

# THE MILITANT

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 80/NO. 7 FEBRUARY 22, 2016

## End US economic embargo of Cuba

BY EMMA JOHNSON

Since Washington and Havana re-established diplomatic relations last year, Cuba's revolutionary government has built on that victory to press for an end to the economic, diplomatic and financial warfare that 11 U.S. administrations, both Democratic and Republican, have imposed on the island over more than five decades. This is a fight that deserves the support of working people everywhere.

"There can be no normal relations between Cuba and the United States as long as the economic, commercial and financial blockade continues to be fully implemented," said a July 1 statement issued by the Cuban government announcing the opening of its embassy in Washington. Havana also called for the return of the U.S.-occupied territory housing the Guantánamo Naval Base and an end to Washington's destabilization programs.

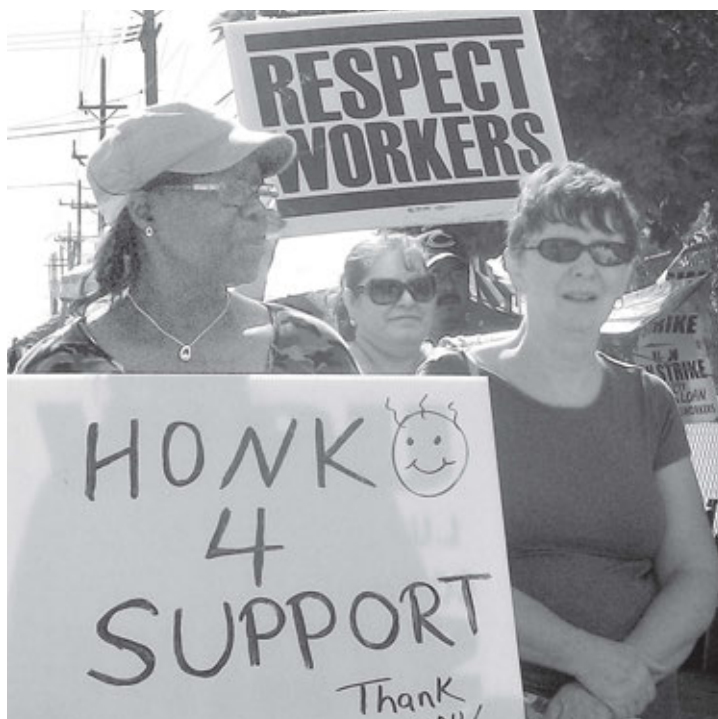
The revolutionary leadership has made clear that Cuba will not abandon a single one of its principles, nor cede a millimeter in defense of its national sovereignty.

So far Washington has removed Cuba from its self-proclaimed list

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## Join the Socialist Workers Party 2016 US presidential campaign!

Alyson Kennedy for president ≈ Osborne Hart for vice president



Militant photos: Left, Laura Anderson; right, Hilda Cuzco  
 Socialist Workers Party candidates Alyson Kennedy, front in sunglasses, marching on 2014 picket line with Steelworkers on strike at Sloan Valve in Franklin Park, Illinois; Osborne Hart, far right, at November 2015 rally in Philadelphia demanding \$15 minimum wage and a union.

### The SWP candidates

#### Alyson Kennedy

Alyson Kennedy grew up in a working-class neighborhood in Indianapolis. She was attracted to political action in high school as she watched TV coverage of workers and youth who were Black battling racist cops and KKK thugs across the South and

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### A working-class alternative to the capitalist parties

The Socialist Workers Party has announced its 2016 presidential ticket of Alyson Kennedy for president and Osborne Hart for vice president. The *Militant* reprints here the statement and biographies of the candidates released by the Socialist Workers Party National Campaign Committee Feb. 10. These and other campaign materials can be downloaded at [themilitant.com](http://themilitant.com) to print and distribute.

Join Alyson Kennedy and Osborne Hart, Socialist Workers Party candidates for president and vice president, and other SWP candidates and their supporters fighting alongside workers in cities, towns and farming areas against depression-driven attacks on our living and working conditions. The bosses and their government are escalating assaults on the working class and our unions to shore up profits at our expense.

All the bourgeois candidates — from

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## 1,000s flee Moscow's bombings, assault on Aleppo by Syrian regime



AP Photo/Bunyanin Aygun

Syrians seeking refuge from Assad regime's assault on Aleppo halted at Turkish border Feb. 6.

#### BY MAGGIE TROWE

Tens of thousands of Syrian workers and farmers fled toward the Turkish border over the last week during a brutal assault by Russian warplanes, Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad's forces and Iranian and Hezbollah troops on Aleppo in northern Syria. The assault is aimed at destroying opposition forces

seeking Assad's overthrow.

Reinforced by Moscow's massive bombing, Assad has reversed gains by opposition groups, strengthening his position in any negotiations on the country's future. Aleppo was a center of popular mobilizations against the Damascus regime in 2011. They were

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## Sanders' socialist reform program aims to save crises-ridden capitalism

BY NAOMI CRAINE

The contest is heating up between socialist Bernie Sanders, who beat former front-runner Hillary Clinton by 22 percentage points in the Feb. 9 New Hampshire Democratic primary, and the Clintons' pursuit of a third family term for U.S. president.

Billionaire Republican front-runner Donald Trump trounced his opponents with over 35 percent of the vote, more than double any rival. In his New Hampshire victory speech, Trump vowed to be "the greatest jobs president," stressing one of his key appeals to working people. "Don't believe those phony figures," he declared. "If we had 5 percent unemployment do you really think we'd have these gatherings?" The real figure, he suggested, could be as high as 42 percent.

The entry of the Socialist Workers Party campaign of Alyson Kennedy for president and Osborne Hart for

vice president now poses a working-class alternative. They call for a break with the Democrats, Republicans and bourgeois candidates of all stripes

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—On the picket line, p. 5—

Montreal city workers strike to defend public services, jobs

New Zealand meat workers broaden fight to defend union



# Calif. protesters demand end to torturous prison practices

BY BETSEY STONE

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Under a big banner saying, “Sleep Deprivation is Torture — Stop Now,” 70 people gathered outside the headquarters of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation here Feb. 1, calling for an end to so-called safety checks at the Pelican Bay State Prison, where guards wake up prisoners throughout the night.

Prison authorities claim the checks are required under a 1995 court order to guard against suicide. But the prisoners say that the banging of metal doors, stomping and shining flashlights into prisoners’ eyes is undermining their physical and mental health.

“This has been going on for 181 days. It’s got to stop!” said Marie Levin, a leader of the Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity Coalition, which organized the protest.

Under the pressure of protests and legal action, prison officials have reduced the nightly checks from every half hour to every hour, Carol Strickman, one of the prisoners’ lawyers, told the rally. “We won a little, but not enough.”

The noisy checks began six months ago, just before prisoners in the Pelican Bay Security Housing Units won a victory in their lawsuit against the widespread use of long-term solitary confinement in California prisons. The settlement ordered an end to officials throwing prisoners into solitary for indefinite periods by labeling them “gang affiliated.” As a result, hundreds of prisoners have been transferred out of solitary, including Levin’s brother, Sitawa Nantambu Jamaa.

“This is the first time I’ve hugged my brother in over 31 years,” Levin said, instead of having to speak through a glass partition by telephone.

The suit was brought by prisoners who led three hunger strikes, the largest in 2013 involving more than 30,000 prisoners across the state.

