

# SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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# END WORKPLACE HARASSMENT

## FIGHT SEXISM, RACISM, & CAPITALISM

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# WHAT WE STAND FOR

## Fighting for the 99%

- ✦ Raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour, as a step toward a living wage for all.
- ✦ Free, high quality public education for all from pre-school through college. Full funding for schools to dramatically lower student-teacher 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 towards fully socialized medicine.
- ✦ 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.
- ✦ Create living-wage union jobs for all the unemployed through public works programs to develop mass transit, renewable energy, infrastructure, healthcare, education, and affordable housing.
- ✦ For rent control combined with massive public investment in affordable housing.
- ✦ A guaranteed decent pension for all. No cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid!
- ✦ 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.
- ✦ Break the power of Wall Street! For public ownership and democratic control of the major banks.
- ✦ 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. Massive public investment in renewable energy and energy-efficient technologies to rapidly replace fossil fuels.
- ✦ A major expansion of public transportation to provide low fare, high-speed, and accessible transit.
- ✦ Democratic public ownership of the big energy companies, retooling them for socially necessary green production. A "Just Transition" for all workers in polluting industries with guaranteed re-training and new living-wage jobs.

## Equal Rights for All

- ✦ Fight discrimination based on race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, and all other forms of prejudice. Equal pay for equal work.
- ✦ Black Lives Matter! 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.

- ✦ Defend immigrant rights! Immediate, unconditional legalization and equal rights for all undocumented immigrants.
- ✦ 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. At least 12 weeks of paid family leave for all. For universal, high quality, affordable and publicly run child care.
- ✦ Fight discrimination and violence against the LGBTQ community, and all forms of homophobia and transphobia.

## Money for Jobs and Education, Not War

- ✦ End the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. Bring all the troops home now!
- ✦ Slash the military budget. No drones. Shut down Guantanamo.
- ✦ Repeal the Patriot Act, 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 environmental, civil rights, and women's campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the corporate parties.
- ✦ Unions and other 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 failed system. No to 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

## Alishia Morales Boston, MA



Being born and raised in a working class family, I always noticed inequality but I didn't start really questioning or challenging it until a few years back when Bernie Sanders was running in the primaries.

I was as apolitical as everyone else in my little hometown of Webster, MA. I remember blindly believing that a \$15 per hour minimum wage was unnecessary for unskilled workers and that it would cause inflation like Fox News said. I understood that the state of poverty I was in was due to my parents' lack of an education and to get out of it, I would have to pull myself up by the bootstraps. I moved out, worked two jobs throughout high school and after a year of deferring and saving money, I was finally ready to move to Boston and start school. I started off sharing a living room with two other girls in an overpriced, dumpy apartment complex on the 12th floor. Comparing this life to how far I've come, I felt like hard work really does pay off and that it is possible for anyone to get to where they want to be in life.

I quickly realized this was the wrong way to look at the "American Dream." In my own experience as a worker at a big pharmacy, I came to the revelation that management is

more than okay with paying people starvation wages to boost profits. Even when I got a promotion, the daily sales of the store I worked at matched my annual salary. I didn't have to skip meals to pay bills anymore, but there are still families surviving on less than I earn to make ends meet.

The 2016 election really changed my perception completely. When the DNC rigged the primaries and allowed for Trump's win, I lost all faith in the two party system. We were told at my liberal arts college that Trump could never win, and while students were sulking in their depression the day after the results, I was prepared to fight. Socialist Alternative put on an emergency rally that night in which 10,000 people attended. Amidst the hopelessness and anger I felt, this protest motivated me to keep fighting and I haven't stopped since. I joined SA within the next month and started linking workers' struggles and the current political climate to the instabilities of the capitalist system. This fight is not just about race, class and anything else Capitalists serve to divide us by, it is about dismantling and replacing this system with a more sustainable and just one that Socialist Alternative calls for. ✦

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## Build a Mass Campaign to End Harassment at Work

# #MeToo Takes to the Streets

Erin Brightwell

Thanks to the collective outrage and solidarity expressed by millions in the #MeToo campaign, there has been an important shift in how sexual harassment and sexual assault are viewed and dealt with; at least when the perpetrator is famous. The new culture of intolerance around sexual misconduct has encouraged more and more women to come forward and expose their abusers. While we should claim a partial victory in the firings of rich and powerful predators in the wake of the Weinstein revelations, we're not stopping there. The next step is to build a movement of millions in the streets, of collective action and strategic activism that takes aim at sexual harassment in every workplace. And we still need to take down Trump, the predator-in-chief himself.

January 20, the anniversary of the Women's Marches, is set to be the largest day of protest nationwide in months and the first major day of protest since the #MeToo campaign exploded. Millions are rightfully disgusted with Trump's reactionary politics, especially his racist attacks on immigrants as well as his history as a sexual predator. This year's Women's Marches can reignite the protest movement against Trump, a kickstart to bringing #MeToo into the streets.

A new, reinvigorated women's movement – like the generalized movement against Trump – if it's going to be able to win victories that affect the lives of working-class women, will need to develop its own organizations and strategies. Time's Up, an initiative begun by women in Hollywood, has raised nearly \$17 million for legal defense of victims of sexual harassment. This is a welcome development, as is the letter from the signers of Time's Up, which extends solidarity to working class women, acknowledging the women farm workers who published their own letter in support of Hollywood actors in November.

While legal defense funds will certainly be helpful to survivors, the existing legal framework for taking your employer to court for sexual harassment is completely inadequate. Even when workers win

*Women's March in St. Louis, Missouri*

damages from their employers, settlements can stipulate that victims give up their jobs, which are often the best jobs that those individuals can get – that's what made it worth it to undergo the grueling process of making a complaint and seeing it through in court.

## Winning Real Reforms

Like other oppressed groups, the gains made by women historically have been won in the course of struggle, not as gifts from on high. The protections against sexual harassment provided by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act through the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), as inadequate as they are, exist only because the organized women's movement of the 1960s mounted a campaign that combined protests in the streets with more legalistic strategies. They demanded that the EEOC enforce discrimination law for sex, as it earlier pledged to do for race in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement.

The name and shame tactic employed in today's era of #MeToo has been used effectively to elevate the issue of sexual harassment. Telling our stories is empowering in the solidarity it builds but it won't be enough to shake the sexist political and social establishment down to its foundations. An organized movement is necessary to win reforms that can make it easier to report sexual harassment and to shield victims from retribution from employers.

We have argued that a new system needs to be set up where every workplace has a complaints officer, democratically elected by the workforce and federally protected from employer retaliation. The legal framework also needs to be radically overhauled. This includes ending clauses in employee contracts that mandate company-run arbitration for complaints. These causes prevent more than half of American workers from being able to take harassment claims to court.

Of course, enacting change at the federal level when the political system is dominated by the anti-women Republican Party and the corporate dominated Democrats may seem far-fetched. But reform can also be pushed for at the state and local levels, as the movement for a \$15 minimum wage did. Unions can also demand elected complaints officers in their contract negotiations.

The only way to win and maintain serious reforms is a mass campaign and a mobilized and active workforce refusing to return to the past. Forty-five years ago, when the labor movement was far stronger, the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) was set up which saved thousands of workers' lives. Today, corporate America will ferociously resist any incursion on their dominance in the workplace and reform will require a massive push from below. Ultimately, defeating sexism will require completely

**continued on p. 11**

## On The Ground at the Women's March

Keely Mullen

Last year, Donald Trump's inauguration was met by massive demonstrations of millions worldwide marching against his sexism and bigotry. One year later, the 2018 Women's Marches saw hundreds of thousands turn out around the world to say that the fight is far from over! The demonstration in Los Angeles attracted over half a million people, in Chicago there were 300,000, and New York saw 200,000 in the streets. There were also marches in Osaka, Rome, London, Sydney, and other cities worldwide. The size of these demonstrations show that there is still tremendous anger at the Trump administration and a real desire to see him out of office. Not only were there protest signs taking aim at Trump's sexism and predatory sexual history, there were signs about his vicious attacks on immigrants, and his blatant racism and bigotry.

