

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

**'Absolved by Solidarity' —
16 new paintings on Cuban 5**
— PAGES 6-8

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 78/NO. 47 DECEMBER 29, 2014

Workers fight for union, against firing at Delta Air

BY HELEN MEYERS
AND DAVID ROSENFELD

MINNEAPOLIS — Three hundred airport workers and supporters marched in front of the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport here Dec. 5 demanding \$15 per hour and protesting the firing three days earlier of Kip Hedges, a Delta Airlines worker active in the 15 Now movement.

Hedges, a baggage handler for 26 years, is also active in the effort to organize ramp workers at Delta, the largest airline at the airport, into the International Association of Machinists.

Ramp workers, flight attendants, wheelchair attendants, cabin cleaners and cart drivers took part in the protest, along with supporters of their fight for \$15 an hour. They chanted

Continued on page 8

The Cuban Five are free!

Fight to end US embargo strengthened by victory in 16-year frame-up

BY MAGGIE TROWE

The Cuban Five are free.

Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino and Antonio Guerrero, the three members of the Cuban Five remaining in U.S. prisons, returned to Cuba to a hero's welcome Dec. 17. The five Cuban revolutionaries were arrested and railroaded to jail in the U.S. in 1998. (The story of the frame-up of the Five and the fight for their freedom is told in a special feature on pages 6-8.)

"As Fidel promised in June 2001 when he said, 'They will return,' Gerardo, Ramón and Antonio arrived

**SOCIALIST WORKERS SALUTE
EXAMPLE OF CUBAN FIVE**

— Page 4

in our homeland today," said Cuban President Raúl Castro at a Dec. 17 press conference in Havana, at the same time U.S. President Barack Obama spoke to the press at the White House.

Castro thanked all those who had



Granma

From left, the Cuban Five: Fernando González, Ramón Labañino, Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero and René González with Cuban President Raúl Castro, in uniform, Dec. 17, day that Hernández, Labañino and Guerrero arrived in Cuba after 16 years in U.S. jails.

fought to free the Five. "The enormous joy of their families and our whole people, who mobilized tirelessly for this day, is extended to the hundreds of committees and solidarity groups; to the governments, parliaments, organizations, institutions and personalities who for these 16 years demanded and fought hard for their freedom," said Castro.

Cuba and the U.S. have agreed to resume diplomatic relations, Castro said. "This does not mean that the heart of the matter has been resolved," the Cuban leader continued. "The economic, commercial, and financial blockade, which causes enormous human and economic damage to our country, must cease."

He reaffirmed the Cuban govern-

Continued on page 4

CIA torture debate masks bipartisan blows to rights

BY NAOMI CRAINE

New details about torture carried out by the CIA during the George W. Bush administration were made public in a 499-page executive summary report released by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Dec. 9. The torture revelations came to light as tens of thousands across the U.S. protested the killing of Eric Garner by New York cop Daniel Pantaleo in Staten Island and other police killings across the country.

The report itself, prepared largely by Democratic staff members of the committee after Republicans chose

Continued on page 3

Emulate, defend Cuban Revolution

As this issue was going to press, we and millions around the world learned with joy that the Cuban Five are all now together — in Cuba.

EDITORIAL

It is a great moment of celebration for all those who have fought for the past 16 years to win their freedom. Readers of the *Militant*, who have been an active part of this international campaign from the very beginning, are among those to be saluted.

The great Puerto Rican revolutionary Rafael Cancel Miranda accurately pointed to the stakes in this fight some two years ago when he asked, "Why do we fight for the Five?" He answered: "Because we are fighting for ourselves, for our own freedom."

Today we can say the victory that

Continued on page 9

March on Washington protests killings by cops



Militant/Ruth Nebbia

"Look at the masses, Black, white, all races, all religions," Gwen Carr, mother of Eric Garner, killed by NYPD, said at Dec. 13 protest in Washington. Above, 1199SEIU union at march.

BY NAOMI CRAINE

WASHINGTON — More than 10,000 people marched here Dec. 13 in a national mobilization against police brutality fueled by grand jury decisions in New York and Missouri declining to indict the cops who killed Eric Garner and Michael Brown. The action was called on little more than a week's notice by the National Action Network, NAACP, Urban League and other organizations. Many came on buses sponsored by unions, churches, student and other groups from throughout the northeast and as far away as Florida and Missouri.

"Look at the masses — Black, white, all races, all religions," Gwen Carr, the mother of Eric Garner, said

from the stage. "This is a history-making moment. We need to stand like this at all times."

Garner died July 17 after Staten Island cop Daniel Pantaleo grabbed him in a chokehold and other cops

**WORKERS NEED LABOR PARTY
TO CHART COURSE TO POWER**
— Socialist campaign p. 9

piled on his back. The cops claim he was selling untaxed cigarettes. The confrontation was captured on a video in which an unarmed Garner tells police, "Stop harassing me." After cops threw him to the ground, Garner

Continued on page 9

Inside

Rights fighters in UK beat back prisoner book ban 2

Ohio ban on abortions after six weeks defeated 3

—On the picket line, p. 5—

Iowa unionists raise funds for Illinois uranium workers

Striking Toronto can workers win solidarity in Philadelphia

Washington, D.C., rail workers push back 12-hour shift plan

Syrian refugees in Greece fight for jobs, right to travel

BY NATASHA TERLEXI

ATHENS, Greece — Since Nov. 19 hundreds of refugees from Syria's civil war have been staging a sit-down protest in Syntagma Square, across the street from the parliament building. Some 250 men, women and children have been spending the night under a plastic tarp.

"We want travel documents in order to move to other European countries where we can have housing and work," said Bashem Al Mishwit, a member of the protesters' coordinating committee, who worked as a journalist in Syria. "We want to work as a right, not receive handouts that we cannot live on."

One young man from Homs, who asked not to be identified for fear of reprisals against his family in Syria, said that he paid \$3,500 to cross from Turkey to the Greek island of Kos.

After the initial "revolution for freedom," he said, as Syrians call the nationwide mobilizations that broke out against the dictatorial regime of Bashar al-Assad in 2011, Assad retaliated with his army and bombers. Opponents of the regime took up arms, but many have been pushed aside by Islamist forces pursuing their own agenda.

He particularly expressed horror at Islamic State. "They want to make us live like 1,000 years ago," he said. "A person would be punished for something as simple as smoking."

He described how refugees from many parts of Syria have joined together to make their demands heard.

They are united, he said, Sunni Muslim, Kurds, Christians and Alawis.

They have won solidarity from unionists protesting government economic measures targeting working people. A Nov. 30 demonstration in support of the refugees drew several thousand. So far the cops have been prevented from evicting the refugees.

An estimated 30,000 refugees made their way to Greece from Syria in 2014, according to news reports. Many are trapped, without the ability to get asylum or passage to another country. Since 2011, more than 3 million Syrians have fled the fighting to neighboring countries, and another 6.5 million have been driven from their homes, according to the U.N.



Militant/Georges Mehrabian

Syrian refugees hold protest across from parliament building in Athens, Greece, Dec. 5. Protests have won solidarity from unionists. A Nov. 30 action drew several thousand supporters.

