



Killer cops go free



Tony Savino / Socialist Action



Tony Savino / Socialist Action

By MARTY GOODMAN

In 1857, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled to deny freedom to Dred Scott, a slave living in Missouri. The decision stated that Black people have “no rights which the white man was bound to respect.” Today, as yesterday, the racist system of capitalism operates much the same in real life—if no longer on paper.

Each day adds to the deadly toll as racist killer cops walk free. Grand juries failed to indict Darren Wilson, the cop who murdered Michael Brown, 18, in Ferguson, Mo., last summer and officer Daniel Pantaleo, who choked to death Eric Garner, 43, in Staten Island, N.Y., in July. The Brown and Garner cases have galvanized a new generation of anti-racist youth—especially African Americans, many of whom are women—who are taking to the streets in outrage.

Adding fuel to their anger were the cop shootings of two African Americans—Akai Gurley, 28, in a Brooklyn stairwell on Nov. 20, and Tamir Rice, a 12-year-old in Cleveland, gunned down in a park on Nov. 22.

The anger has spread internationally to protests in London, Tokyo, Melbourne, Toronto, and many other cities. The video of Garner’s savage murder was viewed worldwide and gave the lie to Washington’s propaganda that U.S. capitalism and imperialism deliver “equality” and “democracy” to occupied countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan. U.S. racism is 400 years old and it

still continues—*despite* having a Black president in the White House!

The current anger comes almost three years after the big nationwide mobilizations that followed the murder of Trayvon Martin, the 17-year old gunned down in February 2012 by a racist vigilante in Florida. In New York City, Ramarley Graham, 18, was killed inside his Bronx home by a cop without a warrant right in front of his family in 2012; Kimani Gray, 16, was shot seven times, three from behind, in 2013 in Brooklyn. All of the above victims were unarmed.

The number of killings by police thugs is almost mind numbing. A Malcolm X Grassroots Movement study found that an African American is killed by police or a vigilante every 28 hours! Outrageously, there are no official national numbers of police killings of Black and Hispanic youth by U.S. law enforcement. *USA Today* (Jan. 1) reported that only 750 out of 17,000 law enforcement agencies even report the numbers. *The Wall Street Journal* found that

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Youth on the Move!

By JOE AUCIELLO

Even a brief look at the racial landscape in America today would convince a reasonable person that, in essential ways through the years, too little has changed. Differences in wealth, income, education, employment, incarceration, etc.—differences that are growing to the disadvantage of Blacks—are still based on race. The election of a Black man as president and the election of other minorities to office have brought no overall improvement in the daily life of Black America.

In fact, Jim Crow, if he ever went away, has returned. Police departments throughout the country certainly think so, and the Supreme Court has backed them. So, Black males, especially, continue to be profiled, stopped and frisked, harassed, and shot with distressing regularity. The growth of a Black middle class has not fundamentally altered this reality. Just ask Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr. the next time he is arrested when he misplaces his house key.

Yet, within the framework of this racially charged country, significant if unexpected change is emerging. In Ferguson, Mo., New York City, Cleveland, and other cities where Black men have been shot or killed, people of many races and ethnic groupings—including whites, Asians, and Latinos—and especially the young, participate in the demonstrations, marches, die-ins, and civil dis-

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Why so much ado about 'The Interview'?

By BARRY WEISLEDER

Hollywood, Wall Street, and the White House are celebrating the release, albeit delayed and via the internet and small cinemas, of the third-rate comedy "The Interview." The film is about a plot to assassinate the leader of North Korea. Pyongyang took exception to the idea, and threatened to retaliate, which set off a spate of verbal and cyber warfare.

While there's much ado about "freedom of expression," this has little to do with the case. In fact, thoughtful defenders of freedom will avoid getting caught up in the question about whether the film "deserves" to be shown. That's a subordinate point in the real world drama.

The larger issue is actual Hollywood and Washington bullying. It is the reality of their ceaseless efforts to economically punish, and militarily intervene, against any country or any people who defy the Empire—and who try to exercise national sovereignty. Moreover, although Obama has ordered new economic sanctions against North Korea, questions have been raised as to whether that country was even responsible for the hacking attack that set off the dispute.

As much as we find the North Korean regime abhorrent, we should insist that it is the task of its workers and farmers to replace it with a socialist democracy. Clearly, that's not the agenda of Sony, Obama, or Wall Street. Our task is to expose why the latter are making such a big fuss about the distribution of this film. Our job is to try to deprive their campaign to resuscitate the blood-soaked image of imperialism of any legitimacy it might have in the public mind.

Corporations like Sony censor artists all the time. They rarely depict anything, much less a "good cause," unless they can pervert it to their priorities, especially profit-making. You don't have to think way back to McCarthyism and the scores of artists who were purged and blacklisted in the 1950s. Consider today's cinematic landscape: How many Ken Loach films get the funding or promotion that Seth Rogan comedies enjoy, much less the largesse bestowed upon flicks like the Terminators 1, 2 and 3, or Transformers 1, 2, 3 and 4?



Socialists defend freedom. We make no apologies for Stalinism or totalitarianism of any kind. But many freedoms in our world are at risk, and have been brutally crushed. What should our priority be? Where do we start?

Start by opposing what our rulers, and what their compliant media, "choose" to do. With regard to Korea, keep in mind that our capitalists, the Canadian establishment, in alliance with all the partners of the UN-sanctioned war, led by the USA, wrecked havoc on the Korean people in the early 1950s. Chinese sources estimate that North Korea suffered 290,000 military casualties, 90,000 captured, and a "large" number of civilian deaths. Over a million people overall died in the process. And that's no comedy punch line.

Since then, Washington has threatened to use nuclear weapons against North Korea. This gave the DPRK the incentive to obtain such weapons as a deterrent. That seems to be working.

I like Canadian-born Seth Rogan and his screwball comedy, in small doses. But that's beside the point. What should be our attitude towards those "cultural" institutions that celebrate imperialist war, that defend Israeli apartheid, justify sexism and homophobia, and excuse the exploitation of humanity and the plunder of nature?

It is true that the Kim Jun Un regime is abhorrent. It sits atop a repressive state that appears to be plunging headlong into a system of capitalist exploitation, and is thin-skinned to boot. Yes, North Korea might have done better just to ignore the wretched, third-rate Sony flick. But Koreans have paid a very high price for imperialist dominion over Asia. And they remember. So their outrage against foreign arrogance, villification, and bullying is understandable. Not so ironically, foreign threats, however they are "packaged," tend to reinforce the authority of the abominable Kim Jun Un regime.

As movie reviewers have pointed out, many Hollywood films have been made that depict a plot to assassinate a U.S. president. So

what's the big deal here? Well, I ask this: How many of those films have portrayed the would-be assassins of the U.S. president as the "good guys?" Or even as hapless stoners?

What does promotion of "The Interview" now represent? Is it a blow for freedom of expression, or for imperial hypocrisy and bullying?

And about "freedom," let's keep in mind an old saying: Freedom of the press exists only for those who own one. And don't forget the golden rule: He who has the gold, makes the rules. ■

UKRAINE IN TURMOIL

BY JEFF MACKLER AND MICHAEL SCHREIBER

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Socialist Action: Where we stand

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. 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.

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!

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,

queers, 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. That is why we maintain fraternal relations with the Fourth International

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.

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, instead of seeking to merely reform or work within the system. 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.

SOCIALIST ACTION Closing news date: Jan. 7, 2015
Editor: Michael Schreiber Canada Editor: Barry Weisleder

Socialist Action (ISSN 0747-4237) is published monthly by Socialist Action Publishing Association, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610. Postmaster: Send address changes to: Socialist Action, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610. RATES: For one year (12 issues, 1st-class mail): U.S., Canada, Mexico — \$20. All other countries — \$30. Money orders and checks should be in U.S. dollars.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of Socialist Action. These are expressed in editorials. Socialist Action is edited, designed, and laid out entirely by volunteer labor.



For info about Socialist Action and how to join: Socialist Action National Office, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610, (510) 268-9429, socialistaction@lmi.net

Socialist Action newspaper editorial offices: socialistactionnews@yahoo.com
Website: www.socialistaction.org

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Philadelphia's MLK-D.A.R.E. coalition: Statement of Principles

MLK-Day of Action, Resistance, and Empowerment (MLK-D.A.R.E.) is organizing a march in Philadelphia on Jan. 19. The broad-based coalition hopes to "reclaim" Martin Luther King Day with a focus on political action.

The demands of the march are: a \$15 minimum wage and the right to a union; an end to the police department's "stop and frisk" policy / for an independent police review board; for fairly funded and democratically controlled schools.

Below we publish the Statement of Principles distributed by MLK-D.A.R.E.

The Fierce Urgency of Now

"We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there 'is' such a thing as being too late. This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action" (Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence," April 4, 1967).

There comes a time when women, men, youth and children, people of all races, religions, ideological and moral commitments must act. On this day when Martin Luther King Jr. is celebrated, we call on Philadelphians in the thousands to unite in action to transform the rapidly deteriorating conditions of life of our people.

Martin Luther King was a man of action in the causes of human rights, civil rights, labor rights, and world peace. He believed that ordinary people—working people, the poor, women and the racially oppressed—were, in the end, the authors of justice. And if our nation and city are to be saved we must recognize what King called "the fierce urgency of now" and that "time waits for no one."

Philadelphia is more divided along race, class, and gender lines than at any time in recent memory. We are two cities, one of privilege and wealth, the other of poverty, police brutality, low and poverty wages, collapsed schools, and collapsing neighborhoods. Of America's 10 largest cities we are the poorest. Close to 70% of our citizens live in or very near poverty. Our children suffer the most, and far too many are wrapped in lives of misery and hopelessness. Our streets are filled with the homeless, hungry, and destitute.

As a nation we spend more on prisons, police, and the military than on schools, eliminating poverty, providing jobs with living wages and homes. As a nation too many value our dogs over the lives of Black young people. We are witness to the grotesque spectacle of Black and Brown people murdered in our streets by police, while many of our fellow citizens look the other way, and those who run the court system find murderers in blue innocent. Such a nation lives religious hypocrisy, social decadence, and a moral lie.

Any honest examination of the life of our city proves how far we are from the standard of human freedom declared in the nation's founding document, The Declaration of Independence. Rather than human freedom we witness a colossal human tragedy and a human rights emergency. The recovery of standards of human dignity demand that everyone who loves this city and country take a hard look at the situation, and ask what must I do to change this situation.

Great achievements must begin somewhere, and they always begin when people look tragedy in the face, ask "what can I do?" and decide to act. If we are not capable of this examination, we may yet become one of the most distinguished and monumental failures in the history of nations. As a city, a nation, and a people we must ultimately recognize we are all wrapped in a single garment of destiny; what affects one directly affects us all indirectly.

Time to Break Silence

It is time to break the silence about what Dr. King called the triple evils: racism, poverty, and militarism. These forms of violence, indeed terror, exist in a vicious cycle, deteriorating hope, progress and opportunity, as a result of humankind's depravity toward its own.

Now is the time! We are the ones. We, the people, are the leaders we have waited for. We are compelled to speak truth to power, to say to the powerful and the powerless, enough is enough. To our elected of-

Call to conscience, commitment, and action in the celebration of Martin Luther King Jr.



icials we demand an end to empty promises when you run for office and service to the rich and privileged while in office. To the banks, universities, real estate developers, gentrifiers, and others that profit from our poverty and misery, we say you will be held accountable to the people of this city. To those who refuse to pay their fair share of taxes to help fund our schools, we assure you change is on the way.

To the Philadelphia police department, we declare that we intend to hold you to democratic, human, and anti-racist standards in your relations with Black and Brown communities

It's time for change! It's time for Black, Brown, and poor communities to realize political and economic power to change conditions that shape their lives and communities. But most of all it's time that we transform the structure of institutions, the foundations of our communities and our values.

Toward Beloved Community

"We seek a beloved community, where racism, bigotry and prejudice are not tolerated and the continual reproduction of poverty, hunger and homelessness ceases. We seek beloved community where disputes are resolved within, through peaceful conflict-resolution and equitable laws serve the ends of justice. We seek beloved community founded upon a qualitative change in our souls as well as in our lives, a true revolution of values that will cause us to question the fairness and justice of our past and present" (Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence," April 4, 1967).

