

## Stop climate disaster

### *Mass protests critical to victory!*



Greg Wood / AAP

By DANIEL ADAM

The People's Climate March, scheduled for Sept. 21 in New York City, is poised to live up to its promise of mobilizing the largest number of people that the U.S. has ever seen against the mass production of greenhouse gases. With more than 1000 endorsing organizations, buses scheduled to leave from more than 200 locations, alongside chartered trains (including three leaving from Connecticut and one from San Francisco), over 200,000 Facebook invites, and countless meetings and events around the country, the march will create major advances for the climate movement.

By marching, participants will affirm for all to see that, at root, climate change is not a matter of isolated individual consumer decisions but of institutional forces that refuse to respond to the will of the majority. They will show that climate activists can go beyond lo-

cal organizing on dispersed projects and can come together to articulate their vision.

The absence of mass demonstrations for many years kept the movement from forging a visible political expression—until the marches against the Keystone XL pipeline in 2012 and 2013. This had allowed climate change to appear like a fringe issue of the relatively well-to-do, or simply something beyond the scope of human intervention. September will mark an advance from the fringes to the mainstream, and from paralysis to action.

In particular, the participation of more than 30 unions presents a groundbreaking opening for labor and the climate movement. Endorsers include the Communication Workers of America, the Amalgamated Transit Union, 32BJ, the United Federation of Teachers, Transport Workers Union 100, US Labor Against the War, and other formations including machinists, electrical

workers, farm workers, and a variety of food and service workers.

The participation of unions is a crucial question, given their members' social position and ability to shift social production from a greenhouse-dependent one to a renewable, even waste-free, one. Such potential was raised at one presentation for a union meeting organized by the Connecticut Roundtable on Climate and Jobs, where participants showed impatience to go beyond discussing the evidence of climate change to working out the steps needed to end it. "We can build anything; what do you want us to build?" one worker asked.

To be sure, the union movement is still largely divided over climate questions. For instance, Pennsylvania mineworker unions have recently organized against milquetoast attempts to reduce coal-plant emissions, in an attempt to preserve their jobs. This strategy of aligning with the bosses to protect job security will only be successfully challenged

(Above) Australians march in 2011. World-coordinated action is essential.

as the movement grows powerful enough to realistically demand a secure livelihood and employment for workers affected by the transition to renewables and as the movement becomes capable of struggling independently of the boss class.

Still, September's march will mean a considerable step forward for efforts inside the labor movement to bring climate change to the fore. It will also make considerable progress in awakening climate activists outside the labor movement to the importance of allying with organized workers.

A glaring limitation of Sept. 21 is the absence of any united demand whatsoever, or even a rally with speakers. The absence of any specific political message springs from the march organizers' continued political dependence

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# A timely new pamphlet on the Ukrainian crisis

As we go to press, insurgents in eastern Ukraine have mounted a counter-offensive that has forced Kiev forces to retreat from territory that they had previously captured. The Kiev government, along with U.S. and NATO officials, have charged Russia with sending some 1600 soldiers and armored vehicles across the border to fight alongside rebel troops.

The Kiev regime is asking for increased arms from the Western imperialist powers to repel the alleged Russian invasion. Obama has responded by boosting deliveries of "non-lethal" military equipment—with more to come. This month, 400 U.S. troops will participate in war games in Ukraine, while some 4000 "combat-ready" U.S. and NATO troops are to be stationed in Eastern European countries bordering Russia.

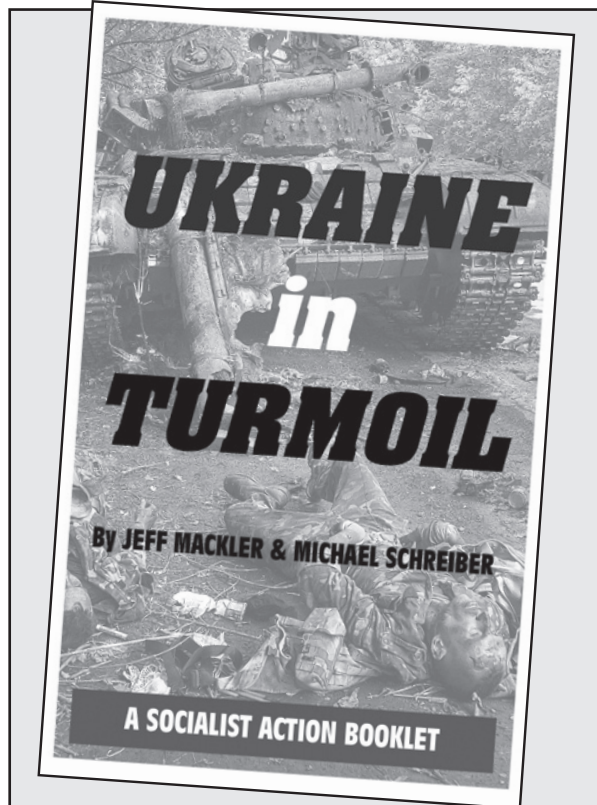
In urging Western military aid, Ukraine's defense minister, Valeriy Gelety, declared: "A great war has arrived on our doorstep, the likes of which Europe has not seen since World War II." The fighting could yield "tens of thousands of deaths," he warned.

Already, there have been over 2000 deaths in the fighting, and some 40 percent of them have been civilians. Gelety failed to mention, however, that a major source of the casualties is the Kiev government's airstrikes and shelling of large population centers.

In the meantime, Russian leader Vladimir Putin is pushing a new "peace plan." The response from within the Kiev regime has been mixed, with Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk bombastically declaring that the plan would "destroy Ukraine and bring back the Soviet Union."

What are the causes and background of the war in Ukraine's East? Perspective on the crisis is provided by a timely new pamphlet, "Ukraine in Turmoil." The pamphlet includes five articles by *Socialist Action* Editor Michael Schreiber and *Socialist Action* National Secretary Jeff Mackler that analyze the tumultuous events in Ukraine from February to August 2014.

