

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

**Cuban 5: US 'justice' system
railroads millions into prison**
— PAGE 7

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 80/NO. 4 FEBRUARY 1, 2016

Trump, Sanders support shows working-class discontent

BY NAOMI CRAINE

The protracted erosion of jobs, wages and conditions of life for the working class across the United States is fueling discontent and anger on a level not seen since the 1930s. Working people, in city and countryside, are looking for answers to why this is happening, and what can be done about it. And they're increasingly fed up with "establishment" ruling-class politicians — Democrat and Republican alike — who they see as part of the crisis being visited on them.

This is why the most demagogic "outsider" candidates with a populist message — Democrat Bernie Sanders and Republican Donald Trump — are attracting workers' attention and interest. Practically every week media pundits have said these candidates are on the verge of fading away, yet their poll numbers are rising as the first primaries near. And it's why there is more openness and interest among workers to considering a revolutionary working-class program and course.

The grinding depression conditions
Continued on page 6

Oregon ranchers demand 'Free the Hammonds,' debate occupation

BY SETH GALINSKY

"I've been here 70 years and Dwight and Steven Hammond are the nicest people that ever walked a foot of this earth," rancher Merlin Rupp said to cheers and applause at a Jan. 6 community meeting in Burns, Oregon. "They got the rottenest deal there ever was."

Dwight Hammond, 73, and his son Steven, fellow cattle ranchers, returned to federal prison in California Jan. 4 to serve additional time on frame-up charges of "maliciously damaging" U.S. property by fire, which the government prosecuted under the 1996 Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act. They had set two backfires on their ranch, one to protect against an approaching wildfire and the other to destroy invasive juniper growth. They burned a total of 140 acres of federal land.

The fires took place in 2001 and 2006, but federal officials didn't file charges until June 2010. In previous decades, the government had bought up land around the Hammonds to expand the Malheur National Wildlife
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Washington pursues deal with Tehran, Moscow

Seeks stability for imperialist interests in Mideast



AP/Christoph Schmidt

Thousands rally in Stuttgart, Germany, Jan. 16, organized by unions, churches and other groups to protest attacks, discrimination against refugees and New Year's Eve sexual abuse of women.

BY MAGGIE TROWE

Implementation of the nuclear deal between Washington and Tehran marks further progress in the U.S. rulers' efforts to pursue a cease-fire in the five-year civil war in Syria, common action to curtail Islamic State, stabilize the war-torn Middle East and protect its interests.

The agreement, pushed by President Barack Obama and signed last July, took effect Jan. 16 as U.N. inspectors verified Tehran had moved the core and cemented over its reac-

tor at Arak, destroyed over 12,000 enrichment centrifuges and shipped some 12.5 tons of partially refined uranium for storage in Russia.

Washington and its allies began lifting harsh economic sanctions that hit working people in Iran the hardest. Tehran released four American prisoners and Washington freed seven Iranians held in the U.S.

Tehran will now have access to some \$100 billion in frozen assets held in banks around the world, can
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Protest hits restrictions on abortion rights, cuts to Planned Parenthood



Militant/Laura Anderson

Some 100 supporters of women's right to choose abortion rally in Chicago Jan. 17 to counter anti-abortion action. Growing public actions are key to defense of women's rights today.

BY EMMA JOHNSON
AND NAOMI CRAINE

As part of continuing attacks on women's rights, a new law took effect in North Carolina Jan. 1 imposing a three-day waiting period before a woman can get an abortion and requiring doctors to submit ultrasound

and other documentation to state officials for any abortion after the 16th week of pregnancy.

In Kansas, Gov. Sam Brownback announced Jan. 12 that all state Medicaid funding to Planned Parenthood of Kansas and Mid-Missouri would
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Calif. family fights for-profit jail medical services that let son die

BY ERIC SIMPSON

OAKLAND, Calif. — The family of Mario Martinez, who died from medical neglect in Alameda County's Santa Rita Jail July 15, is leading a campaign to get Corizon, the for-profit private prison health provider, out of the jail.

Martinez, 29, died during an asthma attack complicated by nasal polyps that obstructed his breathing. "What happened to my son was totally preventable," his mother Tanti Martinez told the *Militant* Dec. 16.

Corizon reports it has operations in 27 states across the country, raking in \$1.5 billion annually.

Martinez rang an emergency call button, telling the prison guard, "I can't breathe." The guard refused first aid. When emergency medical personnel arrived on the scene 30 minutes later, he was dead.

"He left my son there unassisted, they never gave him oxygen," Tanti Martinez said. "The guard made my son die."

First examined at the Corizon-run jail clinic for breathing difficulty in December 2014, Martinez's condition worsened as he sat in jail awaiting trial. His defense attorney Timothy Rien won three court orders to force

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—On the picket line, p. 5—

Big Three auto bosses keep hated tiered wages system

New York union rally demands statewide \$15 minimum wage

Volunteers boost reach of revolutionary books

BY MICHELE SMITH

Volunteers in 16 cities across the United States and Canada put hundreds of Pathfinder books about revolutionary working-class politics onto bookstore, library and museum shelves, and into college classrooms, during an Aug. 22 through Dec. 31 sales effort.

Volunteers placed 110 orders, going over their goal of 100. Special emphasis was put on Pathfinder’s new edition of *Teamster Politics* and its new book *Política Teamster*, winning 38 orders for books in the four-volume Teamsters series, which also includes *Teamster Rebellion*, *Teamster Power* and *Teamster Bureaucracy*. Written by Farrell Dobbs, the books recount the powerful story — with many useful lessons for today — of Teamster union battles in the Upper Midwest and the role of the Socialist Workers Party in helping to lead them.

“We found real interest in the Teamster series given the economic crisis and the fight for \$15 an hour and a union unfolding today,” said New York City volunteer Gale Shangold, who helped lead the effort.

Sales volunteers found that long-time customers and new buyers alike commented on how Pathfinder’s catalogue would appeal to those involved in labor resistance and social struggles, like the fight against police brutality.

Volunteers in Oakland, California, visited a university library buyer they met at the American Library Association summer convention. “Our acqui-

sitions department will place an order directly with you all for The Cuban Revolution in World Politics,” she told them after their meeting. This is a series of 29 books written by its leaders that provide firsthand accounts of a revolution that continues to change the course of history.

At an appointment with a college librarian in Olympia, Washington, Scott Breen from Seattle showed her all 14 issues of *New International*, a magazine of Marxist politics and theory. She ordered the entire set in addition to a number of Pathfinder titles.

Volunteers staffed Pathfinder booths at a number of national and regional conferences. An Arizona professor who attended the annual African Studies Association convention in San Diego purchased for classroom use 44 copies of *February 1965: The Final Speeches* by Malcolm X.

Volunteers in Montreal set up a table at the yearly Salon du livre and sold 33 books, including five *New Internationals* and four copies of *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*.

