

States attack reproductive rights

Women say 'Fight back!'

By Martha Grevatt

It's war.
Patriarchal diehards in state legislatures across the country are bound and determined to criminalize what should be a private decision between a woman, a girl or a gender-oppressed individual and their doctor. The target of their new legislation is to kill the now-still-legal right to terminate a pregnancy.

Brazen misogynists, pining for the days when a woman was a man's legal property, want to roll the clock back and not only deny access to legal abortion but to contraception. In their fantasy world, Roe v. Wade, the hard-fought 1973 Supreme Court ruling legalizing abortion, is already shredded.
On April 10 Ohio became the sixth state to pass a so-called "fetal heartbeat" bill. When the bill goes into effect in July it will be illegal to obtain an abortion after

the sixth week of pregnancy — often before pregnancy is even detected. Doctors who perform the procedures could face felony charges, with up to a year in prison and \$20,000 in fines. There is no exception for rape or incest.
Gov. Mike DeWine wasted no time in signing the bill as soon as it landed on his desk April 11, despite the fact that state and federal courts have deemed these laws unconstitutional in Arkansas, Iowa, Kentucky and North Dakota. Similar bills are in various stages of the legislative process in five other states; Georgia passed one on March 29, which the governor could sign any day. (WW, April 4)
The law is misnamed. According to the Cleveland Clinic, it is only "after the eighth week [that] your baby is called a fetus instead of an embryo." At that stage the embryo is smaller than a pea, and the brain and nervous system are undeveloped. The fact that a heartbeat can be detected via ultrasound is being used to equate abortion

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May Day on Wall Street

40 Wall Street
Trump Building

Wednesday
May 1, 2019
2-5pm

May 1 is International Workers Day.

It's a day when around the world, workers regardless of where they live, what their job is, or what language they speak, celebrate their unity as a global working class.

WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE

Today, the unity of workers of the world is critical in fighting against Trump and the billionaires that he represents, who are trying to use racism to divide and oppress workers. The war against immigrant workers is a war against the entire working class. Let's come together on May 1 "May Day" to tell the rich that there are no walls in the workers struggle.

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Pennsylvania prisoners say, “Enough is enough!”

By **Betsey Piette**
 Philadelphia

Prisoners in Pennsylvania under the banner “Enough is enough” are circulating a petition challenging a number of arbitrary and punitive measures adopted by the state’s Department of Corrections.

The DOC began implementing these changes August 2018 following fraudulent claims by a handful of guards that they became “sick from drugs illegally entering the prisons.” While this fabricated “health crisis” eventually collapsed under public scrutiny, the DOC continued the draconian measures and threaten to implement more in July.

Prisoners say they will stand for morning count on June 1 but refuse all movement until the issues they are grieving are fixed. They are appealing to families, advocacy groups and news publications to share the petition so the whole country hears their voice.

The sweeping crackdown included measures that severely restricted prisoners’ access to mail. Letters, as well as legal correspondence, are being routed through the third-party, Florida-based Smart Communications. The company is paid \$4 million to open and photocopy the contents, including photographs, before sending the photocopies to prisoners. Pennsylvania is the 19th state to hire Smart Communications, which stores the original contents of prisoners’ mail on its private servers.

Prisoners in some Pennsylvania facilities had previously organized a boycott of the subcontracted mail service. Recently, the American Civil Liberties Union successfully challenged the DOC for interfering with legal mail sent through the system.

In addition to tampering with mail, the PA DOC tried to further isolate prisoners from their families by shortening visiting hours and removing food and drink vending machines from visiting areas for 90 days. In some prisons, visitors are arbitrarily denied entry for scheduled visits. Altogether, PA DOC policies cost the state an estimated

\$15 million to put in place.

The DOC says it will stop the sale of tobacco June 1 and make it illegal on July 1. It is threatening to rip cells apart to take tobacco. The prison will make money by selling more expensive vapor cigarettes, which require purchasing batteries to use.

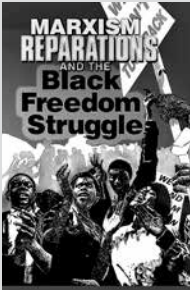
Other threatened measures include charging prisoners \$0.35 per picture that comes via their email. Access to TV channels has been downgraded. Food portions have been cut, while commissary prices have increased.

Though the prisons continue to profit off inmates by raising commissary prices, the slave-labor employment “pay” has not been raised in almost 30 years. When prisoners write up their grievances, the authorities almost always find in favor of the guards. That was one of the issues behind the 1971 uprising in New York state’s Attica prison.

The petition ends, “Our lives matter too!” and it’s signed, “Unidos somos fuerte” — “Together we’re strong!” □

Marxism, Reparations and the Black Freedom Struggle

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



Racism, National Oppression & Self-Determination • Black Labor from Chattel Slavery to Wage Slavery • Black Youth: Repression & Resistance • The Struggle for Socialism Is Key • Domestic Workers United Demand Passage of a Bill of Rights • Black & Brown Unity • Harriet Tubman, Woman Warrior • Racism & Poverty in the Delta • Haiti Needs Reparations, Not Sanctions • Alabama’s Black Belt: Legacy of Slavery, Sharecropping & Segregation • Are Conditions Ripe Again Today? Anniversary of the 1965 Watts Rebellion

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Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the neverending quest for ever-greater profits.

Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, attacks on im/migrants, misogyny, LGBTQ oppression and mistreatment of people with disabilities. It means joblessness, increasing homelessness and impoverishment and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism.

The U.S. is the richest country in the world, yet no one has a guaranteed right to shelter, food, water, health care, education or anything else — unless they can pay for it. Wages are lower than ever, and youth are saddled with seemingly insurmountable student debt, if they even make it to college. Black, Brown and Indigenous youth and trans

people are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis.

The ruthless ruling class today seeks to wipe out decades of gains and benefits won by hard-fought struggles by people’s movements. The super-rich and their political representatives have intensified their attacks on the multinational, multigender and multigenerational working class. It is time to point the blame at — and challenge — the capitalist system.

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

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

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Contact a Workers World Party branch near you:

National Office

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

Atlanta

PO Box 18123
 Atlanta, GA 30316
 404.627.0185
atlanta@workers.org

Austin

austin@workers.org

Boston

284 Amory St.
 Boston, MA 02130
 617.522.6626
boston@workers.org

Bay Area

P.O. Box 22947
 Oakland, CA 94609
bayarea@workers.org

Buffalo, N.Y.

335 Richmond Ave.
 Buffalo, NY 14222
 716.883.2534
buffalo@workers.org

Charlotte

charlotte@workers.org

Cleveland

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

Durham, N.C.

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

Houston

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

Knoxville, Tenn.

knoxville@workers.org

Minneapolis

minneapolis@workers.org

Pensacola, Fla.

pensacola@workers.org

Portland, Ore.

portland@workers.org

workers.org/wwp

Philadelphia

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

Salt Lake City

801.750.0248
slc@workers.org

San Antonio

sanantonio@workers.org

San Diego

sandiego@workers.org

Tucson, Ariz.

tucson@workers.org

Washington, D.C.

dc@workers.org

West Virginia

WestVirginia@workers.org

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Workers World

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



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Editor: Deirdre Griswold

Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, LeiLani Dowell,
 Martha Grevatt, Monica Moorehead, Minnie Bruce Pratt

Web Editors: Ben Carroll, John Steffin

Production & Design Editors: Gery Armsby, Sasha Mazumder, Scott Williams

Copyediting and Proofreading: Paddy Colligan,
 Sue Davis, S. Hedgecoke

Contributing Editors: G. Dunkel, K. Durkin, Fred Goldstein, Teresa Gutierrez, Betsey Piette, Gloria Rubac

Mundo Obrero: Alberto García, Teresa Gutierrez,
 Carlos Vargas

Supporter Program: Coordinator Sue Davis

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‘Stop, don't shop!’ — Northeast grocery workers on strike

By Workers World Boston bureau

Approximately 100 Stop & Shop workers and supporters rallied at the Somerville, Mass., store April 14 to demand a fair contract for members of Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1445 on strike since April 11. On the busy highway out front, hundreds of cars honked, and drivers yelled, waved and raised fists in support of the strike.

UFCW 1445 is one of five union locals representing workers at Stop & Shop locations in Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut. Combined, the five striking locals represent more than 31,000 workers who are fighting against the company’s attempt to completely dismantle what was previously considered the best food retailer contract in the region.

A number of unions were present at the rally, including UFCW Local 791, Teamsters Local 122 and Local 25, Ironworkers Local 7, Service Employees (SEIU) Local 888 and Local 509, Massachusetts Nurses Association and UNITE HERE Local 26. The rally was also attended by political organizations, including Workers World Party, Boston Democratic Socialists, the Jewish Labor Committee and Our Revolution Somerville.

Although police had forced striking workers away from the store entrance, strikers set up picket lines at parking lot entrances, which merged into one long picket during the rally. The determination of striking workers at this and other locations forced Stop & Shop back to the negotiating table as of Saturday night, April 13.

Health care, pension, wages all at stake

After all five UFCW locals representing Stop & Shop workers voted with wide margins to authorize a strike last month, workers across the Northeast walked out at 1 p.m. on April 11. This was due to a breakdown in negotiations after Stop & Shop presented its disgraceful “final offer.”

Workers World interviewed several workers at the picket line in Somerville, who highlighted what they considered to be the strike’s main issues. Most noted that they were not even fighting for any increases, but just to keep the contract they already had.

Reina, who works in the produce section, told WW that her husband was deported to El Salvador in 2006. “I depend on this check to pay rent, internet, electricity and other things. I only have one income, and I am raising my three daughters on my own. The company wants to cut pensions, cut our vacation down to two weeks from four,

refuse to pay us time-and-a-half on Sunday. My back hurts, but I will be out here as much as I can. We need to fight!”

Workers also mentioned that the company wants to kick spouses off their insurance plans, which would hike health care costs for the workers. On top of that, proposed increases in health care premiums would cut workers’ take-home pay and make increased expenses harder to meet.

Stop & Shop is also trying to replace time-and-a-half pay on holidays and Sundays, the busiest day for food retailers, with flat bonuses that won’t increase with the cost of living. Several of the workers interviewed mentioned that their parents, children or other relatives also worked for Stop & Shop, multiplying the devastating effect of the proposed concessions.

Workers also raised the increasing use of self-check-out lines to eliminate cashier jobs and the introduction of surveillance robots in many stores. Another issue was an attempt to introduce a two-tier system by denying new hires any union benefits — an increasingly common



WW PHOTO: SAM ORDÓÑEZ

Workers fight massive cutbacks at grocery chain.

union-busting tactic.

Many speakers also noted that the Stop & Shop strike comes in the wake of the successful Marriott Hotel workers’ strike and the months-long National Grid lockout last year. The Stop & Shop workers are determined to win their contract and mark another victory for the labor movement in the Northeast. □

Build Workers World! Defend the environment and workers’ rights

April 22 is Earth Day, initiated in 1970 to make people aware of the earth and environmental health. After that push, laws were passed to promote clean water and air, enact safety regulations, and pass measures that promote health and life. Not until 1990 was climate change raised. Now, with a far-right climate-denier in the White House, while floods and tornadoes surge in the U.S. and shorelines rise around the globe, we know the need to fight the overuse of fossil fuels and dethrone the billionaires who sell them.

Ten days after Earth Day we celebrate May Day. Established to honor the historic 1886 struggle of Chicago workers for the 8-hour day, May 1 now marks the worldwide fight for workers’ rights. There’s lots of good news this year: Education workers all over the U.S., from K-12 schools to universities, have started a strike wave, organizing for higher wages and better working conditions. Well-paid Amazon and Google workers are joining low-wage McDonald’s workers in walkouts.

While Trump and the global ruling class are waging war on the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela, his administration is also making war on Central American im/migrants and refugees seeking entry into the U.S.

Workers are threatened with deportation after escaping horrific conditions caused by U.S. intervention in their home countries. Neo-fascist U.S. policies separate infants and children from their parents at the border and jail under-age migrants crossing the border alone.

The perpetrators of global environmental destruction and workers’ oppression are one and the same. If you want to fight against capitalist reaction and for socialist change, we invite you to join the WW Supporter Program. The program was founded in 1977. Ever since, our subscribers and friends have helped build the only revolutionary socialist weekly in the U.S. that’s in print as well as on the web.