What began in February 2014 as critical debate in Ukrainian society over whether to accept an austerity-laden "Association Agreement" with the European Union (EU) or a less onerous trade agreement with



Russia rapidly devolved into a U.S.-backed fascist-led military coup. Ukraine's elected President Viktor Yanukovich was driven from office on Feb. 24, when armed militias of the fascist Svoboda Party and the Right Sector stormed the Ukrainian Rada (parliament) and established a new government that included five neo-Nazi cabinet ministers.

Included in the pamphlet is material revealing that the U.S. and European Union policies during this period were in significant part aimed at integrating Ukraine into the political, economic, and military framework of the imperialist West. This was projected in order to secure control over Ukraine's vast shale gas reserves—the fourth largest in the world—and to

eliminate or minimize Europe's current and heavy dependence on Russia for fossil fuel resources.

The articles assess the overwhelming vote of the Crimean population to join Russia, the subsequent Russian annexation, and the resulting imposition of sanctions by the U.S. and EU as punishment.

While the Western imperialist powers undoubtedly lent their support to the neo-Nazi-led coup and the right-wing government that emerged, their objective was less to give political credence to these forces than it was to eliminate or minimize the longstanding Russian influence in that country, while furthering EU and U.S. military/political objectives aimed at weakening and economically penetrating the Russian state and its flagging capitalist economy.

The negative reaction to the right-wing coup by Ukraine's largely Russian-speaking population in eastern and southern Ukraine is similarly assessed, including the armed mobilization in a number of Ukrainian towns and cities by indigenous Russian-speaking forces who rejected the EU/U.S. austerity measures, the anti-Russian chauvinist policies of the coup government, and later, the massive bombing of eastern Ukraine cities.

This military assault on the eastern Ukraine is led by the refurbished and U.S.-backed Ukrainian armed forces, which includes independently acting fascist militias and "U.S. advisors" and/or military forces of the privatized U.S. Blackwater type.

The authors focus on exposing the reactionary role of U.S. and EU imperialism, today the major players in Ukraine. Once again, these powers have demonstrated, as in the Middle East, that they do not shrink from political and military alliances with the most reactionary forces in order to advance their financial and military interests. *Socialist Action* opposes all U.S. and EU imperialist intervention in Ukraine and champions the right of the Ukrainian people to self-determination.

"Ukraine in Turmoil" can be ordered from *Socialist Action* Books, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610. The price is \$3 per copy, plus \$1 for shipping. ■

## Socialist Action: Where we stand

*Socialist Action* is a national organization of activists committed to the emancipation of workers and the oppressed. We strive to revitalize the antiwar, environmental, labor, anti-racist, feminist, student, and other social movements with a mass-action perspective. In the process we hope to bring activists together from different backgrounds into a revolutionary workers' party that can successfully challenge the wealthy elite—whose profit-driven system is driving down living standards and threatens all life on this planet.

Our ultimate goal is a truly democratic, environmentally sustainable, and egalitarian society organized to satisfy human needs rather than corporate greed. We invite you to join us in the struggle to make the world a better place!

We are active partisans of the working class and believe in the need for independent working-class politics—not alliances with the bosses' parties. That is why we call for workers in the U.S. to break from the Democratic and Republican parties to build a Labor Party based on the trade unions.

We support the struggles of those who are specially oppressed under capitalism—women,

queers, national minorities, etc. We support the right of self-determination for oppressed nationalities, including Blacks, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans. We are internationalists, and hold that workers of one country have more in common with workers of another than with their own nation's capitalist class. We seek to link struggles across national boundaries, and to build an international revolutionary movement that will facilitate the sharing of experiences and political lessons. That is why we maintain fraternal relations with the Fourth International

Recognizing the divisions that exist on the left and within the workers' movement, we seek to form united front type organizations around specific issues where various groups have agreement. In this way we seek to maximize our impact and demonstrate the power and effectiveness of mass action.

*Socialist Action* believes that the capitalist state and its institutions are instruments of the ruling class, and that therefore they cannot be used as tools of the working class but have to be smashed. That is why we fight for revolution, instead of seeking to merely reform or work within the system. When we fight for specific reforms, we do so with the understanding that in the final analysis real social change can only come about with the overthrow of capitalism, the establishment of a workers' government, and the fight for socialism.

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# Fracking must be banned! For 100% renewable energy!

By CARL SACK

Despite the imminent perils of global warming and global ecosystem collapse, capitalism has accelerated the assault on Earth's environment. Faced with the need to grow or die, the global capitalist economy requires ever more non-renewable natural resources and fossil fuels, whatever the environmental cost. Serving their corporate overlords, government regulators pay lip service to environmental protection while they rubber-stamp pollution. It is only when affected communities build determined, militant resistance movements that extraction projects can be halted.

Hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, is a terrifying example of how fossil fuel company profits take precedence over people's health. The process of fracking involves drilling a well up to thousands of feet deep into layers of shale bedrock, then drilling sideways for several hundred more feet. Explosives are then used to fracture the bedrock, exposing the oil or gas within. A simple graphical explanation can be found at [www.dangersoffracking.com](http://www.dangersoffracking.com).

To get the gas out, a toxic slurry of water, deadly chemicals, and sand are pumped into the well under high pressure. Only the fracking companies know fully what chemicals are being used, as state and federal laws allow that information to be labeled "trade secrets" and not disclosed to the public. Some of the chemicals found in fracking waste include mercury, uranium, formaldehyde, and hydrochloric acid. Only 30-50% of fracking fluid used is recovered from the ground; the rest leaks into deep aquifers and the water table. It is not biodegradable and the water in it can never again be cleaned to drinkable quality.

Instead of receiving treatment, contaminated wastewater from gas wells in Pennsylvania is injected into deep wells in northeast Ohio, causing earthquakes. The city of Youngstown, which had never experienced a recorded earthquake before 2011, recorded 109 earthquakes that year, with the strongest measuring 3.9 on the Richter scale. This is to say nothing of the unknown future problems that may be caused by the current "out of sight, out of mind" approach to fracking waste.