Baker & Taylor, a major wholesaler that distributes Pathfinder titles to bookstores and libraries, listed two dozen Pathfinder titles in a special fall marketing program called “Shelf Worthy.” Included were *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*; *Cuba and Angola: Fighting for Africa’s Freedom and Our Own*; *Absolved by Solidarity: 16 Watercolors for 16 years of Unjust Imprisonment of the Cuban Five*;

Hawa Bah: Join fight to indict cops who killed my son



Militant/Mike Shur

NEW YORK — As part of her ongoing fight against the cops who killed her son, Hawa Bah, above, mother of Mohamed Bah; her lawyer Randolph McLaughlin, right; and Socialist Workers Party leader Maggie Trowe spoke at a Militant Labor Forum here Jan. 15 attended by some 50 people.

“Tonight I’m speaking for a loved one I lost who can’t speak for himself,” she said. Mohamed Bah was a 28-year-old student and taxi driver.

Upon arriving from Guinea, West Africa, to visit her son in September 2012 Bah found him suffering from depression. She called 911 to ask for an ambulance to take him to the hospital. Instead, five heavily armed cops arrived. They broke into his locked room, shooting him eight times, once in the head.

Since then, Hawa Bah has been active together with other family members of sons who were killed by the NYPD, demanding cops who committed these crimes be indicted and brought to trial.

“At first the cops said Mohamed had a knife and they had to shoot when he tried to stab one of them,” Bah said, “Now they admit that was a lie.”

“Three boxes of evidence have been ‘lost’ in the case, including the supposed knife, clothing and a big chunk of the wall in the apartment,” said McLaughlin. The cover-up has begun to unravel in response to a civil lawsuit filed by Hawa Bah and her family.

“The Socialist Workers Party stands with Hawa Bah in her fight to tell the truth and bring to trial the cops who killed Mohamed,” said Trowe.

— BRIAN WILLIAMS

Teamster Politics; *Women in Cuba: The Making of a Revolution Within the Revolution*; *The Jewish Question*; and three *New Internationals*.

The Jewish Question was written by Abram Leon, a Belgian revolutionary executed by the Nazis at the Auschwitz concentration camp in 1944. It describes the social history of the Jews and how in times of social crisis Jew-hatred is incited by the propertied rulers to deflect attention from how their crisis is rooted in the workings of the capitalist system while they mobilize reactionary forces against the working-class movement.

Volunteers are preparing promotional materials and organizing visits to bring in Pathfinder orders for Black History Month in February. A special feature is the upcoming Pathfinder book “*It’s the Poor Who Face the Savagery of the US ‘Justice’ System*”: *The Cuban Five Talk About Their Lives in the US Working Class* (see excerpts on page 7). The book will be available Feb. 1.

Also in the works is a spring 2016 sales effort, which will feature the new book along with *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* and *The Jewish Question*.

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THE MILITANT

Defense of nature falls to working class

Social disasters caused by floods in England and mudslides in Shenzhen, China, are products of capitalist relations, not nature. The ‘Militant’ explains the stewardship of nature depends on the working class and its fight to end the dictatorship of capital.



Reuters/Andrew Yates

City of York in northern England flooded after River Ouse burst its banks Dec. 28.

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Family protests jail death

Continued from front page
the county to send him to a specialist. Instead, Corizon doctors fought the orders and overruled referrals, giving Martinez an ineffective nasal spray and decongestants.

He was finally sent to the county hospital in June and diagnosed with a complete breathing obstruction. A CT scan and surgery were scheduled, but he died first. “I think they were trying to save a buck,” Tanti Martinez said. “To me, they don’t care about a person’s life.”

No disciplinary action was carried out against jail or Corizon personnel and the case is closed, according to the Alameda County Sheriff’s Office.

Supporters of the effort to expose the criminal neglect that led to Martinez’s death have organized street protests outside county offices and Corizon headquarters. The family filed a wrongful death suit against Alameda County.

“I’m an electrician working for International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 595. In our brotherhood, if I see a brother fall down or get hurt, I have to help him. If not, I get kicked out,” Mario’s brother, David Martinez, said Dec. 16 at a public meeting of an ad-hoc public safety relations committee set up by county supervisors. The meeting was attended by representatives of the District Attorney’s Office and the Sheriff’s department.

“What makes Corizon different than us? They basically gave the judge the finger three times,” David Martinez said. “My brother died and you guys are going to keep them in business? All you guys are guilty.”

County Sheriff and Coroner Gregory Ahern recommended Alameda

County renew its \$237 million contract with Corizon, and the supervisors did so without discussion.

“The reason we are here is not just for my nephew Mario,” Sheri Costel said at the meeting, “but so it doesn’t ever happen again.”

The Alameda Labor Council has joined the campaign against Corizon, calling for a full investigation into Martinez’s death and for suspension of the sheriff’s deputies who denied him medical aid.

In February 2015 the company and the county were forced to pay \$8.3 million to the family of Martin Harrison, who was killed in Santa Rita Jail in 2010. He died when 10 deputies beat, kicked and used Tasers against him while he was suffering severe alcoholic withdrawal and hallucinations.



Militant/Eric Simpson
At Alameda County Board of Supervisors meeting Dec. 16 protesters condemn death of inmate Mario Martinez from failure of prison health service company Corizon to provide needed care.

Oregon ranchers demand ‘Free the Hammonds’

Continued from front page
Refuge, but the Hammonds refused to sell their ranch.

Their case gained national attention after a small group of armed protesters led by Ammon Bundy occupied buildings at the nearby wildlife refuge following a peaceful demonstration of 300 Jan. 2. Bundy, the owner of a truck maintenance business in Arizona who has been involved in other land fights with the federal government, calls his group Citizens for Constitutional Freedom. He says the occupation supports the Hammonds and opposes federal control of land.

Forcing the Hammonds to prison a second time for the same charges is seen as grossly unfair by ranchers and workers in the area, increasing anger over the conduct of federal government

agencies that control more than half the land in Oregon and 75 percent in Harney County. Grazing cattle and getting water on federal land is critical for area ranchers, large and small, but they face bureaucratic rules and fees every step of the way, including pressure to give up their land.

Government officials have tried to whip up sentiment against the occupation. At the Jan. 6 meeting, Harney County Sheriff Dave Ward asked for a straw poll on who wants “to work this out peacefully and would like these folks to go home.” Most at the meeting raised their hands, according to the *Burns Times-Herald*. At the same time, many said they were sympathetic to the occupiers’ demands.

“Whether you agree or disagree with Bundy’s movement, he has given Harney County our biggest and best platform to get our message out,” rancher Mitch Siegner told the meeting.

Trial judge Michael Hogan sentenced Steven Hammond to two concurrent one-year sentences and his father to three months of imprisonment. The judge rejected imposing the five-year minimum sentence set in the terrorism statute, saying it would be grossly disproportionate to the severity of charges and “would shock the conscience.”

The Hammonds reached a verbal agreement with prosecutors not to appeal the case, and also agreed to pay fines for the fires and to give the federal government first opportunity to buy their ranch if they put it up for sale. But prosecutors appealed anyway and the U.S. Court of Appeals ruled in their favor. The Hammonds were ordered back to prison to complete the five-year sentence minus time served.

As the occupation continues, tensions and disputes have escalated. Some rightist armed “patriot” groups who offered to help were turned away by Bundy, but remain in the area.