During the hunger strikes “prisoners were able to organize across racial lines, gang lines and religious lines,” said Jerry Elster, a coordinator with the American Friends Service Committee who spent 26 years behind bars. “What they did makes me proud.”

Luis “Bato” Talamantez, a leader of the Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity Coalition and co-founder of California Prison Focus, pointed to the freeing of the Cuban Five, Cuban revolutionaries who were framed up and held in U.S. prisons for up to 16 years, as an important victory. “Now the Five are touring the world, getting out the truth about the



Demonstration in Sacramento, California, Feb. 1 demands end to so-called safety checks by authorities at Pelican Bay State Prison that wake inmates up repeatedly throughout the night.

conditions in U.S. prisons,” he said. Cynthia Fuentes, whose brother participated in the hunger strikes, described the effort to get him decent medical care when he was diagnosed with cancer. “I believe medical maltreatment killed my

brother,” she said. “What’s incredible is what I’m hearing about what the prisoners’ did inside,” said Elyse Highstreet, a student at the University of California at Santa Cruz. “It shows their humanity.”

## Attempted murder charges filed under anti-abortion law

BY SUSAN LAMONT

ATLANTA — A growing number of states have adopted laws expanding the definition of “personhood” to include a fetus, part of broader attacks on women’s right to choose abortion. The Tennessee government passed such a law in 2012. Now it is being used to charge 31-year-old Anna Yocca with attempted first-degree murder for allegedly trying to end her pregnancy at 24 weeks.

“Whatever the exact circumstances, it’s clear she was in a desperate posi-

tion,” said Cherisse Scott, of the group SisterReach in Memphis, in a Jan. 29 phone interview. “We’re afraid that the hostile environment around abortion that’s been created by the Tennessee state legislature will force more women into the situation Anna Yocca was in.”

Yocca, an Amazon fulfillment center worker, was arrested Dec. 9. She is accused of using a coat hanger to try to induce an abortion. She went to the hospital bleeding, and doctors eventually delivered a baby boy, who weighed 1.5 pounds and has multiple serious medical problems. She pleaded not guilty to the charges, which carry a possible sentence of life in prison. Yocca is being held in jail on \$200,000 bail, with her next hearing scheduled for Feb. 29.

Tennessee allows abortions up to the “point of viability,” usually around 24 weeks, with exceptions afterward for the life and health of the woman. But no clinics in the state offer abortions after 16 weeks. Last July the state legislature imposed a 48-hour waiting period, after

scripted “counseling” by a doctor, forcing women to make at least two trips to a clinic to obtain an abortion.

“The legislature also enacted the requirement that clinics performing surgical abortions must meet standards for ambulatory surgical treatment centers,” Jeff Teague, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Middle and East Tennessee, told the *Militant*. “There are six health centers in the state that perform surgical abortions. Of those, two don’t yet meet those standards.”

Planned Parenthood in Tennessee lost federal funds for family planning services in 2011, when the state legislature voted that those funds could only go to county and city public health facilities. “This means people have to pay for their medical care or have insurance,” said Teague. “We know that not everyone we used to help is getting served at these public clinics.”

In Texas, where restrictions on abortion access have forced the closure of

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# THE MILITANT

## Fight cop brutality and killings

*From cities to rural towns, the ‘Militant’ covers fights against cop brutality and killings. It explains how these actions help strengthen the working class, and the impact they’ve had in forcing the capitalist rulers to begin to rein in their police. Don’t miss an issue.*



Protesters in Paradise, California, Jan. 9 call for arrest of cop who killed Andrew Thomas.

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# Cuban 5: ‘We extended solidarity and received it’

Cuban revolutionaries, fellow workers in US prisons resist ‘justice’ system organized to break them

“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 is a new book from Pathfinder. It centers on a 2015 interview by Mary-Alice Waters and Róger Calero with the Cuban Five in Havana. Each was incarcerated in the U.S. from 14 to 16 years after the FBI framed them up for activity in defense of the Cuban Revolution. This excerpt, “We Extended Solidarity to Others in Prison and Received It Too,” includes Fernando González discussing his experiences in prison with Carlos Alberto Torres and Oscar López Rivera, Puerto Rican independence fighters framed up by the U.S. government and imprisoned for decades. Torres was freed in July 2010, while the fight to free López continues. Copyright © 2016 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

**RENÉ GONZÁLEZ:** Prison was a learning process for all of us. We set a goal to leave prison stronger than when we entered.

The jailers want to destroy you. They want to break your physical, moral, and mental integrity. You understand that immediately. You learn the first day that you have to resist this, and that the measure of your victory in doing so will be to leave prison a better person than when you walked in. Each of us, according to our own individual characteristics, adopted that as our strategy. ...

For me, the hardest thing at first was making sure I didn’t react the way they wanted me to. It didn’t take long. The turning point came when my daughter turned fifteen. I’d saved up my weekly minutes to make sure I had enough to call her that day. We were in the hole, however, and they figured out a way to deny me the call.

That night I suffered, but when I woke up the next day I was a different person. I realized I couldn’t allow myself to suffer because of their actions. And when I finally was able to



Militant photos: above, Seth Galinsky; left, Sara Lobman. Sharing cell with Oscar López, Puerto Rican independence fighter, in prison now for over 34 years, “was an exceptional experience,” Fernando González said. Above, contingent in 2014 N.Y. Puerto Rican Day parade. Letters to Cuban Five from around world — like from youth at Jackie Robinson Center in Harlem, left — drew attention to their support, helped defend them in prison.

call, I told my wife that from then on, if I could communicate, that would be fine, but if I couldn’t, that would be fine, too.

I realized that if I thought that way, I’d be in control, not them. I’d remind myself that I had very strong moral values, and that they could never change that. Like Ramón, I also turned to physical exercise — I ran a lot — and to reading to load up my intellectual backpack. ...

**ANTONIO GUERRERO:** From the moment we were convicted, people in Cuba began to hear about our case. The billboards began to go up. People learned about the seventeen months in the hole and the seven-month trial, which we faced with tranquility and dignity.

We began receiving hundreds of letters, not only from Cuba but from the US and around the world. There was news about us in various publications. All that started getting known

in the prisons, too. And apart from that, other prisoners could see we were ordinary human beings, that we didn’t create problems for anybody. To the contrary, we were the easiest people in the world to get along with. We helped others. And, of course, we had our own opinions.

**RENÉ GONZÁLEZ:** Most important, I think, was our conduct. We earned the respect of others, even Cubans and prison officers, because we treated others with respect. If that’s how you act, and if you keep away from certain activities — like drinking, using drugs, gambling — people respond by showing respect in return. ...

**RAMÓN LABAÑINO:** I’d like to add something on the question of solidarity. Actually it’s not exactly solidarity; it’s about the guards. Usually, when we’d get to a new prison — and I was in every type: maximum, medium, and minimum security — the guards would be afraid of us at first. They’d seen our files, which say we were convicted of “conspiracy to commit espionage.” You’d feel the tension. But as they got to know us, even the way the officers viewed us began to change.

A big part of that was the solidarity that started coming in from all over. We began to receive newspapers — like the *Militant* — with front-page articles about the Cuban Five and books with photos of us in them. You wouldn’t believe how much this helped. It was testimony to the solidarity with us around the world. ...

**MARY-ALICE WATERS:** Fernando, you were in prison at different times with both Oscar López and Carlos Alberto Torres, the Puerto Rican independence fighters. That must have been quite an experience.

**FERNANDO GONZÁLEZ:** In the two prisons where I did most of my time, I was able to share that time with two individuals who were politically conscious revolutionaries sentenced to prison for political reasons. I consider myself privileged.

