism, has hit Spain hard. Official unemployment is nearly 25%. For youth ages 15-24, the official unemployment number is 37.7%.

The Spanish state, a constitutional monarchy, is governed mostly today by the People's Party (PP) and the Spanish Socialist Party (POSE). Since the crisis began, both of these parties have laid down the gauntlet of austerity onto the heads of Spanish workers. Austerity, meted out by the "Troika"—the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Central Bank—continues to threaten Spanish workers with deeper hardships.

Home evictions

As if unemployment weren't bad enough, a massive wave of home evictions is well underway in Spain. While 1 million homes currently go unoccupied, evictions continue at a staggering rate. Reuters reports, "Some 50,000 Spaniards were kicked out of their homes in the first half of 2012."

People are horrified by the fact that more than 100 owners and renters committed suicide after being forced out of their homes in 2012, some jumping to their deaths from the windows of their apartments. Nearly every country in southern Europe facing austerity has seen dramatic spikes in the rates of suicides. The Spanish newspaper *El Pais* reports a 52% jump in Italy and 40% jump in Greece.

These stories have led to a massive public outcry. Many feel as though these are not suicides but murder.

They demand that everyone have a roof over their head at a fair price. Newspapers in Spain are also reporting that locksmiths are refusing to help the landlords and the state in the eviction process.

Crackdown on civil liberties

The Spanish state is beginning to come down hard on activists in the anti-austerity movement. Two notable cases include Alfonso Fernandez and Twitterista @Almu_en_Lucha.

Alfonso or "Alfon," a 21-year-old from Madrid, was on his way to a picket line during the Nov. 14 general strike when he and his girlfriend were arrested. The judge sentenced Alfon to preventative detention, claiming he was potentially too dangerous to be released to the public. This charge stems from police accusations that Alfon was carrying a bag of gasoline to the picket line. Alfon maintains that the accusations are not true.

The Spanish people have responded to these draconian measures with an "Alfon Libertad" movement, which has been manifested both in the Twitterverse (#Alfon-Libertad) and on the streets of the Spanish state. "Alfon Libertad" graffiti is scrawled on the walls in many places as a reminder that an injury to one is an injury to all. Nearly nine weeks later, at the time of this writing, Alfon remains in jail and the struggle continues.

Journalist Almudena Montero (@Almu_en_Lucha) has been called in for questioning before the national police for her posts on Twitter. Izquierda Anticapitalista reported that police claim @Almu_en_Lucha is inciting violence by posting quotes of 1920s Italian communist Antonio Gramsci on her Twitter account. ■

Egyptian regime attacks demonstrators

By ANDREW POLLACK

The regime headed by President Mohamed Morsi shot down dozens in protests in Egypt at the end of January. All the while it continued to meet with International Monetary Fund officials to dicker over the terms of a promised loan, terms that it knows can only be enforced if militancy in the streets and workplaces is crushed.

The bourgeois opposition gathered in the National Salvation Front (NSF) reacted to the new wave of repression in its typical schizophrenic way: at first endorsing protests against the regime's undemocratic legal and constitutional moves, then quickly agreeing to talks seeking a compromise with the regime and denouncing the "violence" of youth in the streets, the better to secure acceptance of its compromise offer.

The NSF is composed of several secular liberal parties and the April 6 Youth Movement, as well as former Mubarak regime figures. NSF leaders trotted out the myth of the "nonviolence" of the uprising against Mubarak, hoping episodes like the heroic "Battle of the Bridge," when the youth forced back regime soldiers and cops, will be forgotten.

As has been the case at each crucial turning point of the revolution, the youth turned out in huge numbers around the country during the anniversary days. Particularly notable was the turnout in the Suez Canal cities of Port Said, Suez, and Ismailia. Port Said even announced its independence from the Morsi regime. Protests there were particularly fierce because of the regime's failure to convict any of the cops or thugs who murdered soccer fans in the city a year ago, instead issuing death sentences to fans supposedly involved.

The importance of these cities rests in the ability of their workers to shut down commerce traveling through the Canal, and in so doing potentially sparking strike action elsewhere in the country. Morsi declared a state of emergency and curfew in the Canal cities, but was forced to backpedal after mass demonstrations openly defied the curfew.

Meanwhile, thousands in Alexandria blocked several main roads as well as public transport. And protesters in Qena, in Upper Egypt, demanded that the Suez Canal not be given up "to any entity," re-



(Above) Egyptian President Morsi meets with German Chancellor Merkel, Jan. 30.

flecting fears that the regime would give up control of the Canal to Israel, the U.S. and/or Qatar, fears which are understandable given the regime's continued acquiescence in imperialist-run "free-trade zones."

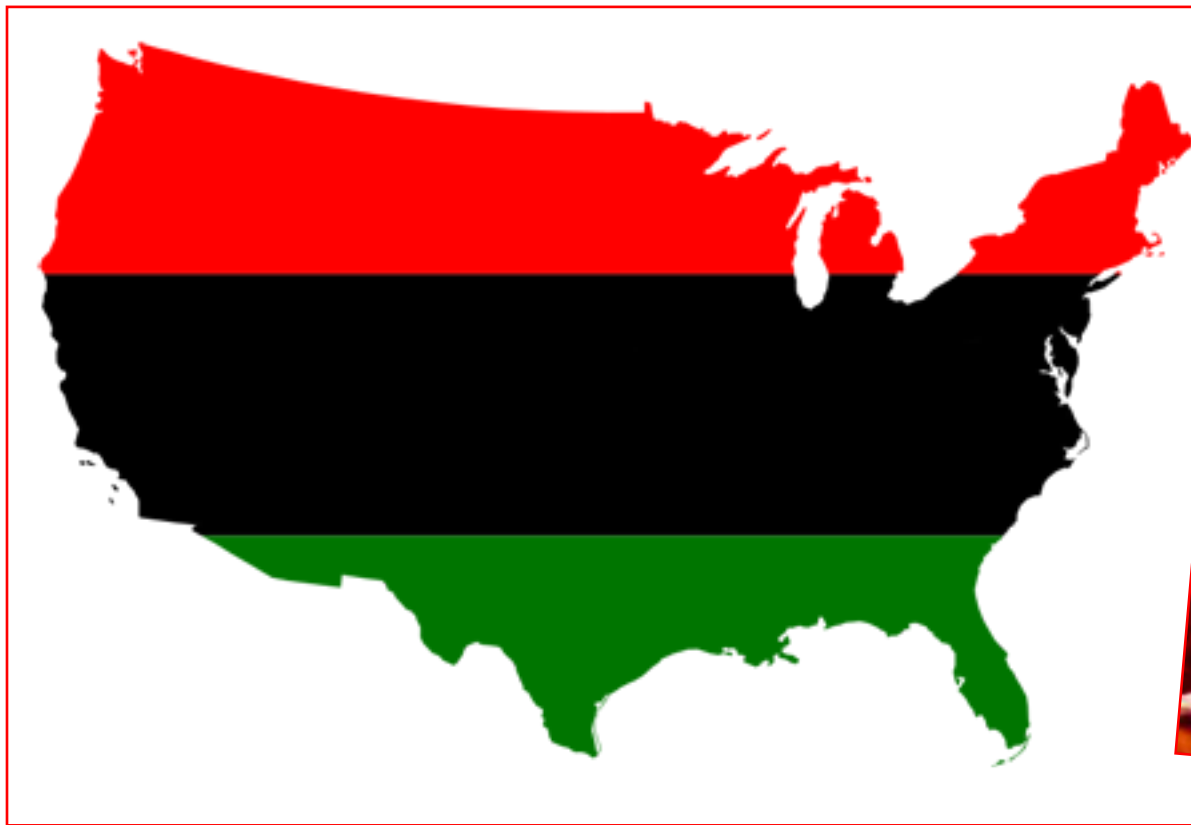
Meanwhile, a new force has appeared on the scene, the so-called "Black Bloc" of anarchists. They have appointed themselves "protectors" of the masses in the streets—ignoring the organized self-marching of every mass protest in the

last two years. And this offer of "protection" is a slur on the amazingly efficient and democratic self-organizing that the youth, women, workers, and hundreds of thousands of unaffiliated individuals participated in while providing food, shelter, and health care, as well as space for democratic decision-making about rally and march logistics and tactics.

The self-appointed and unaccountable Black Bloc has also offered to protect women who are facing unprecedented levels of regime-organized assault and rape. This "offer" is a slap in the face to the amazing defense squads organized by groups such as the Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment team, which have done a heroic and thoughtful job of combining defense, rescue, counseling, shelter, and health care for victims of such attacks.