Rights fighters in UK beat back prisoner book ban

BY ÖGMUNDUR JÓNSSON

LONDON — In a victory for workers' rights, the High Court here ruled Dec. 5 that a yearlong ban on family members and others sending books to prisoners is unlawful. The ban has been fought by English PEN, the Howard League for Penal Reform, poet laureate Carole Ann Duffy, Nadezhda Tolokonnikova of Pussy Riot, *Militant* editor Doug Nelson, and current and former prisoners and writers, including Salman Rushdie, Ian McEwan and Nick Hornby. It remains in effect while the government decides whether to appeal.

The legal challenge to the ban was brought by inmate Barbara Gordon-Jones, who is serving a life sentence at

Send prison in Surrey. Under the new rules, Gordon-Jones was denied five books sent to her in April.

"Reading is a right and not a privilege," solicitors from the firm Lound Mulrenan Jefferies, who acted pro bono as counsel for Gordon-Jones, said in a public statement.

"The legal case was pivotal," Rob Preece, press officer of the Howard League for Penal Reform, told the *Militant* Dec. 11. "It built on months of public campaigning."

"We and English PEN took hundreds of books to the Ministry of Justice after the decision, asking that they be delivered to prisoners," Preece said, describing a demonstration organized that day. "We also told them it's an opportunity to lift bans on other things prisoners' need, from writing materials to underwear."

"The challenge relates to what are said to be unlawful restrictions on the ability of prisoners generally and the Claimant in particular to receive or have for their use books," Justice Andrew Collins said in his ruling. "I see no good reason in the light of the importance of books for prisoners to restrict beyond what is required by volumetric control and reasonable measures relat-

ing to frequency of parcels and security considerations."

The prison regime's Incentives and Earned Privileges scheme lists books as privileges that can be restricted. "In light of the statement made about the importance of books," Collins concluded, "to refer to them as a privilege is strange."

"This is a surprising judgment," an unnamed spokesman for the Prison Service told BBC News in response to Collins' ruling. "We are considering how best to fulfill the ruling of the court. However, we are clear that we will not do anything that would create a new conduit for smuggling drugs and extremist materials into our prisons."

"We'll have to see what the ministry does," Preece said. "Our campaign to relieve the ban on parcels will continue."

'Militant' publishing break
This is a three-week issue. *Militant* no. 1 in 2015 will be mailed out January 8.

THE MILITANT

'Militant' reader supports prisoners' fund

"I read the whole issue enthusiastically, including learning about the paper's circulation among prisoners," Pat Lipscombe told London supporters as she subscribed Dec. 13 and contributed to the prisoners' fund. The fund helps prisoners get reduced-rate subscriptions.

Militant/Jonathan Silberman
Pat Lipscombe, right, talks with *Militant* supporter Celia Pugh in London Dec. 13.

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Report details CIA torture

Continued from front page
not to participate, is classified and secret and includes more than 6,000 pages.

The report's release has kicked off a sharp debate among bourgeois politicians over the CIA's past actions and future policies. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, chair of the committee, said the report should "ensure coercive interrogation practices are not used by our government again." This view was backed by former Republican presidential candidate Sen. John McCain.

Current CIA Director John Brennan — appointed by President Barack Obama — who had been involved in the so-called Enhanced Interrogation Techniques program under Bush; former Vice President Dick Cheney; and others backed what the CIA had done. Asked about some of the techniques used, Cheney said, "I have no problem as long as we achieve our objective."

The report reflects the fact that the majority of the propertied rulers want to shed the image of U.S. imperialism as a power that stands on torture and brutality. At the same time, all the participants in the debate agree that the White House and its spy apparatus are justified in taking the steps necessary to "get" those they target.

Before taking over as CIA director, Brennan worked at the White House managing the "kill lists" for U.S. drone strikes.

The use of simulated drowning, known as waterboarding, at secret CIA prisons had already been made public. New revelations included that "at least five CIA detainees were subjected to 'rectal rehydration' or rectal feeding without documented medical necessity."

The report documents the extensive use of "standing sleep deprivation," with prisoners shackled for up to a week, often with their hands shackled above their heads. One prisoner was left chained to the wall in a standing position for 17 days.

"At other times, naked detainees were hooded and dragged up and down corridors while being slapped and punched," the report said.

In 2002 Gul Rahman died from suspected hypothermia after being shackled half-naked on a concrete floor in near-freezing conditions in a CIA prison in Afghanistan, known to the torturers as "the salt pit."

Federal Bureau of Prisons officials saw nothing out of line when they visited that CIA center in 2002. "They were WOW'ed," a CIA report said, because "they have never been in a facility where individuals are so sensory deprived, i.e. constant white noise, no talking, everyone in the dark ... detainees constantly being shackled to the wall or floor."

Though the facility also lacked heat and plumbing, with just a bucket in the cell for prisoners to relieve themselves, Prison Bureau officials said it "was sanitary" and detainees were not being mistreated.

The foremost finding in the Senate report is that torture failed to serve its purpose and "was not an effective means of acquiring intelligence or gaining cooperation," implying that the brutal techniques would be fine if they got more results. It also highlights as a problem that CIA officials kept Congress and the White House in the dark about their activities.

Brennan responded that the prisoners who were tortured "did produce intel-

Ohio ban on abortions after six weeks defeated



Courtesy of Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio

More than 30 defenders of a woman's right to abortion rallied on the steps of the Ohio Statehouse Dec. 3 to protest a bill that would ban abortion after six weeks. A week later the bill went down to defeat in a 47-40 vote in the state House of Representatives. HB 248 would have outlawed abortions when a fetal heartbeat is detectable, around six weeks after conception and before many women know they are pregnant.

"We're happy about the victory, but we know we have to remain vigilant for the next attack that's coming from the anti-abortion forces," Celeste Ribbins, director of communications for Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio, told the *Militant* in a phone interview Dec. 12. Ohio already has a 24-week limit, she said, and a woman must undergo mandatory state-directed counseling designed to discourage her from having an abortion and then wait 24 hours before receiving the procedure.

— MAGGIE TROWE

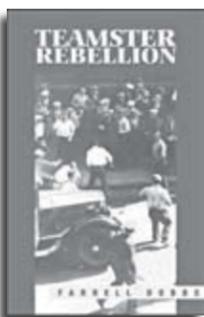
ligence that helped thwart attack plans, capture terrorists and save lives," and that the "agency made mistakes," but never misled government officials.

Some liberals have called for CIA operatives involved in the interrogations to be punished and that Brennan be discharged. But White House spokesperson Josh Earnest Dec. 10 told reporters, "The president is pleased that he is able

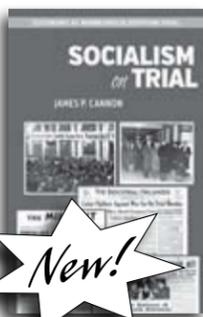
to rely on the advice of a dedicated professional like John Brennan."

Soon after taking office in 2009, Obama made clear he would not prosecute any CIA agent who acted within guidelines set out by the Bush administration. An investigation carried out by the Justice Department into two cases in which prisoners died in CIA custody ended in 2012 with no charges filed, much like the recent decisions by grand juries in New York and Missouri not to file charges against the cops who killed Eric Garner and Michael Brown.

