**SWP wins a hearing in Kentucky coal country**

By Jacque Henderson

Socialist Workers Party candidates and members are talking with working people in big cities, small towns and farming areas across the country. Everywhere they go they knock on doors and introduce the party, its program, the Militant and books by party leaders. Amy Husk, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Kentucky governor, and campaign supporters knocked on doors here, a town of 2,000 in Letcher County, Jan. 4. Working people in this part of Kentucky have been hard hit by the closing of hundreds of coal mines over the last two decades. Once a union bastion, the last United Mine Workers-organized mine in the state is in Kentucky. 

A flagging economy burdened by debt, pressure, with increasing evidence of a flagging economy burdened by debt. 

The Militant/George Chalmers

Continued on page 3

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**SWP speaks in interests of working people**

Amy Husk, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Kentucky governor, and campaign supporters knocked on doors here, a town of 2,000 in Letcher County, Jan. 4. Working people in this part of Kentucky have been hard hit by the closing of hundreds of coal mines over the last two decades. Once a union bastion, the last United Mine Workers-organized mine in the state closed in 2015.

Continued on page 8

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**US, Chinese rulers’ trade talks continue amid rivalry**

By Roy Landersen

U.S. and Chinese officials met in Beijing Jan. 7-9 for negotiations over the trade dispute between the rulers of the world’s first and second largest economies. These are the first announced talks since President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping met at the G-20 summit in Argentina last month, agreeing on a pause in any new tariffs until March.

The trade confrontation between Washington and Beijing throws a spotlight on the sharpening rivalry between the waning but still dominant world power of U.S. imperialism, and the rising economic and military might of the Chinese rulers. Beijing has been hit hard by Washington’s pressure, with increasing evidence of a flagging economy burdened by debt.

Chinese Vice President Liu He unexpectedly joined the talks, an expression of Beijing’s desire to head off threatened new U.S. tariff increases from 10 percent to 25 percent.

Continued on page 8

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**Socialist Workers Party launches Texas campaign**

Alyson Kennedy, SWP candidate for Dallas mayor, introduces SWP to Jorge Méndez Jan. 8.

‘We’re going to campaign all throughout the state’

By Seth Galinsky

Supporters of the campaign of Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Dallas mayor, are planning two weeks of intensive campaigning Jan 12-26.

“We’re going to go all over Texas,” George Chalmers, who is organizing the campaign, said by phone Jan. 8. As she campaigns, Kennedy explains that no movement to defend the interests of working people can be successful and take political power out of the hands of the capitalist class unless it unites in struggle those who labor in big cities, small towns and farm areas.

Supporters of the Socialist Work-

Continued on page 6

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**Fight to extend right to vote for ex-prisoners!**

The statement below was released Jan. 9 by Amy Husk, Socialist Workers Party candidate for governor in Kentucky.

Former prisoners in Florida proudly asserted their newly won rights

**SWP statement**

by lining up to register to vote Jan. 8. Working people across the country were inspired by the overwhelming victory last year after supporters gathered over 1 million signatures to put constitutional Amendment 4 on the ballot and won its passage by a 64.6 percent vote for ex-prisoners!

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**Ex-prisoners turn out to register to vote in Florida rights victory**

Vietnam veteran Alan Rhyelle registers to vote Jan. 8 in Sarasota, Florida, one of more than a million ex-prisoners whose right to vote was restored by passage of Amendment 4 last year. He had been convicted of a felony in 2008 for growing marijuana for his personal use.

By Seth Galinsky

All across Florida former prisoners lined up to register to vote Jan. 8 — some getting there more than an hour before offices opened — as constitutional Amendment 4 took effect. It passed overwhelmingly last November, by 64.6 percent.

The amendment restored voting rights to more than a million people statewide convicted of felonies once they’ve completed their sentence, including probation and fines. Still excluded are ex-prisoners convicted of murder or sex offenses.