The recent #MeToo uprising has signaled new phase in the women's movement, and in city after city the major question being asked is: how can we carry the movement forward? In Columbus, Ohio, Socialist Alternative lead the 3,000 person march behind a banner that read "Unite Against Sexism! Build a New Women's Movement!" In her rally speech, a

member of Socialist Alternative, Columbus was met with roaring applause when she pointed toward the need for rent control and free college education in moving the fight against sexism forward. At the end of the march in New York, our members chanted "The march may be over, but the fight isn't!" drawing in crowds to discuss next steps for the movement. We organized vibrant #MeToo contingents in a number of marches across the country, drawing in people who want to end harassment in their workplaces, and who want to see the Predator-in-Chief Donald Trump driven out of office.

Most of those marching are focused on the midterm elections in November as the key opportunity to strike back against Trump. However, many others agreed with us that the Democrats have not been reliable fighters for working people and what is key in challenging sexism, sexual harassment and Trump is the building of an organized, mass movement. A Socialist Alternative member in New York stood in the middle of the NYC Women's March holding a sign that read "Ask Me How I'm Getting Organized!" She was approached by dozens of excited people who wanted to learn how to get organized, how to build a movement, and how to fight back. ☘

## We Say:

- ☘ *Unions, women's organizations, and other forces must launch a mass campaign against sexual harassment in the workplace.*
- ☘ *Impeach the "Predator-in-Chief," serial harasser Trump.*
- ☘ *Build for the next day of action on March 8, International Women's Day, marching alongside women around the world. ☘*

# Puerto Rico: Disaster Continues

Leon Pinsky

Over three months ago, Hurricanes Irma and Maria devastated the island Puerto Rico. There followed a shocking disregard to the plight of residents by the mainstream media and an abhorrent response by the Trump administration. Due to the “free-market” approach of the authorities, 660,000 power customers across Puerto Rico still lack electricity. Even more shocking is that an independent investigation has suggested that while officials claimed 64 deaths due to the hurricane, the real number might actually be 1,050!

Governor Ricardo Rossello also reported that “with half a million homes partially or totally destroyed, only 30,000 [blue tarps] have arrived.” Officials added that only 55% of houses have regained power. But many Puerto Ricans do not trust even that figure, and report entire areas, particularly in the countryside, still without power. On top of this, the island is facing the possibility of a massive foreclosure crisis with a third of the island’s homeowners behind on their mortgage payments to the banks and Wall Street firms.

Levels of mental illness have increased significantly. With already high levels due to the devastation of living standards caused by

the brutal neo-liberal policies of U.S. capitalism, there have been growing reports of post-traumatic stress disorder.

The NY Reserve Bank warns about increased migration, noting that during September and October 124,974 more people left the island than arrived. In October alone the island suffered a net loss of more people than in the whole of 2016. During October, it also lost four percent of its salaried employees.

## Privatizations Makes Conditions Worse

Officials have placed blame for the delayed restoration on the geography of the island itself. While logistical challenges are real, a more honest conclusion can be found by looking at the for-profit “solution.” After handing out \$300 million to a private power company from Montana, which only had two employees, the government was forced to cancel the deal and look for other companies. Puerto Rico’s publicly-owned utility company (PREPA) has been suffering from heavy cuts and privatization with its American creditors demanding that it raise electricity rates which are already double the U.S. average. The reliance on private companies has meant that the island is opening itself, in its most dire



Toppled electricity poles in Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria

situation, to private companies whose main interest is not to help the people, but to make the biggest profit possible.

This is not a new “solution.” U.S. corporations and their hired politicians have seen disasters, both natural and economic, as an opportunity to push disastrous policies based on extreme privatization. This happened in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina over a decade ago. It also happened in Greece where the European Union’s policies dictated a massive selling off public assets, including islands!

Betrayed and neglected by the federal government and the incapability of private vulture companies to quickly restore the island to its former shape, communities have begun to organize to help each other. A Puerto Rican studying on the mainland explained to *Newsweek*: “The way people connected and relied on their neighbors and really helped people out was amazing. ... My

aunt is missing a huge chunk of her roof, and when I visited, her house was full of canned goods because every morning they distribute food, on their own accord. It was inspiring.”

What is needed to restore the infrastructure is a massive program of federally-funded public works to rebuild the country and provide training and new jobs. All cuts to PREPA should be reversed and it should be run democratically by and for the Puerto Rican people. Trade limitations imposed by the U.S should be lifted and the island’s debts to Wall St. should be cancelled. This should all be paid for by a massive tax on the rich.

All workers in the U.S should stand in solidarity with the workers, farmers, and youth of Puerto Rico as we fight against the same enemy – big banks, Wall Street, and the government of the rich, headed by Trump – the vulture in chief. ☘

**Due to the “free-market” approach of the authorities, 660,000 power customers across Puerto Rico still lack electricity.**

# J20 Trials: Drop all Charges!

Alka Mysore and Sarko

On January 20, 2017 large demonstrations erupted across the United States in response to Donald Trump’s inauguration as President. In Washington D.C., thousands of protesters gathered to voice their opposition to a Trump presidency leading to an unprecedented mass-arrest of 234 people on that day. Using unlawful tactics, the D.C. police “kettled” and arrested hundreds gathered downtown.

The J20 arrestees were slapped with multiple felony charges by an overzealous prosecution for destruction of private property to the tune of over \$100,000. While property damage occurred at the hands of a few, the same charges were applied to all arrestees, and if convicted, they face over 60 years in prison. The prosecution has sought to prove guilt by association - a dangerous precedent should they be successful.

The most recent trials began in November and shamefully included two medics and a

journalist. A jury acquitted the six defendants of all charges, rebuking the government’s attempt to criminalize mass protest.

On January 18, 2018, the prosecution announced that they will dismiss 129 cases. While this is mostly positive news, 59 defendants still face an uphill battle to fight the bogus charges.

There were some at the J20 protests who used vandalism as a tactic of resistance. We oppose the frequently counterproductive tactics of “black bloc” anarchists and “antifa” groups such as random window smashing. However, to prosecute over 200 people for only \$100,000 damage is a clear attempt to intimidate protesters. How much damage did Wall Street bankers do to working class families in the recession and no one was prosecuted?

It has been a bleak year for the J20 defendants. Following their arrest, protesters were detained without food, water, or access to restrooms. Furthermore, D.C. Police subjected many to invasive body searches. Other

people merely involved in the protests but not arrested were issued subpoenas for access to their private conversations. For the last year, defendants have relied on a small network of devoted supporters for legal assistance and housing as they return to Washington D.C. for court dates.

As a display of solidarity, over a hundred defendants signed a “Points of Unity” agreement, a collective pledge to reject potential plea deals and cooperation with the prosecutors that might come at the expense of their codefendants. Activist group Dead City Legal Posse formed in the wake of the arrests has played a critical role in providing support to the defendants.

The Trump administration and Republican party explicitly want to criminalize protest and dissent. Jeff Sessions’ DOJ has made it easier for police to brutalize innocent people by lifting restrictions on police seizures of property, as well as lifting limits on military hardware for police. On the campaign trail, Donald Trump repeatedly called for attacks

on protesters and for loss of citizenship and jail time for those who burn the flag.

While we do not know what will come next for the remaining 59 defendants in the J20 cases, we must defend, protest and dissent by standing in solidarity with the defendants. We say: drop all the charges now!

Socialist Alternative argues for building mass protests where everyone feels safe and we argue against ineffective tactics of property destruction. However, we must unite to demand an end to the criminalization of dissent in all its forms, and fight to defend our rights to free speech and free assembly. With inequality reaching critical levels, we must build even stronger movements centered on the social power of the working class with the end goal of making a society where no one need protest. ☘

**Read the full version of this article at [SocialistAlternative.org](http://SocialistAlternative.org)**

# *Fire and Fury* – Can the Liberal Establishment Stop Trump?

**Bryan Koulouris, Socialist Alternative's National Organizer**

The publication of *Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House* by Michael Wolff shook up the political terrain before the book was even released. Trump's reactions say it all: he tweeted that he was "like, really smart" and then corrected himself minutes later by typing he was "not smart but genius...and a very stable genius at that!" Just days later, Trump's tirade about Haiti, El Salvador, and African nations being "shitholes" made news.