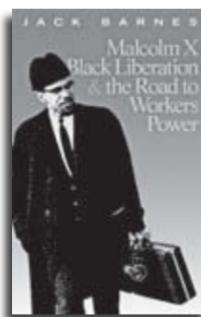
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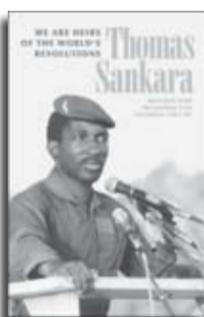
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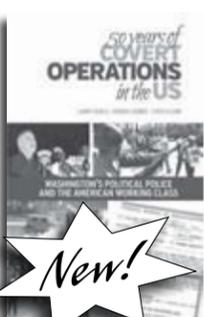
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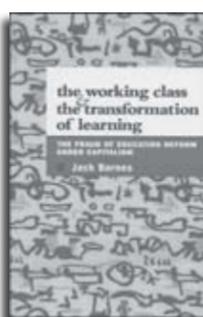
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Cuban 5 are Free!

Continued from front page
ment's willingness to discuss "issues related to national sovereignty, democracy, human rights and foreign policy" with Washington, in spite of "profound differences" on these matters.

Obama referred to a "complicated history" between the two countries. It's actually not complicated at all. It is the history of the U.S. propertied rulers' class hatred for a revolution led by workers and farmers 90 miles away — and the unending economic, political, and military actions Washington has taken to punish Cuba's toilers.

The Eisenhower administration imposed an economic and financial embargo on Cuba in October 1960, and every U.S. administration, Republican and Democratic, has upheld or intensified it. In 1992 and again in 1996 the embargo was tightened by legislation adopted by the U.S. Congress and signed into law by presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton.

President John Kennedy launched a mercenary invasion at the Bay of Pigs in 1961, which was routed by an armed people, and threatened to use nuclear bombs against Cuba in 1962. Since 1959 nearly 3,500 Cubans have been killed in attacks by counterrevolutionary Cuban-American paramilitary groups that operate on U.S. soil with impunity.

In exchange for freeing the three, the Cuban government released and sent to the U.S. a spy of Cuban origin. U.S. officials report that this person is Rolando Sarraff Trujillo, a former Cuban Ministry of the Interior cryptographer arrested in 1995 and sentenced to 25 years in jail. Obama said the agent provided critical assistance to the United States. According to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, this includes information that led to the conviction of Defense Intelligence Agency senior analyst Ana Belen Montes in 2002, former Department of State official Walter Kendall Myers and his spouse Gwendolyn Myers in 2010, and members of the 'Wasp Network' in Florida, including members of the Cuban Five.

According to the *Washington Post*, "the Wasp Network has been credited with foiling a 1994 plot to set off bombs" in the well-known Tropicana nightclub in Havana. Other attacks succeeded, including three bombs set off in Havana hotels Sept. 4, 1997, one of which killed Italian-Canadian businessman Fabio di Celmo.

Castro announced that for humanitarian reasons Cuba had released Alan Gross, a U.S. citizen imprisoned in

2009 for distributing sophisticated satellite equipment in Cuba to counterrevolutionaries as part of U.S. operations to create a covert high-speed Internet network there. Cuba also unilaterally released 53 individuals in whom Washington, according to Raúl Castro, "had shown interest."

Gross, his family and U.S. officials have claimed he was in dangerously deteriorating health. His supporters asserted he was ill-treated, had lost weight and was severely ill with cancer, arthritis and other ailments. However, Rabbi Elie Abadie, a professor at Yeshiva University and a practicing physician in New York who visited Gross in Cuba two years ago and examined him at the family's request, told CNN that Gross was in good health and cancer-free, and noted that Gross walked down the plane ramp with ease.

While in Cuba, Gross refused medical and dental care.

"We will end an outdated approach that for decades has failed to advance our interests. And instead we will begin to normalize relations between our two countries," Obama said, adding he had instructed Secretary of State John Kerry to "review Cuba's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism." He said the administration is "taking steps to increase travel, commerce and the flow of information to and from Cuba."

According to the White House website, the new regulations will raise the amount of money U.S. residents may send to Cuba, permit the use of U.S. credit and debit cards in Cuba, facilitate the processing of authorized financial transactions and open the way for increased commercial sales and exports of goods and services to Cuba, including building materials for entrepreneurs and private residences, communications hardware and business training.

While most travel to Cuba is still prohibited, those who plan visits under 12 specific categories — including family visits, journalistic activity, professional, educational and religious activities — will be covered by general licenses and will no longer have to apply individually, the Obama administration says.

The agreement had been in the works for some time, with involvement of the Vatican and the Canadian government, both Castro and Obama said. A number of editorials in the *New York Times* in recent weeks called for an end to the embargo and a prisoner swap.

After the announcements, a Dec. 18 *Wall Street Journal* editorial said that while the paper has called for ending the embargo for 20 years, the overall course presented by Obama represents an indefensible "attempt to rehabilitate Cuba as an ordinary state." The *Washington Post* in an editorial sharply opposed the Obama administration moves, saying they had given "a 50-year-old failed regime a new lease on life."

Conduct of the Five

The conduct of the Five on trial and



Rovier Mesa Rodríguez

Members of Federation of University Students and others march through streets of Santiago in eastern Cuba Dec. 17 in celebration right after announcement that the Cuban Five were back home.

in prison won them respect and support, and inspired working people around the world. They acted with dignity and firmness, insisted on their innocence on the frame-up charges and said they were proud of defending Cuba and would do it again.

Refusing to plea bargain for more lenient sentences, they fought for a public trial in a venue where they could be judged by anything approaching an impartial jury. They maintained their revolutionary commitment, carried out a massive correspondence and reached out to fighters inside and outside the prison walls. Hernández corresponded with Cuban medical volunteers fighting Ebola in west Africa.

The release of the Cuban heroes took place as activities to free the Five were expanding, from the United States to

Bangladesh to Cambodia to Greece to the United Kingdom.

More workers and others were being drawn to their fight, and to the Cuban Revolution itself, as they joined in labor actions demanding Walmart and other employers pay \$15 an hour, street actions against police brutality and other protests generated by the growing crisis of capitalism.

As the news of the release of Hernández, Labañino and Guerrero spread in Cuba, spontaneous celebrations broke out across the island. When the three arrived, they were met by Raúl Castro, their immediate families and their two comrades who had been released earlier, René González and Fernando González. Hernández told Castro the five were ready for whatever assignment comes next.

'An example of what it means to be a revolutionary' Socialist Workers Party letter to Cuban Five

December 17, 2014

To our Comrades: Gerardo, Ramón, Antonio, Fernando, and René
To the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba

Dear Comrades,

Today, as we see the five of you standing together again on Cuban soil, we join the joy and celebration of the people of Cuba. "Volverán — They shall return" is now not a course of struggle but a fact.

To the Five Heroes of the Cuban people we say: You are also heroes of the international working class.

Above all, it is you — Gerardo, Ramón, Antonio, Fernando, and René — to whom we credit the victory that has been won. Your unwavering strength, dignity, honesty, creativity — and humor — have shown the world what it means to be a revolutionary. What it means to be a communist. What it means to put your lives on the line to defend and advance a living revolution.

From Cuba to Angola to the United States, whether inside or outside prison walls, you have been the same human beings, acting along the same revolutionary course.

For the last 16 years, standing on the front lines of working-class forces in the United States, you fought day and night to advance the goals and values of the Cuban Revolution you represent. We came to know and deeply value each of you as comrades-in-arms.