“This day’s a very big day for me,” truck driver Carlos Beverley told WFSU radio in Leon County after registering. “It gives me the opportu-

Continued on page 8

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**LA teachers call for workers, parents, students to join strike rally on Jan. 14**

By Laura Garza

Los Angeles — Daily preparations for a Jan. 14 strike by 34,000 teachers here have intensified as the United Teachers Los Angeles union reaches out for support from parents, students and fellow union members. Negotiations with the school board continue.

Joanna Belson plans to be on the picket line with her children. “If they can’t be taught by schoolteachers that day,” Belson said, “they’re going to have a real-life lesson on the picket lines and they’re going to see how the real world works.”

“We know there are tough decisions ahead for the more than 600,000 students and their families impacted by a strike,” a front-page wraparound ad by the union in the Jan. 8 Los Angeles Times with an accompanying poster states. “Having many parents and allies on the picket lines will be powerful and transformative.”

The union has called for workers, students and parents to join teachers

Continued on page 5

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**Inside**

Over half a million people in US have nowhere to live

‘Yellow vest’ protests respond as French gov’t cracks down

Albany DA drops charges against Ellazar Williams

Celebration of 60th anniversary of Cuban Revolution
Over half a million people in US have nowhere to live

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

As part of the economic upturn in the U.S., more than 550,000 working people were homeless last year, according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development. High rents and low wages account for what would seem to be a contradiction, but in fact is a reflection of the underlying capitalist crisis that affects working people today.

The gulf between the conditions of life for workers and working farmers and those enjoyed by the capitalists and their meretricious enablers continues to widen.

Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell has insisted all year that the U.S. economy is almost “too good to be true.” Maybe that’s true for him. But in mid-December even he had to admit, “The benefits of this strong economy and sound financial system have not reached all Americans.”

Conditions of life facing working people certainly bear this out. Four in 10 adults say they don’t have enough savings to cover a $400 emergency expense, Powell’s Federal Reserve reports. Some 4.8 million workers who want full-time employment are part-time workers. Suicide rates are so high — 129 a day on average — that life expectancy is now declining in the U.S.

The actual figures for people with nowhere to live are probably much higher than the HUD report indicates since the number of homeless one night in January 2018, tabulating those registered in shelters or who were seen “unsheltered” on the streets. On any given night in California, HUD said, 134,000 people are without housing, the most in any state. The state’s homeless population rose 13.7 percent between 2016 and 2017.

Since 2007 homelessness has increased by nearly 47 percent in New York. And in North Dakota, it has risen by over 70 percent.

Families with children represented one-third of the total homeless population in 2018, according to the report. But in some areas it’s much higher.

In October 2018 family members comprised three-quarters of the 65,599 people sleeping each night in New York City’s shelter system, according to the Coalition for the Homeless. This doesn’t count the thousands who stay away from these shelters given the abysmal conditions that exist at many of them.

Half of adults have had family members thrown in jail

Another one of the reflections of the capitalist rulers’ crisis today and how it weighs on working people is the significant increase in the number of workers grounded up in the U.S. criminal “justice” system. A recent study by Cornell University documents that nearly 50 percent of individuals over 18 years old in the U.S. have seen an immediate family member thrown into jail or for prison for at least one night.

For Blacks and Native Americans the numbers are higher — 63 percent have had a family member behind bars. Overwhelmingly, those targeted by the U.S. rulers’ cops, prosecutors and prison officials are working people.

One in seven adults has had an immediate family member behind bars for a year or more: in one in 34 that relative has been imprisoned a decade or longer. Nearly one-third of Blacks have seen a close relative imprisoned for a year or more. Over 50 percent of workers who make $25,000 a year or less have had a family member thrown behind bars.

The rulers show their disdain for workers behind bars in many ways. Many find themselves stuck in prisons far from family and friends. Less than half of those who have had a family member locked up for more than a year say they’ve never been able to visit them.