Even where there is no fracking, its consequences are reshaping the landscape. Wisconsin has seen an explosion of new sand mines to provide the exceptionally hard sand needed for fracking. In sleepy rural farming communities, frac sand mining is wreaking havoc, with 24-hour noise, dust, and truck traffic. Ultra-fine silica dust drifting from the mine sites may cause silicosis and lung cancer in workers and surrounding residents, but the state has refused to regulate the dust emissions because it claims there haven't been adequate studies on the risks.

The technology for fracking was invented in the 1950s, but has only been in widespread use since 2005. In that year, Congress passed an energy bill with the "Halliburton Loophole," which exempted fracking from most provisions of the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act, and the Superfund law. If these environmental regulations were enforced for fracking, it would be illegal!

There are very real consequences of this for the people who live near fracking sites. Drinking-water wells near fracking sites have an average of 17 times the methane concentration of normal wells. Sometimes there is so much methane in well water that residents can light their taps on fire. To capitalists, though, poisoning the common water supply is more of a benefit than a problem, since people with contaminated tap water must purchase bottled water at thousands of times the price of a well over its lifetime, lining the pockets of water privateers.

Methane also leaks into the air, at an average rate of around 34 grams per second at each gas well, according to a recent Pennsylvania study—which is up to 1000 times higher than the Environmental Protection Agency's estimates. Other studies have shown similar results. Methane is a greenhouse gas 30 times more potent than carbon dioxide over a 100-year



period. When inhaled, symptoms include dizziness, headache, fatigue, nausea, and vomiting. Volatile organic compounds, which also contaminate air around fracking sites, cause damage to liver, kidney, and the nervous system as well as cancer.

It's not just people who are impacted. Livestock around dozens of fracking sites have been sickened or killed by air pollution and drinking from water sources contaminated with fracking waste. Heavy metals and radioactivity released by fracking can bioaccumulate in livestock and be passed on through the food chain to humans.

The industry itself is well aware of its image problem and runs a constant stream of pro-fracking propaganda over airwaves. One company, Talisman Energy, donated coloring books to elementary schools that featured a friendly gas-drilling cartoon dinosaur.

Despite the deadly health and climate consequences of fracking, it is promoted by the Obama administration as part of its "all of the above" energy policy. The president's website brags that "domestic production of natural gas has increased every year since President Obama took office, and is now at an all-time high."

Promoting fracking is also part of U.S. foreign policy. In 2013, the U.S. Energy Information Administration released a detailed assessment of "technically recoverable" shale gas reserves around the world. Vice President Joe Biden promoted fracking in Ukraine as part of his diplomatic visit there in April, working out a partnership with the European Reconstruction and Development Bank to spread the technology there.

The government's enthusiasm for fracking is fed by gas industry campaign contributions to politicians of both major parties. The industry sent federal candidates over \$70 million during the 2012 campaign, including over \$750,000 to the Obama campaign. These political investments have garnered a massive payoff, as federal fossil fuel subsidies have skyrocketed 45% since Obama took office in 2009—to \$21.6 billion in 2013—largely due to the increase in fracking, according to a report by the group Oil Change International. While Obama mouths support for curbing fossil fuel emissions, U.S. taxpayers are paying \$5 billion a year to increase oil and gas exploration and development.

Fortunately, the movement against fracking, and fossil fuels in general, is growing and has already won some small but important victories. The strongest anti-fracking movement is in New York, where Governor Andrew Cuomo has so far had to forego opening the state up to frackers. The moratorium there has lasted six years, in no small part due to hundreds of rallies and street protests around the state, including pickets that follow the Democratic governor at his ritzy campaign fundraisers. The New York Supreme Court ruled in July that town governments can ban fracking in their zoning ordinances, and towns in other states have followed suit.

As ecosocialists, we believe that poisoning our water supply, food supply, and climate to increase the profits of fossil fuel companies is insane. Giving away the taxes paid by working people to frackers so they

(Above) October 2013 protest against fracking near Elsipogtog native reserve, N.B., Canada.

can expand fracking around the world heaps insult upon injury.

Fracking should be banned. We need a 100% renewable energy system now! A transition to 100% clean renewables—distributed and appropriately scaled wind, solar, geothermal, tidal, and hydrological energy sources—would produce millions of much-needed jobs while addressing the deepening climate crisis.

In the long run, though, a sustainable economy with full employment and environmental protection is not possible under the capitalist system. Under capitalism, a reduction in energy use entails a recession or depression accompanied by layoffs and poverty for millions. We need a revolution to rebuild society along socialist lines so that we can democratically plan our energy systems without the need for corporate profit driving us all to ruin. ■

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**(Left) Plastic bottles wash up on a beach. Close to 70% of human trash in the ocean is plastic.**

# Waterways and oceans face catastrophe

By CHRISTINE FRANK

With the burning of fossil fuels, seawater temperatures are rising, giving impetus to fiercer hurricanes with more destructive winds and powerful storm surges. Warmer seas are eroding polar sea ice, allowing for the release of land-based glaciers from Greenland and West Antarctica, causing sea levels to rise.

Gigantic plumes of methane are being released from thawing permafrost on the Siberian Sea's continental shelf, adding to global heating. With more freshwater from melting permafrost and land ice flowing into the sea, the salinity of ocean currents is changing, threatening the shutdown of the global thermohaline circulation that regulates the temperate climate of the Northern Hemisphere.

Coral reefs, which serve as nurseries and habitat for a wide array of marine species, are suffering from heat stress, bleaching, and die-offs. Due to the ocean's absorption of human carbon pollution, seawater acidification is affecting the marine food web by undermining the ability of sea creatures to form shells and skeletons, and also affecting their hearing and navigation.

As seawater temperatures rise, many marine species are migrating toward the poles, dramatically altering feeding patterns and predator-prey relationships in those regions. Due to the changing composition of life in the oceans, jellyfish blooms are becoming problematic in coastal areas and fisheries.

Besides climate change, there are other human interferences in marine ecosystems. Overfishing is depleting the top predators of the oceans, threatening their extinction, and some fisheries have already collapsed due to industrial trawling, which destroys huge numbers of other species with murderous and wasteful by-catch.