A great battle has been won by the people of Cuba and the "jury of millions" around the world. As we are all aware, however, the hard-won victory of your return to Cuba does not mean the war has yet been won. A new stage has opened in the decades-long struggle to defend Cuba's sovereignty and independence. President Raúl Castro said it clearly: "This in no way means that the heart of the matter has been solved. The economic, commercial, and financial blockade, which causes enormous human and economic damages to our country, must cease."

For our part, we assure you that as that struggle unfolds — the struggle to continue advancing and defending the revolution's socialist, proletarian internationalist course — we will be there with you. We will be fighting from the same trench, from inside the ranks of working people in the United States, whose political capacities and revolutionary potential are today as utterly discounted by the propertied rulers as were once those of the Cuban toilers. And just as wrongly.

Jack Barnes
National Secretary
for the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party

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—ON THE PICKET LINE—

MAGGIE TROWE, EDITOR

Help make this column a voice of workers' resistance!

This column is dedicated to spreading the truth about the labor resistance that is unfolding today. It seeks to give voice to those engaged in battle and help build solidarity. Its success depends on input from readers. If you are involved in a labor struggle or have information on one, please contact me at 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018; or 212-244-4899; or themilitant@mac.com. We'll work together to ensure your story is told.

—Maggie Trowe

Iowa unionists raise funds for Illinois uranium workers

KEOKUK, Iowa — Uranium workers, members of United Steelworkers Local 7-669 in Metropolis, Illinois, were once again locked out Aug. 1 by the Honeywell Corporation and their ruthless CEO David Cote.

Many of those unionists haven't worked much since the 2010-11 lockout.

Members of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Local 48G here were also fighting a lockout at that time. We joined the uranium workers in solidarity actions in Metropolis and elsewhere, and they did the same for us.

For the holiday season the Lee County Labor Council, the Keokuk Fraternal Council and the Breakroom Lounge have set up a "helping hands tree" at the Keokuk Labor Hall.

There are paper cutout hands hung on the tree with dollar amounts written on them. You simply take a hand into the lounge, sign it with your name, union local or organization, and pay the dollar amount. As of Dec. 13 we have received \$1,000. Money collected by Dec. 18 will be sent to Local 7-669 to help the families have a nice Christmas while they carry on their fight — and our fight.

—Buddy Howard

Kitchen workers at New Zealand hospitals fight outsourcing

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — Some 70 kitchen workers from the three main public hospitals here, joined by cleaners and other hospital staff, protested outside Auckland Hospital Dec. 2, demanding the District Health Board reject a government proposal to replace on-site food preparation with food prepared by an outside contractor, Compass Group.

Health Benefits Limited, set up by the New Zealand government in 2012 as a "cost-saving entity," proposed the outsourcing, touted to save \$90 million (US\$70 million) over 15 years.

"It's all about budget cuts," Mereana Uaperea, a Service and Food Workers Union delegate for the kitchen staff, told the *Militant*. "We like to cook the food and deliver it to the patients fresh."

When the District Health Board decided to proceed with the outsourcing Dec. 15, Alofa Lemalu, head union delegate at Auckland Hospital, told the *Militant*, "We were so upset we decided to go outside and take a break. People were still upset, so we decided to call it a day and go home."

—Annalucia Vermunt

Washington, D.C., rail workers push back 12-hour shift plan

WASHINGTON — Yard workers at Amtrak here have headed off a management plan to cut labor costs by eliminating an entire shift and making all remaining jobs 12 hours long, a move that would have negative consequences for worker alertness and safety.

The proposed change generated concern and opposition among the workforce. Having seen the employer make many changes to the detriment of workers in the past, some said, "They're going to do what they're going to do." But that's not the way it turned out.

Workers organized meetings at shift change times in which everyone could learn about the 12-hour shift proposal, express their opinions and discuss what could be done to prevent it. Many concluded that if we spread the word about what was wrong with the plan to everyone we could reach on the job and off, we could lessen the likelihood of its implementation. The bosses' proposal met growing opposition.

Union representatives from the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLET) and the Trainmen and the Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART) held meetings with management expressing opposition. In early November, company spokespeople said they had decided not to implement the plan at this time.

—Tom Headley

Striking Toronto can workers win solidarity in Philadelphia

PHILADELPHIA — A delegation of Canadian Steelworkers on strike against Crown Holdings were joined by unionists here Dec. 4 in a picket at Crown's corporate headquarters. Crown is one of the largest can makers in the world.

The 120 members of United Steelworkers Local 9176 at Crown's Toronto plant have been on strike since September 2013 against company demands for a two-tier wage scale, cuts in cost-of-living allowances and other concessions. Strikebreakers are running the plant.

"This is union busting," said Cheryl Dollimore, one of six women in the workforce. She makes \$23 per hour



Militant/Pat Starkey

Some 70 union hospital kitchen workers and supporters picket outside Auckland Hospital in New Zealand Dec. 2 protesting government plan to outsource food preparation.

(US\$20). The company wants to pay new workers doing her job \$15. The last company offer, which would permanently replace 75 percent of the strikers, was voted down 117-1 in February.

Dollimore and others have traveled throughout Canada and several U.S. cities speaking before USW locals and other unions about their fight.

At the picket action, representatives of USW locals 10-1 and 404 presented strikers with a check for \$4,189 raised at a plant gate collection organized by the Women of Steel chapter at the Philadelphia Energy Solutions refinery.

—Osborne Hart

Truck assembly workers in Quebec end lockout

STE-THERESE, Quebec — Paccar truck assembly workers here, members of Unifor Local 728, voted 58 percent to approve the company's second contract offer Dec. 2.

Paccar, the maker of Peterbilt and Kenworth trucks and one of the world's largest truck production companies, locked out 900 workers as the contract expired at the end of the day Nov. 29. The next morning the workers voted 76 percent against the company's "best and final" proposal and set up pickets.

This was the second lockout by the American-based company in 10 years. Sticking points in the negotiations were company proposals for cuts in insurance, wages and pensions.

"The new people get a lot less," Mark Tremblay, who has worked at the plant for 25 years, told the *Militant* on the

picket line Nov. 30. Another worker called the company's proposals "divide and rule."

Since 2009, when a two-tier wage structure was imposed, it takes 48 months for new hires to reach the wage and benefit level of those previously hired.

While the wage increase of 12 percent over five years applies equally to all workers, the two-tier wage structure established in 2009 remains, Local 728 President Johanne Duplantie said.

—Annette Kouri and John Steele

NY phone workers rally for contract: 'Ready to fight in 2015'

NEW YORK — Several hundred telephone workers, members of Communications Workers of America Local 1101, rallied outside the Verizon corporate offices here Dec. 4, marking the 25th anniversary of the 100-day strike in 1989 against NYNEX, Verizon's predecessor. The union's contract with the telecommunications giant expires in August 2015. In 2011, 45,000 union members struck for two weeks.

Placards read, "We remember 1989, ready to fight in 2015" and "We walked then and will strike again."

"Every contract they try to take away everything we've gained," Brian Williams, a field technician and 17-year union member, told the *Militant* at the rally. "The time for givebacks is over. They always start with the retirees' benefits. We have to be the voice of the retirees."