France: ‘Yellow vest’ actions press needs of toilers

Despite government concessions and a police crackdown, yellow vest protests continue in cities, towns and rural areas in France. The actions are a response to decades of squeeze by the capitalist rulers on living standards. The ‘Militant’ supports and covers this fight.

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Continued from front page

"I’m from the Socialist Workers Party and we’re running a working-class campaign," said Martha Blair, an SWP member who has been convicted of a felony. "Both the Democrats and Republicans defend the interests of the rich. The bosses and the crisis of their capitalist system have wreaked carnage in working-class communities. Working people need to rebuild the labor movement and organize to fight against these attacks."

SWP campaigners learn firsthand about the conditions fellow workers, farmers, small proprietors and others face, from low pay, rising debts, inadequate housing and transportation, to the scourge of the opioid epidemic wreaking working-class neighborhoods.

"I sure am glad to see you’re running," said Martha Blair, 28, after Husk and fellow SWP member Samir Hazboun knocked on her door. "Nobody else is going around here talking about how things really are and asking people what we think!"

"Let me tell you, there are no opportunities in this area. The only jobs are minimum-wage service jobs," she said. "I’m studying to be a cosmetologist and have signed up to get some work doing transcriptions at home. My husband is a radiologist technician and they don’t make enough money to live on."

"You’re not alone," said Husk, a medical assistant in Louisville. "Millions of workers are unable to make ends meet. Health care workers do our best to give good treatment under difficult conditions, but the bosses don’t care about us and they don’t care about the patients that we take care of either."

"The bosses and their government try to get us to think that immigrant workers or workers who have been in prison deserve to be treated as second class," she said. "But this keeps us divided and hurts our ability to fight for all our rights."

"That’s why my party defends the right of workers who’ve been behind bars to vote," Husk said. "Working people won this in Florida last fall. Kentucky is one of two states that denies this right for a lifetime to anyone who has been convicted of a felony. Our campaign calls for a fight to overturn this law."

"I agree with that, I’ve read about this," Gibson said. "You’ve got that right!" Hall responded. Her father had been a union coal miner who fought for black lung benefits and safer working conditions.

"My three sons were coal miners and one is still working," Gibson said. "I have two other brothers who are miners. One has been fighting for benefits because of the disease. They’ve turned him down twice. He’s real sick and he’s still fighting."

"We have to fight for everything," Husk said. "Their system can’t be fixed. We have to gain confidence through our unity in struggle to take the power out of the hands of the rulers. We can organize on the basis of human solidarity."

The SWP campaigners sold five copies of the Militant, a subscription and a copy of Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power by Jack Barnes, and the The Road to Workers Power by Jack Barnes. They met with three people interested in more discussion about participating in the May Day brigade to Cuba and three others who exchanged contact information to continue discussions.

Running for more than a dozen municipal and state offices, SWP candidates are the only voice in the elections in defense of the interests of working people and all the oppressed. If you’re interested in more information about the party, the brigade, or in getting involved in going door-knocking with the SWP, contact the nearest party branch listed on page 4.

Amy Husk, left, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Kentucky governor, talks with Martha Blair on her doorstep in Whitesburg, Kentucky, Jan. 4, about party’s campaign and upcoming May Day Brigade to Cuba. Blair said she was interested in working on both.

"You’re not alone," said Husk, a medical assistant in Louisville. "Millions of workers are unable to make ends meet. Health care workers do our best to give good treatment under difficult conditions, but the bosses don’t care about us and they don’t care about the patients that we take care of either."

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These books just $5 each with a Militant subscription (trial offer for new readers: 12 weeks $5)

Are They Rich Because They’re Smart?
Class, Privilege, and Learning Under Capitalism by Jack Barnes

The Clintons’ Anti-Working-Class Record
Why Washington Fears Working People by Jack Barnes

Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible?
A Necessary Debate Among Working People by Mary-Alice Waters

“It’s the Poor Who Face the Savagery of the US ‘Justice’ System”
The Cuban Five Talk About Their Lives Within the US Working Class.

