

U.S. takes aim at Iran, threatens military action



By NICK BAKER

As U.S. imperialism ceaselessly spreads its tentacles around the globe, its latest victim, yet again, is Iran, the strategically located oil-rich Middle Eastern nation that has resisted U.S. and British colonial domination for over a century.

Since its 1979 Revolution that ousted the murderous dictatorship of Shah (meaning “King”) Reza Pahlavi, imposed by a 1953 U.S. coup against the democratically elected Mohammed Mossadegh government, the Iranian people have been subject to unending imperialist onslaughts. As former President George H. W. Bush once wrote in a classified National Security Directive, “U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf are vital to the national security. These interests include access to oil and the security and stability of key friendly states in the region.”

Former Federal Reserve chair Alan Greenspan called this “the eight-hundred-pound gorilla” that U.S. capitalists avoid mentioning in public.

As punishment for ridding itself of overt U.S. impe-

rial domination in 1979, the U.S. secretly orchestrated the eight-year Iran-Iraq War (1980-88), wherein the U.S. backed its then ally, Iraq’s President Saddam Hussein, whose U.S.-funded army invaded Iran, leaving one million Iranians dead and 800,000 Iraqis. The U.S. wanted to pave the way for the return to power in Iran of a U.S.-allied government and, in the interim, foment a war wherein both nation’s vast oil-producing capabilities were either destroyed or sufficiently crippled to keep their oil from competing on world oil markets.

Since withdrawing in May 2018 from the imperialist-imposed “nuclear deal” the U.S. has continuously increased its aggression against Iran, accompanied by apocalyptic threats to destroy the country from many top U.S. officials. On June 20, President Trump, conjuring up yet another imperial pretext for war, came within 10 minutes of launching a deadly assault on Iran. The warmongering corporate media dutifully reported Trump’s proclaiming himself a “dove” as opposed to a “hawk,” as he publicly removed his deadly presidential finger from the “Go!” button. The attack

had been set in motion to punish Iran for alleged attacks on two oil freighters in the region.

Meanwhile, U.S. warfare in all its modern-day manifestations—cyber war aimed at crippling Iran’s infrastructure, devastating sanctions, as in Venezuela, aimed at bringing on misery and deprivation to the broad population, secret assassination teams targeting Iranian scientists, and the massive military preparations—continue unabated.

The most recent U.S. war moves include sending an additional 2500 soldiers—on top of the thousands already in Iraq and Syria and 70,000 across the Middle East—B-52 bombers, F-22 fighter jets and surveillance equipment to the area, and stationing a carrier fleet in the Persian Gulf whose warships provocatively sail back and forth along the coast of Iran. While the capitalist press bleats that “both sides in the U.S.-Iran standoff say they don’t want war,” we note that only one side has gathered its armies at the door of the other and threatened it with “obliteration,” in the words of Donald Trump. Need we assert that a per-

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Queer liberation march restores politics to Pride



Rozwell Simmons / Socialist Action

By ROZWELL SIMMONS

NEW YORK—In the years since Stonewall, corporations have jumped on the opportunity to use Pride as a means of profit; it has been perverted into a cash grab for companies. This corporatization has played a large role in the depoliticization of Pride. Naturally, it is in the best interests of the ruling class to distract oppressed people from engaging in movement building. Of course, separating politics from Pride is completely counter to everything Pride stands for; the first pride parade was a police brutality march in response to the raids at the Stonewall Inn, a haven for queer folks.

The Queer Liberation March, organized by the Reclaim Pride Coalition of New York City, occurred on

June 30, the same day as the more popular LGBT Pride March organized by the Heritage of Pride organization. The Queer Liberation March drew over 45,000 people to the streets of Manhattan, recreating the same route of the original Pride march in 1969, which started at the Stonewall Inn and traveled 4.5 miles to The Great Lawn in Central Park.

Following this route was just one example of organizing done to emulate the first Pride. The Queer Liberation March aimed to decommercialize and repoliticize pride, attempting to rekindle the revolutionary spirit that was so vibrant 50 years ago.

From the Reclaim Pride Coalition's statement on *Why We March*: "We March in our communities' tradition of resistance against police, state, and societal

oppression, a tradition that is epitomized and symbolized by the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion. We March against the exploitation of our communities for profit and against corporate and state pinkwashing, as displayed in Pride celebrations worldwide, including the NYC Pride Parade."

Instead of the pay to march and corporate/police diversity celebration of the Heritage of Pride march, the Queer Liberation March represented an organic and open movement of queer people to celebrate their identities on their own terms and to continue the political fight for queer liberation that began with the Stonewall riots.

The militancy and enthusiasm of those involved was inspiring. Marchers held slogans for a broad spectrum of struggles, including immigrant rights, trans rights, against police brutality, pink washing, and for the liberation of Palestine. Chants such as "We have nothing to lose but our chains" and "The people united will never be defeated" echoed in the streets, indicating a consciousness that went beyond gender and sexuality. Many social political issues and oppressed groups were represented, and almost 200 groups endorsed the event. Participants expressed overwhelming solidarity for their comrades as well as a fundamental opposition to the police, capitalism, imperialism, colonialism, etc.

After the march, a rally was held on The Great Lawn in Central Park. Speakers included protesters and witnesses of the original rebellion at Stonewall, a survivor of the Orlando Pulse shooting, and a Nigerian queer activist, among many others.

Speaker Staceyann Chin's stirring words on the hypocrisy of mainstream Pride, as well as the ravaging of the planet and its people via imperialism, brought

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Socialist Action is a national organization of activists committed to the emancipation of workers and the oppressed. We strive to revitalize the antiwar, environmental, labor, anti-racist, feminist, student, and other social movements with a mass-action perspective. Recognizing the divisions that exist on the left and within the workers' movement, we seek to form united front type organizations around specific issues where various groups have agreement. In this way we seek to maximize our impact and demonstrate the power and effectiveness of mass action.

In the process we hope to bring activists together from different backgrounds into a revolutionary workers' party that can successfully challenge the wealthy elite—whose profit-driven system is driving down living standards and threatens all life on this planet.

We are active partisans of the working class and believe in the need for independent working-class politics—not alliances with the bosses' parties. That is why we call for workers in the U.S. to break from the Democratic and Republican parties to build a Labor Party based on the trade unions.

We support the struggles of those who are specially oppressed under capitalism—women, LGBT people, national minorities, etc. We support the right of self-determination for oppressed nationalities, including Blacks, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans. We are internationalists, and hold that workers of one country have more in common with workers of another than with their own nation's capitalist class. We seek to link struggles across national boundaries, and to build an international revolutionary movement that will facilitate the sharing of experiences and political lessons. We maintain fraternal relations with the Fourth International.

Socialist Action believes that the capitalist state and its institutions are instruments of the ruling class, and that therefore they cannot be used as tools of the working class but have to be smashed. That is why we fight for revolution. When we fight for specific reforms, we do so with the understanding that in the final analysis real social change can only come about with the overthrow of capitalism, the establishment of a workers' government, and the fight for socialism. Our ultimate goal is a truly democratic, environmentally sustainable, and egalitarian society organized to satisfy human needs rather than corporate greed. We invite you to join us in the struggle to make the world a better place!

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Sudan protesters defy repression

By STEVE XAVIER

As Socialist Action goes to print, reports indicate that the military and civilian opposition forces have reached an accord to end the months of unrest. Under the agreement, an 11-member Sovereign Council (SC) would be formed, consisting of five civilians and five representatives of the military. The 11th member would be a civilian mutually agreed upon by the two sides. A military representative would head the SC for the first 21 months. The plan proposes a 39-month transition leading to a civilian government, and the SC would set up a legislative body.

Under this pact, bourgeois and petty bourgeois forces have made an agreement with the military that will more than likely sell out the interests of workers, women, and youth. The only clear road forward to end this crisis is by finishing the revolution.

At least seven protesters were killed in Sudan on June 30, gunned down by government forces as tens of thousands of Sudanese marched in what was termed a "Millions March" against the regime. Organizers hoped to build the largest mass mobilization since the violent crackdown on June 3 following a successful general strike.

In the days preceding the mass march, Rapid Support Force (RSF) thugs rounded up some march organizers. Despite the repression, marches were held in Khartoum and other cities throughout the country. Military forces, riot police, and RSF used tear gas and live ammunition in an attempt to disperse the marches.

As reported previously by *Socialist Action*, paramilitaries tied to the regime in Sudan responded to the May 28-29 general strike with brutal violence against pro-democracy protesters. The initial attacks by the Rapid Support Force, a paramilitary organization linked to genocide in Darfur and loyal to the regime, resulted in more than 100 deaths and hundreds of injuries.

The RSF has its roots in the brutal Jangaweed, a militia that is notorious for its criminal genocide in Darfur. Human rights organizations report mass rapes of protesters and medical personnel by militia members and government troops. In some cases, soldiers and army officers moved to protect protesters from the rampaging paramilitaries.

Activists claim that the death toll has now risen to more than 120. After the massacre, RSF members allegedly threw bodies of their victims into the Nile in an attempt to cover up their crimes. More than 40 bodies were recovered from the river subsequent to the attacks. Official government sources claim that the death toll is much smaller.

The May 28-29 general strike, called by the Sudanese Professional Association, displayed the potential power of the working class, with from 80% to 100% participation in defiance of intimidation, coercion, and violence from the employers and government. Transportation was shut down. Also, the Red Sea port closed down as dockers joined the work stoppage. Professionals, government ministry, factory, telecommunications, and medical workers observed the strike. Domestic air flights were cancelled.

Two presidents fall

On April 11, the dictator, Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir, was removed from office by the military after 30 years in power. This followed months of unrest that was initially sparked by a drastic rise in bread



prices and then quickly took up demands for the fall of al-Bashir. High unemployment, inflation, and shortages of basic goods, like fuel and food, are pushing the struggle forward.

The military replaced al-Bashir with General Awad Ibn Auf, who lasted less than 48 hours as mass protests intensified. This was an attempt by the military to preserve the existing state machinery by changing the outside face of the regime. The Sudanese masses didn't fall for the maneuver.

In the wake of the repression, the SPA and the Alliance for Freedom and Change (AFC) called for a renewed round of strikes and civil disobedience on June 9, stating that "the peaceful resistance by civil disobedience and the general political strike is the fastest and most effective way to topple the military council."

Striking airline pilots were abducted from their homes by the RSF and forced to fly military personnel. The RSF and security forces have detained hundreds of striking workers and activists. Internet access was shut down at the beginning of the crackdown on June 3, making communication with the outside world difficult.

The June 9 strike was attacked by RSF goons with tear gas and rifle fire. Government services, banks and transport in Khartoum were shut down. In Port Sudan, the docks, banks, and telecommunications were shut down as more than 90% walked out. Similarly, in other areas workers, government employees, and professionals struck. The Egyptian regime, which has been propping up the TMC, offered to provide aid to the regime in the form of strikebreakers to operate shuttered services.

After the June 9 strike, dozens of military and police officers were arrested by the regime for their refusal to participate in the repression. The government claimed that these officers had been plotting a coup to restore al-Bashir to power, but this is disputed by sources close to the opposition.

(Above) Sudan solidarity march in Philadelphia on June 29. Marches took place throughout the U.S.

On June 26, TMC representatives met with the "Sudan Troika" made up of the United States, Britain, and Norway. The Troika criticized the repression, and the envoy from Norway advocated support of the efforts of the African Union to mediate the conflict. Despite the rhetoric of the imperialists about democracy and human rights, the truth is that the imperialist countries are more than willing to sacrifice both in the interests of stability and profits. There is hypocrisy in the "democratic" imperialists talking about peace and democracy, while the European Union funds the RSF militias.

What's next?