—Candace Wagner

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



December 22, 1989

December 8 was "Stand Up to Lorenzo Day" for Eastern Airlines strikers and their supporters. Activities were held in several cities to show that after more than nine months, the Machinists' walkout at Eastern remains solid, despite recent decisions by the officials of the pilots' association and flight attendants' union to end the sympathy strikes at the carrier. The International Association of Machinists and the AFL-CIO called the activities.

In New York some 700 strikers and supporters gathered at Washington Irving High School for a labor solidarity benefit to back the Eastern strikers, miners on strike at Pittston Coal Group, and workers at NYNEX phone company who recently returned to work after a successful four-month walkout.



December 28, 1964

Anger and indignation among Negroes, civil-rights activists and among those who simply believe murder should be punished is mounting over the situation in Mississippi. The FBI's highly publicized arrests of 21 people involved in the murders of the three civil-rights workers last summer in Philadelphia, Miss., apparently is not even going to result in indictments — let alone convictions.

This follows the failure to bring Medgar Evers' assassin to justice, the release of the McComb bombers, and countless other unpunished racist crimes. There is little indication that the Johnson administration will take any decisive steps against the officially-encouraged killing of civil-rights workers in Mississippi.



December 29, 1939

During the first month of the new year the crisis in Japanese-American relations will enter an acute phase. The trade treaty of 1911 denounced by President Roosevelt six months ago will expire on Jan. 26. The negotiations for replacing it involve not merely trade questions but the broader and graver issues of Japan's position in East Asia, its relations with the Soviet Union, and its role in the war.

Under the pressure of threats of an embargo, supplemented by ostentatious additions to U.S. naval and air strength in the Far East, Japan has made a token gesture of conciliation. It has promised to re-open to American and other foreign shipping the lower Yangtze River, which it closed after conquering Shanghai and Nanking two years ago.

Absolved by Solidarity: 16 watercolors for 16 years of unjust imprisonment

New paintings by Antonio Guerrero tell story of Miami frame-up trial of Cuban Five and how they 'defended truth against colossal injustice'

Absolved by Solidarity a full-color book of new paintings and text by Antonio Guerrero, is being released by Pathfinder Press in January. Guerrero is one of five Cuban revolutionaries arrested by the FBI in 1998 and railroaded to federal prison. "16 Watercolors for 16 Years of Unjust Imprisonment," Guerrero entitles it.

Published in a bilingual English-Spanish edition, *Absolved by Solidarity* conveys "the strength, integrity, and creativity of five human beings — Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and René González — today known throughout the world as the Cuban Five," writes Mary-Alice Waters, the book's editor. Her introduction, "The Cuban Five: Who They Are," follows Guerrero's August 2014 message about the new watercolors and a note written for the book by Labañino. All three are reprinted below.

The book also includes the first statement released by the Five, after their 2001 convictions; letters by them; parts of an interview with Hernández, serving the longest sentence, double-life; and excerpts from a 2005 U.S. Appeals Court decision ordering a new trial and dissents by judges opposing the later reversal of that decision.

Absolved by Solidarity will be an invaluable tool in explaining the victory won in freeing the Cuban Five and using that victory to advance the fight against the U.S. embargo on Cuba and to strengthen the Cuban Revolution. It can be gotten into the hands of workers resisting bosses' attacks from Walmart to the railroads, those protesting the cop killings of Eric Garner and others.

'In that courtroom we won an immeasurable victory'

I don't recall the exact moment the idea came to me to do sixteen watercolors for the sixteen years of unjust imprisonment we served as of September 2014. I do know I decided several months ago that the paintings would focus on our frame-up trial in Miami. This project grew out of the fifteen watercolors I did in 2013, which sought to tell

watercolors in sixteen days. Such was the pace, working nonstop, using every minute I could given the conditions here.

Telling the story of the trial in sixteen images is impossible. That would take many, many more paintings. Even then there would be important details of our nearly seven months in a Miami courtroom to take up. From the first day we knew we couldn't get a fair trial there.

But in that courtroom we won an immeasurable victory: in their own den, we denounced terrorism against our people.

Each picture is accompanied by text. There will be a few documents supporting the facts we want to convey. We hope this work will serve in some way to provide a picture of those days when, with the dignity we learned from our people, the five of us defended truth against colossal injustice.

We never felt defeated. We knew we would be acquitted by the honest men and women of the world, who have today become a growing wave of solidarity that won't break until it carries us home.

*Federal Correctional Institution
Marianna, Florida, Aug. 29, 2014*

The truth that cannot be locked in the 'hole'

These new paintings by our brother Tony remind us, with their simple strokes and colors, of the cruel, deeply painful injustice we experienced outside the walls of the Miami federal prison.

We who lived through those moments

again that it's better to fight and die on your feet than to live on your knees.

Art in the service of justice. Art as a weapon to expose and speak the truth that cannot be locked away or isolated in the "hole." Dignity that is worth more than all the gold in the world. Those are the clearest messages our brother Tony offers us in each of his paintings.

Once again the Five send our embrace to express our heartfelt gratitude for the solidarity and the love of people everywhere.

Venceremos! We will win! Five strong embraces!

*Federal Correctional Institution
Ashland, Kentucky, Nov. 6, 2014*



Two of Guerrero's 16 paintings. In describing "The Jury's Verdict," right, Guerrero says when the Five returned to Miami Federal Detention Center jail after June 2001 conviction, they were "greeted with loud applause from the big majority of those we had been living alongside" during the trial, "what we might truly call the first act of solidarity with our cause." Above, "The Sentences," whose harsh character, he writes, "had only one purpose: punishing Cuba."



The Cuban 5: Who they are

BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

Art in the service of justice. Art as a weapon to expose and speak the truth that cannot be locked away in the "hole." Dignity that is worth more than all the gold in the world. Those are the clearest messages our brother Tony offers us in each of his paintings.

*Ramón Labañino
FCI Ashland, Kentucky
November 6, 2014*

Absolved by Solidarity is the second set of watercolors by Antonio Guerrero proudly conveying the strength, integrity, and creativity of five human beings — Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and René González — today known throughout the world as the Cuban Five.

These paintings are not the work of a longtime professional artist. Tutored by fellow inmates, Guerrero taught himself to draw and paint after he was incarcerated at the US Penitentiary in Florence, Colorado, in 2002, sentenced to life without parole. During sixteen years behind bars, his powers of expression through art have grown in tandem with his political strength.

Guerrero's first set of watercolors in this series, *I Will Die the Way I've Lived*, was completed in 2013. Entitled "Fifteen watercolors for the fifteenth anniversary of the imprisonment of the Cuban Five," that work portrays, and transforms into art, the conditions the Five confronted at the Miami Federal Detention Center during their first seventeen months of imprisonment. Those were months when they were confined to punishment cells isolated from the general inmate population, and initially

from each other, as well — the "hole."

Above all, the paintings convey the integrity, dignity, courage, truthfulness, self-discipline — and humor — with which each of the Five heroes of the Cuban people defended themselves and the revolution they represent, as US authorities subjected them to the harshest pretrial conditions hoping to make them turn traitor to themselves and their comrades. Refusing to "cooperate" with agents of the state that held them hostage; refusing to cop a plea in return for a lesser sentence; refusing to renounce their right to a trial and the presumption of innocence — on all these fronts the Five took the moral high ground in response to their accusers.

