

# THE MILITANT

**INSIDE**  
**Fight to free Cuban 5 gains support at political festival in Greece**  
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 78/NO. 39 NOVEMBER 3, 2014

## ‘Militant’ helps link struggles across globe

BY MAGGIE TROWE

“The U.S. government doesn’t care about us, the little people,” Takisha Stringer, a health care worker in Miami, said when she saw the *Militant* article on how Cuban medical workers are throwing themselves into the fight to control the Ebola outbreak. “It’s a good thing the Cuban doctors are going to Africa.”

The class questions posed by  
**Continued on page 3**

Workers attracted to SWP’s fighting course give to fund  
 — See page 3

**Sign up 2,400 subscribers!**  
**Sept. 6 - Oct. 28 (week 6)**

Country	quota	sold	%
<b>UNITED STATES</b>			
Chicago*	170	167	98%
New York*	210	193	92%
Washington*	110	100	91%
Boston	60	54	90%
Brooklyn*	210	186	89%
Atlanta*	155	137	88%
Philadelphia*	120	103	86%
Seattle*	130	111	85%
Houston*	115	97	84%
San Francisco*	165	138	84%
Nebraska*	165	134	81%
Lincoln*	12	12	100%
Omaha*	153	122	80%
Los Angeles	105	80	76%
Miami	105	74	70%
Twin Cities	125	82	66%
Total U.S.	1945	1656	85%
<b>PRISONERS</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>135%</b>
<b>UNITED KINGDOM</b>			
London	120	123	103%
Manchester*	95	94	99%
UK Total	215	217	101%
<b>CANADA</b>			
Calgary	50	44	88%
Montreal	60	58	97%
Canada Total	110	102	93%
<b>NEW ZEALAND</b>	70	50	71%
<b>AUSTRALIA</b>	70	55	79%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2430</b>	<b>2107</b>	<b>88%</b>
<b>Should be</b>	<b>2400</b>	<b>2057</b>	<b>86%</b>

\* Raised quota

## Defend a woman’s right to choose abortion!

The following statement was released Oct. 22 by John Studer, chair of the Socialist Workers National Campaign Committee.

**WORKERS NEED LABOR PARTY!**  
 — SWP campaign statement

The Socialist Workers Party campaign joins in defending women’s right to safe, legal abortion, which is under attack in Texas and elsewhere. This fight is crucial both for women’s rights and for the labor movement. And like other important social battles, it shows the need for the workers movement to organize its own political party, a Labor Party, to champion the fight for the interests of working people.

Since World War II, women in the U.S. have joined the workforce in ever greater numbers. This trend continues to unfold across the globe, boosting women’s self-confidence and expectations and transforming attitudes of male co-workers.

Out of these social changes, a movement of women who refused to accept second-class status emerged,  
**Continued on page 4**

## Fidel: Duty calls us to fight Ebola in Africa

Cuba shows what workers in power can do



Estudios Revolución

Cuban President Raúl Castro sends doctors off to Liberia and Guinea to join 165 in Sierra Leone, Oct. 21. “We will happily cooperate with U.S. personnel in this task,” said Fidel Castro.

BY SETH GALINSKY

“The hour of duty has arrived,” declared former Cuban President Fidel Castro in an Oct. 18 column published in papers throughout the island. Castro called on governments around the world to step up aid to the fight against Ebola

in West Africa. Cuba already has 165 doctors and nurses in Sierra Leone, 53 in Liberia and 38 in Guinea-Conakry to treat those infected and to train others to prevent the spread of the deadly disease.

Meanwhile, Ebola patient Thomas  
**Continued on page 7**

Socialist candidate calls on US to send doctors, aid to Africa  
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## UK workers march for pay increase in show of solidarity among unions



Militant/Jonathan Silberman

Thousands join trade union march in London Oct. 18, culminating week of national work stoppages and other actions to demand pay raise and protest declining living standards.

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

LONDON — Under the banner “Britain Needs a Pay Rise,” tens of thousands took to the streets here Oct. 18 in a demonstration organized by the Trades Union Congress. Thousands more joined similar marches in Glasgow, Scotland; and Belfast in

Northern Ireland, drawing attention to declining living standards in the United Kingdom over the last seven years.

“It’s good to see the solidarity between workers from different unions,” said Brian Oreggio, one of seven  
**Continued on page 6**

## Kurds push back Islamic State in battle of Kobani

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Despite being greatly outnumbered and outgunned, Kurdish fighters in Kobani, Syria, have for more than a month defended their city from a major offensive by Islamic State forces. And over the last week, Kurdish men and women in arms forced the reactionaries to withdraw from positions in the city.

The demonstrated capacities of the Kurds have not only surprised Islamic State and the other Salafi jihadists they are at war with. They have defied all predictions of those who stand against their struggle for national  
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### Inside

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—On the picket line, p. 5—

Postal workers in Phila. rally against outsourcing to Staples  
 Cabin cleaners strike Aircserv in NY over safety, wages, dignity

# Canada rallies protest cops' disregard for Native women

BY ANNETTE KOURI

MONTREAL — Undeterred by the pouring rain, hundreds of people took to the streets here Oct. 4 to demand a national government inquiry into the disproportionate number of aboriginal women who are murdered or go missing as a result of the refusal of authorities to protect their lives. The protest in Montreal, part of a National Day of Action, was one of more than 200 across Canada and one of 15 in Quebec.

Although Native women form only 4.3 percent of the Canadian population, they account for 16 percent of female homicides and 11.3 percent of disappearances. Amnesty International, one of the organizers of the protests, said that indigenous women in Canada are “five times more likely than other women to die as the result of violence.”

“We want to send a message to the Canadian government — we no longer accept the government of Canada’s tyranny of indigenous people and their institutionalized racism,” Mohawk activist Ellen Gabriel said to the gathering. “Yes, we want a national inquiry, but we know what the root causes of the problem are. It started with the Indian Act and continues to this day.” The first Indian Act was passed in 1876, aimed at suppressing Native traditions and rights. The sun dance and potlatch were officially barred.

Native organizations have been demanding government attention and a public inquiry into police disregard

for the lives of Native women for more than a decade. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police lists the number of missing and murdered Native women at 1,181 since 1980. Native activists and organizations put the number at nearly 3,000.

Quebec Native Women and Missing Justice, a group from Concordia University, organized the action in Montreal, with support from Amnesty International and the Federation of Quebec Women. The latter helped initiate the actions across Quebec.

“We had allies with us today. The Quebec Labor Federation and the Confederation of National Trade Unions were here,” said Viviane Michel, president of Quebec Native Women.

## Death of Fontaine spurs protests

The death in August of 15-year-old Tina Fontaine in Winnipeg, Manitoba, focused public attention on authorities’ discriminatory disregard for the lives of Native women. Police and social workers had seen and spoken to the runaway teen hours before her death. “They ran her name through the system,” Thelma Favel, Fontaine’s great-aunt from Sagkeeng First Nation, told the press, “but they just let her go.”

“Nobody seems to care when it comes to aboriginal children,” she said.

Ruling Conservative government Justice Minister Peter MacKay said he still rejects convening a national inquiry, saying the government is ad-

## Hong Kong protesters challenge gov’t over rights



Reuters/Carlos Barria

Thousands watch a debate between representatives of the Hong Kong Federation of Students wearing “Freedom Now” T-shirts and the government on screens set up at the site of a sit-in in downtown Hong Kong Oct. 21. Students, workers and others joined the actions to demand the right to vote for candidates of their own choosing in the 2017 elections. The debate was live-streamed in Hong Kong and to the Chinese mainland — although the mainland only carried statements from government participants.

Protests entered their fourth week, sparked by government insistence that a Beijing-approved nominations committee decide who can run.