Justice is what love looks like in public. Freedom and equality are what democracy looks like in actuality. Moreover, without life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for Black folk, these values can hardly exist for anyone. Black freedom is a condition of the freedom for all fellow citizens. Our commitment to justice, democracy and the people is what grounds our hope in the realization of a new city that serves all of us. Our hope is rooted in what led Martin Luther King Jr to the conviction that America could become a great nation if we the people rose up and practiced the religious, moral and social values we claim as our foundations.

From our diverse communities, faiths, moral beliefs and ideologies we are united in love for justice and our people. We are grounded in a love sublime, an all-embracing love for all God's children. The prophets of the Old and New Testaments and the Holy Quran inspire us. We seek courage from the examples of our ancestors and embrace the spirits of our martyrs of the distant and recent past.

We will march and rally for the future of our city and nation in the spirit of hope. We are confident that change is on the way. This will continue and intensify ongoing protest actions, sit-in, die-ins, pray ins, teach ins, petitions and whatever else is necessary to turn the tide towards justice. We declare our right to pro-

test for right. And in the words of the great Black song of hope, "we ain't gonna let nobody turn us around." We will march until, in the words of Martin Luther King, "Justice runs down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream".

What We Stand For

Racial Justice and the Dignity of Each Person

The racist school-to-prison pipeline begins in failing schools. Policies that fund schools based upon property taxes, redistribute funding to charter schools, and require teachers to teach to standardized tests condemn poor communities to segregated, understaffed, under-resourced, and ineffective schools. In Philadelphia, a "majority minority" city, public schools doom Black and poor students to destitution, graduating only 10% of those who enter 9th grade and leaving half of all adults without the literacy skills required to compete for "family-sustaining" jobs with benefits.

Bigoted racial profiling, stop and frisk, mandatory minimum sentencing, and three-strikes-you're-out policies entrap black youth in criminalization and create a culture that devalues Black life and condones police misuse and abuse of power throughout the Black community.

Pennsylvania spends hundreds of millions to build prisons, in which more than 60% of inmates are Blacks and Hispanics. For Black males in their thirties, one in every 10 is in prison or jail on any given day, and two-thirds of all persons in prison for drug offenses are people of color. These insidious policies of institutional racism, apartheid education, and mass incarceration must stop!

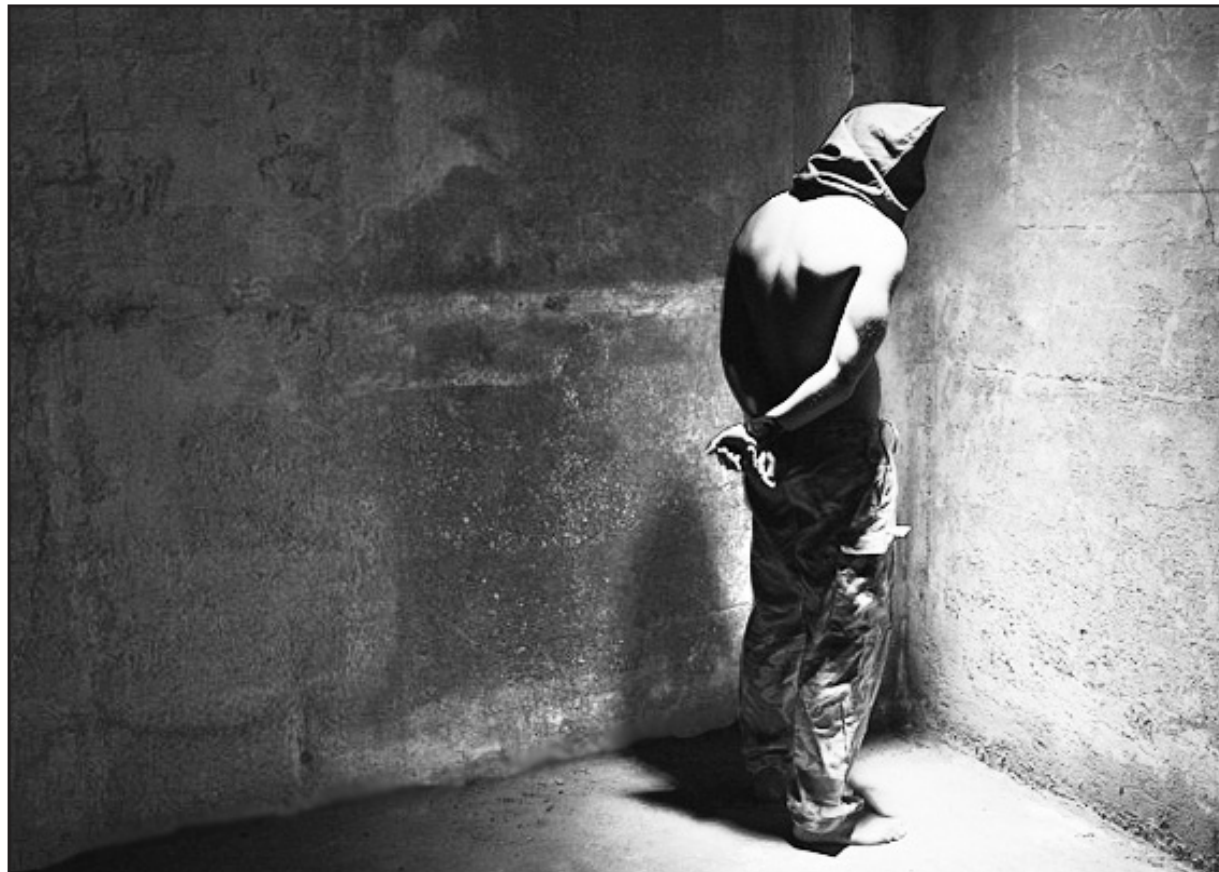
Recognizing that liberation for Black people advances the freedom of all, we must work tirelessly to extinguish racist philosophy, abolishing policies of racism and restoring the dignity, value, and productive potential of the Black community, Black youth, and Black men especially. We are committed to establishing a city and society in which all are viewed as created in the image of God with inalienable human rights and justice as their birthright.

Economic Justice and Stability

With extremely high levels of poverty and deep poverty, the highest among major cities, Philadelphia's unemployment rate in recent years has been 15.1% for Blacks. However, when those who are underemployed or have dropped out of the labor force altogether are counted, the figure jumps to close to 30%. Instead of tackling problems of unemployment and discrimination, Philadelphia is spending millions to displace the poor, destroying Black communities and businesses, to gentrify neighborhoods for the wealthy.

Nationwide, policies that privatize prisons and prison services enrich the elite who then lobby and contribute to politicians to institute draconian poli-

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'Advantages' of CIA torture over mass murder

BY JEFF MACKLER

While mass murder via “legally approved” wars remains the weapon of choice of today’s imperial conquerors—especially the United States—torture, conducted properly and legally and with the help of modern science, does have its advantages. Or so we are given to understand.

The *forme moderne* now practiced by the CIA and defined as “enhanced interrogation techniques” (EIT), leaves no marks, no evidence of wrongdoing or sadistic intent. Its legality is recommended and approved by well-known political scientists like John Woo, former Deputy Assistant U.S. Attorney General, whose “Torture Memos” included a set of rules adopted by the government to ensure that questionable deeds were fully in accord with U.S. law. Woo, a “respected scholar,” now teaches at the University of California at Berkeley.

Further, legalized torture is said to actually save lives—according to the CIA and its bipartisan defenders—by extracting information from terrorists without which monstrous deeds would have inevitably been committed! Torture is certainly cost effective and more precise, much more so than spending \$1 trillion yearly on traditional wars that indiscriminately, or better, inadvertently, target civilians, as with the 1.5 million killed in Iraq by U.S. forces since 2003 or the four million slaughtered by the U.S. in Vietnam in the previous century.

But then again, there are advantages and disadvantages to both. A wise imperialism never excludes either!

However, once in a rare while, someone steps in and blows the whisper of a whistle questioning “some” forms of torture. Such an event took place with the

over 6000-page Dec. 7, 2014, report of Diane Feinstein’s Senate Intelligence Committee, revealing that CIA torturers had perhaps committed some heinous deeds. For “national security” reasons, of course, 5500 pages of Feinstein’s committee report, conducted at a cost of \$40 million, were “redacted,” (edited) and thus we have only some 500 pages from which to make judgments.

No doubt some skeptics are still wondering what hidden horrors lay in the original report. But as we know, “national security” requirements include protecting the guilty, lest some angry victims or outraged citizens “mistakenly” seek revenge against the modern-day Adolph Eichmanns. Indeed, not a single torturer has been brought to the “bar of justice,” not to mention the CIA tops who approved what Obama officials essentially deem “moral” lapses. This “bar” has been so elevated as to permanently protect all transgressors.

Feinstein noted that CIA torture “regularly resulted in fabricated information” and that the CIA program was “a stain on our values and on our history.” These are harsh words from senior Senator Feinstein, a proud supporter of every U.S. war since she was first elected to local office in San Francisco in 1970.

Her conclusion that the CIA torture was a “stain” on our values and history seemed a bit understated. “Stain” is a modest term, especially when such torture has always been accompanied by endless wars of mass destruction and murder in seven countries, where millions have been slaughtered under Bush and Obama.

It is one thing to condemn a bit of torture, “a stain,” as Feinstein puts it; it is quite another to condemn the systematic terror and murderous wars undertaken by Republicans and Democrats alike.

“During the brutal interrogations,” Feinstein stated, “the CIA was often unaware the information was fabricated.” It was, she stated, “morally and administratively misguided” and “far more brutal than people were led to believe.” One might ask how the CIA torturers were ever to know beforehand whether their victims were lying or fabricating information! Assuming that even a few did provide *accurate* or “useful” information, one can only wonder whether she would have come to a different conclusion or whether her report would have been published at all.

“Administratively misguided,” says Feinstein. It seems like the CIA needs instruction on how to torture better, that is, within the guidelines of “legally” adopted policy.

The president’s comments on the Feinstein report were similarly moderated, with Obama stating that despite whatever problems it might have revealed, the U.S. owed “a profound debt” to the CIA even though “some” of its techniques were “contrary to our values” [emphasis added].

The Democratic Party Senate majority released the redacted version shortly before the new Republican majority took over the Senate. This lame duck shot at the Republicans, as with Obama’s recent image-burdening “legacy” policies implemented through executive orders, amounted to little more than a presidential slap on the wrist. And could it be otherwise? Could Obama’s presidential war crimes against millions in Libya, Iraq, Sudan, Congo, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Syria, Egypt Yemen, etc., be any less immoral?

For the record, it would be useful to list just a few of the modern atrocities revealed by Feinstein’s committee. All were designed to crawl under the “bar of justice” that Woo’s Torture Memo outlined.

- Detainees were told that their children would be harmed and that their mothers would be sexually assaulted or have their throats cut.
- They were waterboarded, that is, subjected to repeated near-drowning techniques.
- Their rectums were infused with “pureed” food in a process called “rectal re-hydration.”
- They were held for long periods on freezing floors or doused with nearly freezing water while held in “stress positions.”
- They were subjected to extreme “sleep deprivation.”

Needless to say, a few died during these procedures, according to the redacted report. Twenty-six of the 119 detainees were “wrongfully held,” a term still undefined. In most cases, however, they were either innocent, and/or denied recourse to any legal counsel and always held without formal charges levied against them.

Most of the above torture techniques were designed by “contractor psychologists” James Mitchell and Bruce Jensen in 2002. They were paid \$81 million by the CIA for their efforts.

In the days and weeks before Feinstein’s report was released, a ruling-class debate of sorts ensued with Feinstein and her Senate Intelligence Committee allies pitted against not only the Republicans and the CIA but also against President Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry. Obama and Kerry joined the chorus in insisting that the report be severely redacted—that is, watered down sufficiently to portray the torture as essentially limited to lapses in administration, poor coordination, and essentially unintended consequences.