$7 EACH WITHOUT SUBSCRIPTION

To subscribe or purchase books at these prices, contact Socialist Workers Party or Communist League branches listed on page 4.

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**CALENDAR**

Celebrate 60th Anniversary of the Cuban Revolution

Chicagoland


Washington, D.C.

Speakers: Miguel Fraga, first secretary of the Cuban Embassy; Luis Ramirez, Antonio Maceo Brigade; Omar Mas, DC Metro Coalition and Socialist Workers Party; WPFW radio host Mimi Machado. Fri., Jan. 18, 6:30 p.m. St. Stephen Church, 1525 New Stanton St. NW. Tel.: (202) 703-9685. Sponsored by DC Metro Coalition in Solidarity with the Cuban Revolution.

Vancouver, British Columbia


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**MILITANT SUBSCRIPTION & BOOK SPECIALS**

Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power by Jack Barnes

$15. With subscription, $10

Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power by Jack Barnes

$15. With subscription, $10

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The Militant January 21, 2019
BY HUGO WILS

LONDON — Yellow vests in France have responded to government arrests, attacks and slanders by taking to the streets. Skirmishes were matched throughout France Jan. 5, according to the interior ministry — almost twice as many as the Saturday before. President Emmanuel Macron attacked them in televised address as a “hateful mob” who target “journalists, Jews, foreigners and homosexuals.”

The yellow vests are a mainly rural and smaller town movement of workers, farmers and other small proprietors triggered by the crushing effects of the ongoing crisis of capitalism and attacks by the government aimed at making them pay for it. Their actions have forced some government concessions, but not enough to get demonstrators off the streets.Protests at toll booths, traffic circles and elsewhere continue to draw support from the majority of people, especially among the working class.

The yellow vests continue to protest for a higher minimum wage and other demands to ease the economic crunch on working people. And they have increased noticeably for unemployment pay and to cut taxes, particularly among the working class.

“The yellow vests are a mainly rural and smaller town movement of working people. And they have increasingly called for Macron to resign.”

Macron’s government has deployed thousands of cops in an attempt to quell the protests. The interior ministry has warned that police will act to look after clear protesters off the traffic circles and occupied toll booths. More than 147,000 cops were mobilized across France on New Year’s Eve as protesters organized marches. Thousands assembled on the Champs Élysées in Paris.

The government has used the fact that anarchist antifa groups, known in France as “cassuese,” have used the yellow vests, especially in Paris, to attack property and people.

“The yellow vests, which target “journalists, Jews, foreigners and homosexuals,” have used the yellow vests, especially in Paris, to attack property and people.”

Macron threatened to impose his crime! Organizing an undeclared protest of a few dozen people to lay candles at the Champs Élysées for those injured or killed since the protests began.

In Macron’s France it’s a crime if you call a protest without giving the government at least a day’s prior notice. Le Figaro, owned by Dassault Group, the manufacturer of warplanes for the French air force, labeled Drouet a “vio- lent extremist” because he supported the popular working-class Maidan uprising in Ukraine that overthrew the regime of Viktor Yaru-
koyvych in 2014.

BY JACOB PERASSO

ALBANY, N.Y. — Opponents of police brutality and cop frame-ups were out in force Jan. 9 when Albany County District Attorney David Soares announced he was dropping charges against 19-year-old Ellazar Williams.

They told the press, “I think it was the more than 2,000 signatures we got from the community” that got DA Soares to drop the charges.” A county grand jury had cleared Olsen of any excessive force, false arrest and other evidence that was presented to the grand jury,” he told the press Dec. 14.

Knox filed a lawsuit against Olsen and other cops, charging them with excessive force, false arrest and other charges. Olsen retired Jan. 4.

Williams’ campaign Katia West spends most of her time taking care of him. She quit her two jobs to do so, organizing his medications, giving him shots, dressing his wounds and getting food. The cop’s ballet is still lodged in Williams’ spine.