Bourgeois figures and their political parties are not reliable allies in the fight against dictatorship. The independent organization of the working class and its allies, and the construction of a revolutionary workers party, is an urgent task. Ultimately, the working class is central to the resolution of the current revolutionary situation.

The opposition should be built around democratically run popular committees that answer to the workers and poor farmers of Sudan. Revolutionaries in Sudan must also understand the limits of nonviolence and take steps to build mass-based committees for self-defense. Negotiations with a regime of murderers is a dead end.

Advancing the revolution also requires targeted propaganda aimed at the ranks of the army, with the goal of bringing as many soldiers as possible over to the side of the revolution.

Revolutions cannot be made halfway or hesitantly. The movement in Sudan has to realize that the only resolution of the current crisis that can achieve justice for the oppressed masses is through revolution and workers' power. ■

By KEITH LESLIE

Hong Kong protesters reject extradition to China

Dramatic protests are ongoing against an effort by the Hong Kong government, backed by the Chinese state, to allow extradition of people in Hong Kong to mainland China, widely seen as a crackdown on democratic rights. Demonstrations began in March and have since grown, with more than a million people going to the streets on June 9 and 12. They have been met with police repression, tear gas, rubber bullets, and pepper spray.

The government suspended the bill on June 15, but has not fully withdrawn it. Protests have continued since, with demands including a full withdrawal, the resignation of HK chief executive Carrie Lam, and an end to police brutality. On

July 1, amid mass marches, a section of the movement stormed the legislative assembly, temporarily occupying it.

The protests have brought together a wide mix of social and class forces. The protests have drawn many workers and students, but also support from many capitalists, who typically are key supporters of the CCP-aligned government.

Work stoppages on June 12 exemplified this, with a strike call supported by some trade unions but with capitalists also participating by closing their businesses. Liberals, right-wing localists, and socialists have all sought to intervene. Widespread opposition to the involvement of organized groups and a fe-

tishization of spontaneity have further muddled the waters.

While the June 9 and 12 protests were initially called by the Civil Human Rights Front, a group comprised of NGOs, trade unions, and liberal political parties, neither the CHRF nor any other group has had control over the movement.

The 2014 Umbrella Movement, in which liberal political parties were very hesitant to participate, soured many activists towards organization generally. The weaknesses of this attitude have been shown in light of debate over the July 1 actions. A movement dedicated to being "spontaneous" is particularly vulnerable to provocateurs, informal

cliques, and splintered control.

Hong Kong's protests have inspired many with their mass character and resolute spirit, bringing out millions and winning at least a temporary reprieve.

To win deeper and long-lasting victories, however, working-class forces in Hong Kong will need to organize and build connections between their struggles and democratic demands as well as with struggles throughout China. They must show that democratic rights are not a bourgeois luxury amidst poverty and inequality in Hong Kong and China but a vital tool for advancing workers' interests. ■



By **HEATHER BRADFORD**

Zillah Eisenstein, *Abolitionist Socialist Feminism: Radicalizing the Next Revolution* (New York, Monthly Review Press), 2019, 160 pp. Heather Bradford is the Socialist Action candidate for vice president of the United States in the 2020 elections.



(Left) Socialist Action's vice presidential candidate Heather Bradford.

An astonishing three to five million people participated in the 2017 Women's March in the United States, and this year, 600,000-700,000 people are believed to have participated. Yet, the Women's March and the feminist movement in general have been critiqued for ignoring racism and how the experiences of women of color differ from those of white women. Although women of color were leaders in organizing the Women's March, the march has been criticized for failing to address racism in signs, leaders, and demands.

Another critique, such as one from Alicia Brown, a co-founder of Black Lives Matter, was that those who attended the march had neither spoken against nor shown up to protest the racist nature of mass incarceration, unemployment, police violence, and homelessness.

The feminist movement today is often criticized as "white feminism" or a movement that fights for middle-class or upper-class white women, only giving lip service to racial issues when it furthers their own goals or image. A similar critique is sometimes launched at socialists, who are at times accused of sidelining race and gender issues in the interest of class struggle.

The substance and meaning of Bernie Sander's version of socialism is debatable, but he has been accused of color blindness and avoiding of racial issues. For those who associate Sanders with socialism, it sends the message that race is not important to socialists.

"Abolitionist Socialist Feminism: Radicalizing the Next Revolution" by Zillah Eisenstein seeks to remedy of the problem of "white feminism" and color-blind socialism by connecting anti-racism, feminism, and socialism.

One important way that the book addresses racism is by centering itself around the voices of people of color. Although author Zillah Eisenstein is white, she highlights the insights of a large number of antiracist thinkers and activists such as Kimberly Crenshaw, Angela Davis, bell hooks, Ta-Nehisi Coates, and Frantz Fanon. Centering the voices and experiences of people of color is important to anti-racist movement building, and Eisenstein models this throughout the text.

The book itself centers upon examining multiple oppressions in ways that are inspired from Kimberly Crenshaw's intersectionality as well as the Black feminist thinking that preceded it, such as the work of the Combahee River Collective. The Combahee River Collective argued that "sexism, racism, heterosexism, and capitalism are interlocking systems of oppression that necessitate revolutionary action" (p. 57).

Thus, as the name suggests, "Abolitionist Socialist Feminism: Radicalizing the Next Revolution" takes a multifaceted approach to feminism and socialism and is a tool for building a movement that fights against racism, while fighting for workers, women, and other oppressed groups. The book begins by posing a series of questions meant to provoke deeper thinking about the interconnectedness of racial, class, and gender oppression. These questions are explored throughout the book, though the big idea is that socialism and feminism must be anti-racist, anti-racism needs socialism and femi-

nism, feminism must be socialist, and socialism must be feminist. While the book offers many insights, there are a few which are particularly important. Again addressing the issue of white feminism, the book vigorously pursues the important point that white women have been complicit in maintaining white supremacy. A largely white female jury determined that George Zimmerman was not guilty of murdering Trayvon Martin. White women historically supported the lynching and castration of Black males. They also obtained social standing by controlling slaves.

Eisenstein also argues that white women helped to get Trump elected, as 53% of white women voted for Trump (with the caveat that half of eligible voters did not vote at all.) She posits that white women voted for racism and sexism when voting for Trump, who represents misogynoir, a term coined by Paula Moya. Misogynoir is a term to add to the vocabulary of multiple oppressions and is used several times in the book to describe the intersection of sexism and racism.

Another important point made in the book is that the working class is not white and male; nor has the global working class ever been predominantly white and male. The struggles of workers of color are spotlighted in the book, such as the example of the 2014 fast food strikes, which were led by women of color and the largest to occur in the history of the industry. Around the world, women engage in paid and unpaid labor and while laboring, have been the victims of rape and murder, such as in Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo, where women have been killed while gathering wood. This connection between labor and vulnerability to sexual assault is an important observation, as women are often victim-blamed when they are assaulted at work, especially if they are sex workers or work at bars, alone, or on night shifts.

Labor and sexual assault warrants more attention in feminist and socialist circles. While there are many differences in women around the world, labor and experiences of violence is a common experiential thread that binds many of the world's women. This leads to another important point, which is that feminism is often predicated upon an imagined "we" of female experience. Eisenstein makes the point that women are both presidents of nations and die in the hundreds of thousands in childbirth. Women are not a heterogeneous group, but do share some similarities, most markedly in their experiences of sexual violence, and for many, their expanded role as part of the proletariat.

A third important point is that Black women are the fastest growing segment of the prison population. The prison system is a continuation of slavery, and the point is made that Sandra Bland had no more rights than she would have had as a slave. Because of the racist nature of the criminal justice system, the answer to crime against women is not punishment but restorative justice.

Despite the many strengths of the book, there are some weaknesses. For one, the book does not say enough about the solution to prisons. While it is established that the United States' criminal justice system violently upholds white supremacy, the question of

prisons is not given full attention.

The word "abolition" in the title may suggest prison abolition, though prison abolition, reform, and restorative justice are giving passing attention. Instead, the title of the book refers to the author's conception of a more revolutionary version of intersectionality. Abolition as described in the book means "the abolition of white supremacist misogyny and its capitalist nexus alongside the racist misogyny of everyday practices" (p. 99).

Abolition is further described as interlocking, revolutionary, radically inclusive, and multilayered. It challenges white dominance by redistributing white wealth through taxes and reparations, ending white privilege, and calling upon white people to no longer act as deputies of the carceral state.

A more revolutionary analysis of interlocking oppressions is a welcome development, especially when Eisenstein states early on that "comrade" is a better term than "ally" or "accomplice," which imply distance from a struggle. However, the book would have been strengthened by offering a bit more on the "what is to be done?" aspect of criminal justice, especially when carceral feminism is the dominant solution to issues of justice for women.

Likewise, the book would be strengthened by answering some important questions about the nature of multiple oppressions. Socialist feminists should have no qualms with the notion that oppressions are interconnected, as Eisenstein posits. She does not believe that these oppressions are bifurcated, or can be examined without examining each. And, there should be no argument with Eisenstein that these oppressions are a part of capitalism. Yet, the nature of oppression is never quite expanded upon.

Yes, oppression is interconnected, but by what mechanisms, by what origin, and to what end? Social Reproduction Theory seeks to connect oppression back to the functioning of capitalism and thus would fortify the arguments of the book.

A full exploration of the topic of Social Reproduction Theory's examination of multiple oppressions is beyond the scope of this book review, but a glimpse of what the theory has to offer is made in an article by David McNally and Susan Ferguson (2015) entitled "Social Reproduction Beyond Intersectionality."

McNally and Ferguson argue that racism, sexism, homophobia, and other "isms" serve capitalist accumulation and dispossession but not evenly, neatly, or with crude economic determinism. They state that the ways in which labor power is produced and reproduced exists in a social world that is bound and differentiated by race, nationality, gender, sexuality, age, and so on. These differences serve as determinants for the conditions of production and reproduction.

For instance, McNally and Ferguson use the example of migrants. In the interest of higher profits, labor power is often sourced from outside of wealthier countries such as the United States, where there are higher wages and often better conditions. Some work is less mobile, such as child care for American families or work within the service industries of the U.S. Migrants are a cheap labor source to fill this need, but are also vulnerable because they are not afforded the same legal or labor rights.

The oppression of migrant workers can be connected to their precarious position within capitalism and the differentiated status that keeps them vulnerable. Thus, the oppression of immigrants intersects race, gender, and class, and this oppression can be understood through the mechanism of extracting labor power, their role in social reproduction, and their place in a social world that renders them vulnerable. Capitalism contains contradictions, unevenness, struggle, and agency but it fundamentally divides workers from the means of their sustenance (social reproduction), and in doing so, is the totality in which oppressions exist.

A more significant shortcoming is the book's contradictory message regarding elections. For example, the book begins with some biographical information about Eisenstein, who has been engaged in anti-racist activism since her childhood in a communist family. Her family's principled stance against racism invited hardship in their lives. For instance, she could not buy a prom dress because of a boycott of the segregated department stores in Atlanta and she missed out on visiting a pool because it was unwelcoming to Blacks.

Unfortunately, these immutable principles did not prevent her from voting for Hillary Clinton, which was a disappointing conclusion to an otherwise compelling introductory chapter. Eisenstein correctly describes Hillary Clinton as a neoliberal feminist, beholden to corporate interests, and implicated in her husband's racist, carceral state. Even more could have been said about her role in the State Department.

While this critique correctly recognizes Clinton as an accomplice to capitalism and white supremacy, she is

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Garner case finally heard — in a cops' court

By MARTY GOODMAN

NEW YORK—The 2014 chokehold murder of Eric Garner, an unarmed 43-year-old African American man, by a city cop, Daniel Pantaleo, finally got its first public hearing in June—but not in a court of law but at an NYPD hearing!