Feinstein, in a rare flair of disagreement, initially stuck by the report, apparently still outraged by the CIA’s successful efforts several months earlier, to surreptitiously and illegally break into her committee’s

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Big Eyes: A woman artist trapped in cruel deception

By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

Tim Burton’s new film, based on a true story, is often highly comical although its overall theme is tragic. “Big Eyes” tells the familiar story of a woman who submits to a flamboyant and domineering husband. In this case, however, the husband even usurps the woman’s identity as an artist.

The film opens in 1958; the perfectly cast Amy Adams as Margaret Ulbrich, tired of life as a suburban housewife, leaves her husband to pursue her career as a portrait artist in beat-era San Francisco. At a jazz club one night, she meets Walter Keane.

Christoph Waltz (“Django Unchained”) does not miss a note as Walter, an animated,

charming bon vivant, to whom he bears a close resemblance. His pick-up line, “Does your husband approve of your working?” defines this as the era when women were subservient to their husbands.

Walter boasts that he studied art in Paris. He belittles her work. He asks why she paints eyes somewhat larger than in real life, calls them “jelly bean” eyes; she explains that one can see the person through the eyes. Still, she is blinded by love to not see the real Walter.

Once they are married, Walter sells Margaret’s “big-eyed” paintings as his own work—at first behind her back and later with her grudging consent. An example of oppressive patrimony occurs when the non-religious Margaret visits a Catholic church to confess that she is lying about her and Walter’s deception. The priest tells her to obey her husband as the Bible instructs. She sheepishly accepts.

The couple achieves fame through the media. Their paintings are reproduced as cal-

endars, postcards, posters. An entire industry grows around them, allowing the couple to acquire a bigger house with a pool. They achieve the “American Dream.”

On a TV talk show, Walter explains that his “inspiration” was seeing destitute children during the war. (All lies, of course.) His audience is in tears. Later, when asked about Margaret’s art work, he says, “We don’t talk about Margaret.”

Like the girl in the fairy tale “Rumpelstiltskin,” tasked to spin straw into gold, Margaret churns out her paintings in a studio behind locked doors. She is, basically, Walter’s slave. After Walter’s sadism turns to violence against her, Margaret finally escapes and moves to Hawaii with her daughter. There, in a radio interview, she tells the truth: “I am the only painter in the family.”

She sues Walter for slander. In court, he represents himself in one of the best scenes in the film—actually funny—in which he acts out his role both as witness and attorney. To settle the dispute, the judge orders

them to paint in front of the jury—which decides in her favor.

Some critics have said that Christoph Waltz overacted his role as Keane. Not at all; Walter Keane was just like that. I met the Keanes at a San Francisco Art Festival in the mid-1950s. I was staffing the booth for the art school where I was studying. They were well known in the art community because of “Walter’s” big-eyed children—but not yet famous.

A rumor had it even then that Margaret was the artist. She was doing charcoal portraits of passersby, and a friend I was with had hers done. Though Margaret had exaggerated my friend’s eyes, it was a good likeness. As Margaret sketched away, Walter swanned about, chatting up some corporate honcho with Columbia Records about “his” paintings. It was decided between the Keanes and this man that I would be his dinner date. I asked myself, did I really want to hang with these people? I turned and walked away. ■

McDonald's workers win legal victories

By ANN MONTAGUE

Labor activists, including Fight for \$15 and the Service Employees International Union, have been staging demonstrations and employee walkouts at McDonald's and other fast-food chains for the past two years, demanding a \$15 minimum wage and the right to a union. Along the way, the movement has scored a couple of legal victories against McDonald's that should help open the door for union-organizing drives in the entire fast-food franchise sector.

When Seattle approved a \$15 minimum wage law last year, the legislation contained a long implementation schedule (five to seven years) for small businesses. However, many fast-food workers were shocked to hear McDonald's Corporation claim that their outlets should qualify as "small businesses" because they are franchised to individual owners.

In the end, the Seattle law included language that prevents a major corporation from claiming its franchises were exempt from the law's requirements: "Large employers (businesses with 500 or more employees, either in Seattle or nationally) will reach \$15 per hour in three years."

McDonald's not only lost in Seattle last year, but on the national level, it recently suffered a setback in regard to the second demand of fast-food strikers: "The right to a union." The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruled last month that McDonald's is a "joint employer" with its franchisees. The ruling overturns McDonald's claims that it is not the actual employer at its restaurants and that the franchisees are entirely responsible for setting wages and working conditions.

Last month, the NLRB issued 13 complaints that involved 78 charges by workers that McDonald's USA, LLC and many of their franchisees broke the law by interfering with collective efforts to organize and improve working conditions. The complaints came from regions that include: Manhattan, Philadelphia, Detroit, Atlanta, Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas City, New Orleans, Minneapolis, San Francisco, Indianapolis, Phoenix, and Los Angeles. The complaints will now go to a trial before an administrative law judge.

The allegations include "discriminatory discipline, reductions in hours, discharges, and other coercive conduct directed at employees in response to union and protected concerted activity, including threats, surveillance, interrogations, promises of benefit, and over broad restrictions on communicating with union representatives or with other employees about unions and the employees' terms and conditions of employment." The NLRB is scheduling regional hearings to address these complaints.

There are plans for global demonstrations against McDonald's in 2015. McDonald's is the largest fast-food employer, with 440,000 full-time and part-time workers in the U.S. According to *Business Insider*, in April 2012 there were 761,000 McDonald's workers worldwide.

\$15 Now in Philadelphia and Portland

A broad coalition in Philadelphia is building a march and rally on Martin Luther King Day, Jan. 19. One of the main demands of the march is "\$15 minimum wage and a union." The march will wind through the central city and end at a rally near Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell (see the coalition's Statement of Principles on page 3.)

In another significant development, the Philadelphia city council plans to hold a public hearing on raising the minimum wage. The council's decision was taken after strong action by the Philadelphia \$15 Now coalition, which included bringing low-wage workers to meet city officials in order to give testimony about the hardships of trying to live on poverty wages. During the past year, \$15 Now has canvassed neighborhoods around the city and built several neighborhood support groups.

In Portland, Ore., "Don't Shoot Portland" has endorsed 15 Now, and a series of joint marches have taken place combining the issues of poverty, racism, and police brutality. On Jan. 3, there will be a joint rally starting at a McDonald's to demand \$15, and then a march to spread the "Hands Up, Don't Spend" message to end corporate domination and income inequality.

Minneapolis airport workers

Last month Kip Hedges, a Delta Airlines baggage handler who was fired for speaking out about the low wages at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, took his case to the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC).

Hedges, a known union activist, was fired on Dec. 2 for comments he made on a "Workday



Minnesota" video, in which he said that one-half of all Delta workers make less than \$15 an hour. At the Airports Commission meeting, Hedges repeated the words that got him fired and challenged the commissioners to take a stand in support of workers. "I want you to make it clear to Delta that they stand alone on this."

Many airport workers are participating in \$15 Now Minnesota's campaign for a \$15 minimum wage at the airport. Some airport subcontract workers have been engaged in an organizing drive of SEIU Local 26, and flight attendants and ground workers at Delta are seeking union representation with International Association of Machinists (IAM). Along with \$15 Now members, they packed the commission meeting and spoke of intimidation and harassment of their respective union organizing drives.

Some commissioners spoke in favor of a "Labor Peace Ordinance" to counteract employer intimidation at the airport. One commissioner said, "They [labor peace ordinances] make for a great workplace, a fair workplace." Commission Chair Dan Boivin said he agreed and that he would put the issue on the agenda in the first quarter of 2015.

In the meantime, Hedges is pursuing the issue of his firing through Delta's internal appeal process. If the decision is not overturned, he says he will sue the airline in court for wrongful termination. ■

Celebrations for the Cuban Five

Socialist Action was proud to be among the sponsors of two events that celebrated the freedom of the Cuban Five (see article on page 6). Hundreds of activists jammed into the headquarters of Local 1100 in New York on Jan. 3 and at Berkeley's La Peña Cultural Center on Jan. 4. The diverse range of organizations that had contributed to projects to bring the Five Heroes home displayed a spirit of solidarity that was exhilarating.

The La Peña event included speakers from the National and International Committees to Free the Cuban Five; the mayors of Berkeley and Richmond, Calif.; Valerie Landau, daughter of filmmaker and Cuba solidarity activist, Saul Landau; Socialist Action's Jeff Mackler; and film clips with Danny Glover and Alice Walker. Karen Wald announced that a film of the rally would be brought to Cuba the following week.

In New York, the major speaker was Cuba's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Rodolfo Reyes. Freed political prisoner Lynne Stewart, framed up on charges of conspiracy to commit terrorism, was greeted at the event with a thunderous standing ovation. ■

... M.L. King Day

(continued from page 3)

cies that usher Blacks and Browns into prisons at unheard of rates for ever-increasing profits. Economic policies that enrich private corporations at the expense of poor neighborhoods, schools, and families to create a Black and Brown permanent under-caste must stop!

We are committed to the complete elimination of poverty, the restructuring the economy, and bridging the gulf between the haves and the have-nots. We must challenge our governments to deploy the technology and resources needed to eliminate the structures of poverty. We call for restructuring the systems and policies that destabilize Black and poor communities, producing unemployment, homelessness, hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy, infant mortality, and slums.

We seek economic power for the poor, enabling individuals to make decisions concerning their own lives. We seek fair working conditions for laborers, ensuring the right to organize and just representation. And we seek stability for families and communities, assuring access to training, small-business financing, and other means of self-improvement.

Communities of Peace

Images of tanks and high-tech weapons trained on citizens of Ferguson, Missouri, as they democratically challenged injustice, are forever burned into our collective consciousness and hearts. There is no more vivid reminder today of the culture of violence that now dominates the world, our nation, cities, communities, and homes.

Unending wars for resources, fighting terror with terror using drones and torture, the spread of ever more deadly weaponry, and establishment of policies that put the government at war with its citizens and condemn them to the violence of poverty permeate

every fiber of our existence.

In Philadelphia, where more than 80% of homicides have been committed with guns and 242 homicides were committed in 2014 (a 2% increase over 2013), and where Black males are 90% of murder victims and offenders, our youth come to believe that Black lives don't matter and only intimidation and domination win the day. As a result, they suffer abuse too often, fight on the streets and in the military beyond their numbers, and die too young.

This glorification of war and weapons—which is creating unending war zones, where militaries and police target, entangle, and execute whole communities at will—must stop!

"We are committed to ending the culture of militarism and violence that pervade our lives in the forms of war, imperialism, domestic violence, rape, terrorism, human trafficking, media violence, drugs, child abuse, violent crime and mass incarceration. We oppose rapid increase of military spending, the proliferation of high-powered weapons to be used in and against our communities and the continued pursuit of war. We seek to build these communities of peace through tireless efforts, creative work and seizing the time to do right, rather than resorting to intimidation and fear" (Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., "Nonviolence and Racial Justice," Feb. 6, 1957).

We will challenge all policies that embroil Black communities in crime and trap Black youth in lives of criminality. We must end the policies and culture of mass incarceration, stop the proliferation of guns in our communities, oppose wars here and abroad and transform our values. Our goal is to establish a fuller sense of community, rooted in our collective political and economic control and new strategies to connect, collaborate and create holistic relationships.

We are building the beloved community upon new relationships, understandings, and redeeming goodwill. ■

Cuban Five are free!

A victory for revolutionary Cuba



BY JEFF MACKLER

In simultaneous press conferences in Washington, D.C., and Havana on Dec. 17, President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro announced an agreement that included the immediate release of the three remaining Cuban political prisoners held in U.S. jails since 1998—Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, and Antonio Guerrero. Two other Cubans, Fernando González and René González, having completed long jail terms, had been released in recent years.

The Cuban Five, as they are known with great admiration worldwide, were charged in 1998 and convicted in 2001 in Miami of conspiracy to commit espionage, conspiracy to commit murder, and acting as agents of a foreign power. The U.S. government-orchestrated trial included the illegal manipulation of reporters and the media more generally, forged documents, and the exclusion of exculpatory evidence. It was a classic U.S. political frame-up, aimed at poisoning public opinion and the jury pool while characterizing Cuba, the victim of U.S. terrorism for decades, as a terrorist state.