After LaVoy Finicum, a spokesperson for the occupiers, addressed a Jan. 16 press conference at the wildlife refuge, Kieran Suckling grabbed the microphone to demand they leave “public land.” Suckling is the executive director of the Center for Biological Diversity, based in Tucson, Arizona, which focuses on preserving endangered species.

Various groups who said they spoke for animals, birds and the environment held protests against the occupation Jan. 19 in Seattle and Spokane, Washington; Boise, Idaho; Portland, Oregon;

and other Northwest cities. Signs at the rallies included “Bird Lives Matter” and “Arrest the Occupiers,” but not a word about the problems facing ranchers, working farmers and workers in eastern Oregon. Residents who support the Hammonds or express sympathy with the demands of the occupation report they have been followed by police or FBI agents, who have set up a command post in town.

Bundy had said he would hold a community meeting Jan. 15 and announce his “exit plans,” but local officials denied him use of the county fairgrounds or other public buildings in Burns.

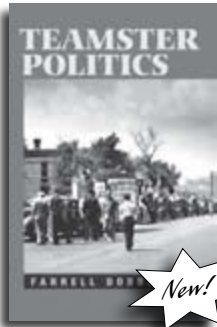
Vanessa Leathers-King, a hairstylist who is active in efforts to defend the Hammonds, organized a protest of more than a dozen people in Burns Jan. 18, on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, to protest denial of the right of local residents to hold meetings in public buildings. Signs quoted King, including “Our lives begin to end the day we become silent.”

The protest would have been bigger, she said in a video posted on the web, but “A lot of people here are afraid to stand up and put their names in. They’re worried about job loss.” She added that some local businesses told workers not to say anything about the dispute.

On Jan. 19 local officials organized another community meeting. Bundy and others involved in the occupation attended but did not speak. County Judge Steve Grasty looked at Bundy and said, “It is time for you to go home.” Some in the gymnasium chanted, “Go, go, go.”

One local resident, quoted by the *Oregonian* but not identified, took the mic and said, “We need to talk about who needs to come home,” referring to the Hammonds, instead of talking about who needs to go.

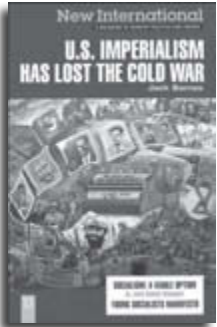
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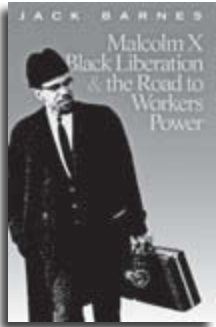
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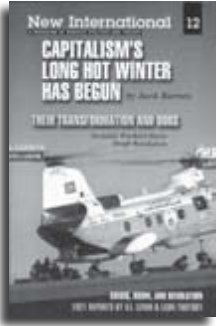
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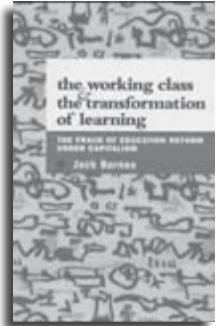
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Fight grows in Canada to stop refugee’s deportation

BY MICHEL PRAIRIE

MONTREAL — “Because Mohamed has exhausted all legal procedures, the campaign launched by the Justice for Mohamed Harkat Committee is the last means we have to prevent his deportation,” Sophie Lamarche Harkat, his wife and a leader of the committee, told a Jan. 8 Militant Labor Forum here, speaking via Skype from Ottawa.

In December the committee announced a campaign to get 1,000 letters demanding that newly elected Liberal Party Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stop the deportation procedures against Harkat. The Algerian refugee, who has lived in Canada for 20 years, was targeted for deportation by the outgoing Conservative Party government of Stephen Harper last August. Amnesty International Canada says Harkat faces possible torture and death if sent back to Algeria.

The Supreme Court of Canada ruled in May 2014 that the federal government can use secret evidence never tested in court to deport permanent residents and other noncitizens declared a threat to “national security” or suspected of criminal activity.

Harkat came to Canada in 1995 and lives in Ottawa. He was granted refugee status in 1997 and worked as a pizza delivery driver and gas station attendant. Under the country’s “security certificate” laws, he was arrested in 2002 and spent four years in jail after the Canadian Security Intelligence Service accused him of being an al-Qaeda “sleeping agent.” Harkat, who denies the charges, has been living under various forms of house arrest since 2006.

Over the years Harkat’s case has become a *cause célèbre*. His fight has gone twice to the Supreme Court of Canada, forcing the federal government to make minor adjustments in 2008 to the security certificate laws. More than 6,000 people and organiza-

tions have signed a statement against the government’s use of these certificates, including the Canadian Labor Congress and dozens of major unions.

Sophie Harkat described how people would stop her husband in the street to wish him good luck, not knowing that his probation conditions prohibit him from addressing a person not previously approved by the Canadian Border Service Agency, which monitors his probation.

“Mohamed is now a prominent figure, he has respected all his probation conditions over the years and even the Canadian Security Intelligence Service says he is less a threat than they thought initially,” she said.

Security certificates issued against people “who were not threats and never engaged in or supported violence” have been dropped in the past, Barbara Jackman, Harkat’s lead counsel,



Mohamed Harkat, left, at 2009 press conference showing ankle bracelet, has been restricted without trial since 2006 under Canada’s “security certificate” laws and faces deportation.

wrote to the meeting.

“This effort is in the front line in Canada of protests against attacks on Muslims and mosques,” John Steele told the forum on behalf of the Com-

munist League.

Information on the fight can be found at <http://www.justiceforharkat.com/news.php>. Messages of support and donations can be sent as well.

Washington pushes deal with Tehran, Moscow

Continued from front page trade with Washington and others, and resume selling oil on the glutted world market.

Washington: More stability, less war

After the second imperialist World War, the victorious propertied rulers in Washington were confronted by a worldwide rise of colonial peoples for self-determination and social revolution. Colonial powers were forced to grant independence. But betrayals of workers’ and farmers’ struggles in the Middle East and elsewhere by Stalinist parties and the exhaustion of bourgeois nationalist forces like Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt and the Baathists in Syria and Iraq created a vacuum.

The wave of popular mobilizations that swept Syria in 2011 were suppressed by the bloody regime of Bashar al-Assad, leading to armed conflict. The weak Iraqi government, dominated by Shia-led forces, looked to Iran and faced mass distrust by the majority Sunni and Kurd population. In this context, reactionary Islamic State forces conquered large areas of the two countries, a blow to workers and farmers of the region and a challenge to imperialist domination. In areas it controls, Islamic State has carried out mass killings, abductions and enslavement of some 3,500 “infidels” and “apostates” in the name of forming a caliphate.

More than a quarter of a million people have been killed in Syria during the five-year civil war, and over half the population has been driven from their homes. There are more than 4 million refugees in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt, and hundreds of thousands more have been trying to seek refuge in Europe.

The flow of refugees from Syria and North Africa into Europe is creating a social and political crisis at a time when eurozone economies are hit by the worldwide capitalist contraction.