The charges against Pantaleo were brought by the semi-independent Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB). The NYPD Deputy Commissioner of Trials, Rosemarie Maldonado, has 90 days to decide whether to fire Pantaleo, fine him or dismiss the charges. She cannot jail Pantaleo since it is a non-criminal case. Maldonado's decision—which does not have to be released to the public!—will be read by Mayor de Blasio's top cop, James P. O'Neill, who will ultimately rule on Pantaleo.

A possible Justice Department decision on civil rights violations must be rendered before the fifth anniversary of Garner's death on July 17. It has been reported that the agency has reached a decision, to be announced sometime in July.

Not one of the half-dozen cops present at Garner's murder in 2014 have served a single day in jail, despite hearing Garner cry out "I can't breathe" 11 times! The lethal chokehold used by Pantaleo was banned by the NYPD in 1993, but was used with deadly effect on Anthony Baez in 1994 and on other victims of police brutality like Eric Garner. Leaked documents show that citizen complaints against Pantaleo were among the NYPD's worst (see ThinkProgress.org, March 21, 2017).

Pantaleo and his partner, Justin Damico, were told by commanding officer, Lt. Christopher Bannon, to arrest Garner for selling "loosies," or single cigarettes, a misdemeanor, at a storefront on Staten Island. But, witnesses say, Garner had just broken up a fight when the cops arrived. Upon learning of the death of Garner, Lt. Bannon texted with racist indifference to arresting cops, "Not a big deal."

Pantaleo's lawyer, Stuart London, claimed his client was using an approved "seat-belt hold." However, Inspector Richard Dee, head of training at the New York City Police Academy, testified that Pantaleo's action was "the definition of a choke hold." Outrageously, London implied that Garner caused his own death by not moving when ordered by police! An additional video showed that all of the cops and an EMS crew left Garner lying on the ground for several minutes without attempting resuscitation or using available oxygen.

Anti-racist activists packed the courthouse and maintained a noisy picket line outside the hearings in lower Manhattan where well-attended press conferences were held. Speaking after the concluding session on June 6, Gwen Carr, mother of Eric Garner, said that the hearing sends "a clear message that Black lives do not matter."

Pantaleo is now on desk duty, with 35% more in earnings (N.Y. Daily News). He was present in the courtroom but refused to testify and thereby submit to cross-examination by CCRB attorney Suzanne O'Hare. His lawyer, Stuart London, said Pantaleo would be "reckless" to take the stand because the Justice Department is still investigating.



(Above) Gwen Carr, Eric Garner's mother.

After almost five years, President Barack Obama, New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, and Donald Trump allowed Pantaleo to keep his job after the entire world saw him choke Garner on a cell-phone video!

In 2015, New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer issued a \$5.9 million check to the Garner family, saying that the payout was "in the best interests of all parties." The police union denounced the settlement. The payment was made by the city without conceding liability, which insulated New York's power structure from a drawn-out court suit that would further expose the racist NYPD and "progressive" Mayor de Blasio's cynical inaction on police violence.

Phony "socialist" De Blasio campaigned for mayor on reforming racist police practices, yet refused to fire Pantaleo, merely calling Garner's death a "terrible tragedy" for all concerned—despite compelling video evidence!

Ramsey Orta, the quick-thinking activist who videoed Pantaleo choking Garner, was arrested three weeks later on weapons charges. He was released on bail in April 2015 and rearrested in 2016 on drug and weapons charges and sentenced to four years. Orta says that what happened to him is retaliation for the video. Orta says he's endured harassment and beatings.

Orta has been in solitary confinement at least four times. Orta's fiancé, Deja Richardson, told *Socialist Action* that he is currently in solitary on a 90-day sentence. Orta was thrown back into solitary following his testimony against Daniel Pantaleo via video from Groveland Correctional facility in upstate New York. His release date is December 2019. It remains an out-

rage that Ramsey Orta—a hero—is the only person to be jailed in the Eric Garner case!

(Letters of support for Ramsey Orta should be addressed to: Ramsey Orta, Ramsey Orta 16A4200, Collins Correctional Facility, Middle Road P.O. Box 340 Collins N.Y. 14034. Your return address and Orta's number are critical since his prison changes. Send no cash. Prison authorities will read all letters. Email: officialramseyorta@gmail.com or deja.richardson.dr@gmail.com.)

In December 2014, a closed-door grand jury on the Garner case was held in the conservative stronghold of Staten Island and led by Republican District Attorney, Dan Donovan. The grand jury decided on Dec. 3 not to proceed to a trial, provoking large, militant protests in New York City and across the U.S.

Grand jury hearings are almost always prosecuted by white attorneys who decide on the evidence and witnesses and are not subject to cross examination. Politicians like Donovan depend on cops as witnesses in other cases. If prosecutors are seen by racist police unions as anti-cop, it could mean trouble prosecuting cases. The Garner grand jury, its testimony sealed, was denounced as a sham, especially given the video evidence.

James Cohen, a law professor at Fordham University, said, "There is no question that a grand jury will do precisely what the prosecutor wants, virtually 100% of the time." Whatever the outcome, we must remain alert and ready to mobilize. Fire and jail Pantaleo! Jail 'em all! Justice for Eric Garner!

MOVE 9 members released from prison

By STEVE XAVIER

PHILADELPHIA — Political prisoner Eddie Goodman Africa, a member of the MOVE 9, was released from prison on the morning of June 2, after 41 years of unjust incarceration. Janet Holloway Africa and Janine Phillips Africa were also released recently (on May 25), becoming the third and fourth MOVE members to be freed after spending four decades in prison. MOVE member Mike Africa Sr. was paroled in October 2018, and Debbie Sims Africa was set free in June 2018.

Two MOVE 9 prisoners, Phil and Merle Africa, died in prison. Two members of the MOVE 9, Chuck and Delbert Africa, remain incarcerated. The fight to gain freedom for the remaining incarcerated MOVE members, and all other prisoners, must be redoubled.

In a press release, Attorney Brad Thomson said, "Eddie's release is a victory for him, his family, and the movement that

has been fighting for his freedom. This is the newest chapter in the decades-long struggle to free all the MOVE 9, which is a struggle that continues with the fight to free Delbert and Chuck Africa, who are both up for parole this year."

Speaking at a press conference in Philadelphia on June 27, Eddie Africa spoke about his struggles in prison, the loss of Phil and Merle, and the need to reach youth before they get sent to prison. Eddie talked about coming home, saying, "It's good to be with family. I'm telling you now, as I told them then, I am innocent. I did not—we did not—kill Ramp. They know we didn't do it. I've had parole agents tell me they know we didn't kill the cop, but somebody's got to pay. So, they chose us."

Following Eddie's comments, Janine Africa took the mike. She said, "It's really emotional because Delbert should be here too. And it's hard to leave your family behind. They [Eddie and Delbert] have

been through a lot together. They were beaten together. They spent time down at Holmesburg, where they were attacked defending us [referring to the MOVE 9 women prisoners] because we were attacked. They've been through a lot and there's no reason that Delbert's not here except that he's a MOVE member."

1978 Powelton Village confrontation

Founded by John Africa in 1972, the MOVE organization was persecuted by Philadelphia cops from the beginning. Philly cops were, and still are, notorious for targeting Black activists. Frank Rizzo, a cop turned police chief and later mayor, was a hardcore racist and reactionary who encouraged his cops to treat Black people with disrespect and brutality.

Beginning in 1977, police blockaded MOVE's house in the Powelton Village section of Philadelphia. The attempt to force MOVE out included a 50-day siege in which no one was allowed in or out of

the house and water was shut off.

On Aug. 8, 1978, at 4 a.m., 600 police surrounded the house on N. 33rd St. "The police made the first move. O'Neill ordered a bulldozer, which had a Lexan plastic shield to protect the operator from gunfire, to mow down the barricade. A long-armed ram tore the windows out of the upper floors. With the windows gone, fire hoses threw streams of water into the house" ("Frank Rizzo, The Last Big Man In Big City America" by S.A. Paolantonio).

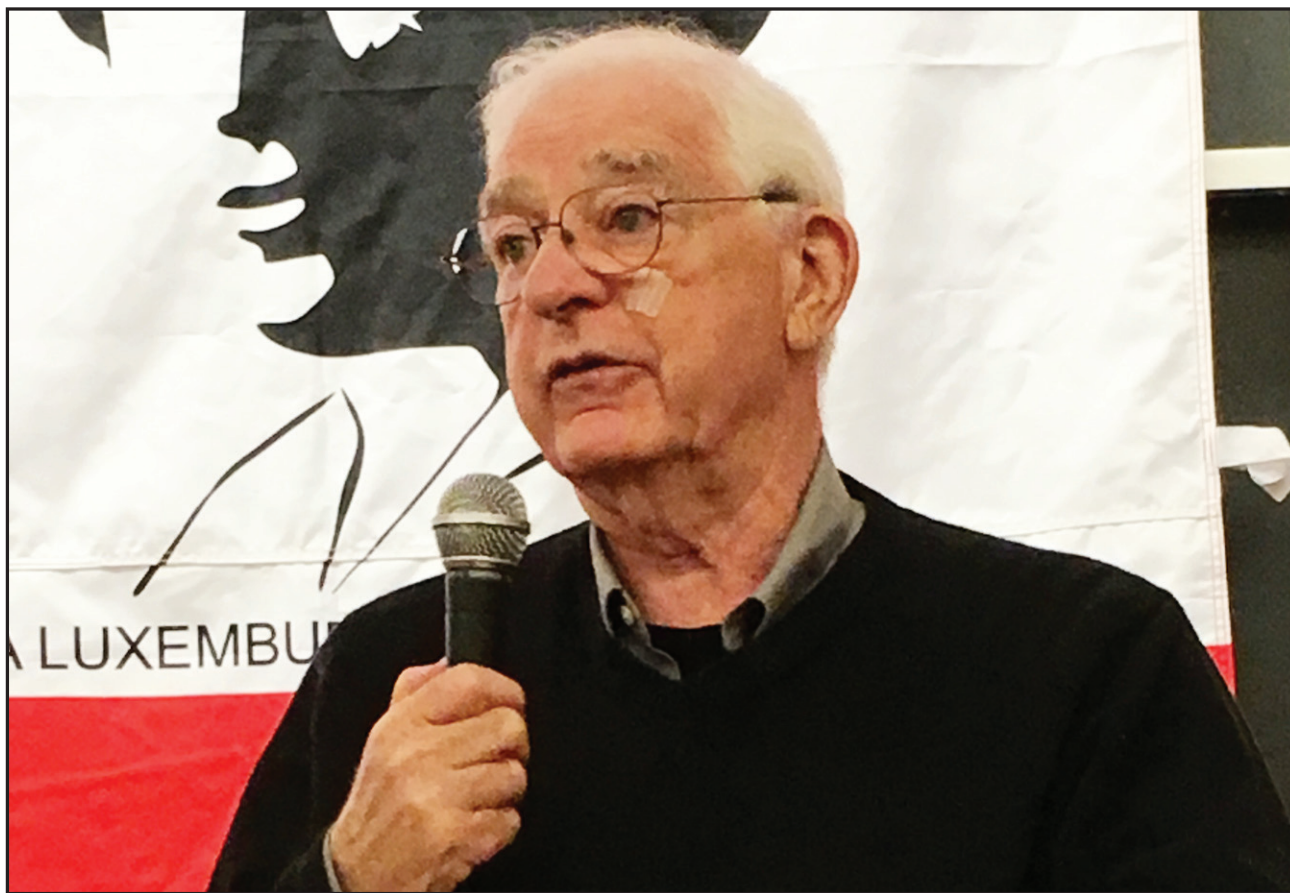
Shortly after 8 a.m., shooting started and Officer James Ramp was struck and killed, likely by police fire. Police rained bullets into the house, as well as tear gas—and more water blasted from fire trucks. MOVE members surrendered and cops savagely beat Delbert Africa in full view of news cameras.