A Dec. 19 statement by the National Lawyers Guild (NLG), which has been monitoring U.S.-backed terrorist attacks on Cuba, stated, “For more than 30 years after Fidel Castro took power, over 3400 Cubans have died and over 2000 have been wounded in terrorist attacks by extremist anti-Castro exile groups based in South Florida. In 1990, the Cuban government sent the five men to Miami to monitor and disrupt such groups and prevent future attacks.” The Cuban Five [long ago granted Cuba’s highest award, “Heroes of the Revolution”], remained nonviolent throughout their mission.”

Amy Goodman’s “Democracy Now!” radio and television program described one such U.S.-trained terrorist, Luis Posada Carriles, as “one of the most notorious Cuban exiles who applied for political asylum in the United States several years ago.” Goodman reported that Carriles, a former CIA operative trained by the U.S. Army at Fort Benning, Ga., “has been trying to violently overthrow Fidel Castro’s government for four decades. ... Posada was responsible for the 1976 downing of a civilian airliner that left Venezuela bound for Cuba. The bombing killed 73 passengers, including the gold medal-winning Cuban Olympic fencing team.”

In 1998 Posada told *The New York Times*, “The C.I.A. taught us everything. ... They taught us explosives, how to kill, bomb, trained us in acts of sabotage.”

The Cuban government transmitted the informa-

The Cuban Five trial was a classic political frame-up, aimed at poisoning public opinion while portraying Cuba as ‘terrorist.’

tion obtained by The Five to various U.S. intelligence agencies that supposedly exist to prevent such terrorist activities from being initiated from U.S. soil. It was these communications to the U.S. that led to the arrest of the Cuban Five, via a deeply implanted Cuban intelligence officer in the employ of the CIA. This was Rolando Sarraff Trujillo, subsequently imprisoned in Cuba for almost 20 years.

Trujillo was part of the prisoner swap, along with Alan Gross, an American working in association with the U.S. Agency for International Development, a notorious instrument used by the CIA and other such institutions aimed at undermining governments whose policies the U.S. government opposes. Gross had been imprisoned in Cuba for the past five years. Also, Cuba has reportedly freed 53 other “political prisoners” as part of the deal with the United States.

No U.S. government action was taken against the terrorists that the Five had exposed! Indeed, U.S. spy and terrorist operations continued with abandon, all focused on the organization of an internal opposition to topple the leadership of the Cuban Revolution.

In recent years the U.S. ruling class has been divided on the issue of the most effective methods to employ to bring down the Cuban workers’ state, established in 1959 when the forces led by Fidel Castro organized a popular revolution that removed the hated U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista and opened the way to a socialist revolution in Cuba.

One wing of the U.S. ruling class, including former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and a number of “liberal” Democrats, as well as Midwest Republicans who wish to sell cheap grain and other foodstuffs to Cuba, argue that a healthy dose of American capitalist investment aimed at undermining and underselling Cuba’s largely nationalized economy is the best way to proceed. Clinton’s view is clearly stated in her new book, “Hard Choices.”

A Dec. 18 *Bloomberg View* article entitled “Hillary Clinton Secretly Pushed Cuba Deal for Years” notes: “Although President Barack Obama is taking the credit for Wednesday’s historic deal to reverse decades of

U.S. policy toward Cuba, when Hillary Clinton was secretary of state, she was the main architect of the new policy and pushed far harder for a deal than the Obama White House.”

The *Bloomberg* article continues, “From 2009 until her departure in early 2013, Clinton and her top aides took the lead on the sometimes public, often private interactions with the Cuban government. According to current and former White House and State Department officials and several Cuba policy experts who were involved in the discussions, Clinton was also the top advocate inside the government for ending travel and trade restrictions on Cuba and reversing 50 years of U.S. policy to isolate the Communist island nation.”

While Obama officials asserted that the secret negotiations with the Cuban government that resulted in the present agreement were facilitated by Pope Francis and Canadian diplomats, presumably those with interests in exploiting Cuba’s significant nickel resources, ruling-class debates over the effectiveness of the Cuban embargo/blockade have been underway for decades.

Today, with the same intentions, the Obama administration has come on board. The president made clear in a Dec. 19 press conference that “the whole point of normalizing relations is that it gives us a greater opportunity to have influence with that

government.” That “influence” includes U.S. corporate intentions to penetrate Cuban markets with an ongoing flow of cheap commodities aimed at undermining Cuban government enterprises.

U.S. imperialism’s relations with Cuba, and all other poor nations, always include such economic penetration based on imperialism’s capacity to set prices for vital resources far cheaper than their actual value. U.S. imperialism, for example, was able to effectively reduce the world market price of nickel, previously an important component of Cuba’s income, by 50%.

This kind of economic robbery is inherent in the imperialist system, wherein the nation that employs the highest levels of technology in the production of any commodity effectively devalues competing products produced with considerably more labor input. U.S. agri-business, utilizing the most advanced technologies in the world and very few workers, regularly produces rice more cheaply than any nation on earth. In every instance, the threat or actual export of rice in significant quantities has the effect of undermining the national rice markets worldwide.

The “liberal” advocates of opening Cuba to U.S. economic investments and commodity exports often cite the great economic gains obtained by U.S. multinational corporations in China and Russia as a prime example. They have found a regular voice in the editorial pages of *The New York Times*, which repeatedly champions an end to the embargo in order to advance U.S. economic penetration of Cuba as the most effective way to bring down the Cuban workers’ state.

The more hard-bitten sectors of the U.S. ruling class prefer the traditional stick to Obama’s carrot. They remain in accord with the 1960 State Department memo—continuing in essence to this day—to “bring about hunger, desperation and [the] overthrow of [the Cuban] government.”

The National Lawyers Guild statement also noted that “under the current [Obama] administration, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) had secretly attempted to build an opposition movement in Cuba which it acknowledged had no significant support from within the island. These covert actions as documented several months ago by the Associated Press include: (1) sending undercover Latin American youth to Cuba posing as health workers; (2) establishing a fake “Cuban Twitter” program, [the now-abandoned ZunZuneo (the sound of the hummingbird) program], collecting the data of 50,000 unsuspecting Cubans; and (3) infiltrating the underground hip-hop scene and co-opting artists.”

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(continued from page 6)

These more “subtle” programs were, of course, accompanied by the ongoing and illegal 52-year U.S. embargo/blockade, which has caused Cuba billions of dollars in lost revenue and has been central to the U.S.-imposed misery inflicted on the Cuban people. Despite the embargo/blockade and all other illegal measures employed by U.S. imperialism, revolutionary Cuba has persevered, including maintaining one of the world’s finest and free systems of health care, public education, and other vital social services that are universally admired.

In recent years, and following a massive consultation process with the Cuban people, Cuba has implemented a series of reforms, within the context of maintaining its socialist ideals, aimed at improving the efficiency of the Cuban economy. These include granting licenses for the operation of small businesses that involve just a few people, usually family members, in their operation. In 2013, these enterprises employed some 400,000 Cubans.

This fall, the government announced 246 projects that will be added to the number of industries that are open to foreign investment. This effort focuses on the special development zone that is being developed in an expanded Port of Mariel. The new zone will offer the possibility of 100 percent private ownership, although enterprises will be subject to government, labor, and other regulation.

Additionally, modest parcels of state land have been distributed on a renewable-lease basis to Cuban workers and agricultural laborers. Here again, the objective was to improve efficiency and avoid bureaucratic abuse. The latter has been periodically and publicly noted and condemned by the Cuban leadership, especially with regard to the state agriculture system, where theft and corruption have been rampant. In cases of imperialist-imposed and massive shortages of basic necessities, bureaucratic abuse is well known. Combating this abuse was been a critical part of the legacy of the Castro team.

Socialist Action has documented Cuba’s economic reforms in significant detail in the resolution in solidarity with Cuba adopted by our 2012 national convention and published in the pamphlet entitled, “The Politics of Revolutionary Socialism.” We noted that unlike the process of capitalist restoration that has been completed in Russia and China, no significant portion of Cuba’s economy has been granted to any section of the Cuban leadership or to international corporations. Indeed, before implementation, the proposed economic reforms were presented for discussion, debate, and modification to well-organized and massive assemblies of workers and farmers that included millions of Cubans.

While Cuba still lacks formal and vitally necessary institutions of workers’ democracy, such as the soviet (council) system under the revolutionary leadership of Lenin and Trotsky in the early period of the Russian Revolution, the present Cuban leadership has not developed into a hardened caste whose interests can only be preserved by repression. To the contrary, despite the incredible hardships imposed on Cuba by U.S. and world imperialism, the Castro team has struggled valiantly to maintain the social gains of the 1959 revolution and to foster social equality to a greater extent than anywhere on earth.

The Cuban example in sending hundreds of doctors and medical workers to fight the scourge of Ebola in Africa and similar humanitarian efforts across the globe is testimony to its ongoing revolutionary and socialist orientation.



Obama failed to lift the embargo; it will soon become clear that the U.S. will use this leverage to extract further concessions.

The heinous U.S. embargo/blockade of Cuba has been annually condemned as illegal in United Nations General Assembly resolutions in each of the past 23 years. The most recent vote on this issue was 188-2, with only the U.S. and Israel voting against.

Commenting on the embargo/blockade and the new U.S.-Cuba agreement, and reaffirming Cuba’s socialist course, Raul Castro stated emphatically, “An important step has been taken, but the essential thing remains—the end of the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba, which has grown in recent years particularly in terms of financial transactions.” In short, Cuba, unlike virtually every nation on earth, has been denied credit from almost all of the world’s major banking institutions.

While Obama declined to lift the embargo, with the assertion that this required congressional action—that is, rescinding the Helms-Burton Law and other anti-Cuba legislation—what will soon become clear is that the U.S. government will seek to use its embargo leverage to extract important concessions.

Similarly, after a century of colonial occupation, including torture of so-called terrorists captured in the course of U.S. wars in the Middle East and Afghanistan, Obama made no reference to the U.S.-occupied naval base at Guantánamo Bay. The Cuban government continues to demand an end to this colonial occupation, a product of the 1898 American war in Cuba based on the infamous “Remember the Maine!” pretext, when Spanish authorities were charged with blowing up the U.S. battleship *Maine* in Havana harbor.

Morales characterized climate change as the crystallization of the capitalist crisis and stated that we have two choices—to change global society fundamentally or to allow capitalism, which has commodified even life itself, to annihilate the world’s people and all of nature. Along with thousands of other climate crisis activists, he denounced the two decades of pretentious blather and do-nothingism of past UN meetings, and condemned the liars who promise to take action with no intention of ever doing so.

It is clear that after 20 years of melting ice masses, rising sea levels, intense heat waves, droughts, wildfires, and ferocious storms, Earth’s climate is not going to be restored by capitalist governments’ exerting “peer pressure” upon one another in a “name and shame” operation, as *The New York Times* describes the Lima accord. If we are to achieve an anti-capitalist overturn in time to save the planet for human habitation, it will require powerful mass movements representing many different social layers in each country to challenge and bring down the ruling classes and to culminate in a worldwide eco-socialist revolution. ■

Obama’s press conference also announced several additional executive orders aimed at softening relations with Cuba. Dependent on expected new and soon to be enacted Treasury and Commerce Dept. revisions of current policy and their formal publication in the Federal Register, Obama and his administration officials indicated that rules on visits to Cuba by Americans will be liberalized to allow for travel in categories that have in

the past required special licenses. These include family visits, as well as travel regarding official U.S. or foreign government business, journalism, competitions, and meetings for research, educational, professional, and religious activities and humanitarian support.

Specific licenses will no longer be required for business related to telecommunications and internet linkages with Cuba. Further, remittances by Americans with family members in Cuba will now increase to \$2000 every three months, up from \$500. Americans visiting Cuba will be allowed to legally import merchandise bought there with a value of up to \$400, including up to \$100 in tobacco and alcohol purchases.

In the same vein, Obama—declaring the U.S. approach to Cuba “outdated” and stating that “these 50 years have shown that isolation has not worked”—proclaimed that his objective was the normalization of relations with Cuba, including the construction and establishment of a U.S. embassy in Havana and an Obama administration effort to remove Cuba from the U.S. terrorist list. Secretary of State John Kerry indicated his intention to pay a formal visit to Cuba along with other top administration officials.