Those remaining in Syria face intense bombings from the Assad regime or brutality from Islamic State. The Kurdish people, who have sought independence for centuries, won control over large parts of their land in both Syria and Iraq. The “world order” cobbled together by Washington and its

imperialist allies over decades is coming apart.

Washington needs the help of the capitalist governments of Iran and Russia and their longtime ally Assad to end the anarchy and war.

“This shift required a closer relationship with Iran,” George Friedman wrote in his Geopolitics weekly column Jan. 18. “This meant drawing away from the Saudis, who feared the Iranians, and also allowing friction to build up in the Americans’ relationship with Israel.”

“Iran and the United States are not friends,” Friedman said. “There is no friendship between nations. There are interests — and both share an interest in breaking IS.”

Washington’s allies back this perspective. “We need Iran to calm the conflicts and re-establish stability in this crisis-hit region,” German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier told Reuters Jan. 19. “And I hope Iran is ready for this.”

Iran has a modern industrial economy and a sizable working class. Its population of nearly 80 million is two and a half times that of Saudi Arabia.

Numerous obstacles to Washington’s course remain, as conflicts between Tehran and Riyadh, Ankara and Moscow, and Ankara’s insistence on prioritizing murderous assaults on Kurds rather than fighting Islamic State threaten to blow up any moves toward tamping down fighting.

U.N. officials announced Jan. 18 that peace talks scheduled for Jan. 25 to include all parties would likely be deferred since no clear delegation from groups fighting against Assad had been recognized.

Muslims, political rights attacked

Since Islamic State followers organized terror attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, California, last fall, the rulers in Washington and capitalist governments in Europe and elsewhere have scapegoated and targeted the rights of Muslims and Arabs. Threats and physical assaults on Muslims and mosques, calls for restrictions on immigration, increased cop spying and curtailment of political rights have followed.

In New York City masked thugs yell-

ing “ISIS! ISIS!” jumped Mujubar Rahman, 43, a Bronx resident dressed in traditional Bangladeshi garb, and beat him unconscious while he was walking with his 9-year-old niece Jan. 15. A protest against the attack took place at the site Jan. 19.

Four friends returning to Brooklyn, New York, from a weekend in Toronto — two Bangladeshi Muslims, an Arab Muslim and a Sikh from India — recently filed a \$9 million lawsuit after they were kicked off a flight from Toronto in December because the pilot and a flight attendant felt “uncomfortable” with their presence, the *New York Daily News* reported Jan. 18.

City of London cops have launched a new spy and frisk program called Project Servator. Pioneered by the cops’ counterterrorism unit, special teams of undercover cops have been trained to notice “subtle, sometimes unconscious ways in which people behave” on the street. If you look “nervous,” you are stopped and can be frisked.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

CALIFORNIA

Oakland

Free Dwight and Steven Hammond. Speaker: Joel Britton, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Jan. 29, 7:30 p.m. 675 Hegenberger Road, Suite 250. Tel.: (510) 686-1351.

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New York

How the Debt Crisis Accelerates the Colonial Plundering of Puerto Rico and Shows the Need to Fight for Its Independence. Sat., Jan. 30. Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. 227 W. 29th St., 6th Floor. Tel.: (646) 964-4793.

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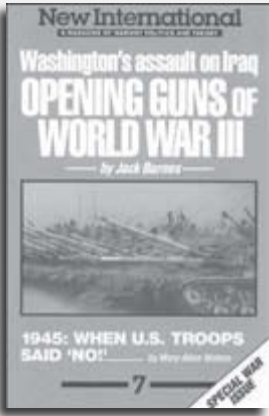
Workers Face Depression and War as Capitalist Crisis Grows. Speaker: Michel Dugré, Communist League. Fri., Jan. 29, 7:30 p.m. 4909 17th Ave. SE. Tel.: (403) 457-9044.

Montreal

Workers Face Depression Conditions as World Capitalist Crisis Grows. Speaker: Michel Prairie, Communist League. Fri., Jan. 29, 7:30 p.m. 7107 St Denis, Suite 204. Tel.: (514) 272-5840.

Communism, the Working Class, and Anti-Imperialist Struggle: Lessons From the Iran-Iraq War

In *New International* no. 7



Resolutions adopted by communists in Workers Unity Party in Iran outlining course for revolutionary-minded workers and peasants in face of imperialism’s murderous 1990 assault on Iraq.

\$14. Also in Farsi, French, Spanish, Swedish

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—ON THE PICKET LINE—

MAGGIE TROWE, EDITOR

Help the *Militant* cover labor struggles across the country!

This column gives a voice to those engaged in battle and building solidarity today — including workers fighting for \$15 and a union; locked-out ATI Steelworkers; Verizon workers opposing concessions; construction workers demanding safe conditions. I invite those involved in workers' battles to 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

New York union rally demands statewide \$15 minimum wage

ALBANY, N.Y. — A thousand unionists and other workers rallied at the state Capitol here Jan. 13 to demand increasing the state minimum wage to \$15 an hour. The rally took place before the annual "State of the State" speech by Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who promoted his proposal for an incremental wage raise to \$15 in 2019 in New York City and elsewhere in the state two years later.

"I have to work 75 hours a week for two different agencies to support my daughter," Vileta Hicks, a home health care aide, told the *Militant*. "We need a pay raise. I need to spend more time with my family."

Unions organized buses from New York City and from Buffalo, Long Island, Rochester and Syracuse. Aurora Luna, a 25-year Manhattan building cleaner and member of Service Employees International Union Local 32BJ, came in solidarity with lower-paid workers fighting for \$15.

"I've worked for Kentucky Fried Chicken for 23 years and only make a bit over \$8 an hour," Wilton Major told the *Militant*. "There's no way to support a family, \$15 is only the beginning."

Marina Svitlana, who has worked for the same health aide agency in New York City for 16 years, said "I started at \$7.14 an hour. Now I make \$10. You do the math."

"When I started they gave us more benefits, for the whole family — husband and children," said Ukrainian-born Iryna. Then for several years only the employee was covered. Last November children were restored, but

not spouses.

"If we work a 24-hour job we are only paid \$16.95 total for eight hours of 'sleep,'" said Svitlana. "If you're taking care of two people at the same time, they only add 50 cents an hour. They are abusing us." Iryna added, "That's why we fight for \$15."

—Candace Wagner



Home care workers were part of Jan. 13 rally at New York state Capitol in Albany for \$15 state minimum wage. Above, Service Employees International Union Local 1199 contingent of home care workers in April 15, 2015, march of thousands in New York City.

Big Three auto bosses keep hated tiered wages system

BY ILONA GERSH

The recently signed United Auto Workers contracts with Fiat Chrysler, General Motors and Ford Motor Company do not deliver what most autoworkers wanted — an end to the hated multiple-tier wage system and job security. Instead, they enable auto bosses to rake in big profits while auto sales are up, and continue to lower costs as older workers retire.