At the federal prison in Oxford, Wisconsin, for more than five years, I got to know Carlos Alberto Torres, and I spent nearly five years in the Terre Haute, Indiana, prison with Oscar López Rivera. My relationship with them was different from that

with other prisoners. You establish good relations with many people, but Oscar and Carlos became my compañeros and brothers.

**MARY-ALICE WATERS:** Did you share a cell?

**FERNANDO GONZÁLEZ:** With Carlos Alberto, no. We were in the same unit but not the same cell. Oscar and I shared a cell for some time.

Most prisoners have a relatively low level of political consciousness and interest in political questions. But with these two compañeros I could have a different kind of discussion. They are well-informed compañeros, with solid political education. Our conversations covered many topics, including daily events.

When I got to prison, Oscar and Carlos Alberto each had already been there a long time, and I benefited from their experience. Their view of prison life was different, not the way other prisoners saw things.

That’s why I say I felt privileged. It’s not just having gotten to know them personally. It’s the kind of human beings they are. They are extremely humane and supportive of others. They know the history of Puerto Rico, the struggles of the Puerto Rican people. And both compañeros are also very well informed about Cuba.

Oscar is older. His experiences go back to the struggles of the 1960s and 1970s in the United States. Not only the Puerto Rican independence movement but also struggles by African Americans, Chicanos, Native Americans, and others that were part of the radical left.

**RÓGER CALERO:** Oscar says his political views were profoundly changed by his experience as a young man drafted into the US army to serve in Vietnam during Washington’s brutal war there.

**FERNANDO GONZÁLEZ:** When I met Oscar in prison, I went over and said hello. “Yes, I know who you are” — that’s the first thing he said to me. Remember, we had never met each other. But he knew about our case, the names of all five of us, the history of our fight, and a lot about Cuba, too.

Carlos Alberto and Oscar both understood what our case represented politically. And because of the political education I had received in Cuba about the history of Puerto Rico — which is so close to that of our own — I could understand perfectly the situation they were in. Within the possibilities at hand, I could contribute to the campaign for their release.

**MARY-ALICE WATERS:** The fight to win Oscar’s freedom is gaining momentum, especially with mounting anger among Puerto Ricans at the economic crisis hitting the island so hard due to its colonial status. There’s a notable increase in the breadth of forces demanding Oscar’s freedom. He was officially honored by organizers of the Puerto Rican Day parade in New York last year, and again this year there was a big contingent demanding his freedom.

**FERNANDO GONZÁLEZ:** If there’s anything I would call my best years in prison — if you can use such an expression, since I don’t wish prison on anyone — it would be those years with Oscar. It was an exceptional experience.

**Just released... \$15 — Get it now!**

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 from 14 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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# ‘The truth will come out: Finicum was flat murdered’

BY SETH GALINSKY

Working people should denounce the cold-blooded Jan. 26 killing of Robert “LaVoy” Finicum by Oregon State Police and the FBI; the frame-up conspiracy charges against Ammon Bundy and others who took part in the occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge; and the frame-up of Dwight and Steven Hammond, two Harney County, Oregon, cattle ranchers, imprisoned for a second time on the same bogus arson charges dating back to 2001 and 2006.

“The truth will come out. LaVoy was just flat murdered,” Tad Houpt, the owner of a small logging company, said by phone Feb. 7. Finicum and Bundy were traveling to a Jan. 26 community meeting that Houpt helped organize in John Day, Oregon, when they were intercepted by the cops.

Bundy initiated the refuge occupation Jan. 2 to draw attention both to the frame-up of the Hammonds and to U.S. government land policies that have been undermining the livelihood of ranchers and farmers.

The persecution of the Hammonds outraged small ranchers and farmers throughout the West — controlled burns are common to control invasive plants and to prevent the spread of wildfires.

Despite serving the sentence imposed by the trial judge, the Hammonds went back to jail Jan. 4, because of a U.S. Appeals Court ruling that their sentences didn’t meet federal minimum rules.

After the trial the U.S. Bureau of Land Management vindictively revoked the Hammonds’ grazing permits, threatening the survival of their ranch.

Meanwhile, the *Oregonian* reported Feb. 6 that the scanty official information and one grainy video released on the killing confirm many aspects of the accounts by Shawna Cox and Victoria Sharp — who were in the pickup truck driven by Finicum.

According to both of them, the cops first fired one shot at the vehicle they

were in after Finicum initially pulled over. Finicum then shouted out to the cops, “I’m going to see the sheriff,” a reference to Sheriff Glenn Palmer of Grant County, who was also scheduled to be at the John Day meeting and has been quoted in the press as saying the Hammonds should be freed.

Finicum tried to drive away, but was soon forced off the road again. The *Oregonian* reports that the FBI admits lethal force was used when the truck “approached the checkpoint,” that is, even before the vehicle crashed into the snow bank and Finicum gets out with his hands up.

Much of the capitalist press justifies the killing and prosecutions by labeling Finicum and Bundy as extremists and outside agitators.

“To his detractors,” the *New York Times* said, “he was a doctrinaire leader of an illegal protest that is deeply opposed by many who live near the refuge.” The paper conveniently leaves out that most people in the area support the demand to free the Hammonds and are sympathetic to their opposition to the government land policies. Many local residents visited the refuge, met Finicum and Bundy or donated food and supplies to the occupiers.

Some 1,000 people attended Finicum’s funeral in Kanab, Utah, Feb. 5. While pretending to be objective, the *Times*’ description of the scene plays on many of its readers’ prejudices. After the service there were “cowboys on horseback and members of so-called patriot groups wearing camouflage and carrying small weapons,” it reports.

The *Times* did quote one rancher from Nevada, Diana Clark, at the funeral. “All of us ranchers feel like we’re



Feb. 6 vigil in John Day, Oregon, protesting state troopers’ killing of Robert “La Voy” Finicum. Sign reads, “Not a shootout when only one side is doing the shooting. Then you call it murder.”

backed into a corner,” she said. “And it’s hard to get anyone to acknowledge our needs, and so they gave us a platform.”

At least 22 smaller protests against the killing of Finicum took place Feb. 6, from Florida to Washington. One common placard was “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot,” a slogan first popularized by protesters against police brutality after the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014. At events in John Day and Prineville, Oregon, dozens of local ranchers participated.

Meanwhile, federal prosecutors have now indicted 16 supporters of the occupation with conspiracy to “prevent by force, intimidation and threats, officers and employees of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service ... from discharging the duties of their office” at the wildlife refuge.

The list of what the indictment calls “overt acts” to further the conspiracy is proof itself that the prosecution is a frame-up.

The first “act” it lists is an Oct. 5 meeting where Ammon Bundy warned Harney County Sheriff David Ward

that if the Hammonds went to jail there could be “extreme civil unrest.”

Although the occupiers are not accused of pointing their weapons at anyone, the indictment claims that they “brandished and carried firearms.” Oregon law allows the open carrying of firearms.

Bundy released a statement from prison Feb. 6, noting that the occupation was civil disobedience. He encouraged those “who disagree with my speech” or dislike his ideas to engage in civil discussion. “If you do not advocate for government to tolerate ideas that it hates, then the First Amendment and free speech mean nothing,” he said. “Arm yourself with ideas. ... Argue and disagree. Be free.”