Liberal apologists for U.S. imperialism have been effusive with praise for Obama’s recent policy initiatives, characterizing them as sincere efforts to portray his “legacy” as that of a progressive, liberal-minded—if not humanistic—head of state.

Mindful of the need to attract to its 2016 electoral efforts the unprecedented millions who did not vote in the recent mid-term elections—two-thirds of the eligible electorate and especially Blacks, Latinos, and youth who saw no significant difference between the twin parties of the ruling rich—the president has engaged in a flurry of executive pronouncements aimed at burnishing his tattered image. These include his fraudulent immigration reforms, his “success” in negotiating the new \$1.1 trillion congressional funding bill (that granted additional billions to the corporate elite), his tepid criticisms of the now internationally exposed CIA torture practices, and his most recent release/transfer of four Guantanamo prisoners who had been held for decades without charges or legal representation.

All these measures, as with Obama’s “new” Cuba policies, are in their essence the dressing of the government’s ongoing reactionary policies in more presentable garb. They are aimed at maintaining and advancing the interests of the U.S. rulers at the expense of the world’s people, including the American working class. The classic maxim of over 3000 years past applies with full force today: “Beware of Greeks bearing gifts!” Obama’s Trojan Horse belies wicked intentions. Nevertheless, the hard-fought winning of the freedom of the Cuban Five, and all other measures aimed at ending the monstrous imperialist embargo/blockade, are important victories for revolutionary Cuba and all humanity. ■

... Climate

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gral and sustainable management of forests with funding and technological support that satisfies the needs of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. It also ensures gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, who play vital roles in farming and hunter/gatherer economies and often suffer the worst when ecosystems are degraded.

Bolivia’s Aymara president, who campaigned as an “eco-socialist” in his latest successful bid for reelection, pointed out that the environment is the common heritage of all the peoples of the world and must be protected from the ravages of commodity production. He juxtaposed the holistic practices of communal societies to the unlimited growth of a predatory, insatiable, consumerist capitalism that accumulates and concentrates wealth in the hands of a few while reducing the rest of the world’s population to grinding poverty and marginalization.



(Left) Vancouver, B.C., protest against U.S. and Canadian involvement in Vietnam War in 1968.

History lessons for today's activists

By BARRY WEISLEDER

“Revolutionary Activism in the 1950s & 60s — Ernest Tate, A Memoir,” Resistance Books, London. Vol. 1, Canada 1955-1965, 274 pages; Vol. 2, Britain 1965-1970, 402 pages.

I’m very excited about the two-volume work that Ernest Tate produced, with considerable help from his life partner Jess Mackenzie. Although I have been involved in radical politics for 45 years, compared to Ernie, I’m a late-comer. Yet my passion about “Revolutionary Activism in the 1950s and 60s” is real because I find that it is not only about the past; it is very much about the present.

For revolutionary socialists in the Canadian state today, this is our prologue. It describes the application of the political method known as Marxism. The legacy of the Socialist Education League and the League for Socialist Action/Ligue Socialiste Ouvriere, as recounted particularly in Vol. 1, represents the framework and the guide to the present program and practice of Socialist Action/Ligue pour l’Action socialiste. Vol. 2 deals mostly with Ernie’s political activity in Britain.

Ernie’s modesty leads him to describe his work as a memoir. It is that, but it’s much more than that. It is rich in political lessons that apply to today’s circumstances and issues. In my view it is a kind of textbook for revolutionary party building, particularly in tough times. The present decade and the 1950s have that in common.

It certainly helps that the writing is very accessible and unpretentious. The narrative is fast-paced, compelling, and yet a breezy account of world historic events and prominent personalities.

Ernie wouldn’t have met the Trotskyists, the anti-Stalinist revolutionary socialists in Toronto, in the mid-1950s, or perhaps at all, if he had not stumbled upon the Toronto Labour Bookstore on Yonge Street, just north of Wellesley. That’s where curiosity encountered revolutionary political leadership. Ross Dowson, the store manager, had been the socialist candidate for mayor who won tens of thousands of votes in the 1940s. It’s a good thing that the socialists had a bookstore, to nurture critical thinking, to attract new supporters, and to organize their ranks.

Of course, that required an organization. It was called The Club. The bland name was a concession to anti-communist hysteria, fanned by the mass media. Meetings of The Club, the tiny Trotskyist party, took place in the store basement. Once he was invited to attend, Ernie noticed the business-like conduct of party membership meetings, the routine collection of dues, and the serious attention paid to internal education, offering new members an opportunity to learn how to speak in public.

Public forums were held elsewhere, on a regular basis, usually in a union hall—even if the seating exceeded the need. Forums featured speakers like Helen Sobell (wife of Morton Sobell of the famous Rosenberg case). That forum promoted the Sobell Defense Committee, with the involvement of members of the Labour Progressive Party. That was the name adopted by the Communist Party of Canada after it was made illegal under the War Measures Act.

In the 1950s, world nuclear annihilation seemed imminent. Tensions ran very high. The conflict between the imperialist powers and the Stalinist-led workers’ states was pervasive. And to many, it seemed destined to be permanent. That reality had a huge impact on working-class politics.

On the one hand, the repressive anti-communist atmosphere in the West caused some socialist tendencies to make concessions to imperialism. They embraced “third camp” politics, supported by the theory of state capitalism. That theory taught neutrality in the conflict between Washington and Moscow, between Washington and Vietnam, and between Washington and Cuba. In other words, it condoned hostility, or at least indifference, to the colonial revolution, and to the defense of the gains of the October Revolution.

On the other hand, the Cold War led some socialist groups to adapt to Stalinism. It led them to become apologists for

the ruling bureaucracies in Moscow, or Beijing, or Hanoi.

Inside the Fourth International (FI), a number of national sections decided to “enter” the Communist Party in their own countries, or in some cases, to “enter” the Socialist Party. The specific form of “entry,” entryism *sui generis*, meant dissolving the public face of the organization—for the long term. It was not at all like doing some work in those parties, while continuing to be openly active outside of them.

Some Trotskyist leaders predicted “centuries of deformed workers’ states.” They saw the CPs as the place to be, for the long run, in order to defend those states and the working class against imperialism. It took 10 to 20 years to break FI sections from this extreme tactic. Meanwhile, differences over concessions to Stalinism, and differences over the authority of the FI leadership to dictate tactics to national sections, what American Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon decried as “Cominternism,” caused a split in the FI. It lasted from 1953 to 1964.

The Cuban socialist revolution did much to heal the split. Cuba demonstrated that the colonial revolution could smash the imperialist stranglehold by going socialist, by bringing the workers and farmers to power, by defying the two-stage reformist schema dictated by Moscow to its satellite parties. Ernie and his comrades were at the forefront of explaining the key concept underlying the liberation of Cuba—Leon Trotsky’s strategy of Permanent Revolution. Although it is mentioned only in passing in the book, Permanent Revolution today retains its central importance. The LSA and the FI heralded the new rise of world revolution and seized the opportunity to advance party building in that period.

The book reports the fight against racial discrimination at the Palais Royale, on Lakeshore Blvd. in Toronto. It refers to solidarity with the restaurant sit-ins in the U.S. and Canada, and identifies with the Black voter registration campaign led by the Freedom Riders in the Deep South. Ernie describes the Ban the Bomb campaign, and the early days of the Vietnam anti-war movement in North America and Europe.

All of these campaigns, and many more, succeeded because they brought together people of different views who could agree on one issue, like opposition to a war. They also practiced the principle of non-exclusion. That meant that the campaign was open to all groups and individuals, and that participating groups would enjoy equal rights to speak at the major events of the campaign.

The Trotskyists advocated legal, peaceful mass action. They didn’t discourage letter writing and the lobbying of bourgeois politicians. But they actively promoted proletarian methods of struggle: demonstrations, sit-ins, teach-ins, mass picketing, and strikes.

The aim was to encourage broad participation and to empower the participants to create a movement capable of winning a majority, and winning its demands. And they were very successful—in tearing down overt forms of racial discrimination, helping to end the war in Vietnam, winning the right of women to choose abortion, putting gay liberation on the political agenda, and targeting industrial polluters to clean up the mess they made. We in Socialist Action try to follow their example.

Like our political predecessors, we are strong proponents of the united front, which is essential to covering new ground and defending past progress. The labour movement is beset by many problems that impede the efforts of working people to defend our past gains, much less to build a just society. The question is: how can we work to remove the obstacles to progress?

Decades of labour concessions, and mis-education of the ranks by the proponents of business unionism, have entrenched bureaucratic roadblocks to change and fostered worker passivity. Radical initiatives from below, self-organization of the ranks, from the bottom-up, is necessary. This is precisely what militants of the SEL and the LSA did.

As Ernie recounts, they fought repression in the unions. They campaigned against exclusion from the Ironworkers’ union of SEL leader Paddy Stanton. They proposed class-

struggle policies. They fought for significant improvements in wages and conditions of work, and for the right of union members to set bargaining demands and to vote on tentative agreements.

They launched the ‘Forward With Democracy’ caucus in the Teamsters union. They pushed the fight for the 44-hour week. They built the “No Reprisals Defense Fund.” They ran candidates in union elections on a class-struggle platform.

This brings us to the issue of independent working-class political action. The first task for class-conscious workers is to break the majority of our fellow workers from supporting the bosses’ parties. That entails building a political party based on the union movement, a party within which socialists fight for a Workers’ Agenda of democratic, defensive, and transitional demands. The only mass party in North America that is based on the unions is the New Democratic Party, in English Canada.

That meant opposing the LPP’s line for “anti-monopoly coalitions,” i.e., giving backhanded support to the Liberal Party. SEL comrades got the United Electrical Workers’ Union, then led by Stalinists, to support the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation instead of “progressive” Liberals. Of course, the bureaucrats who dominate the NDP today—virtually the same officials who dominate the unions—wish to impede the socialists, even to exclude us if conditions permit.

The leaders of the CCF, the NDP’s predecessor party, expelled Trotskyists in the 1950s. The NDP brass did the same in the ’60s. But that did not alter the orientation of the SEL or of the LSA to the labour party. They continued to build activist groupings. They launched a Left Caucus, then a Socialist Caucus. They fought successfully to win support for public ownership of the resource sector, for the extension of public health care, for NDP opposition to the war in Vietnam, and to end Canada’s involvement in NATO.

The Trotskyists urged the CCF and the NDP to compete in city elections, to quash the myth that city elections are non-class and non-partisan affairs. And when Labour and its party did not contest city elections, the Trotskyists did so whenever they could.

You can readily see how closely Socialist Action patterns its activity on that of the SEL and the LSA. We founded and play a leading role in the NDP Socialist Caucus. The SC has much to show for its work. Together with many allies, it won the NDP to a “Canada Out of Afghanistan” policy. It defended the reference to socialism in the NDP constitution, and pushed many party policies to the left. It is the most consistent force for democracy in the party.

Finally, I want to discuss the need for building the revolutionary party on an international scale. Capitalism is global. So must be the efforts of the working class to resist and overcome the capitalist system of exploitation and oppression. In the wake of the dissolution of the First International, the capitulation of the Second International to imperialism, and destruction of the Third International by Stalinism, Canadian socialist workers helped to found the Fourth International in 1938.

The predecessors of SA worked to build the FI in the 1950s, ’60s, and ’70s. That included participating in important debates, sometimes aligned in tendencies and factions. It also meant working closely with American comrades, with the U.S. Socialist Workers’ Party, prior to its break with Trotskyism in the 1980s. Socialist Action Canada today works closely with SA-USA, the inheritor of the best traditions of the SWP.

I mentioned earlier that the FI experienced sharp debates in the 1950s and 60s over how to relate to Stalinist parties. In the 1960s and 70s the debates centred on the merits of urban and rural guerrilla warfare, with tragic results for our party in Argentina, reminiscent of the tragedy that befell Che Guevara in Bolivia. Today, there are sharp disagreements in the F.I. over revolutionary party building, that is, over the Leninist concept of organization. There is precedent for this kind of dispute, which underscores another benefit of the book.