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On the picket line

By Alex Bolchi and Sue Davis

UIC education worker victory!

The Graduate Employees Organization strike at University of Illinois Chicago (WW, April 6) resulted in a victory April 5. After two weeks of picketing, over 1,500 teaching and graduate assistants won a 3-year agreement ensuring pay hikes, better health insurance with increased UIC contributions, dependent care coverage, reduction of university fees and the largest raise in the union’s history — \$2,500 over three years.

Teaching and graduate assistants’ baseline salary had been \$18,000, from which they had to pay \$2,000 in university fees. While management claimed the workers had received raises, the fees were indirect pay cuts. (Chicago Sun Times, April 6) Open negotiations lasted two days. Although workers had agreed to a new contract late on Thursday, April 4, the union knew there were still outstanding issues — such as how workers could recoup lost time — so they kept striking. On Friday, undergrad students joined their teaching and grad assistants at a rally protesting the university’s mishandling of negotiations.

Finally, the university agreed to allow the workers to make up any hours missed during the strike. Management also agreed to GEO’s demand that hiring discrimination based on citizenship or immigration be barred. (uic-geo.net, April 5) U.S. education workers continue to lead the class struggle.

University of California workers on the move

The enormous University of California system, with 10 campuses and five medical centers, has been seething with labor struggles in 2019. American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 3299, representing 8,300 custodians, food workers, gardeners and other campus service workers, reached a contract in late February, ending the most tense labor situation facing UC up to then. Negotiations had dragged on for over a year, with the union holding a one-day walkout in November. The agreement calls for an immediate 4.5 percent pay increase as a signing bonus and across-the-board 3 percent raises annually through 2019, plus an additional 2 percent each year for many employees in certain longevity and pay categories. Language to ensure safe staffing levels was added.

In a separate bargaining unit, 13,000 patient care technical employees — respiratory therapists, nursing aides and radiology technicians — at all UC medical centers and its many health clinics still await a contract. And 800 medical residents, interns and fellows at UC Davis Medical Center signed up to join the Committee of Interns and Residents; they’ve asked the state’s Public Employment Relations Board to register their union.

Meanwhile, 39,000 workers also represented by AFSCME Local 3299 and supported by 15,000 workers in the University Professional and Technical Employees-CWA Local 9119 held a one-day unfair-labor-practice strike April 10. Earlier that week, the workers filed charges with the state Public Employment Relations Board addressing UC’s unlawful interference, which includes conduct ranging from workplace retaliation and threats of police citation to effectively condoning violent physical assault of striking workers on a picket line. Among the 10 incidents cited was one last October when a UC Davis manager physically assaulted striking workers and allied students protesting job outsourcing at UC. (DailyBruin.com, April 12)

Dare to struggle, dare to win!

NYC Gender and racial pay-discrimination lawsuit wins

Communication Workers (CWA) Local 1180 reached a settlement with New York City April 2 resolving a long-standing gender and racial pay-discrimination lawsuit covering administrative managers, who are predominantly Black women. The \$15 million accord covers 1,600 active and retired Local 1180 members on the job from December 2013 through 2017.

“Local 1180’s path to the finish line started more than two decades ago,” union President Gloria Middleton told a cheering crowd on City Hall steps April 2. “It’s been a long path, a complicated path, a frustrating path. But today we can finally say it’s been a successful path.” (WW to cover struggle in detail in future issue.)

Wabtec work stoppage rightly ruled a lockout

Decision-makers agree that the workers at the Wabtec Plant in Erie, Pa. — who walked the picket line from Feb. 26 to March 6 — had been locked out. (WW, March 6 and 15) United Electrical Workers Local 506 had insisted that was the case. “We offered to work under existing terms and conditions, and the company said no,” Local 506 President Scott Slawson told the April 3 Erie Times. “It’s a joint merger between General Electric and Wabtec. We view [Wabtec] as a clear successor.” But once the merger happened, the company wouldn’t honor the old contract. That’s called union busting.

The Harrisburg ruling in favor of worker justice means that the workers who filed claims will be paid for at least part of the time they were picketing, and unemployment compensation that the workers filed for has been approved. Even the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry’s Office of Unemployment Comp realized Wabtec was reckless! And really greedy! □

WW COMMENTARY

Trump threatens more repression

By Teresa Gutierrez

On April 5, during a presidential visit to the southern border in Calexico, Calif., President Donald Trump told migrants and the world: “Our country is full. We can’t take you anymore.”

Indeed, the U.S. is full: Full of s--t. More precisely, it is full of white supremacists in the White House.

As the 2020 presidential election approaches, Trump is becoming ever more agitated about his bedrock issue, immigration, and his evident aim of excluding all migrants and refugees of color from entry into the U.S.

He has become so frustrated that his goals are not being implemented, that he recently carried out a major shakeup in his administration so he could go in a “tougher direction.” (Vox, April 10)

Trump fired Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen on April 7. Did he fire her because she was not doing a good enough job in carrying out his draconian plans against migrants?

Not exactly. He fired her because she did not go far enough, potentially breaking the law to carry out his racist aims.

Nielsen is no saint. Under her administration, families were separated and children caged — and then lost in the system. Under her watch, several migrants have unnecessarily and tragically died.

But it seems the one thing Nielsen wouldn’t do for Trump was risk going to jail by breaking the law.

Capitalists trump Trump

Trump was travelling through the Southwest the first week in April to send a racist message to his base — and to his campaign donors — that he will not stop until he gets his way on border policy.

Trump is frustrated that current laws and the U.S. Constitution are hindering him. But Washington bureaucrats, and the capitalist class in general, break the laws or ignore the Constitution when it suits them.

When it comes to defending their interests — when it comes to making sure the capitalist system continues to run smoothly — they are quick to invoke the law’s sanctity.

So when Donald Trump threatened to close the southern border, what stopped him? Not the people’s movement, or the migrants languishing at that same border. Capitalist interests stopped Trump.

The New York Times noted on April 4 that “economic experts” warned Trump that closing the border would damage the U.S. economy: “Nearly \$1.7 billion of goods and services flow across the United States-Mexico border every day, according to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. About 500,000 legal workers, students, shoppers and tourists also cross the border daily.”

When Trump threatened the border shutdown, corporate lobbyists immediately, and furiously, got to work to inform him that within 48 hours of closing the border, the economic effects would be “disastrous.”

They were not talking about U.S. consumers missing their avocados, though that impact made the news.

What did not get publicized is that billion-dollar businesses with plants in the U.S. and Mexico, like General Motors and Ford, depend on uninterrupted production using parts that cross the border. Mexican workers manufacture these for wages that are a fraction of U.S. autoworkers’ pay.

So if the big capitalist companies couldn’t get their parts into the U.S. because of a closed border, they were going to damn well stop Trump. And stop him they did.

Where is Trump heading?

The Nielsen firing must set off alarm bells to the progressive and working-class movements. Trump could easily unleash even more criminal, racist and atrocious acts against migrants and refugees.

Trump and his white supremacist cohorts want to rip every human and civil right from migrants and refugees. They aim to recolonize all oppressed people in the U.S. For migrants allowed to remain, this would be to control and dominate their labor, both in and out of prisons.

These acts could conceivably amount to war crimes.

The present attacks on migrants and refugees are in the same genocidal current as centuries of U.S. crimes against Indigenous peoples; as the continuing crime of mass incarceration against Black and Brown people; as the occupying crime of police terror in primarily Black neighborhoods.

It is not inconceivable that just as Native children were torn from their parents’ arms and placed in white homes, so too Central American and other refugees could have their children taken and placed in foster homes — if Trump and company have their way.

Immigration experts of all kinds are beginning to speak out in an unprecedented fashion. Not known as revolutionaries, as progressives or even as anti-system, many are horrified by the turn of events, as immigration judges are being removed or disempowered, and as more racist anti-migrant officials are put in place.

According to international and U.S. immigration law, Central American refugees currently fleeing U.S.-created violence are eligible for asylum. Trump aims to overturn this one way or the other, threatening to change asylum law through presidential administrative power to circumvent Congress.

More repressive measures underway

Trump, Stephen Miller, a chief immigration advisor, and Kevin McAleenan — who became acting head of the Department of

Homeland Security on Nielsen’s departure—are floating a policy idea that some journalists have called “Sophie’s Choice.”

Also called “binary choice,” this policy would allow parents to “choose” either to be separated from their child or to be in detention with their children. If the parent chooses that their child not be detained, the child (or children) could apply for asylum — alone.

In response to former Attorney General Jeff Sessions’ “zero tolerance policy,” a federal court ruled in 2018 that DHS could not separate families.

The binary choice would undo that ruling — another reason why Trump wants new judges.

Doris Meissner, former head of the then named Immigration and Naturalization System under the Clinton administration, told the New Yorker April 9 that Trump is “stymied by the other branches of government,” such as the courts and Congress.

Under Meissner’s watch, the border was also militarized, and undocumented workers were also terrorized, especially Mexican workers. But Meissner is one of those pro-system liberals who feel Trump is “going too far.”

Meissner pointed out that having so many “acting” officials in the Trump administration is worrisome to her. These appointees are accountable to no one and have never gone through a congressional vetting process.

Revolutionaries understand that this vetting process is cosmetic. But note that Trump told Kevin McAleenan (at the time commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection) he would “grant McAleenan a pardon if he were sent to jail for having border agents block asylum seekers from entering the U.S., in



Migrants and refugees held by U.S. Border Patrol in area under El Paso freeway bridge.

defiance of U.S. law.” (CNN, April 12)

This message can easily be interpreted — correctly — as a signal to the now “acting” DHS secretary to do whatever the hell the president wants, laws or no laws.

Trump also told Border Patrol agents in California “not to let migrants in. Tell them we don’t have the capacity. If judges give you trouble, say, ‘Sorry, judge, I can’t do it. We don’t have the room.’” (CNN, April 8)

A Trump defeat is needed

A victory for Trump’s war on migrants and refugees will not only be a setback for the fundamental rights of the undocumented — rights they have earned a thousand times over.

A victory for Trump in this war will also be a setback for all struggles.

From the fight to raise the minimum wage, to the push to punish corporations for climate change, the struggle for migrants is part and parcel of all progressive struggles. A victory for one is a victory for all.

A victory against Trump is needed, not at the election polls, but in the streets and in the court of public opinion.

Immediate asylum for refugees, no deportations, full rights for the undocumented must resonate on May Day 2019.

Every struggle should fight for these demands. □

Say his name: Oscar Cain Jr.

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta

Atlanta activist Oscar Cain Jr. was shot and killed by police in the early morning hours of March 31.

The police say someone flagged down a patrol car, claiming to have seen a man with a gun near the Metropolitan Avenue ramp to I-85. Oscar Cain, who lived in the area, was spotted and the officer attempted to arrest him, according to the police report.

Cain fled into a dark, wooded area pursued by the cop, who claims he saw a gun in Cain’s hand and fired, killing him.

The news of his death shocked many hundreds of community organizers and activists who had worked with Cain since he was in his early twenties.

A neighborhood kid who loved music and could rap, played basketball and couldn’t afford to go to college, his leadership skills brought him to the attention of seasoned community organizers. His big, welcoming smile was a clue to his generous, lively personality.

In 2010, he was named the Atlanta Field Director for the League of Young Voters Education Fund, a position that saw him travel across the country, speaking on voting rights, education reform, housing equality and racial justice. He went door-to-door, talking to people and listening to what they had to say about these issues.

He joined a number of other organizations. But several years later, with the GenY Project of the American Friends Service Committee, Cain took the lead in a campaign to force the Atlanta Police Department to equip police with body cameras — as a way to end the reliance on the police version of what had happened in cases of deadly force.

He traveled to Ferguson, Mo., to support that community in their demand for justice for Michael Brown.

Cain was in the front lines of numerous demonstrations and marches in Atlanta in which youth, outraged by the unending police murders of Black people, locally and across the country, shut down major streets and interstates.

He had two much-loved children, Malicah and Sky. His son was often at his side at rallies for social justice.

Cain’s funeral was attended by hundreds of family members, childhood friends, neighbors, members of the many organizations he had worked with, and those who had been in the streets with him to declare Black Lives Matter.