One immediate effect of *Fire and Fury* is that Steve Bannon, the vicious racist and nationalist former "chief strategist" of the Trump campaign and administration, has been abandoned by his billionaire backers due to his statements in the book, forcing him to resign from leadership at Breitbart News. Bannon had declared his intention to unseat high-profile mainstream Republicans, including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, but McConnell looks safe, at least for now.

*Fire and Fury* will be read widely and likely reach "best-seller" status, fueled by a liberal and left audience that wants to see Trump and his agenda defeated. However, while Trump's support has weakened for a number of reasons, including the allegations of sexual assault against him re-emerging, the book will not likely have an impact on Trump's "hard-core base." Many of them feel encouraged by Trump's "outsider" and populist approach, with a smaller section of Trump's supporters being emboldened by his normalization of racist and sexist actions. The other factor preventing Trump's support from collapsing is the apparent strength of the economy at the moment, which is actually heading in the next period for another 2007-8 type crash.

*Fire and Fury* is a genuine page-turner, telling a story of warring factions, chaos, shifting power dynamics, and conflicting personalities that is gripping and would be more entertaining if it wasn't a horrific real-life look at some of the most powerful people in the world.

However, the portrayal of an inept, unraveling administration having its wings clipped by billionaires, military generals, and politicians could lead some to underestimate the dangers of the Trump administration and what will be necessary to defeat its policies.

## Confirmation of Suspicions

The book confirms many things already widely believed: Trump is a non-stop sexist harasser with a short attention span and fragile ego that nobody can fully control. His campaign was a vanity project and his advisers didn't expect anything like the level of success



it achieved. More than this, *Fire and Fury* confirms that they didn't even want to win.

An unprepared transition following a disorganized campaign led to an unprecedented level of chaos in the initial days of the Trump administration. As Bannon authored right-wing executive orders that provoked mass protests, National Security Adviser Michael Flynn was forced out of his position due to lies about his connections with Russia. With mainstream Republican leader Reince Priebus brought in as Chief of Staff, a three-way faction fight between Bannon, Priebus, and Trump's family (nicknamed "Jarvanka" in the book) dominated the administration for months.

The constant media leaks, conflicting political messages, and sharp shifts in policy coming from the White House reflected the balance of power between these three factions and Trump's own shifting allegiances. Many suspected this, but it is confirmed in exhaustive detail with direct quote after direct quote from key players in Wolff's book.

Wolff also deals at length with the approach of the Trump administration to accusations of collusion with Russia. The paranoia, squabbling, and unprofessional approach of the Trump administration has given the liberal establishment a longer "lease on life" for the Russia scandal than would have been initially warranted. These actions have opened the door to obstruction of justice charges surrounding the ill-conceived attempts to avoid and end the investigation, especially the firing of FBI director James Comey. Special counsel Robert Mueller appears to be vigorously pursuing this line of inquiry. The Russia investigation has also opened the door to examining Trump and Kushner's financial dealings with

various Russian oligarchs, including allegations of money-laundering.

*Fire and Fury* indicates a lack of evidence of ongoing cooperation with Russian officials during the campaign. This is one reason why we can't depend on denunciations of a Russia connection or an investigation into it to defeat Trump. But there are tens of millions who want Trump gone now! We need to mobilize for demands to improve our lives with protests in the streets and organizing in our campuses, workplaces, and communities to defeat this reactionary administration. We demand that Trump, who lost the popular vote, be impeached for his sexual assaults against women, his relentless promotion of racism and xenophobia, and his brazen attempts to use the presidency for his and his family's personal gain.

## Back to Normal?

Many of the key figures in *Fire and Fury* no longer reside in the West Wing: Bannon, Flynn, and Priebus are all gone. Does this reflect a fundamental shift back to "normalcy?"

Wolff writes, "politics is supposed to be ... a business supported by, tended to, and, indeed, ennobled by a professional political class."

This "professional political class" is made up of corporate lobbyists, military brass, and politicians paid off by billionaires. Their policies have directly contributed to growing income inequality: including the bailout of the big banks, cuts to social programs, and the privatization of education. They uphold institutional racism and sexism and have waged war after war for corporate profits and the "prestige" of

the U.S. empire. It is precisely the actions of this professional political class that laid the basis for the echo that both Trump's campaign and Bernie Sanders' call for a "political revolution against the billionaire class" got in the 2016 elections.

Rather than aggressively attempting to remove Trump now, cynical Democratic leaders want to use the disgust with Trump simply for electoral gain. Their active opposition to mobilizing people in the streets or any use of the social of the working class enables the Republicans to push through policies that damage the lives of working people, like the recent tax bill. If the Democrats finally move to impeach Trump, it will be coupled with an attempt to return the corporate "politics as usual" that will inevitably deeply disappoint people, opening the door to more right-wing populists in the future.

Instead of Democrats who refuse to fight for Trump's removal and don't boldly do everything they can to block his policies, we need strong independent left campaigns in 2018 as a step towards a new party of working people. We need a political force that refuses corporate donations and audaciously fights for a "political revolution" with demands for quality health care, affordable housing, and education for all, while fighting against all the right-wing attacks.

## Taking Action and Building Movements

The revelations in *Fire and Fury* won't lead directly to Trump's downfall without further political crisis and mass pressure from below. Capitalist investment craves stability and the political establishment serves the will of the ruling-class billionaires. We cannot be complacent or wait for the midterm elections to strike a blow at Trump and the Republicans.

This decaying system creates monsters like Trump through its constant racism, sexism, and increasing economic inequality. A socialist program for democratic workers' control of the commanding heights of the economy, an independent left party, and vibrant social movements are necessary to stop this onslaught.

The "professional political class" will only move against Trump as a last resort to prevent an even deeper crisis or mass upheaval. Even with Bannon gone, racist ideologue Stephen Miller is still influential in the West Wing. One year is enough! The working class needs to bring "fire and fury" against the billionaires and politicians that created this mess as well as the racist, sexist capitalist system that they represent. ☘

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# THE POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN AND The Radical Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King

Eljeer Hawkins

On December 4, 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) announced a new campaign and mass march to shed light on the endemic poverty, inadequate housing, and structural unemployment existing in the middle of the massive postwar economic upswing after World War II. To understand the importance of this initiative, we have to look at the dynamic of the black freedom struggle at that point and the evolution of Dr. King's thinking in a radical direction.

The postwar boom had contradictory effects. It improved the material conditions of a section of the black population and raised their confidence to fight, and made segregation and searing racism even more intolerable. At the same time, large sections were left in appalling rural and urban poverty. The confidence to fight was further reinforced in the North by the experience of hundreds of thousands of black workers in militant mass industrial unions grouped in the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). On top of that was the experience black soldiers in World War II and Korea who came back determined not to put up with being treated as subhuman. These ex-soldiers played a key role in the early stages of the Civil Rights movement.

## Civil Rights Movement Goes North

After the enormous victories of the movement in the South, a new phase of the struggle opened up in the North that posed different challenges. The urban explosions in Watts, New York, Detroit and many other cities in the mid-to-late 1960s were the culmination of the failure of capitalism and President Lyndon B. Johnson's liberalism to solve the systemic problems faced by the generation of African Americans who migrated to the North in the 1920s and '40s to escape rural poverty, white supremacy, violence, and Jim/Jane Crow. In 1967 alone, there were 160 social explosions from January to September.

The Kerner Commission report would confirm what many in the black freedom movement

and black community knew to be true - that urban explosions were not caused by militant instigators, but by the conditions of racism, abject poverty, and systemic federal government neglect.

Dr. King's travels to Watts in Los Angeles and black communities in northern cities helped him realize that their culture, leadership, and urban landscape were very different from the conditions that blacks faced in the South. The African American community in the North questioned Dr. King's tactics of nonviolent civil disobedience. Dr. King and the movement would invest time to firmly understand the conditions of black workers and poor people in the North, including Dr. King and his family renting an apartment on the predominantly black West Side of Chicago.

