

# SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE



Kshama Sawant: First Year in Seattle City Council - p. 8

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*“Now there  
has to be  
a change  
and a better  
world has to  
be built.”*

-Malcolm X

50 Years  
Since the  
Assassination  
of Malcolm X  
pages 6 & 7



Stop the Republican Offensive – Page 4



# WHAT WE STAND FOR

## Fighting for the 99%

- ✦ No budget cuts to education and social services! Full funding for all community needs. A major increase in taxes on the rich and big business, not working people. The federal government should bail out states to prevent cuts and layoffs.
- ✦ Create living-wage union jobs for all the unemployed through public works programs to develop mass transit, renewable energy, infrastructure, health care, education, and affordable housing.
- ✦ Raise the federal minimum wage to \$15/hour, adjusted annually for cost of living increases, as a step toward a living wage for all.
- ✦ Free, high quality public education for all from pre-school through college. Cancel student debt. Full funding for schools to dramatically lower teacher-student ratios. Stop the focus on high stakes testing and the drive to privatize public education.
- ✦ Free, high quality health care for all. Replace the failed for-profit insurance companies with a publicly funded single-payer system as a step toward fully socialized medicine.
- ✦ A guaranteed decent pension for all. No cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid!
- ✦ Stop home foreclosures and evictions. For public ownership and democratic control of the major banks.
- ✦ A minimum guaranteed weekly income of \$600/week for the unemployed, disabled, stay-at-home parents, the elderly, and others unable to work.
- ✦ Repeal all anti-union laws like Taft-Hartley. For democratic unions run by the rank-and-file to fight for better pay, working conditions, and social services. Full-time union officials should be regularly elected and receive the average wage of those they represent.
- ✦ No more layoffs! Take bankrupt and failing companies into public ownership and retool them for socially necessary green production.
- ✦ Shorten the workweek with no loss in pay and benefits; share out the work with the unemployed and create new jobs.

## Environmental Sustainability

- ✦ Fight climate change. Organize mass protests and civil disobedience to block the Keystone XL oil pipeline, coal export terminals, and fracking. Massive public investment in renewable energy and efficiency technologies to rapidly replace fossil fuels.
- ✦ A major expansion of public transportation to provide low-fare, high-speed, accessible transit.
- ✦ Public ownership of the big energy companies. All workers in polluting industries should be guaranteed retraining and new living-wage jobs in socially useful green production.

## Equal Rights for All

- ✦ Fight discrimination based on race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, age, and all other forms of

prejudice. Equal pay for equal work.

- ✦ Immediate, unconditional legalization and equal rights for all undocumented immigrants.
- ✦ Build a mass movement against police brutality and the institutional racism of the criminal justice system. Invest in rehabilitation, job training, and living-wage jobs, not prisons! Abolish the death penalty.
- ✦ Fight sexual harassment, violence against women, and all forms of sexism.
- ✦ Defend a woman's right to choose whether and when to have children. For a publicly funded, single-payer health care system with free reproductive services, including all forms of birth control and safe, accessible abortions. Comprehensive sex education. Paid maternity and paternity leave. Fully subsidized, high-quality child care.
- ✦ Equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, including same-sex marriage.

## Money for Jobs and Education, Not War

- ✦ End the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. Bring all the troops home now!
- ✦ Slash the military budget. No drones. Shut down Guantanamo.
- ✦ Repeal the Patriot Act, the NDAA, and all other attacks on democratic rights.

## Break with the Two Parties of Big Business

- ✦ For a mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people, and activists from workplace, environmental, civil rights, and women's campaigns to provide a fighting, political alternative to the corporate parties.
- ✦ Unions and social movement organizations should stop funding and supporting the Democratic and Republican parties and instead organize independent left-wing, anti-corporate candidates and coalitions as a first step toward building a workers' party.

## Socialism and Internationalism

- ✦ Capitalism produces poverty, inequality, environmental destruction, and war. We need an international struggle against this system.
- ✦ Repeal corporate "free trade" agreements, which mean job losses and a race to the bottom for workers and the environment.
- ✦ Solidarity with the struggles of workers and oppressed peoples internationally: An injury to one is an injury to all.
- ✦ Take into public ownership the top 500 corporations and banks that dominate the U.S. economy. Run them under the democratic management of elected representatives of the workers and the broader public. Compensation to be paid on the basis of proven need to small investors, not millionaires.
- ✦ A democratic socialist plan for the economy based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people and the environment. For a socialist United States and a socialist world. ✦

# WHY I AM A SOCIALIST

**Ashton Rome**  
Math Teacher  
St. Louis, MO



When I was a teenager and came out as a part of the LGBTQ movement, I faced the backlash from some of my family and friends. This was the time defined by the murder of Matthew Shepard and the end of the anti-gay backlash during the AIDS crisis. I realized early on that my identity, like everyone that goes out, was contested and politicized. As I read and studied why heterosexuality was enforced – socially, legally, and politically – I began to realize that my oppression was connected to the system of capitalism.

Since my parents were born in Jamaica and went to college in New York during the '60s through the early '80s our bookshelves were filled with the writings of Fanon, Malcolm X, Michael Manley, Richard Hard, and others. As I was starting to question my sexuality, these writers and activists helped

me understand that capitalism is an international system that created the impoverished conditions that my family was living through, particularly during the '90s structural adjustments.

In a future where family functions become the responsibility of society as a whole, we will see freer associations and personal relations. A socialist international system would be the basis of social relations for the benefit of humanity, not profits for a tiny elite. ✦

## Obituary: Dave Thompson 1961-2014

Jess Spear, Seattle Socialist Alternative

Socialist Alternative was deeply saddened to learn about the death of Dave Thompson, a Branch Organizer in Seattle and a great friend and comrade. Dave had only been a member for two years, yet he made a tremendous contribution to the socialist movement in that time. Our thoughts and sympathy are with his family.

From the beginning, Dave was willing to step up and take on challenges to help us build. He played a big role in the historic campaigns to elect Kshama Sawant to the Seattle City Council in 2013 and in winning a \$15 an hour minimum wage for 100,000 workers in 2014. At the start of 2014, we needed a Branch Organizer for the newly created University District branch in Seattle. Though he had only been a member one year, Dave stepped up to lead the branch, setting an important example for the rest of the membership that all members, regardless of experience, can play decisive roles in our local work and make an impact in the national and international political discourse.



I first met Dave during the 2012 campaign to elect Kshama Sawant to Washington State House. Over dozens of vegan meals, Dave and I discussed socialism and our shared concern about environmental destruction. It was during this time that it became clear to me that Dave was one of the most incredibly kind and generous people I will ever have the honor to know and work alongside.

Dave was only 53 when he died. He will be sorely missed by everybody in Socialist Alternative and by many others in Seattle. His steadfast commitment to building Socialist Alternative and the socialist movement in the U.S. is a shining example for all members. We honor his life and his work in Socialist Alternative by continuing to build and to inspire people that a better world is possible – if, like Dave, we join in the fight for democratic socialism. ✦



# For Huge Protests on February 21 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Malcolm X's Assassination



Saturday, February 21, the 50th anniversary of Malcolm X's assassination, should be marked with an almighty mobilization of working people and youth to disrupt this system and call for an end to racist policing and poverty wages. The unions and community organizations, alongside the new organizations thrown up by the movement, have the capacity, if they fully mobilize their resources and members, to bring out hundreds of thousands in mass marches and actions on that day. Escalate the struggle against racism and poverty! The whole system is guilty!