Big Three pretax profits for the first three-quarters last year — \$8.3 billion for GM, \$6.6 billion for Ford and \$3.4 for Fiat Chrysler — come from concessions recommended by union officials and approved by the membership in October 2007 at the onset of a sharp contraction of world production and trade. Fiat Chrysler cut UAW labor costs from \$5.5 billion in 2007 to \$3 billion last year. GM's labor costs fell from \$9.4 billion to \$7.1 billion.

GM cut pay for new hires to \$14 an hour in 2007, half of the pay of many autoworkers at the time, and transferred health care costs for half a million retirees to a union-run trust fund.

When GM filed for bankruptcy in 2009 union members, pressured by

officials, bosses and President Barack Obama, accepted the suspension of cost-of-living increases, bonuses and some holiday pay, along with a six-year strike ban.

One of the worst concessions was allowing bosses to hire temporary part-time workers, creating a third tier who are members of the union but ineligible for the benefits of permanent workers and subject to termination at any time.

Chrysler workers reject first offer

Union officials began pattern-bargaining negotiations with Fiat Chrysler in 2015. On Sept. 16 they recommended acceptance of a contract that continued the tiers. But the membership voted 2 to 1 against it.

A second proposal was returned two days later. Officials hired a public relations company to promote it. On Oct. 22 they announced the proposal had carried by 77 percent.

Under the new contract, Tier Two workers are to top out at \$28, almost the same as those hired before 2007, after eight years. But the contract is a four-year agreement and many will be receiving only \$22.50 per hour when

it expires.

The clause perpetuating part-time temporary workers was omitted from the contract summary and buried on page 265. Newly hired temp workers will start at \$15.78 and top out at \$19.28 after five years, while those hired during the old contract get pay raises that top out at \$22.

"At the Fiat Chrysler Jeep plant here the first contract was rejected by 87 percent of the production workers and the second barely passed," Alan Epstein, a member of UAW Local 12 in Toledo, Ohio, told the *Militant*. "The turnover rate is pretty high and conditions are bad. With 60 cars an hour going through the line, we don't get the two seconds we used to between them. The temporary part-time workers are moved around and get the worst jobs, so they can never get up to speed."

"I voted against it," Edward DeLuna, another member of Local 12, said by phone Jan. 10. DeLuna got hired on temporary part time last spring. "They want us to be TPTs forever."

Similar contracts were ratified at GM and Ford by slim majorities — 55.4 percent at GM and 51 percent at Ford.

"The union officials didn't discuss with us what we could do to get a better contract," said Aradia Clark, a member of Local 551, who has worked at the Chicago Ford plant for several years. "They didn't come to areas where the newer workers are."

The national agreement settles the financial questions while job conditions, health and safety are decided locally, allowing bosses more leverage in their productivity drives.

The low ratification votes and the rejection of the first contract at Chrysler were signs that many autoworkers are looking for a way to fight back. They identify with and are inspired by the fight for \$15 an hour and a union carried out by fast-food, retail, airport, home care and other workers over the past two years. Thousands of autoworkers make close to \$15 per hour.

The contract won't "break the bank," RBC Capital Markets analyst Joseph Spak said in a note to investors, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, especially since many of Ford's higher paid veteran workers will retire in the coming years, something the bosses are encouraging. The GM contract offers a \$60,000 retirement incentive and Ford offers \$70,000.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



February 1, 1991

TOKYO — Forty-six years after the end of Japan's colonial rule over Korea, Koreans in this country still face deep discrimination and denial of basic rights.

During the past decade many protests targeted the mandatory fingerprinting of all Korean residents in Japan, most of whom are considered "aliens" by the government. Not limited to recent immigrants, the measure extends to second- and third-generation Korean residents.

On January 10 the Japanese government announced an agreement to end the fingerprinting requirement next year. However, it will still require identity cards bearing photographs.

Discriminatory policies have driven the 680,000 Koreans, along with an increasing number of immigrant workers from elsewhere in Asia, into inferior economic and social conditions in Japan.



January 31, 1966

Since last October the Indonesian army and right-wing terrorists have perpetrated one of the worst peace-time fratricidal blood baths in history. It is comparable — though on a larger scale — to the reprisals taken by the French capitalists against the Paris working class following the Paris Commune in 1871.

Indonesian President Sukarno admitted Jan. 15 that 87,000 persons were known to have been killed since Oct. 1 in the chain of islands that make up the country, almost all of them members or sympathizers of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) or of mass organizations affiliated with it. Sukarno said the death toll "was bigger than that of the current Vietnam war."

All this bloodletting against civilians has taken place without the slightest protest from governments or the press in the capitalist world, including the United States.



February 1, 1941

With this first edition of our enlarged paper, the banner on our masthead is changed from *Socialist Appeal* to *THE MILITANT*.

By returning to this name, we symbolize before the workers of America and the revolutionary proletariat throughout the world that our party proclaims today that program of uncompromising international class struggle which we inscribed on our banner from the first moment of our existence.

By this banner, *THE MILITANT*, we make known to the revolutionary vanguard everywhere that we remain loyal to our common goal and principles.

Our original name was never more appropriate than now. "Militant" implies proletarian activists in the very midst of the class struggle. Our party is today made up of such proletarian activists, and every sign testifies to a new stage of the class struggle in America.

Working-class discontent

Continued from front page

that the working class and the rural poor continue to face underlie the unprecedented shake-up in the Democratic and Republican Parties.

Now there is growing alarm among Republican politicians that conservative establishment candidates can't win support among workers, and that Trump might actually win the nomination. Presenting the Republican response to President Barack Obama's State of the Union speech Jan. 12 that condemned Trump, South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley said Republicans need to "resist that temptation" of following "the siren call of the angriest voices," joining in taking aim against the real estate mogul.

"I will gladly accept the mantle of anger," said Trump in the Republican candidates debate two days later. "I'm very angry because our country is being run horribly." Exchanges like this just strengthen Trump's image as a "nonpolitician" who's not afraid to say what he thinks and doesn't worry about what's "politically correct."

Contrary to widespread claims in the main liberal media, Trump's appeal and the source of his demagoguery about stopping immigration is not racism. "His supporters are people, not caricatures," Kaddie Abdul, a Muslim woman who attended a Trump rally in Nevada wearing her hijab, wrote in the *Guardian* newspaper Jan. 13. She was not harassed and said the people she spoke to "feel marginalized economically, politically and socially; they see a world different from the one they think should exist."

His appeal is to bring "America" back to greatness, for a classless "we" to take control, for which he will be the voice. His rallies draw tens of thousands of workers, including some Blacks and Latinos.

Trump, like Sanders, appeals to workers' opposition to Washington getting embroiled in new foreign wars. For this reason, they are the favored candidates of Patrick Buchanan, who said, "For anti-interventionists, Trump vs. Sanders is the ideal race."

Democrats, Republicans fracturing

The crisis in the Democratic Party and Sanders' rise in the polls also reflect the growing anger in the working class. Although the Vermont senator calls himself a "democratic socialist," his campaign has nothing to do with socialism. More than anything else, he runs as the voice of the Occupy Wall Street protests of 2011-12. His demagoguery about "massive income and wealth inequality" and the "greed of Wall Street" focuses on calls to break up the big banks,

raise taxes on the rich and other reforms aimed at shoring up capitalist rule and protecting it from working-class revolt.