The flagrant dumping of radioactive coolant and ground water from the Fukushima triple-reactor meltdowns is irradiating the entire Northern Pacific and all life in it with radioactive isotopes. The impacts on marine organisms can be seen in bizarre tumors and increased vulnerability to disease.

Great thumping garbage patches swim in vast flotillas in the Pacific and Atlantic Gyres. There is even human trash on the seafloor. Sea birds are dying of starvation by mistaking plastic bits for food and have been found with gizzards full of nothing but our junk. Organisms that live in the sea consume plastic bits that break down into ever smaller microscopic particles, enter cells, and become delivery systems for deadly persistent organic pollutants (POPs) such as PCBs and dioxins.

Those dangerous poisons have been carried by wind and waves to the Arctic Circle, where indigenous peoples subsist off of the marine life and are at the top of the food chain. As a result, concentrations of PCBs and dioxins are the highest in the breast milk of First Nation women.

Nutrient overloading from nitrogen fertilizers gives rise to enormous dead zones at the mouths of all major rivers whose watersheds carry run-off from industrial agriculture. Toxic algal blooms from chemical fertilizers and factory-farmed animal manure are a serious threat to coastal marine life and humans and occur regularly.

The threat of deadly oil spills, such as BP's Deepwater Horizon disaster, continually looms. Obama's "all of the above" energy strategy is primarily focused on fossil-fuel extraction and *not* on the development of renewables—far from it. As peak oil approaches, and the world scrambles for what's left of the hydrocarbon reserves, the most extreme forms—tar sands, shale fracking, mountain-top removal of coal, and deepwater offshore drilling—are what they are going after.

Drilling for oil and gas in the Arctic, where icy conditions and rough seas make it impossible to recover a toxic spill, is still in their game plan. Preliminary to exploratory drilling, seismic testing for offshore oil and gas reserves must be conducted. That is already expanding in the Atlantic Ocean, undermining the ability of marine mammals such as whales and dolphins to communicate.

U.S. Navy submarines also send out seismic signals, which cause whales to become disoriented and to fatally beach.

There seems to be no end to capitalism's assault on the seas, and the Global Ocean Commission has issued a warning that the world's oceans are on the verge of collapse unless things are turned around in the next five years. When one considers that 70% of the planet's surface is water, it can be seen that a healthy ocean is absolutely vital to our well being. Humans cannot survive on a planet with a dying ocean, and we must restore this great body of water for the sake of all life on the globe.

Water is a vital resource that belongs to no one, yet is required by every living thing. Human beings need it for drinking, cooking our food, cleansing our bodies, washing our clothes, growing our crops, generating electricity, traveling from place to place, conducting our rituals and playing. In other words, we need it for Life. Yet, the planet's supply of pure freshwater is dwindling overall because of pollution and waste.

With climate change, there have been profound changes in Earth's hydrological cycle. Increased temperatures mean increased seawater evaporation and more water vapor circulating in the atmosphere. Wet places are becoming wetter, often affected by torrential downpours and destructive flooding or violent blizzards with heavy snowfalls.

The subtropic regions of the planet, which contain most of the world's deserts, are expanding poleward. Arid places are becoming dryer, resulting in prolonged, withering droughts. Mountainous areas are experiencing depleted snowpacks and faster spring melts that gush rather than pulse through the warm season, making for much dryer summers.

Rapidly shrinking alpine glaciers, especially in the equatorial regions, are leading to water shortages in the Global South.

Industrial agriculture is the largest user of freshwater. To irrigate thirsty crops, water is diverted from major rivers in one region to satisfy the needs of another so that they run as mere trickles into the sea, leaving delta wildlife to languish. Aquifers are being over-pumped way beyond their rates of recharge. Ground and surface water depletion is being exacerbated by droughts, increasing the withdrawals that go ever deeper not only for food production but to supply densely populated urban centers.

It is especially distressing when water is wasted at one end of the country on silly lawns, golf courses, and swimming pools while tap water has been cut off to Detroit's working-class poor, who have lost their good paying industrial jobs, despite generous government bailouts for the automakers, to offshoring and globalization.

There are other ways in which people are denied access to the commons. With scarcity, comes hoarding and profiteering by greedy interests. Huge corporations have taken over municipal water treatment facilities, jacking up the price on this basic resource. In collusion with the IMF and the World Bank, giant transnationals are forcing privatization schemes upon the poor nations of the Southern Hemisphere, robbing indigenous peoples, peasants, and workers of their natural entitlements to pure freshwater.

Nestles, Coke, and other outfits are siphoning off natural springs and municipal sources and bottling the resource. Bottled water is an enormous rip-off. The plastic containers are made of petroleum, better left in the ground, and contain toxic chemicals. When not recycled, they are landfilled and leach endocrine disrupting compounds (EDCs) into groundwater and our bodies as well when we drink from them.

The other matter in regard to freshwater is whether it is actually fit to drink. Despite passage of the Clean Water Act, a regulatory tool riddled with loopholes, our waterways continue to be fouled not only by industrial chemicals but by concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) and agribusiness chemicals. The overloading of agricultural phosphates along with poorly treated human sewage, combined with heavy rains and warm temperatures, are the cause of the recent algae bloom in Lake Erie that threatened Toledo's residents with toxic microcystis if they drank municipal water. Toxic algal outbreaks have been a chronic problem on the Great Lakes for some time. With climate change, water-borne diseases are on the rise in general.

Ninety percent of the some 80,000 chemicals on the market come from petroleum-based feedstocks. The human chemical body load of an adult can be as high as 250 compounds, with concentrations even higher in our children. Pesticides and herbicides are in ground and surface water everywhere, combining in synergistic ways with other chemicals.

Pharmaceuticals and birth-control hormones are released into our water courses through urination and because water treatment facilities cannot filter everything out. Endocrine mimics are feminizing male fish, amphibians, and reptiles who swim in the waters. In addition, treatment facilities add unnecessary chemicals to drinking water, such as chlorine and fluoride, that don't belong in our systems and cause harm. Because of widespread chemical pollution, cancers and chronic illnesses are epidemic.