The mobilizations are also fueled by anger at the growing income gap between the region’s propertied rulers and workers and students. Hong Kong Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying told the press Oct. 20 that if candidates were nominated by the public “obviously you’d be talking to the half of the people in Hong Kong who earn less than US\$1,800 a month.”

“Why do many citizens still come out to protest, even though they get beaten by the police?” Chinese University of Hong Kong student Lester Shum said in the debate. “Law is written to protect the basic rights of everyone. It is not only a protection for the rich and privileged.”

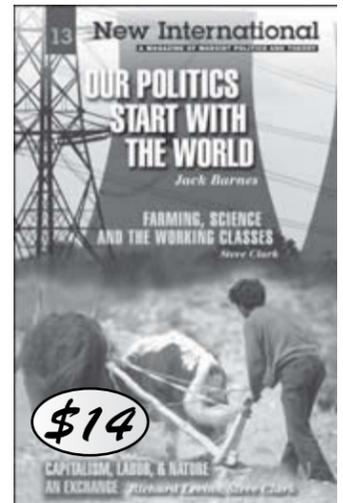
Government speakers told students to give up their protests, saying further changes in election procedures might be possible after 2017.

— JOHN STUDER

ressing the issue through use of a national DNA missing persons index.

A march in Calgary, Alberta, Sept. 27 protested police brutality and refusal to do anything after Colton Crowshow, 18, a Native youth, disappeared July 4, two days after he was beaten by cops there. He was found dead in a pond July 24. “We want more equality,” Hayley Starlight, who went to school with Crowshow, told the *Militant*. “Stop discriminating against Native people.”

Joe Young and Philippe Tessier contributed to this article.



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## THE MILITANT

### Solidarity with labor in Somalia!

Reading most big-business papers, you would have no idea that there is a fighting working-class in Somalia. The *Militant* covers the fights for safety on the job, higher wages, and better conditions from Africa to Asia, from Europe to the Americas.



Port workers march in Mogadishu, Somalia, Sept. 11 to protest threatened firings.

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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant*'s views. These are expressed in editorials.

# Workers attracted to SWP's fighting course give to fund

BY PAUL MAILHOT

Involvement in labor struggles and social protests, along with growing identification of the *Militant* newspaper as the voice of the resistance and international working-class solidarity, are helping generate support for the SWP Party Building Fund. The once yearly fund to raise \$100,000 helps finance the work of the Socialist Workers Party, which seeks to educate and

organize the working class to fight to establish a workers and farmers government, abolish capitalism and join in the worldwide struggle for socialism.

Over the past few weeks alone party members have joined in the massive environmental march in New York, protests against police brutality in Missouri, the Nebraskans for Peace conference, responding to the attacks on abortion rights, and many strikes, picket lines and labor rallies.

Local quotas have climbed near the \$100,000 goal this week, with a few areas still planning raises. Some \$40,500 has been sent in. The challenge now is to get all the pledges in and go over the top by the Nov. 11 deadline.

Party supporters in Chicago raised their quota for a second time to \$10,500. "I'm making a contribution because I appreciate the work the party is doing to get out the truth about the struggles of working people around the world," said James Bouse, one of four new contributors.

In Washington, D.C., the fund got a boost from a Walmart worker who bought an issue of the *Militant* at a protest for \$15 an hour and a union because of its coverage of workers' struggles and Cuba's example in sending doctors and other medical workers to fight Ebola in Africa. After joining the discussion at a talk in Washington two days later by SWP leader John Studer on world politics



Militant/Maggie Trowe

**Militant supporter Ellen Brickley shows paper to unionist at Oct. 9 Brooklyn, N.Y., rally of Transport Workers Union Local 101 against National Grid attacks on wages, health costs.**

today, he made a pledge to the Party-Building Fund and paid it on the spot. Some \$365 in additional pledges were made to the fund at that meeting.

In Minneapolis, a Militant Labor Forum Oct. 18 on "Workers and Union Resistance" where Alyson Kennedy, a leader of the SWP from Chicago,

spoke, helped the fund drive there. At the meeting \$1,437 was collected and \$300 raised in new pledges.

The final scoreboard will be printed in the *Militant* that goes to press on Nov. 19. This allows for contributions received at the end of the drive to be sent by regular mail and arrive on time.

## Party-Building Fund Week 5

Area	Quota	Collected	%
Boston*	\$3,750	\$2,205	59%
San Francisco	\$14,000	\$7,720	55%
Chicago**	\$10,500	\$5,713	54%
Los Angeles	\$8,000	\$3,870	48%
Atlanta	\$8,600	\$4,109	48%
Miami	\$2,800	\$1,264	45%
Seattle	\$7,600	\$3,295	43%
Washington, DC	\$7,800	\$2,445	31%
Brooklyn	\$10,000	\$3,055	31%
Houston	\$3,300	\$1,005	30%
Philadelphia	\$4,200	\$1,260	30%
Twin Cities	\$5,000	\$1,185	24%
New York	\$10,000	\$2,255	23%
Nebraska*	\$3,350	\$775	23%
Lincoln*	\$150	\$75	50%
Omaha*	\$3,200	\$700	22%
Other		\$400	
Total	\$98,900	\$40,556	41%
Should Be	\$100,000	\$63,000	63%

\* raised goal

## 'Militant' subscription drive

Continued from front page  
the Ebola epidemic, especially the contrast between the response by Washington and that of the revolutionary government of Cuba, were a big part of discussions in Miami and elsewhere last week.

Supporters of the *Militant* from Atlanta and Plant City, Florida, drove

to Miami to help boost the subscription effort there, signing up 20 new readers.

Workers campaigning with the *Militant* in the Twin Cities also got reinforcement when supporters of the paper from Omaha and Chicago joined sales teams there to sell 24 subscriptions over the weekend.

*Militant* supporters in New York knocked on doors Oct. 18 in a Staten Island neighborhood where many workers from Liberia live. They also attended a community meeting where Liberian-born immigrants protested being treated as pariahs because they come from a country hit hard by Ebola.

Through visits, phone conversations and discussions at political events, *Militant* supporters in Houston have won 23 renewals.

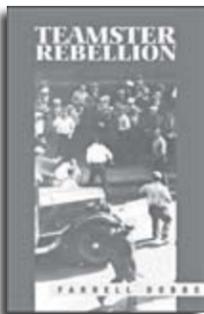
"I keep getting the *Militant* because of the diverse areas that it covers — from Africa to Texas," said Miles Stevens, a restaurant and retail worker who renewed for the fourth time. "You can learn about things you can't follow anywhere else."

Leah Henderson, a restaurant worker, and her partner Trent, a former metal polisher, bought a copy of the *Militant* from Patrick Brown when he knocked on their door in Pukekohe, New Zealand, Oct. 18. Twenty minutes later Trent called Brown to come back and talk about the paper's coverage of Cuba's response to the Ebola crisis and protests against killings of Black youth by U.S. cops. They signed up for a subscription and got a copy of *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning*. "It jumped out at me," Henderson said.

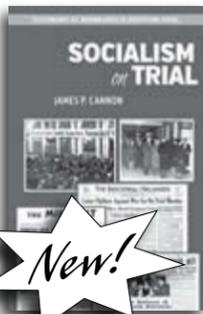
The international subscription drive is on track with one week to go. Let's finish strong by Oct. 28! If you haven't already done so, you can help out in the final push. (See list of distributors on page 8.)

Supporters of the paper in a few cities are already planning to get together at the completion of the campaign to celebrate with new readers of the socialist press.