"Betraying never crossed my mind," Gerardo Hernández tells filmmaker Saul Landau in an interview included here. "It's so obvious that it's difficult for me to explain. Not only would it mean betraying myself as a person, as a revolutionary, but betraying an entire country."

Absolved by Solidarity, the title Guerrero has given this set of paintings, itself echoes the famous 1953 courtroom defense delivered by Cuban leader Fidel Castro, "History Will Absolve Me." Later printed clandestinely and passed from hand to hand across Cuba in the tens of thousands of copies, Castro's speech systematically presented the proletarian goals and ethics of what became the founding program of the movement that culminated in the revolutionary triumph of 1959. That mass popular insurrection overthrew the US-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista and opened the door to a victorious socialist revolution in what the US ruling families considered solely their own domain.

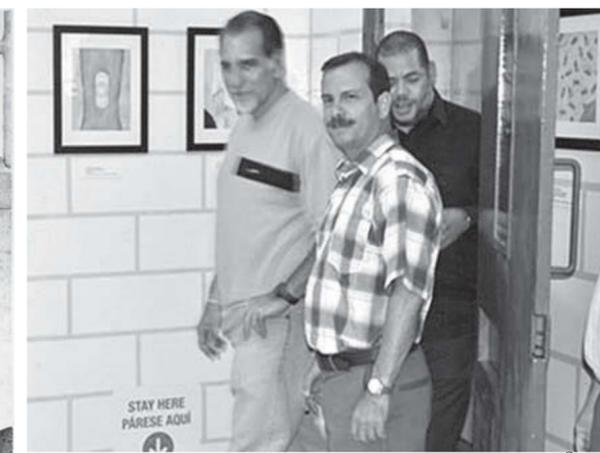
Today Guerrero's first set of watercolors hangs in the Museum of Fine Arts

in Havana, part of an installation created by world-renowned Cuban artist Kcho (Alexis Leyva Machado), built around a true-to-life replica of the punishment cells depicted in Guerrero's paintings.

This second set, entitled "Sixteen watercolors for sixteen years of unjust imprisonment," continues the story, as Guerrero says. It focuses on the frame-up trial in a Miami federal court that ended — unsurprisingly — with the summary conviction of the Five on every single charge brought by the US government. Each was given the maximum sentence on every count.

With insight and wit *Absolved by Solidarity* blasts through the opaqueness of capitalist "justice," allowing us to see the normal workings of the courts and prisons of the United States, the country with the highest incarceration rate in the world. Like the earlier paintings, these new watercolors shine a spotlight on the oppressive class-based system so many millions of US working people, from their own life experience, know all too well.

Even more important, the paintings show us the expressions of respect and solidarity the Five have received from



Inspired by Guerrero's 2013 paintings "I Will Die the Way I've Lived," Cuban artist Kcho, right, created replica of the "hole" at Miami detention center, where the Five were held for 17 months after 1998 arrest. With Kcho at April 2014 opening of installation at Havana's National Museum of Fine Arts are René González, left, and Fernando González, center, two of the Five who returned to Cuba after serving entire terms.

hundreds, perhaps thousands, of working people with whom they have shared the calculated brutalities and indignities of the federal prison system of the United States of America.

Who are the Cuban Five?

Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González, and René González were living and working in southern Florida in September 1998 when each of them was arrested in coordinated predawn raids by the FBI.

What were their allegedly criminal activities?

On behalf of the Cuban government they were gathering information on the actions and plans of counterrevolutionary Cuban organizations, including murderous paramilitary outfits that operated with impunity on US soil. These groups and the individuals who belong to them have a more than half-century-long record of carrying out bombings, assassinations, and other assaults on

supporters of the Cuban Revolution — not only in Cuba but in the United States, Puerto Rico, and other countries as well.

Since 1959, when the mass revolutionary struggle of Cuban working people ended US economic and political domination of their country, nearly 3,500 men, women, and children in Cuba have been killed in such attacks, most originating from the United States. The task of the Five was to keep the Cuban government informed of deadly operations being prepared by these groups and individuals in order to prevent as many as possible of these plans from coming to fruition.

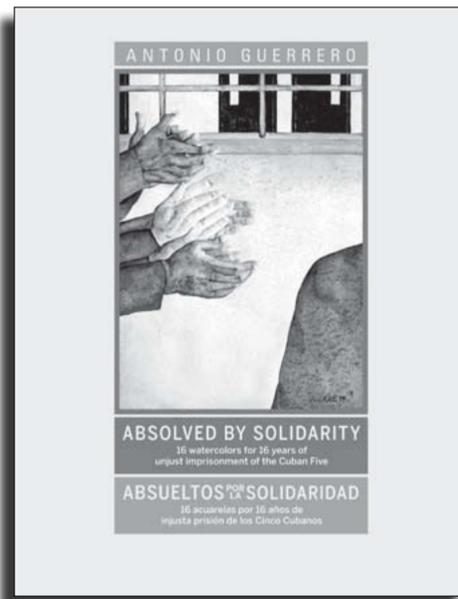
The Five were tried and convicted by a federal court in Miami on frame-up charges that included conspiracy to commit espionage and, in the case of Gerardo Hernández, conspiracy to commit murder. The latter charge, added some eight months after his arrest to ratchet up pressure on the Five, was based on a false allegation. Prosecutors claimed that Hernández had advance knowledge of the Cuban government's decision in February 1996 to shoot down two planes that had penetrated Cuban airspace.

The Miami-based operators of those flights had for months rebuffed Havana's repeated warnings to cease their recurring provocations. Four Cuban Americans ended up dying while carrying out one of those deliberate acts of aggression, hoping to precipitate a confrontation leading to military retaliation by Washington against Cuba.

Admitting it could produce no evidence against any of the Five of any act of espionage — that is, gathering and transmitting to a foreign government information relating to US national defense — Washington resorted to its long tradition of "conspiracy" charges to obtain convictions and impose draconian sentences.

Each of the Five forthrightly acknowledged before the court and to the world that they were working for the Cuban government to prevent future murderous attacks on the Cuban people from taking place. Each of them affirmed they would do so again without a mo-

Continued on page 8



Would you like to read more?

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Absolved by Solidarity

Continued from page 7
ment's hesitation if asked.

On their unbowed heads, in December 2001 the judge laid sentences ranging from fifteen years for René González, to nineteen for Fernando González, to life without parole for Guerrero and Labañino, and a double life sentence without parole for Hernández, who led the effort.

Four years later in 2005, citing the blatantly prejudiced atmosphere surrounding the Miami trial, a three-judge federal appeals court panel unanimously overturned the convictions and ordered a new trial. In response to a US government petition, the full appeals court twelve months later overturned that decision and reinstated the convictions.

In 2009 the same appeals court ruled that, "in the absence of a finding that top secret information was gathered or transmitted" by Labañino, Guerrero, or Hernández, the life sentences imposed on each of them for conspiracy to commit espionage exceeded federal guidelines. Labañino's sentence was reduced to thirty years, and Guerrero's to just under twenty-two. At the same time Fernando González's sentence was reduced by a number of months.

The court refused to allow Hernández's life sentence on the espionage conspiracy charge to be reconsidered, however. The judges ruled that any reduction would be "irrelevant to the time he will serve," since he is sentenced to not one but two concurrent life terms!