Police commanders ordered the house destroyed with heavy equipment later the same day, destroying any remaining forensic evidence. Police claimed that they found 11 or 12 weapons in the house.

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Jeff Mackler for U.S. president

Socialist Action campaigns for socialism



By NICK BAKER

Twenty Democrats faced off during two nationally televised “debates” last month, each armed with a few stock phrases they hoped would instantly boost their poll ratings and associated capacity to win additional hundreds of millions of dollars sufficient to defeat Donald Trump for the presidency. The combined 2020 presidential election expenditures are expected to exceed the record \$6.7 billion spent in 2016.

The competing Democrats all began their campaigns with the unstated premise that the racist, sexist, homophobic, anti-working-class, crisis-ridden, environment-destroying, imperialist, capitalist system can be tweaked a bit to improve the lives of millions by replacing the crudely reactionary Donald Trump with one of their own.

Bernie Sanders set the tone and parameters of the contest months earlier with his pledge to support whichever of the contestants emerged victorious at the end of the primary season—that is, anyone but Trump. Sanders, robbed of a victory in 2016 when Hillary Clinton’s team, which then controlled the Democratic Party apparatus and finances, stacked the deck against him, nevertheless dutifully followed the rules and went to the Democratic Party Convention podium to endorse her campaign.

Capitalism cannot be reformed

In sharp contrast, Socialist Action’s 2020 presidential election campaign is based on the stated premise that rapacious capitalism cannot be reformed, that its history of endless wars, environmental devastation, economic crises and human degradation is inherent in the functioning of the system itself. “That system,” said Jeff Mackler, Socialist Action’s 2020 presidential candidate, “cannot be reformed. It must be fundamentally replaced by the collective action of the majority of the nation’s working masses in the course of a socialist revolution. Our priority is building every social struggle that challenges capitalism’s innate drive to profit regardless of the cost in human lives and social wellbeing.

“We will win in this consciously orchestrated period of pseudo-democracy, in which billionaires compete against each other, not at the rigged ballot boxes and debates controlled by the parties of the one percent and their liberal cheerleaders today rushing to mobilize their constituencies to “Defeat Trump” in 2020, but rather by winning the hearts, minds, and direct participation of working people in the vital struggles that affect them directly.”

Socialist Action at the Left Forum

Mackler’s assertions above were sharply disputed during the course of a June 30 Socialist Action-spon-

‘Our priority is building every struggle that challenges the innate drive of capitalism to profit regardless of the cost in human lives.’

— Jeff Mackler

sored Left Forum panel debate at Long Island University’s campus in Brooklyn, N.Y., entitled “How Will the Left Vote in the Presidential Election?” Socialist Action supporters distributed thousands of campaign flyers during the course of the weekend conference. Mackler’s panel opponents were Manhattan Green Party Chair and WBAI co-host of “La Voz Latina” Daniel Vila, and South Florida Bernie Sanders organizer and co-chair of 350 South Florida Jack Lieberman. Vila argued that Green Party election campaigns could pressure the Democrats to make important reforms.

Lieberman said that a Sanders victory, if not a victory for any Democrat, was critical to stopping the “fascist-minded Trump” and his mass following of “right-wing nationalists and racist bigots.” Sanders’ election, he implied, would represent a bulwark of continued [capitalist] stability as opposed to the fascist barbarism promoted by Trump!

With regard to literally every presidential election contest over the past 70 years and longer, liberal capitalist apologists have argued that only a Democratic Party victory could prevent the rise to power of the “fascist Republicans.” In classical “lesser evil” style, Daniel Vila defended a widely circulated Green Party position paper at the Left Forum entitled “Cut the War Budget for a Green New Deal,” which stated, “The U.S. military budget is 3 times that of Russia and China’s combined and therefore can be *cut in half* without sacrificing national security” (emphasis in original).

Mackler countered by calling for a 100 percent cut in the trillion-dollar annual U.S. military budget. He added, “There are no U.S. ‘national security interests’ that Socialist Action defends. These are nothing less than U.S. capitalism’s justification for endless wars for oil and other resources, witch-hunting assaults on its most effective critics, and ongoing persecution of immigrants who are forced to flee their own countries that have been systematically exploited and decimated by the U.S. imperial policies of the corporate elite.”

Mackler was also a panelist or active participant in the discussions at Left Forum panels on the Ukraine and on Venezuela, both sponsored by the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC). The Ukraine panel featured several speakers who had recently visited

Ukraine and who were engaged in various efforts to defend Odessa Ukrainians and others who have been subjected to the violence, murder, and persecution emanating from the U.S.-backed 2014 fascist-led coup government.

In addition to Mackler, panelists included UNAC National Co-coordinator Joe Lombardo and Pippa Bartolotti, both having recently visited Odessa as part of an international solidarity delegation, Ukrainian activist Maria Zakharova and Phil Wilyato, who has headed the annual U.S. solidarity efforts to commemorate the fascist attacks and murder of 43 Ukrainian dissidents who opposed the fascist-led coup. The panel gave a view of the terror unleashed by government-promoted armed fascist forces. “In Ukraine today,” Zakharova reported, oppositionists have every reason to fear for their lives. In the face of armed fascist gangs they have no alternative than to operate underground.”

UNAC’s Venezuela panel, among the largest at the Left Forum, attracted over 60 antiwar activists and featured participants in a recent U.S. fact-finding delegation to Venezuela, as well as Kevin Zeese, a central leader of the Embassy Protection Coalition that for 34 days and at the request of the Venezuelan government of Nicolas Maduro defended the Washington, D.C. embassy against the U.S. government and right-wing Venezuelans who insisted that the U.S.-anointed Juan Guaido was the “legitimate” president of Venezuela. Zeese and three other embassy protectors were subsequently arrested and face felony charges of “interfering with government functioning” that carry heavy fines and potential imprisonment.

Bahman Azad, a leader of the recent U.S. delegation to Venezuela and the U.S. Peace Council, announced the formation of a Committee to Defend the Venezuelan Embassy Protectors. Jeff Mackler is among the 21 defense committee initiators. A surprise participant at this panel was Venezuela’s representative to the UN mission in New York, Daniela Rodriguez, who reviewed the plight of the Venezuelan people as they courageously face the U.S. embargo, sanctions, and U.S.-orchestrated coup attempts.

Mackler, a member of UNAC’s national administrative committee, and based in the San Francisco Bay Area, proposed a West Coast fall fundraising tour of Zeese and other embassy protectors. Zeese heartily agreed, as did Rodriguez, who explained that her participation had to be via SKYPE because U.S. restrictions, as with those imposed on Cuba’s UN diplomats, bar Venezuelan officials from travel outside a 25-mile radius from New York City.

Socialists banned from election debates

While today’s polls, conducted by organizations ranging from the Pew Organization to Gallop and the *New York Times*, indicate increasing popular support to socialist ideas—a majority in regard to youth under 30 years old—socialists are routinely banned from nationally-televised debates as the corporate pollsters list only candidates of their own parties as choices offered to those being polled.

The “equal time” laws of the 1970s—wrested from the government by the massive civil rights, anti-Vietnam War, and free speech movements—have long ago been obliterated, along with the fiction that the major media were unbiased and open to multiple viewpoints. Today’s media, ever fearful of mass movements that expose government lies, with few exceptions publish only “news,” often filtered through government channels, including the FBI and CIA, that they deem “fit to print.” The same holds for the myriad of NGO-backed or Democratic Party-funded social and political organizations.

Last month, for example, the Poor People’s Campaign, headed by the Rev. William Barber, sponsored a Washington, D.C., “non-partisan” presidential debate where a dozen competing Democrats were invited. Socialist Action’s Jeff Mackler applied for inclusion in this event, and especially so since it was billed to press forward the Poor Peoples’ Campaign priorities for social justice and against ever-increasing military ex-

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(continued from page 6)

penditures. But Mackler was excluded, as he was from Amy Goodman's Democracy Now! radio program, which periodically features Democratic Party advocates and supporters.

Mackler appears on Election 2020

A rare exception to the exclusion of socialists from public debates was Mackler's July 26 one-hour podcast presentation on "Election 2020: Meet the Candidates," billed by its libertarian host Paul Duddridge as the "fastest growing 2020 candidates podcast in the U.S." (<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/2020-election-meet-the-candidates/id1456951992>).

Duddridge, a pro-capitalist, free-trade, "economic nationalist," advocate of no government interference in any aspect of human endeavor, and a Trump supporter who believes that the president exemplifies these qualities, features on his podcasts dissident Democrats, Republicans, and Libertarian Party members, with whom he jousts to present his ideas in defense of "free market" capitalism as opposed to the "socialism" that he sees encroaching on "freedom" in present day America. Mackler's debate with Duddridge, edited by Duddridge to highlight his own views and undercut Mackler's, is noteworthy not because it is likely to reach a broad audience but rather because it provided a limited opportunity for a socialist to express some fundamental revolutionary propositions.

At the conclusion of the debate, Duddridge asked rhetorically, "What would you do on your first day in office as president of the U.S.?" Mackler responded: "I would empty the prisons where the U.S. incarcerates the largest number and percentage of its population of any nation. Ninety percent of those imprisoned are there for non-violent crimes driven by a capitalist system that deprives the poor and oppressed of any opportunity to live decent lives. I would provide quality health care for those in need of it—Rehabilitation not Mass Incarceration! I would close all 1100 U.S. military bases around the world and spend the trillion-dollar annual war budget to rebuild our schools and public education.

"I would immediately institute free socialized medicine for everyone. I would fundamentally change the present transportation system, quickly ban fossil fuel production by nationalizing the energy industry and placing it under workers' control to organize a just transition to a sustainable fossil free society, reforest the earth, ban all restrictive racist voting laws, end all discrimination against LGBTQI people, end all discrimination against transgender people, end all discrimination based on sex and gender preferences, institute a woman's right to free abortion on demand, support the right to self-determination of all oppressed people to be free from



Heather Bradford
Socialist Action VP
candidate via SKYPE



Nora Barrows Friedman
Associate Editor,
Electronic Intifada (via message)



Cindy Sheehan
Organizer/Coordinator,
Women's March on the Pentagon



Robbie Meeropol
son of Julius and
Ethel Rosenberg
(via message)



Pam Africa
Chair, International
Concerned Family &
Friends of Mumia
Abu-Jamal



Joe Lombardo
Co-National Coordinator,
United National Antiwar
Coalition*
(via Skype message)



Mumia Abu-Jamal
The nation's
foremost innocent
political prisoner
(via phone connection)

Jeff Mackler for President additional endorsers

Frances Golden, literary agent, Mumia Abu-Jamal, via greetings

Barbara Lubin, Exec. Dir., Middle East Children's Alliance

Michael Parenti, author, lifetime social activist via message

Karen Wald, Coordinator, Cuba Inside-Out News Analysis; author, Children of Che: Childcare and Education in Cuba (Ramparts);

Cliff Conner, historian of science and longtime socialist activist; author, A People's History of Science (message)

Michael Steven Smith, Co-producer/host, Law and Disorder, WBAI/Pacifica Radio, NYC; Board member, Center for Constitutional Rights (message)

Deborah Smith, Co-editor, Imagine Living in a Socialist USA (Harpers) (message)

Suzanne Baker, longtime Nicaragua solidarity activist

Anthony Fest, producer, KPFA Pacifica Radio, Berkeley

Marilyn Levin, Planning Committee, Boston United for Justice with Peace; Co-National Coordinator, United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC)

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Jeff Mackler for President

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Pulitzer Prize Novelist,
Poet, Life Long
Social Activist



Sabrina Jacobs
Producer/host, KPFA Pacifica
Radio's Rude Awakening*



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imperialist wars and intervention, eliminate heinous mortgages imposed on working people, cancel all student debt, nationalize all banks and major corporation under workers' control, provide free quality food for all in needs and thus begin the revolution-

ary transformation of capitalism to a socialist society where the full satisfaction human needs, not capitalist profits are first and foremost among our priorities."