They told the Albany Times Union they’ve got a lot of help from Alice Green and others who fought to get the charges against him dropped.

Williams and West are trying to get a motorized wheelchair, accessible housing and adequate food and medical supplies. With Green’s help, they’ve set up a fund: the Ellazar Williams Donation Account, SEFCU, 700 Parkrow Blvd., Albany, NY 12205.

The petition drive was supported by more than 30 organizations, including the Center for Law and Justice, the Albany NAACP, Capital Area Action Against Mass Incarceration, Citizens Action of New York and the Socialist Workers Party.

There have been a number of fights against police brutality in the area over the last couple of years. Protests were organized to respond to the 2017 shooting of Dahmeek McDonald and the police killing of Edson Thevenin in 2016 in Troy, New York, across the Hudson River from Albany.

In nearby Schenectady, cops were caught on video slamming Nicola Cot- tone’s head onto a bench while his hands were cuffed behind her back in 2016. Cottone won a $360,000 settlement this past October.
Continued from front page

In a 10 a.m. rally in front of City Hall on the first day of the strike. The board has counseled the union’s strike preparations with attempts at last-ditch court orders to thwart a strike. The original strike date of Jan. 10 was postponed by the union to Jan. 14 because the school board claimed in court they weren’t given the required 10-day strike notice. The union on Jan. 9 they’d win the case, but didn’t want to allow the board to spread confusion.

The board has hired 400 scab teachers and is urging parents to cross picket lines to monitor students along with the 2,000 administrators that will attempt to keep the schools open. The old union contract expired in June 2017. The board has also approved new policies to relax vetting requirements to allow volunteers to cross teacher picket lines and come into the schools.

The school board — which is headed by a millionaire former investment banker — claims it will go insolvent trying to meet the teachers’ demands, regardless of how “worthly” they are.

The union answers by showing the board is sitting on a $1.86 billion reserve.

Teachers get labor support

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union is urging every member to sign a scab picketing card with the picket captains on the strike lines to provide water, food, bodies to walk the picket line, shutting folks, etc.,” wrote Cathy Familathe, president of the ILWU Southern California District Council. The Los Angeles

Richmond, Virginia

Join Virginia Educators United March and Rally

Mon., Jan. 28, 11 a.m.
Gather at VCU-Monroe Park 620 W. Main St.
March to state Capitol

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO

January 24, 1944

SEATTLE — A head-on collision between Burlington Northern and Union Pacific freight trains in Kelso, Washington, killed five workers near Kelso, Washington. The northbound UP train was preparing to switch over to a parallel main track to allow the BN train to continue southward.

A number of safety systems, designed to prevent precisely this sort of accident, already exist. One device is called an automatic train stop. Another system uses a special car — “a walking drink” — to warn the engines themselves to warn the crew of upcoming signals.

For 16 years the NTSB [National Transportation Safety Board] has strongly recommended that the bosses install such safety systems, which might have prevented the Kelso collision. But instead the railroads, with the approval of the Federal Railway Administration, have dismantled the existing systems in order to cut costs.

January 24, 1969

HAVANA — A million Cubans gathered in the Plaza de la Revolución here Jan. 23 to celebrate the 30th anniversary of their revolution. They heard an address by Fidel Castro of the first 10 years of the revolution — the progress made and the continuing problems. And they greeted with tremendous enthusiasm his prediction of the great accomplishments that lie ahead.

Central honors at the demonstration went to the exemplary workers whose revolutionary dedication have spurred production in the face of difficulties. Everyone in Cuba the result of a decade of mass mobilization of revolutionary manpower are evident. All the training schools that were established by the revolution are now graduating classes of skilled technicians, doctors, engineers and scientists who are carrying out the task of rebuilding Cuba.

January 22, 1944

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January 21, 2019

The Militant January 21, 2019 5

Cuba and the Coming American Revolution by Jack Barnes

This is a book about the example set by the people of Cuba that revolution is not only necessary — it can be made. It’s about the class struggle in the US, where the potential of workers and farmers is today as utterly discounted by the ruling powers as were those of the Cuban toilers just a century ago.