What's more, unlike the Black Bloc, these self-organized masses have deep roots in the country's workplaces, neighborhoods, campuses, women's groups, etc. These roots in turn provide the potential for more structured forms of organization—i.e. committees representing each workplace, school, residential block, etc.—which can potentially unite on a national level, providing essential venues for the masses to discuss and decide on their demands and strategy, all as a prelude to an eventual challenge for power. ■

Black Self-determination and Socialist Revolution



To commemorate Black History Month, we are reprinting the first part of the Socialist Action resolution, "Black Self-Determination and Socialist Revolution in the United States." The document was drafted in February 1992 and adopted by the July 29-Aug. 2, 1992, Socialist Action convention.

African Americans are an integral part of the American working class. They are also an oppressed nationality, and we support their right to self-determination up to and including the right to form a separate nation. While nationalist aspirations have always been a part of the Black consciousness, whether or not this people sees its interests best served by separate forms of organization and goals or as an integral component of the broader class struggle has been shown by history to be dependent on both objective and subjective factors.

When the white majority is sharply divided, as it is from time to time, Black Americans might see their interests coinciding with those of this or that sector of the majority. When African Americans sense that allying with one or another sector of a divided white majority serves their interests as a people, they have vigorously responded.

Such a division led to the Civil War, which ended in the overthrow of the slave-owning class and the abolition of slavery. This second American Revolution—as was the first—was led by this country's capitalists. A de facto alliance was formed between the whole Black people, free and slave, and the opponents of slavery led by Abraham Lincoln, the last of America's capitalist revolutionaries.

Lincoln and Northern capitalism were driven further than they had intended to go—by Blacks, the abolitionists, and by the logic of the deadly struggle for capitalist supremacy over the slaveholding class.

Black Americans enjoyed a short period of relative political freedom during the period known as "Reconstruction." Black political freedom was the means by which Northern capitalists consolidated their victory over the former slaveholding class.

Shortly after the Civil War, a new alliance was formed between Black and white poor farmers, who made common cause against the large landowners—formerly slaveholders—and Northern bankers. This alliance was crushed by the victorious capitalists, who by 1877 had concluded peace with the remnants of the old Southern ruling class. Because the old slaveholders were also landlords and owners of private property, including capitalist enterprises employing wage labor, their incorporation into victorious American capitalism was entirely logical and quite easily consummated. Thus the former slave masters were fully integrated into the expanded American capitalist class.

Once the domination of capitalism over the Southern states was assured, Blacks were soon subjugated once

Black Americans enjoyed a short period of relative political freedom during Reconstruction. That was the means by which the Northern capitalists consolidated their victory over the former slaveholding class.

again—this time as a sector, or caste, of super-exploited workers and farmers. And in the rural Southern states the former slaves were eventually placed in a special form of bondage that had features of serfdom. They were chained to the land by the peculiar institution of sharecropping, backed up by juridical forms of second-class citizenship.

Many poor white farmers were similarly subjugated by the institution of sharecropping. But as whites, they were able to more easily extricate themselves from the bondage of debt to the landlord. Blacks, however, having no legal recourse and subject to terrorism of the KKK and other fascistic bands, were chained to the land substantially in the manner of feudal serfs.

"Jim Crow" laws, which constituted the American form of apartheid, were enacted in all the Southern states. African Americans were juridically segregated—a word that barely suggests its terrible consequences. They were denied the right to vote, denied access to all but the hardest and lowest-paid jobs, condemned to inferior, segregated schools and housing, and subjected to a variety of degrading insults of every imaginable kind. These ranged from segregated drinking fountains and toilets, and worse, to a de facto denial of access, more often than not, to the indispensable and vital requirements of modern civic life. There was no arena of public life in which Blacks were not confronted by instances of racial injustice, down to being compelled to stand at the rear of buses until every white rider had been seated.

In many cases, while white workers and poor farmers were not the real beneficiaries of Jim Crow laws, they were often among the Blacks' worst tormentors. How did this come about?

First, those Blacks who had succeeded in becoming independent farmers were driven from their land by naked terrorism. Ku Klux Klan and other fascistic gangs then lynched and burned Blacks out of every occupation but the very worst. And those poor white farmers who had allied themselves with Blacks in a populist movement in opposition to the former planocracy and Northern bankers also came under attack. The poor whites that dared oppose the extra-legal gangs—many of whom would mobilize in defense of

(Above) Marcus Garvey: His nationalist and Pan Africanist views included the idea that Blacks in the U.S. should return to the African homeland.

their Black neighbors—were subjected to a dose of the same murder and mayhem inflicted upon Blacks.

Moreover, many poor white workers and farmers were deceived by capitalism, and its agents among them, into believing that they would materially benefit from the oppression of Blacks. While this was sometimes the case, with individuals here and there gaining the better-paying jobs taken away from Black workers, and gaining land at bargain prices taken from Black farmers, the white workers in factory and farm "gained" mainly by not being the immediate target of the terror campaign and all its horrendous consequences.

Then, as all resistance was suppressed, the living standards of white workers—and working farmers too—were in most cases also driven down to a level only somewhat better than that of Blacks. The method is similar to the practice of capitalist employers who will pay scabs higher than normal wages—until the strike is broken.

Many workers and farmers, terrorized into a culpable silence or brainwashed into thinking that they would gain economically from the assault against Blacks, were induced by their misleaders to take a more or less active part in the victimization of their class brothers and sisters. But the expected gain was an illusion because by driving down the living standards of Blacks, the standards of all workers—and working farmers too—were driven down. In fact, during the long period when Jim Crow was the law of the land in the Southern states, from the end of the 1870s to the end of the 1960s, Black and white workers in the Jim Crow states earned wages that averaged considerably lower than their counterparts in the North.

What began in the Southern states eventually was extended to varying degrees everywhere. The capitalist-initiated exclusion of Blacks created an artificial oversupply of Black labor. According to the laws of the capitalist market, this drastically drove down the price of Black labor power (wages).

But capitalist economics also dictated that Blacks thus forced to work for lower wages inexorably undermined the price of labor power for all workers, white as well as Black. White workers were regularly reminded by their bosses, when they showed dissatisfaction with wages or working conditions, that they could be easily replaced by Blacks "only too eager to work for less."

The absurdly false perception spread, and was insidiously promoted among white workers, that Blacks voluntarily choose to work for lower wages because, racists falsely argued, "as an indolent and inferior race they need less to live on." This myth provided

(continued on page 7)



(continued from page 6)

the rationale for the treacherous practice of excluding Blacks from unions.

It was the privileged labor bureaucracy that led the unions toward self-destructive racist, exclusionary practices. Historically constituting the most backward layers of the workers' movement, the bureaucracy serves as the main transmission belt into the working class for capitalist ideology. The racist role of the labor lieutenants of the capitalist class helped create the illusion among Blacks that racism derives from the exclusionary policy of white workers and their unions, and not from capitalism.

This myth is relentlessly promoted by the capitalist media and still distorts the perceptions of both Black and white workers despite the fact that white workers also suffer from the generalized reduction in the price of labor power resulting from racist practices. Meanwhile, capitalism continues to reap untold billions in superprofits because Blacks are systematically paid below the value of their labor power.

Unfortunately, once in place, the real source of the racist centrifugal dynamic disrupting the unity of Black and white workers became increasingly harder to perceive.

This opened the door wider to the divide-and-conquer policy of the ruling class. Once the practice of paying Black labor less than white labor had been institutionalized, capitalists could quite easily induce desperate Black workers, alienated by racist union practices, to serve as strikebreakers. Black workers, condemned by capitalism to serve as virtual permanent members of the reserve army of the unemployed—but perceiving it as caused by the racism of white workers—could see no good reason to act in solidarity with striking white workers. This, in turn, contributed substantially to further ingrain racist prejudices against Blacks among the more backward layers of the white working class.

Why Blacks turned toward separatism

By 1876, the re-enslaved Blacks in many Southern states felt betrayed by their former allies among poor whites. They were thus receptive to movements for emigration to sparsely settled areas of the country. The idea of separation was, of course, not new. Many Blacks were captivated by dreams of going home—back to Africa—beginning with their enslavement in a foreign land.

In 1878, a group organizing an exodus from the Southern states had recruited 98,000 Black victims of racist terror from Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Missouri, and Indiana. But the exodus proved a failure. "The emigrants were attacked and denied transportation by white mobs who realized their importance to the Southern labor market" (From Philip Foner's "The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass," Vol. IV, International Publishers, 1955).

Frederick Douglass, who still had faith in a capitalist-led reformation of the South, had opposed the exodus up until his visit to South Carolina and Georgia in 1888. Soon after his return, he wrote a letter in favor of emigration to one of the leaders of this movement:

"I had hoped that the relations subsisting between the former slaves and the old master class would gradually improve; but while I believe this, and still have some such weak faith, I have of late seen enough, heard enough, and learned enough of the condition of these people in South Carolina and Georgia, to make me welcome any movement which will take them out of the wretched condition in which I now know them to be. While I shall continue to labor for increased justice to those who stay in the South, I give you my hearty "God-speed" in your emigration scheme. I believe you are

By 1876, the re-enslaved Blacks in the South felt betrayed by their former allies among poor whites. They were thus receptive to movements for separation.

doing good work" (*ibid*, Foner).