A surprised Duddridge replied, "And what will you do on Day Two?"

... Feminism

(continued from page 4)

still framed as the lesser evil and it is puzzled over why white women voted for Trump over Clinton. The two-party system, like so many things in the lives of women, is a choiceless choice. Trump is overtly sexist and racist, while Clinton is perhaps less overtly either, but still an agent of U.S. imperialism, which relies on racism and sexism to function.

Eisenstein describes how lynching became the electric chair and how the electoral college privileged slave states. She describes how Barack Obama sided with the rule of law in Ferguson after the death of Michael Brown. She even calls for the formation of a third party and working towards revolution, but she is unfortunately unable to break from the Democrats entirely.

Part of Eisenstein's unwillingness to break with the Democratic Party is perhaps due to Trump "exceptionalism." This is the narrative that Donald Trump is uniquely horrible, and therefore, voting for the most abhorrent Democrat is preferable to Trump's unique brand of racist misogyny. Every Republican is framed as the next worst thing, though it seems like just yesterday when George Bush Jr. was the "worst president" for being a warmongering, civil liberties defying dolt. Now, he is looked upon favorably by some who critiqued him before.

Understandably, the 2016 election is a central focus

of the text. This is an important focus as many of the readers may have been recently radicalized by the election of Trump. The book reasonably tries to make sense of this election. While Trump is no doubt racist and sexist and unique in his crude comments and unabashed narcissism, it seems a bit far to say that Trump is America's "first white supremacist misogynistic president" (p.91).

It is hard to imagine that Trump's policies are worse than Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal Act and the fact that at least 12 presidents owned slaves. All presidents have been racist to varying degrees, from Franklin Delano Roosevelt's internment of Japanese Americans to Bill Clinton's crime bill.

While Trump certainly seems exceptional in his sexist language and behaviors, Nixon was accused of domestic violence, Bill Clinton has been accused of multiple sexual assaults, Grover Cleveland sexually assaulted a woman who later had his child and had her committed to an asylum, and Thomas Jefferson had a family with his slave, Sally Hemings.

Trump is terrible and must absolutely be challenged for his racist misogyny, but in the long view of American history, Trump fits right in among the slave holders, war makers, overseers of genocide who have been U.S. presidents. To consider him exceptional gives too much credit to the presidents who came before. All U.S. presidents serve U.S. power and capital.

The two-party system is a two-headed monster. One head is not better than the other, as both are attached to the body of capitalism and imperialism. Revolution is possible only with the decapitation of both.

The electoral shortcomings aside, the book is powerfully written and a short, accessible, and important text for socialist, feminist, and anti-racist activists. Eisenstein makes a vibrant and energizing call for building a revolutionary movement that takes on racism, sexism, and capitalism, and also tackles climate change, environmental racism, LGBTQ rights, Islamophobia, and war.

She boldly states that "resistance is not enough. Reform is not enough. Civil rights are not enough. Women's rights are not enough. In other words: liberalism and liberal feminism do not work for this moment and never did" (p. 127). Despite the mixed messages about Democrats, she even states that voting is not enough. She calls upon activists to move beyond moderation and employ a variety of tactics such as building connections between movements, workplace actions, internationalizing movements, mass actions, and visible civil disobedience.

Building connections between movements or creating a movement of movements is central to her prescription for social change. One of her more profound connections is towards the end of the book when she quotes Frantz Fanon, who said: "We revolt simply because, for many reasons, we can no longer breathe" (p.129). She connects this to Eric Garner, who said "I can't breathe" 11 times before he died.

The point is well taken. Activists are called upon to fight relentlessly and courageously, with real solidarity, for a world wherein everyone can catch their breath, be it from police violence, polluted air, or the other suffocating miseries of capitalism.

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

NDP convention: Singh drifts left, Horwath treads water

By BARRY WEISLEDER

The convention was on Andrea Horwath's home turf, but Jagmeet Singh stole the show. The federal New Democratic Party leader grabbed national headlines when he spoke to Ontario NDP delegates about his New Deal for People. It seeks to expand public health care to include universal pharmaceutical care by 2020, followed by free dental, vision, hearing, mental health services, long-term home care, and addictions treatment. He proposes to pay for it by upping the federal corporate income tax from 15 to 18 per cent, and by creating a new, 1 per cent tax on people whose net worth is more than \$20 million.

In a break from Tom Mulcair's no-deficit, soft-austerity 2015 campaign, Singh vowed to fund green programs and infrastructure through a new \$3 billion "climate bank," to push to retrofit all buildings by 2050 (in the process creating 300,000 new jobs), and to build 500,000 new affordable housing units within a decade.

Ontario leader Horwath, on the other hand, demonstrated why her party is stagnant. She repeatedly showcased her caucus of MPPs and paraded a bunch of talking heads. They offered anti-Doug Ford rhetoric, decried wildfires and floodwaters, said "me-too" for pharma care, and issued platitudes for a more just society. Even her "Green New Democratic Deal" is mainly a 28-page discussion paper rather than a policy. It fails (as does Singh) to challenge monopoly control of the carbon-fueled economy.

The ONDP and labour bureaucracy tightly controlled the June 14-16 convention in Hamilton. They stifled criticism. You wouldn't know that thousands of auto workers' jobs are being buried. The top brass put innovative, radical resolutions at the bottom of every topic list. The leadership exhibited little sense of urgency about removing the Ford Conservative regime despite its onslaught against workers and the environment. A blinkered obsession with preparations for the 2022 Ontario election, three years down the road, ruled the roost.

Party chief of staff Michael Balagas provided a laughably Pollyana interpretation of the latest public opinion polls (showing the Tories, NDP and Liberals close together, and Greens rising fast).

Identity politics and milquetoast motions dominated the proceedings. The agenda imposed by the top brass devoted less than 39 per cent of the convention time to policy discussion. The rest of the time filled up with "showcases," guest speakers (including Dan Riffe from Wall Street's, war-mongering Democratic Party USA), "breakout" sessions for chatter but not for voting on policy, the numerous elections, and plenty of procedural wrangling.

Cutting, shrinking or reassigning such agenda items to the margins could have restored hours of rank-



NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh.

and-file democracy to the gathering. Late starts (delegates were locked out of the main hall after Saturday lunch, and again on Sunday morning), squandered a further 40 minutes of precious policy time. When, in the opening minutes, Socialist Caucus member Elizabeth Byce asked the convention chair why so little time was scheduled for policy matters, the chair rudely interrupted her with an abrupt "We will cover as much policy as possible." But that was a dead letter from the word go.

This is not to say that many of the adopted resolutions are not wor-

thy—just that several were adopted nearly unanimously. They consumed scarce time that could have been spent addressing controversial issues submitted by dozens of local NDP district associations.

Adopted resolutions included: "Policy Sunset and Reaffirmation Resolution," "Stop the Legalized Theft of Workers' Pensions," "Replacing the Term Aboriginal with Indigenous," "Equity-Seeking 'Victory Funds'" (to raise money for campaigns that feature visible minority and female NDP candidates), "Cannabis Growers Workers," "Expand the Powers of the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario," "End Hallway Medicine," "Opioid Crisis," "Full Day Kindergarten," "Health and Phys Ed," "Black Canadian Curriculum," "First Nations Job Creation," and "Development without Displacement."

Again, these motions could have been approved, omnibus-style, with one vote. Their positioning effectively scuppered other issues.

Multiply-endorsed resolutions that officials prevented from reaching the convention floor included: "Nationalize GM," "Share the Work, Shorten the Work Week," "Dump Doug Ford with Mass Extra-parliamentary Action," "Social Ownership and Economic Democracy," "For Public Ownership of Telecom," "Boycott apartheid Israel, End the Siege of Gaza, uphold Palestinian Rights," "NDP should be clear: Hands Off Venezuela," "Eliminate Tuition, Ancillary Fees and Student Debt," "Public and Democratic Hydro," and "Build Social Housing as an Emergency Priority in Ontario" (12 different affiliates submitted that one!).

A Left break-through

A weak resolution titled "GM Jobs," was referred back to the appeals committee with instructions on Saturday. In the last minutes of the convention on Sunday, after obtaining unanimous consent, it returned to the floor. Added were the words: "including a new vision of a publicly owned facility that could produce green vehicles and/or any other product that meets public need in order to face the climate crisis and transition to a green new economy."

Oshawa delegate Rebecca Keetch spoke forcefully to the imminent loss of 5000 jobs, including her own. Convention finally adopted the motion, in part due to

the SC resolution calling for Nationalization of GM, and thanks to our collaboration with CUPE-Ontario President Fred Hahn, whose dogged efforts paved the way for this small victory.

As seen at the federal NDP convention in Ottawa, February 2018, Palestine shook things up. But a motion to appeal its low rank on the list of resolutions simply ran out of time for consideration. Only 10 minutes are allowed for appeals from the floor in each policy segment. The right wing stacked the mics to ensure that left wing appeals would not be heard.

The Resolutions Appeals Committee, chaired by former federal leader candidate Brian Topp, became a lightning rod for discontent. Several times it suffered defeat on the convention floor, as delegates fought its status quo priorities. In defiance, a policy to reduce the voting age in Ontario to 14 years carried. Likewise, delegates defeated "Support for Mobile Crisis Response" that relied heavily on police involvement, a motion backed by the party establishment.

Socialists steadfast

An appetite for radical left media was evident. Delegates snapped up over 500 copies of *Turn Left*, the Socialist Caucus magazine (www.ndpsocialists.ca). Donations on site added to the \$3300 raised to fund the publication prior to the convention. Scores of delegates bought copies of *Socialist Action* newspaper.

NDP staff had said, "No literature display tables will be allowed," although the Ontario Federation of Labour and the Broadbent Institute each got one. Nonetheless, the Socialist Caucus found a way to display its materials, as did former OFL president Sid Ryan, who sold copies of his popular auto-biography "A Grand Vision."

The convention was poorly attended. Party officials had predicted 1500 delegates. The last Credentials Report, claiming that 1045 attended, tried to bandage this sore point. The fact is that only 720 delegates voted for president and treasurer. Only 730 voted for V.P. candidates. Fewer than 530 voted for Members At Large. Most of the time, empty chairs outnumbered occupied seats.

Support for Andrea Horwath (expressed in a leadership review vote) was underwhelming. The norm is 95%+ for a Leader (especially one who made major gains at the previous provincial election). As *Toronto Star* columnist Rick Salutin wrote on June 21, "She got 84 per cent support at last week's NDP convention, not a healthy sign. If her party were serious about power, there'd have been more dissension."

Socialist Caucus candidates garnered 12.2 to 27 per cent of the votes for the 15 top executive positions the SC contested. Over 200 delegates marked ballots for Julius Arcscott for V.P., who told the convention, "The NDP must call for mass action, including general strike action, to defeat the Doug Ford/Bay Street agenda. Some may say that is labour's jurisdiction. But the NDP is directly tied to the struggles of the working class. We have a huge stake in this fight!"

The establishment slate swept, as expected. Sadly, independent socialist candidates (like Jessa McLean and Tim Ellis) failed to break through. A united front socialist slate would surely help in the future. Once again, the Socialist Caucus provided the most visible, principled, all-round left opposition—and it demonstrated growing support. A "Meet the Socialist Candidates" pub night attracted a big crowd on Saturday.