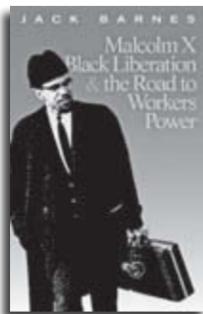
## Special book offers for 'Militant' subscribers



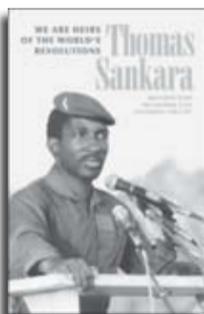
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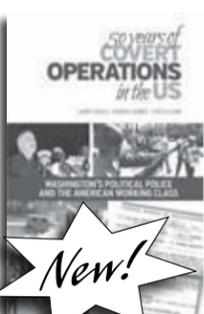
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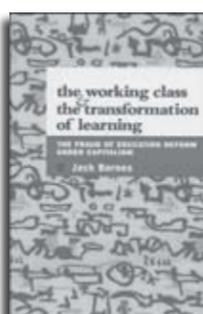
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**If you have a subscription to the *Militant*, these special offers are for you. Contact a distributor listed on page 8.**

# New abortion curbs in Texas target working-class women

BY STEVE WARSHHELL

HOUSTON — Opponents of women's rights are pressing to impose onerous building and staffing requirements for abortion providers in Texas that would shut 80 percent of the state's clinics, forcing women from rural areas to travel hundreds of miles to obtain an abortion and pushing more to risk their health and lives with self-induced or "back alley" procedures.

In July 2013 Gov. Rick Perry signed a bill that banned abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy. Under the pretense of concern for women's health, it also established new state regulations requiring doctors who perform abortions to have admitting privileges at a nearby hospital and clinics to meet new "ambulatory surgical center" standards. These provisions are being disputed in court, but nearly half of the state's 41 clinics have already been closed as a result.

On Oct. 2, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit upheld Texas' surgical-center provision, brushing aside plaintiffs' argument that some 750,000 Texas women of reproductive age face hardship because they live more than 200 miles from an abortion provider who meets the law's standards.

The U.S. Supreme Court, in a 6-3 decision Oct. 14, issued a stay on the surgery-center regulation and waived the hospital admitting privileges requirement for clinics in the border towns of El Paso and McAllen, allowing some facilities to reopen.

"The Whole Woman's Health abortion clinic in McAllen is the only provider in the Rio Grande Valley," Drew Stanley, social media manager at the clinic, said in a phone interview. "When it was closed, women had to drive 240 miles to San Antonio.

"Many workers from Mexico have visas to work in the valley, but if they try to drive to San Antonio, they're stopped at an internal immigration checkpoint and turned back," he said.

The Fifth Circuit will next hear arguments on *Whole Women's Health v. Lakey*, another challenge to the law. Its decision is almost certain to be appealed to the Supreme Court.

When the anti-abortion law was under debate in the Texas state legislature last year, thousands of supporters of women's rights turned out at the

state Capitol in Austin. This year the main women's rights groups are not building demonstrations, but focusing instead on getting out the vote for Democratic gubernatorial candidate Wendy Davis, a state senator who filibustered to stall the anti-abortion bill's passage. Davis told the *Dallas Morning News* Feb. 11 she supports the 20-week term limit.

About 100 assembled to protest the bill outside the Capitol Oct. 2, the day after the appeals court ruling. Two days later, some 15 women, organized by Southern Texans for Reproductive Justice, picketed outside the then-shuttered McAllen clinic.

Ten states now have 20-week term limits, 23 require abortion facilities to meet at least some surgical-center standards and nine require a physician with admitting privileges at a local hospital.

The 1973 Supreme Court ruling declared that states cannot interfere



Protest in front of Whole Woman's Health clinic in McAllen, Texas, Oct. 4, after federal appeals court upheld restrictions on abortion providers that effectively closed more than half of state's clinics. Ten days later U.S. Supreme Court issued stay, allowing some facilities to reopen.

with a woman's right to abortion until fetal viability, considered to be 24 to 28 weeks after pregnancy.

Some anti-woman forces are aiming at this "viability loophole" in the decision by promoting laws that define the fetus as a person from conception.

Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun, in the majority opinion in

the 1973 ruling, warned, "If this suggestion of personhood is established, [Roe's] case, of course collapses."

In an interview with Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg in the Oct. 13 issue of the *New Republic*, Jeffrey Rosen asked about the impact of a possible overturn of *Roe v. Wade*. "It would be bad for non-affluent women," Ginsburg replied.

## Defend a woman's right to choose abortion!

Continued from front page

demanding reproductive freedom alongside the right to equal pay and job opportunities.

By 1973 — amid rising support for a woman's right to choose and changing social attitudes opened by earlier victories won by the mass proletarian battle for Black rights — the U.S. Supreme Court struck down state laws criminalizing abortion. This victory strengthened the ability of working-class women to control their own bodies and lives. This is key to unifying the working class and forging a class struggle leadership that can wage a fight for political power.

Since then, as the capitalist crisis has deepened and the bosses have increasingly stepped up attacks on the labor movement, including the part of it that is female, sections of the propertied rulers have backed relentless efforts to restrict access to abortion — from prohibiting federal funding to imposing waiting periods

and parental consent requirements to requiring clinics to meet hospital standards most cannot afford. All these restrictions target working-class women.

These attacks are part of a broader ideological campaign against women to undermine their confidence, drive down the value of their labor power and divide the working class.

At the same time as they target women, the propertied rulers have mounted attacks on the voting rights of working people in a number of states, seeking to disenfranchise hundreds of thousands of workers, disproportionately African-Americans.

Class struggle history teaches that winning and defending rights critical to the working class — from free speech to the right to form unions to voting rights for Blacks to women's rights — requires independent working-class political action.

Support for the right to abortion runs deep among workers and farmers. It is only by relying on the back-

ing and mobilization of working people that a woman's right to abortion can be protected and extended. There are no "friends of women" among the politicians of the bosses two parties, the Democrats and Republicans, any more than there are "friends of labor."

The Socialist Workers campaign fights to overturn all restrictions on women's access to abortion, without interference from the state or anyone else.

Across the country today workers are beginning to fight to resist attacks by the bosses and their government on our wages, safety on the job, health care and retirement pay, and our social and political rights.

This shows the potential to mobilize to defend a woman's right to abortion, as well as strengthen our voting rights. It points to the need for labor to break from the bosses' parties and organize a Labor Party, sorely needed to champion the fight for the needs of working people.

### 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



November 3, 1989

Two days following the most massive political march seen in decades in East Germany, head-of-state Erich Honecker resigned.

The protest of 100,000 on October 16 in the city of Leipzig overshadowed a demonstration a week earlier of 50,000. "We want new leaders!" and "We want reforms!" were popular chants at the march. Protesters carried signs calling for greater freedom of the press, unrestricted travel and free elections.

The size of the protests grew rapidly following the mass departure to West Germany of more than 23,000 East Germans during September and early October. The government responded to the wave of emigration by restricting travel outside the country to those with approved visas.



November 2, 1964

A staple of both Johnson's and Goldwater's campaigns is enmity to the Cuban Revolution. Clifton DeBerry, candidate of the Socialist Workers Party, calls for friendly and normal relations with Cuba.

On the "Issues and Answers" television program, broadcast over the ABC national network Oct. 25, DeBerry urged the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the naval base at Guantanamo, Cuba.

The U.S. base also came under fire from the conference of non-aligned nations which met in Cairo last month. Leaders from 47 nations were at the conference and signed a document urging the United States to "negotiate the evacuation of this base with the Cuban Government."