A further review of U.S. history from the Civil War to the present day will show that the Black masses have followed the path to freedom that seemed most open to them. Though justifiably suspicious, they tend to readily collaborate with whites when convinced by the action of the potential ally that the alliance serves Black aspirations for freedom. American history has so far shown that it is after betrayal, when the prospects for reliable white allies seems hopeless, that a separatist mood tends to grow.

Such was the case after World War I. Capitalism during the war had encouraged a mass migration of rural Southern Blacks to work in the war-expanded industries of the North. At the same time, however, the capitalists insidiously worked behind the scenes to disrupt instinctive moves towards cooperation between Black and white workers. Capitalists and their agents systematically encouraged the most backward whites to vent their racist spleen against Blacks.

The Ku Klux Klan had steadily spread to the North after the crushing of Black resistance in the South. But it was kept within limits required by the needs of the first imperialist world war. After the war, the Klan-like groups were given the go-ahead when the war industries shut down and unemployment soared. Capitalism, which no longer required Black labor to work in their war industries, unleashed the full fury of its racist shock-troops to prevent a united working-class response to mass unemployment.

The Klan blamed Blacks for the misery of whites thrown on the scrap heap of the jobless. This effectively diverted the ire of the most backward workers from the capitalist criminals to its Black victims. And, typically, the bureaucratic and often overtly racist misleadership of the unions refused or failed to counter the boss-inspired scapegoating of Blacks.

This betrayal led to a renewed wave of nationalism and separatism engulfing the disappointed Black masses. Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association grew into the largest mass movement of Blacks since the Civil War. The UNIA was more than a "Back to Africa" movement. Garvey tapped the deep sentiment for organizational and economic independence. The growing use of lynch-law throughout the land inspired a movement toward self-defense. Garvey's organization attempted to meet this desperate need. The UNIA raised an army—which under the prevailing conditions was essentially symbolic—complete with officers, uniforms, and a "Black Cross" nurses corps. All "for the reconquest of Africa."

Blacks enthusiastically flocked to the UNIA. They saw the Garvey-led "army," above all, as a bold and necessary step that they hoped would be filled with real content. At its height the Association numbered several million members and had amassed considerable capital for its independently owned business ventures.

Black nationalism and permanent revolution

Leon Trotsky, who along with V.I. Lenin, led the Russian workers to victory over Russian capitalism in 1917, understood the progressive character of the nationalism of oppressed peoples. Trotsky applied this understanding to Black nationalism in the United

(Left) Members of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union at a rally in 1937. The union was a rare instance of Blacks and whites organizing together until the rise of the CIO.

(Right) Terrorism against Black people revived in the South after the fall of Reconstruction.

States.

Lenin had blazed the trail on this. He taught that the nationalism of the oppressed in a distorted expression of class consciousness—an organic part of the class struggle. The Bolsheviks called for unequivocal solidarity by the workers with the struggles of any oppressed nationality for freedom, justice, and equality. After Lenin's death, Trotsky carried on this defense of true proletarian internationalism and class solidarity.

As early as 1905, Trotsky predicted the course of the Russian Revolution in his Theory of Permanent Revolution. The working class would first overthrow the capitalist state, Trotsky's theory predicted, and then give its peasant allies the land, dealing a fatal blow to the power of the combined landlord-capitalist class. After thus firmly cementing its alliance with the peasantry, the workers would then go on to destroy the remaining foundations of capitalist power, advancing the socialist character of the revolution.

Trotsky also blazed a trail on the related theoretical principle. He foresaw, 12 years before the Russian Revolution, that the democratic revolution—which includes the right of oppressed nations to self-determination—could only be carried out in the course of a social revolution led by the Russian workers.

Trotsky later went on to generalize the Theory of Permanent Revolution after it was confirmed by the actual course of the October Revolution. In the United States it meant that Black freedom, justice, and equality were impossible so long as the capitalist class ruled; that only a workers' revolution combined with a struggle by Blacks could liberate the Black people.

In 1939, Trotsky engaged in a discussion about Marcus Garvey and Black nationalism with his co-thinkers in the American socialist movement. After listening carefully to the factual presentations of his American comrades, he argued for an understanding of the entirely progressive sentiment Black nationalism represents. He said: "The Black woman who said to the white woman [who had just pushed her in a street car], 'Wait until Marcus is in power. We will know how to treat you then,' was simply expressing her desire for her own state.

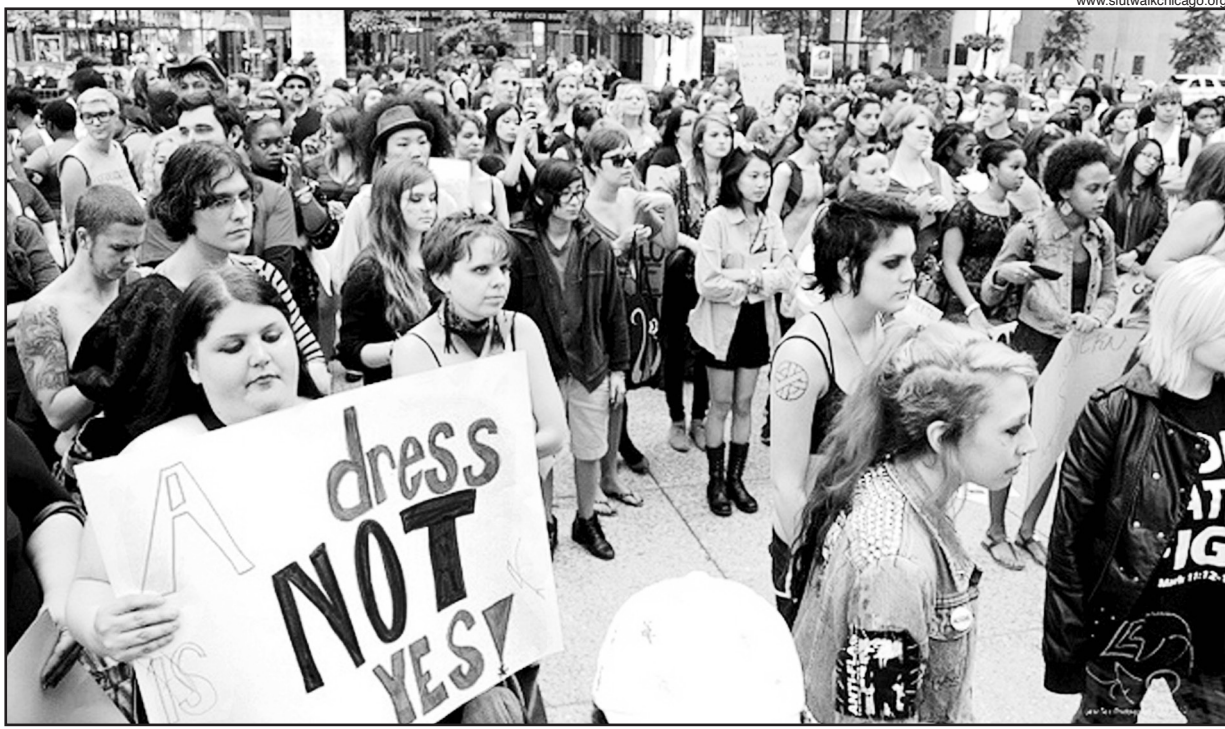
"The American Negroes gathered under the banner of the 'Back to Africa' movement because it seemed a possible fulfillment of their wish for their own home. They did not want actually to go to Africa. It was an expression of a mystic desire for a home in which they would be free of the domination of the whites, in which they themselves could control their own fate. That also was a wish for self-determination" ("Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination," Pathfinder Press).

Trotsky had earlier explained, "I do not propose for the party to advocate, I do not propose to inject, but only to proclaim our obligation to support the struggle for self-determination if the Negroes themselves want it." Indeed, to do otherwise would itself be a violation of the right of oppressed people to determine their fate. It would also cast a cloud over the absolute commitment of revolutionary socialists to a united working class based on true equality.

CIO: Break from labor's racist past

When the mass-production workers began their historic assault on the citadels of American industrial

(continued on page 9)



'Purity' myth hurts young women

By DAWN ROSE

"Your body is a wrapped lollipop. When you have sex with a man, he unwraps your lollipop and sucks on it. It may feel great at the time, but, unfortunately, when he's done with you, all you have left for your next partner is a poorly wrapped, saliva-fouled sucker." —Darren Washington, abstinence educator at the Eighth Annual Abstinence Clearinghouse Conference

The quote above is disturbingly telling. America is obsessed with virginity, and that obsession is harming both women and men in insidious ways. In "The Purity Myth: How America's Obsession with Virginity is Hurting Young Women" (2009), Jessica Valenti crafts a vivid and compelling narrative about the pervasive American purity myth, which valorizes "pure," virginal women for their passive femininity, while condemning sexually active women as tainted and immoral. This myth *matters*—and has consequences ranging from the conservative backlash against women's rights and the promotion of erroneous and discriminatory abstinence-only education, to complacency towards sexual violence.