Supporters of the Hammonds continue to organize. A new online petition calling on President Barack Obama to free the Hammonds had 3,341 signatures as of Feb. 9. The Oregon Cattlemen’s Association is asking that donations be sent to: The Hammond Family, c/o Sandra Carlon at US Bank, 493 N. Broadway, Burns, Oregon 97720.

## End Washington’s economic embargo of Cuba

Continued from front page

of “state sponsors of terrorism” and opened access to banking services for Cuba’s diplomatic mission in Washington. In three different rounds, the latest on Dec. 17, the White House eased some travel and trade restrictions. All these measures have been executive orders by President Barack Obama.

Cuban officials point out that despite the latest changes, the web of legislation aimed to block Cuba from international trade still has a big impact on the country’s economy. Most purchases from U.S. companies are impossible under existing restrictions, which specifically prohibit any interaction with many Cuban state companies and entities. All sales to companies that would “primarily generate revenue for the state” are denied. Cuba cannot use dollars in international financial transactions. And many banks in other countries still won’t conduct business with Cuba, because they fear possible U.S. penalties.

French President Francois Hollande called on Washington to end the economic embargo on Cuba at a Feb. 1 joint press conference with Raúl Castro in Paris, during the first-ever state visit by a Cuban president to France. The two signed six bilateral accords on economy, tourism, trade, railroads and development aid.

Castro’s visit followed a deal in December between Cuba and the “Paris Club” of imperialist creditor countries,

in which Havana agreed to pay off \$2.6 billion in debt over a period of 18 years. Some \$8.5 billion in interest that had piled up since Havana suspended payments in 1986 was written off.

The opening of diplomatic relations came only after Washington released the remaining three of the Cuban Five, revolutionaries framed up and imprisoned in the U.S. for up to 16 years.

**Want to ‘destroy us with bear hug’**

“We have reason to be very cautious. The U.S. has always seen my country as its backyard, and there are powerful interests who now see an opportunity to achieve what they have been unable to do by other means during half a century,” Gerardo Hernández, one of the Five, told the Spanish daily *El País* Jan. 28. He was visiting Spain to thank supporters for their solidarity and to visit his mother’s birthplace in the Canary Islands.

“Influential congressmen and the administration itself haven’t given up their objectives with respect to Cuba,” Hernández said. “The goal has always been to destroy the revolution. Now they are wagering they can do it with a bear hug.”

Hernández pointed to the large appropriations of money by the U.S. government, both public and covert, devoted to subversion in Cuba.

For the fiscal year 2016, the U.S. Congress increased funding for “democracy

assistance and international broadcasting to Cuba” and provided direction on “denying the issuance of visas to members of the Cuban military and the Communist party.”

The U.S. Agency for International Development announced Jan. 21 that it is offering \$6 million in grants over a three-year period to organizations they claim will “provide humanitarian assistance to political prisoners and their families, and politically marginalized individuals and groups in Cuba.” The amounts can range from \$500,000 to \$2 million.

### Cuba and the Coming American Revolution

BY JACK BARNES

About the struggles of working people in the imperialist heartland, the youth who are attracted to them and the example set by the people of Cuba that revolution is not only necessary — it can be made. **\$10**

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## —CALENDAR—

### CALIFORNIA

#### Richmond

**Has U.S. Policy Towards Cuba Really Changed?** Join a discussion with Miguel Fraga, First Secretary of Cuban Embassy in Washington D.C. Fri., March 11, 7 p.m. Community Room, Public Library, 325 Civic Center Plaza. Tel.: (510) 219-0092. Sponsors: International Committee for Peace, Justice and Dignity, Richmond; CA Regla; Cuba Friendship Committee; and Marin Task Force on the Americas.

### WASHINGTON, D.C.

**Rally at the Supreme Court to Protect Abortion Access.** Wed., March 2, 8 a.m. — 12 p.m. Sponsored by Center for Reproductive Rights.

## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### CANADA

#### Montreal

**Black History Month 2016: The Revolutionary Legacy of Malcolm X and the Struggles of Working People Today.** Speaker: Annette Kouri, Communist League. Fri., Feb. 26, 7:30 p.m. 7107 St. Denis, Suite 204. Tel.: (514) 272-5840.



# —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

### Montreal city workers strike to defend public services, jobs

MONTREAL — More than 8,000 city “white-collar” workers here are waging a month of rotating strikes culminating in a one-day general strike March 1 against the city administration's plans to privatize public services and contract out their jobs. The workers, members of Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 429, have been without a contract for four years.

At a Jan. 26 picket line passersby honked as 40 strikers brandished signs that read, “Stop dismantling public services” and “I am the city.”

“Subcontracting our jobs is the major issue,” Local 429 President Alain Fugère told the *Militant* on the picket line. The city has been replacing only one of two vacancies, which will lead to the loss of 2,200 jobs by 2018, and aims to reduce wages by 12 percent.

The administration of Mayor Denis Coderre “is waging total war against the white-collar workers,” a Jan. 5 union statement said.

— Annette Kouri

### New Zealand meat workers broaden fight to defend union

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — Meat Workers Union members remain locked in a battle with food giant AFFCO. The company, owned by the wealthy Talley family, employs some 4,000 workers, 1,000 of them union members, at eight AFFCO meat plants. It owns fish, vegetable and dairy processing factories as well.

The dispute began when the company insisted workers returning from seasonal layoff last year sign “Individual Employment Agreements” instead of renegotiating the union contract, which expired in 2013. At the Wairoa plant, more than 200 workers refused to sign and were locked out Sept. 9.

When the Employment Court ruled in November that the company's action was illegal, workers at Wairoa hoped to go back to their jobs and negotiate a new contract.

Instead, bosses insisted they return without seniority to a special night shift. “What they offered us was a slap in the face,” shop steward Peter Amato told the *Militant* Jan. 25. “They're acting like they won the court case.”

Wairoa workers rejected these demands and remain locked out.

Sixteen of them came here Jan. 25 to back a court case filed by the union demanding implementation of seniority.

“This is about being union,” said Tina Edwards, an offal worker. “They want to put us all on night shift to keep us away from the IEAs.”

Workers at the Rangiuru plant picketed Dec. 21 after three workers were stood down (refused entry) for wearing union T-shirts to work.

Unionists there, like most AFFCO workers, signed the Individual Employment Agreements last June

and went back to work.

“We needed to get some income and wanted to keep the union alive in the plant,” butcher Bertie Ratu, Rangiuru Meat Workers Union shed secretary, said by phone Jan. 29. The company gave them no choice of shift, cut staff and ignored seniority.

“They put senior butchers on lower-paid jobs and replaced them with IEA workers with no experience,” Ratu said. “If the IEAs didn't do it they were gone.” Ratu and shop steward Charmaine Takai were sacked for talking to workers about this before the shift started.

## Walmart closes 269 stores worldwide, affecting 1,000s

BY ERIC SIMPSON

OAKLAND, Calif. — Walmart closed its only store here Jan. 17, affecting 400 employees and thousands of workers who shopped there. Management gave workers two days' notice following a corporate announcement that 269 stores would be closed worldwide, another expression of the international contraction of manufacturing and trade.

When the store opened 10 years ago, 11,000 people applied for 400 job openings. Bettie, now 64, was hired then. Many employees are transferring to other stores, she told the *Militant*, but “I'm done with Walmart!”

A rally outside the store during its last hours of business protested the closure and demanded Walmart find a new job for every worker.

“This is a big company with a lot of money,” Juana Pelayo, a cleaner, told the *Militant* outside the store the final night. “They don't need to shut things down here. People need these jobs.”