The black power movement was inspired by the revolutionary struggles in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Individuals like Robert F. Williams and Malcolm X, and organizations like the Black Panther Party, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and the Radical Action Movement provoked wide ranging discussion of self-determination, self-defense, political, and economic power. The black power movement included different political trends, ranging from socialism, revolutionary nationalism, to Maoism and black capitalism. It challenged Dr. King to reformulate his thinking and brought out his radical side.

The earlier phase and character of the civil rights movement was linked to the liberal wing of the Democratic Party and was dominated by a gradualist approach, turning the spotlight on the brutal realities of white supremacy and institutional racism in the South. The aim of the movement was to embarrass the U.S. government and to enforce legal equality, including voting rights in the South.

## King and the Vietnam War

To fully understand the development of Poor People's Campaign, one must examine Dr. King's Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence speech on April 4, 1967 at the Riverside church in Harlem, New York. Beyond Vietnam was a powerful indictment of U.S. imperialism.

It marked a watershed moment in Dr. King's public ministry and the civil rights and antiwar movements. It was events, including the diversion of half a billion dollars from community action programs to war spending in Vietnam, as well as the increasing death toll of U.S. soldiers - particularly black soldiers who were disproportionately placed in combat units - that caused Dr. King to come out publicly and forcefully. From January through November 1966, almost a quarter of army casualties were black.

The themes of the Beyond Vietnam speech co-written by historian and reverend Vincent Harding would draw on the interconnection of the national and international struggle for freedom and economic justice. Dr. King's use of the terminology of imperialism, colonialism, racism, nuclear war, militarism, and poverty - casting big business and the American government as the greatest purveyor of violence, supporting some of the most brutal dictatorships in the world - showed he had started to analyze the foundations of global capitalism and its violent expression: war.

Speaking in 1966, Dr. King stated, "We are dealing with class issues. Something is wrong with capitalism. Maybe America must move towards democratic socialism." His socialism, however, was not rooted in a serious class and Marxist analysis of capitalism, despite reading the works of Marx. Dr. King was inspired by early Christianity and an egalitarian interpretation of the Christian faith. Dr. King's Christian democratic socialism was never articulated at public events or in the pulpit, only at SCLC private meetings. He was unwavering in his belief in a more humane and spiritual vision of the world.

## The Birth of the Poor People's Campaign

The birth of the Poor People's Campaign is rooted in a critique of U.S. capitalism, including opposition to consumerism, imperialism, militarism, racism, and structural poverty. Dr. King spoke of putting people's needs first before profit margins, raising the question of political and economic power. The Poor People's campaign came out of an intense debate and discussion within SCLC around its goals and aims

in combating poverty, and the resources needed for such a grand project.

The Poor People's Campaign would eventually create a rift in the SCLC with many of the leading activists seeing themselves as organizers for black people exclusively, and not the wider working class and poor. The plan was to organize a mass march on April 22, 1968, culminating in a permanent tent encampment in Washington, D.C. titled "Resurrection City" until their demands were met. The title of the encampment was a religious reference to the resurrection of Christ, serving as a testimony to the resurrection of human beings.

The demands included a number of radical and far-reaching reforms:

- ✪ \$30 billion annual appropriation to fight poverty [\$213 billion today];
- ✪ Congressional passage of full employment;
- ✪ Guaranteed annual wage;
- ✪ Construction of 500,000 low-cost housing units to eliminate slums;
- ✪ Petition the government to pass an Economic Bill of Rights.

King expected violent confrontations with the federal government and its troops in Washington, D.C. Historically, this would not be the first time an encampment would take place in the nation's capital. In 1932, veterans marched into D.C. demanding payment of bonuses promised for their service in the military during World War I, only to be violently attacked by federal troops.

The Memphis sanitation workers' strike of 1968 epitomized the struggle for economic justice. Workers demanded an end to poverty wages echoing Dr. King's question, "What does it profit a man to be able to eat at an integrated lunch counter if he doesn't have enough money to buy a hamburger?" The strike challenged the culture of oppression and inferiority that the black sanitation workers, black working class, and poor endured daily from slavery to Jim and Jane Crow. Dr. King's participation in the strike was not an accident; it was rooted in the political, economic, and social aims of the Poor People's Campaign.

Dr. King politically understood the importance of the link between labor and the civil rights movements. The captains of industry and big business opposed both labor and civil

# PEOPLE'S AT 50 y of King, Jr.



rights, holding down wages and violently attacking strikes for union representation and better working conditions. The U.S. capitalist class and their political representatives have always used racism and sexism to divide the working class and deny human rights, economic justice, and social uplift to the black masses, immigrants, and women.

The Poor People's Campaign would bring together a multi-ethnic coalition of organizations and individuals from among Puerto Ricans, Latinos, indigenous people, blacks, Appalachian whites, labor, churches, workers, and the poor. The involvement of single mothers, welfare-dependent households, and organizations like the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO), would challenge sexist ideas in the movement and educate Dr. King on the issues facing women and families dependent on welfare. Dr. King and the movement tried to find a way to end the triple evils of poverty, racism, and war. Dr. King began to promote a more militant approach to civil disobedience and direct action tactics than that utilized in the Southern movement against Jim Crow.

An example of this were the protests, boycotts, and sit-ins at corporate headquarters used by the SCLC organizational arm, Operation Breadbasket, headed by the then-radical Jesse Jackson in Chicago. This represented the beginnings of a more fighting response to poverty

centered on the demand a radical redistribution of wealth and resources.

Dr. King travelled back and forth throughout the country organizing for the Poor People's Campaign march. The first mass march led by Dr. King in Memphis supporting the sanitation workers on March 28, 1968 would end in violence when police provocateurs, members of The Invaders organization, and youth began shattering windows and destroying property. Having always stated he would never lead a violent march, Dr. King left the march.

On April 3, 1968, Dr. King returned to Memphis to organize another mass march, fighting an injunction by the city administration, and big business. That evening, he delivered his final address, I've Been to the Mountaintop, a speech he'd given before. This version however, was filled with an eerie mood. Dr. King's political trajectory led to an increase of daily death threats and intense surveillance by the FBI. Dr. King was an increasing threat to U.S. imperialism at home and abroad. On April 4 at 6:01 pm on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel, the life and mission of a revolutionary was gone with one single shot.

## The Mule Train to Resurrection City

The public assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was a mighty hammer blow to the

movement against racism, capitalism, and war. The new march on Washington lost its most effective spokesperson whose new direction could have ignited a new phase of the freedom movement – uniting working and poor people of all colors, creeds, and nationalities. Across the nation, black communities would explode in righteous indignation over Dr. King's death. The Poor People's Campaign would go on under the leadership of Dr. King's close friend and co-laborator, Rev. Ralph Abernathy. The march on D.C. was postponed until May 12, 1968.

The campaign began in Marks, Mississippi, in one of the poorest regions in the country and visited by Dr. King on two occasions. Several caravans of the poor, starting at different points across the country, were to converge on Washington D.C. for the rally led by Coretta Scott King, Dr. King's widow, after which the "Resurrection City" shanty-town tent city would be set up.

The shanty-town was meant to evoke the conditions of the poor under U.S. capitalism and racism. The next phase of the campaign was aimed at mass disruption of everyday business of government institutions. Protesters would engage in arrest-provoking nonviolent civil disobedience. The second phase would lead to a national boycott of industries and major city shopping areas, with the stated goal of putting pressure on business leaders to force Congress to accept the five point demands of the Poor People's Campaign.

At the height of the Poor People's campaign there were 7,000 participants, falling short of 50,000 estimated. Poor weather conditions, attacks by the media, politicians, and organizational infighting doomed this powerful initiative. "Resurrection City" would officially end on June 19, 1968, besieged by violence in the tent city and law enforcement provocation.

## 50 Years Later: A New Gilded Age

Fifty years after Dr. King sought to launch a mass campaign of poor people, the reality of inequality in the U.S. and the world is even more extreme. Five billionaires have more wealth than the bottom half of the world's

population, which is 3.8 billion people. Oxfam has just reported that 82% of the money generated last year went to the world's richest 1%. We are truly living in a new gilded age, where the world's wealth and resources are held in so few hands.

Recently the United Nations special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights issued a report after traveling throughout the United States. The report highlighted the deep levels of income inequality, poverty, and deplorable conditions in the wealthiest nation in human history.