Conservative think tanks and anti-feminist organizations, like the Independent Women's Forum and Concerned Women for America, are leading the charge for the well-funded and well-organized virginity movement. This movement is reactionary in nature: as women in recent decades have made measurable social gains and challenged traditional gender roles, the virginity movement has organized in "seeking a return to traditional gender roles (marriage and motherhood), and focusing on purity is the vehicle toward that end."

Virginity as a moral proxy is harmful, Valenti argues, as it creates a culture in which girls are valued for their passivity, rather than for their accomplishments. Furthermore, the virginity movement fetishizes the sexualization of young girls, rather than fighting

against it. Valenti describes in vivid detail the surge of disconcertingly sexual father-daughter purity balls and antiquated purity pledges, in which fathers pledge to "cover" and protect their daughters in the area of purity.

There is also a spate of virginity-themed products that commodify teen sexuality—t-shirts for young girls stamped with messages like "No Trespassing on This Property, My Father is Watching", and "Virginity Vouchers", or credit card-like abstinence commitment cards featuring images of a bride and groom. As Valenti rightly states, by "focusing on girls' virginity they're actually positioning girls as sexual objects before they've even hit puberty."

The purity myth hurts men too

The virginity movement's ideal woman is passive, docile, and relegated to the home. This notion of ideal femininity is harmful for men as well—it creates an oppositional ideal of masculinity that is aggressive and dominant. This has consequences for violence and the perpetuation of rape culture.

If women are the moral gatekeepers of sex, Valenti claims, then the behaviors of men are excusable; rape, sexual assault and violence against women are natural male responses to biological urges. We see this manifested often through victim blaming. The media reporting around sexual violence is often centered on women's behavior—what she was wearing, what she was drinking, or where she was walking—rather than on the actions of the actual perpetrators.

"Relying on condoms is like playing Russian roulette." Sex education in the U.S. hasn't escaped the talons of these conservative think tanks and virginity movement proponents. Research shows that more than 80% of federally funded abstinence education programs contain (or are often laden with) misinformation and false claims about sex and reproductive health. And there is indeed a regressive agenda behind this education. As Valenti unequivocally states:

"abstinence-only education seeks to create a world where everyone is straight, women are relegated to the home, the only appropriate family is a nuclear one, reproductive choices are negated, and the only sex people have is for procreation."

I would argue that one of the most severe consequences of the conservative backlash is the increasingly restrictive, anti-choice, and anti-women legislation cropping up across the country. The patriarchal discourse that dominates in the virginity movement presumes that women are incapable of making decisions about themselves or their bodies. This leads to heinous legislative attempts to roll back reproductive rights and hinder access to health services.

"Informed consent" laws regarding abortion are one such example. Created to "inform" women about the "realities" of abortion, an increasing amount of states are implementing restrictive, patronizing laws, from requiring doctors to tell women that abortions "end a human life" to mandating pre-abortion ultrasounds. If I were to pursue an abortion in my home state of Michigan, it would be required that I receive the following: a written summary of the procedure, illustrations or photographs of fetal development, prenatal care information, and condescendingly enough, parenting information.

The cult of virginity doesn't apply to all young women. Valenti is quick to explain that women of color and low-income women are generally absent from the purity myth discourse, as they are often hypersexualized. As she says, "how can you be pure if you are seen as dirty to begin with?" Despite these acknowledgments, Valenti lacks a more robust discussion about the commodification of virginity and how this manifests differently on racialized, queer, and trans bodies.

Class matters

But where Valenti falls a major step short is in explaining how the purity myth serves certain class interests. She lacks an analysis of *why* the cult of virginity fights to maintain traditional gender roles, and how the subjugation of women and appropriation of female sexuality reproduces capitalism. Her analysis lacks historicity and a rich explanation of the relationship between the commodification of female sexuality and the shift towards atomized family units with the rise of capitalism.

To extend her argument, I would claim that insofar as families remain atomized units, each solely responsible for the health and well-being of their offspring, the social cost of reproducing human labor remains low, class inequality is easily reproduced, and collective action is diminished.

Overall, Valenti's book is a thoughtful and evocative read, and useful in understanding the consequences of the purity myth for American men and women. Though enjoyable, her book is also pointedly U.S. focused, and I found myself desiring an international analysis. It is critical in the struggle for women's liberation to understand international complexities, and how Western and Eurocentric feminist frameworks can harm women across the globe.

This is particularly relevant in the midst of the current discourse and public outcry surrounding the gang rape and murder in New Delhi. The U.S. media has framed rape culture and the predilection towards violence as a unique character of Indian men, rather than a pervasive problem that is innately tied to the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism. ■

Popular movements organize in Honduras

By ANN MONTAGUE

At 3 a.m. on June 28, 2009, Honduran President Manuel Zelaya and his wife Xiomara were kidnapped from their home at gunpoint by 10 hooded Honduran soldiers and put on a plane that flew directly to the U.S. military base on Honduran soil called Palmerola. From there they were eventually flown to Costa Rica, where they were dumped on the airstrip and spent 23 months in exile.

This was the first successful military coup in 25 years in Latin America, and it took place five months after President Obama's election. When Zelaya returned to Honduras, he spoke to Amy Goodman on "Democracy Now!" His first words were, "This coup d'état was made in the U.S., and was a conspiracy that needs to be investigated by the international community".

Zelaya stated that the U.S. Ambassador, Charles Ford, was preparing the coup with the Southern Command. Ford had given President Zelaya the names of people the U.S. wanted him to appoint to his cabinet. He refused. At the time, Zelaya, a member of the center-right Liberal Party, was moving away from the expected neoliberal policies as he initiated literacy programs and increased services to the poor.

Honduras joined the Bolivarian Alternative For The Americas (ALBA) and developed relationships with Venezuela, Cuba, and Ecuador. According to Wikileaks docu-

ments, the CIA claimed Zelaya was threatening the security of the hemisphere. Currently, the so-called drug war is being used to justify sending 600 soldiers and opening three more military bases in Honduras.

Since the coup, there has been an increased number of killings specifically aimed at the campesino movement, unions, and members of the LGBT community. In response to the coup, a strong non-violent resistance movement has grown up. It has its base in the popular movements of unions, campesinos, indigenous communities, human rights groups, students, and the LGBT community. They united to form the National Front For Popular Resistance (FNRP). In November 2011 they submitted the required documentation, including 81,000 signatures to form a political party called Freedom and Refoundation Party (LIBRE).

At the formal ceremony presenting the signatures, Manuel Zelaya spoke: "We are entering a new era, we are opening a new era of democracy, of democratic socialism for the Honduran people, and this new era has a name—Freedom and Refoundation Party, LIBERTAD."

The Zelayas are large landowners in the central region of Olancho. In the Libre Party primary of November 2012, Xiomara Zelaya, running unopposed, was elected to be its presidential candidate. She has been holding large rallies throughout the country. The two other major parties are the National Party, the traditional party of the oligarchy, and Zelaya's former party, the Liberal Party. It has been

reported by election observers from the Alliance For Global Justice that in the primaries the Libre Party candidates received more votes than the combined total of the National and Liberal parties.

In December, I traveled to Honduras, and my friend encouraged me to meet her niece, who is a teacher and an activist in her union, as well as a supporter of LIBRE. Suyapa Almenderes is a teacher and proud union member. Earlier in the month she had participated in a strike called by the teachers unions. Some 30,000 Honduran public school teachers went on strike to protest the government's delay in paying their salaries.

The strike began on a Monday, just as thousands of public school students were coming back to class after five consecutive weeks of street protests against a new Education Law promoted by the government, which they believe will result in privatization of the public school system. Half of those who work in the public school system joined the three-day work stoppage in 298 municipalities around the country. They had not received their salaries since before August.

Suyapa explained that they are struggling against attacks on public schools teachers. In the past their jobs were secure; they had a decent pension and health care when they retired and death benefits for their families. Currently, the government can fire any teacher for any reason. In the past they could retire at age 50, and now it has increased to age 65, and family death benefits have been eliminated. Suyapa sees her union as standing up for the dignity of teachers.

(continued on page 11)

By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

Django Unchained, a film written and directed by Quentin Tarantino.

"Django Unchained" takes place in 1858, two years before the Civil War—the year that William Wells Brown published the first Black drama, "Leap to Freedom," John Brown held an anti-slavery convention, Abraham Lincoln said "A house divided against itself cannot stand," and the Richmond *Daily Dispatch* reported that 90 blacks were arrested for trying to get an education.