Although Cain had been instrumental in the campaign to equip APD members with body cameras, the officer who killed him had not turned his on.



Cain, an activist for racial justice and yet another victim of Atlanta police.

There is no video to let us know if this was a cop who had threatened Cain in the past and who was aware of his political activities. There is no picture of Cain with a gun in his hand, running in a dark, wooded area.

There is no audio of the exchanges between Cain and the officer who shot him.

Oscar Cain Jr., 32 years old, was the 26th person killed by police in Atlanta in 2019 — in less than a third of a year. The record was just last year, when 48 people died from police deadly force.

A campaign to call Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms and Atlanta Police Chief Erica Shields to demand the firing of any officer who fails to activate their body cameras when engaging with the public has been initiated by Cain’s friends and family.

Oscar Cain Jr., presente! □

States attack reproductive rights: Women say 'Fight back!'

Continued from page 1

with taking a life.

Ohio Senate Bill 23, now wrongly titled “Human Rights Protection Act,” is just the latest of a slew of state anti-choice bills being passed across the country. Over 20 such bills have passed in Ohio alone since 2011. These bills have deterred women from seeking abortions, causing the number of women’s clinics which provide the procedure to drop from 16 to nine in eight years. They are all located within six metropolitan areas.

Many women have to travel to have an abortion. A mandatory 24-hour waiting period means having to pay for an overnight stay where the clinic is located, plus transportation, meals, child care and other expenses. These costs, on top of the cost of the abortion itself, are an imposition on poor women, especially women of color, low-wage workers, immigrants, youth, women in rural areas, disabled women and domestic violence survivors.

Angry reproductive rights activists held militant protests inside and outside the Ohio Statehouse while legislators were voting on the law. The Ohio chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, representing reproductive rights advocates, has sued to have SB23 overturned.

Christian right’s overall strategy

The organized Christian right is pushing these bills, knowing full well they cannot survive a legal challenge while *Roe v. Wade* remains law. Their strategy is to carry their legal fight to the U.S. Supreme Court, with the goal of getting *Roe* overturned. Their optimism was bolstered with the appointment of right-wing woman-haters Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh to the high court.

As Ohio State Rep. Ron Hood stated,

“Will there be a lawsuit? Yeah, we are counting on it. We’re excited about it.” (wosu.org, April 11)

These anti-choice bills are part of a broad political agenda that includes “religious freedom” exemptions to allow anti-LGBTQI2S discrimination and laws giving their version of Christianity privileged status. Emboldened by the presidential election in 2016, Christian nationalists launched a legislative campaign called “Operation Blitz.” Since then, states have passed a multitude of legislative assaults on LGBTQI2S communities, religious minorities, women and gender-oppressed people.

Religious bigotry, especially Islamophobia, is stoked by laws espoused in the 148-page manual of Operation Blitz. Five states now require the display of the motto “In God We Trust” in public buildings, including schools. Others allow or require the teaching of “Biblical literacy.”

Operation Blitz has organized “Prayer Caucuses” in about three dozen state legislatures. The manual’s newest section is titled “Talking Points to Counter Anti-Religious Freedom Legislation.” In his exposé “Blitzing to Dominion,” Frederick Carlson explains, “This section

insists that there cannot be inherent civil rights regarding ‘sexual orientation’ and ‘gender identity’ because the terms are said to be too vague and there is too much disagreement over their meaning.” (politicalresearch.org, April 11)

After an oppressive bill is passed, one even more ominous is presented. Just days before Ohio’s abortion ban became law, Texas saw the introduction of a far more extreme bill that would allow the death penalty for women who have abortions and doctors who perform them.

Cristina Vega, with South Texans for Reproductive Justice, who volunteers at Whole Women’s Health in McAllen, Texas, told Workers World: “I think it’s ridiculous how people value the ‘lives’ of fetuses — they call them children but they don’t have feelings, they don’t even know that they’re alive — over women who are alive, who do have feelings, who know that they are alive, who are just trying to make the best decision for themselves and for their families. They would be put to death by supposed ‘pro-lifers.’”

Vega added that this is “extremely hypocritical,” given that Texas has the highest rate of execution in the country — with 560 people put to death by the state since 1982.

Democratic ‘allies’ inconsistent

The anti-reproductive rights bills are largely passed and signed by Republican-majority legislatures and Republican governors. To secure their passage, bill supporters have mounted an ideological assault that shames both women who seek abortions and their physicians. They wrongly refer to embryos and fetuses as “babies,” deliberately conflating legal abortion with infanticide or even genocide.

The goal is to make such unscientific and stigmatizing

language part of the culture. Democratic legislators, seen as allies of the pro-choice movement, have occasionally capitulated to this mindset. In 2015 Ohio Democrats all voted for a bill that prohibited state funding for abortions, under the guise of providing first-time state funding to rape crisis centers. However, these centers cannot use those funds to offer abortion referrals to rape victims.

This year, Democrats, who unanimously opposed the heartbeat bill, had nevertheless voted minutes earlier for a state Senate resolution “to urge the Congress of the United States, as expeditiously as possible, to enact a Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act.” This largely symbolic act was intended to shame anyone who has an abortion and to falsely equate late abortions with murder.

Clearly, it’s not enough to vote for “pro-choice” politicians. It took a movement in the streets to force the passage of *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, and it will take a mass movement — one allied with all oppressed groups being targeted by hateful legislation and rhetoric — to keep it from being overturned. □



Women and their supporters protest anti-choice bill at Ohio Statehouse in December 2018.

Manning, Assange, WikiLeaks and U.S. war crimes

By Taryn Fivek

No person who watched “Collateral Murder” could deny the brutality of U.S. imperialism. Smuggled out of Iraq by Chelsea Manning and published by WikiLeaks in 2010, the video reveals the murder of more than a dozen people by occupying U.S. soldiers from Apache helicopters.

The video itself is shot from a helicopter, with the radio transmissions looped in so that viewers can hear the way the soldiers laugh, joke and cheer as they plow thousands of 50-caliber bullets into a crowd of unarmed journalists, civilians and children.

This was not an isolated incident. People across the world were disgusted and outraged by the photos of torture from Abu Ghraib, the stories that emerged from the Haditha and Muttawaniya massacres—all reminiscent of U.S. war crimes in Vietnam and elsewhere.

Due to the Pentagon policy of targeting journalists who were not embedded with the murderous soldiers, a lot of the horror never reached the U.S. public. By the time the first deformed children were born after their parents were poisoned by depleted uranium ammunition, most media had moved on from covering Iraq. But there was no possibility of ignoring the brutality exposed by WikiLeaks.

Together, Julian Assange of WikiLeaks and Manning published incontrovertible proof of imperialist crimes committed across the world, mainly by the U.S. from Asia to Africa to Latin America. The case against empire piled up. The ruling class, both Democrat and Republican, was enraged.

As a result of this exposure, Manning was kidnapped and sent to prison in 2010. Assange accepted asylum in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London in July 2012 and was unable to leave without being arrested. Both Assange and Manning found themselves incarcerated for nearly seven years.

Manning was offered clemency by Barack Obama in 2017, but last month Donald Trump sent her back to prison for refusing to appear in front of a federal grand jury regarding WikiLeaks. On April 11, the whole world was watching as Lenin Moreno of Ecuador allowed the British Metropolitan Police to arrest Assange.

The bourgeois media seem confused about why Assange was dragged out of the embassy where he had been living for the past seven years. They say it’s about hacking, skipping bail or sexual abuse. They say it’s because he was a bad guest to the Ecuadorians.

All this is outrageous. He was arrested because he had played a part in exposing the crimes of empire.



Chelsea Manning (left) at New York City Pride in June 2017, after release from her first imprisonment for exposing U.S. war crimes.

The Pentagon Papers were classified but published anyway in 1971. Eventually, charges against those involved in leaking the information were dismissed. But this is no longer 1971. Now, in 2019, Donald Trump is president, and there are about 1,000 U.S. military bases worldwide.

By refusing to condemn the most recent attacks against Assange and Manning, the mass media are sending their assurances to the ruling class. Honest journalists would see this as an attack on press freedoms, the First Amendment and basic whistleblower protections. By saying that the two deserve to be repressed, the media are promising their Wall Street

and Pentagon bosses they would never expose the crimes of empire.

The workers and oppressed, however, have not remained silent. Protests were held across the world in response. People gathered in New York, Paris, Washington, D.C., and Britain as well as other places to raise their voices against this sort of intimidation. Online vigils under the hashtag #Unity4J have been raising awareness around their arrests.

Many in the antiwar movement have been reminded of the crimes that WikiLeaks, Chelsea Manning and Julian Assange exposed and vow not to let them happen again. □

Interview with author Susan Abulhawa: *‘Imperialism by the inch’*

“Just because it doesn’t look like the exterminations we’re accustomed to seeing doesn’t make it any less genocidal,” says novelist and activist Susan Abulhawa. The bestselling author of “Mornings in Jenin” and “The Blue Between Sky and Water,” she is also the founder of the nonprofit organization Playgrounds for Palestine. She was arrested by Israeli border authorities last November when returning to her homeland for the Kalimat Palestinian Literature Festival. She was deported back to the United States where she currently resides.

Abulhawa spoke with Ted Kelly of Workers World on the eve of the Israeli elections on April 9 that resulted in the reelection of hardline, racist, incumbent Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Susan Abulhawa speaks at rally supporting Palestine in Philadelphia on April 12, 2018.

Workers World: March 30 marked the 1-year anniversary of a new phase in the Great March of Return protests in Gaza. In a single year, 20,000 Palestinian activists have been shot and maimed by Israeli snipers. Nearly 300 have been killed, including infants, journalists, nurses and doctors. This ongoing massacre is still misunderstood as a “border conflict.”

Susan Abulhawa: News media often talk about “the border,” but there is no official border. After the 1948 assault on Palestine, Gaza remained unconquered and became a protectorate of Egypt. There was a demilitarized zone of about 3 miles around Gaza. Israel decided the innermost line of that zone is the “border.” Israel has perfected an “imperialism by the inch” tactic. It never was ever a border. Palestine is whole. The people have been whole. All these lines that are drawn are quite arbitrary.

WW: What this means is that when people see images of protests at the partition fence, that fence is within even Israel’s recognized boundaries for Gaza?

SA: Exactly. Israel created a new demilitarized zone that Gazans have been living under. And Gaza is effectively a death camp. We see how Israel patrols and enforces the siege on Gaza through force of tremendous death technology. Snipers. Drones. From the sea they have patrol boats that are constantly shooting at fishermen. Gazan fishermen are not allowed to venture beyond 3 nautical miles, but even within those 3 nautical miles, Israel still shoots and drowns a lot of those boats. It’s a complete siege.

There are 2 million people in Gaza who are utterly besieged. They cannot leave by land, water or air. Israel has routinely bombed hospitals and schools and any infrastructure, including electric plants, flour mills, mosques, sewage treatment and water treatment plants. Israeli politicians have said they’re going to send Gaza back to the Dark Ages. They said that and they’re doing that.

WW: They are also using experimental tear gas, white phosphorus and other “death technology,” as you have accurately named it.

SA: Gaza serves a purpose for Israel as a human laboratory, as a testing ground for Israeli weapons exports. What a lot of people don’t know is that Israel is the largest exporter of arms per capita in the world. That means the export of death is their main industry. And the attractiveness of Israeli weapons is that they are marketed as “field-tested” or “battle-tested.”

In 2014, when Israel killed over 2,200 people in Gaza, a huge portion of them children, they were testing the Hermes 900 drone — they used it extensively on people in Gaza. Three weeks after the assault there, Israel held a huge drone

trade show in which they highlighted the “performance” of the Hermes 900. It sold for a lot of money, and the makers of that drone made a lot of money. That’s economics for Israel.

Israel has a new series of drones called Cyclone that have been used on protesters in the Great March, dropping all kinds of aerosols and new gases. Plenty of photos and other evidence show this kind of gas as red in a color nobody’s seen before. Gaza is a testing ground. It’s a laboratory.

WW: Israel is often thought of as a recipient of arms deals from the U.S., but you’ve found that they are in fact the preeminent global exporter per capita of weaponry.