Bertie Ratu

Members of the Meat Workers Union picket outside AFFCO's Rangiuru, New Zealand, plant Dec. 21 after union members were refused entry (stood down) for wearing union T-shirts.

Workers face harassment every day, Ratu said. A lot of Individual Employment Agreements workers “can see how the company is abusing them” and have joined the union.

Locked-out Wairoa workers remain determined. They protest regularly on the bridge in the town. Unionists from the nearby Watties food processing

plant donated canned food, and the local Maori tribe, Ngati Kahungunu, to which many of the workers belong, helped cover travel expenses to the court hearing here.

Donations to the locked-out workers can be made at: <http://www.nzm-wu.org.nz/index.html>.

— Felicity Coggan

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



February 22, 1991

SALT LAKE CITY — One day after Utah's governor signed the most restrictive abortion bill in the United States into law, some 2,500 demonstrated in outrage. Hundreds of chanting prochoice supporters first rallied at the State Capitol, then marched to governor Norman Bangerter's mansion. They placed hangers on his fence and vowed to continue their battle.

The law, signed on January 25, eliminates a woman's right to abortion except in cases of rape or incest, where the pregnancy threatens “grave damage to the pregnant woman's medical health,” or to prevent the birth of a child with “grave defects.”

Under the new law, doctors who perform illegal abortions would be guilty of a class-three felony, and could face fines up to \$5,000 and a five-year jail term.



February 21, 1966

The recent gunning down of students on the streets of Santo Domingo was a cruel reminder that country is still suffering the full consequences of U.S. military occupation. The Santo Domingo military killed three students and wounded 32 others, in an attempt to break up a demonstration demanding the resignation of the Trujillist generals who remain in command of the Dominican army.

The fact is that the Trujillist generals are still around in Santo Domingo only because of the powerful intervention of the U.S. Marines. It is well known that the resistance of the old-guard military had totally collapsed by the fourth day after the April uprising, suffering a defeat at the hands of the armed civilian masses. The continued presence of U.S. troops can only lead to further suppression of the Dominican people.



February 22, 1941

Japan's program of territorial expansion in the Far East, which began with the conquest of Manchuria nearly ten years ago, has come into conflict with the aims and interest of American imperialism. This fact is openly recognized in both Tokyo and Washington and was underlined by “crisis” developments during the past two weeks. A war in the Pacific is in the offing.

Secretary of State Cordell Hull told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on January 27 that “long, efforts to obtain mutual understanding and co-operation between the United States and Japan had been virtually fruitless.” Speaking the day before in the Japanese Diet, Foreign Minister Yosuke Matsuoka made the following pointed declaration: “The time for settling misunderstandings with the United States through negotiations has passed.”



# Working-class alternative

Continued from front page

socialist Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton in the Democratic Party to demagogue billionaire Donald Trump, John Kasich, Marco Rubio and other Republicans — aim to rescue capitalism from an economic, social and moral crisis as production, trade and employment contract.

In Flint, Michigan, Democratic and Republican officials alike told working people it was OK to drink poisoned water. In workplace after workplace job safety goes out the window as employers impose speedup and either lengthen the workweek to increase exploitation or slash hours to boost their bottom line. They scapegoat immigrant workers, seeking to intimidate them with deportations to drive down wages and divide the working class.

The ruling capitalist families use Washington's economic and military forces to protect their investments and interests abroad against any who rise up to struggle for national sovereignty and to close the chasm between their conditions of literacy, electrification and sanitation and those in the imperialist countries.

The Socialist Workers Party campaign poses a working-class way forward out of the dog-eat-dog, crises-ridden capitalist system.

The SWP strives to advance the class-

consciousness and self-confidence of workers as we fight together. We know from history that working people, relying on our own power, solidarity and mobilization, can take over and run the mines, mills, railroads and factories — without the bosses.

As we gain experience in struggle we become different people, capable of organizing our class and its allies — millions strong — to overthrow rule by the billionaire capitalist families and establish a government of workers and farmers.

Socialist Workers Party supporters fight within the ranks of labor to transform the unions into effective fighting instruments against the employing class and its government. The labor movement can become a powerful force for human solidarity — championing the fight for \$15 and a union; for a government-funded public works program to create jobs, build schools and medical, child care and recreation centers, replace crumbling infrastructure and other things working people need; the fight for Puerto Rican independence; for free preventative and comprehensive medical care for all; to extend equal protection under the law to women who seek an abortion; to demand that cops who kill or brutalize working people be prosecuted.

SWP campaigners point to the need to break from the bosses' parties and build our own independent labor party based on the unions.

Kennedy and Hart point to the example of how Cuba's working people made their 1959 revolution, an example for working people in the U.S. They demand Washington end its brutal economic embargo against the Cuban people and return the Guantánamo naval base. Hart is in Cuba at the Havana International Book Fair, the better to tell workers here about Cuba's socialist revolution.

In the 1950s workers and farmers across Cuba, led by Fidel Castro and the July 26 Movement, learned as they



Militant/Naomi Craine

Inset: Militant/Janet Post

The Socialist Workers Party candidates demand Washington end its brutal economic embargo against the Cuban people and return the Guantánamo naval base. Above, party banner at September 2015 West Indian Day parade in Brooklyn. Inset, Osborne Hart speaks at St. Ambrose Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, July 2015. Hart and other SWP members, the church's pastor and others had worked together to build May 30 demonstration calling for the release of Puerto Rican independence fighter Oscar López, framed up and imprisoned by Washington for over 34 years.



organized and fought to overthrow the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship. They became different men and women, capable of working together to change society to meet their needs.

Working people took over and began to run U.S.- and Cuban-owned factories, sugar mills, utilities and banks. The revolutionary government backed landless rural laborers in an agrarian reform that turned cultivation of the land over to the tillers.

They destroyed the old army and police and built new armed forces, militia and police out of their own ranks to defend, not oppress, working people.

The revolution enforced laws putting an end to racial discrimination, drew women into the workforce and revolutionary political activity and made abortion a woman's choice.

The Cuban Revolution extends internationalist solidarity, from sending almost 400,000 volunteers to fight against apartheid South Africa's invasion in Angola to sending doctors to help lead the fight against Ebola in West Africa.

A similar transformation began among many Blacks active in the fight against Jim Crow, worker combatants in the building of the CIO and stalwarts of the decade-long fight against Washington's war in Vietnam. Malcolm X said fighters "find their self-worth" in the course of such struggles.

A victorious revolutionary struggle by working people here in the U.S. can inspire emulation worldwide.

## Candidates who are fighters

The Socialist Workers Party candidates have taken part in rallies of Pennsylvania Steelworkers locked out by Allegheny Technologies and Verizon workers without a contract. They are part of the fight for \$15 an hour minimum wage and to organize unions.

The fight against police brutality and killings is *their* fight. They have joined protests at home and across the country, demanding cops who killed youth and others — African-American, Latino and Caucasian, from Freddie Gray in Baltimore to Laquan McDonald in Chi-

cago to Andrew Thomas in Paradise, California — be charged and jailed.

They are part of the effort to free Dwight and Steven Hammond, Oregon ranchers jailed twice on trumped-up arson charges. The SWP candidates demand the arrest of the FBI and Oregon cops who killed Robert LaVoy Finicum, one of the ranchers who occupied the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge to protest the imprisonment of the Hammonds.

The Socialist Workers Party speaks out against Washington's imperialist military attacks — from Iraq to Afghanistan to Syria. SWP candidates fight the rulers' efforts to use workers' revulsion at Islamic State's terrorist acts to scapegoat Muslims and roll back workers' rights.