Tarantino made his engaging, well-acted and directed film in the true spaghetti-western style, with Ennio Morricone adding to the soundtrack as he had for Sergio Leone's films. However, he tackled a more serious issue than that of the typical pulp western of revenge, showdowns, and gun-battle one-upmanship. "Django Unchained" is a seriously nutty "comedy" that elicits a sober discussion on enslavement, and its portrayal over the years by slaves to Hollywood.

Put bluntly, he does not employ mushy sentimental platitudes a la Spielberg in "Amistad" or "The Color Purple." It is about the deadly craziness of racism and slavery's particular horrors.

"Django" stars Jaime Foxx, Kerry Washington, Leonardo DiCaprio, and the incredible German actor, Christopher Waltz, for whom Tarantino wrote delightful, erudite, highfalutin exchanges. He also wrote a lot of inflammatory dialogue for the white guys and some "domesticated" Blacks, including generous use of the "n" word. Tarantino's love for Japanese samurai films is evident in lots of blood splattering and gushing.

Dr. King Shultz (Waltz) is a bounty hunter who tracks wanted men: Dead or Alive. During a chance meeting in the woods at night, he comes across Django, an escaped slave in a chain gang, who knows where the bad guys are. Shultz frees him and elicits his help. Django agrees only if Shultz helps find his wife, Broomhilda (an obvious play on the name Brunhilda of Wagnerian

'Django'—A pulp Western look at slavery



lore), played by Kerry Washington. She is a slave at Calvin Candie's Mississippi plantation.

When they ride into a town, the townsfolk are shocked: "Looka there! A n— on a horse!" Over beers, Shultz tells Django that bounty hunting is "like slavery, a flesh-for-cash business." He convinces Django to play his valet so as to come off more a businessman than bounty hunter, and sends him off to a costume shop. Django emerges dressed as Gainsborough's "The Blue Boy" (Tarantino does have a wicked sense of cultural reference). To his credit, Tarantino uses flashbacks sparingly, showing them only to flesh out character, such as Django and his wife and his early days as a slave.

Many scenes are shot through with gory brutality wreaked on Blacks that are difficult to stomach, such as one of whipping a half-naked woman for breaking a few eggs. Shultz and Django rile up white slave owners who resort to forming a hooded posse (precursors of the Klan?), who complain about the hoods, which is hilarious; much needed levity in this violent film.

In one scene, Shultz asks Django about Broomhilda's name, then tells him the German myth, how the hero Siegfried rescues Brunhilda. He then convinces Djan-

go to act like a slaver himself, to ingratiate themselves with Candie, outfitting him in fine, well-to-do cowboy attire and a beautiful, hi-steppin' horse, on which he cuts quite a figure.

By now, almost halfway into the three-hour film, I was getting impatient: when would meet we Candie (Leonardo DiCaprio)? After witnessing a gruesome contest between slaves egged on by white plantation hands, involving a slave, d'Artagnan (Eto Assando), they arrive at Candie's plantation, Candiland. Candie is handsome, rich, smooth talking, corrupt, and evil. He stages bloody wrestling-to-the-death matches between slaves in a gorgeously appointed room while guests drink and dine, oohing and ah-hing as they shrink from blood spatters.

Broomhilda is there, severely punished for trying to escape. Stephen (Samuel L. Jackson, made up, as one critic said, like Uncle Ben), is Candie's kowtowing, simpering house slave with his own agenda, who literally hangs over Candie's chair at the head of the table. He bows and nods as Candie explains to his guests why slaves don't revolt, using a skull to illustrate. At one point, Shultz is visibly appalled; Stephen asks Django why it doesn't bother him, being Black himself. Django answers that Shultz is German, "I'm more used to Americans than he is."

It's fair to say that Christopher Waltz carries the film. After Shultz is gone, near the end, the film becomes predictable. Django turns himself in to spare his wife. But he has an out—money, and lots of it. The ending is a bloodbath; no one is spared. Django gives Stephen his comeuppance, too. But there is a happy ending. Django impresses Broomhilda with his horse's dressage; then the couple ride off into a "Gone with the Wind" sunset. Django becomes a legend for Blacks, almost like Toussaint L'Ouverture. ■

By TYLER MACKINNON

A musical for rebellion

With Oscar night right around the corner, this iconic book-turned-play-turned-film is taking theatres by storm—and for good reason. "Les Misérables" combines superb drama, action, romance, and tragedy. Written by French literary giant Victor Hugo over a century and a half ago, it is remarkable, if not a bit depressing, to see how many of the political and economic issues addressed in the novel and the musical retain their currency with audiences today.

"Les Misérables" is not an easy story to tell, particularly in a movie format. It consists of several plots, each quite separate, until they converge in a great climactic rebellion in the second act. With roughly a dozen different major characters—each having different origins, trajectories, and motives—it can get a bit confusing to those who are not familiar with the general plot.

Theatre productions can usually get away with story gaps due to the understood limits of cast, space, and budget, leaving the holes to be filled in by audience imagination. Film does not enjoy this luxury, posing a real challenge to the producer and director. Luckily, Universal Pictures was able to hire Tom Hooper ("King's Speech") to direct, and then UP gathered a star-studded cast to bring this amazing project to fruition.

"Les Misérables" starts in 1815 and climaxes in 1832, in the two-day-long June Rebellion, in which students tried to re-establish the republic and end the suffering of the masses. With many gains of the revolution of 1789 just a distant memory for the French working class, the country faces a return of the Bourbon monarchy after the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo.

The film centres on a former prisoner on parole, living in France, named Jean Valjean (played by Hugh Jackman). Upon his release he violates his parole conditions in an attempt to create a new life for himself. On the way he develops a moral code so selfless and good that it seems Jesus-like.

Despite his reformed ways, however, Valjean is under constant pursuit by French Police Inspector Javert (Russell Crowe). He refuses to believe that a crim-

inal can ever reform. His views on law and crime are so black and white that he resembles a musical caricature of Batman.

A sub-plot involves a love triangle between Valjean's adopted daughter, Cosette; a young Parisian revolutionist who is organizing the June Rebellion; and the daughter of comic-relief thieves. The film introduces several other characters, most notably Fantine (Anne Hathaway). Although she dies soon after being introduced, Fantine completely steals the show when she sings the classic "I Dreamed A Dream." Hathaway is sure to win an Oscar for this, not only for her excellent singing voice, but because her

performance revealed the horror faced by working-class women at the time.

Political issues percolate to the surface. At the very start of the film, police repression is quite visible as many of those labelled as criminals are guilty only for minor crimes, such as stealing a loaf of bread. Musical numbers dramatize the growing tension between France's working class and its ruling elites so evident in the gross inequalities of urban life. It is these tensions that build to the climax, demonstrating the need for working people to stand up, get organized and fight against any and all oppressive regimes.

The film does a great job in showing how the short-lived barricades failed to

topple France's new capitalist regime but would inspire revolutions to come. The young students who led the charge for freedom and equality saw their stand as a step towards a better world, and that only by being united on a principled basis could they smash tyranny.

Although the story is a tragedy in every meaning of the word (you would have to be a black-hearted capitalist not to get teary-eyed by the end), "Les Misérables" is truly an inspirational film. The music, the characters, and the political themes work so well together that, even though this epic has been on the big screen before, Hooper and his cast can be proud that they have brought "Les Misérables" and its message to the 21st century at a mere 158 minutes. I encourage everyone to go and hear the people sing! ■

... Black self-determination

(continued from page 7)

capitalism in the 1930s, they made a profound break from the racist patterns of the past. They had drawn the bitter lessons of the previous harmful policy of the segregationist AFL and other unions—a policy that led to profound defeats.

The insurgent workers' industrial union movement, organized at first within the AFL in the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO), consciously united Black and white, men and women, for the stupendous task of forcing auto, steel, and other giant corporations to kneel to industrial unionism.

The CIO was more than a union. It was a social movement for freedom and equality. This is what gave it its great strength. The CIO also took the first steps in allying itself with Blacks as a people.

As history has proven time and time again, when whites take this road, Blacks naturally respond. And so did virtually the entire Black working class and middle classes—from common laborers to intellectuals and even small

business people.

The conquests of this movement—although eroded by the privileged, self-seeking labor bureaucracy—are still alive and remain a source of great potential power. But most important, labor's giant step forward toward class unity taken in the mid-1930s will inspire it to follow that example again.

The working class has been in retreat for over 40 years—a retreat that has accelerated since 1970. The unions have been crippled by a labor misleadership that foolishly and criminally whines for "unity" with alleged "good" capitalists in place of a struggle against the capitalist class as a whole. A class-struggle policy in which all of capitalism's victims will fight together for economic and social justice is the logical way forward—not "unity" with the capitalist labor-bashers.