SA: Israel has been notorious for arming rogue regimes long after even countries like the United States couldn’t bear the human rights abuses. Case in point: the genocide in Myanmar. Israel has been arming the Myanmar forces as they are committing atrocities against the Rohingya minority, a Muslim minority.

WW: Rwandan President Paul Kagame last week reaffirmed his support of Israel and the administration of Benjamin Netanyahu.

SA: Israel has many quid pro quo agreements with Paul Kagame. One is Israel’s support for a United Nations effort to basically rewrite the narrative of the Rwandan genocide. In exchange, Rwanda has agreed to accept African asylum seekers deported from Israel, which is deporting them to whatever country will take them.

WW: This seems to mark a change from Israel as a settler-colonial state to now an imperialist state in its own right.

SA: Israel has actually been up to this from the very beginning. They supported apartheid South Africa as far back as the 1950s. They armed all sides of the Angolan civil war for over 40 years. They armed despots in Guatemala and El Salvador. They provided almost exclusively the arms to the Somoza government in Nicaragua, and later they helped fight the Sandinistas by arming the Contras. They’ve had their hand in for some time, most notably in South Africa.

Israel had a very special relationship with [white supremacist] South Africa. After the whole world couldn’t stomach apartheid South Africa anymore, Israel stood with them until the end. [During the June 16 Soweto Youth Uprising in 1976], when South African white police mowed down children, those guns and that ammunition were provided by Israel.

[Israeli General] Rafael Eitan said that Black South Africans “want to gain control over the white minority just like the Arabs here want to gain control over us. And we, like the white minority in South Africa, must act to prevent them from taking over.”

WW: This gives the lie to liberal rhetoric of the sort we hear from 2020

presidential candidate Joe Biden, who just affirmed himself as a proud Zionist.

SA: I think the Democratic Party really underestimates how fed up their base is with unconditional support for this right-wing, fascist, settler-colonial, apartheid state. Rep. Ilhan Omar has split things wide open. She deserves credit because she had the courage to say what needs to be said, and she’s paying a really heavy price for it — personally, professionally, politically, down to her physical safety. The FBI just arrested somebody who was threatening to blow her up. Ten years ago we couldn’t have seen an Ilhan Omar.

WW: But much like in the U.S., where there are no truly anti-imperialist candidates, in Israel there is no anti-apartheid party.

SA: As bad as things are in the U.S., I don’t think you can compare it to Israel, whose politicians are in a league of their own. The things they say publicly and unashamedly are stunning. Politicians in the U.S. use dog whistle [language] and code their rhetoric. As racist as this country is, there are some things you can’t say out loud.

But in Israel, it wins you elections when you say things like, “We need to carpet bomb all of Gaza” or “We need to chop their heads off.” Netanyahu says, “This is a country only for Jews.” These are quotes. Every candidate has said things that are so fascist and racist that it’s stunning.

Israeli society is in the same stage that Europe was at in the 1930s, where things were said about Jews and gay people, out loud and in the newspapers, that should never be said about other human beings. That’s where Israel is right now in terms of rhetoric and public discourse.

WW: Justice Minister Ayelat Shaked put out a video this year parodying a cologne commercial, advertising a fragrance called “Fascism.” She’s getting away with this by claiming she was being ironic.

SA: But she’s said explicitly before that she’s proud to be a fascist.

WW: In Europe in the ‘30s there were liberal observers who said Hitler was only deploying racist rhetoric to appeal to a hardline base for the elections, but he didn’t really mean it. This same mindset seems to be at play with Netanyahu’s threat to annex the West Bank when he wins the election.

SA: It wasn’t a threat. I think it was a promise. Netanyahu is flying high on his ability to convince the United States and Donald Trump to affirm the annexation of the Golan Heights and to move the embassy to Jerusalem. He’s been campaigning on annexing the rest of Palestine. Netanyahu has said this repeatedly. Palestinians have been telling the world that [Israel] has no intention of allowing a Palestinian state to emerge. But U.S. media choose to ignore that and

instead play up this impossible two-state narrative that is utterly discredited.

The two-state solution in the first place was racist—for a lot of reasons. It was a way to consolidate power over the whole of Palestine and allow for the emergence of a permanent cheap labor pool for Israel.

WW: Regarding the West Bank, another member of the Tamimi family has been arrested.

SA: The West Bank is also under siege but not at quite the same intensity as Gaza is. The Tamimi family has been a particular target because of their ongoing activism that has captured imaginations throughout the West. The slap from Ahed Tamimi [of an Israeli soldier attacking her family] reverberated around the world. This family, as all Palestinian families do, live under constant threat, under constant harassment. In night raids, soldiers literally break into your house and grab your children and members of your family from your beds and cart you off to prison. It’s a different kind of horror experienced by each group of Palestinians, depending on where they live.

Of course there are the Palestinians who are citizens of Israel. We call them the ‘48 Palestinians, who remained in the 1948 territory [that was made into Israel]. They are reviled [by Israelis] and face another set of discrimination and harassment and surveillance and policing.

WW: We must speak of the Palestinians living in the diaspora right now, like yourself. You were held by Israeli authorities on your way home to attend the Kalimat Palestinian Literature Festival and experienced the Israeli carceral [penal] conditions firsthand.

SA: Like a lot of Palestinians who speak up against Israel, or who speak up for BDS [Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions] or for whatever arbitrary reason, Israel did not allow me in. In general, Israel harasses anyone of Palestinian or Muslim descent. They target Palestinians and Palestinian supporters, they stop you, detain you, are known to take away your phones and go through your email [and other sources of information].

The irony is that all those people who were carting me off to prison and interrogating me — all of them are foreigners, without exception. None of them are native to that place. Me, on the other hand, I am Indigenous to Palestine.

And I can prove it — my parents, my grandparents, my great-great-grandparents, going back hundreds of years — I can prove this is where I’m from. But they can’t. They can’t point to a single ancestor before 1948 who was there. That’s the irony of it all.

WW: It’s been about a year since you were one of the key organizers here of the Don’t Orchestrate Apartheid protests against the Philadelphia Orchestra for their decision to tour Israel. I’m wondering if you have any thoughts on Madonna’s recent decision to cross the BDS picket line and perform in Israel.

SA: History will not judge Madonna well. She’s a friend of the Netanyahus. She’s been a supporter of Zionism for a long time. She’s basically saying, “I don’t care about the lives of Palestinians. I don’t care that they’re being brutalized and ethnically cleansed. I don’t care that Gazans are living in a death camp. I’m getting paid a million dollars, and I’m happy to lend my name to apartheid.” That’s what Madonna is saying.

A Jewish-Canadian billionaire was quoted as saying Madonna’s presence in Israel will go a long way in terms of “positive branding” of Israel. So there you have it. Madonna is branding apartheid. That’s “art-washing.” □

Sudan on brink of revolution — What will U.S. do?

By Joanna Straughn

April 15 — Months of widespread protests by thousands, some say millions, in the northeast African country of Sudan culminated in six days and nights of a massive sit-in rally in the capital city, Khartoum. The gathered crowds celebrated April 11 upon hearing that Sudan's president of the past 30 years, Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir, had resigned.

The joyous mood changed quickly when military leaders announced that Defense Minister Awad Ibn Auf would be the new president during a two-year transition period leading to an election. Protesters refused to accept Auf, a military figure with close associations with Bashir.

As of April 14, Auf has stepped down and the military council requested that political parties "select an independent prime minister." (The New Arab) The Alliance for Freedom and Change met with the military council on April 13 to discuss the establishment of a civilian government, as well as changing the repressive practices of the security services.

During the demonstrations, security forces and militias defending those in power periodically attacked the huge popular sit-in. According to the Central Committee for Sudanese Doctors, 35 people were killed by security forces or militias during the protests.

Soldiers fraternize with demonstrators

In a dramatic move, dozens of lower-ranking soldiers in the regular army refused to obey orders and intervened to protect protesters from the security forces. Some rank-and-file soldiers and junior officers have defected to the protesters' side. Videos show friendly cooperation between demonstrators and troops — indicating the possible collapse of the old state power.

It is less likely that top officers in the military council would ultimately support new leaders who introduce social and economic change in Sudan. To whom will the soldiers give allegiance? To the military command or the revolutionary movement?

Nonaligned, independent groups, such as the Sudanese Professional Association, have led the protest movement against Bashir and the present government. The



Part of the huge crowd that sat in and rallied in Khartoum on April 13.

Communist Party of Sudan, a significant party also involved in the current movement, called recent developments "a major day in the revolutionary history of our country" in its newspaper, Morning Star for Peace and Socialism.

Also included in the protest movement was an opposition party, Umma Party, whose leader, Sadiq al-Mahdi, was overthrown by Bashir in a military coup in 1989.

Protesters of all generations and genders joined the sit-in. Youth made up the majority. "This revolution was the revolution of the youth before it was a popular revolution," said Hmeda, a participant. She explained that the government had neglected spending on education, health care and infrastructure while spending the majority of the budget on defense. (The New Arab, April 12)

Nearly 30 percent of youth ages 18 to 24 are unemployed, according to International Labor Organization statistics.

Oil writes Sudan's recent history

Oil companies from many countries invested throughout the 1980s and 90s in the construction of wells, pipelines and other major oil development projects to reach Sudan's oil reserves. The expansion of the government-directed oil infrastructure was mostly dominated

by the northern culture, while entering into areas of the southern region. Rebel forces also vied with government forces for control of oil-related resources.

Large oil reserves has been detected in 1978 in what came to be the separate state of South Sudan in 2011. Washington supported rebels in South Sudan in a bid to guarantee U.S. oil interests access to that region.

Some explain the conflict between northern and southern regions of Sudan by its colonial-era borders, which encompass groups with distinct languages, religions and cultures. The Arabic language and Islam predominate in the north, while English and multiple Indigenous languages prevail in the south, along with Christianity and traditional practices.

Bashir came to power in 1989 through a military coup led by the National Islamic Front. In 1994, a Foreign Ministry delegation from Iran reported seeing the Construction Jihad of Iran active in agriculture, hospital building and road building in Sudan. In 1995 Bashir signed an agreement with China about mining, oil, textiles, the sugar industry and rehabilitation of Sudan railways, along with a grant of 1 million yuan for "projects for poor families." Projects would later expand as Sudan pursued foreign investment from Western countries.

Tensions rose as rebel forces from the South made attempts to take over oil resources and infrastructure, leading to government retaliation. In April 1999 the central Sudan government announced it was building factories to produce tanks and missiles, "to defend ourselves against conspirators," and declared they would use earnings from oil exports to finance these projects. (sudanupdate.org)

In 2003, the southern rebels (SPLA) captured an airbase, destroying planes and freeing prisoners. The Sudan government, which had since built up its military capacity, retaliated against SPLA forces in the region of Darfur in 2004 with helicopter gunships. Concurrent raids were led by Janjaweed mounted militia forces against the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa peoples.

Bashir denied any connection between himself and the Janjaweed. This didn't stop U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell from charging Bashir with a massacre and even genocide before the International Criminal Court. At the time Washington considered Bashir an obstacle to U.S. interests.

When South Sudan separated in 2011, Sudan lost a quarter of its area and population, including access to nearly half of its former oil reserves, which had formed the economic basis for securing investment and also the ability to pay back debt. In addition, the U.S. had imposed sanctions since 1997 and listed Sudan as a state sponsoring terrorism. Sudan still has the third-largest land area in Africa and over 40 million people.

Sudan currently faces an economic crisis, with inflation at over 60 percent. In October 2018, Bashir announced a 15-month austerity program, dissolving his government and slashing a third of ministries to cut costs. Bread subsidies were halted — an anti-people move — and the price of bread tripled.

How will the U.S. and other imperialist countries react should a popular revolutionary government replace the current military rule and attempt to rebuild Sudan on its own terms? Will the imperialists attempt military intervention to gain control over the oil infrastructures that pass through and connect Sudan and South Sudan? □

Peace delegation to tour Russia on 'bridge-building mission'

By Mike Kuhlenbeck

The Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space (GN) is organizing a delegation to Russia to help "build a peace bridge between people of their nations" from April 25 to May 10.

Twenty-four peace activists from Canada, England, Nepal, Sweden and the U.S. will participate in a "bridge-building mission." Most of the group will be members of GN and Veterans For Peace.