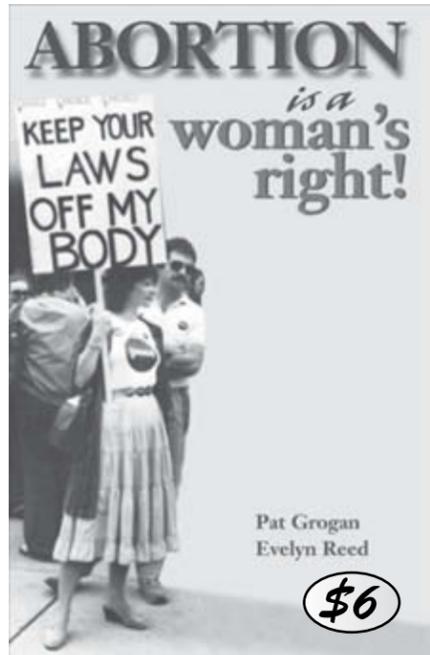


November 3, 1939

MINNEAPOLIS, Oct. 30 — Twenty-five men and women go on trial today in Judge Joyce's Federal court for their participation in the nation-wide WPA [Works Progress Administration] strike this summer.

The defendants are being tried formally under a provision of the Roosevelt-Woodrum Relief Law which makes it a crime to "interfere with" WPA workers. Actually, however, they are being tried under the Roosevelt-made law: "You can't strike against the government."

Where facts cannot be twisted to arouse the prejudices of a businessmen's jury, the Federal prosecutor adds a "conspiracy" indictment, and the judge defines "conspiracy" in such broad terms that convictions can be voted by the jury without bothering about evidence.



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# —ON THE PICKET LINE—

MAGGIE TROWE, EDITOR

## Postal workers rally against outsourcing to Staples

PHILADELPHIA — Postal workers and other unionists demonstrated in front of the downtown Staples store here at lunchtime Oct. 7.

The “Stop Staples” rally was one of a series the American Postal Workers Union is organizing in the Philadelphia area this month, following the pattern of protests that began in California in January and took place in Atlanta, Pittsburgh and Massachusetts in recent months.

The APWU, along with the three other postal unions — the National Association of Letter Carriers, the National Postal Mail Handlers Union and the National Rural Letter Carriers Association — is organizing a national rally in Washington, D.C., Nov. 14.

Chants of “the U.S. mail is not for sale!” and “Whose post office? The people’s post office!” echoed through the area, as members of APWU Local 89 distributed informational leaflets on the union’s struggle against the privatization of postal work.

In 2013 the U.S. Postal Service, under the union-busting “Approved Shipper” outsourcing program, authorized Staples to open postal counters in more than 80 stores around the country.

Postal clerk Cynthia Heyward told the demonstrators that the Postal Service has been cutting union jobs and not replacing workers when they leave, at the same time they contract out postal work to businesses like Staples.

Union members from Communications Workers of America, American Federation of Government Employees, Carpenters union, Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, Service Employees International Union, UNITE HERE and others were part of the crowd of more than 75.

“We need all the other unions to join us. It’s all one fight,” John Dennie, a retired member of the National Association of Letter Carriers, told the *Militant*. “The retirees’ pension is the next

target.” Dennie traveled from Staten Island, N.Y., to the protest.

— Osborne Hart

## Montreal university staff strikes for wages, women’s equality

MONTREAL — Workers at the University of Quebec at Montreal carried out their second one-day strike Oct. 9 to demand a wage increase and a contract. The 2,000 members of Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 1294 — janitors, librarians, food service workers, laboratory assistants, office workers and others — have been working without a contract since May 31, 2012. The university administration declared a wage freeze that year. The last time the workers went on strike was in 1982.

Pickets arrived early to cover the 50 entrances to the campus. “Most professors, teaching assistants and students respected the picket lines,” Guillaume Chicoine told the *Militant* as he picketed. “Many classes were canceled.”

One of the university’s demands is that the union withdraw a complaint about women’s wages filed under the Pay Equity Act, an Aug. 28 union press statement said. “Knowing that women make up more than 60% of the UQAM support staff, I find that the university should be setting an example,” said CUPE representative Martin Larose in the statement.

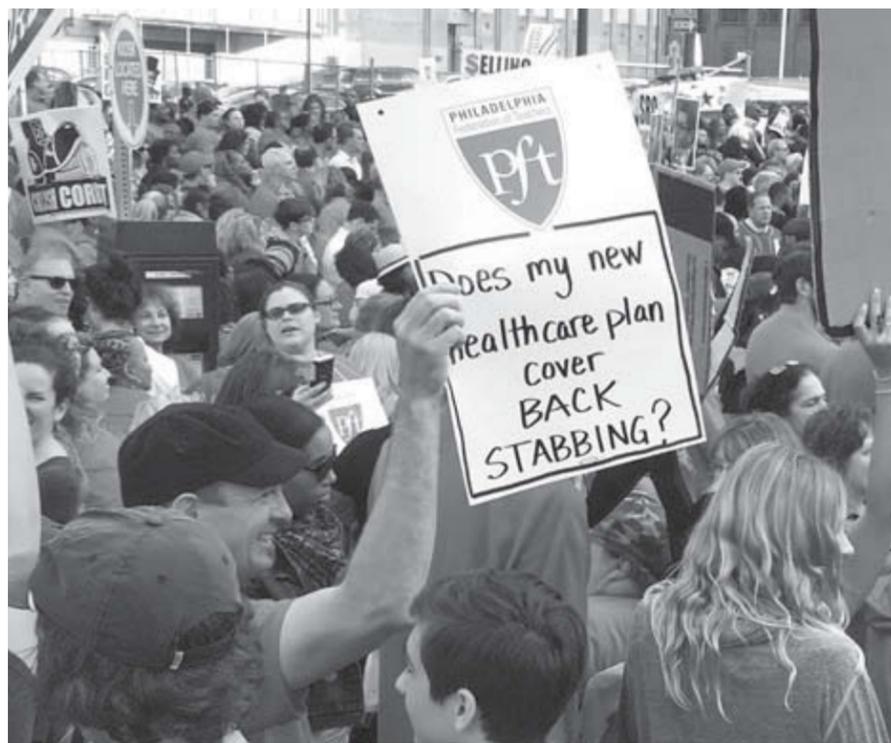
“The university’s counteroffer included a salary increase of only 1 percent per year for the next three years,” said Marie-Claire David, an office worker.

— Beverly Bernardo

## Cabin cleaners strike Air Serv over safety, wages and dignity

NEW YORK — “Thirteen months ago we started fighting for the benefits we deserve,” said Rafael Mercedes, a striking airport worker speaking at a picket-line rally at LaGuardia Airport Oct. 9. “Air Serv sees us as muscle to do their work, but we have stomachs and brains too.” Night shift Air Serv workers, who clean passenger aircraft, refused to report to work to protest unsafe working conditions, inadequate pay, lack of respect and poor benefits.

“We want \$17.40 an hour starting pay like other workers get doing similar work,” said Adeldo Martinez. Workers had won a wage increase from \$8 to \$9 per hour in August, he said, but “many times I bring home about \$1,000 per month. This is not enough for my fam-



Militant/Janet Post

Some 3,000 members of Philadelphia Federation of Teachers and supporters rally Oct. 16 against unilateral cancellation of their contract by School Reform Commission 10 days earlier.

ily’s expenses.”

Wilmer Rojas, an organizer for SEIU Local 32BJ at LaGuardia, said Air Serv has been trying to make workers pay for the \$1 per hour increase by running smaller crews and shorter hours with no reduction of the workload.

The striking workers protested unsafe working conditions, including exposure to blood and vomit without proper protective equipment and company vans with no seat belts.

The night shift workers returned for a 6 a.m. rally with day shift workers and other supporters that grew to more than 200.

During the day, as part of the 24-hour strike, a number of Air Serv workers attended “Ebola and infectious disease awareness” training organized by the union.

— Jacob Perasso

## Bank workers strike, protest ‘flexible’ work hours

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — Bank workers, members of First Union, carried out a one-day strike Oct. 10 against ANZ, one of the country’s largest banks.

More than 100 strikers marched up Queen Street here chanting, “When workers’ rights are under attack, stand up, fight back! When family time is under attack, stand up, fight back!”