A break from the policy of supporting politicians in either capitalist party is indispensable for such a class-struggle policy. An independent labor party based on the unions is the logical political step toward uniting the working class and its natural allies for a gener-

alized struggle. But the labor bureaucracy has obstinately blocked this independent road. This irresistible force of historic necessity, however, will impel labor's rank and file onto the center stage of history. They will be compelled to sweep aside the privileged labor bureaucracy now blocking the road forward.

The aspirations of the Black community toward an independent Black party is an entirely progressive national expression. This is despite the success of the petty bourgeois, pro-capitalist, Black political misleadership that has kept the Black masses chained to the Democratic Party. These fakers, like their counterparts in the labor bureaucracy, are forced to conceal their slavish subordination to the ruling class behind demagogic declarations of independence.

But the coming resurgence of mass labor militancy will pick up where their predecessors left off. A new anti-capitalist alliance of all the dispossessed will arise that will uproot capitalist exploitation and national and sexual oppression. ■

We will continue with Part II of this resolution in next month's Socialist Action newspaper.

Movement rises against XL oil pipelines

By BARRY WEISLEDER

The movement to oppose Keystone XL is huge in Canada. It ranges from activists and scientists to indigenous peoples of the threatened Canadian plains and boreal forests, where the tar sands are located. It includes rural farmers and ranchers, and important sections of the labour movement.

Dave Coles, President of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers' Union, spoke to 5000 people on Oct. 23, 2012, at the Defend Our Coast rally in Victoria, British Columbia, explaining why his members are "diametrically opposed" to Tar Sands pipelines that would extend to BC's coast.

A representative of the United Fishermen and Allied Workers echoed those concerns, citing the loss of fisheries jobs in Alaska following the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

Most recently, the December-January upsurge of popular solidarity with aboriginal rights, voiced in part by the Idle No More movement, targeted federal government legislation to eliminate federal protection of lakes and waterways. Rallies held across the Canadian state also opposed pipeline construction to transport Alberta crude to China and other destinations.

Opposition to XL unites everyone to the left of the Stephen Harper Tories. Where the unity fractures is over energy alternatives. Sadly, the labour-based New Democratic Party federal leader Thomas Mulcair argues for building a pipeline eastward to deliver the tarry fuel to Atlantic Canada, at a cost of billions, rather than invest the money in green energy op-



(Above) Some 1400 join Portland, Maine, protest on Jan. 26 against proposal to pipe in tar sands oil from Canada.

tions—climate change be damned.

Protests in Canada dovetail with actions against the construction of oil pipelines in the United States. The most significant project is the Keystone XL pipeline, which would carry Alberta tar sands petroleum 1700 miles through environmentally sensitive areas of the Midwest to refineries in Texas. In January, hundreds of Native Americans, including supporters of Idle No More, gathered at the state capitol in Lincoln, Nebraska, to oppose the line, pointing out that it would endanger their ancestral lands.

On Jan. 26, some 1400 marched in Portland, Maine, to protest a proposal to move tar sands oil via a pipeline through eastern Canada to ports in New England.

And on Feb. 17, tar sands and the pipelines will be a major focus of the Forward on Climate mass rally in Washington, D.C. The U.S. State Department is expected to release its Environmental Impact Statement on the Keystone XL pipeline very soon, and the Obama administration will make its decision on the project later this year.

According to Oil Change International, emissions from tar sands extraction and upgrading are between 3.2 and 4.5 times higher than the equivalent emissions from production of conventional oil in North America. On a life cycle basis, the average gallon of tar sands bitumen-derived fuel embodies between 14 and 37 percent more greenhouse gas emissions than the average gallon of fuel from conventional oil.

Reasons to oppose pipelines and bitumen extraction do not stop there. Do you know the story of petcoke? It's a leftover from refining tar sands bitumen. Petcoke is sold as coal, but since it is cheaper and dirtier, it helps keep coal-fired plants running and polluting our atmosphere. A ton of petcoke yields, on average, 53.6 percent more carbon dioxide than a ton of coal. The proven tar sands reserves of Canada will yield roughly 5 billion tons of petcoke—enough to fully fuel 111 U.S. coal plants to 2050.

The situation is critical. That is why socialists say: No to tar sands oil! No to the pipelines! Nationalize Big Oil under workers' and community control. To combat climate change, governments should radically reduce reliance on fossil fuels, and implement a systematic plan for the development and use of sustainable green energy alternatives. ■

Members require the tools to fight back. That is what the union should have provided. Instead of holding a ratification vote on a concessionary agreement, OPSEU should have launched a strike vote prior to the Liberal Convention. Based on reports from mobilizers across the province, there would have been a strike mandate. This could have had an impact by putting pressure on the Liberal party, which heads a minority government, suspended the Legislature, and was busy choosing a new leader.

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

Concessions cripple labour's fight against capitalist austerity

By JULIUS ARSCOTT

The author is a former OPS mobilizer (resigned), Toronto Region, currently vice president, OPSEU Local 532.

Ontario Public Service Employees' Union (OPSEU) members of the Ontario Public Service (OPS) ratified a two-year collective agreement with a two-year wage freeze. It represents a wage cut of over 4% when inflation is considered. While members will continue to progress up the wage grid, the 3% lower first new step in the grid will have a major impact on new hires. The deal also removes termination pay for new employees. These are dangerous moves towards inequality among workers in the OPS.

The steps towards a two-tier wage structure is a betrayal of young members. It sows the seeds of a union divided. OPSEU is on the way to joining the ranks of major Canadian unions that have surrendered serious concessions. Leaders of

autoworkers, steel workers, postal workers, and Catholic teachers gave way. Then elementary and secondary public school teacher leaders caved to the OLRB ruling banning a one-day political strike. Now all teachers are forced to work under the thumb of undemocratic terms imposed under the former Bill 115.

Labour brass rhetoric aside, concessions bargaining is now the norm, not the exception, impacting most harmfully youths, women, and immigrant workers. Lacking was any attempt to work in a common front with the house of labour against Dalton McGuinty's austerity agenda.

Indeed, in true sectarian fashion, OPSEU organized a separate early morning protest at the Ontario Liberal leadership convention, where MPP Kathleen Wynne won the top post on Jan. 26. This denied members from outside Toronto (who relied on union-booked buses) the opportunity to participate in the Ontario Federation of Labour afternoon protest demonstration and rally. The OFL effort, which

attracted over 20,000 participants, was planned months in advance. The OPSEU event rallied less than 200.

Today, the labour leadership has virtually abandoned the fight against the capitalist austerity agenda. The labour-based New Democratic Party has likewise played a pathetic role. Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horwath has failed to defend workers publicly. She focuses her criticisms on the financial costs to be incurred by government in defending the legality of the actions of the big business parties against labour. Needed now, more than ever, is a working-class fightback in the NDP, to push the party to the left to challenge austerity, and to abide by more democratic and socialist principles.

There are good examples of effective protests against austerity. The Occupy movement, under the slogan "We are the 99%," showed for the first time in a generation that there is a class struggle, that working people did not create the economic crisis, and should not pay for it.

The massive Quebec students' strike in 2012 was an excellent example of a fightback against austerity. Quebec students rallied public support for universal access to quality post-secondary education, and hastened the defeat of the governing Quebec Liberal Party and the reversal of the tuition hike. This shows what is possible when there is progressive leadership.

OPSEU would have been in a better position to fight and win if it had launched a mobilization effort months before the beginning of bargaining, through bulle-

tins, guest speakers at local events, and educational conferences on what capitalist austerity is, and how to fight it. The union should have focused on a clear message, such as "no concessions," or "we didn't create this crisis, and we won't pay for it."

By accepting concessions, OPSEU signals to the ruling class that it will tolerate what the Liberals are doing—in effect making working people pay for the economic crisis we are enduring. Statements such as "the government would not budge" are a very poor excuse to accept concessions. If the bosses don't budge, should we collapse?

The idea that labour will turn things around "when the economy recovers," or that a struggle against management will occur without the union rank and file challenging and overcoming the union bureaucracy, are grand delusions. The fostering of class-struggle opposition in each union is no abstract ideal. It is an urgent necessity to avoid an accelerating descent into labour hell. ■

No to Canada's intervention in Mali!

By CANADIAN PEACE ALLIANCE

The government of Canada has recently announced that it is sending a CF-17 transport plane to northern Mali to add to the military buildup by the NATO powers in the area. The Canadian Peace Alliance is calling on the government to recall the plane and to cease any further contribution to the France-led mission.

One transport plane and a few Canadian "trainers" constitute just the thin edge of the wedge. There is a real fear of "mission creep" as witnessed in the Libyan situation. Canada's involvement as a junior partner to a NATO aggression in Africa could mushroom in the coming months and years. All this is being done without public or parliamentary debate. This unilateral support for war by the Harper govern-

ment without consultation must stop.