The other major sources of water pollution are the extraction of fossil fuels, metals, and minerals. The mountain-top removal of coal destroys not only the mountains and forests, but the hollows and streams, which are filled with toxic overburden. The numerous compounds in the water/chemical/sand mixture used for fracking shale gas and oil are another source of lethal substances. Plus, the water is reused as much as a dozen times, and becomes increasingly more radioactive before stored in poorly lined ponds or pumped into injection wells from where it migrates into groundwater.

Uranium mining on Navajo lands has made their water undrinkable. Then there are the oil spills from pipelines that run over and under waterways, which is why TransCanada's Keystone XL must be prevented from crossing over the Ogallala Aquifer. The Great Plains cannot afford another spill of the scale in the Kalamazoo watershed.

Mining ores creates millions of tons of overburden. The huge slurry pits from tar sands, coal, and metal mining leach huge amounts of poisons into the water. The catastrophic breach in the Mount Polley gold mine tailings impoundment, which is leaking into British Columbia's streams, is a nightmarish example

*(continued on page 10)*

# We need a plan to forestall climate disaster

By BILL ONASCH

To stop climate change short of climate disaster, the United States—which has been the world’s largest polluter for many years—has to lead the way to restructure our global economy to rapidly reduce, and ultimately eliminate, use of fossil and nuclear fuels. That’s a giant task—but even more will be required to create a sustainable environment that can be passed on to future generations.

We also must reverse destructive urban sprawl, rebuilding and repopulating our depleted urban cores while restoring the forests, wetlands, and farmland that once surrounded, protected, and nourished our cities.

We have to as well start shifting from chemical and genetic modification to organic farming methods to stop the many forms of pollution of our soil, water, and air—as well as creation of “super-bugs” threatening not only crops and livestock but even human health.

And we will have to make some adjustments in the wastefulness of what we consume.

We have the science and technology at our disposal to do all of these things. And the ruling rich can spare some of the enormous wealth they have accumulated through environmental/climate destruction to underwrite the costs. We can accomplish all this while creating truly full employment, maintaining a quality life style in this country, and also introducing dramatic improvement in the lives of billions currently living in poverty around the world.

But for this satisfactory outcome in the greatest challenge humanity has yet faced, we above all need a plan. Individuals can and should support this effort through changes in life style, but such modest options available to us will amount to little more than the proverbial drop in the acidifying ocean.

The class that runs our economy and dominates government is deeply vested in a highly profitable fossil/nuke dependency. Measures such as discredited cap-and-trade schemes—now belatedly proposed on a small scale by the Obama administration—promising to modify this corporate behavior in the capitalist market economy, will get us nowhere fast.

Even the bipartisan Establishment run by the One Percent, which has been slashing “Big Government,” recognizes the inherent superiority of centralized planning and has embraced it, in a distorted way, during times of emergency.

When this country was taken into the Second World War—fought on six continents and all oceans—the White House and War Department did not patiently wait for the Free Market economy to somehow pro-



(Above) Protesters demand more action at UN climate conference in Durban in 2011.

duce the vast quantities of ships, planes, and tanks urgently needed. Big Government essentially took control of the entire economy and ran it according to a master plan. It proved to be the most successful economic mobilization in history—and in the process finally succeeded, where the markets had failed, in bringing an end to the Great Depression that had festered for more than a decade.

We, of course, don’t want more war. Nor do we want to lavishly compensate Big Business for following our plan, as was done with the war profiteers during World War II. But we certainly face an emergency even greater than in 1941, and we can learn much from the planning method, and the spirit of cooperation that motivated the entire nation then.

Socialist Action calls for the creation of an Emergency Climate Action Public Sector to begin with nationalization of key components of the economy such as Finance, Energy, Transportation, and Auto. This sector would democratically implement a plan determined by scientists, environmentalists, and workers in the workplace. Top priority would be given to replacing fossil and nuclear fuel usage with clean renewable sources such as solar and wind.

Another crucial element to the plan is commitment to the principle of Just Transition. That is: whenever jobs are eliminated for the benefit of society as a whole, society has the obligation to maintain displaced work-

ers’ living standards while they are retrained or relocated for suitable new jobs. Many present jobs will unavoidably be lost. But the needs for restructuring a sustainable economy will produce full employment for generations to come.

Of course, the new Climate Action Public Sector we envision would continue existing union contracts and would not oppose new union organizing.

In short, those of us proudly accepting the label of “eco-socialists” believe the goals of climate and class justice are inseparable. We can’t win one without the other. The only force in society with both the material interest and social and economic clout to take on the climate and economic wreckers ruling society today is the working-class majority. A revitalized workers’ movement, reclaiming our class identity, working with allies in the inspiring new climate action movement, can get the job done.

That’s the message we need to spread in the workplace, on campus, in our communities—and in the coming struggles for political power. ■

*Bill Onasch is a retired bus driver and former vice president of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1287 in Kansas City.*

## ... Mass action

(continued from page 1)

upon ruling capitalist forces, particularly the Democratic Party.

While 350.org’s Bill McKibben has singled out the fossil fuel industry for demonization, he has treated the rest of big business as generally innocent, and looks to Obama as an ally who needs encouragement and support, rather than chief executive of the capitalist state tasked with maintaining the profitability and power of the fossil fuel industry, the banks, and every other sector tied to the destruction of Earth.

The Sierra Club’s Michael Brune speaks even more highly of Obama and the Democrats. Indeed, their last major march against the Keystone XL pipeline referenced Obama’s campaign slogan with its title, “Forward on Climate.”

The labor unions and other organizations involved are also committed to supporting the Democratic Party, and it is clear that any specific demand that would be acceptable to anyone in the movement would be embarrassing to these “allies” in Washington.

As pointed out by left commentators Chris Hedges and Anne Petermann, the absence of concrete demands has opened the door for even corporate fronts like Climate Group (whose backers include BP and China Mobile) to advertise the demonstration on their website (although this support has not translated into a formal endorsement).

When a demonstration has clear po-

litical demands, such support from opponents only exposes their own contradictions. But without a clear political objective, such support threatens to become the message itself.