Some 96 percent of the more than 1,300 union members voted in favor of strike action Oct. 6. They are fighting for higher pay and resisting the bank’s demands for “flexible” work and sales quotas for pushing loans, insurance and other bank products. ANZ made a profit of \$3.2 billion in the first six months of the fiscal year. The company is offering workers a 2 to 3 percent pay increase.

“ANZ is proposing contracts where we would only know month-by-month which days, start and finish times we will be working,” said the flyer marchers handed out to passersby.

“The effect of flexible contracts is a casualized workforce,” said Isaac Hayes, a worker on the First Union Council, at the rally.

Mocking the bank’s marketing slogan, “We Live in Your World,” a popular placard called on the bank’s CEO to “Come and Live in Our World.”

— Annalucia Vermunt

## Philadelphia teachers protest cancellation of contract

PHILADELPHIA — More than 3,000 teachers and their supporters rallied outside the school district head-

quarters here Oct. 16 to protest the district’s cancellation of its contract with the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers. This unilateral decision was made Oct. 6 during a morning meeting of the School Reform Commission, created in 2001 after the state took over the school district with power to sign the teachers’ union contract. Three years earlier an anti-labor state law was passed that enabled city and state officials to decertify the union if it called a strike.

Teachers and other workers found out that the contract was nulled in an email from District Superintendent William Hite. The union is challenging the move in court.

If the contract is broken, “this is just the beginning,” Megan McGlynn, a sixth grade teacher, told the *Militant*. “They will go after all kinds of things, not just in Philadelphia.”

“They say we’re not allowed to strike,” Charles Wolfsfeld, a retired teacher, said in an interview. “But I’m going to join with other retired teachers whenever the union protests.”

The 15,000 workers in the union include teachers, nurses, secretaries, cooks, social workers, cleaners, counselors, lab assistants, mail clerks and others.

The commission announced that it would stop payments into the union’s Health and Welfare Fund; that Philadelphia Federation of Teachers members would start paying for health benefits, amounting to as much as 5 to 13 percent of their wages; and that retired workers would lose all prescription, dental and vision benefits.

The cancellation of the contract comes after the layoff of 5,000 school workers and the closing of 30 schools.

Union officials, hoping to stave off the government’s union-busting attack, backed a regressive \$2-per-pack city cigarette tax for school funding that went into effect in September.

On Oct. 8, hundreds of students at three high schools boycotted school and picketed outside in support of the teachers.

— Janet Post

### Stop Delaying America’s Mail

National Day of Action to protect service and oppose union busting

Called by the four major postal unions

Sat. Nov. 14

Washington, D.C., and other cities

For more info go to <http://www.apwu.org/news/web-news-article/stop-delaying-america's-mail>



Militant/Annalucia Vermunt

Bank workers picket in Auckland, New Zealand, Oct. 10 during one-day national strike over wages and “flexible” schedule demanded by ANZ, one of the country’s largest banks.

Send in your On the Picket Line items, suggestions, or questions to Maggie Trowe at the *Militant* by postal mail, email or phone: 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018; themilitant@mac.com; or 212-244-4899.

# Health care workers in UK stop work in fight over pay

BY PETE CLIFFORD

MANCHESTER, England — Thousands of public health care workers carried out a four-hour strike Oct. 13 demanding a pay increase, their first walkout in 32 years. Nurses, ambulance drivers and other health workers walked off the job to form protest picket lines outside hospitals throughout England. For the first time members of the Royal College of Midwives joined the action.

Real wages for National Health Service workers have fallen by as much as 15 percent since 2010.

The strike, organized by seven trade unions representing more than 400,000 NHS workers, was called after the government refused to implement an across-the-board 1 percent pay increase recommended by a pay review body.

The ruling excluded those it claims receive annual incremental raises, so some 60 percent of NHS workers received no raise.

At the Oldham picket line passing cars honked in support as some 70 workers waved placards.

“Some midwives have not had a rise now for three years,” said Julie Beattie. “There’s been a two-year wage freeze and the incremental rises are not guaranteed — it depends on what managers say about your performance.”

“We do a job where we can often work through our paid breaks in a 12-hour shift,” she said. “Now for the rest of the week we’ll be ‘working to rule’ including taking breaks.”

U.K. Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt threatened to lay off 14,000 nurses if the



Militant/Jonathan Silberman

Health care workers in London picket during Oct. 13 national four-hour strike for pay raise.

strikers’ demands were met.

The government called in police and army personnel to run ambulances in London and North West England, despite the unions organizing to provide emergency care during the action.

“I’m always saying to the managers we’re a hospital, not a factory,” Brian Cardwell, a porter and union steward at Stepping Hill Hospital, Stockport, told the *Militant* while picketing with 50 workers there.

## Scotland separation vote fails, workers on both sides concerned about bosses’ assaults

BY PETE CLIFFORD

MANCHESTER, England — With 85 percent voter turnout, the Sept. 18 referendum for Scottish independence was defeated by 55 to 45 percent. While Scotland’s basic relationship with the United Kingdom remains unchanged, so do the social contradictions in the U.K. that have been brought to the fore by the worldwide crisis of capitalism and tug at the seams of the declining world power.

The support for separation in Scotland is not driven by a struggle against discrimination or national oppression. For working people, the referendum was a typical “lesser evil” choice presented by rival capitalist parties. Whether for or against, the vote was decided by how most people judged the outcome would affect living standards and employment, as well as government welfare, pension and health care services. And capitalist politicians on both sides focused their appeals on these issues.

The Scottish National Party, which for the first time in 2011 took a plurality of seats in Scottish parliamentary elections, initiated and led the independence campaign. Though couched in nationalist rhetoric, its main pitch was a supposed “Scottish” road to avoid the economic crisis that has gripped the U.K., Europe and the world. Among the selling points were the fact that Scotland has a smaller budget deficit, higher tax revenue and the great bulk of tax-generating oil and gas reserves than the rest

of the U.K. The SNP government has also taken a more cautious approach to the nationwide assault on welfare. At the same time, camouflage was given to the SNP’s anti-working-class course by various leftist organizations that claimed independence and the break-up of Britain would lead to progressive social change.

“I voted ‘yes,’” Sean Tulloch, a warehouse worker from Edinburgh, told the *Militant*. “Nationalism wasn’t the issue for most people, it was what are the possibilities for their future.”

“It wasn’t about William Wallace,” said Linda McKay from Cranhill, a working-class housing complex in Glasgow, referring to the historic leader of Scotland’s first war of independence against the English monarchy during the 13th and 14th centuries. “My sons voted ‘yes’ hoping for change, but I voted ‘no’ as I was not sure about the unknown.”

The capitalist class in Scotland was divided, as various layers had more to gain or lose from independence. In the rest of the U.K. the propertied rulers and their main political parties — Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrats — were behind a campaign to keep Scotland in the union. The three parties stepped up their efforts in the final weeks as opinion polls showed growing support for a “yes” vote.

Former Labour Prime Minister Gordon Brown, a Scot, was given pride of place in the campaign. Prime Minister

and Conservative Party leader David Cameron, Liberal Democrat Deputy Prime Minister Nicholas Clegg and Labour Party leader Edward Miliband also traveled to Scotland. The capitalist politicians promised to give the Scottish Parliament greater control over taxation and spending on social services, while maintaining the “Barnett formula,” which has been used for the last 36 years to allocate public spending for

each nation within the United Kingdom and gives Scotland a greater per capita amount than England or Wales. The Barnett formula was first implemented in 1978 amid labor struggles and rising discontent in Scotland over disparities with the rest of the United Kingdom in wages, housing and health care.

The vote to maintain the union came not only as a relief to Britain’s main rul-

Continued on page 9

## UK workers march for pay rise

Continued from front page

butchers from the Tulip meat factory in Ashton-under-Lyne where workers are resisting bosses’ plans to increase the workday from eight to 10 hours.