In the latest polls Hillary Clinton, who as little as a month ago appeared a sure bet for the Democratic nomination, is running behind Sanders in New Hampshire and in a statistical tie in Iowa. Clinton's campaigning has often looked tired and lackluster.

At a Jan. 17 Democratic candidates debate in South Carolina, Clinton identified her campaign with the record of Barack Obama. "President Obama has led our country out of the Great Recession," she said, but "Senator Sanders called him weak, disappointing."

"Bernie mopped the floor with Hillary," opined John Podhoretz in the *New York Post* the next day. Clinton's goal was "to make the point she's the serious and sober candidate and Bernie Sanders is a pie-in-the-sky fantasist," he wrote. But "the country is in a rage, Democrats as well as Republicans, at the brokenness of our politics and the stagnation of the middle class. Hillary cannot find a way to tap into that — and tapping into that is all Sanders does."

In the last quarter of 2015 Sanders raised \$37 million — more than Clinton — and from more individual people than any other candidate in U.S. history.

Democratic Party leaders are starting to panic. If Clinton's campaign continues to falter, suggested MSNBC-TV host Joe Scarborough, other party stalwarts might jump into the primary race. "Those close to [Secretary of State] John Kerry and [Vice President] Joe Biden have said specifically that, if she loses Iowa and New Hampshire, they



Above: SEIU 32BJ

Protracted erosion of jobs, wages and conditions of life and work is fueling working-class discontent and anger that marks 2016 election campaign. Inset, U.S. Steel blast furnace in Fairfield, Alabama, shut down last year, eliminating 1,100 jobs. Above, airport workers demand \$15 and a union at SEIU Local 32BJ protest in Washington, D.C., Jan. 18.



are going to have to take a much closer look," Scarborough said Jan. 11.

Leading figures in both parties increasingly complain that the twin capitalist political vehicles are coming apart at the seams, often blaming working-class, "less educated" men, especially those who are Caucasian.

"Particularly blue-collar men have had a lot of trouble in this new economy, where they are no longer getting the same bargain they got when they were going to a factory and able to support their families on a single paycheck," Obama told National Public Radio in December. "There is going to be potential anger, frustration, fear — some of it justified, but just misdirected," he said, which Trump is "exploiting."

Far from turning further and further

to the right, Caucasian workers' unprecedented discontent, like that of the working class as a whole, is aimed at finding a way to fight the grinding depression conditions they face.

And under the nation's first Black president, the only progress for workers who are African-American has come by taking to the streets against the powers that be in popular protests that have forced the rulers to take steps to rein in their cops.

The *New York Times* ran an article titled, "For Republicans, Mounting Fears of Lasting Split" Jan. 10. "If an establishment candidate wins the nomination," it said, "about two-thirds of Trump supporters would vote for him as a third-party candidate."

Colorado meatpackers fight for prayer breaks

BY KAREN RAY
AND JACQUIE HENDERSON

FORT MORGAN, Colo. — Muslim workers and supporters here are continuing to fight against Cargill Meat Solutions' decision to fire 150 meatpackers Dec. 23. The firings were in retaliation for workers walking off the job after the company changed its long-standing policy and denied them the right to take breaks to pray.

At least one other manufacturer, Ariens Company in Wisconsin, has followed Cargill's example and banned Muslim workers' prayer breaks.

In response to protests and national media attention, Cargill announced Jan. 8 it will allow any employee "terminated for attendance violations or job abandonment to be considered for potential rehiring" after 30 days. Previously the company required a 180-day wait.

"The company changed the hiring policy but not the prayer policy, so things are still the same," said Mohamed Ahmed, who took part in the protest. Ahmed worked in the fabrication department with the fired workers.

The Fort Morgan plant is the largest employer in the area with 2,100 workers. Before the walkout some 600 Somalis were employed there.

"It is OK to pray this week," Ahmed Mohamed, who is still working on the kill floor, said managers told workers on his line. "But starting Jan. 15 there will be no more prayer breaks."

"I am Muslim and the guy next to me is not. If he had to go to the bathroom

I would do his job as well as mine to cover him, and when I needed to go for prayers, he would cover me," said Yusuf Abdi Mohamed, a 10-year veteran in the plant. "For 10 years we have been praying and production on the line has never been a problem."

While that has been long-standing practice, Cargill's formal policy says, "Accommodation requests are made to work area supervision and granted based on production." It also notes that prayer breaks are not part of the union contract with Teamsters Local 455.

Cargill did not return calls by the *Militant* requesting further comment.

"While we welcome the changes to the termination rehire process because our clients want to return to work and support their families, this does not resolve the prayer accommodation denial and the ambiguity of the current policy on prayer," said the Council on American-Islamic Relations Jan. 8. The group has been negotiating on behalf of the Muslim workers.

"I would not discount Muslim-phobia," Khadar Ducaale, who works for the school district and has been helping fired workers with unemployment claims and bills that are piling up, told us when we asked why the company had changed its policy. "It is like what happened to the Japanese in World War II and to African-Americans."

"The company told the media that we all wanted to go to prayer at the same time but that's not true," Abdi Mohamed told the *Militant* Jan. 10 at the mosque in

Fort Morgan.

"If someone needs to go to the bathroom that's no problem but to pray is now a problem," said Imam Said Ali at the mosque. He worked in the plant and was fired for joining the protest. "In my opinion they want to divide people into two groups — one that is with the company and one against."

"Workers are going to lose a lot if the company hires them back. They will lose all their vacation and their medical card for six months," the imam said. And, of course, the company "did not make any accommodation for prayer."

"The way the company is treating people gives other companies ideas," Abdi Mohamed said. "It encourages other companies to do the same thing. We have to stay solid on this."

"This not good for the people or for the country," he said. "We should always be united as Muslims and non-Muslims living together as one."

Ariens Company, which makes snow blowers and lawn mowers at its plant in Brillion, Wisconsin, told workers Jan. 14 that it had decided to bar prayer breaks, saying it "does not allow for unscheduled breaks in production." Somali workers told WBAY-TV that when they protested, the bosses handed them papers to apply for unemployment.

The company previously had allowed the 53 Muslims who work there to take two five-minute prayer breaks a day. The new rule is "absolutely discriminatory," worker Adan Hurr told the TV station.

The Clintons' Antilabor Legacy:

Roots of the 2008 World Financial Crisis

by Jack Barnes

in *New Internationalist* no. 14



"The Clinton administration consolidated an anti-working-class shift in Democratic Party domestic policy that increased the political convergence of the two leading parties of the employing class."