In the 1960s, Ken Coates, a leader of the Labour Party left wing and a member of the FI group in Britain, the International Marxist Group, saw it more as a vehicle for building a “broad left” current in the Labour Party, rather than to pursue the work in the Labour Party primarily to build a revolutionary party outside of it. The latter is the approach of SA-Canada, to build an open and independent revolutionary party, and it was the approach of Ernie and his comrades in Britain in the late ’60s.

The book isn’t perfect. It has little to say about the national question. It contains a few minor errors of chronology and typing. But for the most part, the book faithfully presents a method of politics that has proven it can change the world for the better.

For that reason I encourage everyone to buy and to read the two volumes. Read it not just because it’s a good story well told and a history that you will not find anywhere else, but primarily because you want to change the world today. We are indebted to Ernie and Jess for the wonderful work they’ve done. I say to all who read this review: if you agree with the message of these fine books, you should join Socialist Action. Together we will make a better world, and better sooner than later. ■

A brief history of political Islam

At the time of this writing, the United States has been at war in Afghanistan for 13 years and in Iraq for 11 years. The United States has been engaged in a global drone bombing campaign since 2001 in Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Libya. The Arab Spring has opened up a new rift through which arms and money have flowed to groups currently turning Egypt, Syria, and Libya into bloodbaths. And this past summer, the United States and its allies initiated another bombing campaign against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) on both Iraqi and Syrian territory.

We are told, in most of these cases, that we are engaged in a “clash of civilizations”—that this is a life-and-death struggle between the secular, democratic Western nations on the one hand, and the barbarous, 7th-century Islamic world on the other. We are told that there are those in the Middle East who are simply evil, or incompatible with modernity, and that the only solution is bombing and occupation. Or alternately, we are told to reject the interventionist narrative and hold up the most reactionary of groups as “anti-imperialists.”

Both of these narratives serve to obfuscate the true nature of politics and economics in the Middle East; the first is in the service of justifying naked imperialist aggression over the region’s resources, and the second is to gloss over the failure to build real, working-class institutions in those countries, which are the only ones capable of effectively resisting imperialist power. The only way to truly understand the dynamics of power and empire in the Middle East is through historical analysis, taking into account the material basis of the social movements that emerged and grew there in the 1970s.

In the years following the Second World War, the territories of the great colonial powers experienced a period of massive upheaval. In particular, in the Islamic world, the great push to decolonize was led primarily by groups espousing some form or another of radical secular nationalism. Religious movements had heretofore been relatively minor.

Leaders such as Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt and Mohammad Mossadeq in Iran implemented structural changes in society designed to both reduce the influence of the former colonial powers, and kick-start economic development after long periods of imperial stagnation. This included land reform, the nationalization of banks and key industries, the expansion of education, and massive state-planned industrialization projects. Of course, this had the immediate effect of promoting intervention by Western governments.

Why intervention? In Iran, there was the direct nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company; in Egypt, there was the prospect of Nasser’s “Arab Socialism” taking hold and spreading throughout the Arab world. Both of these developments represented severe threats to the Western domination of the Middle East’s oil reserves.

In addition, during the depths of the Cold War, these represented potential allies to the Soviet Union. In Egypt, the U.S. began to support the Muslim Brotherhood, and in Iran, the CIA orchestrated a coup against Mossadeq and installed Shah Reza Pahlavi, ushering in 26 years of brutal absolute rule and culminating with the Islamic Revolution that overthrew the Shah and instituted the current theocratic Iranian regime.

During this time, the United States increasingly relied on



(Left) Rescue team responds to an attack by alleged Islamists on the offices of *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris on Jan. 7. The satirical publication has received messages of solidarity from around the world.

Unfortunately, imperialist governments and the corporate media are using this terrible event to whip up hatred against Muslims, and to justify their endless wars in the Middle East.

The New Anti-Capitalist Party of France, while solidarizing with the victims, stated, “We will not be part of any national union with the sorcerer’s apprentices who play with racism, stir up hatred against foreigners and in particular Muslims, or make use of this event to introduce new repressive laws. They have a heavy responsibility for the xenophobic and poisonous climate in which we live today.”

Western imperialism saw an opportunity to counteract Soviet influence and nationalist aspirations in the Middle East by using the Saudi networks of finance and charity. This is most evident in the rise of Hamas as a counterweight to the Palestine Liberation Organization, and perhaps more spectacularly, in the creation of the Afghan Mujahideen (and later, the Taliban in Pakistan) in order to combat the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in support of the Communist Party of that country. The forces trained and armed by the CIA and Pakistan to fight the Soviet Union in Chechnya and Afghanistan formed the basis of modern Islamist groups such as ISIS and al-Qaeda.

Thus, a confluence of geopolitical and economic factors led to the rise of political Islamic movements in the 1970s. The economic collapse and neoliberal restructuring of the world economic order led to a squeeze on the booming middle classes, with the call of global jihad against the Soviet Union particularly promising in light of the political failure of nationalism and powerful financial backers.

The class basis of nearly all Islamic movements, then, is thoroughly modern, rather than a relic of a bygone era. Educated urban youths have made up most of the armed, militarized cadre, and the older, conservative middle class typically have formed the “political” wings of those groups active in electoral politics. In recent years, they have also incorporated numbers of the very poor, and especially members of former militaries and civil administrations. For example, ISIS currently has a number of ex-Ba’ath (an ostensibly “socialist” party) members among its ranks; the Taliban and other reactionary factions in Afghanistan contain several former members of the Afghan Communist Party.

Once we realize that the historical dynamics of Islamist politics in the Arab and Muslim world trace the rise and establishment of a narrow section of petty-bourgeois elements, we can at once see two things: First, that the “clash of civilizations” conception is utterly false. The intense barbarism wrought by these apparent throwbacks to the 7th century are modern creations that are themselves sustained by repeated attempts by imperialist powers to maintain control over global resources and markets, rather than apparently inevitable consequences of a backward culture.

And second, being thoroughly middle-class in orientation, it is impossible for these elements to be principled anti-imperialists; petty-bourgeois ideology cannot help but be inconsistent. The working class must utilize its own organizations to mount a determined struggle for power, particularly in semi-industrialized countries like Egypt, before fundamental change can come about in the oppressive social and economic system in the Middle East. ■

Saudi Arabia as a proxy for influencing events in the Muslim world. The state religion of Saudi Arabia is the Wahabi form of Sunni Islam, an ultra-conservative school that is intricately tied with the formation of the Saudi state and the legitimacy of the Saud family’s rule over the peninsula. This factor, combined with the country’s massive oil wealth and relative lack of industry (and hence a sizable working class), meant that Saudi Arabia was especially well-positioned as a counterbalance to the secular nationalist and socialist/communist movements emerging in the region.

In addition, the massive influx of oil wealth enriched large numbers of the native middle class within the oil-producing countries and created a large, internationally mobile middle class in countries like Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The use of oil money and Wahabi ideology as weapons against secular governments in the Third World took a general form that was repeated several times over. Using oil windfalls, Saudi Arabia developed a vast financial network across the Islamic world—a banking system that allowed for the transfer of funds to selected Islamic groups, who engaged in political action against and sometimes violent suppression of secular and socialist forces while providing education, social services, and political propaganda in order to spread their ideologies.

Of course, Nasser’s “Arab Socialist” project was only socialist in name. In actuality it was still a nationalist ideology rooted in the middle class, advocating for heavy state intervention into the economy but failing to fundamentally change the class relations within Egypt. The story was much the same for the secular Ba’ath parties controlling Iraq and Syria, as well as for Z.A. Bhutto’s government in Pakistan. Thus, these societies were not immune to crises of capitalism, and as the global crisis of the 1970s began to grow, economic development in the Muslim world sputtered (in the case of non-oil-producing countries), and these governments collapsed into authoritarian regimes.

During this period of economic and political turmoil, the Islamic movements, backed by CIA and Saudi money, began to make serious inroads into Middle Eastern society. This began with students for whom newly-attained access to education still did not guarantee a place in the new society, as well as the middle classes that were newly empowered economically by the oil boom but still suffering severe political repression in their countries of origin.

... Youth on the move!

(continued from page 1)

obedience arrests.

Such an assertion is, admittedly, not readily quantifiable. After all, no one is required to show proof of age in order to join a demonstration, and marchers do not line up by year of birth. Yet, the evidence is there for anyone to see. Participate in local protests. Watch national television coverage; look at YouTube footage, examine social media, and the conclusion is obvious and undeniable. Political actions, from demonstrations to die-ins, are significantly young and multi-racial.

More and more, a new generation of youth is making its first political act in the name of racial justice. They expect and demand that a nation that proclaims “Liberty and Justice for All” must actually live up to these ideals. Young protesters today are not necessarily the veterans of the Occupy movement. Many of the youth who are taking to the streets now were too young to figure in that wave of actions. Instead, they are moved by the injustice that plays out in front of their eyes.

While most have not placed an “equal sign” between racism and capitalism—at least, not yet—they do insist that the political and legal system must change

for the better. They bring to these protests no faith that government will reform itself and no faith in the Democratic Party. It appears more and more that young whites who are compelled to action feel their strongest identification less with the social system that provides them an uncertain future and more with the Black victims of that system. This represents a profound shift and growth in social consciousness.

Polls taken in response to Ferguson show an unsurprising racial divide in America. Whites overall are more likely to deny the existence of racism, support the police, etc. Yet, Pew Research data from August 2014 also shows young whites at odds with their parents’ generation regarding issues of race, bias, police misconduct, and other issues.

A positive stand against racism is not an isolated occurrence but part of an overall pattern of progressive ideas. This is the generation that believes gays deserve the right to marry, that wants abortion not only legal but also available, that supports the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from overseas, that would extend health care to being a universal right, and favors a healthy environment for people more than healthy profits for corporations.

It has not always been this way. For instance, following the police assault on Rodney King in 1991, author and activist Earl Ofari Hutchinson wrote a column in

the *Guardian* newspaper entitled: “Police brutality: Where are the white leftists?” (May 1, 1991, p. 18). He contrasted two demonstrations in Los Angeles, held a few months apart, in which he had participated. The first was a demonstration of 20,000 mostly white protesters against the Gulf War while the second was a demonstration of 6000 or 7000 mostly Black protesters against police violence. “My question: In less than three months, where did the white progressives disappear to?”

Hutchinson continued: “How is it that thousands of white activists can wage passionate campaigns against oppression and human rights abuses in Chile, El Salvador, South Africa, China, the Occupied Territories and the Philippines but not in the ghettos and barrios of their own cities? Why is it that white progressives are continually struck by political paralysis and unable to unite with African-Americans in anti-racist struggles on U.S. streets?”

This is a different generation than the one Hutchinson criticized. A strong impulse of solidarity leads young people to fight alongside minorities, the poor, and the perpetual victims of American “justice.” The same spirit of solidarity that defined the best of past labor and social movements—the conviction that “an injury to one is an injury to all”—is being renewed in today’s national protests. ■



... Killer cops go free

(continued from page 1)

550 civilian killings between 2007 and 2012 were not even counted.

Research by Philip Stinson, a criminologist at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, found that only 41 officers were charged with murder or manslaughter between 2004 and 2011. Despite the hype, the number of cop deaths has actually gone down.

Albert Burneko, of Deadspin.com, wrote, "America employs the enforcers of its power to beat, kill, and terrorize, deploys its judiciary to say that's OK. ... This not a flaw in the design; this is the design."

Most members of the new generation of anti-racist activists taking part in the struggle are, so far, sidestepping the older civil-rights organizations and leaders that are linked to the Democratic Party. On Dec. 13, dozens of U.S. cities had anti-racist demonstrations.

Tens of thousands participated in the giant Millions March on Dec. 13 in New York City. One protester, Kayesha, told Pacifica Radio, "It's amazing. It's empowering. I've never seen anything

like this. This is my first protest of this magnitude. And I'm just grateful to be part of changing history, because that's what we need to do—not make history, we need to change it!"

Another protester on Dec. 13 was Thenjiwe McHarris, who told Pacifica, "What we're seeing in the U.S. is what some may call an uprising, an uprising of young Black people, but also people across issue, across race, led by young Black people, saying enough is enough, you can't keep killing Black people. And we're not going to stop because Black lives do matter!"