Over the last few years Black Lives Matter (BLM) provided black workers, youth, and the most oppressed a powerful example of social struggle against law enforcement violence. But BLM has struggled to truly root itself in the black working class and build a sustained movement around a program that speaks to the needs of working people and the poor. On top of that, Trump and racist Attorney General Jeff Sessions have gone on the offensive against BLM and activism. BLM is at a crossroads today.

Rev. Liz Theoharis and Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II – who led the NAACP chapter in North Carolina and Moral Mondays movement – have called for a 2018 version of the Poor People's Campaign. This initiative comes at a crucial moment as the Republicans seek to implement an agenda that directly targets the poor, people of color, immigrants, and the broader working class.

It is hard to say at this point whether the new Poor People's Campaign will truly take off, but its organizers are pointing in the right direction – toward the need for a new multiracial movement of working people, the poor, and the most oppressed. Bernie Sanders' campaign in 2016 also raised the need for a massive redirection of society's resources to end poverty. But we will need to go further and create a new political party based on the interests of working people and the poor which can challenge the entire capitalist establishment, which is complicit in creating the conditions we see today. As Dr. King powerfully exclaimed, "Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever." ☘



A poor people's march in Laredo, Texas.

# Free Ahed Tamimi: Courageous Fighter Against Israeli Oppression

**Neta Most,**  
**Socialist Struggle / Nidal Ishtiraki**

*The Israeli government and army's decision to punish the women of the Tamimi family has, in response, awakened a wave of international solidarity and support. Here we publish a statement from Socialist Struggle, the Palestine/Israel section of the Committee for a Workers International.*

Sixteen year-old Ahed Tamimi was arrested during a military raid on her house in the West Bank village of Nabi Saleh on the night of December 19, 2017. Ahed's mother, Neriman Tamimi, was arrested when she went into the police station to find out what happened to her daughter. The family's laptops and phones were confiscated by the army.

All of this was a result of video footage documenting Ahed and her cousin facing two armed soldiers in full body armor, and trying to remove the soldiers from their home. Minutes earlier, Ahed's relative, fifteen year-old Muhammad Tamimi, was critically wounded after he was shot in his head with a rubber plated metal bullet.

It is clear from the clip that the soldiers were not hurt or threatened at any point. The publication of the incident caused an uproar on the right.

The highly covered arrests seem like a vindictive act meant to deter young Palestinian men and women from fighting against the occupation, especially in lieu of the protests following Trump's declarations regarding Jerusalem and the location of the U.S. embassy.

The military advocate general is accusing Ahed of five counts of "assault" against security forces and incitement. Her mother is accused of filming two instances and of "incitement" on social media. Both are now held in the "Ofar" military prison, notorious for the use of questionable methods to break prisoners, such as isolation and sleep deprivation. They will stand trial in a court martial, a court with almost 100% conviction rate.

Since the original incident for which they were arrested is not enough to legally justify their continued detention, even by the distorted standards of the military court system, the military advocate office repeatedly extends their arrest by adding more offenses that allegedly happened in the past to their indictment. In these conditions, not only do they not have any chance of a fair trial, there is a real danger they will remain in prison for years.

It is almost redundant to mention that Jewish settlers who have been documented



*Ahed Tamimi in Israeli police custody.*

assaulting Palestinians, Israeli left activists, or even police officers and soldiers, almost never face a courtroom for their actions.

## Media Coverage Denies the Reality

The discussion in the mainstream Israeli media was mostly focused on the question of whether the officer should have immediately reacted using force toward the Tamimis, or rather show restraint in front of the camera. The picture that was drawn was of a soldier innocently standing by, while two young girls are trying to confront him and cause him to react violently in front of the camera. But when looking at the facts it is clear the story is the other way around: the army provocatively entered the village to push the residents into a reaction which could be used to justify heavier oppression.

Several op-eds went further and portrayed sixteen years old Ahed as a provocateur or skilled actress who intentionally creates situations which will make IDF soldiers "look bad". As if the Tamimi family invited armed soldiers to invade their home for this purpose! And, as if there's a girl anywhere in the world who chose to be born and live under foreign occupation by a foreign army. Since Trump's declaration, at least 610 Palestinians were arrested by the Israeli army, over 170 of them are children and teenagers. Did they all "orchestrate" their arrests just to make soldiers look bad?

Most media outlets in Israel ignored the main issue: What was the reason the soldiers entered Nabi Saleh in the first place? Only a

handful of journalists mentioned the popular protests in the village – the protests that the soldiers were there to suppress – which were held against the occupation and the theft of the village well by the adjacent settlement of Haramish.

The local water source lies on private Palestinian land and is used by the Palestinian farmers of Nabi Saleh. The settlers are claiming it and preventing Palestinian farmers from working their land. The Israeli army is there to protect the theft of the spring by the settlers and to prevent residents from protesting against the injustice caused to them. Most of the time, quelling demonstrations is done by use of brutal and often deadly force against unarmed civilians. In recent years, two protesters were murdered – Mustafa and Rushdi Tamimi.

At the day of the filmed incident where Ahed and her cousin confront the soldiers, the army did not stop at suppressing the demonstrations by the spring, but invaded the village in order to make it clear to the residents that protesting would not be worthwhile. During the attempt to suppress the demonstrations protesting the army's invasion of the village, Muhammad Tamimi was shot in his head. The essence of the army's presence there is therefore to enforce the oppressive order of the occupation, where settlers have a license to steal and Palestinians are stripped of their right to even protest.

## Solidarity and the Future of the Struggle

Ironically, the brutal and arbitrary arrests

of the Tamimi women sparked the reactions of solidarity that the government and army feared when the video went viral. Workers and young people all over the world are following the arrest of Tamimi and demonstrations demanding her release have been held in multiple countries.

This reaction reveals the limits of the power of the occupation regime when facing the civilian population and can definitely push more young people to rise up against it. "Ahed is a representative of a new generation of our people, of young freedom fighters... They must become the life line which will revive our revolution," writes Ahed Tamimi's father in a public letter to his arrested daughter.

The arrests of the Tamimi daughters are meant to put a "price tag" on the resistance to military regime in the occupied territories. Netanyahu's government of settlements and big capital is arrogantly trying to break the resistance to the occupation using deadly oppression, to "manage the conflict" at the expense of the future of Palestinian workers and youth, but also at the expense of Israeli workers. There need to be arrests for the government's attacks, not of young Palestinian girls rising up against them. A fight to remove the army and the settlements from the occupied territories is a fight for peace.

## Mass Resistance to Occupation

The Socialist Party (CWI in Israel) supports the mass resistance of the Palestinian people against the occupation with the right to armed self defence. The resistance of Ahed Tamimi is dangerous to the Israeli ruling class as it has the potential to spark a new "intifada" or mass uprising against Israeli military rule in the occupied territories.

Such a struggle could potentially open up the real class divisions within Israeli society and win the Israeli Jewish working class over to a common struggle against its rotten and oppressive ruling class.

It could also pose the question of a democratic socialist solution to the national question where the Palestinian and Israeli Jewish people have a right to self-determination and democratic ownership and control of the wealth and resources of the region. ☺



Read more on international news at  
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U.S. / North Korea



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# False Alarm in Hawaii and the Threat of Nuclear War

**Stephan Kimmerle, Seattle**

Trump's aggressive and erratic policy could unleash war on the Korean peninsula with devastating global consequences. The anti-Trump movement needs to stop this right-wing administration and its hawkish, imperialist approach.

"The first thing I noticed was nine missed calls from my dad, then my mom's texts telling me to take shelter and that she loved me," reported Sara Donchey after the horrific missile alert on Hawaii on Saturday, January 13. The radio anchor from Houston, on a visit on Hawaii, gives with her account a glimpse of the horror that people went through after the message was sent out over text and across Hawaiian television stations: "BALLISTIC MISSILE THREAT INBOUND TO HAWAII. SEEK IMMEDIATE SHELTER. THIS IS NOT A DRILL." For 38 minutes people on the islands tried to reach their loved ones. People tried to find refuge with the knowledge that there is no shelter against a nuclear strike.