## We Demand:

- ✪ End “broken windows” and “stop and frisk” policing with elected civilian boards that have full powers over the police. Independent anti-racist candidates from community organizations and unions should run for these boards. End the policies which have led to mass incarceration of black youth. Indict the killer cops!
- ✪ Stop the militarization of the police! For the billions being spent on police weapons to be put toward schools, child care, health care, and other community services.
- ✪ For economic justice! For a \$15 an hour minimum wage, guaranteed jobs for all, and a massive investment in public education and transit paid for by taxes on the super-rich and corporations. ✪

At events around the country on Martin Luther King Day, Socialist Alternative distributed a leaflet (see full text at [SocialistAlternative.org](http://SocialistAlternative.org)) which included the following points:

We must continue building this movement through massive protests, student walkouts, and strikes that disrupt “business as usual” and challenge racism and poverty.

Coalitions of Black Lives Matter activists, community organizations, unions, and socialists should come together with a clear call for coordinated demonstrations from Staten Island to Ferguson, Oakland, and beyond. These coalitions should be run democratically and plan actions with clear demands and determined tactics.

## Philadelphia

# Invigorated MLK March Embraces \$15 Minimum Wage

Nearly 47 years ago, Dr. King was assassinated at a point when he and other black activists were building a mass campaign against poverty. Today, state-sanctioned segregation is gone, but legal equality has barely changed the material conditions of black Americans. In Philadelphia, a city with a large black population, the majority of black workers still face low wages, horrible working conditions, and a lower quality of life than white workers.

This year, in the midst of the Black Lives Matter protests, Philadelphia faith institutions, community organizations, and unions resolved to reject the sanitized MLK “day of service” and, instead, uphold Martin Luther King’s true legacy of radical direct action. Moreover, the MLK Day of Resistance, Action, and Empowerment (MLK DARE) embraced a range of bold economic and social demands to improve the quality of life in black neighborhoods.

On January 20, up to 7,000 marched, calling for an end to racist police practices like stop and frisk, for a civilian police review board with real power, for fair funding and democratic local control of our schools, but critically, the broad MLK DARE alliance emphasized the demand for a \$15 an hour minimum wage. Rev. Gregory Holston boldly proclaimed that MLK DARE is “pressuring the city to raise the minimum wage locally to precipitate a legal showdown over” the state’s ban on raising the minimum wage.



In less than a year, the convergence of #BlackLivesMatter and #Fightfor15 has elevated the \$15 minimum wage from obscurity to the center of political debate in Philadelphia. Next, 15 Now will struggle alongside its new allies of faith and labor unions to turn this bold demand into a material reality for working-class Philadelphians.

On MLK Day, we chanted and marched for justice, instead of listening to the lies of washed-up establishment politicians. We voiced our demands with the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who at the end of his life was working to build a “a multiracial army of the poor” aiming at nothing less than the “reconstruction of society.” ✪

## Kshama Sawant Column

# The Need for Mass Struggle



The movement initiated by young people on the streets of Ferguson last August has grown to become the most significant challenge to institutional racism in the U.S. since the 1970s. Young black activists have played the key role in building increasingly diverse protests against police brutality, rightly demanding accountability and justice for those killed because of where they lived and the color of their skin.

There was much talk when President Obama took office in 2008 about a “post-racial” society. That talk is over. The underlying realities of living under a deeply unjust social system are being exposed for all to see. In this sense, the #BlackLivesMatter (BLM) movement continues and deepens the work which Occupy Wall Street began by relentlessly exposing the massive and growing inequality that disproportionately affects people of color, particularly black families, in our society.

The U.S. remains divided along race as well as class lines. Throughout the history of capitalism, racial division has been the key – though not the only – tool used by the elite to prevent a more decisive challenge to their domination. Changing this reality requires a mass struggle that fights for both racial and economic justice.

Black Lives Matter is also picking up where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X – leaders who gave their lives in the fight for black freedom in America – left off. But like every movement posing a serious challenge to the system, BLM is facing and will face serious challenges itself. The killing of two police officers in New York City by a mentally disturbed man in December was used by right-wing forces to try to push the movement off the streets. They made the outrageous claim that people peacefully protesting police brutality and an unjust “justice” system were somehow responsible for inspiring murderous hatred against the police.

But this movement will not be so easily deflected. The genie is out of the bottle. Like the Civil Rights Movement, BLM is challenging systemic racism and is, therefore, faced with questions of how racism can be ultimately defeated and what is the road to achieving that victory.

At the end of their lives, both Malcolm X and Martin Luther King were grappling with these questions. Their speeches and work pointed toward the necessity of mobilizing wider social forces in the struggle for economic and social justice. This remains the correct path. It is urgent that the labor movement join hands with those fighting to end racial injustice and bring its considerable resources to bear. There is real potential to widen and broaden this movement and thereby resist the attempts of the elite and their politicians to isolate it.

I have confidence that the movement will meet and overcome these challenges – in no small part by drawing from the rich history of the movements and leaders of the past, but also because of the boldness, audacity, and determination of this new generation.



Time to Build a Working-Class Resistance

# Republican Offensive

*Republicans in Washington are making plans to push through their right-wing pro-business agenda, following their capture of the Senate last November. Tony Wilsdon reviews what this will mean for working people in the coming months.*

It should be no surprise that Republicans have boldly announced plans to attack on the environment, immigrants, and health care while also pushing for tax cuts for the rich and big business. However, their ability to implement these changes will mainly rely on how well Democrats and President Obama hold the line.

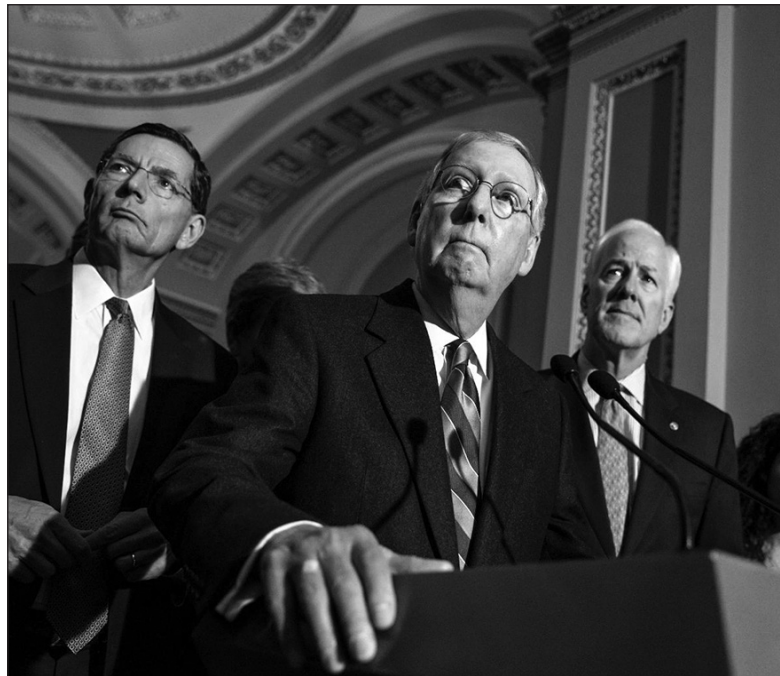
## Republican Policies Are Unpopular

The main problem for Republicans is that there is no broad support for their agenda. They did not campaign on this agenda, instead centering their campaign on ramping up fear against multiple foreign threats, including Ebola, ISIS terrorists, and immigrants crossing the border. Blame for these exaggerated problems was placed on the doorstep of Obama. But most of all Republicans were elected because of disappointment with Obama, resulting in many Democratic Party and progressive voters choosing to stay home on Election Day.

The most immediate plans are to defund Homeland Security to prevent Obama funding his proposal to grant temporary residence rights to millions of immigrants. Already the Keystone XL pipeline has passed the House and Senate and will await a promised veto from Obama. They also plan to challenge EPA policies to protect the environment in the courts. Next on the list is to challenge aspects of Obama's health care program by seeking to use the courts to rule the expansions of Medicare as unconstitutional.