Hedges, however, poses an entirely inadequate solution to this problem. To begin with, he poses no demands either. He simply supports plans for direct action following the main march and quotes Kevin Zeese’s call to disrupt the UN meeting itself.

Zeese characterizes the main march as merely symbolic, but how can a few arrests in central Manhattan be anything more than symbolic? Even the activists who recently stalled a train full of coal and oil in Seattle by blocking the tracks did not slow the emissions of greenhouse gas one iota.

For direct action to have an effect beyond symbolism, it has to appeal to broad layers of society and involve large numbers of people (particularly those working at the point of production) in sustained struggle, whose aim is not the arrest of the participants but actual material victories, up to and including the seizure of mass production by those who make it run.

This will require mass organizations of working and oppressed people and a leading layer capable of directing the struggle independently of the capitalist class. A small number of people getting arrested for a cause with no discernible material effect can symbolize militancy, but it can also symbolize political isolation and desperation, or even the attempt to substitute for the struggle of the many



with the actions of a few.

A demonstration of hundreds of thousands symbolizes the will of the majority in society and reveals those in charge of everything to be the utter minority. A demonstration that includes a substantial showing from organized labor symbolizes the potential that working people have to shut down production and reorganize society.

A demonstration that draws in significant layers of new people from many different walks of life symbolizes our collective potential to radically reshape society, and thus the relevance and practicality of an uncompromising and sweeping vision, and the demands to articulate it.

It is not possible to conjure a revolutionary uprising at will. As in Tunisia, Egypt, Wisconsin, and Ferguson, such explosions often take the world by surprise—even when the initial actions have

been planned. What can be consciously developed are democratic practices that allow a layer of today’s activists to learn how to advance a struggle independently of the capitalist class and build organizations that can realize their goals. The climate march creates more space for this perspective, not less.

Radicals must use the opportunity posed by the march to connect with the many layers, old and new, who are joining the protest. Where possible, they should advocate large democratic meetings to follow, where the base of the movement can get together to work out demands and a struggle that is independent from big business, its institutions, and its parties.

The demands for 100% renewable energy and a just transition for hydrocarbon workers might well become crucial demands in advancing this process. ■

# World condemns Israeli massacre in Gaza



Tony Savino / Socialist Action



Tony Savino / Socialist Action

By **JEFF MACKLER**

**F**ive hundred and sixteen children are among the over 2200 Gaza Palestinians murdered by the racist, Zionist, apartheid settler state of Israel. An estimated 75-80 percent of the Palestinians slaughtered were civilians.

Some 1.8 million Palestinians “live” in perhaps the world’s largest prison, Gaza, virtually unable to enter or leave, starved and bereft of clean water, electricity, and basic medical care. Their residences—15,000 to date—have been obliterated, bombed to smithereens by Israeli jets, artillery, and mortars.

These horrors have been justified in grotesque and racist terms. An Aug. 22 *Hollywood Reporter* ad, signed by a score of Jewish executives, featured a 1950s statement from former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir (1969-73) about “the Arabs.” The ad, however, leaves out Meir’s words “the Arabs,” who were expelled en masse from their homelands and are today’s Palestinian Gazans and their descendants. Meir’s “haunting words” (the Hollywood executives’ choice of language to indicate their agreement) were paraphrased in the ad as follows: “We can forgive [the Arabs] for killing our children. We cannot forgive them from forcing us to kill their children. We will only have peace with [the Arabs] when they love their children more than they hate us.”

“Us” and “them!” These terms are used to describe one of the most powerful military states on earth, versus a virtually defenseless people. “Their children!”—516 Palestinian children murdered, versus one Israeli child! “They hate us” more than they “love their children!”—a demented statement by the leader

of a racist state. Does this not reflect a colonial mindset akin to that of the Belgian King Leopold, who in the 19th century murdered 12 million Congolese, in the world’s most monstrous case of genocide? Leopold, Hitler’s predecessor in atrocities, also did not concern himself with the annihilation of innocent peoples, instructing his soldiers to cut off the hands of the “rebels” of his day.

Need we remind today’s Zionist colonizers that in 1943, walled-in, starved, and persecuted Warsaw Ghetto Jews courageously fought back with primitive weapons against the Nazi butchers’ army, then the strongest in the world? Did Warsaw’s Jews provoke the Nazi retaliation that bombed and burned the Ghetto—and a year later, most of the rest of Warsaw—to the ground, killing Jewish children and all others? Hitler called them terrorists and proceeded to try to annihilate an entire people. The world called Warsaw’s resisting Jews freedom fighters.

Today’s Israeli Zionist murderers are the descendants of what was, until after the Holocaust, a conservative minority current in Jewish history and politics—a current whose mentor, Vladimir Jabotinsky, thought that Jewish freedom could be obtainable through the agency of British imperialism.

Said Jabotinsky in his 1923 Zionist exposition, “The Iron Wall”: “Every native population in the world resists colonists as long as it has the slightest hope of being able to rid itself of the danger of being colonized. That is what the Arabs in Palestine are doing, and what they will persist in doing as long as there remains a solitary spark of hope that they will be able to prevent the transformation of ‘Palestine’ into the ‘Land of Israel.’”

And again: “Except for those who were born blind, they realized long ago that it is utterly impossible to obtain the voluntary consent of the Palestine Arabs for converting ‘Palestine’ from an Arab country into a country with a Jewish majority. ...

“We cannot offer any adequate compensation to the Palestinian Arabs in return for Palestine. And therefore, there is no likelihood of any voluntary agreement being reached. ... Which means that it can proceed and develop only under the protection of a power that is independent of the native population—behind an iron wall, which the native population cannot breach.

“That is our Arab policy; not what we should be, but what it actually is, whether we admit it or not. What need, otherwise, of the Balfour Declaration? Or of the [British] Mandate? Their value to us is that outside Power has undertaken to create in the country such conditions of administration and security that if the native population should desire to hinder our work, they will find it impossible.”