A lot of questions are raised. How such a horrific warning could go out without even a second person verifying the threat, just one person pressing the wrong button.

Why did it take 38 minutes to send out a second message to call off the alarm? The whole event shows the callous disregard of the authorities for the feelings and fears of ordinary people

A deeper question is also posed: how is it possible that we are living again in a situation where the peril of nuclear extinction is real enough for people believe such a false alarm? How did this billionaire president Donald Trump and his right-wing squad in the White House bring working people into this nightmare? And what can we do about it?

## Trump Raises the Stakes

With its "America First" strategy, Trump's administration is playing a dangerous game. With the rise of China, U.S. imperialism's position globally and especially in the Far East is diminished. Despite still being the strongest power on the planet, the hopes of the billionaire class for a unilateral U.S. domination after the fall of the Soviet Union never materialized. The Trump administration in a clumsy, erratic and aggressive way has tried to restore U.S. imperialist ambitions with brute force where soft power – diplomacy based on



North Korea and South Korea agreed to a combined Olympics delegation.

economic strength, and just a hint of military might – eroded.

From day one, Trump identified China as the big, new rival in the 21st century. The pressure on North Korea is part of his power play in Asia. Trump is resorting to a foreign policy of inflammatory rhetoric with the imminent danger of a full escalation. However, already under Obama, the U.S. turned toward the Pacific. What Trump tries to achieve with unilateral intimidation and military power, is what his Democratic Party predecessor aimed to achieve with

neoliberal free-trade agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). This alliance with twelve nations was aimed as an aggressive economic policy to contain China's rise. Trump cancelled the TPP, but not to protect U.S. American workers. He replaced this neoliberal trade deal with his neo-nationalism that now brings back the horrific threat a nuclear war which was visualized in the 38 heartbreaking minutes on Hawaii.

There is no doubt, that the North Korean regime is brutal in its repression against its people. While

claiming to be "communist" its whole ideology is based on defending the interests of the ruling elite around dictator Kim Jong-un.

However, decades of military intimidation by the U.S. and its allies against North Korea help the regime in Pyongyang to justify its actions in front of its own people. And still, to date, the only country which has used nuclear weapons is the U.S.

We need to reignite the movement in the streets against Trump and the anti-working class, anti-women, anti-immigrant, anti-LGBT agenda of the Republicans. The movement against the right must also take up the demand an end to the U.S. military presence on the Korean peninsula which has nothing to do with defending the Korean or the American people and everything to do with defending the interests of imperialism in the Far East. This must be combined with the demand to drive out Trump who is a danger to the entire world.

The actor Jim Carrey wrote from Hawaii, "I woke up this morning in Hawaii with ten minutes to live. It was a false alarm, but a real psychic warning" - a warning the whole anti-Trump movement should take up. ☺

## Catalonia: Elections Do Not Solve Revolutionary Crisis

The following is an extract from an article written by members of *Izquierda Revolucionaria / Esquerra Revolucionària* (the CWI in the Spanish state and in Catalonia) on the aftermath of the December elections to the Catalan Parliament. These elections were called by the government in Madrid following an independence referendum in the fall that saw over two million people vote for Catalan independence from Spain.

Throughout this independence struggle, *Izquierda Revolucionaria / Esquerra Revolucionària* has supported the right of the Catalan people to self determination and called for a Catalan socialist republic as part of a free and voluntary federation of peoples and nations that currently make up the Spanish state.

The elections created a new problem for the conservative Rajoy government because the pro independence forces again won a majority.



The events in Catalonia over the last months have shaken the political scene in the Spanish State, in Europe, and the world, capturing the attention of activists on the left.

Through their direct action, the people defeated the savage repression of the state and showed their firm decision to break with the regime of '78 [the political order in Spain following the fall of the Franco dictatorship],

voting massively for an independent Catalan Republic. The virulent reaction of the Spanish and Catalan bourgeoisie has not yet succeeded in repressing the independence movement.

As proven by the facts, the events of October 1 and 3 opened a revolutionary crisis in Catalonia. On the night of October 3, King Philip VI addressed the nation in an incendiary speech advocating drastic repressive measures. From that moment, the application of Article 155, [which allows the government in Madrid to declare direct rule over Catalonia], was activated to prevent the proclamation of the Catalan Republic.

The machinery of the state launched and perpetrated the greatest attacks in forty years against democratic rights. They imprisoned without bail the leaders of the Catalan

National Assembly, and eight members of the Catalan Parliament (including Vice President Junqueras). President Puigdemont, also threatened with imprisonment, fled and into exile in Belgium.

In the elections held on December 21, the pro-independence parties won a majority in the elections and the response of the government in Madrid to this defeat leaves no room for doubt: increased repression with new judicial processes, and the certainty that they will suspend the inauguration of the Catalan Parliament if it decides to accept Puigdemont's candidacy from exile. Faced with these threats, the response of pro-Independence political leaders is to seek a lifeline that allows them to maintain their positions at the head of the independence movement, even if that means capitulating and renouncing to defend the Catalan republic voted for by more than two million people. ☺

## Twin Cities: After Super Bowl Strike Threat

# Transit Workers Defeat Attacks

Andy Moxley

As we go to press, the MetCouncil (management) is voting whether to ratify the contract adopted by the union. If they choose not to ratify the contract, the union has already filed a 10-day notice and will begin a strike on January 26, a week before the Super Bowl.

## Winning the Battle – The ATU Contract

On Sunday and Monday December 17 and 18, members of Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1005 in the Greater Minneapolis-St. Paul area voted by 82% to accept a new contract. This vote marks an end to the first stage of a saga that opened up over the past period for the union in its fight back against cuts pushed by the Met-Council (management). This has been especially important stage given the need for scaled up public transport at the upcoming Super Bowl 52 in Minneapolis. Rank-and-file activists in the union including Socialist Alternative member and Local 1005 newly elected President Ryan Timlin played key roles in the struggle.

Against a background of a U.S. labor movement facing the brutal threat of right-to-work being imposed on a national scale in the public sector, embodied in the *Janus v. AFSCME* case in front the Supreme Court, ATU 1005 workers took a bold stand. They demonstrated the way to fight attacks: for workers to self-organize and mobilize to take direct and mass action – not to accept concessions and prepare to “hold-on” in their aftermath.

The issues in front of the 1005 workers were not new. They faced a management and a political establishment keen to dismantle the power of the unions in the public sector and to corporatize and eventually privatize public transit services in particular. The Met-Council’s early offers reflected this agenda, pushing unlimited part-time work, refusal to implement measures to prevent workers from violent attacks, inadequate layover time (time in between bus runs that drivers use to go to the bathroom, rest, etc.), poor wage increases, and much more.

The timing was critical. ATU workers had a key opportunity with the upcoming Super Bowl taking place in Minneapolis this year. Due to the thousands of people coming in needing transportation, the Super Bowl could not have functioned without ATU 1005 workers. This was key leverage for the union.

Earlier in the year, union activists, including Socialist Alternative members, began to



December 11, 2017 - ATU 1005 members in a small action in the MetCouncil offices.

organize and build a Contract Action Team of rank-and-file members. They prepared for the possibility of taking strike action during the Super Bowl. The Team went into the garages to mobilize and discuss with other workers the issues and the need to fight.

This mobilization had a big impact. The first concessionary contract offer was dealt a resounding defeat by the workers, with 93% voting “no” at a mass meeting and giving the go-ahead authorization for a strike! This meeting saw a doubling in the number of workers attending the vote as compared to the previous contract, a clear indication that consciousness and militancy had begun to grow. Building from this, workers took action, including a one-day action where drivers did not sign up for voluntary overtime (which management has relied on) and packed two different MetCouncil meetings. The second of these meetings was shut down by workers and allies for over an hour. Along with this, the ATU built solidarity with other unions including the NFL Player’s Association and moved towards a Solidarity Committee of community members and workers’ families.

This strong mobilization for a strike in fact is what avoided a strike. The establishment made their intentions clear early on with the NFL starting to map out a “contingency plan” in case of a strike that would include hiring “replacement workers” (ie scabs) for the transit during the event. But the actions by the workers and the support they were able to muster shook the political establishment to their core. They did not want a showdown with the workers before or during the Super Bowl. In a span of just three days, management, faced with the

power of organized and active workers, was forced to reverse of all of its concessionary demands and the union made a number of further gains on important issues.