Part of this legislative agenda is designed to offer red meat to their right-wing base to keep them on board. Yet if they manage to push either of these through, it will be unpopular to voters and weaken Republicans' ability to win further gains in 2016.

Republicans have been living in a bubble of opposition for the last few years, happily spouting right-wing rhetoric. They have offered no alternatives and spent their time blaming Obama for every ill in the world.



Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY).

Now they will need to face the reality of actually governing; yet their core policies are only popular with a right-wing minority of society. Implementation of these policies is likely to bring tens of thousands and millions into the streets.

## The Reality of Bipartisan Agreements

Both parties fear the voters. They look to distract them and deflect anger. A majority of the public wants an alternative political party. In order to pass more unpopular policies, a new round of bipartisan talks has begun in order to implement further parts of the corporate agenda behind the backs of ordinary people. Bipartisan policies usually only benefit one class in society: the richest 1% and big business. Bipartisan politics mean that neither party has to take responsibility. They can screw ordinary working people without taking the direct blame. It happened when Bush won support from Democrats to pass the bank bailouts of 2008. Bush's earlier tax cuts for the rich and the passing of the Homeland Security Act only happened with Democratic Party cover and support.

One main item where there is clear bipartisan agreement is passing the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a further attack on our democratic ability to control the actions of major corporations, under the guise of a trade agreement. There is general agreement by leaders of both parties to pass a tax cut for big

business, although the details are still to be ironed out

## For a Working-Class Alternative

Only a massive expression of public anger, with movements in the streets, can prevent this agenda going through. Only by publicly exposing the corporate nature of the policies can they be defeated. Social movement organizations, labor unions, and the left need to run independent candidates who can expose the corporate agenda. These campaigns can become a pole of attraction for workers and young people looking for a working-class alternative to these capitalist policies. Such campaigns can lay down the roots for the creation of a new political party of the working class, which can bring the millions into politics to fight the interests of the elite 1%.

What we need are pro-working-class, socialist policies, like a massive green jobs program, a nationwide \$15 minimum wage, guaranteed paid vacation for all workers, demilitarization of the police, free college education, and cancellation of student debt. This should be funded by slashing the military budget, major tax increases on the very rich, and public ownership of the major banks and corporations, with decision-making over the use of these assets placed in the hands of elected representatives of our communities and the working class. ☸

## After the Midterms

# Do the Democrats Offer a Real Alternative?

Dan Kroop

It is becoming clearer since the election of a Republican-dominated Congress last November that President Obama has decided to take a series of populist steps to help better position the Democratic Party for the 2016 elections, as well as to refurbish his legacy. Millions of progressives have been disillusioned by six years of policies that have served the interests of Wall Street, including the trillion dollar bank bailout, massive surveillance of the population, and minimalist measures to address police brutality, to name just a few.

The new measures include the executive order lifting the threat of deportation for approximately five million undocumented immigrants in the U.S., making a deal with China to cut greenhouse gases, and normalizing diplomatic relations with Cuba. Obama has sought to take these steps by invoking executive power and avoiding congressional votes that he would surely lose. Now Obama is calling to make community college free for the first two years and for middle-class tax cuts to be funded by higher taxes on the very wealthy. These steps require legislation and are highly unlikely to go anywhere in Congress at the moment.

Socialists will support any forward steps, while also spelling out the severe limitations of the measures Obama has enacted and is proposing. Taking the example of the executive order on deportations, there is no disputing that the move is a welcome relief from the danger of deportations that tear families apart. However, it comes just one year after Obama broke U.S. deportation records by imprisoning and forcing out 440,000 people – and the steps are not an amnesty, not a way to citizenship, and not permanent, all of which Socialist Alternative backs.

## Democrats' Role in Two-Party System

The Democrats sometimes pose as friends of labor, women, and people of color to appeal to the interests of the middle and working classes and keep them inside the two-party system. Nevertheless, it is their friends on Wall Street and in big corporations who determine major policy.

A critical example of how Democrats support corporations over workers was the \$1.1 trillion budget deal passed in December 2014. First, at the behest of Wall Street's biggest banks, Democrats helped repeal one of the signature provisions of the 2010 Dodd-Frank financial reform act. As a result, American taxpayers will once again underwrite high-risk credit default swaps

Continued on page 11



Immigration reform protest outside the Capitol building in Washington, D.C.



# Keystone XL on the Brink of Defeat

## Build a Mass Movement for Climate Justice

Jess Spear

The announcement that President Obama plans to veto a Republican-backed bill approving the Keystone XL pipeline (KXL) is rightfully seen as a victory for the environmental movement and a direct result of persistent campaigning. However, it's not clear that Obama will actually reject the project in the end. The environmental movement has the opportunity to use the momentum gained last year to build a mass movement in 2015 focused on delivering environmental, economic, and social justice.

### To Build or Not to Build, the Market Rules

Obama stated in 2013 that he would not approve the pipeline if it would "significantly exacerbate" global warming – a curious statement considering the pipeline would be a conduit for the very product that is causing global warming. The State Department's report, released in January last year, stated that KXL would not worsen carbon pollution, leaving the political door open for Obama to green-light the project, (State.gov, 1/14/2014).

However, that conclusion was based on an expectation of high oil prices, where the oil, in the absence of KXL, would be moved by more expensive means – that is, railroads – and would end up on the market and in the air regardless, (*NY Times*, 1/31/2014).

Yet oil prices have plunged over the past six months to a six-year low of about \$50/barrel (from around \$100/barrel in summer 2014) at the time of writing, (Reuters, 1/16/2015). Since the State Department based its statements on oil prices above \$75/barrel, its logic would now suggest that KXL would significantly exacerbate global warming and should, therefore, be rejected. Under capitalism, the market and all its volatilities, not scientific data, are governing our future.

### GOP Surge Ahead, Democrats Give In

After the 2014 midterm elections, Congress now has enough support from Republicans and "moderate" Democrats in both houses to move forward with legislation approving KXL. Even if Obama follows through with the

veto, Republicans – assisted by a greater than 60% approval by the public and, unfortunately, the support of the AFL-CIO – need to convince only 28 Democrats to override the veto. While this scenario is unlikely, that so many Democrats voted for approval and that Obama is vacillating clearly shows that the Democratic leadership is a shaky ally at best and definitely not where the environmental movement should focus its energy.

President Obama is clearly reluctant to approve KXL, as are many Democrats in local and federal positions. But talk is cheap. Admitting global warming is happening isn't going to save lives, and proposing timid steps in the right direction is a tacit acceptance that catastrophic climate change, resulting in the death of millions of people, is inevitable.

### Escalate Mass Actions in 2015

Considering the profits at stake and the power fossil fuel corporations wield in the political and economic realm, the rapid transition away from fossil fuels will require mobilizing a massive social and



Protest against the Keystone XL pipeline in Washington, D.C..

political movement. The momentum gained last year from the People's Climate March can be transformed into a sustained mass movement, with millions of youth and working people united in the call for a sustainable future with guaranteed jobs for all, a living wage, and social equity. Ultimately, the struggle for a safe future demands we transform our movement into one that recognizes that environmental destruction and climate change are just two of the many consequences of

the brutally exploitative system of capitalism.

Turning the tide against fossil fuel corporations and forcing corporations to keep their product in the ground requires not only a rejection of major fossil fuel projects, but also the demand for building the necessary infrastructure for a rapid transition to clean energy. By focusing the movement on clean energy investment – and, therefore, on a major public works jobs program – the environmental movement could

cut across Big Oil's lure of jobs and attract support from labor unions, a powerful and decisive ally in this battle.