GN Coordinator Bruce K. Gagnon said, "Our primary goal is to stand against the constant demonization of Russia, which is being used to justify U.S.-NATO military expansion up to Russian borders."

Members of the delegation are scheduled to arrive in Moscow April 25. They will fly to Crimea on April 30 and then to St. Petersburg on May 5. They will meet with experts to discuss such topics as culture, economics, foreign policy, military policy and more.

Chair Dave Webb of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (U.K.) said in a statement, "We want to see and hear for ourselves what Russia is really like.

"We want to meet with Russian citizens, teachers, students, political leaders,

journalists and others in order to listen and ask questions, so we get unfiltered information."

GN was founded in 1992 to "stop the militarization of space" and has around 150 affiliated organizations. The idea for the tour originated last spring in Oxford, England, at the GN annual meeting, which takes place in a different country each year.

Hostility to USSR and Russia

Hostility against the Soviet Union was a keystone in U.S. political life. As journalist Louise Bryant wrote in 1918, "We have here in America an all-too-obvious and objectionable prejudice against Russia," one that was "born of fear." U.S. hostility has now returned, despite the downfall of the USSR and the restoration of capitalism in Russia.

The U.S. government and its NATO allies have now ratcheted up tensions with Russia through sanctions, arming nations such as Ukraine (where a Russophobic regime was elevated into power by a U.S.-backed coup in 2014), saber-rattling rhetoric on the world stage and other means of intimidation.

According to an April 5 GN news release, "Not since the height of the Cold

War in the 1980s have tensions been so great between Russia and the U.S. Washington now regularly blames Russia for nearly every ill in the world."

Continuing down the dangerous path of his predecessors, the administration of Donald Trump has further endangered the world by pulling out of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and the Iran Nuclear Deal.

Swedish Peace Council vice chair Agneta Norberg, another delegation member, said, "The U.S. has 1,000 military bases around the world and a dozen nuclear-armed Trident submarines patrolling. We are trapped in a very dangerous situation, and none of the presidents seem to understand the danger."

Hostility to Russia and its people is widespread, not just in the West but also in Asian-Pacific NATO partner countries like Japan and Australia.

Norberg said the U.S. is "twisting the arms" of countries such as Sweden and Finland to join "an ever-expanding NATO and allow war games and bases aimed at Russia onto our lands."

Gagnon dispels the myth of NATO being a defensive alliance. "The U.S. used NATO

to attack Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria and more. The U.S. wants to turn NATO into a 'global alliance' and is signing up 'partner' nations in South America and the Asia-Pacific."

According to Gagnon, "The U.S. finds it difficult to get many of its regime-change wars supported at the United Nations and, thus, is attempting to have an expanding and aggressive NATO replace the U.N. as endless-war supporter."

It should be noted that while U.S. military coffers continue to swell (with a budget of \$716 billion for 2019), Russia's military budget (\$66.3 billion last year) has been reduced in the last couple of years, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

Gagnon said, "We should recognize that the corporate-dominated media has one intention — to justify the military encirclement of Russia and China. This obviously benefits the weapons production corporations and the politicians they control in Congress."

The delegation will make its findings available to the public in the near future.

Gagnon said one of the hopes for the tour is to "make friends with the Russian people, who are not our enemies." □

Hurricane of colonialism ravages Puerto Rico

By Makasi Motema

When a hurricane smashes into an island, it destroys everything in its path and carries the remains out to sea. But hurricane damage is trivial compared to the devastation caused by colonialism.

In early April, the white supremacist commander-in-chief sought to deny Puerto Rico aid money for the continued rebuilding process after Hurricane Maria. He claimed that the U.S. had already given Puerto Rico more than its fair share. The reality is that from sugar cane monopolies in 1898 to bond market inflation schemes in 2006, the U.S. has done nothing but take. Hurricane Maria was nothing more than a hammer with which the Yankee empire could further shatter its Caribbean piggy bank.

Puerto Rico has been a target of wealth extraction and a vehicle for military expansion ever since the U.S. took control of the colony from Spain in 1898. Wall Street wasted no time commandeering the economy of Puerto Rico to enrich U.S. agribusiness. And Puerto Rico became an important staging point for invasions and coups that the U.S. launched against other Latin American nations.

More recently, U.S. banks descended on the island to take advantage of its lax regulations, which had been imposed by the U.S. Congress. Banks like UBS have pushed the Puerto Rican government into borrowing billions of dollars to cover basic expenses. The big banks know that, unlike other U.S. jurisdictions, federal law requires Puerto Rico to pay back its debt before covering any other obligations. Further, neither the island nor its public corporations can file for Chapter 9 bankruptcy. (Chapter 9 involves the restructuring of municipal debt, such as Detroit filed in 2013.)

U.S. rule puts banks before people

With borrowing and lending driven out of control, collapse was inevitable. But without the ability to declare bankruptcy,

Puerto Rico has been strong-armed into depriving its citizens in order to repay the banks. Like any imperial power, the U.S. left this work to unelected vice-roys—a seven-member board appointed under the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA).

Puerto Rican citizens have absolutely no say over who sits on this board, and only a single seat must be filled by someone who actually lives on the island. In spite of this incredibly undemocratic process, PROMESA board members have been empowered to lower Puerto Rico’s minimum wage, close nearly 200 public schools and slash funding for its public university. PROMESA is nothing more than a tool for colonial wealth extraction.

In this light, it’s clear that Hurricane Maria only adds to the tragedy. More than 3,000 people died due to the hurricane and the subsequent damage to infrastructure, but the reaction from Puerto Rico’s imperial masters was heartless.

A recent study showed that in the first nine days after hurricanes Harvey in Texas and Irma in Florida, Texas residents received \$141 million and Florida residents received \$100 million. How much aid money did Puerto Rico receive during the crucial nine days following Hurricane Maria’s landfall? A paltry \$6 million. Aid was, and still is, slow in coming to the island. For people of color living in an overseas colony, compassion, like clean water, is in short supply.

White nationalism out in open under Trump

And there is no reason to expect compassion from the current occupant of the White House. President Donald Trump is an open white nationalist who despises



After Hurricane Maria’s devastation, Puerto Rican children rally in 2018 for their schools as for-profit attacks intensify on the public education system.

people of color. Even though Puerto Ricans have received aid much more slowly than other disaster victims, Trump told Republican lawmakers in March that Puerto Rico had received too much aid.

This is unsurprising from a man who would tear Latinx children from the arms of their mothers and fathers and cage them beneath a filthy overpass. No amount of pain and suffering is enough when the victims are people of color and the perpetrators are white nationalists. As is the case with so much of U.S. policy in the last two years, Trump reveals the white supremacist heart beating beneath the chest of U.S. imperialism. What’s happening to Puerto Rico now is but an extension of what has been done for the last 100 years.

Racists like Trump have always portrayed Puerto Rico as a welfare state that squanders its resources and survives off the generous largesse of the U.S. government. This is, and has always been, imperialist and paternalistic nonsense. The “white man’s burden” is a total lie. In reality,

Wall Street has extracted billions of dollars from Puerto Rico through predatory lending; the fruits of Puerto Rican agriculture have enriched U.S. corporations; and every year, Puerto Ricans pump millions of dollars into the U.S. economy because they are forced by law to import nearly all their goods from the states—at a 20 percent markup, no less.

In truth, it is the U.S., like any empire, which parasitically feeds off its colonial victims. The money that Puerto Rico requires to rebuild its infrastructure — an estimated \$90 billion — pales in comparison to the wealth that the U.S. has drained from the labor and resources of the Puerto Rican people. But resistance among Puerto Rican activists to these colonial and neoliberal policies is on the rise, and the strength of the U.S. empire is on the decline.

As the power of the people grows and the strength of their oppressors begins to fade, Puerto Ricans may be the ones who cut off the money tap. □

Venezuelan right wing runs out of cards to play

By Marco Teruggi
Caracas, Venezuela

This article was published on April 12 on pagina12.com.ar. Translation by Michael Otto.

For the third time since January, the United States has convened a meeting of the United Nations Security Council to address the issue of Venezuela. The goal this time was to get Juan Guaidó recognized as the country’s interim president. Vice President Mike Pence, representing the first government to take the floor, proposed this goal: “The time has come for the United Nations to recognize Interim President Juan Guaidó as the legitimate president of Venezuela and seat his representative in this body.” (tinyurl.com/y4jrrxbp)

The absurd rationale Pence used to formulate his request was U.S. recognition of the National Assembly as the only legitimate Venezuelan government institution, and of Guaidó as president until new elections are held. Pence outlined the narrative which Washington is promoting to justify its new attacks: “Venezuela is a failed state, and as history teaches, failed states know no boundaries. Drug traffickers, criminal gangs, even terrorists like Hezbollah are exploiting the chaos in

Venezuela to gain a foothold.” Both arguments have been heard before. As could be expected, this and other positions were presented by the U.S. in previous meetings.

Through its ambassador to the Council, Vasily Nebenzia, the Russian Federation opposed the “interference of the United States in other states.” He denounced the attacks on Venezuela and the various types of robbery that are being perpetrated against the country. He also assailed U.S. cynicism, “because on the one hand they have got [Venezuela] by the throat with sanctions, but simultaneously they promote international assistance. ... The political situation can only be resolved through a national dialogue, but Guaidó is not willing to open a dialogue because he has not been given orders to do so.”

The government of the People’s Republic of China also advocated a dialogue between the parties. Ambassador Ma Zhaoxu said: “China opposes military intervention in Venezuela and it opposes the use of humanitarian aid for political purposes. Unilateral sanctions will only worsen people’s daily lives, and will not bring peace to the country.”

Several countries, such as France, Germany and Britain, shared a common stance, which reaffirmed their recognition

of Guaidó as Venezuela’s official president, and declared that “as interim president in full respect of the Constitution, he could organize free and transparent elections.” This solution went along the lines of the International Contact Group. This resolution, which was invented abroad, was taken up behind Maduro’s back.

Venezuela denounces U.S. attack

Venezuelan Ambassador to the U.N. Samuel Moncada denounced the U.S.-planned attack. He said it was applied to commit “deliberate economic destruction, aggression using financial instruments and by abusing its dominant position in the markets to create unjustified pressures.”

Moncada asserted that the solution, “should not be interventionism or contributions from criminals or conferences of patrons who conceal the looting they have committed. They should return the [stolen] funds, end the blockade, halt the sabotage of our infrastructure and stop threatening military intervention.”

As in the two previous meetings, the final result was predictable. Agreement was impossible, as blocs were aligned around the same hardened positions. The meeting convened by the U.S. appears to have been intended to keep the issue of Venezuela on the international agenda

and to deepen the discourse around the humanitarian crisis and the “failed state.”

[In the U.N.], it was impossible [for Washington] to achieve the result obtained on April 9 at the Conference of the Organization of American States, where Guaidó’s envoy was recognized in place of the Venezuelan representative with the support of 18 votes [a simple majority of the 34 members]. Mexican Foreign Minister Jorge Lomónaco described that result as a “Pyrrhic” victory that undermined the OAS as an institution.

While the U.N. Security Council was in session, the Venezuelan right wing was calling for the second day of its so-called “Operation Freedom,” with protests located in different parts of Caracas, the capital, and the country. The protest’s results reconfirmed the downward trend in the opposition’s capacity to mobilize around Guaidó, and its inability to build up expectations that will excite people within the opposition. Its propaganda has stumbled into a crisis zone, particularly because of the gap between the promises [of regime change] and the conversion of those promises into concrete reality.

The next steps in Washington’s agenda are highlighted by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s visits to Chile, Paraguay,

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Popular forces challenge Guatemalan regime

by Sam Ordóñez

Six gunshots killed Hemil Leonel Nájera Trigueros on April 8 in the municipality of la Libertad, in the Petén department of Guatemala. Nájera Trigueros was a land defender and a campaign staffer for the Movement for the Liberation of the Peoples (MLP).

MLP registered as a political party in late 2018 as the electoral vehicle for the peasant organization Codeca. It is campaigning on issues raised by the peasantry and by Indigenous communities.

This popular force is only one of the forces currently challenging the Guatemalan government. On one side, the oligarchy is facing the organized popular movement, something they thought they had permanently defeated after the

1960-96 civil war. On the other side, they are dealing with an urban middle class that refuses to allow them to keep plundering government funds.