Also in Spanish, French, Farsi pathfinderpress.com

LA teachers call Jan. 14 rally

County Federation of Labor has issued similar appeals.

Over a thousand union school representatives converged on the union headquarters Jan. 5 to get strike material and instructions for organizing picketing. Signs distributed by the union saying, “We Stand with LA Teachers,” are springing up in houses around the area.

The union is pressing for a 6.5 percent pay raise. They are demanding hiring of more school nurses, counselors and librarians. Many schools only hire a nurse for one day a week, and there is one counselor for every 945 students.

Small class sizes are a key concern of teachers. “Right now I have classes with 40-41 students in them and I have a total of 233 students that I work with,” Erica Huerta, a social studies teacher at Garfield High School, said. “That’s a lot of students to think about at one time. It’s another one of the signs of disrespect from our district,” said Huerta. “They’re expecting us to do magic without giving us the resources that we need and one of the resources is just time and energy with students.”

Teachers say they draw inspiration from the round of teacher protests and strikes across the country last year, from West Virginia to Colorado, Arizona to North Carolina.

To find out how you can aid the teachers and their fight for more resources for schools, visit www.WeArePublicSchools.org.
SWP launches Texas campaign

Continued from front page

ers from party around the country are heading to Texas to help campaign. "We're knocking on workers' doors in North Dallas Jan. 8. "We're calling for all U.S. troops to get out of the Middle East and Afghanistan," Kennedy told those they met. "Working people there need to fight to control their own destiny. The best way workers in the U.S. can help them find a road forward is to demand Washington get out now,"

Jorge Méndez, 22, a cook, was one of the people they met. "Life in the U.S. is better than in Mexico," Méndez said. "The money here is low, but it's still way more than in Mexico."

That's true, Kennedy said. "In fact, U.S. capitalists want immigrants to be 'fixed' — to pay them less than U.S.-born workers and drive down wages of everyone," she said. "Their government opens and closes its borders based on the bosses' need for labor. And they try to drive a wedge between immigrant and native-born workers to better exploit both and to point us away from our real problem — the capitalist rulers and their government."

"The Socialist Workers Party fights for amnesty for the more than 11 million undocumented workers in the U.S. today," she said. "That's how we can build strong unions and unite the working class."

They also spoke to dental student Baretten Anderson who said that the health care system is broken and has to be "fixed."

"Health care in the U.S. "is based on making profit," Kennedy said, "not on keeping you healthy. We're for universal, government-funded health care from cradle to grave, not health insurance. Insurance plans, like Obamacare, are structured to profit the medical and pharmaceutical industries, not get us taken care of."

"The Cuban Revolution is an example of what is possible when working people make decisions based on human need not profit," she said. "Working people there fought and took power. They transformed health care, education and other social needs into a human right. And they send doctors and other medical volunteers out wherever they're needed, like they did in the fight against Ebola in Africa."

SWP: Fight to extend right to vote for ex-prisoners!

Continued from front page

In six states, some 5 million former prisoners are denied the right to vote. The Florida victory is a gain for all working people. It inspires people across the country to fight all the restrictions on the franchise for workers behind bars. The focus now is on Kentucky, where I'm campaigning for governor, and in Iowa, the last two states where severe restrictions on the voting rights of ex-prisoners still apply. In Kentucky, the state constitution permanently bars workers with any past felony convictions — some 300,000 people — from voting. The only exceptions are by personal decision of the governor. This anti-working-class restriction disproportionately affects African-Americans. It bars one in five Blacks in the state from voting.

My party defends the right of all workers to cast a ballot. We are fighting to overturn efforts by prison authorities in Florida and elsewhere to disenfranchise, but to intimidate and keep working people in their place. As Ramón Labanino, one of the Cuban Five political prisoners kept in Washington's jails for their defense of the Cuban Revolution for almost sixteen years, noted: "In the United States, imprisonment is a way of de-humanizing a human being. It's a way of isolating you from society, including from your family."