Now is the time to organize nationally coordinated mass actions to stop the KXL's approval – and, if approved, its construction. We can achieve this by building and strengthening coalitions of forward-thinking labor unions, social justice organizations, environmental organizations, native peoples, and socialists. ☘

## Interview With an Organizer Against the Gas Pipeline in Boston

*Jack Zhang interviewed Seamus Whelan, a leader in the campaign to Stop the West Roxbury Lateral pipeline (SWRL) and a Socialist Alternative (SA) member. More info can be found at SWRL.info.*

**Zhang:** What is the West Roxbury Lateral pipeline?

**Whelan:** It's a proposed five-mile-long, high-pressure gas pipeline that will take gas from the longer Algonquin pipeline. This gas, extracted from fracking in Pennsylvania, will cross four states, and the WRL segment will take it to the Boston market.

**Zhang:** How will this pipeline affect the community you live in?

**Whelan:** This type of pipeline and the associated metering and regulating station is totally inappropriate for this densely populated urban neighborhood that has a number of schools, playgrounds, nursing homes, stores, and churches along its pathway. The pipeline explosion in San Bruno, California, caught that community completely by surprise. That pipeline had only half the pressure of the proposed Boston line, and it destroyed a 15-block area



Seamus Whelan gives an interview on local radio.

with eight fatalities and many more seriously injured.

**Zhang:** As a socialist, why are you opposed to this pipeline?

**Whelan:** I am concerned first with the safety of my own family and with the safety of my neighbors and my community. As a socialist, I also have serious concerns about the environment, global warming, and the future of our planet.

**Zhang:** What role can SA play in advancing this

campaign?

**Whelan:** The message we have brought to the campaign is that as a community we must get organized and that we can't depend on the courts or the political establishment to stop this pipeline for us. We must do it ourselves by building the strongest possible grassroots campaign and by linking up with other groups and campaigns that are fighting battles on similar issues. Socialist Alternative has given support and materials to help the campaign and brought to it the national and international experience gained from many other grassroots and electoral campaigns.

**Zhang:** How can the campaign organize a fight-back?

**Whelan:** By shining a bright light on this insane pipeline. We are starting to knock on thousands of doors, hold regular community meetings attended by hundreds of local residents. From these meetings, we are organizing rallies and actions. As West Roxbury begins to find out the truth about Spectra Energy's fracked gas, there is a growing anger and willingness to stop the deadly pipeline. ☘





50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF

# Malcolm X and the Fight for Black Freedom

**'A**nd in my opinion, the young generation of whites, blacks, browns, whatever else there is, you're living at a time of extremism, a time of revolution, a time when there's got to be a change. People in power have misused it, and now there has to be a change and a better world has to be built, and the only way it's going to be built – is with extreme methods. And I, for one, will join in with anyone – I don't care what color you are – as long as you want to change this miserable condition that exists on this earth.'

-Malcolm X

## Toya Chester

I am part of a generation of young African Americans that is beginning to rediscover Malcolm X. Let it not be mistaken; we know who he was and what he stood for. We wear T-shirts with his face and quote his most famous words. But my generation did not hear him speak on television. His death is not something we can remember. I, myself, only recently heard his actual voice for the first time. But my generation is becoming radicalized through the same struggles that Malcolm fought in his day because so many of the conditions have not changed. We are searching for ideas and a way forward. Unfortunately, not only for him, but for the entire movement, he was murdered in cold blood on February 21, 1965, while preaching just that: a way forward.

*The Autobiography of Malcolm X* is a great resource for understanding the development of Malcolm, and everyone should read his amazing story. Here, I can only touch on a few highlights.

Malcolm's ideas and philosophies went through many changes in his short life. Radical thinking was something that was introduced to Malcolm at a very young age. He would go with his father to hear different political activists. When Malcolm was six, his father was killed by white supremacists. Malcolm's mother

wound up in a mental hospital when he was 13, and his life continued downhill. After he wound up in prison at age 20, his siblings, who were greatly influenced by people like Marcus Garvey, introduced him to the Nation of Islam (NOI), which was a tiny black nationalist sect before he joined.

## The Nation of Islam

Although Malcolm ultimately left the Nation, being part of the organization was crucial for his development as a leader. While in prison, he truly began to question the world and took the opportunity to explore different ideas. He developed these ideas further in forums such as a debate society, to give one example. But the NOI also gave him something to fight for and gave him hope for a better world, which cannot be understated when analyzing the development of a leader as powerful as Malcolm. For it is this hope that drove him to be so passionate.

Malcolm X spent ten years of his adult life in the Nation of Islam as a prominent preacher who played a key role in bringing its membership up to 100,000 by the early '60s. He had devout faith in the group's leader, Elijah Muhammad, for many years. But over the course of time, Malcolm began to find it harder and harder to agree with the decisions made



# OF HIS ASSASSINATION

# Freedom

by the leader. In 1962, a fight broke out in a parking lot in southern California between some police and members of Mosque Number 27. One member of the mosque – like so many young black men today – held up his hands in the “don’t shoot” manner to surrender to the police – and was shot dead. Malcolm tried to organize the NOI to go and demand justice for the dead brother, but Muhammad would not allow it. Malcolm went anyway and participated with civil rights organizations in a rally, educating people about how this was not about religion but rather about skin color.

As time passed, Malcolm grew in the spotlight. Yet while Muhammad was living an increasingly lavish lifestyle, Malcolm was living paycheck to paycheck. Muhammad’s jealousy of Malcolm’s abilities and charisma created tension between the two men. When Malcolm would go to speak, Muhammad would order him to only speak about things that he had previously heard the leader say, which were never political.

But it wasn’t until after Malcolm was suspended from preaching for publicly stating that the assassination of JFK was a “result of the climate of hate” that he decided to leave the Nation of Islam and start his own organization. Malcolm rightfully called out JFK – and the whole Democratic Party – for blockading Cuba and waging war in Vietnam in the name of “freedom” and “democracy” while not “correcting injustices against Negroes” here in the U.S. Malcolm could not keep silent any longer about what was so obvious to him, namely that black people would not be liberated without a fight, a political fight, an economic fight. There needed to be an end to what he called the “political oppression, economic exploitation, and social degradation” of black people.

“Being Black Is Not a Crime” is a slogan we have heard recently from the current anti-police brutality protests. But in Malcolm’s youth, being black was not even something to be proud of in the eyes of the majority. Instilling racial pride was one of Malcolm’s greatest contributions to the movement that is still alive today. He advised people to “think black,” giving black workers a sense of identity, an identity to be proud of and to feel strength in.

## Internationalism

What was happening in America during this time was not happening in isolation. Malcolm learned this through his travels in Africa and the Middle East, in countries that were colonized by Western powers. He saw the misery

of colonization and the fight in these countries that the black people, men and women alike, were putting up to gain independence. Malcolm sums it up quite eloquently in one television interview by saying, “Now to make it appear that the Congolese themselves are criminals, are brutes, because they’re reacting to these injustices that they’ve been victimized by, is again ducking the question.” The point is that when black people will no longer stand for injustices placed upon them, they are criticized for fighting back.

Malcolm X saw the need to unite with his black brothers and sisters in Africa. But then he went to Algeria, a country in the north of Africa. The people there did not have black skin, and this was something that Malcolm struggled with. He knew the oppressor to be white and the oppressed to be black, but in Northern Africa that wasn’t quite the case. This was crucial for Malcolm’s understanding of who the enemy truly was. He classified this time as “an era of revolution.” He finally develops the analysis that, “It is incorrect to classify the revolt of the Negro as simply a racial conflict of black against white, or as a purely American problem. Rather, we are today seeing a global rebellion of the oppressed against the oppressor, the exploited against the exploiter.”