The Tuareg people of Northern Mali have been waging a campaign for independence for decades, which has been a thorn in the side of both the Malian government and to those who wish to exploit the natural resources of the area. The borders drawn up by the French colonialists were never appropriate to the needs of the primarily nomadic peoples of the deserts in the north.

More recently, the overthrow of the Libyan government by NATO (with direct Canadian military participation) has allowed for huge numbers of weapons to fall into the hands of local militias. The Mali situation is, therefore, yet another case of blowback against Western interests. Sending Western troops to the region does nothing more than compound that folly and continue the cycle of perpetual war in the region. Canada should not participate.

The real reason for NATO's involvement is to secure strategic, resource rich areas of Africa for the West. Canadian gold mining operations have significant holdings in Northern Mali, as do many other western nations. Canada's new

interventionism, which includes the building of three military bases in Tanzania, Senegal, and Kenya, is therefore primarily about securing the area for further plunder. Canadian troops are already stationed in Niger ready to launch an invasion.

We urge the Canadian Government to withdraw all troops from the surrounding region. We also call on Canadians to demand of the Harper government that it withdraw from membership in NATO, which constantly drags us into every neo-colonial, military adventure of the Western powers in the world.

Also of concern is the use of the "Islamist" threat to justify any intervention by the NATO powers. Islamophobia is a key tool in perpetuating these foreign advances. It is ironic that since the death of Osama Bin Laden, the U.S. military boasts that al-Qaeda is on the run and has no ability to wage its war. Meanwhile, any time there is a need for intervention, there is suddenly a new al-Qaeda threat that comes out of the woodwork. Canada must not participate in this process of unending war. ■

Prison officials thwart cancer treatment Lynne Stewart's Life in Danger

More than two years ago radical attorney and human rights activist Lynne Stewart, now serving the third year of a 10-year prison sentence based on frame-up charges of conspiracy to aid and abet terrorism, was given a clean bill of health following surgery for breast cancer. That cancer has now returned. September tests performed by prison medical authorities at FMC Carswell near Forth Worth, Texas, found a spot in one lung. A month later, an additional spot was found in Lynne's other lung, and still others in her upper back.

The same authorities refused to treat Lynne after the September discovery, a practice in accord with the monstrous policies that Carswell and most U.S. prison facilities in the U.S. are known for.

Following the October discovery that the cancer had spread, Lynne received two injections aimed at slowing or retarding its growth. Lynne's daughter, Dr. Zenobia Brown, who was initially barred from consulting with Carswell doctors, is now actively involved in the consultations. Brown has informed Lynne's defense committee that, based on the radiographic evidence, Lynne's likely metastasized breast cancer is of the type that could kill her in a short time unless treated aggressively and immediately and by her own physicians.

Yet Carswell officials insist that Lynne be placed on the facility's formal waiting list before further prison treatment.

Lynne has requested an immediate transfer to the highly respected New York City hospital that treated her for the initial breast cancer. While Carswell has a "compassionate release" program that could approve Lynne's transfer to this facility, prison officials insist that Lynne's status as a well-known personality insures that she will receive adequate treatment, if not "preferential treatment," in prison. Her request for an immediate transfer to New York until she recovers has been rejected. The implication, of course, is that if you are "famous" you get excellent treatment; if you're poor and without outside support you get the standard inferior health care that is the rule in virtually all U.S. prisons. In Lynne's case, as her "fame" stems from a lifetime in defending society's damned and oppressed, she is treated with the same contempt and disregard that most are subjected to.

A recent article on Lynne's case by health-care activist and Lynne Stewart supporter Bob Lederer cites a Physicians for a National Health Program (PNHP) report entitled, "The Health and Health Care of US Prisoners." Lederer writes, "Almost a million inmates report having one more chronic medical [problems], and their access to medical care appears to be poor."

"An *American Journal of Public Health* article discussed a first-ever nationwide study. It said about 40% of America's prison population (over 800,000 inmates) have chronic medical conditions. They include diabetes, heart and kidney problems, asthma, and cancer. Researchers found 'sick prisoners have poor access to care.' Many in need aren't treated. Others get deplorable care.

"Compared with comparably aged Americans, the incidence of inmates' illness is much higher. Treatment is sub-standard."

The fight to reverse Carswell's rejection of Lynne's transfer request is the immediate and top priority of her defense committee, the Lynne Stewart Organization. An online petition to President Obama to commute Lynne's sentence is now in preparation, but such commutation, according to prison and related regulations, cannot be considered until Lynne has exhausted all legal remedies.

The last of these legal appeals is Lynne's petition for certiorari (request that the court agree to hear Lynne's



(Above) Supporters gather around Lynne Stewart (ctr.) at sentencing hearing in New York in 2007.

case) scheduled for submission to the U.S. Supreme Court on Feb. 21, 2013. Lynne is calling on the broad legal community to unite in this final appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. It is not clear at this point whether the filing of the petition or an actual decision of the Supreme Court constitutes the legal basis for President Obama to consider commuting Lynne's sentence. Certiorari decisions by the Supreme Court can take several months, if not a year or longer—too late for Lynne's now rapidly progressing illness.

Lynne Stewart, a prominent civil rights attorney of 30 years who defended America's poor, persecuted, and unwanted, was the victim of a government-orchestrated 2005 frame-up trial that was riddled with violations of constitutional principles. These errors, revealed in the court record and including repeated objections by her then attorney Michael Tigar, are being meticulously compiled for review.

This writer was present at Lynne's trial, a five-week horrific proceeding replete with McCarthy-type (today "war on terror") hearsay accusations that an intimidated judge allowed into evidence, and that had absolutely nothing to do with the facts of Lynne's case.

Images of Osama Bin Laden were projected on giant movie-theater-size screens for the jury's perusal, implying that somehow Lynne was connected to the Sept. 11, 2001, World Trade Center bombing. The presiding judge allowed this material and countless other examples of admittedly "hearsay evidence" with the justification that while the material did not constitute any evidence against Lynne, the fact that some documents were found in files in Lynne's office during an FBI search and seizure process was indicative of "the mind of the defendant." There was no mention of the fact that it was the government itself that provided Lynne with this "evidence." This was during the time, for some years after 1995, when Lynne was representing her client, the "blind Sheik" Omar Abdel Rachman,

In 2005, Lynne was convicted on four counts of conspiracy to aid and abet terrorism. This was mostly based on the government's charge that her public issu-

ance several years later of a press release on behalf of her client, Rachman, an Egyptian cleric who was similarly framed up and imprisoned for life on "terrorism" charges, was illegal. Ironically, Rachman's freedom is today being demanded by Egypt's president, Muslim Brotherhood head Mohamed Morsi.

Lynne Stewart, 73, was originally convicted and sentenced to 28 months in prison. But this "light" sentence was contested by the reactionary U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit and her sentence was outrageously increased to 10 years by the now compliant Federal District Court trial judge, John Koeltl—career decision indeed!

Lynne attributes her "strong will" to the "focus that you [her supporters] all infuse me with!" Commenting on her formidable challenge of winning a hearing before the Supreme Court, she asked, "Will they deign to hear us? Will we advance the sunlight or only increase the shadows on our constitutional rights?" Lynne added, "We can only strive to present our issues in the best possible way and 'fight like hell' for justice. There's no predicting results, but in prison, HOPE is the only currency."

Lynne Stewart's freedom, and her life itself, in large part depend on our solidarity. She is intent on winning her health and freedom under the most difficult conditions. Letters of solidarity to Lynne are essential.

Write Lynne at: Lynne Stewart #53504-054, Federal Medical Center Carswell, P.O. Box 27137, Fort Worth, Texas 76127. For critical information regarding where to address your letters of protest, e-mail her husband, Ralph Poynter: Ralph.Poynter@yahoo.com or call (917) 853-9759. Send your generous contribution payable to: Lynne Stewart Organization, 1070 Dean Street, Brooklyn, NY 11216. ■

Jeff Mackler is the West Coast Coordinator of the Lynne Stewart Defense Committee, jmackler@lmi.net.

... Honduras

(continued from page 8)

She proudly states, "We will not compromise with the government."

We talked about the recent Chicago Teachers Strike and how teachers in Chicago are struggling against the closing of public schools and the corporate take over of education in the United States. Suyapa said, "This is an international problem." The government is also cutting art and music classes.

Suyapa took me to the offices of her union to meet the president, Oscar Recarte. He had the current copy of the Honduras newspaper, *El Herald*, spread out on his desk. It had a three-page article entitled "Los 10 Villanos [Villains] Nacionales." There was his picture at number nine. They cited his opposition to the Fundamental Law Of Education and a protest against teacher evaluations based on student tests. He found it humorous.