Dozens of new contacts, new volunteers for the SC steering committee, new subscribers to the left press, added to the positive political harvest for class struggle activists. While it is clear that NDP officials will not lead the fight in the streets against the arch-austerity corporate agenda, they may be compelled to join an upsurge, as teachers and other public and private-sector workers suffering job loss and frozen wages gird for a hot autumn. ■

NUPGE: Costly & Ineffective

By JULIUS ARSCOTT

The triennial National Union of Public and General Employees' Union (NUPGE) convention, held June 20-23, drew 350 delegates to Winnipeg, Manitoba. Many of them witnessed the unveiling of the Winnipeg General Strike memorial, situated across from City Hall, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the historic strike when workers took control of their city, and laid the basis for the expansion of the labour movement—which today is threatened by aggressive employer and state actions.

NUPGE is a federal umbrella of provincial unions. To affiliate to the Canadian Labour Congress and its over three million members, unions like OPSEU across the country (except for Quebec and the Territories) must join NUPGE.

As a delegate and member of Socialist Action, this writer spoke about the need to defy back-to-work legislation by any means necessary, stressed the urgent need for massive construction of affordable housing, the fight for eco-socialism, and called on affiliates to urge their members to vote for the labour-based NDP in the Oct. 21 federal election.

These interventions were well received.

However, there was a much higher percentage of labour bureaucrats than rank-and-file members at this convention, so the only attempt to amend a resolution occurred on the issue of the upcoming federal election, and it was defeated.

NUPGE claims to be a campaigning union. Millions of dollars of affiliate dues go to it annually, but with very little positive effect. Because those who set up the body did so mainly to join the CLC, NUPGE was designed to be a glorified post office box. The flat tone of the

convention, and the lack of action coming from it, shows that little has changed in this regard.

Delegates visited the Manitoba Museum and gathered around the rocked streetcar sculpture, perhaps the most significant tribute to militant working class struggle in Canada. At the reception, participants eagerly took copies of the NDP Socialist Caucus magazine, *Turn Left*, and bought *Socialist Action* newspapers.

Other highlights included a free tour of the Human Rights Museum, which includes an exhibit on Nelson Mandela and the fight against South Africa apartheid, as well as a free concert featuring Buffy St Marie and Randy Bachman in celebration of National Indigenous Peoples Day. ■

U.S./NATO false flag in Syria exposed

Skepticism is essential when assessing official propaganda

By BRUCE LESNICK

On April 7, 2018, the U.S and its NATO allies accused the Syrian government of carrying out a chemical weapons attack in the town of Douma, outside Damascus. A week later, President Donald Trump, with the support of French and British allies, ordered the launch of 103 missiles. ABC News quoted Defense Secretary James Mattis as saying that the strike was necessary to demonstrate international resolve to prevent the use of chemical weapons, and that he was “confident the Syrian regime conducted a chemical attack on innocent people in the last week.” According to ABC News, President Donald Trump asserted, “The evil and the despicable attack left mothers and fathers, infants and children thrashing in pain and gasping for air. These are not the actions of a man. They are crimes of a monster instead,” referring to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Reporting from Douma for The Independent on April 17, 2018, journalist Robert Fisk cast doubt on the official story. “There are the many people I talked to amid the ruins of the town who said they had ‘never believed in’ gas stories – which were usually put about, they claimed, by the armed Islamist groups.” But the U.S. and its allies stood by their story. “France, meanwhile, has said it has ‘proof’ chemical weapons were used, and US media have quoted sources saying urine and blood tests showed this too. The WHO [World Health Organization] has said its partners on the ground treated 500 patients ‘exhibiting signs and symptoms consistent with exposure to toxic chemicals.’”

The Organization for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) was dispatched to the scene to investigate but they were “blocked from coming here to the site of the alleged gas attack themselves, ostensibly because they lacked the correct UN permits,” according to Fisk.

Nevertheless, the OPCW fact-finding mission (FFM) issued its “final report” on March 1, 2019. The report states, “... based on the information reviewed and with the absence of biomedical samples from the dead bodies or any autopsy records, it is not currently possible to precisely link the cause of the signs and symptoms to a specific chemical.”

However, the report goes on to conclude, “Regarding the alleged use of toxic chemicals as a weapon on 7 April 2018 in Douma, the Syrian Arab Republic, the evaluation and analysis of all the information gathered by the FFM—witnesses’ testimonies, environmental and biomedical samples analysis results, toxicological and ballistic analyses from experts, additional



(Left) Chlorine gas canister found on a roof in Douma, Syria, in April 2018.

digital information from witnesses—provide reasonable grounds that the use of a toxic chemical as a weapon took place. This toxic chemical contained reactive chlorine. The toxic chemical was likely molecular chlorine.”

The OPCW’s conclusions were widely reported in the corporate press as evidence that the Assad government carried out the alleged attack: The New York Times: “Evidence of Chlorine Found in Syrian Town of Douma, Investigators Say.” AP: “Chemical weapons watchdog says chlorine was used in Douma.” Reuters: “Chemical weapons agency: ‘toxic chemical’ used in attack on Syrian rebel town last April.” UN News: “Security Council discusses chemical weapons use in Syria following latest global watchdog report.” The BBC: “Syria war: Chlorine likely to have been used in Douma attack—OPCW.”

But on May 13, 2019, the Working Group on Syria, Propaganda and Media published a suppressed OPCW engineering assessment that directly contradicts the OPCW’s “final report” on the Douma incident. On May 16, the OPCW confirmed the leaked assessment was genuine, saying it was “conducting an internal investigation about the unauthorised release of the document in question.”

The leaked assessment was authored by Ian Henderson, a member of the OPCW Fact Finding Mission (FFM) that was sent to investigate the Douma incident. After initially denying that Henderson was part of the OPCW on-the scene team in Douma, OPCW director general Fernando Arias reversed himself on May 28: “[At] the time of the FFM deployment in Douma in 2018, this staff member was a liaison officer at our Command Post Office in Damascus. As such, and as is customary with all deployments in Syria, he was tasked with temporarily assisting the FFM with infor-

mation collection at some sites in Douma.”

The suppressed engineering assessment could not be more devastating. Referring to two metal cylinders that were assumed to have delivered the chemical agent, the assessment states, “In summary, observations at the scene of the two locations, together with subsequent analysis, suggest that there is a higher probability that both cylinders were manually placed at those two locations rather than being delivered from aircraft.”

Theodore Postol, professor emeritus of science, technology, and international security at MIT, explained the significance of the leaked engineering assessment as it contradicts the official OPCW report, “The OPCW engineering assessment unambiguously describes evidence collected by the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) that indicates two analyzed chlorine cylinder attacks were staged in April 2018 in Douma. The holes in the reinforced concrete roofs that were supposedly produced by high-speed impacts (impact at speeds of perhaps 100 m/s or more, 250 mph) of industrial chlorine canisters dropped from helicopters were instead created by earlier explosions of either artillery rockets or mortar shells.

“In one event a chlorine canister that was damaged on another occasion was placed on the roof with its head inserted into an existing crater hole, and in the other case a damaged chlorine cylinder was placed on a bed supposedly after it penetrated the building roof and bounced from its original trajectory into a bed. In both cases the damage to the chlorine cylinders was incompatible with the damage to the surroundings that was allegedly caused by the cylinder impacts.

“As such, 35 deaths that were originally attributed to these staged chlorine events cannot be explained and it cannot be ruled

out that these people were murdered as part of the staging effort.”

Former UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter weighed in on June 20, “Thanks to an explosive internal memo, there is no reason to believe the claims put forward by the Syrian opposition that President Bashar al-Assad’s government used chemical weapons against innocent civilians in Douma back in April. This is a scenario I have questioned from the beginning.

“It also calls into question all the other conclusions and reports by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which was assigned in 2014 ‘to establish facts surrounding allegations of the use of toxic chemicals, reportedly chlorine, for hostile purposes in the Syrian Arab Republic.’”

Ritter is best known for his work as a weapons inspector in Iraq from 1991 to 1998, during which he concluded that Iraq had no significant weapons of mass destruction. He was harshly criticized by war hawks and policy makers for daring to tell the truth, and in so doing, undermining the imperial narrative.

To date, the corporate media that so eagerly promoted the official U.S. government narrative of the events in Douma and the formal OPCW report that reinforced it have been silent on the leaked OPCW engineering assessment, which so thoroughly contradicts the official story. This entire incident serves as a reminder that critics of the imperial war machine must be vigilant and remain skeptical.

The ruling rich, their spokespersons and their media all lie. Routinely. This is their default behavior. It’s one of the tools they use to maintain power. For them to tell the truth would be to expose the injustice and irrationality of their system, of their wars, and of their foreign and domestic policies. Skepticism is always called for when evaluating contentious narratives in the midst of day-to-day struggles but it is especially necessary when the “official” narrative makes the warmakers look like champions of truth and justice while their opponents are portrayed as monsters.

It should go without saying that, just as a stopped clock will show the correct time every so often, the corporate media will mix some truth in with their falsehoods. But aware as we are of the imperial compulsion for prevarication, we should never afford them the benefit of the doubt. Self-serving claims by the ruling rich and its mouthpieces should be assumed to be false until proven otherwise by concrete, verifiable facts. ■

... Oil refinery

(continued from page 12)

The Atlantic Refining Company (later ARCO) built an oil refinery on the river in 1870, and Gulf Oil opened one nearby in 1926. Both refineries were purchased and merged by Sunoco in 1988 and 1994. Finally, PES was founded on the combined property in 2005, when Texas-based Energy Transfer Partners and the Carlyle Group (an investment firm frequently tied to the war armaments industry) “rescued” the refinery from bankruptcy. The PES investors received a state-supported package that included designating the complex as a tax-free zone, over \$25 million in grants, and environmental liability waivers.

For many years, the PES refinery and its predecessors have been Philadelphia’s largest single polluter. It is responsible for 70 percent of the city’s particulate air pollution, according to one study. It is also the largest single source of pollutants like nitrogen dioxide and sulfur dioxide, which are associated with causing or exacerbating asthma, and carcinogens like benzene, toluene, and xylene.

The refinery is likewise the area’s largest single source of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions that are responsible for climate change. The city’s draft Clean Energy Vision document states that the refinery “accounts for nearly 16 percent of Philadelphia’s carbon footprint, not including the fossil fuel products exported off-site.”

The company has never been in compliance with the Clean Air Act, though it has been punished with little more than a slap on the wrist, paying \$649,417 over the past five years for Clean Air violations.

Christina Simeone, a senior fellow at the Kleinman Center for Energy Policy at the University of Pennsylvania, wrote a paper last September that pointed out, “The soil and groundwater at the site are heavily contaminated” with gasoline, benzene, lead, and other toxic materials. She said that some contaminants have probably made their way far from the refinery and could even impact a drinking water aquifer in New Jersey.

The plant has been cited for releasing chemicals into the ground and sewers, and draining polluted water from a holding pond into the Schuylkill River. But again, fines have been minimal. The former own-

er, Sunoco, has been working on remediation of the site since 2003, monitored by the state, though many believe that the effort is completely inadequate. In 2011, the Environmental Protection Agency ordered a vast clean-up of the refinery complex after nearby residents complained of a petroleum smell in their houses. The remediation process took six years to “complete,” although the area is still highly polluted.

The refinery sits in a floodplain, and the site is quite likely to be inundated in future decades as sea level continues to rise under climate change. Unfortunately, remediating and restoring the land will potentially take many years, and the fear is that the public will be saddled into paying for it while the big oil barons who are responsible for the mess grab their profits and make a getaway.

The oil industry has been heavily subsidized while it despoils the land and sea, ravages our health, and threatens the stability of the planet with climate change. Now is the time, as we face an unprecedented climate emergency, to demand that the entire fossil fuel industry be nationalized under the control of the workers and oppressed communities so that it can be converted to sustainable energy sources. ■



Close the Camps! No to ICE!