We are currently seeing the same evolution in the movement for racial equality that Malcolm went through. But why reinvent the wheel? Malcolm learned through his travels around the world that it was not about black and white, Muslim and Christian, man and woman. It was about capitalism and what the ruling class would do to remain in control over the economy and the world’s resources.

Internationalism was a key concept that helped Malcolm draw anti-capitalist conclusions. Malcolm sought to learn from the anti-colonial struggle by drawing international attention to the plight of African Americans.

He saw the need for independent political action by African Americans. He completely rejected the idea that the Democratic Party had anything to offer black people, stating, “With these choices, I felt the American black man only had to choose which one to be eaten by, the ‘liberal’ fox or the ‘conservative’ wolf - because both of them would eat him.” He also began to see the need for economic action by poor people, such as rent strikes, but he did not see clearly the strategic role of black workers in industrial production and the power they could wield alongside white workers in fighting for a better life.

## The Search for A Way Forward

Malcolm’s greatest strengths were his fearless search for answers, his honesty about his own failings, and his willingness to learn from experience. Toward the end of his life, he had discussions with the Socialist Workers Party, a Trotskyist organization, though he himself never became a Marxist. Unfortunately, despite a proud history, the SWP had

# Selma: Hollywood Portrait of a Key Civil Rights Battle

Darletta

The movie *Selma* couldn’t have come at a better time. With #BlackLivesMatter and the development of a potential new black freedom movement, many people looked forward to this movie as inspiration and guidance. Unlike most Hollywood films, which tend to dehumanize people of color, *Selma* succeeds in connecting to figures famous and forgotten and empathizing with the struggles of the Civil Rights Movement. By showing a crucial battle in the South over voting rights, and a glimpse into the debates within the movement, it can inspire and push on activists today.

Like many times with Hollywood movies we are [I think] trapped between history with no context or context without historical events. *Selma* did a great job of recreating key events in the movie, such events being the level of voter suppression that took place, the scene on the bridge, and the extreme racism during that time.

The most powerful and impactful scene is the march across the bridge from Selma on March 7, 1965. The display of vicious attacks against peaceful protesters was seen live by millions of viewers at that time, leading to the name “Bloody Sunday.” Fifty-eight people were injured. The events of Selma played a key role in the passage of the Voting Rights Act that same year, a key victory of the Civil Rights Movement. The brutality of the police in Selma raises real parallels with how police today respond to peaceful protestors. Fifty years later, people of color are still being gassed, beaten, and arrested for simply protesting for the value of black lives. How far have we really come?

The portrayal of women in the movement is a weakness. For example, the film completely ignores the role of Diane Nash, a co-founder of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and a central to the voting rights struggle in Selma. While the movie shows many acts of courage by women, with the exception of Coretta Scott King women are relegated to a background role. Particularly jarring is the scene when the men arrive to Selma to get some good ol’ cooking. Of course women are only useful for cleaning, cooking, and caring for children.

The film presents Martin Luther King, Jr. as the “savior” of the movement who acted alone and made all the decisions. Projecting Dr. King as the only person responsible for the freedom and liberation of African Americans is a misleading account of history. In particular, the focus on Dr. King’s discussions with President Lyndon Johnson minimizes the power of organizing the community and the impact of the demands of the movement on a mass level.

It is important to look into the events of history and not rely on Hollywood to teach us. Selma, like many protests and boycotts of that time, was organized by many individuals with an extensive background in civil rights work. Although Dr. King played a very inspirational role, he was not the movement itself. He was part of an organizing body made up of men and women who played major roles. We are being faced with a turbulent time in history ourselves, and the best thing we can take away from the film *Selma* is the importance of organizing. Whether it’s a peaceful protest or a militant-style boycott or strike, it needs to be organized and democratically run. We are staring right now at a new black freedom movement – a movement with not just one leader, but thousands of leaders. ☺

capitulated to black nationalism, calling for a separate black revolutionary organization and implicitly accepting that it was a “white organization.”

As noted earlier, Malcolm had acknowledged that it was not just an issue of black and white but of oppressed and oppressor. This points toward the need for a racially integrated workers’ party to lead the fight for system change. Working people have the social power to change society. They can bring the production, distribution, and sale of goods and services to a halt. Black people still face segregation and special oppression, but racial division has set the entire working class back and, at the end of the day, only truly benefits the bosses. Black people cannot be liberated through a struggle on their own, especially considering that they are less than

20% of the U.S. population. Workers need to unite together no matter what color they are, as the ruling class will always try to find a way to divide us.

Malcolm X was clearly on the correct path. His humility may not be so apparent when listening to him speak, for he had a grand confidence that is to be admired. But we see in his efforts to adapt his ideology as he gained a wider experience that humility is key in a great leader. And so my generation must continue where Malcolm ended. We do not need more black capitalists to liberate black people. Obama has proven that quite well. My generation has the ability to learn from Malcolm with an advanced outlook on race. We shall not mourn the death of Malcolm X but rather commemorate him and continue fighting for an equal society and a socialist world. ☺





2014: A Year of Struggle and Victories in Seattle

# Kshama Sawant: One Year in Office

*One year ago, Kshama Sawant took office on the Seattle City Council after boldly campaigning for a \$15 minimum wage. Only six months later, the movement achieved a historic victory. Seattle became the first city to pass legislation for \$15 an hour – the highest minimum wage in the country.*

*While Kshama alone cannot deliver the fundamental change needed in this country and internationally, over the past year she has already helped build coalitions and movements of workers, activists, and labor and community groups, who have gone on to win a series of important victories. This is the basis to build toward an affordable Seattle, for economic and social justice, and for a society based on solidarity and cooperation – a society of international democratic socialism.*

*-Socialist Alternative*

Kshama Sawant



Over the last year, working people have begun the process of fundamentally shifting the political landscape in Seattle. Low-wage workers, 15 Now, the labor movement, and Socialist Alternative collectively waged the fight against corporations to win the passage of a \$15 minimum wage. Seattle's victory has since inspired low-wage workers everywhere to continue building the movement against income inequality.

Together with dedicated indigenous activists, we succeeded in establishing Indigenous People's Day on the same day as the federal holiday Columbus Day, exposing the brutal history of colonization in the Americas and the continued disenfranchisement of the indigenous community. It was also a recognition of the rich cultural tradition of indigenous peoples and a step toward a larger movement for social and economic justice for oppressed communities.

We have campaigned against electricity rate structures that enable corporations like Boeing to pay lower rates than working families. While most of the city's political establishment moved to carry out status quo, corporate-friendly policies, we initiated the People's Budget campaign to fight for a fundamental shift in the city budget and won a series of amendments for ordinary people.

This year, we have fought hard for each and every gain to improve the lives of working

people. These victories show what is possible when working people mobilize: We can overcome the resistance of the political establishment and their corporate backers.

We stood with the activists opposing a new youth jail, casting the sole City Council vote against the decision. The detention center will cost hundreds of millions of dollars, while a tiny fraction of that money will be spent on youth job programs. We and have raised our voices in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, against the the Israeli state's violence in Gaza, and with activists fighting climate change.

In April, our historic victory on the \$15 minimum wage will begin to go into effect. As we celebrate, we need to build on this success in the fight for social and economic justice. We need a broader mass movement for affordable housing, for racial justice, and to tax the rich.

One year ago, political pundits speculated about whether the election of a socialist would lead anywhere. We have shown the beginnings of what is possible when working people have their own representation and organize themselves independently of the pro-corporate establishment. These victories indicate what could be further achieved by building a mass workers' party, supported by labor and community groups, that could end the domination of corporate greed over society and build toward democratic socialism.

Creating a working-class alternative will require independence from corporate money and political parties. As in my election campaign, it means refusing to take business donations, as well as running outside both the right-wing Republicans and the pro-corporate Democrats. I also take only an average workers' wage and donate the rest of my salary to build struggles for social justice.