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SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters addresses: ‘Can US workers make a socialist revolution?’

In Defense of the US Working Class, a new book by Mary-Alice Waters, is being released in January. It features the talk by Waters at an international conference in Havana organized by the Cuban History Institute and the Central Organization of Cuban Workers (CTC), the country’s union federation. The April 24-26 gathering was part of the May Day events in 2018, including the May 1 marches of more than a million working people who mobilized in Havana and across Cuba to support their socialist revolution.

Waters is a member of the Socialist Workers Party National Committee and publisher of Pathfinder Press, publisher of the book. Her talk was first printed in the June 11 issue of the Militant. She has edited her presentation for publication in the new book.

Waters’ talk was followed by a panel on the US class struggle titled, “From Clinton to Trump: How US working people are responding to the anti-labor offensive of the bosses, their parties and their government.”

As Pathfinder editor Martin Koppel explains in the preface, the members of the panel were “leaders and supporters of the Socialist Workers Party with years of experience in major industries and trade unions as well as on the land. They described the many intertwined forms of capitalist exploitation and oppression faced by working people in capitalist America.”

More important, Koppel says, the panelists “explained how workers have fought back against the forty-year anti-labor offensive by the employers and their government. They pointed especially to the teachers strike in West Virginia and the impetus it gave to waves of strikes and struggles by school personnel in the country.”

In Defense of the US Working Class includes political summaries of those remarks, as well as short biographies of the panelists. Over the next three weeks, the Militant will run all six summaries.


This week we feature the panel presentations by Alyson Kennedy and Omari Musa.

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Alyson Kennedy, Alyson is a 14-year veteran union coal miner. She was among the first wave of women who in the 1970s broke through barriers that coal bosses used to exclude them from underground mining jobs. She has been part of United Mine Workers battles in coal fields from West Virginia and Alabama to Utah. Alyson was the Socialist Workers Party candidate for president in 2016 and lives in Dallas, Texas, where she works at the international retail chain Walmart.

At the Havana conference, Kennedy highlighted some of the fighting history of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) including the successful struggle waged by the rank and file of miners for democracy movement in the 1970s to win control of the union. The new union leadership then established the right of the ranks to vote on contracts. The strengthened union fought for a new union safety committees with the right to shut down production under dangerous conditions, and other key demands.

During the same years new federal equal-employment-opportunity laws obliged the coal bosses to drive them out of the mines, and how the women won union backing and support from fellow miners who were men. She described how the incorporation of women into the workforce strengthened the UMWA.

Kennedy also described the twenty-five thousand-strong mobilization of striking teachers and other school personnel in Oklahoma where she had been part of three weeks earlier. In a state with no tradition of labor action like West Virginia’s, teachers shut down the schools for nine days, winning a pay raise and increased school funding.

The Oklahoma strike was the strongest of the wave of teachers’ actions that drew added energy from the example set by the West Virginia working class. Kennedy explained that, like teachers, many of her coworkers, as well as many customers, at Walmart work more than one job to survive. They identified with and supported the teachers’ fight.

Omari Musa, Omari has worked for half a century in every kind of job, union and nonunion, from rail and oil to an ice cream factory, from California to Miami. He currently lives in Washington, DC, where he is employed by Walmart. He is a life- time veteran of battles in defense of the rights of African Americans and a longtime national leader of the wave to defend the Cuban Revolution, both inside and outside the labor movement.

Musa took up the assertions made by many liberals and radicals in the US that racism is on the rise and that most workers who are Caucasian — the majority of striking miners in West Virginia and Oklahoma, for example — are reactionary. That’s why Donald Trump, not Hillary Clinton, was elected president, they say.