After completing more than fourteen and a half years in prison and on parole, in May 2013 René González became the first of the Five to return to Cuba. Fernando González, who also served every minute of his sentence, was released and deported to Cuba in February 2014. Were they to serve their full time, Antonio Guerrero would not be released until September 2017, and Ramón Labañino seven years later, in October 2024.

For Gerardo Hernández, however, there is no release date. Moreover, as an additional, intensely cruel punishment, for more than sixteen years Washington has denied his wife, Adriana Pérez, a visa to enter the United States to visit him.

Growing worldwide condemnation of the trial of the Cuban Five, and of the unconscionable sentences and other vindictive treatment, has not been without effect. At the court hearing where Guerrero's sentence was reduced, federal prosecutors acknowledged the pressure, admitting they hoped that decision would "quiet the waters of contentiousness" and "noise" swirling around the case internationally.

Evidence has come to light, however, that a number of journalists writing about the trial in the Miami press were at the same time receiving payments from the US government's Office of Cuban Broadcasting. This further proof of the corruption of the trial proceedings — negating the possibility of empaneling an impartial jury of peers — has become part of the habeas corpus appeals filed on behalf of Hernández, Labañino, and Guerrero. It is adding to the international outcry for their release.

Why are the Cuban Five in prison for even a day?

"They dealt with us harshly, as yet another way to punish Cuba's resis-

tance," René González writes here. The trial was "an extension of the confrontation between those who claim the prerogative to attack Cuba and those of us who believe in Cuba's right to defend itself." The US government "regarded both terrorism and military aggression against Cuba to be among their legitimate prerogatives. That's what the trial showed. We thought it was important to demonstrate they would have to confront an entire people who think otherwise."

The Five were imprisoned precisely because they exemplify the Cuban Revolution — they exemplify the strength of the men and women who brought into being and defend "the first free territory of the Americas." They are held hostage to punish the Cuban toilers for their audacity in making a socialist revolution in what Washington still considers its "backyard."

It was for these deeds that the Cuban Five were arrested, framed up, and have been locked away through three imperialist administrations, two Democrat and one Republican. During those same years, however, growing knowledge in North America and the world over of the consistency of the



New set of paintings titled "Absolved by Solidarity" echoes 1953 courtroom defense given by Cuban leader Fidel Castro, "History Will Absolve Me." Above, drawing by H. Maza of Castro delivering speech at close of trial for July 26, 1953, assault on Moncada army garrison that opened revolutionary fight in Cuba against U.S.-backed dictatorship. "The day of my sentencing, I placed it in front of me when I began reading my statement," Guerrero writes.

revolutionary conduct of the Five — from Cuba and Angola to US prison cells — has been decisive in winning them ever-widening admiration and support.

Absolved by Solidarity is one more powerful weapon in the fight to win their freedom. In the words of An-

tonio Guerrero, "Those harsh sentences had only one purpose: punishing Cuba. But they could not stop our truth from being heard, the truth of our honorable, humane, and revolutionary country?"

That is the truth one finds in Antonio's paintings.

December 2014

Workers fight for union, against firing at Delta Air

Continued from front page

in English, Somali, Amharic and Spanish. Many were workers who are fighting for a union at Air Serv, a subcontractor that pays some of the lowest wages at the airport. The rally was called by Service Employees International Union Local 26, the Delta organizing committee and 15 Now.

"Delta was trying to chill the atmosphere around the Delta organizing drive, the Air Serv organizing drive and the 15 Now campaign when they fired me," Hedges told the *Militant* Dec. 13.

"I was told I was terminated for making 'untrue and disparaging' public comments about the company on a video posted on the Internet leading up to the Dec. 5 rally," he said.

What he says in the video is, "A lot of the Delta workers make under \$15 an hour. As a matter of fact, I would say probably close to half make under

\$15 an hour. So there's a lot of them that understand how important this is. And a lot of the better paid workers also understand that the bottom has to be raised, otherwise the top is going to fall as well."

"Delta never thought that there would be a demonstration of 300 people at the terminal. I have never seen anything like the support I've gotten," he said.

"After the merger between Northwest and nonunion Delta in 2008, the company went on a campaign against the union," Hedges said. "Posters were put up everywhere. Workers were called in to be intimidated. Everyone was constantly surrounded by anti-union messages."

IAM supporters lost the vote in a 2010 election. "Since then, union activists have been subject to extra scrutiny by the company," Hedges said.

"Delta wants to replace us with low-

paid workers, such as part-time, temporary 'ready reserve' baggage handlers and ticket agents with no benefits or seniority," he said. "Air Serv workers — cabin cleaners, wheelchair pushers and cart drivers for Delta — make \$8 to \$10 per hour."

"Since Kip was fired, increased numbers of ramp workers in Minneapolis-St. Paul and several other Delta stations have been signing union cards," Marty Knaeble, another pro-union Delta ramp worker, told the *Militant*.

Hedges appealed the firing, and the Machinists union is preparing a lawsuit. Co-workers are organizing a fundraiser to support the fight.

Word of the firing has spread to Delta hubs in Atlanta, Detroit and elsewhere, and nearly 2,000 people have signed an online petition in protest. The petition can be found at co-worker.org/p/Delta.

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Emulate, defend Cuban Revolution

Continued from front page

has been won puts working people in the U.S. and around the world on a stronger footing to defend and advance our interests. We are now in a stronger position to broaden the struggle to end Washington's brutal, more-than-half-century-long economic war against Cuba, to fight for the normalization of relations with Havana, and to end the violation of the right of U.S. residents to travel to Cuba. We are in a better position to prevent those opposed to such measures from using the congressional purse strings to block the establishment of an embassy in Havana for the first time since early 1961, or to deny confirmation of a U.S. ambassador.

Above all, the victory freeing the Cuban Five reinforces all those, from Ferguson, Missouri, to Staten Island, New York, and beyond, who are taking to the streets to demand a halt to cop brutality and killings. The courage, dignity and discipline of the Five throughout their 16-year incarceration has helped shine a spotlight on the class-based character of capitalist "justice" experienced firsthand by millions of working people in the U.S. — from the brutality of cops and prison guards carrying out "the law," to "plea bargains" and the denial of any semblance of presumption of innocence and trial by a jury of your peers.

The fight for the Five reinforced, and was reinforced by, struggles of workers at Walmart and elsewhere for dignity, full-time work and a union, and of rail workers to defend life and limb against the rail bosses' ruthless drive for profits.

From the beginning of the frame-up and the fight against it in the late 1990s, the *Militant* has helped, week in and week out, to get out the truth about the Cuban Revolution and the fight to win freedom for the Five. We've reported on their activity on the front lines of the class struggle in U.S. prisons, and on the ongoing proletarian internationalist course of the Cuban

Revolution they were imprisoned not only for defending but for being in the vanguard of advancing — and will now continue defending on different terrain.

Many of these articles from the pages of the *Militant* are now parts of books in many languages distributed around the world that eloquently convey the truth about the Cuban Revolution and the Five. Among them are *Cuba and Angola: Fighting for Africa's Freedom and Our Own*; *Voices From Prison: The Cuban Five; I Will Die the Way I've Lived*; and the soon-to-be published *Absolved by Solidarity: 16 Watercolors for 16 Years of Unjust Imprisonment*, with paintings by Antonio Guerrero.