## Winning the War – Rebuilding a Fighting Labor Movement

The victory against the concessionary contract and the fightback of the ATU 1005 workers is an important first step. Cuts and attacks on transit workers are not vanquished forever, ATU workers must build on this victory for the future.

The class-struggle strategy adopted by ATU in the recent period made the victory over the concessionary contract possible - relying on our own strength, not fickle allies like corporate politicians and management. As socialists, we believe we need to not only do this in the workplace but in the political realm as well.

Labor, social movements, and working people in general need our own political representatives that are democratically accountable to us, not the interests of corporations and the elite. We need candidates that will be pro-worker, take only to the wage of people they represent and fight for real change like taxing the rich to fully fund transit at the local, state and national level. Ultimately, unions like ATU, along with other forces, need to move toward building our own party that will mobilize in the streets, communities, and workplaces as well as at the ballot box for every possible reform today as well a fundamental transformation of society along democratic socialist lines. ✪

## Solidarity with Iranian Transport Workers

On January 5, independent trade unions in Iran issued a statement in support of the mass protests against austerity and dictatorship that began at the end of last year. The statement was issued in the name of the Tehran Public Transport Workers Union and the Haft Tapeh Agro-industry Workers Union in Khuzestan province. Both unions have been involved in recent struggles and have suffered repression. Reza Shahabi, a leader of the Tehran bus workers, has been a target for persecution since 2010, served a 6 year jail term and now has been imprisoned again since August, last year. Read the full appeal at [SocialistWorld.net](http://SocialistWorld.net).

Dear fellow transit workers in Iran,

When I saw the appeal by the Tehran Public Transport Workers Union on [SocialistWorld.net](http://SocialistWorld.net), I was deeply moved as a socialist and union activist. The working conditions you describe - poverty level wages, the spread of privatisation, subcontracting, and attacks on job security - although on a more extreme scale, are the same issues bus drivers in the Twin Cities in the U.S. are facing. Thankfully we are not facing the type of vicious repression of trade union activists that you describe – yet.

Workers and socialists in the U.S. whose government in the past has supported vicious dictatorships like the Shah and which still seeks to dominate the peoples of the Middle East, have a special responsibility to stand in solidarity with the struggle of the Iranian workers against dictatorship, austerity, and repression of democratic rights. We also oppose any attempt at intervention by the Trump regime or any other imperialist government, who serve the profits of corporations, not the needs of working people.

As workers, we can only rely on our own power. Your struggle to build an independent trade union in the midst of a brutal regime is a model of courage. I fully support your effort to build an independent trade union and offer solidarity from Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The struggle of the independent unions is a powerful base for the building of a mass movement of workers and the poor in Iran to not only topple the dictatorship but also overturn capitalism and build a socialist society. It is a brave example for the working class to follow around the world. I look forward to reports on future developments. Solidarity forever!

**Ryan Timlin,**

President, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005, Minnesota, USA (personal capacity) ✪

# #MeToo Takes to the Streets

continued from p. 3

ending their power and control over the lives of tens of millions.

## The Role of Solidarity

Sexual harassment and abuse is an expression of power. An isolated worker, fighting a predator on the job, even one who is not a boss, faces long odds to stopping the abuse and getting justice. As Bonnie Castillo, a leader of National Nurses United (NNU) writes:

“The legal avenue is usually a dead end for a nurse in a non-union setting. Without the protection of a union the nurse is identified as disloyal and a troublemaker. Outside the circle of light cast by #MeToo in the entertainment industry and the political arena, sexual harassment will likely continue in the non-union workplace. There will be no #MeToo for non-union nurses who must face harassment alone in their workplaces.”

Fundamentally, overcoming the deeply entrenched sexism that keeps victims isolated and powerless will take the collective action of a united workforce up to and including strike action particularly in toxic environments where management refuses to act despite the issues being forcefully brought to their attention. A workforce where harassment is tolerated will be divided and weakened. A workforce where men and women workers stand in solidarity with all who have faced harassment will be far more united and capable of fighting on all other fronts.

NNU has written powerfully about the critical role of unions in the fight against workplace sexual harassment. The union for hotel workers, UNITE-HERE won important victories in Chicago and Seattle by requiring hotel management to provide housekeeping workers with panic buttons. The union movement as a whole has the potential to take a lead in the #MeToo fight and galvanize millions of working-class women, whether or not they're in unions. Unions could be calling mass meetings and offering help as organizing centers for a movement against employers who are complicit in

workplace sexual harassment.

In contrast to the NNU argument that the way forward for working-class women is through collective workplace action, there are many prominent women in business, government, journalism, and other institutions who are telling us we just need more women at the top.

Capitalism is a system that only obeys the logic of profit. When the choice is between rooting out sexual harassment at every level of an organization, no matter the cost to shareholders, and sweeping the problem under the rug we cannot trust any corporation to do the right thing, regardless of who the CEO is. Whether it's Christy Walton who is a key decision maker at Walmart or Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer who prohibited working from home, it's clear that having women in positions of power is no guarantee of improvements for working women.

## #MeToo and 2018 Elections

Given the openly anti-woman record of the Republican Party, the party of accused sexual predators Trump and Roy Moore, the Democrats are positioning themselves to funnel energy to fight sexual harassment into the 2018 mid-term elections.

The Democrats' real record on sexual harassment is worthy of examination. They have protected many politicians with a long history of alleged and proven sexual misconduct, Bill Clinton being only the most famous. More importantly, what is the Democratic Party strategy for addressing workplace sexual harassment for janitors, hotel housekeepers, restaurant servers – all occupations in which women of color and immigrants are disproportionately represented – as well as millions of other working women?

Electing Democrats and electing women Democrats has been no guarantee of action on improving conditions for victims in the past. On housing, health care, jobs, racist policing, and

any number of other issues, the Democratic Party establishment has been an obstacle to the major changes that are needed to improve life for working-class people.

Oprah Winfrey's stirring speech on sexual assault and harassment at the Golden Globe Awards was positive in its promotion of the #MeToo banner and many are now hoping that she runs for president. However, while Oprah is right to praise women telling their stories, she has nothing to say about collective action or building a mass movement. This is very much in line with the establishment of the Democratic Party and it is clear that, as a billionaire, she is no critic of capitalism.

## Socialist Feminism

The primary strategy of capitalism to maintain the rule of a tiny few over billions of workers worldwide is to divide workers from one another along the lines of race, national origin, religion, and gender. Socialist feminism recognizes that the oppression of women is part of the system of capitalism itself, and not simply caused by bad laws, outdated attitudes, or even men themselves. Socialist feminists fight for reforms that make a real difference in the lives of women and to foster solidarity among working-class people. At the same time, we recognize that full liberation for women is only possible on the basis of a socialist transformation of society that eliminates all forms of oppression. ✪



Socialist Alternative at the 2018 Women's March in Columbus, OH.

# Save DACA

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U.S. history.

Even before the shutdown happened, Chuck Schumer, was prepared to give almost anything in exchange for letting Dreamers stay. In fact, in a desperate attempt to avoid the shutdown, Schumer disgracefully offered Trump full funding for the border wall! This process has been a textbook case of how the Democratic leadership, faced with Republican intransigence, just keeps shifting their position in the wrong direction.

## The Coming Weeks Are Crucial

Immigrant rights organizations are rightly furious. Progressive Democrats, like Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, who voted not to end the shutdown should be challenged as to whether they are prepared to take the next steps necessary to win this fight: to launch an immediate call for mass protests alongside immigrant organizations, the labor movement and other forces. This would put immense pressure on the Republicans, as 69% of Republicans support keeping DACA, and would make it harder for the Democratic leadership to cave, yet again, in February. All progressive organizations, including labor unions, should help build for and participate in these demonstrations.