Honduras is an important country to

watch. The U.S. imperialist hold on Latin America has been weakening with the rise of mass movements in the past couple of decades. If the LIBRE Party continues to maintain popular support as it gets closer to the November 2013 elections, we should be aware of the strong possibility of U.S. intervention. Nil Nikandrov, writing for the Strategic Culture Foundation, stated, "The U.S. Department of State, the CIA, and the U.S. Defense Intelligence Department are not the only agencies diverting top-level human resources to Honduras. USAID and the Peace Corps are also there, and vast employment opportunities are open for contractors with combat experience or record of service in the special forces."

The Civil And Human Rights Committee of SEIU 503 (Oregon) and the Alliance For Global Justice will be holding forums on Honduras in four cities (Portland, Salem, Corvallis, Eugene) on March 4-7 to educate workers and community members about attacks on unions and the LGBT community in Honduras as well as the role of the Obama administration. ■

Greek workers on the move

On Jan. 19, dozens of cities around the world demonstrated as part of a global day of action against fascism in Greece, including recent murderous attacks on immigrant workers by Golden Dawn.

Greek capital is using Golden Dawn as a battering ram against a still defiant working class. Subway workers struck in late January for over a week, and when a court ordered their return to work, they defied the order and were joined by workers from other public transport sectors. The strike folded, however, when the government threatened to imprison all strikers.

Nonetheless, workers in other sectors will launch their own strikes soon, and Greek ports were recently tied up in a four-day strike. Greece's

largest private-sector union federation has called a general strike for Feb. 20.

As Greek-American activist Despina Lalaki pointed out in a recent interview, however, the general strikes in Greece and elsewhere on the continent in recent years have failed to yield substantial results: "European capitalists will make no concessions unless a continuous general strike is called." She also pointed to forms of resistance such as refusal to pay taxes and fees.

She cited the need for leftist party Syriza to tighten links with unions and social movements, in turn giving the masses an opportunity to halt the feared slide to the right as Syriza's electoral fortunes improve.

—ANDREW POLLACK

Behind the French & U.S. military attack in Mali

By CHRISTINE MARIE

On Feb. 1, *The New York Times* published a major article by Adam Nossiter and Neil MacFarquhar entitled “Algeria Sowed Seeds of Hostage Crisis as It Nurtured Warlord.” The warlord in question is Iyad Ag Ghali, who heads Ansar Dine, one of the three Islamic groups that *The Times* says threatened to capture the Malian capital, Bamako, in early January. The involvement of radical Islamists provided the excuse for the Jan. 11 French military intervention, which is, without a doubt, an important escalation in the imperialists’ new “Scramble for Africa.”

Nossiter and MacFarquhar explain that the Algerian government nurtured Ag Ghali in the hope that Ansar Dine, which advocated an Islamic state but not a break-away state, could supplant the battle for self-determination of the secular Tuareg organizations fighting in the northern regions of Mali and Niger.

The Tuareg people traditionally have claimed territory not only in Mali and Niger but in the border regions of Algeria, as well. The Algerian government feared that a victory for the Tuareg would unleash the pent-up anger of oppressed peoples inside Algeria itself.

Like the United States, which helped to create the Taliban to fight pro-Soviet forces in Afghanistan—and Pakistan, which works to maintain dependent Islamic radical “players” in the Pashtun tribal areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan—so Algerian elites supported Ansar Dine as part of a strategy to suppress more threatening opposition forces like the secular National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) or that creature of their own recent civil war, al-Qaeda of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Instead, their game plan is now subordinate to the goals of the direct military intervention of France, the United States, Britain, and Canada, all of whom see the Sahara-Sahel as key to protecting their substantial economic and political interests.

Algeria’s dirty tricks, illuminating as they are about the way that elites intrigue to hold onto power, are really only a sideshow to the main operation—that is, the effort of the U.S. and the old colonizers of Europe to successfully compete with China and each other for Africa’s extraordinary petroleum and mineral wealth in a period of deep capitalist economic crisis of incredible duration. According to an article by Patrick Smith in the *Financial Times* of June 3, 2010, “the Great Game being played out in Africa’s mines and on its sea routes is no less dramatic than the great rivalries over Afghanistan two centuries ago.”

Africa holds at least 10% of the world’s oil reserves, and greater reserves are likely. China buys a third of its oil from Africa, and the U.S. expects to import 25% of its oil from the West African seaboard by 2015. Africa also appears to hold the largest reserves of rare earth metals outside of China.

The French military intervention, which centered on air attacks supported by U.S. logistics, was ostensibly launched to free northern Mali from the brutality of the imposition of a crude sharia law by Islamic militants from al-Qaeda of the Islamic Maghreb. Skepticism about the humanitarianism of France’s assault, however, is warranted.

If France—Mali’s old colonial master and one of the main brokers for European investment, loans, and “aid” to Mali—were actually motivated by the interests of the workers, farmers, traders, and herders of the Konna, Gao, Timbuktu areas, it would be reasonable to assume that these peoples would not be among the poorest on the planet. Before, during, and after this war, the majority of Malians will continue to try to live on less than \$1 a day. France’s actual interests are clearly more mercenary.

As the former colonizer of much of Central and West



Harouna Traore / AP

Most Malians live on less than \$1 a day; France has little interest in changing those conditions.

Africa, France’s economic stake in the region is considerable. French uranium mines in the bordering country of Niger have for 40 years supplied the lion’s share of the fuel for their nuclear power industry, and that industry produces 75% of the country’s electricity. The global economic crisis has pushed other capitalist countries to try to get a piece of the action long dominated by France. China and India have now thrown their hat in the ring in Niger and will undoubtedly jump to participate in Malian mining developments.

U.S. interests in the Sahara-Sahel are multiple but center on petroleum from Nigeria, phosphates from Morocco, and natural gas from Algeria. In Washington’s strategic thinking, the availability and security of these resources are tied to developments in the Sahel as a whole. Washington’s already substantial Trans-Saharan Security Initiative was boosted on Dec. 25, when Obama announced that Washington would be sending troops to 35 African countries. On Jan. 29, Niger announced that it had agreed to host a U.S. drone base, expanding the already significant drone operations Washington runs out of East Africa.

The profits from France’s mines in Niger have been the target of the MNJ, the Niger Movement for Justice. The MNJ is a mostly Tuareg group that has been demanding a share of the revenues and an environmental cleanup. Kidal, one of the northern Malian towns recently taken by French forces, and the heart of Tuareg spiritual life, is at the center of a uranium-prospecting project given a 2007 go-ahead by the Malian government of over 20,000 square kilometers. Oklo Resources was due, as late as last October, to start drilling in May 2013. Malian uranium reserves have been estimated at 5200 tons.

The Malian government, which in the early 1990s was pressured by international financial institutions to agree to mining regulations highly favorable to foreign investors, abandoned a 1991 agreement to share power with the nomadic people that inhabit the uranium-rich areas. Subsequent government policy, developed under economic and political pressure from European and U.S. institutions, focused on integrating a small layer of Tuaregs into the military and other government organizations rather than tackling the

huge disparity in resources that colonialism had bequeathed to the north and the south. When the stick was required, they responded with direct brutality or gave backhanded support to informal militias composed of other ethnic groups in the north, such as the Songhai, who do not support a Tuareg-led government.

French colonialism, of course, set in motion these modern-day ethnic divisions. The occupiers focused on resource extraction and development in the south of Mali and recruited for government service primarily from the Bambara and other southern people. The colonial government then sent them north to implement policies that shrunk the pastoral commons on which various nomadic peoples survived. Contemporary mining concessions, security measures demanded as part of the global “War on Terror,” and severe drought have further exacerbated the shrinkage, forcing more of the Tuareg to turn to black market operations or to migrate to an increasingly impoverished south to vie for very scarce jobs.

“Jobless growth” is the phrase used to describe the current African economic “boom.” Policies imposed on Mali by the IMF and the World Bank for 40 years have exacted a terrible price in the more developed south, as well. Neoliberal schemes have led to the privatizations of the Malian railway and cotton enterprises, and encouraged corporate land acquisitions and genetically modified seed experiments that threaten food sovereignty and the livelihood of small peasants. Today, Mali faces one of the largest food shortfalls in years.

The demands of world capitalism have left Mali divided, impoverished, dependent, and ripe for further plunder. The recent military coup, sparked by an ethnic rebellion, was led by an officer trained by the United States, and dependent for survival on the intervention of the French. It was, in a real sense, determined by 70 years of colonization, 40 years of IMF and World Bank intervention in the interest of non-African elites, and repeated imperialist efforts to head off genuine insurgency by nurturing hand-picked groups of Islamic extremists in Central Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa.

However, the 2011 upsurges in Tunisia, Egypt, and the Western Sahara, to say nothing of the 2012 militant fight back of the South African miners of Mari-kana, suggest that resistance is brewing against the dictates of global capital on the continent. Activists in the Americas can contribute to that process by demanding that France, Canada, and the U.S. get out of the Sahara-Sahel now. ■