At the same march, Frank Graham, father of Ramarley Graham—murdered in his own home by a New York cop in 2012—chanted, "Killer cops, killer cops, killer cops must-must-must-must-go to jail!" In Graham's case, as in that of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, a grand jury declined to indict the police officer for trial.

Eric Garner's mother, Gwen Carr, speaking at the thousands-strong protest in Washington, D.C., on the same day, called the demonstrations a "histo-

ry-making moment." "It's just so overwhelming to see all who have come to stand with us today," she said. "I mean, look at the masses. Black, white, all races, all religions. ... We need to stand like this at all times."

Brown's death on Aug. 9 sparked months of protests in Ferguson, Mo. Working-class and unemployed African American youth and other anti-racists took to the streets in boiling rage, but usually peacefully. Democratic Party Governor Jay Nixon sent in thousands of militarized police and the National Guard, clubbing, arresting and tear-gassing protesters. Also arrested were journalists—23 and counting (Dec. 18).

Gov. Nixon formally ended the siege on Dec. 17, but the protests and police onslaught continued. The Dec. 31 *Daily Dot* reported that protesters "swarmed the St. Louis Metro Police Department headquarters and briefly occupied the lobby. Participants handed out a mock 'Eviction Notice' and circulated a list of demands, including a meeting with either St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay" or other officials. Police used pepper spray on the crowd.

Militant rallies have taken place in dozens of cities across the U.S., from Oakland and Los Angeles to Nashville

and Miami; from Milwaukee and Chicago to Boston. An Amtrak train was stopped by a die-in in California; another die-in was held at a Brooklyn Nets game when Britain's Prince William and his wife Kate attended. In Oakland, 250 protesters blockaded a police station for hours on Dec. 15.

Major Christmas shopping hubs, like Macy's in New York City, were disrupted by die-ins and other forms of protest. In many cities, highways, bridges and tunnels were occupied as protesters, mostly youth of all backgrounds, said 'hell no to racism.'

Philadelphia has seen many marches and die-ins, involving hundreds of people at a time. A broad coalition in Philadelphia is organizing a large march on Martin Luther King Day, Jan. 19, which will protest police violence and call for an end to their "Stop and Frisk" policies.

The diversity of the militant, although mostly peaceful, protests and the apparent leading role of African American activists represents a new and higher stage in the anti-racist struggle.

The grand jury masquerade

In the "Bonfire of the Vanities," a novel about New York in the 1980s, Judge Sol Watchler said, in a famous quote, a grand jury could "indict a ham sandwich." Exceptions have historically included violence against African Americans, as in the recent Brown and Garner cases. Essentially, when the rulers want an indictment, they get it. Justice Department statistics from fiscal 1994 to 1998 reveal that federal prosecutors obtained 122,879 indictments. Over the same period, in only 83 cases did prosecutors fail to get indictments!

Lynne Stewart, a veteran civil-rights attorney who spent over four years in prison as the victim of a vicious government frame-up, insists that the grand jury system, "should be abolished" (see her article on this page).

The grand jury system of secret hearings is responsible for letting many cops walk—as in the Brown, Garner, Martin and Graham cases. Grand juries decide whether to bring charges against cops in a highly manipulated setting. There is no cross-examination of witnesses. Attorneys for victims cannot attend. Most prosecutors have close ties with local police and are loathe to genuinely seek an indictment of cops.

On Jan. 5, a juror who sat on the panel that reviewed evidence in the Ferguson, Mo., killing of Michael Brown filed suit to remove a lifetime gag order that prevents grand jury members from speaking publicly about the case. In the suit, the juror contends that "the investigation of Wilson had a stronger focus on the victim [Brown] than in other cases presented to the grand jury." Also, explanation of the law was made "in a muddled and untimely manner" compared to other cases.

"In Plaintiff's view," states the suit brief, "the current information available about the grand jurors' views is not entirely accurate—especially the implication that all grand jurors believed that there was no support for any charges. ... Moreover, the public characterization of the grand jurors' view of witnesses and evidence does not accord with Plaintiff's own."

The suit names St. Louis County Prosecutor Robert McCulloch as the defendant, since he would be the person to bring charges against a grand jury member who violated the gag order. The plaintiff, who is being represented by the American Civil Liberties Union of Missouri, is identified in the lawsuit as "Grand Juror Doe."

An example of McCulloch's conduct in the Brown case is that he knowingly presented "Witness 40" to the grand jury as Sandra McElroy, a deranged 45-year-old St. Louis woman with a

'Abolish the grand jury'

By LYNNE STEWART

Lynne Stewart is a crusading civil liberties attorney and former political prisoner. She was released from prison a year ago.

One of my most prophetic statements is that the "law" is what "they" want it to be at any given time. Witness the Dred Scott decision, the Japanese internment cases of World War II, and the Scottsboro and other legal lynching cases.

In 2014, stemming from the series (ongoing since 1619) of unprosecuted crimes against the African American population, we confront the lawlessness, now inherent, of an ancient legal institution, the grand jury. My history here may be fuzzy (due to my jail time of four-plus years and subsequently battling the big C)—but hey, there's always Wikipedia! Nonetheless, my own experiences as a practicing criminal defense lawyer for over 30 years will help in this short essay.

In New York State, people accused of serious crimes (felonies) can be brought before the court by a num-

ber of avenues. Most common is the presentation of the case, by the District Attorney, in a rudimentary way, to a grand jury, who will then vote on an indictment. (The famous or infamous statement that a grand jury will indict a ham sandwich being entirely true.)

As I recall, the grand jury was an outgrowth of the Magna Carta, a medieval document that was fought for by the nobles (male and white and born to privilege) in which they won the right to not be thrown in and left forever in a dank and dark prison by the king. They now had the right (habeas corpus) to demand to be heard and judged by their "peers" (equals). Of course, we are not talking "fair" here, just the way it operated.

The functioning of the grand jury has not changed a great deal since those days. It is still possible for a defense attorney to present her client and allow him to tell his story (usually in a self-defense case), and there are even those rare instances where the grand jury will vote no indictment.

However, the abuse by the grand

jury in cases such as Michael Brown and Eric Garner, where there is only prosecution testimony, and that is in total control of the District Attorney or prosecuting authorities, is obvious when there can be no presentation of an opposition scenario—they have killed the obvious witnesses. And so, the grand jury does what it is best at, following the instructions and demands of the District Attorney, Missouri or Staten Island, N.Y. It is the ham sandwich approach, and there is no blame, no accountability. The police and prosecutors are a single entity, and they have an agenda.

The grand jury, in my not so humble view, should be abolished. It is an anachronism, and the miniscule number that benefit from it are not worth the rubber stamp it has become, particularly in the murder of people of color by the police.

A far better solution (short of the revolution we all hope and dream of) is to make those suspected of those heinous crimes stand TRIAL. Let the 12 jurors decide their fate in an open and fully presented evidentiary case. It's not a perfect solution but far, far better that the endless parade of murderers going free because their victims don't matter. ■

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... Killer cops

(continued from page 10)

criminal record and a history of using the “N” word online. After being outed by the “Smoking Gun” website, McCulloch admitted that although he had known McElroy’s testimony was false, he referred to it in order to favor Officer Wilson. (Smoking Gun also claims that the video provided by police showing Brown’s theft of cigars is false and was edited.)

Most countries have abandoned the grand jury system. Although it was begun in Britain during medieval times, Britain discontinued it 80 years ago. Only 19 U.S. states require a grand jury in felonies.

Democrats no answer to racist cops

Within the protest movement are forces like TV personality Al Sharpton and the National Action Network (NAN), with close ties to Barack Obama and the Democrats. With Sharpton’s unique platform and resources, he has managed a close alliance with the families of Brown, Garner, and several other police brutality victims.

Although Sharpton called an Eric Garner demonstration on Staten Island, which received significant labor support, the rally of several thousand was nevertheless organized as a tame, top-down affair loaded with speeches praising the Democratic Party. So too was the Washington, D.C., demonstration on Dec. 13 called by NAN, which was challenged by youth from Ferguson who briefly mounted the stage. Before being chased off, one called from the mike, “This movement was started by the young people. We started this. It should be young people all over this stage. It should be young people all up here.”

The Justice League NYC has also gotten attention organizing entertainment at protests and arranging a meeting with New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio to discuss the grand jury decisions and racist police practices. The group is supported by Russell Simmons, a hip-hop music and clothing entrepreneur said to be worth \$340 million in 2011. The meeting was without conclusion, although a Dec. 19 *New York Daily News* article reported comments by the mayor indicating a willingness by the group to help police identify violent protesters—a claim, says one key activist not in the group, that the Justice League NYC has denied.

Glen Ford, *Black Agenda Report* executive editor, wrote on Dec. 17, “The Al Sharptons of the community are attempting to isolate the core Ferguson activists and prevent the coalescing of a youth-led national Black movement—especially one that might act in concert with non-Blacks in the remnants of the anti-war and Occupy movements.”

“Sharpton’s crude lunge to capture and corral the anti-police protest has put youth activists on notice that a battle for national Black leadership has begun. From this point forward, Sharpton and his colleagues in the old line civil rights groups and Democratic

Party Black caucuses will deploy every scheme imaginable to hijack, subvert and otherwise thwart the growth of a radical, youth-dominated, Black grassroots movement.

Mayor de Blasio & cops

Mayor Bill de Blasio first took office in January 2014 as New York’s first Democratic mayor in 20 years. Framing himself as a “progressive,” de Blasio ran on a platform of “A Tale of Two Cities” to highlight inequality. A top spot in his campaign promises was changing racist police tactics known as “stop and frisk,” which led to wildly disproportionate stops and arrests of Blacks. What many didn’t notice is that de Blasio set out to reform, not eliminate, the policy in a political slight of hand to get votes, particularly Black votes.

While “stop and frisk” is officially gone, the heart of the policy known as “broken windows” remains—with the mayor’s blessing. As recently as December, de Blasio told reporters, “I’ve said very clearly that I believe in the broken windows theory of policing.”

“Broken windows” means busting poor people (of color) for small infractions like littering, drinking beer or smoking pot, etc., in the belief that small infractions are also practiced by serious criminals. This is challenged by several studies, and serious urban observers think the claims are bogus. They have been proven to be racist in practice. Eighty percent of Blacks arrested were found innocent of charges.

The first to fully implement broken windows was Mayor Rudolph Guiliani and his police commissioner Bill Bratton in the mid-1990s. Bratton was the LAPD’s chief of police after he left New York in the late 1990s, earning low marks for human rights by Amnesty International.

Josmar Trujillo wrote last March in *Black Agenda Report*, “In 2001, Bratton was a special consultant to the capital of Venezuela when a failed coup d’etat briefly removed Hugo Chavez from the presidency. Bratton and the local police chief were at the helm when 17 pro-Chavez protesters were shot by police before Chavez returned, jailed the chief and sent Bratton packing.” Bratton said he would have “cleared” protests by Occupy on Wall Street “right away,” something too reactionary even for then-Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

Yet before de Blasio even took office, in December 2014, the mayor-elect reappointed Bill Bratton as his top cop!

Despite de Blasio’s credentials as pro-cop—he called Bratton one of the finest cops of “this century”—he has made known his advice to his bi-racial son Dante: “Very early on with my son, we said, ‘Look, if a police officer stops you, do everything he tells you to do, don’t move suddenly, don’t reach for your cell phone.’”

In response to the mayor’s cautionary advice to his son and the shooting death of two officers, Wenjian Liu and Rafael Ramos, on Dec. 20 by a deranged Afri-



Tony Savino / Socialist Action

can American man, Ismaaiyl Abdullah Brinsley, the right-wing Police Benevolent Association (PBA) went on a reactionary campaign to blame the officers’ deaths on—of all things—protesters and de Blasio. At the funerals of the two officers, hundreds of PBA cops turned their backs on the mayor.

PBA President Patrick Lynch launched a campaign against the mayor and protesters, calling the situation “wartime” for the NYPD; the police, he said, “will act accordingly.” Lynch added, “There’s blood on many hands tonight. That blood on the hands starts on the steps of City Hall in the office of the mayor.” New York police officers held a small pro-cop rally at City Hall, some wearing T-shirts that included the racist taunt, “I Can Breathe.” Anti-racist counter-protesters drew hundreds, while the cops had a mere five.