In Europe of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the majority of politically active Jews opposed the Zionists and instead worked to bring about fundamental social change in their own countries. Revolutionaries of Jewish origin constituted a large portion of the central leadership of Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolshevik Party, which in 1917 not only led the first socialist revolution in world history but virtually instantly abolished all Tsarist laws that persecuted Jews.

That revolution ushered in a society with the greatest diversity and fidelity to human freedom, dignity and liberation ever. It’s central leader, Lenin, partly Jewish himself by virtue of his grandfather, railed against the Great White Russian chauvinism that prevailed to a significant extent in his times. He similarly condemned the ingrained anti-Semitism and persecution of Jews under the Tsar.

Recently, 40 survivors of the Nazi genocide and 287 descendants of survivors and victims published a half-page ad in *The New York Times* condemning Israel’s Gaza massacre. The Aug. 23 ad denounced a previous ad published in the British *Guardian* and in two mainline Israeli papers that featured a statement by Israeli’s misbegotten Nobel “Peace” Laureate and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, who, like the present Zionist colonial warrior and Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, charges Palestinians with “child sacrifice.” Wiesel called on President Obama to condemn Hamas’ “use of children as human shields.”

“In my own lifetime,” Wiesel wrote, “I have seen Jewish children thrown into the fire. And now I have seen Muslim children used as human shields, in both cases, by worshippers of death cults indistinguishable from

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that of the Molochites.” (This was an ancient cult, referred to in the Old Testament and said to have sacrificed children to their god.)

Weisel continued: “What we are suffering through today is not a battle of Jew versus Arab or Israeli versus Palestinian. Rather, it is a battle between those who celebrate life and those who champion death. It is a battle of civilization versus barbarism.”

The Holocaust survivors of the Nazi genocide and their descendants responded in *The Times* with a truth that is today echoed around the world as Zionism’s atrocities and the Zionist state itself stand exposed and illegitimate as never before. They wrote, “As Jewish survivors and descendants of survivors and victims of the Nazi genocide, we unequivocally condemn the massacre of Palestinians in Gaza and the ongoing occupation and colonization of historic Palestine.”

“We further condemn the United States for providing Israel with the funding to carry out the attack, and Western states more generally for using their diplomatic muscle to protect Israel from condemnation. Genocide begins with the silence of the world.”

“We are alarmed by the extreme, racist dehumanization of Palestinians in Israeli society, which has reached a fever-pitch. In Israel, politicians and pundits in the *Times of Israel* and *The Jerusalem Post* have called openly for genocide of Palestinians, and right-wing Israelis are adopting Neo-Nazi insignia.”

“Furthermore, we are disgusted and outraged by Elie Wiesel’s abuse of our history in these pages to justify the unjustifiable: Israel’s wholesale effort to destroy Gaza and the murder of more than 2,000 Palestinians, including many hundreds of children. Nothing can justify bombing UN shelters, homes, hospitals and universities. Nothing can justify depriving people of electricity and water.”

The liberal Israeli newspaper, *Ha’aretz*, writes, “This article, ‘Holocaust survivors condemn Israel for ‘Gaza Massacre,’ call for boycott,’ has been recommended on Facebook more than 50,000 times and tweeted more than 10,000 times.”

Raphael Cohen, a signatory of the letter and a member of the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network [IJAN], which published the ad, commented: “We wanted to make it clear that he [Weisel] does not speak for all survivors of the Nazi genocide and that he doesn’t speak for all Jews. And we wanted to make clear that there is a huge number of survivors who are outraged by what Israel is doing in the Gaza Strip.”

IJAN’s website reports unprecedented coverage of the ad and solidarity statements reported in major media around the world.

Similarly, an Aug. 14 statement by Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, published by *Ha’aretz*, calls for a global boycott of Israel. Tutu stated: “The past weeks have witnessed unprecedented action by members of civil society across the world against the injustice of Israel’s disproportionately brutal response to the firing of missiles from Palestine.”

“If you add together all the people who gathered over the past weekend to demand justice in Israel and Palestine—in Cape Town, Washington, D.C., New York, New Delhi, London, Dublin and Sydney, and all the other cities—this was arguably the largest active outcry by citizens around a single cause ever in the history of the world.”

Tutu was not exaggerating. Opinion polls around the world register majority condemnation in the scores of countries surveyed. Virtually every European nation—including France, England, Spain, Germany and Italy—registered condemnation of Israel’s bombing. The figures in polls ranged from 60 to 72 percent! While the Zionist regime attributes this to rising anti-Semitism, few doubt that the real cause is the Israeli slaughter of innocent and defenseless people by a nation whose military strength ranks among the top in the world.

Bishop Tutu continued, “A quarter of a century ago, I participated in some well-attended demonstrations against apartheid. I never imagined we’d see demonstrations of that size again, but last Saturday’s turnout in Cape Town was as big, if not bigger. Participants included young and old, Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, agnostics, atheists, blacks, whites, reds and greens ... as one would expect from a vibrant, tolerant, multicultural nation.”

“I asked the crowd to chant with me: ‘We are opposed to the injustice of the illegal occupation of Palestine. We are opposed to the indiscriminate killing in Gaza. We are opposed to the indignity meted out to Palestinians at checkpoints and roadblocks. We are opposed to violence perpetrated by all parties. But we are not opposed to Jews.’”

Tutu reported that “more than 1.6 million people across the world have signed onto this movement by joining an Avaaz campaign calling on corporations profiting from the Israeli occupation and/or implicat-



(Above) Thousands join Aug. 9 New York march against Israel’s attack on Gaza. Unprecedented numbers have protested around the world.

ed in the abuse and repression of Palestinians to pull out. The campaign specifically targets Dutch pension fund ABP; Barclays Bank; security systems supplier G4S; French transport company Veolia; computer company Hewlett-Packard; and bulldozer supplier Caterpillar.”

Tutu noted that, “Last month, 17 EU governments urged their citizens to avoid doing business in or investing in illegal Israeli settlements. ... We have also recently witnessed the withdrawal by Dutch pension fund PGGM of tens of millions of euros from Israeli banks; the divestment from G4S by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; and the U.S. Presbyterian Church divested an estimated \$21 million from HP, Motorola Solutions and Caterpillar. It is a movement that is gathering pace.”