Hemil Leonel Nájera Trigueros is the ninth member of the MLP to be found dead or to have disappeared since the electoral campaign began. Three of the victims were congressional candidates, and the other six were founding members of the party. (tinyurl.com/yxvnq3ka, in Spanish)

The MLP is proposing, among other things, the nationalization of resources and utilities, lowering government salaries and initiating a Popular and Plurinational Constituent Assembly. As a minimum proposal it wants the creation of autonomous regions for the various Indigenous peoples in the country.

Guatemala is no stranger to the killing of social movement leaders, and neither is Central America as a region. There have been countless killings of peasant and Indigenous leaders who resist mining projects and other incursions by transnationals that steal land and destroy the environment.

Popular forces and middle class

The corruption of the governing right-wing alliance has caused a political crisis ever since a series of large mobilizations in the capital forced the resignation of then president Otto Pérez Molina in 2015.

These demonstrations were based in the urban middle class, but were supported by popular forces because of their struggle against deep-seated corruption. This middle class, who care about dealing

with corruption more than any particular political debate, have mostly rallied behind the Movimiento Semilla and its candidate, Thelma Aldana.

As a former Attorney General, Aldana worked with the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG, in Spanish) to initiate a series of corruption investigations into the highest levels of government. The most important of these was the investigation against Pérez Molina that sparked the mass demonstrations.

In this sense Aldana poses a threat to the so-called “Pact of the Corrupt,” the alliance of a group of right-wing parties, military officers and businesspeople who run the country. Another opponent is the National Union of Hope party, which, despite its own corruption scandals, has the funds and organization to challenge the ruling coalition.

Right wing returns to dictatorship tactics

How is the Guatemalan oligarchy trying to resolve the country’s political crisis? It is throwing its support behind the candidacy of Zury Ríos — a grim indication of its aims. Ríos is the daughter of Efraín Ríos Montt, the dictator from the 1980s who was convicted of genocide for his policies against the Ixil Maya people.

In the years it has held power, the Pact of the Corrupt has managed to take control of almost every state institution in the country, with the important exception of the Constitutional Court. Using its control of the other courts, the Pact has blocked Thelma Aldana’s candidacy and even issued a warrant for her arrest.

Not only manipulating the legal system to prevent Aldana from participating, but killing social leaders outright, it appears that even the minimum notions of democracy are at stake in Guatemala. Despite its disagreements with the Guatemalan right wing, U.S. imperialism appears willing to allow this return to the previous century’s dictatorships. The popular movement will need to mobilize to defend the fragile democracy that has ruled the country for the last three decades. □

SEMINAR XXIII IN MEXICO Repel the imperialist offensive!

By John Catalinotto
Mexico City

Some 99 political delegations from 38 countries, including most of Latin America and much of the world, plus delegates from all over Mexico, participated for three days, April 4-6, filled with political talks, book presentations and chants of solidarity. The occasion was the 23rd Seminar, entitled “Parties and a New Society,” hosted by the Workers Party of Mexico in that country’s capital.

The Seminar agenda follows a standard pattern that includes reports from parties, in government and out, on how to mobilize the population to make the existing society function. It may even be a socialist society like Cuba’s. There were statements from representatives of China, Vietnam and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. There was also room for reports on ongoing struggles.

From the viewpoint of anti-imperialists organizing inside an imperialist country, the key points hit by the Seminar were the following:

1. The absolute necessity to show solidarity with the Bolivarian government of Venezuela in its battle against U.S. imperialist aggression. All the many spokespeople who addressed this current crisis said this solidarity had priority. They saw the attack on Venezuela as also aimed at Nicaragua, Bolivia, Cuba and the

sovereignty of the whole continent.

2. The need to critically examine the setbacks brought about in recent years after an imperialist offensive, using varied tactics, brought down progressive elected governments in Honduras, Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay. These came from military coups, electoral maneuvering and juridical maneuvering. How can we prevent further setbacks and reverse these? The comments were realistic and filled with determination to fight back, including a campaign to free President Lula in Brazil.
3. The Seminar welcomed the electoral victory by Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador in Mexico, the one election result that countered the recent setbacks.

This reporter was the only delegate who represented a U.S.-based political party, Workers World Party, and delivered a succinct solidarity statement to the Seminar. The statement warned that however the 2020 election turned out in the U.S., the world should prepare for a continuation of Washington’s aggressive foreign policy. It



Indigenous Bolivian representative speaks to seminar.

also reported that Workers World newspaper featured Venezuela weekly on its front page for two months and that on Feb. 23 there were demonstrations in 100 North American cities in solidarity with the Maduro government against the provocations by U.S. imperialism and its puppets. □

Venezuelan right wing runs out of cards to play

Continued from page 8

Peru and Colombia, including the border city of Cúcuta, on Sunday [April 14]. Pompeo, who repeated [Obama’s lie] on April 11, that “the Maduro regime is a real threat to the United States of America,” will seek agreements on the imposition of economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation. The possible use of military intervention has been ruled out of the proposed options by all U.S.allies..

For example, Elliot Abrams, U.S. Special Envoy for Venezuela, met on Wednesday [April 10] with representatives of Spain’s administration, including José Manuel Albares, diplomatic advisor to the government, and Juan Pablo de Laiglesia, Secretary of State for International Cooperation. Spain’s representatives expressed “the need for a democratic solution to the very serious crisis the country is suffering” and stressed that “the current situation in the Caribbean country requires a political, peaceful and democratic solution that categorically excludes the use of force.”

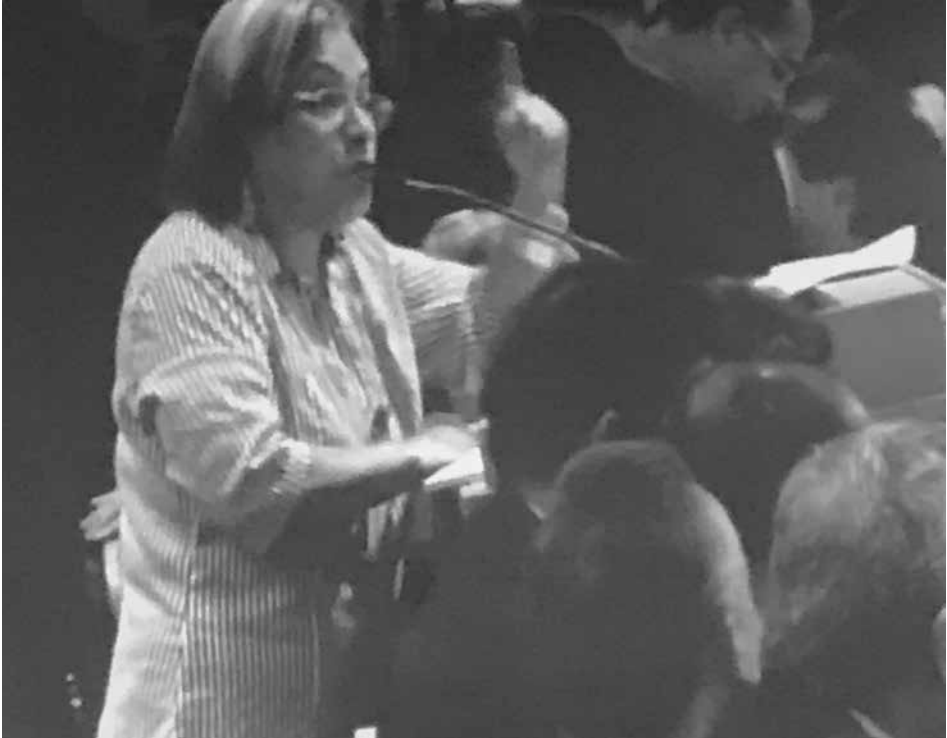
Coup strategy stalls

While the coup strategy isn’t advancing, the Venezuelan government publicly

consolidated its efforts for cooperation in a meeting with the International Committee of the Red Cross. The organization’s president, Peter Maurer, expressed his willingness to work jointly with Venezuela on developing an aid plan that is apolitical and neutral — without defining the needs of the country as a “humanitarian crisis.” The priority areas for aid will be Caracas, the border with Colombia and the state of Bolívar, bordering Brazil.

The joint work between the Venezuelan government and the Red Cross is important in two crucial ways — first, by creating responses to existing difficulties within the country. The Chinese government has been doing this in cooperation with Venezuela, as shown by China’s delivery of 65 tons of medicines on March 29.

Secondly, it removes another aspect of the right-wing’s narrative, which claims that the government will block any kind of social relief. Now the problem for the right wing that no longer recognizes Nicolás Maduro as president is that it has no more cards to play. Three months after the beginning of his new term, it seems to have run out of tricks. That’s why Pompeo, Abrams and Pence have once again publicly taken the lead. □



Gladys Requena of Venezuela’s Constituent National Assembly calls for global movement of solidarity at Mexico Seminar.

A much abused word

The word “democracy” gets thrown around a lot in this country. Most of the time it is used to prettify a political system that pretends to carry out the wishes of the majority of the people through elections, while in fact the system serves the interests of capital: the big banks and insurance companies, the corporate polluters of the earth, the exploiters of labor.

And billionaire bigoted realtors like the current prez. He was elected “democratically,” wasn’t he? In fact, he is a living example of how big money buys political office in a capitalist “democracy.”

These super-rich have the unrestricted ability in this “democracy” to buy politicians and votes. They set aside funds to get their stooges (or themselves!) elected just as they set aside an advertising budget. While there have recently been a few notable exceptions, big money still gets its way in the vast majority of elections.

And then there’s the “Democratic” Party. For decades, the liberals in this party showed what they meant by democracy with annual dinners extolling Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson. Rarely mentioned, of course, not even as a footnote to all the praise, was the fact that both were big slave owners

and Jackson a murderer of Native people. And that the Southern states, so solidly in the Democratic Party camp while these dinners were taking place, found segregation compatible with being “Democratic.”

Democracy, in the view of those early Democrats, Jefferson and Jackson, was completely compatible with slavery, with treating human beings as property to be bought, worked nearly to death and sold “down the river” where the enslaved people might never again see their spouses, their children or their friends.

Chattel slavery was finally defeated. Many who fought against it in the Civil War, Black and white, did so for reasons of principle and humanity. But for big capital in the North, the main factor was not a yearning for democracy. It was that chattel slavery was a less productive, less profitable mode of production than the system which replaced it: wage slavery.

Under chattel slavery, a bonded worker’s death was a material loss for the slave owner. Under wage slavery, whether the worker lives or dies is of not much interest to the boss, as long as there are other workers available to be hired and exploited. Chattel slavery was replaced by a system that still relies on super-exploitation of people of color and jails them

by the millions — in profit-making prisons — for the crime of being poor.

Capitalism these days is not very popular, especially among the younger generations who are appalled at what this profit system is doing to the world. Yet it still has its liberal defenders. One of them recently wrote an op-ed column for the New York Times worrying about “America’s Coming Oligarchy.” (Coming? Isn’t it already here?) Michael Tomasky points out that, surprise, the rich are getting richer. This is a threat to our great democracy, he writes. And who does he cite? Why, Thomas Jefferson, who according to Tomasky was appalled at the growing disparity between rich and poor. (Again, no mention of the disparity between the wealth of Jefferson and those he enslaved.) All this leads him to the conclusion that “democratic capitalism” must be preserved.

“Democratic capitalism” has been around for a long time. It coexists with imperialism and racism and sexism and war — while sometimes grumbling about them. The “democratic” part is a cover for what is basic about capitalism: exploitation of the workers by the super-rich, which is at the root of everything else that is intolerable. □

Assembly of Yellow Vests: ‘We must abandon capitalism’

By Rémy Herrera

Herrera, a Marxist economist and researcher at France’s Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), who works at the Centre d’Économie de la Sorbonne, Paris, wrote this article on April 11. Workers World staff translated it.

“Act 21” of the Yellow Vests took place on Saturday, April 6, as their demonstrations have every week for almost five months. But a parallel event was held from April 5 to 7 in the evening in Saint-Nazaire, in Loire-Atlantique, which will certainly influence the course of future struggles in the country: the Second Assembly of representatives of the lower assemblies of the Yellow Vests. It is the central focus of the movement.