Winning this fight can put the Republicans firmly on the defensive after their recent victory on the tax bill, a massive redistribution of wealth to corporations and the super-rich. It would raise the sights of the immigrant population and reignite the fight to win citizenship rights for all undocumented workers. This in turn must be part of building a broader movement as well as a new mass party of the left to fight for the kind of change working people need. ✪

## Attacks on Immigrants Ramping Up

While Trump's "shithole countries" comment confirms Trump's blatant racism, the establishment media's obsession with Trump's outrageous statements can lead to ignoring the reactionary deeds of this administration. In recent months, Trump has ended the Temporary Protected Status of 60,000 Haitian and 200,000 Salvadoran immigrants. Both of these are poverty-stricken countries, weakened over time by environmental catastrophe and exploitation at the hands of the U.S. Salvadoran immigrants in the U.S., for example, send \$4.5 billion home per year, the country's single biggest source of income and 17% of its economy.

ICE is also ramping up workplace raids around the country on a larger scale than at any time in the past decade. On one morning in early January, ICE raided 98 7-Eleven stores across the country, demanding immigration paperwork from employers and arresting 21 undocumented workers. Derek Benner, head of ICE's Homeland Security Investigations, told reporters that the raids were "a harbinger of what's to come. ... This is what we're gearing up for this year, and what you're going to see more and more of is these large-scale compliance inspections, just for starters" (NBC, 1/10/18). The 7-Eleven raids and Benner's chilling warning point to the absolute necessity to begin organizing a stronger resistance, beyond the cynical dealmaking of the Democratic establishment. ✪

## SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE In Your Area

Socialist Alternative Editor Tom Crean  
Editorial Board George Brown, Eljeer Hawkins, Stephan Kimmerle, Joshua Koritz, Keely Mullen, Calvin Priest, Tony Wilsdon ✉ Editors@SocialistAlternative.org

### NATIONAL

1027 Grand St,  
Studio B2  
Brooklyn, NY 11211  
info@SocialistAlternative.org  
facebook.com/SocialistAlternativeUSA  
Twitter: @SocialistAlt

### NEW ENGLAND

BOSTON, MA  
(910) 639-3948  
WORCESTER, MA  
(617) 285-9346

PORTLAND, ME contact our national office

### MID-ATLANTIC

NEW YORK CITY  
(347) 749-1236  
PHILADELPHIA, PA  
(267) 368-4564  
PITTSBURGH, PA  
(615) 310-5555  
NEW JERSEY, WASHINGTON, DC, and RICHMOND, VA contact our national office

### SOUTHEAST

NASHVILLE, TN  
(931) 220-0427

CHARLOTTE, NC, and LOUISVILLE, KY contact our national office

### MIDWEST

CHICAGO, IL  
(773) 771-4617  
CINCINNATI, OH  
Cincinnati@SocialistAlternative.org  
MADISON, WI  
(608) 620-3901  
MINNEAPOLIS, MN  
(443) 834-2870  
ST. LOUIS, MO  
(952) 270-7676

COLUMBUS, OH, GRAND RAPIDS, MI, MILWAUKEE, WI, and TOPEKA, KS contact our national office

### SOUTHWEST

AUSTIN, TX  
(440) 339-9793  
HOUSTON, TX  
(281) 635-5286  
NW ARKANSAS  
ArkansasSA@gmail.com

For DALLAS, TX, DENVER, CO, FORT COLLINS, CO, HOUSTON, TX, OKLAHOMA CITY, OK, PHOENIX, AZ, and SALT LAKE CITY, UT contact our national office

### PACIFIC

BELLINGHAM, WA  
(360) 510-7797  
LOS ANGELES, CA  
socialistalternative.la@gmail.com  
OLYMPIA, WA  
(360) 250-0943  
PORTLAND, OR  
(503) 284-6036

OAKLAND / SAN FRANCISCO, CA  
(510) 220-3047

SEATTLE, WA  
(612) 760-1980  
TACOMA, WA  
(253) 355-4211

For HAWAII, LOS ANGELES, CA, SAN DIEGO, CA and YAKIMA, WA contact our national office

### INTERNATIONAL (CWI)

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CANADA  
(604) 738-1653  
contact@socialistalternative.ca  
www.socialistalternative.ca  
QUÉBEC  
info@AlternativeSocialiste.org  
www.AlternativeSocialiste.org

# SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE



## MOBILIZE NOW TO SAVE DACA DEMOCRATS CAVE ON SHUTDOWN

Elan Axelbank

The government shutdown which began on January 20 ended with a wave of fury from immigrant rights groups and progressives. The Democrats had taken their most radical action yet in the fight against Trump's bigoted agenda, vowing to not pass a budget without protection for 800,000 DACA recipients, sometimes referred to as Dreamers. These Dreamers came to the U.S. as children and are now threatened with loss of jobs, loss of health care and deportation because of Trump's decision to end the DACA program, set to take effect on March 5.

But less than 72 hours after shutting down the government, with nothing more to show than a "promise" from Republicans to address DACA in a few weeks, the majority of Democratic Senators caved, shamefully surrendering the cause of the Dreamers. Eighteen voted against the resolution to fund the government including all those who appear to be considering presidential runs in 2020. The divisions in the Democratic Party have now come fully to the surface due to the massive pressure from the base to take a stand against Trump.

The key question facing the movement now is how to force the racist Republicans and the Democrats who caved to protect the Dreamers before DACA expires. And to be clear, the Democrats still have leverage because the bill that ended the shutdown only funds the government for three weeks until February 8.

But we must learn the lessons of previous struggles: We cannot rely on the Democratic Party to fight for immigrants and working-class

people generally. Instead, we must mobilize immigrants and U.S.-born working and young people alike in the streets and in our neighborhoods, workplaces, and campuses, to demand a DREAM Act with no strings attached!

### No Spine

The Republicans can in no way be trusted. Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell's claim that it is his "intention" to address the status of the Dreamers sometime in February is hardly a promise, and, even if it was, what's the merit of a resistance strategy predicated on the notion of trusting the very people we're resisting? The Republicans, especially in the House of Representatives, will load down any new DACA bill with as many anti-immigrant measures as they can. The real goal of the right-wing of the Republican Party, is to turn a DACA bill into a general anti-immigrant bill.

If the Democrats were a party actually representing immigrants and ordinary people, they would be using the next three weeks to mobilize the millions of Americans who support DACA into the streets to back up their fight in the halls of power. But the Democrats are not that party. The Democrats are the party that couldn't even manage to pass the DREAM Act when they controlled both Houses of Congress between 2008 and 2010, which is why Obama had to enact DACA by executive order. The Democrats are the party that, under Barack Obama, deported more immigrants than under any other president in

### Against Our Common Enemy

Why should U.S.-born workers care to defend their immigrant neighbors and co-workers against ICE and the Trump deportation machine, and join the fight for citizenship rights for all immigrants?

ICE Director Thomas Homan recently proclaimed, "ICE will continue its efforts to protect jobs for American workers by eliminating unfair competitive advantages for companies that exploit illegal immigration" (NBC, 1/10/18). This is pure demagoguery but is the exact argument made by the anti-immigrant right.

As Kshama Sawant Seattle City Councilmember and Socialist Alternative member stated last May Day:

"Millions of refugees and other immigrants who have fled to the U.S. would prefer not to have left their home countries. They are not just refugees of war, but also of economic devastation inflicted by capitalism's drive to make working people, the poor and youth pay for a crisis that this system created. Budget-cutting austerity programs have gutted social services and privatized former public institutions, while the "recovery" from the global economic crisis has been shallow and mainly benefited the super-wealthy around the world. These are the

conditions which lead people to flee their homes, and the U.S. billionaire class is all too often responsible for the policies leading to that devastation.

"Unlike Trump, many of his big business friends are in favor of immigration as long as they can hold down immigrants as second-class citizens who face the constant threat of deportation. Marginalizing sections of the workforce helps big business to drive down wages for everyone. This situation also helps them carry out a 'divide and rule' policy because it can lead to some workers born in the U.S. feeling resentful and fearful of lower wages and unemployment.

"We need to understand though that this is a situation created by the billionaires and politicians, not the immigrant workers. If all workers living in the U.S. were granted full legal and citizenship rights, then it would make it harder for employers to use fear to drive down wages and benefits. With the threat of deportation lifted, all workers would be stronger together in demanding better jobs, social services, and democratic rights." ✪



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