The demonstrations culminated a week of national pay stoppages and other actions by workers in the public sector.

On Oct. 13, hundreds of thousands of nurses, ambulance drivers, paramedics and other workers employed by the National Health Service carried out a four-hour work stoppage. (See article above.)

The drive to hold down pay in the NHS is part of the government’s decision in 2010 to reduce government expenditures by £20 billion (\$32 billion) through so-called efficiency savings that target jobs, wages and services for working people.

Two days after the NHS stoppage, some 200,000 civil servants, members of the Public and Commercial Services Union, carried out a one-day strike over cuts to real wages.

In 2010 the government imposed a two-year wage freeze on public sector workers, followed by a 1 percent annual raise over the next two years for some.

Dozens of steelworkers from the Tata Steel plant in Scunthorpe also marched. David Sayer, a member of Unite at Tata, said the company plans to sell off its Long Products division. “If the plant closes, some 18,000 jobs are at risk in the area,” he said. “There’s really nothing else in Scunthorpe.”

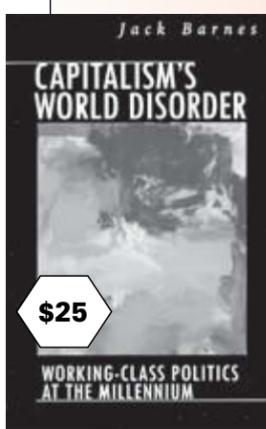
A delegation of 20 care workers from Doncaster in Yorkshire, members of Unison, marched wearing “Care UK strikers” T-shirts. They

have organized 89 days of strike action in the face of wage cuts since February. Another group of Unison care workers — employed by Your Choice Barnet in London — who have been on strike against pay cuts also marched.

Thomas Hemmings, 21, and Steve Geary, 36, who work for the Tesco supermarket chain and marched in a USDAW (Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers) contingent, said Tesco has implemented a new “flexi” contract, which means workers have no guaranteed hours and can be forced to work weekends. “It means that you don’t know how much work you’ll get, what your pay packet will be,” said Hemmings.

“There has been a lot of talk about an economic recovery,” said Rupinder Singh, a council worker and Unite member in the West Midlands, commenting on widely publicized government figures that include an official unemployment rate of 6.2 percent. “But as far as I see it, only a very few are benefiting. The large majority of workers are on the receiving end.”

Most of the touted job gains have been in “self-employment.” More than a third of these newly self-employed earn less than £10,000 (\$16,120) per year. Of the rest many are temporary jobs, often on “zero hours contracts,” with no guaranteed hours. Overall, workers have taken a real wage cut of £50 (\$80) per week since 2007, according to the TUC, and 5 million receive less than the national minimum wage, which stands at £6.50 (\$10.50) per hour for most workers over 21 and between £3.79 and £5.13 for younger age categories.



**Capitalism’s World Disorder**  
**Working-Class Politics at the Millennium**  
by Jack Barnes

“There is more to Her Majesty’s realm than just pomp and symbol. ... In a capitalist state that takes the form of a constitutional monarchy, as economic and social crises deepen, the crowned head of state remains important. ... In a bourgeois republic without a monarchy, the president often assumes Bonapartist powers and authority under such conditions. But in a constitutional monarchy, remnants of feudalism preserved by the bourgeoisie with few intrinsic vested powers — the Crown, as well as an unelected House of Lords — grow rather than diminish in their importance for maintaining stability amid the increasing brutality of capitalist life and rule.” — Jack Barnes

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# Duty calls to fight Ebola



AP Photo/Teresa Crawford

From right, Josephus Weeks, nephew of Thomas Duncan who died of Ebola in Dallas; Nowai Korkoyah, Duncan's mother; and Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr. spoke to media Oct. 18 in Chicago about poor treatment Duncan received in hospital after contracting Ebola.

## Continued from front page

Eric Duncan, who died from the disease Oct. 8 in Texas, never had a fighting chance and two nurses were infected as a result of the substandard medical treatment doled out to working people in the U.S., where the health care "industry" is organized for profit. The U.S. government's bureaucratic response has fostered hysteria and anti-African discrimination, highlighting the incapacity of any capitalist nation to organize an effective social response to the epidemic, either in Africa or within their own borders.

The Cuban volunteer health care workers are the "greatest example of solidarity that a human being can offer, above all when they are not motivated by any material interest whatsoever," wrote Castro. "We will happily cooperate with U.S. personnel in this task, not in search of peace between two states that have been adversaries for so many years, but for peace in the world, an objective that can and must be attempted."

David Nabarro, coordinator of the U.N. anti-Ebola effort, told an Oct. 20 Havana summit on Ebola sponsored by the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America that Cuba has sent "more than other countries together, it's an extraordinary contribution." The

summit brought together nine heads of state and health officials from Latin America and the Caribbean.

The same day the *New York Times* printed an editorial titled, "Cuba's Impressive Role on Ebola."

"Cuba stands to play the most robust role among the nations seeking to contain the virus," the *Times* said, and "should be lauded and emulated."

"While the United States and several other wealthy countries have been happy to pledge funds, only Cuba and a few nongovernmental organizations are offering what is most needed: medical professionals in the field," the *Times* said. "Fidel Castro argued that the United States and Cuba must put aside their differences, if only temporarily, to combat a deadly scourge. He's absolutely right."

As of Oct. 14 there were more than 9,200 cases of Ebola, overwhelmingly in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, according to the World Health Organization. More than 4,500 people have died. Many cases go unreported. And the disease is spreading exponentially.

WHO and Doctors Without Borders worked with Cuba's Pedro Kourí Institute for Tropical Medicine in providing training for the Cuban volunteers before they headed to West Africa, including

## Syriza festival in Greece shows paintings on Cuban 5



Militant/Georges Mehrabian

ATHENS, Greece — About 300 people viewed watercolors by Antonio Guerrero, one of the Cuban Five, at the Oct. 2-5 annual Syriza youth festival, a major political and cultural event here attended by several thousand people.

Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left), a social-democratic coalition founded in 2004, is today the largest opposition bloc in the Greek parliament.

On display was a collection of 15 watercolors by Guerrero titled "I Will Die the Way I've Lived" that depict the experiences of the five revolutionaries during their first 17 months in the "hole" at the Federal Detention Center in Miami. The exhibit was part of a Cuban booth set up in the festival's International Corner, which was dedicated to Palestine, Venezuela and Cuba.

Showings of Guerrero's art in Greece have been organized by a joint effort of the José Martí Cultural Association, Greek Solidarity Network-La Red Solid@ria, Hasta La Victoria Siempre and the publishing house Diethnes Vima.

"The Syriza youth festival was the 10th stop since the Greece tour was launched in May," said Loukia Konstantinou, who helped organize the showing. More than 1,300 people have seen the exhibit, some 550 of whom have signed petitions demanding President Barack Obama release the three revolutionaries who remain in prison — Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino and Guerrero. Participants at Guerrero's 15-watercolor exhibit in Greece have bought a total of 159 books published by Diethnes Vima and Pathfinder Press on the Cuban Five, the Cuban Revolution and other working-class politics.

— GEORGES MEHRABIAN

training on how to put on and remove personal protective equipment.

### Patient without insurance refused

Thomas Eric Duncan, a Liberian who arrived in the U.S. Sept. 19 to visit his family in Dallas, died Oct. 8. Duncan was sent home Sept. 25 after going to Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital's emergency room with a high fever, despite telling staff he had just arrived from Liberia. Two days later he returned to the hospital in an ambulance.

His nephew, Josephus Weeks, told the press that many believe that Duncan was initially turned away because "antibiotics and Tylenol are the standard protocol for a patient without insurance."