Musa grew up in the deep South under Jim Crow conditions of institutional racial discrimination. He knows the difference between then and now, he said. He pointed to the “social revolution that has taken place in the US,” the product of the mass, Black-led movement in the 1950s, ’60s, and early ’70s that brought down the institutions of race segregation and profoundly changed the consciousness of working people, both Blacks and Caucasians.

“Today the workforce is more integrated than ever before, and it is harder than at any previous time in US history for the rulers to use racism to divide us,” he said. “That social revolution strengthened us all.”

Plenty of racial discrimination still exists, he underlined. Such divisions are a source of hundreds of billions in profit and will never be eliminated under capitalism. But racism and anti-Black violence are declining, not growing. “Provocations organized by white-supremacist groups, like the one in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August 2017 draw a few hundred, not thousands as they did only decades ago. Vicious mobs are no longer attacking Blacks in the streets and their homes.”

One week after the Charlottesville provocation during which one counter-demonstrator was killed, 40,000 people poured into the streets of Boston to repudiate the ultraright action.

Musa pointed to the example of African American football star Colin Kaepernick, who refused to stand during the playing of the national anthem as a protest against police killings and racist attacks. “He became a hero to millions — of all races.”
The prison newspaper train

I was reading your newspaper that another inmate had. He got transferred and I would like to keep reading it. A young brother informed me

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eers there have shifted gears, announcing $125 billion in infrastructure spending, mainly on big rail projects, hoping to stimulate manufacturing again. And they feel increased pressure to reach some kind of agreement with Washington. Stock markets turned upward Jan. 9

BY ROY LANDERSE

For the last two years, the Chinese rulers have systematically organized the indefinite detention of over a million Uighurs, a Turkic-speaking Muslim ethnic minority who live mainly in Xinjiang, a huge region of northwest China bordering Central Asia, in what authorities call “vocational training centers.”

Now the government has begun imposing of a system of forced labor in a growing number of these camps. Surrounded by barbed-wire fences and guard towers, some detention facilities include factories where Uighurs are compelled to toil at less than a low-pay.

For centuries the Uighurs have lived in villages around oases in the lower slopes and valleys of this mountainous desert region, mainly as farmers relying on small-scale agriculture. Today they number some 12 million, many living in dire poverty.

The Uighurs have faced discrimination and cultural and religious persecution for decades. Beginning in early 2017, speaking Uighur or saying Muslim prayers became grounds for internment.

For “re-education,” Uighurs are forced to undergo indoctrination sessions, sing hymns praising the Chinese Communist Party or reciting the constitution. Learning Mandarin is mandatory. Men are often forced to shave their beards, women are prevented from wearing veils.

After they “graduate” from the indoctrination centers, the detainees are sent to what many Uighurs call “black factories,” known for their harsh conditions.

Beijing forces a million Uighurs into ‘re-education’ camps

Florida ex-prisoners register to vote

Continued from front page

nity to feel free again.”

Former prisoner Desmond Meade, president of the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition that campaigned for the amendment, told the press that as far as he knows no ex-prisoners were turned away at elections offices Jan. 8, He was one of the first to register in Orlando.

Its passage was a gain for all working people and inspired others across the country to fight restrictions on the franchise for workers who’ve been thrown behind bars.

Before the amendment passed former prisoners had to wait five years before they could even apply to have their voting rights restored, and then had to wait while the governor made the decision, yea or nay.

Florida Governor-elect Ron DeSantis — who took office Jan. 8 as top dog.

The amendment was written deliberately to not have the involvement of the legislature or the governor. It’s self-executing,” Melba Pernal, interim executive director of the ACLU of Florida, told the Militant in a Dec. 17 phone interview. “We are encouraging everyone who has had a felony conviction and has completed their sentence to register to vote.

Some liberals had argued that the amendment, which needed 60 percent to pass, would never make it in Florida because workers who back Republicans like DeSantis, or Donald Trump, are reactionary and racist and wouldn’t vote for it. They were wrong. And the more people voted for Amendment 4 than voted for DeSantis, who won with just over 49.6 percent of the vote.