Our movement in Seattle is just beginning. Socialist Alternative and I will continue to fight for the interests of working people, not wealthy corporations.

Join me in my re-election campaign this year. Visit [KshamaSawant.org](http://KshamaSawant.org), volunteer, and please donate generously. With your help the story of socialist politics in Seattle has just begun. There is so much more to win. ✪

## Movement Defeats Attack on Seattle's Low-Income Housing

### No Stepping Backward



Low-income housing programs across the U.S. are facing brutal cuts. In Seattle, Councilmember Kshama Sawant, community activists, and tenants recently fought back and scored an inspiring victory.

The Seattle Housing Authority's (SHA) Orwellian "Stepping Forward" proposal was an attempt to force through a 400% increase in rents over five years. The SHA disingenuously claimed that work training would spur tenants to find higher-paying jobs and phase out of subsidized housing. The program would have effectively eliminated public low-income housing – rates would no longer be tied to income, and many would be forced into homelessness.

The movement against the SHA's proposal organized mass turnout to community hearings, did public outreach, held a sit-in protest outside the mayor's office, and brought enormous pressure to bear on the political establishment in Seattle. They raised signs and chanted demands such as "No Rent Hikes" and "Show Me the Jobs." At the final SHA hearing, they led a powerful walkout in recognition that their objections were not being listened to, and then they held their own organizing meeting.

In December, SHA conceded defeat and announced they would not be pursuing "Stepping Forward" in 2015. ✪

## A People's Budget

A budget represents one of the clearest expressions of a city's priorities. In September, while paying lip service to a progressive agenda, Seattle Mayor Ed Murray put forward a business-as-usual budget proposal only 1% different than the prior year's budget.

During the heart of budget negotiations, the majority of the city council attended a posh retreat hosted by the Chamber of Commerce. "What a brazen display of corporate favoritism. It is no wonder that the budget, year after year, is completely out of touch with the economic problems faced by ordinary working people," said Kshama Sawant.

As an alternative to a budget designed for big business, Sawant and Socialist Alternative organized a mass meeting for a People's

Budget, bringing together human services providers, labor representatives, and community activists.

The People's Budget based itself on the needs of working people and the poor, rather than the greed of the 1%.

We were able to win critical amendments to the mayor's business-as-usual budget: immediate implementation of \$15 an hour for the lowest-paid city-employed workers, funding for a year-round women's homeless shelter, research funding to investigate policies for municipal taxes on the rich, a bond sale proposal to finance a major program of building city-owned affordable housing and, for the first time, basic services for transitional homeless encampments. ✪



## Podemos Is on the Rise to Challenge the Political “Caste”

# Still Indignant in Spain

Danny Byrne, CWI

Out of the economic and social crisis, a new star is born: Podemos (“We Can” in Spanish). Created in the aftermath of the “Indignados” movement, the Spanish predecessor of the Occupy movement, the rise of this party reflects the huge anger built up in society over endless austerity and attacks.

Spain has been hit especially hard by the global recession, which has thrown the nation into disarray. Unemployment in Spain is at 25%; among young people, it is over 50% – despite a wave of emigration to other EU countries. As a result of the current capitalist crisis, the two-party system, the ceremonial monarchy presiding over the state, and even the borders and territorial makeup of the state have all been brought into question and discredited.

With a program to end austerity and implement improvements for working people and the poor, Podemos won eight percent (1.2 million votes) in the 2014 European Parliament elections – only four months after its launch. Since then, it has gone from strength to strength. In less than a year, it has come “from nowhere” to be the biggest party in opinion polls (around 30 percent).

Possible snap elections in Catalonia or the nationwide round of local elections in May will show its strength, while the general election looms in December 2015.

### Taxing the Rich, 35-Hour Week

In its economic program, Podemos demands higher taxes on capital and top incomes, a minimum income guaranteed for those without work, a 35-hour workweek, and



Pablo Iglesias and other leaders of Podemos at a press conference.

more spending on education and social services. Podemos wants to restructure Spain’s debt and renegotiate it.

After years of austerity since the recession – under both the government led by the liberal Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) and then the conservative Partido Popular (PP) – these demands have inspired millions.

This shows just how quickly a new political movement can grow to challenge the established two-party system when the circumstances allow and it has its finger on the pulse of events.

### Challenges to Podemos

Podemos came from the failure of the traditional left organizations and the trade

union movement to lead a struggle for a fundamental alternative to the imposed cutbacks and attacks on workers’ rights. These organizations confined themselves to symbolic mobilizations, even general strikes, without a sustained plan of mass action to win victories. Instead of launching a militant struggle to stop the vicious austerity of the right-wing PP government and implement pro-worker policies, they made deals with the capitalist parties, agreeing on a softer form of austerity where possible.

For example, the main left party, Izquierda Unida (United Left), despite a vicious internal battle, has entered regional coalition governments with the PSOE party, implementing its own version of austerity.

Podemos seems to offer a break with this

SocialistWorld.net

Read more from the Committee for a Workers International (CWI) about the fight against austerity in Europe, particularly the vital upcoming elections in Greece which could see the election of a left government led by the Syriza party. The CWI has parties, groups, and supporters in over 45 countries around the world.

failed way of doing politics. Based on the popularity of its main leader and well-known left media icon, Pablo Iglesias, it highlights the control of the “political caste” of corrupt politicians.

The idea of a Podemos government has energized much of Spanish society. However, as with Syriza in Greece, when an alternative left force approaches power, the establishment goes into overdrive to try and domesticate it. Unfortunately, the approach of the leaders of both Syriza and Podemos is to give in to this pressure and moderate their positions. They try to present themselves as responsible parties for capitalism.

Podemos leaders have quickly dropped many of their more radical demands, such as the nonpayment of Spain’s illegitimate national debt, which costs the Spanish people €100 million (\$115 million) a day in interest payments alone.

Socialismo Revolucionario (CWI in Spain) insists on the need for a struggle against the domestication of Podemos and the other genuine left parties. It calls for a rank-and-file struggle from below to stop its shift to the right and the adoption of a genuine socialist program for the nonpayment of the debt and taking the banks and major companies into public democratic ownership to launch a real recovery for the workers and youth. This would have to be part of an international offensive against the Troika and vulture bondholders and of a struggle for a socialist Europe. ☪

## Keep U.S. Corporate Domination Out of Cuba

Jason Dinalt, Seattle

On December 17, President Obama ordered the restoration of full diplomatic relations with Cuba for the first time in more than a half-century. The limited lifting of the policy of isolating Cuba and beginning to normalize relations came after 18 months of secret talks.

This is not a full lifting of the embargo, which would require an act of Congress – highly unlikely. For example, while travel restrictions have been eased, general travel for tourism will still not be allowed.

### More Than 50 Years of U.S. Embargo

Nonetheless, the Cuban people themselves may well regard this as a victory for the Cuban Revolution, as the U.S. swore to lift the embargo only when the Castro regime was removed. Though Cuba itself has had to endure many hardships, Obama’s decision signals

that the U.S. is renouncing the approach of a full restoration of property ownership through counterrevolution.

Yet it’s hardly likely that Obama took this step for humanitarian reasons.

The essence of what the U.S. is doing is not removing the embargo but fine-tuning it to allow U.S. and global capital to more easily enter the Cuban economy. Penetration by the international banking system into the Cuban economy will begin, as U.S. institutions will be able to open accounts at Cuban banks. Travelers to Cuba will be allowed to use American credit and debit cards. Taking Cuba off the State Sponsors of Terrorism list will make it easier for Cuba to get loans from foreign lenders.

Many U.S. companies are salivating at the prospect, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce fully supports the move. There is also significant support in the political establishment, despite the opposition of a large part of the Republicans in Congress.