"For the 10 days he was in the hospital, they not only refused to help us communicate with Thomas Eric, but they also acted as an impediment," Weeks said. "The day Thomas Eric died, we learned about it from the news media, not his doctors." Duncan died alone.

Two nurses who tended to Duncan also caught the disease, but survived.

The National Nurses United labor union released a statement Oct. 15 after nurses contacted them about the "lack of training and preparation" for health workers at Texas Health Presbyterian.

"No one knew what the protocols were or were able to verify what kind of personal protective equipment should be worn," the union said.

After three Ebola infections in the U.S., many Democratic and Republican party politicians have called for a travel ban and

suspension of visas for travelers from Sierra Leone, Guinea-Conakry and Liberia.

"We're not going to have community outbreaks of Ebola in the United States," said Michael Osterholm, director of the University of Minnesota's Center for Infectious Disease Research in an Oct. 17 interview with the online publication MinnPost. "What absolutely horrifies me is what is going to continue to happen in Africa. That situation is the most dire of all that I've seen in my 40-year career."

"The United States has still not made one hospital bed available to a patient in those three countries," said Osterholm.

Continued on page 9

## Who are the Cuban Five?



Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and René González are Cuban revolutionaries who during the 1990s accepted assignments from the Cuban government to gather information on the operations and plans of Cuban-American paramilitary groups based in southern Florida. These rightist outfits, organizing on U.S. soil with virtual impunity, have a long record of carrying out bombings, assassinations and other attacks, both against targets in Cuba and supporters of the Cuban Revolution in the United States, Puerto Rico and elsewhere.

On Sept. 12, 1998, the Five were arrested by the FBI. They were framed up and convicted on a variety of charges, which included acting as unregistered agents of the Cuban government and possession of false identity documents. Without a shred of evidence, three were charged with "conspiracy to gather and transmit national defense information."

Hernández was also convicted of conspiracy to commit murder, on the pretext that he bore responsibility for the Cuban government's 1996 shoot-down of two Brothers to the Rescue planes that had invaded Cuban airspace in disregard of Havana's repeated warnings. He is serving two life terms plus 15 years. His wife Adriana Pérez is barred from entering the United States.

René González returned to Cuba in May 2013 and Fernando González on Feb. 28 this year.

## Minnesota SWP candidate: 'Resources exist to stop Ebola'

The following is an excerpt from a statement by Frank Forrestal, Socialist Workers Party candidate for governor of Minnesota.



The resources exist to reverse and stop this epidemic. Working people around the world must mount protests, meetings and demonstrations to pressure the capitalist governments to follow the request of the World Health Organization and the example of revolutionary Cuba.

The Socialist Workers campaign calls on the U.S. government to send thousands of doctors and nurses to the afflicted areas of Africa to treat African working people. Follow the Cuban example. This is the only way to avert a horrible human tragedy. *Not one unnecessary death due to Ebola!*

# Malcolm X: 'Our scope is broad and international'

Below is an excerpt from Malcolm X on Afro-American History, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month. Malcolm X, a revolutionary leader of the Black struggle and working class, gave this speech on Jan. 24, 1965. He was assassinated four weeks later on Feb. 21. This talk was the first of three he had planned to give at Harlem's Audubon Ballroom to lay the groundwork for the new program of the Organization of Afro-American Unity, a political group that he founded in June 1964. Copyright © 1967 by Betty Shabazz and Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Robert Parent

"Our interests are worldwide rather than limited to just things American, or things New York, or things Mississippi. And this is very important," said Malcolm X. Above, Malcolm speaks at founding meeting of Organization of Afro-American Unity, Audubon Ballroom, June 1964.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY MALCOLM X

Brothers and sisters: First I want to, as Brother James has pointed out, thank you, as we do each week, or have been doing each week. It seems that during the month of January it doesn't snow or rain or hail or get bad in any way weather-wise until Saturday night, and it stays like that Saturday through Sunday, and then the sun comes back out on Monday — it seems. But since I was a little boy I learned that one of the things that make you grow into manhood are tests and trials and tribulations. If you can come through the snow and the rain and the sleet, you know you can make it easily when the sun is out and

everything is right. So I'm happy to see that those of you who are here tonight don't let anything get in your way, that is, weather-wise.

During the next three weeks, we're going to have a series that will be designed to give us a better understanding of the past, I should say a better knowledge of the past, in order that we may understand the present and be better prepared for the future. I don't think any of you will deny the fact that it is impossible to understand the present or prepare for the future unless we have some knowledge of the past. And the thing that has kept most of us — that is, the Afro-Americans — almost crippled in this society has been our complete lack of knowledge concerning the past. ...

When you deal with the past, you're dealing with history, you're dealing actually with the origin of a thing. When you know the origin, you know the cause. If you don't know the origin, you don't know the cause. And if you don't know the cause, you don't know the reason, you're just cut off, you're left standing in midair. So the past deals with history or the origin of anything — the origin of a person, the origin of a nation, the origin of an incident. And when you know the origin, then you get a better understanding of the causes that produce whatever originated there and

its reason for originating and its reason for being.

It's impossible for you and me to have a balanced mind in this society without going into the past, because in this particular society, as we function and fit into it right now, we're such an underdog, we're trampled upon, we're looked upon as almost nothing. Now if we don't go into the past and find out how we got this way, we will think that we were always this way. And if you think that you were always in the condition that you're in right now, it's impossible for you to have too much confidence in yourself, you become worthless, almost nothing.

But when you go back into the past and find out where you once were, then you will know that you weren't always at this level, that you once had attained a higher level, had made great achievements, contributions to society, civilization, science, and so forth. And you know that if you once did it, you can do it again; you automatically get the incentive, the inspiration, and the energy necessary to duplicate what our forefathers formerly did. But by keeping us completely cut off from our past, it is easy for the man who has power over us to make us willing to stay at this level because we will feel that we were always at this level, a low level. That's why I say it is so important for you and

me to spend time today learning something about the past so that we can better understand the present, analyze it, and then do something about it. ...

But those of us who come here, come here because we not only see the importance of having an understanding of things local and things national, but we see today the importance of having an understanding of things international, and where our people, the Afro-Americans in this country, fit into that scheme of things, where things international are concerned. We come out because our scope is broad, our scope is international rather than national, and our interests are international rather than national. Our interests are worldwide rather than limited just to things American, or things New York, or things Mississippi. And this is very important.

You can get into a conversation with a person, and in five minutes tell whether or not that person's scope is broad or whether that person's scope is narrow, whether that person is interested in things going on in his block where he lives or interested in things going on all over the world. Now persons who are narrow-minded, because their knowledge is limited, think that they're affected only by things happening in their block. But when you find a person who has a knowledge of things of the world today, he realizes that what happens in South Vietnam can affect him if he's living on St. Nicholas Avenue, or what's happening in the Congo affects his situation on Eighth Avenue or Seventh Avenue or Avenue. The person who realizes the effect that things all over the world have right on his block, on his salary, on his reception or lack of reception into society, immediately becomes interested in things international. But if a person's scope is so limited that he thinks things that affect him are only those things that take place across the street or downtown, then he's only interested in things across the street and downtown.

So, one of our greatest desires here at Organization of Afro-American Unity meetings is to try and broaden the scope and even the reading habits of most of our people, who need their scope broadened and their reading habits also broadened today.

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# Kurds push back Islamic State

Continued from front page

rights and sovereignty, including the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria; the capitalist governments in Ankara, Tehran and Baghdad; and the main imperialist world powers led by Washington. At the same time, the heroic battle for Kobani has inspired not only millions of Kurds, but working people and women throughout the region and beyond.

On Sept. 15 Islamic State, which has taken control of much of Syria and western Iraq, began its advance on Kobani, a city in northern Syria along the Turkish border. Outnumbering the Kurdish forces 3-1 and employing tanks and heavy artillery, the reactionaries took control of about a third of Kobani. But on Oct. 16 major news media reported that Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) in the city had not only held off Islamic State's advance, but forced a partial retreat.