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‘The whole system pressures you to plead guilty’

Cuban 5: US ‘justice’ system railroads millions into prison — We won respect by going to trial

Pathfinder Press’ new book “It’s the Poor Who Face the Savagery of the US ‘Justice’ System”: The Cuban Five Talk About Their Lives Within the US Working Class will be available Feb. 1. The selection below is from Part 1 of a 2015 interview by Mary-Alice Waters and Róger Calero with the Five titled “The Reason There Are So Many in Prisons in the US Is Not the Amount of Crime.” Copyright © 2016 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

MARY-ALICE WATERS: December 17, 2014, marked a hard-won victory for the Cuban people and supporters of the Cuban Revolution all over the world. That was the day that three of you — Gerardo, Ramón, and Antonio — were welcomed home by millions of Cubans who poured into the streets to celebrate. And the day Cuban president Raúl Castro and US president Barack Obama simultaneously announced that diplomatic relations between the two countries, severed by Washington in January 1961, would be restored.

In the months since then, all five of you have been traveling throughout the island thanking the Cuban people for their solidarity and their years of defiant resistance, without which your freedom could not have been won. You’ve also been drawing on your own experiences in the United States to explain what the word “capitalism” means — in human terms.

Each of you worked and lived for a good part of your adult life in the United States. Before you were framed up and imprisoned, like many other immigrant workers you had jobs in construction, as janitors, as deliverymen, in restaurants and hotels, or doing whatever work you could find “off the books.”

Later, during your long years in prison, you were part of that very large sec-



tion of the US working class that is either currently behind bars or has served time at some point in their lives. Today that’s over six million people — 5 percent of adult males, and nearly 17 percent of adult men who are African American.

Around the world, many people have seen photos of the degrading, inhuman treatment meted out to inmates at Abu Ghraib in Iraq and the US prison camp at Guantánamo. What they often don’t understand is that these institutions of imperialist brutality mirror prisons inside the US whose names are infamous among US working people — places like Attica, Clinton, Beaumont, Florence, Angola, and Pelican Bay. US foreign policy begins at home.

When you speak about life in the US, you speak with authority, and not only here in Cuba. Your words ring true to millions of US families as well. They’ve



Since their return after some 16 years in U.S. prisons, Cuban Five have been traveling across Cuba speaking with workers and youth, drawing on their experience in the U.S. to explain what capitalism means in human terms. Above, from right, Fernando González, Antonio Guerrero and René González — three of the Five — with Professor Julián Gutiérrez, Rector Alicia Alonso, and Mary-Alice Waters of Pathfinder Press at Feb. 19, 2015, meeting with students at science and engineering university in Havana. Left, May 14, 2004, marchers in Havana hold photo of U.S. soldier torturing Iraqi prisoner at Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad. Sign says “This will never happen in Cuba.”

lived similar experiences. ...

In one of René’s first interviews when he was able to return home to Cuba in 2013, he explained that in the United States just going to trial, rather than agreeing under pressure to plead guilty to some charge “negotiated” by the prosecutor and your attorney, earns you a lot of respect in prison. Was that the same experience all of you had?

FERNANDO GONZÁLEZ: When someone is arrested in the US, a high percentage are “overcharged.” They’re accused of many more things than they might have done. It’s a tool consciously used by prosecutors. People find themselves in a situation where some charges — for crimes they probably never committed — will be dropped if they plead guilty to other charges, which they also may never have committed.

Prosecutors pile up charges against you. The law not only allows that; it’s how the entire system is organized. It’s a tool to force you to plea bargain.

Most of those arrested in the US end up with court-appointed lawyers, since they can’t afford an attorney. The lawyer usually advises you to plead guilty, even if it might be better for you to go to trial.

Why? Well, one reason is that if you plead guilty, then all the court-appointed attorney has to do to get paid is to go to court three or four times, at most. He has to be there at the indictment, the plea agreement, and the sentencing. But if you go to trial, the lawyer will probably end up spending at least three weeks in court.

The whole system — even the lawyer who’s supposed to be looking after your interests — pressures you to plead guilty.

There’s another side to this. Let’s say you’re already in the federal court system, as we were. You’re there in court, and they bring in a witness. He says he has spent fifteen years in the Drug Enforcement Agency or the FBI or whatever. He comes in wearing a suit and tie, not a hair out of place, and sits there with an air of “nice guy.” He swears he’ll tell the truth — and then tells one lie after another. Who is the jury going to believe? They’ll believe the cop, of course, not the defendant.

In many cases the defendant has al-

ready been the victim of a barrage of unfavorable news coverage. Anxieties about crime here, there, and everywhere are bolstered by the press.

GERARDO HERNÁNDEZ: We saw many cases like that. We met many people who said, “Look, I was no angel. I was doing ‘this’ and ‘this.’ But I never did ‘that’ or ‘that,’ much less the murder I’m serving life for.”

“But when I told that to the attorney appointed by the judge,” the person would continue, “the lawyer said: ‘No jury is going to believe you. Take the offer they’re making and do the time. That’s the best you can do. If you don’t, they’ll slap you with the maximum sentence.’”

“They say that straight up.”

My last cellmate was a guy from Mexico. From the beginning the court-appointed lawyer told him to plead guilty — to murder no less. He asked, “How can I plead guilty to kidnapping and murder if I didn’t do it?”

He’s now serving two life sentences for something he didn’t do. He showed me his court papers. There was a letter from the mother of the man who was killed. She asked the prosecutors not to try those people, because she knew they weren’t the ones who killed her son. But the defense lawyer never presented the letter to the court. ...

Most lawyers stick with a program that says, “Don’t go to court because you’ll lose.” If the client is courageous enough to say, “No, I’m innocent. I’m going to trial,” they’ll try to convince him it’s suicidal. ...

ANTONIO GUERRERO: Many of the prisoners are Latinos and don’t know English; others are basically illiterate. That cranks up the pressure to cop a plea, since you can’t read the documents in any language. ...

There are prisons in every country. But the reason there are so many prisoners in the United States is not the amount of crime. It all begins with the arrest, indictment, and plea bargain. That’s where people begin to be chewed up. There’s no solution within the US justice system, no reform that will change it. It’s not a system that metes out justice to those who’ve committed a crime.

Coming February 1 ...

THE CUBAN FIVE talk about their lives within the US working class



“It’s the poor who face the savagery of the US ‘justice’ system”

Includes 40 photos from their years in prison and since the Cuban Five won their freedom and returned to Cuba.

“They chose five distant points for us to serve our unjust sentences. ... But nothing could stop the Five from marching together with our people and our supporters the world over in the long battle for freedom.”

—Antonio Guerrero

Five Cuban revolutionaries, framed up by the U.S. government in 1998, spent up to 16 years as part of the U.S. working class behind bars. Each reached out to fellow prisoners with respect, solidarity, and through their own example — and won respect and support in return.

What prepared the Cuban Five to act as each did? Above all, it was Cuba’s socialist revolution, whose class character and values their conduct exemplifies. With understanding, objectivity and humor, in this 2015 interview they talk about U.S. capitalist society and its “justice” system. And about the future of the Cuban Revolution.

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Defend women's right to choose!

The labor movement and all working people should join in the fight against the growing number of state laws restricting women's access to abortion, and against the attacks on Planned Parenthood.

Defending the right to choose abortion is a working-class question: the right to decide when or if to bear children is fundamental to a woman's control of her own life and to winning full social, economic and political equality, a prerequisite to uniting the working class. The attacks on the right to choose — from waiting periods to excessive regulations designed to force clinics to close to denial of Medicaid and insurance coverage for abortion — land hardest on working-class women and the rural poor.