By LUCAS ALAN DIETSCH and
JESSICA MORGAN

DULUTH, Minn.—ICE's stepped-up raids on immigrants, the tens of thousands of people whom ICE has imprisoned without trial, as well as images of dead migrants seeking asylum in the U.S., have swelled the number of actions in solidarity with immigrants.

Close to 200 marches and rallies took place around the U.S. on "Close the Camps Day," July 2, including marches of several hundred in San Francisco, New York, and Elizabeth, N.J. In Boston, close to a thousand took part in a "Jews Against ICE" march, beginning at the Holocaust memorial.

In Wisconsin, an independent investigation is taking place into the Douglas County jail, which may house ICE detainees. This is a concern since the policy and procedures of temporary detention for ICE in Wisconsin has led many jails, such as in Milwaukee, to re-

fuse service to ICE operations.

To fight back against detention, separation of families and ICE, Twin Ports Anonymous organized an "Occupy ICE/ Op Detention Center Solidarity Demonstration" on July 4 in Duluth. Lake Superior Socialist Action, Twin Ports DSA, Gitchee Gumi Scouts, and others helped collaborate as hosts to the demonstration. The event had 30-40 attendees from organizations including Extinction Rebellion and Native Lives Matter from the Twin Cities.

Organizers told *Socialist Action* that the event also highlighted the fact that many corporations are invested in ICE-related activities.

Action in the streets, communities, schools, and workplaces is essential to defend against perpetuating the prison-detention-industrial complex. Working people and their allies should give support, solidarity, and sanctuary to refugees. We must create a world without borders! ■

Cops attack Celebrate Pride & Fight Fascism rally in Toronto

By MITCHELL SHORE

TORONTO—On Sat., June 22, members of Socialist Action (Canada) joined union members, feminists, LGBTQI+ activists, anarchists, and others at the "Celebrate Pride—Fight Fascism" rally near Toronto City Hall. We were there to protest against the anti-immigrant group PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans Against Islamization of the West), the Canada Yellow Vests, the Sons of Odin, the Northern Guard and other white supremacists and neo-Nazis, who were holding a rally to oppose Pride Weekend, most notably the Dyke March on that day.

Socialist Action and some 200 allies gathered peacefully on both the southeast and northeast corners of Armoury Street and University Ave. About 20 fascists were protected behind police metal barricades on the northeast corner, where they attempted to disseminate their message of hate and violence.

Unfortunately, our peaceful protest against the fascists quickly shifted when the cops tried to move anti-fascist protesters from the northeast corner to the southeast corner of Armoury and University. The cops began by slowly pushing us across the road, but not without encountering some resistance. We tried to peacefully hold our ground on the public sidewalk. Rather than engage in dialogue, police roughly pushed and shoved us.

Some cops used their batons to forcefully propel the crowd across the road.

The police actions quickly became violent, with a number of protesters getting into scuffles with the cops for not moving to the sidewalk quickly enough.

During the melee, the Socialist Action "Smash Racism: No Platform for Fascists" banner was violently seized from the hands of two leading members of our organization. Simultaneously, a Fightback comrade was choked and punched by a cop, and another person was violently put into a headlock and thrown to the ground.

Soon after the cops had successfully moved the counter-demonstrators across the road, they penned us behind barricades, and a row of cops ensured that the two groups remained separate. This is another despicable example of the police acting as the fascists' personal body guards.

This follows similar events in Vancouver and Hamilton, where alt-right groups attacked Pride events, and were unchallenged by the police. At the Hamilton event, LGBTQI+ youth and elderly people were brutally assaulted while the cops watched. It was only when the community responded in self-defence that the fascists were repelled.

Despite the efforts of the cops, we maintained a strong presence and let the fascists know that they are not welcome in our city, or anywhere else for that matter. And try as the cops may to intimidate, Socialist Action and allies will never back down in the face of racism and hatred. ■

... Queer liberation march in NYC

(continued from page 2)

thunderous applause at every clause. Paraphrasing some of the speech: "What is there to be proud of when the average lifespan for trans women of color is 30 years? What is there to be proud of when corporate Pride marches through the same ghettos where Black boys are swallowing semen to survive, where race and gender-based violence are ignored because too many people think we're past that?"

Chin's words reiterated the main point of the march and rally: Pride must be political because queer people are still suffering from the same oppression they fought years ago. To merely celebrate an empty diversity is a slap in the face to people who are still struggling to survive; it is a gross and reckless display of privilege to any sort of celebrating without acknowledging just how far the movement still has to go. A huge banner at the rally stage declared, "None are free until all are free."

As a queer man, this march made me feel something much more than pride for my identity. It made me proud of my efforts to bring about change, proud to be

part of a movement that fights for the liberation of all oppressed groups (not just queer people). It just goes to show the evanescent nature of fulfillment under capitalism one may feel during corporate pride means nothing compared to the pride that comes from fighting for one's freedoms and winning.

Furthermore, the feeling of being at peace with and accepted regardless of one's identity and the sense of unity that accompanies genuine community is not something that can be purchased. Corporate pride leaves something to be desired: solidarity and comradeship.

The march made clear two points: One is that the common proclamation that pride should be a celebration and not political is wrong. The queer liberation march made evident that protest can be cheerful and celebratory as much as it can be political. The current pride organized by Heritage of Pride is not as apolitical as it makes itself out to be. To celebrate "diversity" and new acceptance from cops and companies is a political statement. Whereas every other day these organizations are attacking queer people, they deserve no

platform to pinkwash themselves during pride.

Secondly, the march represents an extremely conscious, militant wing of many movements, including Black Lives Matter and the struggles for immigrant rights, universal health care, and public housing. It is impossible to participate in any of these movements without recognizing the leadership and work of these activists.

It is likewise impossible to build a movement in solidarity with Black Lives Matter without recognizing the violence that LGBTQ people face. How can we advance the movement against police brutality without recognizing that trans women of color are especially targeted in homicides? If we do not represent those who are the most oppressed, who are we fighting for?

Queer people exist at the crossroads of many movements we participate in, and it should come as no surprise that LGBTQ issues are brought up almost every contemporary movement. The emergence of a renewed political pilotage among the queer community is indicative of a new generation of militant queer activists who have come to recognize the need for change, as well as their capacity to bring about that change. This gives me hope for the future of mass movements. ■

... MOVE

(continued from page 5)

Nine MOVE members were tried and convicted in the death of Officer Ramp, in spite of evidence that he was killed by the gunfire of other cops. Sentences in the case ranged from 30 to 100 years. MOVE founder John Africa was found not guilty on federal conspiracy and weapons charges.

Three cops who participated in the beating of Delbert Africa were later acquitted. Speaking at a support rally for the three cops, the head of the cop union said, "They should have killed them all."

"At his press conference following the cop assault, Frank Rizzo, then the mayor, looked directly at Mumia (Abu-Jamal) and declared that a 'new breed of journalism' was to blame for Ramp's death and that someday those like Mumia were 'going to have to be held responsible and

accountable'" ("The Fight to Free Mumia Jamal" by Rachel Wolkenstein).

MOVE bombing 1985

After the frame-up trial of the MOVE 9, the organization moved to West Philadelphia and continued to advocate for the freedom of their comrades. Their tactics to pressure the authorities included the use of a loud sound system. Police harassment of MOVE continued.

On May 13, 1985, Philly cops surrounded the MOVE house on Osage Avenue in West Philadelphia. Police Commissioner Sambor shouted into a bullhorn, "Attention MOVE! This is America! You have to abide by the laws of the United States!"

Afterwards, two assault teams entered the houses on either side of 6221 Osage carrying explosives and automatic weapons. In an attack lasting for hours, police used plastic explosives to try to breach holes in the walls between the row homes in order to pump tear gas into the house. Police bombs blew the

front of the house off.

Police fired more than 10,000 rounds of ammunition in 90 minutes. Fire trucks deluged the house with 450,000 gallons of water. Later that day, a police helicopter dropped a bomb on the roof of the house in order to get rid of what cops and the media term as a "bunker," and a fire broke out.

Police Commissioner Gregore J. Sambor and Fire Commissioner William C. Richmond decided to let the fire burn in order to take out the alleged bunker. The fire burned out of control, destroying 61 homes and leaving more than 250 people homeless. Children trying to flee the burning building were fired on by cops, driving them back inside.

Six adult members of MOVE, including founder John Africa, and five children were killed. Hundreds who had gathered on surrounding streets shouted, "Murderers!" at police. Not one of the cops or city officials who perpetrated this crime served a day in jail. One of the two survi-

vors, Ramona Africa, is the only person to serve any jail time.

The Philadelphia police continue to commit acts of violence against Black and Brown communities. Recently, researchers revealed that hundreds of Philadelphia police officers had made racist posts on social media. Seventy-two Philadelphia cops are on desk duty pending investigation of their racist posts.

The struggle to free Chuck and Delbert Africa must now be redoubled until they are allowed to return home. Similarly, the legal battle to free Mumia Abu-Jamal continues. Mumia's health is failing, and efforts to get him the medical care he needs and release him from prison continues.

Also, Black Panther political prisoners and Black Liberation Army (BLA) prisoners of war remain behind bars. In Pennsylvania, this includes Russell "Maroon" Shoatz, who has spent almost 50 years in prison, including 22 in solitary. Free Chuck and Delbert Africa! Free Mumia and all political prisoners! ■

... U.S. hands off Iran!

(continued from page 1)

son threatened at gunpoint with annihilation is not engaged in a “standoff?”

The U.S. calls what it is doing to Iran merely the exertion of “maximum pressure.” An essential part of that is all-out economic warfare. After breaking its own “deal” last year, the U.S. has implemented ever-harsher sanctions against Iran with the stated goal of “bring[ing] Iran’s oil exports to zero, denying the regime its principal source of revenue,” to quote an April 22 White House statement, a goal that the U.S. has since repeated many times. Roughly half of the Iranian government’s revenue comes from oil exports, with gas exports providing most of the rest.

The U.S. is following the same “make the economy scream” playbook in Iran that we have seen in Venezuela. Iran’s economy contracted 3.9% in 2018 as a result of Trump’s massive imposition of sanctions. It is predicted to contract another 6% this year for the same reasons. By contrast, in April 2015, one month before the U.S. withdrew from the “deal” and re-imposed sanctions, the IMF was forecasting 4% growth for both years. The partial lifting of U.S. sanctions in late 2015 led to 13% growth the following year.

Now, U.S. imports of Iranian oil have again been reduced to zero, as they were under the Obama administration from late 2010 through late 2015, while the U.S. was pressuring Iran ahead of the nuclear deal. The U.S. initially issued some waivers for countries who were purchasing Iranian oil at a significant discount, but last month the Trump administration announced the end of those waivers as the U.S. proceeds to try to choke off all Iranian oil revenues.

In both Iran and Venezuela, the U.S. has used cutting off the government’s access to oil revenues as a key tool in its economic warfare in preparation for “regime change.” In Venezuela, the U.S. government literally demanded that its “allies,” threatened with U.S. sanctions if they did not comply, seize Venezuelan government assets in banks around the world and transfer them to accounts established by the U.S. These stolen billions of dollars would then be payable to the U.S.-orchestrated coup plotters, who the U.S. called the new Venezuelan government.

In Iran, the U.S. has similarly acted through its influence or control of various world financial institutions to impose sanctions against Iranian banks and the Iranian government. Any nation or corporation that trades with Iran, including transporting its oil, is subject to U.S. reprisals. Venezuela and Iran have the world’s first and fourth largest proven oil reserves, respectively, which represent a massive amount of potential wealth for both countries.