What this may well do is accelerate the process, already underway, of “reform” pointing toward the restoration of capitalism. The current Cuban bureaucratic regime is not of one mind on how to satisfy an increasingly restless younger generation tired of economic stagnation. Raúl Castro looks to the “Chinese road” – opening up Cuba to market forces while maintaining the domination of the current bureaucracy. Obama’s move, though pushing back the aspirations of the Miami-Cuban oligarchy, may open the way for some section of this bureaucracy to represent the interests of international capital in trying to restore domination over the Cuban people.

But the tying of Cuba to the coattails of international capital would likely arouse the wrath of the people of Cuba, especially of older Cubans who are a strong reservoir of support for the gains of the revolution. Restoration of capitalism would be a huge setback for the people of Cuba and for the workers’ movement of the

whole region.

### Challenging U.S. Capitalist Domination

The only way out of this trap is for the ordinary Cubans to take the country into their own hands, to build assemblies in workplaces and neighborhoods and bring together elected representatives on all levels, subject to recall and without any privileges. This is needed to openly discuss all the mismanagement and problems the economy and society face. The current repression against parties and media expressing the needs of the masses must be lifted. This can be the basis to democratically plan the economy and appeal to workers and youth internationally to challenge U.S. imperialism and capitalist domination of the world, and to build toward international socialism. That means carrying through a political revolution in Cuba, using the power of the people to remove the bureaucracy and establish a real workers democracy. ☪



Interview With Fired Delta Worker, Kip Hedges

# “\$15 at MSP Airport Is on the Agenda”

Socialist Alternative interviewed a leading 15 Now organizer in Minneapolis, former Delta baggage handler Kip Hedges, who was unjustly fired December 2 for advocating for \$15 an hour at the Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport (MSP) on a video posted to 15 Now's website.

**SA:** After 26 years as a baggage handler, Delta fired you for speaking out in favor of \$15 an hour at MSP Airport. How have 15 Now and your labor allies responded?

**Kip Hedges:** To really answer that question, you have to look at what was happening in Minneapolis before I got fired. Along with many others, I had been part of a growing fight for \$15 at MSP Airport and part of a growing number of airport workers trying to unionize. Many area unions had given money to 15 Now to help finance our campaign. The Minnesota AFL-CIO had thrown their weight behind our fight, along with SEIU Healthcare Minnesota, the Minnesota Nurses Association, the Minnesota State Council of Machinists, the teachers, and many others.

Airport workers were also combining forces with retail janitors trying to gain a union, Walmart workers, and fast-food workers. We came together for a week of action around Black Friday, behind the slogans “\$15 and a Union” and “Fighting to Live, Not Just Survive.”

I was fired on December 2, in the middle of this week of action. We had previously scheduled a rally for December 5 in front of the MSP terminal to push for \$15 and a union. Because of my firing, this rally turned out to be even larger.

It was a stirring event. Over 200 union and community supporters joined airport workers calling for \$15 and a union and to demand that I be reinstated. A week later, my coworkers at Delta held a fundraiser for me and 300 turned out, giving thousands for my defense. The state AFL-CIO gave \$5,000.

Our effort to unionize ramp and cargo workers at Delta was actually given a boost by my firing because my



coworkers were outraged at the company action and signed large numbers of union cards across Delta's system.

**SA:** What are the next steps for 15 Now Minnesota, at the airport and beyond?

**Kip Hedges:** Airport workers and 15 Now activists noticed how quickly the Minnesota labor movement supported our demand for \$15 at the airport. We began to discuss with the activists we had been working with from Walmart, the fast-food industry, and janitors that now would be a good time to launch a citywide effort to win \$15 an hour minimum wage in Minneapolis. Many important unions and community groups will support this effort. We believe we can build a serious enough movement and pressure a majority of the city council to support this demand. We think that the airport campaign and a citywide campaign will reinforce each other.

Our airport workers group has already won an important victory. At their December meeting, the Metropolitan Airport Commission passed an ordinance giving many workers eight paid sick days per year. With additional pressure, and a vigorous citywide campaign, \$15 at MSP Airport is on the agenda. ☺

## Us vs. Them



### Tax the Poor?

A new study found that the poorest Americans pay more than double what the rich pay when it comes to state and local taxes. The study – released by the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (ITEP) – found that, on average, the bottom 20% paid 10.9% of their income in taxes, while the top 1% paid only 5.4% of their income to state and local taxes, (“Poor Families Pay Double The State And Local Tax Rate As The Rich: Study,” *International Business Times*, 1/14/2015).

### Shrinking Support for Two Parties of Wall St.

Gallup released the results of a 2014 poll which found that 43% of Americans now identify as independent. This is a record high for independents since Gallup first started tracking the trend almost 30 years ago and an almost record low for the two parties of big business. The results also showed that the Democrats' percentage shrank from 2013, indicating that these new independents tend to be progressives rather than conservatives. This comes on the heels of another poll released in September which found that 58% of Americans felt that the two major parties “do such a poor job” that they believe a third party is needed, (“In U.S., New Record 43% Are Political Independents,” Gallup.com, 1/7/2015).

### The Surprise of the Century

The rich think the poor have it too easy, according to a new report released by the Pew Research Center. A survey of a nationally representative group of people divided by financial security found that, of the richest fifth of Americans, 54% think, “Poor people today have it easy because they can get government benefits without doing anything in return,” and 62% felt that the government couldn't afford to do more for the needy, (“Most of America's Rich Think the Poor Have it Easy,” *The Washington Post*, 1/8/2015). ☺

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# Mobile Socialist Alternative Builds Anti-Police Brutality Coalition

Albert L. Terry, III

In the wake of the extrajudicial murders of Mike Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, and too many others by the police, public outrage has reached massive levels all over the country. Mobile, Alabama is no exception. On November 25, Mobile Bay Socialist Alternative called a march and rally demanding an end to de facto legal immunity for police by creating a civilian oversight board with full powers over them.

We received extensive local media coverage at this event and made some important contacts from an organization that hosts Mobile's annual MLK marches, as well as with other local activists. We were also able to use this rally to build a public meeting the following weekend, where we called for the forming of the Mobile Commission of Police Oversight as the means for a sustained campaign for police accountability. At our first meeting on December 13, we created a steering committee and began work toward a legal foundation



MLK day march in Mobile, Alabama, 1/19/2015.

for a civilian oversight committee.

Mobile has not had a police killing that

has grabbed national headlines, but the political, economic, cultural, and even geographical marginalization of black people in this majority-black city is and has always been starkly evident, and the Black Lives Matter movement is providing a vehicle for a long-awaited change.

Our radical demands for a civilian oversight committee, an unbiased, independent prosecutor to take cases against police officers, and body cameras that cannot be controlled by officers and that feed to a third-party server are immensely popular and have received tremendous support from the public.