The First Assembly, which attracted 70 delegates, took place in the Meuse, in Commercy, at the end of January. This time nearly 200 delegations arrived in Saint-Nazaire, which means about 800 delegates were present. (There were two representatives and two observers per delegation.) This doesn’t even include volunteers, journalists and the curious.

These delegates were elected by about 10,000 Yellow Vests who mobilized at hundreds of battle points — traffic circles, squares or toll areas. But when they were dislodged by police, they organized in multiple places that were much more remote and less visible — sometimes even in makeshift huts. This is the Resistance throughout France.

It seems there was an alleged “threat to public order.” This was the pretext given by the mayor of Saint-Nazaire, David Samzun (a self-defined “socialist”), to justify his refusal to lend a space to the organizers. The elected representatives of neighboring municipalities did the same thing — and so no rooms were made available to the Yellow Vests.

A ‘people’s takeover’

Then the Yellow Vests found themselves at the “Maison du Peuple” (the People’s House), a former employment agency that they had been occupying with fellow trade unionists since November. It was a real “people’s takeover” — in the pure historical tradition of the sans-culottes clubs of 1789 [beginning of the French Revolution], the occupations of labor exchanges at the beginning of the

20th century, and of factories by striking workers during the 1936 Popular Front.

Some preparatory work and a lot of solidarity enabled the Yellow Vests to gather together and give each other courage — and to debate, get organized and fight better.

This meeting had initially been scheduled for the end of March, but the material difficulties for most participants in meeting their financial needs added to the problems of logistics and led to a delay of a few days. Once their pay or allowance had been received at the beginning of the month, these participants were breathing a little easier, and so were those who already had funds.

Others wanted to attend, but the large crowds forced the organizers to close registration. Even more people who wanted to come could not because they could not afford the trip. One can rely on the generosity of one’s friends, but they may also have very little money. One can also rely on one’s own capability.

In 1864, the first preamble to the International Workers’ Association statutes reads, “The emancipation of the working class must be the work of the workers themselves.” Being a Yellow Vest means one is not afraid of mud, rain or empty pockets.

There were three days of serious discussions at this assembly. They were often difficult, stormy and chaotic. Like the mobilization itself, which was launched in mid-November, they revealed the determination of the Yellow Vests and their resolute and tenacious opposition to this society filled with inequalities and injustices, symbolized by President Emmanuel Macron.

Delegates unanimously condemned the police repression and violence of which they are victims. And they held to their stubborn desire to place direct democracy at the heart of the movement — to think and reinvent authentic forms of it from the bottom up, without a self-proclaimed leader or recovered leader — and to find the “balance between spontaneity and organization.”

Unity to advance the struggle

First and most important is the collective in “horizontality” (equal participation). It is crucial to maintain unity in a movement that comes back together — reassembles — to stop the threat of

division and fragmentation. It must be a unity that pulls people together, despite all existing differences, including political perceptions and sometimes even social origins, and that continues to portray a good public image and enjoy strong public support. That is what will advance the struggle.

The debates, which were visible on the internet, were structured into thematic working groups concerning: the movement’s modes of action, internal and external communication, the formulation of demands, points of convergence with trade unions and other groups, and the future of mobilizations.

Finally, the plenary session presented summaries of the committee discussions — which were drawn up overnight — and a final text, which was particularly lucid and radical. The text will later be submitted for a vote by the various local assemblies of Yellow Vests.

What does this text say? It made essential points. It says that demands should focus on increases in wages, pensions and social benefit minimums, and pay special attention to the 9 million people living below the poverty line. It says that public services must be strengthened for all. This is fundamental. (Text: tinyurl.com/y5c9s54z)

This text says “no” to the violence imposed by a privileged minority against an entire people. It says “yes” to canceling the sentences imposed on prisoners and convicts from the Yellow Vest movement, and it stresses: “Police violence is an act of political intimidation. It seeks to terrorize us to prevent action. Judicial repression followed to stifle the movement. What we are experiencing today has been the daily life of working-class suburbs for decades.”

The final text also rejected the “trickery of the Great National Debate” which is wanted and is manipulated by President Macron. It also states the Yellow Vests’ refusal to participate in the European elections next month: “The street unites us, the elections divide us. It is in the struggle that the Europe of the peoples will be built. It is by conducting a coordinated fight against our common exploiters that we will lay the foundations for fraternal understanding between the peoples of Europe and elsewhere.”

‘Change the social system!’

Above all, the call of the Second Assembly of the Yellow Vests at Saint-Nazaire affirmed on April 7 that “to improve our living conditions ... to rebuild our rights and freedoms ... [and] to eliminate the forms of inequality, injustice and discrimination,” so that “solidarity and dignity” will happen, it will be necessary to change the social system. The grouping stated, “Aware that we have to fight a global system, we consider that we will have to leave capitalism.” And for that, we must “gather all citizens together in order to battle against this system.”

The message addressed to environmentalists is clear and progressive. Will they hear it? They must. Since the environmental emergency is on the order of the day, the convergence of the fight for ecology with the struggles for social progress is essential. It is “the same logic of never-ending capitalist exploitation that destroys human beings and life on Earth. In order to protect the environment, we must change a system that is harmful to humans and ecology.” This is meant for those who had doubts about the left orientation of the Yellow Vest movement.

Such orientations and formulations have not been easy to agree upon. Some delegates found them premature. Others feared that if adopted, this movement would become dogmatic, indoctrinated and too rigid.

Of course, we are still a great distance from exiting the capitalist system. But it is so important to know what we need to fight. These Yellow Vests, gathered in the crowds and hubbub of the People’s House “for the workers’ honor and for a better world,” have clearly understood and expressed what almost no one in our senior partisan and union leaderships — or among our committed artists or our great intellectuals — understands or expresses anymore.

Yes! To hope to build a “world of freedom, equality and fraternity” [motto of the French Revolution] we will have to break away from capitalism. Without this nothing is possible. This is the beginning of any real alternative program. This is because the Yellow Vests, who rose up against unbearable conditions, will no longer let themselves be fooled. The 21st century will not be the end of history. It will be the beginning of a new postcapitalist civilization. □

‘Modern-day heroes’

Filipino workers battle repression

Workers World conducted the following interview in Philadelphia with Mong Palatino, Chair of BAYAN Metro Manila, and Ed Cubelo, Vice Chair of Kilusang Mayo Uno (May First Movement). They are currently on a U.S. speaking tour about the struggle in the Philippines.

Workers World: What are the main objectives of the speaking tour?

Ed Cubelo: We want to inform as many people as possible about the worsening condition of Filipino workers under the Duterte regime.

We hope to establish strong solidarity with U.S.-based groups in a common campaign to fight for workers’ rights.

Mong Palatino: We are also discussing the current human rights situation in the Philippines and hope to build unity among Filipinos in the U.S. to fight Duterte’s repressive government.

WW: What are the current conditions for workers in the Philippines?

EC: Due to the imposition of new taxes like the TRAIN [Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion] law, prices of basic commodities are soaring. Salaries for the Filipino workers remain very low. In the capital city, Metro Manila, wages are only U.S. \$10.30 a day and much lower in other regions.

Contractual workers, 70 percent of the workforce, are not allowed to join or form a union, have no benefits, are vulnerable to termination and prone to precarious working conditions. Their salaries are mostly much lower than minimum wage, with long hours of work and no overtime pay.

Duterte’s government is not creating jobs. Instead, 1.3 million Filipino workers

lost their jobs in 2017 and 387,000 lost their jobs in 2019. This was not reported by the Duterte administration. Thousands of Filipino workers are leaving the country hoping to find work abroad.

When workers fight back, Duterte’s regime brands their organization — especially the KMU [Kilusang Mayo Uno] — as a terrorist organization “front.” There are massive illegal arrests and red baiting of organizers and worker-activists, with the regime using its drug war campaign to cover up arrests. A combination of police and military force is used to surveil workers. Many workers and organizers have been sent to prison.

MP: Due to the poor conditions for workers and the repressive political climate in the country, many are forced to leave to seek better opportunities abroad. Our migrant workers experience tremendous hardships, but they endure for their families struggling to survive back home. These workers are modern day heroes because they keep the economy afloat.

Yet this does not address how successive government administrations have not created enough jobs to keep families together. Further, the government has systematically promoted labor export policies that push Filipinos, including skilled workers, to leave the country.

WW: What is the U.S. role in the Philippines?

EC: The U.S. acts as a domineering neocolonial master over the Philippines. Economic policies are crafted for its imperial and neoliberal interests.

As the Philippine economy is “opened up” for neoliberal profit, it also remains



PHOTO: KMU

Workers protest government terrorist-tagging campaign against “red” unions, March 10.

agrarian and nonindustrial. Flooded with foreign consumer products, the economy is a source of raw materials, minerals and rare earth ores for the U.S. and its allies. Workers are a cheap labor force for extractive industries, assembly line productions and business outsourcing like call center service employees.

Infrastructures and facilities for these economic and trade activities are financed through loans from institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Our economy is debt-ridden. Half the government’s annual national budget is allocated for debt servicing alone.

These international institutions design the local economic system and heavily influence and dictate legislation and executive actions. Government officials, pressure groups and local technocrats act at their bidding, as agents of neoliberal economic concepts.

In the political field, the U.S. has a stranglehold over the Philippine government, while the Philippine military is the main machine of U.S. dominance.

WW: Can you describe some of the major struggles of Filipino people in response to these conditions?

EC: The mainstream people’s

movement in the Philippines is basically an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal mass movement. The KMU, as a member of the International League of People’s Struggles (ILPS), conducts anti-imperialist struggles at home and with allies and friends abroad, including exposing and opposing U.S. wars of aggression.

MP: Land reform struggles are continuously asserted. Labor protests are rising. Student organizing has amplified the call for free education and also the campaign for justice in relation to Duterte’s drug war.

WW: How can people in the U.S. show solidarity?

EC: Circulate the real situation of Filipino workers in the Philippines. Support the establishment of a workers’ school with a donation to the Paaralang Crispin Beltran (Crispin Beltran Workers’ School). Organize to send a delegation to KMU’s yearly International Solidarity Affair. (tinyurl.com/KMUISA2019)

You can also join the progressive organizations of migrant workers in the U.S., for instance, Migrante USA or Anakbayan-USA.

MP: And you can demand the U.S. government stop sending police and military aid to the Philippines! □

Irish socialists to commemorate revolutionary republic

“If you remove the English army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about the organization of the Socialist Republic your efforts would be in vain. England would still rule you. She would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers, through the whole array of commercial and individualist institutions she has planted in this country and watered with the tears of our mothers and the blood of our martyrs.” — Irish revolutionary and martyr, James Connolly, January 1897

The following statement from the Irish Republican Socialist Committees of North America was written for an upcoming centennial commemoration in Ireland of the Revolutionary Government of the Republic.

For [Irish] Republicans of all stripes the Easter Rising marks a turning point in resistance to British imperialism and a world historical event that gave birth to modern Irish Republicanism. The vision laid out by Connolly and other martyrs for self-determination was one of a nation organized by the principles of common ownership and shared prosperity.

The Republic declared in the 1916 Rising was officially established 100 years ago in 1919 by An Chéad Dáil Éireann — the Revolutionary Government of the Republic. True to the democratic and egalitarian vision of those who fought and died for Ireland three years prior, the first Dáil called for social, political, economic and cultural independence for Ireland and the

equal rights of all her citizens.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of another landmark event in the struggle for self-determination, buried even deeper under bourgeois revisionism — the establishment of the Limerick Soviet. In response to intensified British repression, workers in the Cleeves factory went on strike. This grew to a general strike from which the soviet, or workers’ council, was formed. Workers took control of the city and organized daily affairs in the interest of their class. Although it lasted only a couple of weeks, the Limerick Soviet stands as a testament to the power of the working class. It also stands in stark contrast to counter-revolutionary governments that rule Ireland in the interest of the wealthy. Occurring during Easter week, it was an early testament to the legacy of the Rising and one that deserves to be commemorated alongside the Rising.