Through our experiences, workers will see more and more that all political questions are class questions. We will see that here, as in Cuba, the only way forward is to organize independent working-class struggles that point toward overturning the dictatorship of capital, building a new society based on human solidarity and joining the worldwide fight for socialism. This is a life truly worth living.

Join the Socialist Workers Party campaign!

## NATIONAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE

The committee organizing the Socialist Workers Party 2016 campaign is chaired by national campaign director John Studer. It includes presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy; Chris Hoepfner and Janet Post, who helped lead vice-presidential candidate Osborne Hart's path-setting campaign for mayor in Philadelphia last fall; 'Militant' writer Maggie Trowe; New York SWP organizer Norton Sandler and West Coast campaign director Joel Britton.



Militant/Maggie Trowe

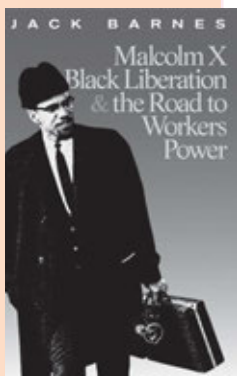
Hart at Oct. 24 protest against police brutality in New York, during SWP campaign for mayor of Philadelphia.

## Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power

by Jack Barnes

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A Marxist Interpretation

by Abram Leon

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# The SWP candidates



Militant photos: Left, Naomi Craine; right, John Studer

**SWP candidates Alyson Kennedy for president and Osborne Hart for vice president.**

## Continued from front page

overturning Jim Crow segregation. She moved to Kentucky, where she was part of the fight to desegregate Louisville public schools in 1975.

Kennedy works at Walmart in Chicago and is part of the movement for \$15 an hour, full-time work and a union that has sprung up among fast-food, Walmart and many other workers.

A socialist and trade union fighter for more than four decades, Kennedy, 65, is a member of the Socialist Workers Party's National Committee. She was the SWP candidate for vice president in 2008 and for U.S. Senate from Illinois in 2010.

She has worked in coal mines in Alabama, Colorado, Utah and West Virginia. She joined the United Mine Workers in 1981. She became part of the Coal Employment Project, a group that championed women's fights to get hired in the mines and fight harassment on the job.

From 2003 to 2006 Kennedy was among those in the front ranks of a union-organizing battle at the Co-Op coal mine outside Huntington, Utah. The miners there, a majority immigrants from Mexico, fought for UMW representation to win safe working conditions, an end to abuse by the bosses and improved wages, which started at \$5 an hour. Their struggle won widespread solidarity and set a powerful example of how to fight.

In 2014 Kennedy went to Turkey to meet with coal miners there and help them get out the truth in the U.S. and elsewhere about their fight against deadly working conditions imposed by the owners with government complicity. A mine explosion in the town of Soma had killed more than 300 miners. She also met with a representative of the Kurdish-based People's Democratic Party (HDP) there, bringing solidarity to the Kurds' fight against national oppression across Turkey as well as in Syria, Iraq and Iran.

Kennedy has also worked in plants and mills organized by the United Steelworkers, UNITE HERE as a garment worker, and other unions.

Kennedy is active in the fight to defend a woman's right to choose abortion, has spoken widely on the fight for women's rights and has helped defend clinics from rightist attempts to shut them down.

Kennedy marched with members of the Chicago Teachers Union on strike against a bitter assault by Mayor Rahm Emanuel and city officials in 2012, walked picket lines with United Steel-

workers locked out by Honeywell Corp. in Metropolis, Illinois, in 2010 and again in 2014, as well as with United Auto Workers members on strike last year against Kohler Inc. in Wisconsin. She joined protests in Kentucky, West Virginia and St. Louis by union coal miners fighting attempts by Patriot Coal bosses to use bankruptcy to tear up union contracts.

She has been active in the fight against Washington's wars, from protests against the war in Vietnam to speaking out against the bloody aggression in Iraq and Afghanistan.

She's been a stalwart in demonstrations against the cop killings of Laquan McDonald, Rekia Boyd, Quintonio LeGrier, Bettie Jones and many others, as well as actions over years demanding the release from prison of men tortured into making false confessions by former Chicago Police Lt. Jon Burge's "Midnight Crew."

## Osborne Hart

Osborne Hart, whose father was a career soldier, spent his youth traveling around the world with his family.

Since getting involved with the civil rights movement in the 1960s, Hart has been a lifelong fighter for Black rights. He's joined struggles against police brutality and school segregation and the movement to bring down apartheid in South Africa and free Nelson Mandela.

He was politically active in the 1970s in the fight to end Washington's war against the peoples of Vietnam and Indochina.

Hart joined the Socialist Workers Party in the mid-1970s and for decades has been part of helping to build and strengthen the labor movement. He's lived in Atlanta, San Francisco, New York, Detroit and now Philadelphia and has worked in industry, including as a meat packer, steelworker, loading trucks in a TJX warehouse and on the railroads. He currently works at Walmart.

He joined actions in defense of United Steelworkers-organized oil refinery workers forced on strike in 2015, demanding workers control over safety to counter bosses' speed-up drives, job cuts and attacks on unions.

Hart, 63, ran for mayor of Philadelphia in 2015, gaining a wide hearing among working people. He participated in protests against cuts in Medicare, demanding free, government-funded medical care for all; against police brutality and in solidarity with workers fighting concession demands by steel giant ArcelorMittal. He explained the need for

## 'Workers need control on job to ensure safety'



Militant/Seth Galinsky

NEW YORK — Alyson Kennedy, the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. president, campaigned at construction sites on the West Side of Manhattan Feb. 9. Kennedy and her supporters spoke with workers on their lunch break about the fatal collapse of a 565-foot crane in Lower Manhattan four days earlier that crushed cars parked on the street and killed a pedestrian. A construction worker fell to his death at an East Harlem site the day before the crane incident.

Several construction union members told her that the "union backs us up" if they refuse to work under unsafe conditions. "I've walked off many times," Thomas Portelli, 38, right, said. "When it's too windy and the load is spinning around. I'm not going to allow that."

While unionized workers get safety training, unorganized workers do not, he said, but the bosses and government officials are trying to get rid of the unions.

"That's why we need to organize all workers into our unions," Kennedy said. "Workers need to control conditions on the job to guarantee safety."

One ironworker said he thought we needed a businessman as president, like Donald Trump, who could get things done. "Workers need our own party, a labor party based on the unions," Kennedy said.

"There is no 'we,'" she said. "There are two main social classes — the workers and the bosses. The Socialist Workers Party joins in actions against employer and government attacks against us and helps to advance class consciousness."

— DEAN HAZLEWOOD

independent working-class political action, urging workers to fight for a labor party based on the unions, to challenge the Democrats, Republicans or other capitalist parties.

Over the past five years, Hart has joined in building protests in Philadelphia against the relentless drive by state and city governments to slash funds for public education, with massive layoffs and spiraling class sizes. These moves have been accompanied by assaults on teachers' and other school workers' wages, pensions, health care and their unions.

Hart is active in the fight against government attacks and discriminatory laws against undocumented workers,

protests against deportations and efforts to organize the unorganized.

He's spoken out and built meetings in defense of the Cuban Revolution, demanding Washington end its 55-year-long economic embargo of the island and return the territory containing the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo to Cuba. He was part of the international movement that won freedom for the Cuban Five, revolutionaries imprisoned in the U.S. for working to defend their country's socialist revolution.