At this year's 500-strong MLK rally, Socialist Alternative again had a speaker who stressed Dr. King's radical legacy as opposed to the sanitized version we usually hear, particularly noting the link between racial justice and economic equality. These points were well received because there is an overwhelming demand for a reimagining of Dr. King as the radical he truly was. ☘

## SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE READERS' CROSSWORD PUZZLE

### "2014: Year in Review"

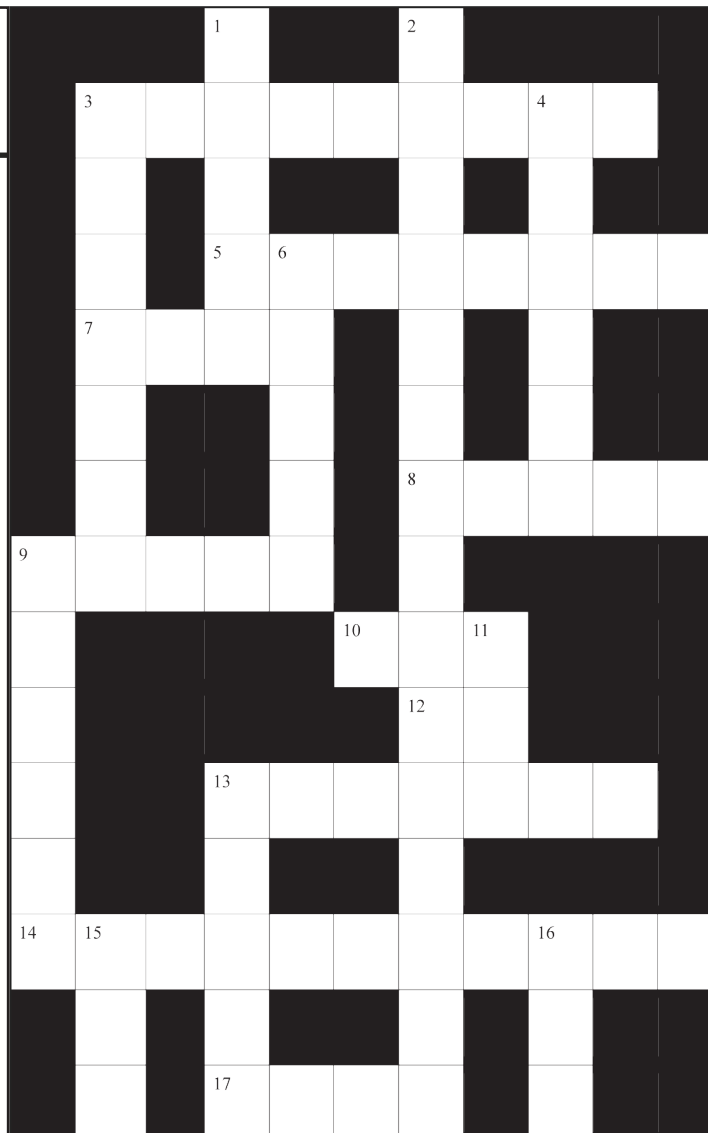
#### Across

- 3) Slogan that made Jess Spear sound like a lumber jack, or a sous-chef
- 5) Hong Kong defense against pepper spray
- 7) "\_\_\_\_\_ is an illusion." Einstein
- 8) "Don't \_\_\_\_\_ on me" - Revolutionary war slogan used by both organized labor and the Tea Party
- 9) Bias in reporting
- 10) One of the things the voters want, according to Ben Casselman
- 12) How the Scots voted
- 13) First major U.S. city to introduce \$15/hr minimum wage
- 14) What Tom Morello does to the machine
- 17) Another solution to the problem cited in 2 Down, first word

#### Down

- 1) The Left \_\_\_\_\_ meets in NYC once a year
- 2) One reason we need \$15 Now
- 3) Another solution to the problem cited in 2 down, second word
- 4) Troublemakers in Ferguson
- 6) A type of pay teachers don't want
- 9) A state of being just below boiling point
- 11) Another of the things voters want, according to Ben Casselman
- 13) Socialist Alternative's weapon against the bourgeoisie in the 2014 elections
- 15) An injury to one is an injury to \_\_\_\_\_
- 16) Org. under attack for failure to combat domestic violence

This puzzle, with solution, will appear online at SocialistAlternative.org by February 5.



## Democrats

Continued from page 4

and derivatives trades that are helping Wall Street billionaires grow richer and richer. The *NY Times* revealed that 70 of the 85 lines of the bill were cribbed from model legislation drafted by Citigroup – a fact that was apparently no problem for the 57 House Democrats who voted in favor of more deregulation.

Second, the White House supported a business-led attack on pensions that shredded 40 years of retirement income rights for workers. This radical provision, added to the budget bill without ever being debated in Congress on its own merits, permits the cutting of pensions for current retirees across the country. According to the Pension Rights Center, around 10 million ordinary Americans could see their pensions cut by an average of 10 to 30%.

The budget deal offers a stark counterpoint to any suggestion that Democrats represent a real alternative for working people. Increasing numbers believe there needs to be a new political party. Only independent left politics, forged through social struggle, can provide a real alternative the two parties of capitalism. ☘



# SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

Issue #10 - February 2015

## Unite the Fight for \$15 With #BlackLivesMatter



### Ty Moore

For Martin Luther King, Jr., “the inseparable twin of racial injustice was economic injustice.”

The same remains true today. Just a few miles from where police murdered Eric Garner, a low-income black man selling “loosie” cigarettes to scrape out a living, the white-collar criminals on Wall Street remain free.

But just as King aimed to link up the Civil Rights Movement and labor struggles, today there is tremendous potential to unite two of the most impressive movements shaping American politics: #BlackLivesMatter and the growing “fight for \$15” among low-wage workers.

United, these struggles could have a far greater impact on society. Imagine the power of a multiracial movement demanding an end to racism, community control of police, a \$15 an hour minimum wage, jobs for all, affordable housing, and fully funded social services.

The political establishment understands this threat to their power and profits.

Throughout history, they have used racism and divisions to cut across working people uniting in common cause, to keep us weak and divided into “single-issue” struggles.

That’s why 15 Now is trying to link up the movement against police racism with low-wage workers fighting for \$15 an hour.

### Fight Poverty and Racism

For tens of thousands demanding justice for Mike Brown, Eric Garner, and other victims of police racism, proposals for joint actions with low-wage workers would be embraced. Most of the active youth believe that “the whole system is guilty.” They want more than just token reforms, and they are searching for a strategy to take the momentum forward.

Meanwhile, with the victories for \$15 an hour minimum wage in Seattle and San Francisco, combined with escalating actions by low-wage workers, the fight for \$15 has gone mainstream.

Just days after the grand jury let Mike Brown’s killer walk free, a previously planned week of action brought low-wage workers onto the streets in nearly 200 cities demanding “\$15 and a union.”

Across the country, protests against police racism expressed their solidarity with the fight for \$15. The widespread mood to #ShutItDown evolved quickly from highway takeovers into die-ins at Walmarts and shopping malls, drawing the connections between economic inequality and police racism.

When Dr. King was murdered, his Poor People’s Campaign was demanding a national jobs program and a minimum wage that would today translate to \$15 an hour. King organized not only in the South but also in the North, including in poor working-class communities. King linked the demands against racism and segregation to the struggles of working people. He died defending a strike and union drive of Memphis sanitation workers.

Poverty wages impact communities of color most. Linking up the fight against police racism with minimum wage struggles can help give the movement an ongoing focus and broaden its scope. Unions have millions of members, including the parents of both Mike Brown and Eric Garner, who fight in their workplaces for better wages and working conditions.

### Joint National Actions

Imagine if the union movement used

its massive resources and numerous organizers to help build a #BlackLivesMatter national day of action. At the same time, if labor took bold initiatives to fight racism it would strengthen the fight for \$15, and the labor movement generally, by undermining racist prejudices that keep workers divided.

Even if labor leaders are not prepared to take initiatives, activists can push in the right direction. Coalitions of #BlackLivesMatter activists, community organizations, unions, and socialists should come together for coordinated national actions.

Saturday, February 21, the 50th anniversary of Malcolm X’s assassination should be marked with a major mobilization of working people and youth to disrupt this system and call for an end to racist policing and poverty wages. This should be followed by joint actions around April 15, the next major flashpoint in the national fight for \$15.

The big unions and community organizations, alongside the new organizations thrown up by the movement, have the capacity – if they fully mobilize their resources and members – to bring out hundreds of thousands on mass demonstrations. Such a movement would shake the establishment to its core and open the road to a wider challenge to this rotten system. ✪