The 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution registered the conquests of the Second American Revolution, which put an end to chattel slavery. It says, "No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

The fight for abortion to be the decision of a woman — not the government, a doctor, a relative or anyone else — is part of the fight to extend this constitutional protection fully to women.

In the context of today's capitalist depression and growing attacks on working people, the rulers' efforts to relentlessly cut women's access to abortion is part of a broader campaign against working-class women to undermine their confidence, drive down the value of their labor power and divide the working class.

Women and the working class are paying a big price today for the refusal of the established women's rights organizations to mobilize spirited public actions in support of women's right to abortion, and campaign vigorously for it as a fundamental question of women's equality. Like most liberals today, they believe workers are moving to the right, evidenced by the support for Donald Trump. They argue supporters of abortion should focus on "stopping the right" and not to rock the boat. Trust in the courts, they say, and work to elect "pro-choice" politicians.

The Socialist Workers Party points to the young people who mobilized in Chicago Jan. 17 against restrictions on women's right to choose abortion as a good example that can and should be emulated.

'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.

Attacks on abortion

Continued from front page

be cut off. This affects access to contraception, cancer screenings and other medical services for some 400,000 people.

These are among the latest moves in the chipping away at access to abortion that began almost immediately after the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court ruling decriminalized the procedure in 1973. The avalanche of state restrictions in recent years highlights problems for defenders of women's rights that have been embedded in that decision from the beginning.

"Women's rights is the issue, that's why I came," Kelly Peck, a 24-year-old food store worker, told the *Militant* at a rally defending abortion rights and protesting the North Carolina law in downtown Chicago Jan. 17. "Women have the right to decide and should be able to control their own bodies." Like many other young women at the rally of about 100, it was Peck's first political action.

Feminist Uprising to Resist Inequality and Exploitation called the spirited protest to counter an annual "March for Life" anti-abortion rally of several hundred. "We need to be in the streets more," Lauren Bianchi of FURIE told participants. "Everyone here should get involved. We need to have access to health care facilities without fearing for our lives." In November an opponent of abortion rights killed three people at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado.

North Carolina is the third state to enact the new ultrasound requirement. "The true intent of the law is clear — to shame women and intimidate the doctors [who] care for them," said Melissa Reed, vice president of Planned Parenthood South Atlantic. It's "medically unnecessary and purely politically driven."

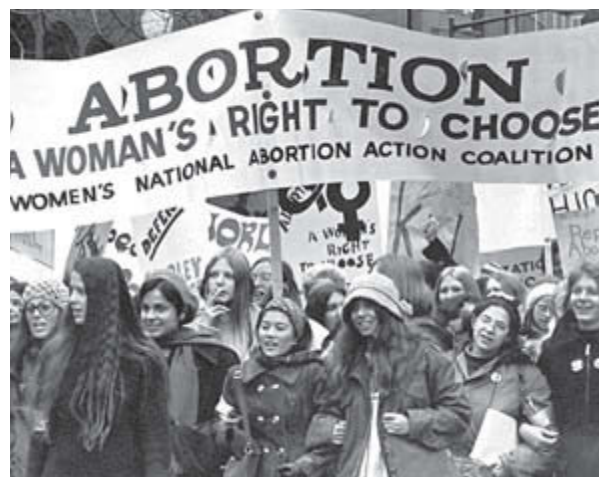
Supporters of the law say it will help enforce North Carolina's ban on abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy except in a medical emergency. Only one other state, Mississippi, bans abortion as early as 20 weeks.

Roe not based on women's equality

Limits on access to abortion, such as those in North Carolina, build on the "trimester" system codified in Roe v. Wade. In striking down a Texas abortion ban, the Supreme Court ruled that for the first three months the decision to terminate a pregnancy "must be left to the medical judgment of pregnant woman's attending physician." After that time, state governments may "regulate the abortion procedure in ways that are reasonably related to maternal health."

And "subsequent to viability," the states have an "interest in the potentiality of human life" and may prohibit abortion, except "for the preservation of the life or health of the mother." Roe v. Wade described viability as the point at which a fetus is "potentially able to live outside the mother's womb, albeit with artificial aid" — a definition that shifts with medical advances. Basing a woman's right to abortion on medical judgments, rather than women's fundamental right to make decisions about their bodies and lives is being used by opponents of women's rights to justify increasingly onerous restrictions.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a longtime proponent of



Militant/Mark Satinoff

November 1971 rally for women's rights, Washington, D.C.

women's rights who has served on the Supreme Court since 1993, has raised important criticisms of Roe v. Wade. The decision was not rooted in the 14th Amendment guarantee of equal protection under the law, Ginsburg said in a 1985 article in the *North Carolina Law Review*.

The equal protection guarantee, a conquest of the revolutionary struggle that ended slavery in the 1860s, was the basis of numerous Supreme Court rulings registering gains in the growing fight for Black rights in the 1950s and '60s, she noted. But for decades, until 1971, the court rejected any attempt to apply the 14th Amendment protections to women. And none of the court's decisions related to reproductive rights were decided on that basis.

Roe v. Wade, she argued, is weakened by its "concentration on a medically approved autonomy idea, to the exclusion of a constitutionally based sex-equality perspective." The case would be stronger "had the Court placed the woman alone, rather than the woman tied to her physician, at the center of its attention."

In the 1985 article and elsewhere, Ginsburg has stated her view that the ruling was premature, cutting short the ability of the growing movement for women's right to choose abortion to win broader support on the basis of women's equality, an issue that was being fought out state by state.

Ginsburg also gets at the class questions posed in the fight to defend abortion rights. Asked in a 2014 interview with the *New Republic* what would happen if Roe v. Wade were overturned, she said, "It would be bad for non-affluent women." If the ruling were overturned "there would remain many states that would not go back to the way it once was. What that means is any woman who has the wherewithal to travel ... will never have a problem. ... Women who can't pay are the only women who would be affected."

That, of course, has been the class impact of every inroad against the right to choose, beginning with the 1976 Hyde Amendment, which barred Medicaid coverage of abortion for poor women.

Four decades later, some 90 percent of U.S. counties lack abortion providers. In the five years since 2011 states have adopted 288 restrictions, roughly as many as in the 15 years before. A majority of states have waiting periods. States in the Midwest and the South account for most of the restrictions.

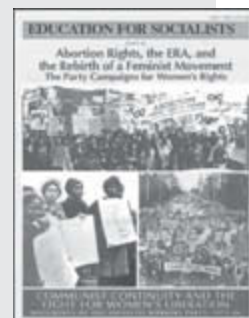
Later this year the Supreme Court will rule on a challenge to a Texas law requiring abortion providers to meet surgical center standards and have admitting privileges at a local hospital. If the law is upheld, all but 10 abortion clinics in the state would be forced to close.

Laura Anderson in Chicago contributed to this article.

Further Reading

Communist Continuity and the Fight for Women's Liberation Documents of the Socialist Workers Party, 1971-86

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