He calls for the immediate release of Oscar López, a fighter for Puerto Rican independence framed up and jailed in the U.S. — much of it in solitary confinement — for more than 34 years.

## Join the Socialist Workers Party campaign in 2016!

### The working class, labor, socialist campaign

- ☐ I want to get involved! Contact me so I can join in campaigning for the working-class alternative, Socialist Workers Party candidates Alyson Kennedy for president and Osborne Hart for vice president.
- ☐ I want to help spread the word. Enclosed is my contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_. (Make checks to Socialist Workers National Campaign Committee)
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# Sanders aims to save capitalism

Continued from front page

and, through the course of workers' struggles, for building an independent working-class political party advancing a fight for workers' power.

Sanders' win underlines the most significant development in the 2016 campaign, one dismissed earlier by bourgeois commentators. He is running as a socialist candidate advancing a program of radical reform to save capitalism.

Something like this hasn't been seen in U.S. politics for some time, though it isn't uncommon in other imperialist countries, where social democratic parties have formed governments on and off for decades when the capitalist rulers face a crisis. Sanders' platform, in fact, is to the left of those of most bourgeois parties in Europe today that go by the name Socialist or Social Democratic.

The response to Sanders reflects growing dissatisfaction among workers and many in the middle class who have faced years of grinding depression conditions as the world capitalist contraction drags on. In his stump speeches Sanders calls for an infrastructure program to put millions of people to work, raising the minimum wage over several years to \$15 an hour and making public universities tuition-free.

He points out that unemployment and underemployment for youth is over 35 percent, and more than 50 percent for young people who are Black, while the United States has the world's highest incarceration rate. This has to be addressed, he says, for young people to "begin their adult life." This resonates with many workers, including those who are African-American.

Sanders has begun to win some endorsement from political figures who are Black, including former NAACP President Ben Jealous and Erica Garner, daughter of Eric Garner whose 2014 killing by a New York City cop met with local and nationwide protests. (Eric Garner's mother, Gwen Carr, has endorsed Hillary Clinton.)

## Covering up class divisions

Sanders also focuses on income inequality, as well as campaign finance rules that he says perpetuate an "oligarchy" in government. He calls for raising taxes on corporations and the super-rich to "end a rigged economy, create an economy that works for all."

This echoes the "Occupy Wall Street" protests of 2011-12, which popularized the catchphrase of a wealthy "1 percent" versus "the 99 percent." The Occupy movement, and Sanders, obscure the fact that the capitalist crisis and growing attacks on workers are the product not of opposing percentiles or well-endowed campaign "Super PACs." Instead, they register the reality of irreconcilable class interests under capitalism and state power held by a handful of ruling-class families whose entrenched power, property and privilege are defended by the armed forces, cops and courts.

The Sanders campaign, like the Occupy movement, peddles the false notion of a classless "we" encompassing nearly all Americans (99 percent or more of us, in fact), who can be brought together if only capitalism and bourgeois election campaigns can be made more fair.

Sanders presents himself as a modern Franklin Delano Roosevelt, proposing another "New Deal." Roosevelt won office in 1932 in the midst of the Great Depression. What Sanders doesn't say is that the steps implemented by Roosevelt — from make-work jobs programs to the start of Social Security — were aimed at blunting the rising social movement marked by the CIO industrial union battles in those years, a working-class movement the rulers feared could threaten capitalist political power.

Roosevelt turned the FBI into a national political police, joining state and local cops in targeting and framing up trade union fighters and communists.

By the late 1930s, Roosevelt's program increasingly became a "War Deal," slashing public works and other jobs programs set up earlier as Washington and the propertied families it represents prepared to enter the second world imperialist slaughter. It was only with the conscription of millions of young men as cannon fodder in World War II that the unemployment crisis ended.

Sanders speaks in opposition to new U.S. military deployments in the Middle East and elsewhere. He touts his record in Congress of having voted against authorizing the U.S. war in Iraq in 2002, in contrast to Clinton — failing to note that he often votes to authorize funding for that and Washington's other wars.

Sanders would be the first Jewish president, something that has not become an issue in the campaign. He says he is "not actively involved with organized religion," and that's not been an



Bernie Sanders describes himself as a modern-day Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Roosevelt's "New Deal," including Works Progress Administration make-work programs, aimed to blunt rising social movement. Above, police confront strikers at WPA sewing project in Minneapolis during national strike in 1939, as workers fought government moves to slash jobs programs.

issue either — which is also new for a U.S. presidential race.

As Sanders has risen in the polls, Clinton has said that she's a progressive too, but one "who gets things done." She says she wants to "rein in the excesses of Wall Street," even though she has accepted substantial contributions from Goldman Sachs and other "too big to fail" banks and financial institutions. The problem with Sanders, Clinton says, is that he's utopian.

Sanders' response is that real change "comes from the bottom on up." He calls for a "political revolution" — one whose content amounts to voting and pressuring Congress to carry out the program he proposes to reform capitalism.

Leading up to the New Hampshire vote, Clinton's campaign took on an increasingly panicky tone. She didn't get much help when Gloria Steinem, a founder of *Ms.* magazine, said the reason so many young women are active in the Sanders campaign is to meet young men. The big majority of women who voted in the Democratic primary in New Hampshire cast their ballots for Sanders.

## Trump's nationalist demagoguery

Like Sanders, Trump owes his position in the Republican race to broad discontent caused by the grinding capitalist crisis. Both speak in opposition to another U.S. ground war and Washington's involvement in so-called free trade pacts. But beyond that, their campaigns are qualitatively different.

Trump's campaign centers on nationalist demagoguery. At the same time, he says he's the one who will create jobs, and steers clear of calls for the cuts in so-

cial benefits that most of his Republican opponents demand. John Kasich, who ran second in New Hampshire's primary, gains at the polls from attacks by rivals for expanding Obamacare-linked Medicaid benefits as governor of Ohio.

Trump presents himself as speaking for the little person, a straight shooter who says what he thinks and a successful businessman who can get things done. But some concrete proposals he pounds away at are anti-working-class, such as building a wall along the Mexican border to keep out immigrants (which he's now begun presenting as a solution to growing heroin addiction as well!) and announcing this week he supports waterboarding and "worse" for those Washington accuses of terrorism.

One of Trump's notorious positions, his call for a "temporary" bar on Muslims entering the U.S., was dealt a political blow Feb. 3 when President Barack Obama visited a Baltimore mosque and spoke against such "inexcusable political rhetoric against Muslim-Americans."

Meanwhile, former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg confirmed he is considering a bid for the White House in a widely reported Feb. 8 interview in the *Financial Times*. The race today is "an outrage and an insult to the voters," said the billionaire media owner.

Bloomberg was a lifelong liberal Democrat before registering as a Republican for his 2001 mayoral bid for electoral reasons. He won his third term as mayor as an independent. His main aim in entering the presidential race would be to block prospects of a victory by Sanders. Bloomberg says he will decide by early March.

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# 1,000s flee assault in Syria

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violently crushed by Assad, leading to the ongoing civil war.

Washington has forged a bloc with Moscow and Tehran, seeking to establish a cease-fire in Syria, to achieve some measure of stability for U.S. interests in the region, and carry out united moves against Islamic State.

The assault on Aleppo marks another devastating blow to Syrian working people. The war has claimed the lives of a quarter of a million people and displaced more than half of the country's population.

Human Rights Watch reported Feb. 8 that Moscow's planes have dropped cluster bombs — anti-civilian weapons that detonate in the air, shooting out lethal shrapnel — at least 14 times in five provinces in the last two weeks.