For at least a month, statements by U.S. officials and media commentary were saturated with fatalistic indifference about the supposed imminent fall of Kobani, the coming slaughter of Kurdish civilians and the city's strategic insignificance for the U.S.-led war effort. Meanwhile, Turkish troops were amassed on the hills overlooking the besieged city. And with Kobani surrounded by Islamic State on three sides, Ankara sealed off its border, blocking the only corridor for reinforcements and badly needed weapons and ammunition to get in.

But as time wore on, the world watched and the Kurds gained sympathy and respect. Washington also recognized and began acting on the opportunity handed them to deal blows to Islamic State, which had concentrated some 10,000 fighters and heavy artillery around Kobani, overstressing their forces and supply lines. More than 135 U.S. airstrikes have been conducted in the area through Oct. 19, according to the Central Command, more than in any other area in Syria or Iraq.

Then on Oct. 19 U.S. C-130 aircraft conducted airdrops over Kobani. "The aircraft delivered weapons, ammunition and medical supplies that were provided by Kurdish authorities in Iraq," said a U.S. Central Command news release. Although the aid was limited, and some was accidentally dropped on Islamic State-controlled territory, the move represented the first supplies the strapped Kurdish fighters in Syria had received. At the same time, the U.S. military statement added that "Kobani could still fall."

The following day while visiting Indonesia, Secretary of State John Kerry told reporters that the military airdrop did not represent a change in U.S. policy. It was a "momentary effort," he emphasized.

The YPG in Syria is tied to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which has been designated as a "Foreign



Kurdish combatants drive to front in Kobani, Syria, Oct. 18 to battle Islamic State.

Terrorist Organization" by the U.S. State Department since the list was first drawn up in 1997. Until a ceasefire last year, the PKK had fought the Turkish government in a three-decade armed struggle for Kurdish rights and greater autonomy. Until now, the only aid Washington had given Kurdish forces had been some limited weapons and training to the Peshmerga army of the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq.

Hours after the U.S. airdrops, the Turkish government announced that Peshmerga forces from northern Iraq would now be allowed to travel across Turkey to join the battle for Kobani.

## Kurdish women lead combat units

The Kurdish people were denied a country when the imperialist victors of World War I carved up the Middle East. Today this oppressed nationality comprises some 30 million people in a region that spans parts of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. Their decades-long struggle has opened space for toilers and women in the region, a fact that is evident in the substantial proportion of Kurdish combatants who are women.

More and more articles have recognized this aspect of Kurdish units as their battle against Islamic State unfolds, with headlines like "Meet the Badass Women Fighting the Islamic State" in *Foreign Policy*, and "These Remarkable Women Are Fighting ISIS. It's Time You Know Who They Are" in women's fashion magazine *Marie Claire*, which include photos and profiles. "Kurdish Women Fight on Front Lines Against Islamic State," headlined a major front-page article in the Oct. 17 *Wall Street Journal*. An estimated one-third of the Syrian Kurdish combatants in Syria are women and a higher proportion are commanders, leading women and men into battle.

"When I walk with my gun, the men who haven't volunteered keep their eyes down around me," Dilar, 19, who recently returned to her village after battling Islamic State near the town Ras al-Ayn along Turkish border, told the *Journal*. "My bravery shames them."

## LETTERS

### 'Inspiring newspaper'

I would like another six months of your inspiring newspaper. I am grateful to all of you who work at the *Militant* and keep us inmates all over the United States and other countries up-to-date with the Cuban Five and other subjects.

A prisoner  
Florida

### Complex events in Ukraine

I read various news sources to follow events in Ukraine, and happened upon your recent coverage. Recent events in my homeland are very complex. So while it was good to see your support for our people, I was rather surprised to see, at the end of the article, the assertion that the Maidan protests were free of anti-Semitism. [See "Stalinists

Whitewashed Nazis' Massacre of Jews at Babi Yar" in issue no. 37.]

I wish that this was true, but it is not.

You are correct that Putin's propaganda is ridiculous. But while the impetus for the anti-Yanukovich protests was democratic and progressive, certain far-right organizations emerged, and grew strong, during and after the Maidan movement. (In particular Svoboda,

which now has a handful of cabinet members.)

Unfortunately, most American reporters and commentators have failed to see the complexities of present-day Ukraine, opting instead to support one or another side with un-nuanced stories. One can take the side of the Ukrainian people without going so far in creating a tidy image.

Michael Shevchenko  
by email

### 'Militant' Prisoners' Fund

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

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

# Scotland referendum

Continued from page 6

ing families, but also to those in much of Europe and beyond, who were concerned about the uncertain financial impact of sorting out currency, debt and banking in an independent Scotland, as well as broader fallout from an accelerated decline of British capitalism. The pound sterling rose to a two-year high against the euro, after a precipitous drop in face of polls indicating an edge to the "yes" vote.

Among the few ruling-class figures outside the U.K. who backed Scottish independence were Russian President Vladimir Putin and Artur Mas, president of the Spanish regional government of Catalan, which is pressing its own independence referendum under similar pressures.

The modern capitalist state of the United Kingdom inherited a country patched together in previous centuries from different nationalities and national grouping during the rise of the British Empire. One of its features was a highly centralized government that over time became harder to maintain and less useful for Britain's rulers. Following a Labour-government organized referendum in 1997, a Scottish parliament was established with devolved powers over schools, health, transportation, the courts and police. An elected assembly with more limited powers was established in Wales. But pressure for further "devolution" continues with the decline of British capitalism.

Hours after the Sept. 18 independence referendum vote was tallied, factional divisions between Britain's three main capitalist parties resurfaced. Cameron announced that plans to give more powers to Scottish Parliament would be combined with ending voting powers for members of U.K. Parliament from Scotland over matters that only effect England. Miliband had to reject the move, as Labour relies on support in Scotland from which it draws 40 MPs, compared to one Conservative.

Meanwhile, a few days before the referendum tens of thousands of public sector workers in Scotland began voting for strike action, demanding more than the paltry 1 percent annual pay raise offered by the Scottish city and town councils. "The only way we'll get anything is by voting with our feet," said Leo Thomson, a government health care worker and Unison trade union member.

# Fight against Ebola

Continued from page 7

who also sharply criticized calls for travel bans. "We need to have people get in and out. ... How do we get planes in with resources that are desperately needed?"

The U.S. government's inept response, media hype and politicians' demagoguery have fueled irrational fear and discrimination against African immigrants.

Staten Island resident Oretha Bestman-Yates was suspended from her job at a local hospital after returning from Liberia July 23. Her supervisors told her to quarantine herself for 21 days before returning to work, which she did.

"I then gave them the doctor's clearance note and the procedure note," she told the *Militant* Oct. 19, but they still won't allow her to come back to work.

New York resident Chaba Doye, who is originally from Sierra Leone and works as a nanny, went to a health clinic recently because she had the flu. "When the nurse found out I'm from Africa, she took a step back, even though I told her I hadn't been there in 10 years," Doye said in a phone interview Oct. 21. "The same reaction in the pharmacy. Like they don't want to touch my money. I decided to treat myself until the crisis subsides."

Turning away a patient who needs care is unthinkable in Cuba, where health care ceased being a commodity as a result of the revolution that overthrew the U.S.-backed Fulgencio Batista dictatorship in 1959.

From the very first days of the revolution, Cuba provided health care to other nations. In Africa alone, Cuban President Raúl Castro told the Ebola summit, more than 76,000 Cuban volunteers over the years have provided health care in 39 countries. More than 3,300 people from 45 African nations studied to become doctors in Cuba without charge.

Jacob Perasso contributed to this article.