Moreover, Iran has the lowest combined production and transportation costs of any oil-producing country. Excluding these nations from the world’s oil markets is deeply imbedded in U.S. imperial policy; it’s in the very nature of the imperialist beast. According to the White House statement of April 20, the U.S. proposes that when Iranian oil has been completely removed from the market, oil from the U.S. and its Gulf State allies Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates will fill the gap. Today, U.S. production is at an all-time high and rising, at nearly 11 million barrels per day (bpd) for 2018, up 68% from 2012. In April, it hit a record of 12 million bpd. Add to this the U.S.’s fracking of its massive shale oil reserves, and a monstrous doomsday scenario emerges: endless wars to ensure the domination of U.S. oil mega-monopolies, combined with a catastrophic increases in greenhouse gases.

As is always the case, U.S. sanctions have hit working people in Iran the hardest. Food prices have soared, medications prices have increased and access to medicines and medical devices has become more difficult, killing an untold number of Iranians. The value of the rial, Iran’s currency, has plummeted. Inflation in 2018 was 31%, according to the International Monetary Fund. The prices of meats and vegetables have risen nearly 50%, with youth unemployment reaching over 25%. The *Financial Times* reports that wealthy Iranians are stockpiling goods and converting their falling currency into gold.

U.S. hatred of Iran goes well beyond oil. Iran has been a key supporter of the Syrian government as it has successfully fought back against the U.S. attempt to overthrow it through U.S.-backed Gulf State monarchy proxy armies and associated NATO forces. Trump campaigned claiming that he would end the war in Syria. Then he said the U.S. would leave when ISIS was defeated. Now the Trump administration says the U.S. military will remain in Syria until Iran leaves. “We’re not going to leave as long as Iranian troops are outside Iranian borders and that includes Iranian proxies and militias,” John Bolton said. As we go to press, Israel is yet again attacking Iranian forces in Syria. Iran has also backed the Houthis in Yemen against Saudi



Arabia’s genocidal war of destruction.

The U.S. is now thrashing about for “justifications” for its war moves, putting out a variety of pretexts, lies, and deceptions as its *causis belli*. The Trump administration’s ham-fisted way of doing it embarrasses some in the ruling class, and has resulted in *The New York Times* in a June 20 editorial invoking the long-exposed Gulf of Tonkin and U.S.S. *Maine* pretexts for the Vietnam and Spanish-American wars. No doubt, *The New York Times* editors/publishers want war; they just want it to be presented more palatably, to make waging imperialist war appear as a respectable last resort. But it was *The Times* that championed George W. Bush’s “weapons of mass destruction”-justified war against Iraq that killed 1.5 million Iraqis!

After two oil tankers were damaged in the Gulf of Oman, Trump and other top U.S. officials, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (former head of the CIA), and National Security Advisor John Bolton, immediately claimed, giving no evidence whatsoever, that Iran had attacked the ships with mines. Soon afterward, the president of the Japanese shipping company Kokuka Sangyo, which operates one of the tankers, stated that the crew had said the ship was attacked by a flying object, and not mines.

More recently, when Iran shot down a U.S. surveillance drone that was flying over its territory, the U.S. claimed that the drone had been in a different location over international waters, and prepared to launch missiles but instead decided on a cyber attack against Iranian computer systems, part of a long history of U.S. cyber attacks against Iran.

The biggest false claim is that Iran intends to build a nuclear weapon. Of course, Iran has every right to build a nuclear weapon as a matter of self-determination in a world in which it is constantly threatened by imperialist powers with nuclear weapons—in the case of the U.S., 6185 of them, to be exact. However, the fact is that Iran has never attempted to build a nuclear weapon, has repeatedly stated that it does not intend to build a nuclear weapon, and has consistently submitted itself to inspections in order to prove those facts. Unfortunately, no level of proof will ever be sufficient to keep U.S. imperialism from its intended ends.

Today, the capitalist warmongers insist that Iran is surpassing the amounts of enriched uranium it can have according to the now-voided nuclear deal. In other words, having broken with the pretense of its imperialist “deal,” the U.S. still demands the right to tell Iran what to do. The so-called “stockpiling” of uranium refers to Iran’s accumulating more than the 300 kilograms of energy-grade uranium it was allowed to have under the nuclear deal. If it produced more, it would have to sell anything over that amount. Buried in a June 20 *New York Times* article is this: “the [Trump] administration has curtailed Iran’s options for disposing of its excess energy-grade uranium. In May, it revoked authorization for Iran to sell the uranium abroad, as it had done under the nuclear agreement.”

This “negotiated” nuclear deal amounted to nothing less than the world’s superpowers’ imposing on a poor nation conditions and restrictions as to how it will operate with regard to world political economy. The essence of the deal was that to avoid Iran’s total exclusion from the world’s oil and trade markets, it would have to comply with imperialist demands, with the latter based on imperialism’s insistence that the “uncivilized” Iranian government aimed at launching nuclear war against the world’s nuclear-armed “civilized nations,” the same national chauvinist pretext aimed at North Korea today.

Not a day passes when the U.S. war machine is not ratcheted up to advance its imperial interests. In the Middle East, its prime agent has been the Zionist, colonial settler state of Israel, whose prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu was quoted in the July 2 *New York Times* during a recent conference in Jerusalem as stating that Israel had bombed Syria “hundreds of times.” Like Trump, Netanyahu insists that Syria is in Israel’s “backyard” and justifies Israel’s “covert” bombing war on the pretext of eliminating or reducing Iran’s presence in Syria. Both Israel and the U.S. today insist on their “right” to conduct their never-ending wars against Syria, citing ad nauseum their “national security” interests, including Israel’s claim to Syria’s Golan Heights, occupied by Israel since its infamous June 1967 war.

As with Venezuela, and any poor and oppressed nation facing imperialist war and intervention, Socialist Action unconditionally defends the right to self-determination, that is, to be free from U.S. imperialist intervention and to call upon allies to help support this right. Both Venezuela and Iran today are in the immediate gun sights of U.S. imperialism and its allied forces. Both have legitimately called on Russia and China and other parties for aid. In fact, Russian and Chinese aid to Venezuela, their intentions aside, has proven to be decisive with regard to thwarting U.S. efforts to ban Venezuela from the world economy. In a similar fashion Syria’s calling on Russia, Iran and the Lebanese-based Hezbollah, proved to be decisive in preventing a U.S.-backed takeover of the entire Syrian nation.

Despite being called a “Marxist theocratic regime” by U.S. Special Representative for Iran Brian Hook, Iran is and has always been a capitalist state, wherein a tiny ruling-class elite dominates the economic and political life of the country. At times, Iran’s capitalist rulers, under pressure from the Iranian masses and in the course of challenging imperialist threats of intervention—as was the case following the heroic 1979 Iranian Revolution that included unprecedented mass mobilizations of some seven million people in Tehran to oust the U.S.-backed Pahlavi dictatorship—have conceded significant gains for workers, including the mass unionization of workers across the country and the formation of revolutionary-minded workers’ councils (shoras) to advance working-class interests.

Tragically, these were undermined and set back in the post-1979 years, largely due to the absence of a mass revolutionary socialist party aimed at challenging capitalist rule. Socialist Action’s Trotskyist co-thinkers in Iran valiantly struggled to build such a party, but their forces, impressive to be sure, proved insufficient to the task. During the 10-year U.S.-orchestrated Iraq war against Iran, our Iranian comrades were in the front lines of Iran’s military, opposing this U.S. effort to overthrow the Iranian government. That task, they correctly argued, was the job of Iran’s working-class masses, not the imperialist-orchestrated interveners.

In Iran today, as in Venezuela, only those who stand in the forefront of opposition to U.S. imperialist threats of intervention and war will prove capable of assembling the mass forces capable of challenging capitalist rule.

The United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC) has called for nationwide protests on or around the weekend of July 13-14. As a leading member of UNAC, Socialist Action will be working to organize broadly-sponsored and united actions across the country demanding: No War on Iran! No U.S. Coup in Venezuela! End Sanctions Now! Bring All the Troops Home Now! Defend Immigrant Rights! No to Racist Deportations! No Human Being is Illegal! Join us. ■

Philadelphia oil refinery closed after explosion



WHYY-TV

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

Days after a devastating oil-refinery fire and explosion, Philadelphia Energy Solutions (PES) announced on June 26 that it would close the facility. PES is the largest refinery on the East Coast, turning heavy shale oil from North Dakota into gasoline. But it is ridden with debt and only emerged from bankruptcy a year ago, after asking workers to give concessions on their contract. Nevertheless, the corporate owners have been able to squeeze huge profits out of the complex (\$400 million in dividends before the recent bankruptcy).

Over 1000 oil workers have been given lay-off slips. About 100 non-union employees were let go immediately and with no prior notice; they were denied any severance pay. Union workers were told that, because of the “emergency,” they would lose their jobs in just two weeks. Later, this was extended to 60 days, in compliance with their contract and city and federal law. Thousands of other contract workers will also be affected by the shutdown.

At 4 a.m. on June 21, people in the largely Black and working-class neighborhoods of South Philadelphia were awakened by a thunderous boom. A mushroom-shaped fire cloud rose above the PES refinery; it was of such magnitude that it could be observed from satellites in space. “I could see from my bedroom window something that almost looked like a nuclear disaster,” a local resident told the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

Over the next half hour, multiple explosions took place at a tank containing butane and propane. The fire continued to burn for two days, pouring thick black smoke over residential communities. It was the second fire in a week at the 150-year-old refinery.

In the latest incident, the city barely dodged a catastrophe thanks to crucial safety procedures carried out by the oil workers. One quick-thinking worker was able to divert hydrofluoric acid from a tank near the fire. If the tank had been breached, it could have sent a cloud of the toxic substance for miles over thickly populated sections of the city, potentially killing or injuring thousands.

The former CEO of Philadelphia Energy Solutions, Philip Rinaldi, has been talking with Democratic Party politicians in the effort to convince investors to “save the plant” by renewing its operation as a petro-chemical refining and storage center. But plans to prolong the life of the facility have been met with outrage by residents of the neighborhood and environmental activists.

On June 25, about 75 protesters, including many residents of the neighborhood, massed near the main gates to the refinery complex. Some residents participated in “telling their stories,” which included tragic accounts of their families’ suffering with asthma, cancer, and other debilities caused by the polluted environment.

The local environmental group Philly Thrive, which helped to organize the rally, conducted a survey among neighbors of the refinery last May and found that, among 314 respondents, over half had heart disease, cancer, or a respiratory condition. Almost 34 percent had asthma, compared to 19 percent in the city overall, and 8 percent nationally.

Speakers at the rally urged that the refinery grounds be cleaned up and re-used for the common good. Some spoke for restoring the area as parkland or a nature preserve, which could also provide space for community-owned renewable power-generation

(Above) Rally outside the gates of PES refinery demands its permanent closure.

facilities.

While correctly standing up for the jobs of its members, the Steelworkers union leadership has countered the call by area residents to permanently close the refinery. Ryan O’Callaghan, president of United Steelworkers Local 10-1, which represents 614 workers at the plant, told WHYY-TV that “those who are calling for the refinery to be shut down, I don’t think they realize the amount of people that rely on this refinery’s operations for part or all of their salary.”

However, it is the big capitalists and banks—and not environmentalists—who want to eliminate the jobs of the PES refinery workers. Many in the environmental movement have sought ways to make common cause with the workers’ struggle. Speakers at the June 25 protest rally and subsequent meetings have acknowledged that converting the economy away from reliance on fossil fuels would require a “just transition” for oil workers, in which they would be retrained and hired to work in the field of sustainable energy.

The site of the refinery, on the banks of the Schuylkill River, was once a verdant area of sheep meadows and wetlands, with several creeks running through it. Several inns and hotels operated there in the 18th and early 19th centuries, serving sports fishermen, hunters, and holidaymakers who came from the city to enjoy the beauties of nature. But the environment changed as industrial uses became established in the late 19th century.

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