Secretary of State John Kerry said Feb. 5 that the bombing “has to stop.” But for some time he has led Washington's increased collaboration with Tehran and Moscow as the 20th century imperialist-imposed borders and stability in the region crumbled and Islamic State seized large areas of Syria and Iraq.

While Washington has given lukewarm verbal support and paltry aid to the capitalist Syrian opposition, none of its components are anywhere near strong enough to stabilize the country.

As a result of decades of betrayal by the Stalinist Communist Party of Syria, which promoted collaboration with Assad's Baathist Party and other bourgeois forces, there is no revolutionary working-class movement that can chart an independent road to power. This vacuum, along with the brutal civil war, opened the door for Islamic State.

The Barack Obama administration's nuclear accord with Iran allows Tehran to resume trade on the world market and escape imperialist sanctions. Washington's goal is to cement the broader political deal they are now working to consolidate.

Assad and his allies threaten to impose a starvation siege on those remaining in Aleppo, as they have in dozens of places across the country. By Feb. 8 more than 35,000 Syrians were massed near the Turkish border, hoping to enter Turkey. Ankara closed the border some

time ago, but the next day Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said 10,000 refugees had been allowed to cross.

Indirect negotiations between Assad and opposition forces started Feb. 1 in Geneva under the auspices of the U.N. Security Council, but blew up after two days as the regime's offensive advanced. Members of the opposition delegation said the Saudi and Turkish governments pressed them to pull out.

Seeking to push Obama to back away from Moscow and Assad, the governments of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates offered to provide troops if Washington would lead an expanded ground war in Syria.

Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem ridiculed the offer Feb. 6, saying they would “return home in wooden coffins.”

## More refugees flee to Europe

Capitalist leaders in Europe have reacted with alarm at the continuing flow of refugees from Syria. German Chancellor Angela Merkel traveled to Ankara Feb. 8 to press Turkish leaders to keep them from heading to Europe.

Capitalist governments in northern Europe are pushing for Greece to be a holding pen for refugees, threatening to send more border guards, and possibly troops, to “hermetically seal” Greece's border with Macedonia.

Islamic State's territory and armed strength in Syria and Iraq is being shrunk by growing unpopularity in areas they rule, U.S. bombings, and ground attacks by Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) and Iraqi special forces. The reactionary group carried out a suicide car bomb attack that tore up a police officers' club and vegetable market in Damascus Feb. 9, wounding dozens and killing at least eight people.

Washington is no friend of the Kurdish people's aspirations for an independent homeland, but depends on YPG units to push back Islamic State. After Ankara's determined insistence, Kurdish representatives were excluded from the Geneva talks. In an effort to assuage the exclusion, Brett McGurk, Obama's envoy for the “Global Coalition to Counter ISIS,” met with Kurdish leaders in

them most of this support. Yes, some grievances are legitimate. But to most people here they look like dumb white guys with cowboy hats.

Joan Little  
Portland, Oregon

## Free the Hammonds

I was pleased with your coverage of the occupation in Harney County, Oregon. You did not fall into the trap of concentrating on the Bundyites and their politics and made the right points about the importance for civil liberties of the Hammonds' persecution. It's obvious from watching TV reports and reading the Oregon papers that there is a big class divide on this.

### ‘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.

## Rallies in France demand ‘End state of emergency!’



Militant/Claude Bleton

PARIS — Tens of thousands protested in nearly 70 cities across France Jan. 30 demanding the government of President Francois Hollande end the state of emergency declared in November.

It was the first public protest against the state of emergency since the government imposed it, banning demonstrations, imposing restrictions on political rights and giving cops freer rein to spy on and throw Muslims and others into detention or house arrest. The rulers insisted the moves — which they said they will extend indefinitely, writing it into the country's constitution — should be accepted in the name of responding to brutal attacks by Islamic State supporters here that killed 130 people.

The protest here, some 5,000 strong, was organized by the League of Human Rights; the CGT, the main trade union confederation in France; and a multitude of other organizations, including many representing immigrants and undocumented workers.

The government also announced plans to revoke French citizenship from anyone with dual nationality who is convicted on terrorism charges.

— CLAUDE BLETON AND NAT LONDON

Kobani, a town in northern Syria where heroic defense by YPG forces drove off IS attackers in January 2015.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan reacted angrily. “Am I your ally or are the terrorists in Kobani?” he said Feb. 5.

Erdogan has stepped up its military assault in Turkey's majority Kurdish southeast since December, targeting the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and terrorizing the population. Thousands

fled the Sur district of Diyarbakir, the largest city in the region, Jan. 27 after government authorities expanded a stifling 24-hour curfew.

In a Feb. 7 editorial, the *Wall Street Journal* referred to Obama's actions in Syria as a “let-it-burn policy.” But the U.S. capitalist rulers have no interest in getting caught in a new Middle East ground war. Whoever wins the presidency in 2016 is unlikely to stray from the current course.

# Charges under anti-abortion law

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20 clinics in recent years, a study by the Texas Policy Evaluation Project found that at least 100,000 women have attempted a self-induced abortion, usually

by taking hormonal pills, alcohol, illegal drugs, herbs or homeopathic remedies or by getting punched in the abdomen, according to the *Washington Post*.

“When abortions aren't available that does not stop women from trying to accomplish that goal, taking matters into their own hands,” said Willie Parker, a doctor who provides abortions in Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi, in a Feb. 2 interview on WNYC radio. This “potentially leads them to have complications that are unnecessary when abortion is safe and legal.”

The clinic where Parker works in Jackson, Mississippi, is the last one left in the state. It is threatened with closure by a state law requiring doctors who perform abortions to have admitting privileges at a nearby hospital, which most won't grant. The U.S. Supreme Court will hear a challenge to a similar law in Texas this spring.

Meanwhile, a federal district judge in San Francisco issued a preliminary injunction Feb. 6 ordering the anti-abortion Center for Medical Progress not to release further secretly filmed videos that they claimed showed Planned Parenthood illegally sold fetal tissue. These claims are baseless, said Judge William Orrick. In January a grand jury in Houston indicted the group's director, David Daleiden, and an associate on criminal charges of using false driver's licenses to infiltrate Planned Parenthood.

After reading the court's summary, I think the government's case against the Hammonds is shaky. Their resentencing smacks of double jeopardy and raises the question of fairness of maximum terms in the first place.

The Hammonds need defenders. This has been made difficult with the focus of attention on the Bundyites and their occupation.

The Hammonds should be freed. There is an online petition for their clemency, which I urge defenders of civil liberties to sign. It is at savethehammonds.com and is sponsored by the Oregon Farm Bureau, among others.

George Johnson  
Bend, Oregon

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.

## LETTERS

### Cop sentenced for beating

Former Inkster cop William Melendez was sentenced Feb. 2 to 13 months to 10 years in prison for the beating of autoworker Floyd Dent.

According to the website Heavy, Dent refused a plea deal on March 25. Originally Dent was charged with resisting arrest and possession of cocaine. This is an example of a point the *Militant* has been stressing. Workers who are put through the “justice” system seldom go to trial. Instead they are offered the “opportunity” to plead guilty to the lesser charge. Mr. Dent refused this “opportunity” and had all charges dropped.

Robert Kissinger  
Detroit, Michigan

### ‘Dumb guys in cowboy hats’

At first I had some support for the Oregon protesters, who have been called “militants” in the media. They have had considerable support here.

But the racism and extremism of the protesters and occupiers has cost