These "defense case" titles won't have to be consigned to cartons like so many outdated brochures. They remain invaluable tools for *struggles and political activity* — for *political example* — by growing numbers of working people who are resisting assaults by the capitalist rulers and their political parties and governments.

Workers are looking for alternatives to the dog-eat-dog values of the capitalist system, to the deadliness that results from the workings of exploitation and oppression. The stories of the men and women who made the Cuban Revolution, and who fight today to defend and strengthen it, are needed more than ever.

Across the United States and other parts of the world, fighters who have campaigned to free the Cuban Five will be gathering on or around Jan. 1, the 56th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution, to celebrate the victory all of us have won.

We urge readers of the *Militant* to help initiate and build these events. They are part of expanding what Gerardo Hernández, just released from a double-life sentence without parole, has called the "jury of millions" — not just the jury that was necessary to free the Five, but the only jury that can defend and emulate the example of the Cuban people.

SWP candidate: 'Cop violence is class issue'

Below is a statement by Glova Scott, Socialist Workers Party candidate for City Council, Ward 4, in Washington, D.C., sent to the press Dec. 18. Scott works at Walmart and is a member of OUR Walmart.

The Staten Island grand jury decision not to indict the cops who killed Eric Garner has changed the terrain for the fight against police brutality and killings, making it clearer that cop violence is above all a *class* issue. This is how the police act.

Millions watched the video of the cop putting a chokehold on Garner. They do so to stop your breathing and incapacitate you, so they can get the cuffs on. They Taser workers for the same reason. And the prosecutors and courts defend these actions as necessary and prudent, part of the cops doing their job, which is to keep working people in their place.

Esaw Garner, the widow of Eric Garner, raises the level of political leadership in the fight against police brutality when she explains that her husband's killing

was not a question of race. Above all the working class — the revolutionary class — is the target. Within this framework, such cop actions are directed disproportionately against workers who are Black.

The police cannot and will not be reformed by "better training," community policing, video cameras or police review boards. They carry out the role dictated to them by the class they serve, part of maintaining the dictatorship of capital. This is why it is so hard to even get them charged, much less convicted.

Working people need to organize independently of the Democratic and Republican parties. The workers movement needs to organize its own party — a labor party to champion our own interests. Through collective struggle, from the fight against police brutality to the fight at Walmart and elsewhere for \$15 an hour, full-time work and a union, and other working-class battles, we can advance solidarity and self-confidence as we fight independently along a course toward the conquest of power.

LETTERS

Meeting with Kurdish fighter

During a weekend trip to Vancouver, British Columbia, Dec. 7, I met Mohamad Khademyani, who is Kurdish and was a teacher in Sardasht, northwest Iran, where he was elected city councilor in 1999. His support of Kurdish rights led to imprisonment and a death sentence. He left the country and now lives in Canada, where he is spearheading a successful campaign to raise money for refugees in Turkey from Kobani, Syria. Kurdish forces there have been beating back Islamic State.

Proceeds from cash donations, children's sale of chocolate and sales of T-shirts saying "My sister is pro-

tecting Kobani," all doubled by a matching fund, have brought in more than \$42,000. Khademyani and others have worked with aid agencies to obtain medicine worth roughly \$600,000. He and others will leave Jan. 11 to deliver supplies to Kobani refugee camps.

I showed Mohamad *I Will Die*

'Militant' Prisoners' Fund

The Prisoners' Fund makes it possible to send prisoners reduced rate subscriptions. To donate, send a check or money order payable to the Militant and earmarked "Prisoners' Fund" to 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

the Way I've Lived, Pathfinder's book of prison watercolors by Antonio Guerrero. "This is very powerful," he said. He told me about a fellow prisoner in Iran. "If I had not gone through prison, and met people like him, I do not think I would still be fighting for freedom today." *Katy LeRougetel Calgary, Alberta*

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Cop brutality protest

Continued from front page

told them 11 times, "I can't breathe."

The Dec. 3 grand jury decision not to indict Pantaleo has galvanized broad actions nationwide. On Dec. 13 more than 25,000 also marched in New York; 10,000 in Oakland, California; and thousands more in Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles and elsewhere.

The Washington rally brought together the families of many individuals killed by the police. Samaria Rice told the crowd how her 12-year-old son Tamir was shot by Cleveland police Nov. 22 while playing with a toy gun. A video shows the boy was shot two seconds after police arrived. "Let that officer be arrested," Rice said. "Let him be brought before a criminal jury."

Other speakers included the parents of Michael Brown from Ferguson, Missouri; Kimberly Ballinger, whose domestic partner Akai Gurley was fatally shot by New York police in the stairwell of a Brooklyn apartment building Nov. 20; John Crawford Jr., whose son John Crawford III was shot and killed by cops in a Walmart near Dayton, Ohio, Aug. 5; Carlos Ball, whose brother Cary Ball was shot to death by St. Louis police in 2013; Sybrina Fulton, whose son Trayvon Martin was killed by a vigilante in Florida in 2012; and Kadiatou Diallo, mother of Amadou Diallo, killed by the cops in New York in 1999.

Some speakers focused on calls to reform police procedures. Al Sharpton, president of the National Action Network, called for Congress to make it easier for federal officials to get involved in cases of police killings, and for special prosecutors supposedly less connected to cops they are assigned to investigate.

Marc Morial, national president of the Urban League, presented a list of measures to provide "police accountability," including greater use of police body cameras, training cops in "community policing," a "uniform deadly force policy" to apply to all police departments and a national law against racial profiling.

'It's police abuse of power, not race'

None of these measures touch the fundamental problem of the role of the police in capitalist society — enforcing the interests of the propertied ruling families and keeping working people in their place. When the cops decide to act, for whatever reason, they move to establish complete control as rapidly as possible, whether through a chokehold, beating, Taser or gun.

Because of their history, including leading the fight to overthrow Jim Crow segregation and against continuing racist discrimination from hiring to housing, Blacks are disproportionately a target of cop assault, even though most of those killed by cops across the country are Caucasian.

Speaking on the national TV show "Meet the Press" Dec. 7, Esaw Garner described how, because her husband sold loose cigarettes, the cops kept tabs on and harassed them often prior to the fatal assault. "We would go shopping and they'd say, 'Hi cigarette man,' 'Hey cigarette man's wife,' stuff like that. ... I feel like he was murdered."

"This is not a black and white issue," insisted his daughter, Erica Garner, in an interview with CNN. The real issue is "the police abusing their power."

"I've never seen something so beautiful. Seeing the Asian community, seeing union workers, seeing people who probably don't even speak English," Josh Toney, a young African-American, told the *Chicago Tribune* as he marched in New York City.

The New York State Nurses Association and 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers organized buses to Washington. Many members of International Longshoremen's Association Local 1422 came on a bus from Charleston, South Carolina.

"This is an issue for the whole community, and unions are part of the community," said Warren Chapman, a maintenance worker for DC Metro who marched with the Amalgamated Transit Union.

Shane Lee, who lives a few blocks from where Garner was killed, rode to Washington on a bus. He pointed out that it's not only white police who act this way. "I recently saw on the news where a Black cop was beating a kid for jumping a subway turnstile."

"This won't stop unless we fight and organize," said Bill Cummings, a maintenance worker at Howard University. "I'm glad to see all races coming out. This is not just a question for Blacks. It's about all of us."

James Harris contributed to this article.