While the Six Counties remain occupied, the equally grim reality of the 26-county Free State gives credence to Connolly’s warning that simply changing the flag, without fundamentally restructuring Irish society in service of the people, will keep the imperialist order intact and on the backs of the Irish people. As in Connolly’s time, the national bourgeois



On Aug. 26, 1921, the bakery and mills in Bruree, County Limerick, were occupied by workers and claimed as Bruree Workers Soviet Mills.

gombeen [capitalists] cynically appeal to a revisionist history that robs the revolutionary and socialist character from the foundations of Republicanism. As their class has done for generations, they invoke a sterilized nationalism that serves the continued oppression of Irish workers and the plundering of their land.

On both sides of the border, the people are ground deeper and deeper into poverty by policies of austerity. And on both sides of the border, working people are driven from their homes for the sake of profit.

The 32-county socialist republic declared in 1916 and established in 1919 is long overdue to be realized by Ireland’s sons and daughters. To do so requires fighting the revisionism of both British imperialism and Irish capitalism. It is up to the current generation to push forward toward national liberation and socialism. Forward in the name of Connolly and Costello.

Up the workers’ republic! □

Fuerza popular se enfrenta al régimen guatemalteco

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gobierna el país. Otra amenaza es el partido Unión Nacional de la Esperanza, que tiene sus propios problemas de corrupción pero tiene la organización y el financiamiento para poder sacar a la coalición gobernante.

La derecha busca el regreso a la dictadura

¿Como busca la oligarquía salir de la crisis política del país? La respuesta se evidencia con el apoyo que ha recibido la candidatura de Zury Ríos, hija del dictador de los años 80 Efraín Ríos Montt que fue convicto de genocidio.

En los años que lleva en el poder, el Pacto de Corruptos ha logrado conquistar casi todos los cuerpos del estado, con la importante excepción de la Corte Constitucional. Mediante el control que ejercen, han logrado bloquear la candidatura de Thelma Aldana con un decreto del Tribunal Supremo Electoral, y se ha emitido orden de detención en su contra.

Entre las manipulaciones del sistema de justicia para bloquear a Aldana y el simple asesinato de los líderes sociales, parece que la misma democracia está en juego en Guatemala. A pesar de algunas diferencias con la derecha guatemalteca, parece que el imperialismo norteamericano va a tolerar este regreso a las dictaduras del siglo pasado. Será necesario el movimiento popular para defender la débil democracia que ha tenido el país durante las últimas décadas. □



FOTO: TAMIR KALIFA

Inmigrantes retenidos bajo un puente en El Paso por la Patrulla Fronteriza EE. UU.

La Casa Blanca intensifica guerra criminal contra inmigrantes

Por Teresa Gutiérrez

En la actualidad, la Casa Blanca se comporta como una cuerda elástica, con proclamas de arriba a abajo que cambian día a día y las amenazas de grandes edictos que pueden no llegar a nada, aturdiendo a su público.

Un día, Donald Trump amenaza con cerrar de inmediato la frontera del sur; otro día para cortar la ayuda a Centroamérica de inmediato. La puerta siempre giratoria del personal de la Casa Blanca podría causar un pequeño tornado ya que los funcionarios de alto y bajo nivel van y vienen.

La última es la renuncia el 7 de abril de la Secretaría de Seguridad Nacional, Kirstjen Nielsen.

Todo esto ocurre cuando los migrantes se enfrentan a condiciones cada vez más desesperadas que necesitan soluciones inmediatas, humanas y justas. A pesar del caos en la Casa Blanca, la guerra de Trump contra los migrantes está teniendo un éxito franco. Las familias están divididas, los niños desaparecidos, la migración masiva continúa, junto con la superexplotación en el trabajo, los campos de concentración deprimentes y las muertes que incluyen niños pequeños. Las políticas imperialistas, lamentablemente, tienen la ventaja por ahora.

Trump apunta al Triángulo del Norte

Trump anunció el 2 de abril que recortaría la ayuda a tres naciones centroamericanas: Guatemala, El Salvador y Honduras, conocidas como el Triángulo del Norte. Esa noche, el Departamento de Estado informó al Congreso que \$450 millones que normalmente se destinarían a estos países se desviarían a otros lugares.

Sin embargo, el día anterior al anuncio de Trump, Nielsen acababa de firmar un acuerdo regional con los funcionarios de los tres países para que "llevaran a cabo operaciones policiales conjuntas y lucharán contra la migración no autorizada". Sin embargo, a la mañana siguiente, el

Presidente Trump criticó nuevamente a aquellos países, así como México, por los niveles récord de migraciones familiares a los Estados Unidos.

De acuerdo con el sitio web del Departamento de Estado, el gobierno de los Estados Unidos gastó más de \$2,6 mil millones en ayuda para el Triángulo del Norte durante los años fiscales 2015-2018. Entonces, el mero recorte de \$450 millones parece ser una cuestión de postura.

Los demócratas y otros que se opusieron al recorte afirmaron que los mismos programas destinados a prevenir la violencia social, la pobreza y el hambre que causan la migración sufrirían. Pero no hay que ser un economista para saber que este dinero no ha hecho nada para detener la migración forzada.

Durante décadas, el gobierno de los Estados Unidos ha robado dinero de los impuestos de la gente de su país y lo ha utilizado para crear terror en el extranjero, incluido en el Triángulo del Norte. El dinero no se ha utilizado para prevenir el hambre, sino ha servido para llenar los bolsillos de los agronegocios de EE.UU., Los propietarios de talleres de explotación y el Pentágono.

La Coalición de Liderazgo Global de los EE.UU., una agrupación imperialista de ex funcionarios del gobierno, admite que en "Guatemala y Honduras, la mitad del país vive en la pobreza,... casi un tercio de los jóvenes está desempleado y no está en la escuela. Afirma que muchos están obligado a huir por "falta de comida".

Por lo tanto, según la admisión de este mismo consorcio de la clase dominante, las décadas de ayuda no han ayudado en absoluto a la gente de la región.

Según el New York Times del 2 de abril, "De las naciones del Triángulo del Norte, Guatemala recibe la mayor ayuda. ... [Según] la Oficina de Washington para América Latina, ... las cifras más recientes de 2017 [fueron] más de \$78,6 millones".

Eso es mucho dinero para una pequeña nación empobrecida.

Lo que ayudaría sería si el dinero realmente fuera a la gente y no a las oligarquías. Lo que ayudaría sería si el imperialismo pagara reparaciones a los pueblos de América Central por siglos de robo. Es la intervención de los Estados Unidos la que ha institucionalizado la violencia que Trump ama culpar a otros países.

En la década de 1980, por ejemplo, Washington organizó una guerra sangrienta contra los pueblos indígenas de Guatemala, que se estaban organizando audazmente e incluían una organización guerrillera. El Pentágono, a través de sus lacayos, llevó a cabo una guerra genocida contra la población maya e indígena. Al menos 600 aldeas fueron destruidas, más de 200.000 personas murieron, miles desaparecieron y millones fueron desplazadas. (PBS.org)

El sitio web de Combat Genocide dice: "Se han documentado seiscientas veintiseis masacres por el ejército guatemalteco". El 18 de julio de 1982, el presidente Ríos Montt fue citado en el New York Times diciendo al público maya: "Si estás con nosotros, te alimentaremos; Si no, te matamos.

Y en Honduras, el Departamento de Estado, supervisado por la Secretaria de Estado Demócrata Hillary Clinton, organizó un golpe de estado en 2009 contra el presidente progresista Mel Zelaya, anunciando un gobierno de derecha pro imperialista. Periodistas, mujeres, sindicalistas y cualquier persona que lucha por la justicia son amenazados o asesinados. Héroes populares como Berta Cáceres, una líder indígena de Lenca que luchaba contra la destrucción de la Tierra, y Margarita Murillo, una líder campesina que organizaba a los trabajadores, fueron asesinadas por el estado hondureño.

Claramente, si Washington quiere detener la migración forzada, debería salir del Triángulo del Norte por completo y pagar la compensación.

Las caravanas de migrantes continúan, los campos de concentración son la

"bienvenida"

Las condiciones imperialistas continuarán obligando a los trabajadores a salir de sus países de origen.

Una vez que llegan a la frontera sur, los centroamericanos, a pesar de que "legalmente" pueden solicitar asilo según las leyes de inmigración actuales de los Estados Unidos, se ven obligados a esperar en condiciones deplorables dentro de los campamentos temporales en el lado mexicano de la frontera.

Si se les permite entrar, se redondean y ponen en una cantidad equivalente a los campos de concentración. En El Paso, miles se vieron obligados a vivir bajo un puente, cercado con alambre de púas.

Los niños siguen siendo separados de sus padres, quienes a menudo son deportados mientras sus hijos permanecen en los EE.UU. Este es el tipo de atrocidad que el gobierno de los EE.UU. llevó a cabo contra los niños nativos americanos en un período anterior.

Otro ejemplo de política de supremacistas blancos y misóginos se da en un artículo de Harper's Bazaar publicado el 2 de abril. Este artículo de lectura obligatoria, escrito por Jennifer Wright, se titula: "Los Estados Unidos monitorea los períodos de las niñas migrantes para evitar que obtengan abortos. "Esto es algo realmente extraño." Wright señala: "Todavía no sabemos dónde están los 1.488 niños ... pero, por Dios, pueden hacer un seguimiento de los ciclos menstruales de las migrantes adolescentes".

En efecto.

En todos los niveles la guerra contra los migrantes continúa.

Pero en toda guerra, la represión engendra resistencia. Los migrantes y los trabajadores en los Estados Unidos se levantarán de nuevo para poner fin a la guerra contra la clase trabajadora. El 1 de mayo, la demanda de "No guerras, no muros en la lucha de los trabajadores" resonará en todo el mundo. □

Fuerza popular se enfrenta al régimen guatemalteco

Por Sam Ordóñez

El día 8 de abril fue asesinado por seis tiros de bala Hemil Leonel Nájera Trigueros, defensor de los derechos humanos e integrante del equipo de campaña política del Movimiento para la Liberación de los Pueblos (MLP) en el municipio de la Libertad, departamento de Petén, Guatemala.

El MLP se inscribió como partido político a finales de 2018, y es el vehículo electoral de la organización campesina Codeca. Representa intereses populares como las luchas del campesinado y de los pueblos originarios.

La fuerza popular es solo una de las fuerzas que actualmente se enfrenta al gobierno guatemalteco. La oligarquía guatemalteca se enfrenta por un lado con el movimiento popular organizado, cosa que pensaban haber eliminado para siempre

después de la guerra civil, y por otro una clase media que ya no tolera el saqueo de los fondos públicos.

Con esta muerte suben a nueve los integrantes del MLP muertos o desaparecidos desde que iniciaron su campaña electoral. Tres de los muertos eran candidatos, y los otros seis eran fundadores del partido. (tinyurl.com/yxvnq3ka)

Entre las propuestas del MLP están la nacionalización de los recursos y los servicios públicos, bajar los salarios de los oficiales públicos, y convocar una Asamblea Constituyente Plurinacional y Popular, que incluye como propuesta mínima establecer autonomías indígenas.

Los asesinatos de líderes sociales no es nuevo en Guatemala, ni tampoco en la región de Centroamérica. Hay un sinnúmero de casos de asesinatos de líderes campesinos e indígenas que resisten las minerías y los proyectos transnacionales

que roban tierra y destruyen el medio ambiente.

Fuerzas populares y la clase media

La corrupción de la alianza de partidos de derecha gobernante ha causado una crisis política desde que en 2015 el presidente Otto Pérez Molina renunció ante una serie de enormes movilizaciones en la ciudad capital.

Estas movilizaciones tuvieron como base social la clase media urbana, pero contaban con el apoyo de las fuerzas populares por enfrentarse a la corrupción. El representante en las elecciones presidenciales de esta clase media, para la cual combatir la corrupción y la impunidad es más importante que cualquier otro debate político, es el Movimiento Semilla y su candidata Thelma Aldana.

Cómo fiscal general, Aldana trabajó con la Comisión Internacional Contra la



FOTO: MLP

Hemil Leonel Nájera Trigueros, uno de los muchos líderes de los campesinos asesinados en Guatemala recientemente.

Impunidad en Guatemala (CICIG) para iniciar varias investigaciones de corrupción contra los niveles más altos del gobierno, siendo más importante la que abrió contra Pérez Molina.

En este sentido Aldana representa una amenaza al llamado "Pacto de Corruptos," la alianza entre un grupo de partidos de derecha, militares, y empresarios que

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