As is typical of liberal capitalist politicians, the mayor immediately backpeddled to please the PBA, calling for a “moratorium” on protests and “respect” on the day of Ramos’ funeral. But defiant protesters marched anyway in Midtown Manhattan, without incident. The mayor even went on a rant blaming the media for stirring up “divisions.”

Obama sent Vice President Joseph Biden, a pro-cop Democrat, to the Ramos funeral. In 1994, Biden wrote the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, considered the most far-reaching crime legislation ever. It put more cops on the street and was signed by President Clinton. Yet, none of the dignitaries present had ever bothered to attend a funeral for a murdered Black man, executed by racist cops!

The mayor has promised that in January, “We’re going to take a very different view going forward about how we respect people’s rights to express themselves.” Those changes are not known at press time, but, recalling the highly co-

ordinated repression of Occupy Wall Street by Obama’s Homeland Security and police and even banks, as revealed in secret documents made available to Naomi Wolf of the British *Guardian*, we must be on guard for possible nationwide repression of the anti-racist movements.

Both de Blasio and Obama are promising thousands of body cameras as a concession to civil-rights forces in order to rope them in more closely to the Democratic Party. But then again, Garner’s death was caught on video, and the killer cop walked free! The outgoing U.S. Attorney General, Eric Holder, has pledged to investigate violations of civil-rights in these cases, but, so far, these promises have netted nothing. Obama is also promising a special commission to study police conduct, but it is to be headed by two former police officials.

Stay in the streets!

The emergence of a young and radicalizing Black leadership in the struggles against police violence represents a major step forward in the struggle for Black liberation.

In significant part, these youth see through the Democratic Party’s Black reformist establishment, who were pressed into service to try to head off a deeper radicalization.

The life experience of these radicalizing youth has taught them that racist murder and racism in general are inherent in “the system.” They justifiably and necessarily see the need for a new Black leadership, and are currently exploring how to bring it into being.

It is also noteworthy that the post-Ferguson demonstrations were in significant part multi-racial, including radicalizing white youth, Latinos, Asians, Arab Americans, and others—also victims of capitalist oppression and exploitation. The cross-fertilization of several social struggles was in evidence, with every sort of protest movement finding ways to join the struggle in the streets, and to express solidarity while finding ways to add vital issues to the demands.

So far, the mass organizations of the working class have generally been missing from this movement. Multi-ethnic labor unions have the muscle to fill the streets and ultimately shut the system down. African American, Hispanic and immigrant workers would be the first to respond to appeals from union leaders to act, but the timid leadership is reluctant to confront racism in the unions and to allow the possibility of loosening their ties to the Democratic Party wing of the ruling 1%.

Nonetheless, today’s emerging anti-racist movement has stirred the conscience of millions and galvanized new layers into action. It will bode well for Black activists to establish their own mass organizations rooted in the communities of the oppressed, while remaining in constant search for allies among all those who seek to challenge capitalism’s inherent racism and the exploitative policies of the white ruling class. ■

... Torture

(continued from page 4)

files in an effort to alter some of the more heinous findings.

Feinstein temporarily suffered under the illusion that the nation’s historic separation of powers—the executive and legislative in this case—guaranteed that her committee’s work could proceed without interference. She was soon disabused of this legal fiction and dropped the matter, only to insist months later, for appearances’ sake perhaps, that the redacted version was insufficient to expose the CIA’s activities.

CIA director John Brennan, commenting

on “The Agency’s” internal investigation of itself, in turn admitted to “shortcomings” and “mistakes,” attributing them to the CIA’s “unpreparedness for massive interrogation and detention programs.” But Brennan, contrary to the report’s findings and all other such data, insisted the EIT did produce intelligence that “thwarted attack plans and saved lives.” He declined to provide examples.

Stressing the need for the nation to “look forward, not backward” and pledging U.S. fealty to democracy and human rights, President Obama’s final mid-December press conference on the matter aimed at closing the debate.

Obama granted similar, if not more blatant absolutism to the NSA’s surveillance operations employed against the cell

phone, computer, and virtually all other means of communications of nearly everyone on earth. In the name of “national security” the green light was handed to the National Security Agency (NSA) to continue its massive surveillance with impunity.

No serious social or political activist can believe for a moment that CIA torture, even in its new genteel EIT expression, has been limited. Not a single perpetrator has been punished.

“The horror, the horror,” in the final words of Joseph Conrad’s deranged colonial-era mass murderer, Kurtz, in the epic 1899 novel “Heart of Darkness,” continues. Little did the world know then that Conrad’s reference was to Belgian King Leopold II’s genocide of 12 million Con-

golese in the course of that nation’s colonization and the extraction of incredible quantities of ivory.

In the past 20 years *only* six million Congolese have been murdered in the course of that nation’s re-colonization, today for the purpose of stealing the Congo’s vast mineral resources. This time around it is the U.S. imperial power at work, assisted by the kept corporate media for whom coverage, not to mention exposure, of the modern rape of the Congo is off limits.

U.S. imperialism’s unceasing citation of its “national security interests” is nothing less than the putrid justification of plunder and murder by any means necessary. Until this behemoth is defeated by the world’s working masses, we can only expect “the horror” to worsen. ■

After 20 years, no global pact on climate change

By CHRISTINE FRANK

Once again, nearly 200 nations came together as the clock ticked to dicker over a global climate agreement in Lima, Peru, last month with little in the way of actual results. Humanity is in the midst of a planetary crisis, yet all negotiators could come up with was a pledge by each nation to devise its own voluntary plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, delaying it to 2020 with no mechanism for assessment or enforcement. What good is *any* plan if there's no real pressure to carry it out? As they say, "The road to Hell is paved with good intentions."

The worst of it is that their so-called Intended National Determined Contributions (INDCs) will be too weak to limit global warming to the critical two degrees Celsius that spell ecological catastrophe. In fact, many low-lying island nations already experiencing rising sea levels rightly demand that the limit be kept to *one* degree Celsius. The one thing this watered-down proposal, with phrasing such as "may" rather than "shall", will provide is a surefire plan for further global heating and more devastating extreme weather that takes thousands of lives.

During the meeting, Typhoon Hagupit forced one million people into emergency shelters in the Philippines one year after Haiyan took 7000 lives. Being strictly voluntary, there are no penalties for the failure to make a plan by the deadline of March 31—or even year's end, when the final round of talks takes place in Paris. It is by no means a new deal but merely a 12-month, wishy-washy work plan leading up to COP 21 in Paris, amounting to no more than an exercise in thumb twiddling while the world burns.

At the latest Conference of the Parties (COP 20), 83 NGOs were accredited observers. Climate crisis activists stood by watching in horror as powerful transnationals insinuated themselves to ensure that the conference did not meet environmentalists' expectations. Corporate representatives did so by playing the jobs-versus-the-environment card and spelling doom for national economies if meaningful measures were adopted.

Every year big polluters are given more and more leeway at these dog-and-pony shows, with industry heads delivering major addresses. Another ludicrous occurrence was a Shell Oil representative's speech at a main session about the company's preference for Carbon Capture & Sequestration (CCS), an unproven and highly risky techno-fix to combat CO2 emissions while burning more dirty hydrocarbons.

There is no such thing as "clean oil or coal," despite the Carbon Barons' claims. In addition, Chevron was allowed to sponsor side events to push pro-fossil-fuel propaganda among the delegates. This was the case even though 50 corporations, a good many of them Energy Giants, are responsible for 73% of greenhouse gases emitted by the world's 500 largest companies.

If the recent bilateral agreement between the United States and China is any indication, we can expect some very lackluster emissions reductions plans indeed. The U.S. plans to cut emissions by 28% below 2005 levels by 2030, yet 2005 was the highest year ever for U.S. emissions and also one of the hottest on record. Due to a major economic downturn, emissions have already declined 10% in eight years, and Obama wishfully thinks they'll drop another 18% over the next 15. He'll need a very large pocket of fairy dust to accomplish that.

China, on the other hand, has agreed to reach peak emissions by 2030—another 15 years of being the world's top emitter—thanks to the U.S. and Europe successfully off-shoring their production—with its economic growth running at 10% annually. If that rate continues, emissions will be four times what they are now even with energy-efficiency measures and economic uncertainties.



China plans to increase clean-energy use by 20% by 2030. Part of its renewable portfolio includes more dangerous nuclear reactors, which are neither green nor carbon neutral. Between them, the U.S. and China produce nearly half the world's carbon dioxide emissions (45%). If they stick to their goals, their combined emissions will increase by over one third, with atmospheric CO2 concentrations and temperatures rising to cataclysmic levels. When you consider that China's growing market economy now for the first time emits more than the EU on a per capita basis, the prognosis does not bode well for Earth's climate.

The EU's proposal is not impressive either. It plans to cut emissions 40% below 1990 levels by 2030, with legally binding requirements for each member nation based on its individual economic capacity. The continent's power from renewables is projected at 27% by 2030 with voluntary commitments to increase energy efficiency the same percentage. East Europeans have balked at this, citing less advanced economies with a greater dependence on coal. Australia and Canada are even less ambitious as they insanely ratchet up their production and export of filthy coal and tar-sands crude.

To protest the grotesque state of affairs going on in Lima, 15,000 Indigenous People, *campesinos*, students, and environmentalists marched on Dec. 10, demanding "System Change, Not Climate Change!" The procession stretched for three kilometers through the streets of the city. An alternative Peoples Summit on Climate Change was held simultaneously during the UN meeting, with thousands of environmental activists present from around the world. The summit issued a strong statement on Dec. 11 with a clear anti-capitalist thrust.

In addition, leaders of the Bolivarian Alliance for Peoples of Our America (ALBA) met in Havana, Cuba, in mid-December and endorsed a Bolivian proposal to host an international assembly of social movements in 2015 to discuss and adopt a united strategy to fight climate change and save life and humanity.

Bolivia's president Evo Morales played a major role at the COP 20, urging adoption of an agreement that reflects the basic principles of South America's Indigenous People, who practice sustainable use of the natural resources on their ancestral lands and are in the forefront of defending the Amazon Rainforest from logging, mining, energy extraction, grazing, and industrial agriculture—putting their lives on the line to

(Above) About 400,000 marched in New York City, Sept. 21, 2014, for action against climate change.

do it. Fifty-seven Indigenous activists have been murdered in 12 years in their struggle against the "Great Amazonian Sell-Off." An Ecuadorian Indigenous-rights and anti-mining leader, who had planned to attend the conference in Lima, was recently found dead near his village, his body bound, beaten, and showing signs of torture.

Scientist Wayne Walker has shown in a recent study that rainforests under the stewardship of Amazonian Natives store 28,000 megatons of carbon. It is evidence that Indigenous tropical forest dwellers are the best protectors of the ecosystem since their survival and traditional way of life depend upon its biological integrity. They have played an active role in UN climate conferences from the beginning and are veteran fighters in defending their livelihoods.

However, capitalist governments have failed to protect the globe's rainforests from exploitation, and 40% of these tribal lands are under threat. If the industrial onslaught continues and temperatures go up, deforestation, heat stress, drought, and wildfire will wither and burn the vegetation in an unstoppable dieback, releasing massive amounts of carbon and setting into motion a positive feedback loop. Dying and dead rainforests will lead to a drastically altered global hydrological cycle and the desertification of equatorial regions. Therefore, Walker points out how important it is that Indigenous territories continue to act as barriers to further deforestation, and why we must defend their sovereignty.

For some years, activists have been fighting phony UN schemes such as REDD+—Reduction of Emissions for Deforestation and Degradation of Forests—which allows big polluters to continue befouling the atmosphere as long as they purchase carbon credits from developing countries in exchange for "offsets." Unfortunately, under these pay now, sin later plans, it is poor nations that end up paying when their natural forests are destroyed and replaced by monocultural tree plantations of eucalyptus and oil palms that are nothing more than "green deserts." Destructive bio-fuels, nuclear reactors, and megadams often pass as carbon offsets as well.

This is in contrast to Bolivia's joint mitigation and adaptation approach (JMA), which promotes the inte-

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