Younger Americans are far likelier than older ones to say that Israel is more responsible than Hamas for the fighting in Gaza. A recent Gallup poll found that a majority of those under 30 thought that Israel’s actions in Gaza were unjustified. The same poll indicated that among people of all ages, around 42 percent thought that Israel was justified in its attack on Gaza, and about 39 percent thought that Israel was unjustified.

In the U.S., unprecedented protests have been organized across the country. In San Francisco, 6000 mobilized to protest Israeli atrocities, and rallies of a similar size or larger were held in New York, Chicago, and Washington, D.C.

The San Francisco protest included people who represented Gazan family members that were murdered by the Zionist bombardment. “End all aid to Zionist Israel,” read one prominent banner, which significantly added, “Abolish Zionist Israel!” This is perhaps the clearest expression of a growing phenomenon in the U.S.—the recognition that the state of Israel is illegitimate. The longstanding distinction between broad U.S. popular opposition to all colonialism and impe-

rialist occupation *except* the Zionist variety, is beginning to crumble.

The idea that the solution to the “Palestinian problem” would be the establishment of a tiny, economically unviable, isolated, and physically discontinuous Palestinian state on a tiny fraction of the original Palestine is seen as akin to the South African system of apartheid that the racist white government, backed to the hilt by U.S. arms, insisted on before 1992.

The courageous Palestinian people’s standing up to the Israeli military behemoth and enduring horrific punishment for doing so, has won the hearts and minds of the world’s people. The Zionist murderers have won the “war” but lost much more.

The door is open wider than ever to the fight for a democratic secular Palestine based on historic Palestine as it existed before the imperialist 1948 partition. This prospect, however distant given the present relationship of forces, can only be achieved when the Palestinian masses bring forth revolutionary and socialist leadership prepared to unite all the Palestinian people and build alliances with the oppressed working masses across the Middle East.

In this regard, the Arab Spring demonstrated in bold relief that the oppressed working masses are more than willing to fight for their freedom and liberation. What is painfully and tragically lacking is a deeply rooted mass revolutionary socialist leadership—the prerequisite to bringing forth a democratic and secular Palestine, where Jews, Palestinian Arabs, and all others can live in peace and harmony.

Unless this new state is socialist in its very foundations—abolishing capitalist-created oppression, racism, exploitation and war—it cannot resolve the present “Palestinian problem.” ■

## U.S. police and Gaza

**S**trong similarities stand out between the methods of the ever more militarized and racist police forces across the United States and those of the Israeli military forces in Palestine. Both forces are the outgrowth of a society that dehumanizes oppressed people and blames them for resisting the degradation attendant to a crisis-ridden and degenerating capitalism.

Three hundred and ninety unarmed Blacks, mostly youth, were murdered by U.S. police or “security guards” over the past year or so—one every 28 hours! Many of the victims were caught in routine “stop and frisk” operations and in other police detentions, which are based on profiling procedures that are reminiscent of those used at Israeli checkpoints against the Palestinians.

Some 7.2 million Americans—a majority Black (40 percent), Latino, and Native people—“live” under the jurisdiction of the U.S. prison-industrial complex. Eighty percent have been incarcerated for non-violent “crimes.” Many U.S. prisoners are warehoused in increasingly privatized facilities to serve the labor needs of private corporations at 50 cents an hour. In Georgia and Texas, their pay is zero. Some are charged for the cost of their incarceration!

The spectacle of the Ferguson, Mo., police force

being armed with the heavy weapons of war was a major contributor to the outrage that swept the country. Throughout the United States, in prisons and cities where the oppressed are housed, the soldiers and guards wear police uniforms, National Guard uniforms, and now U.S. Army-issued combat uniforms, replete with armor. They drive land-mine-resistant armored personnel carriers, generally priced at \$470,000 per vehicle, and topped with supersized state-of-the-art machine guns. In Gaza, Israeli soldiers use the same U.S. weaponry, which, as in Ferguson, Mo., they get for free as hand-me-downs from the Iraq War.

U.S. police forces are issued these weapons of mass destruction to the tune of \$4.3 billion in recent years—weapons that had been used to kill 1.5 million Iraqis over the past two decades. Similarly, the U.S. issues \$4.1 billion annually to Israel to kill Palestinians. Another \$1 billion was sent since the latest slaughter began—in order to “replenish” the rockets, mortars and bullets “used up” on Palestinians.

The fightback and mass protests in Ferguson, as in Gaza, were met with unprecedented solidarity actions in U.S. cities and in many nations around the world. Notwithstanding the terrible losses, when the oppressed raise their voices and take to the streets with righteous indignation, the long road to freedom is shortened. — J.M.

# 'Pro-union' mayor hustles cuts for NY workers

By MARTY GOODMAN

New York's self-proclaimed "progressive" mayor, Bill de Blasio, promised "respect" for the city's 300,000 unionized public workers and has pledged to fight the city's vast income inequality. What unions actually got was the same old hustle from the Democratic Party, as part of the city's 1%.

De Blasio, who took office in January, is the first Democrat to get elected mayor in New York in 20 years. He is seen as a national standard bearer of a "reform"-minded Democratic Party, despite his strong support for Israel and his backtracking on police brutality reform (see article in August's *Socialist Action*).

All of the city's 152 contracts were expired, but new contracts were negotiated in the absence of any serious contract fight and were finally approved overwhelmingly by a desperate and demoralized workforce, many of whom hadn't seen a raise since 2009.

Thus far, some 60% of the public-worker unions have settled and have agreed to exceptionally long contracts. The pattern-setting United Federation of Teachers (UFT), which represents 110,000 workers, settled for a nine-year contract in May, which includes raises below projected inflation. Put more simply, it's a pay cut.

"We look at the city's fiscal numbers all the time; it is clear to us that there is money out there," said UFT President Michael Mulgrew in an interview. In fact, income from taxes is up sharply. Tax income saw a \$700 million increase in just the first four months of this year, reported New York Daily News columnist Juan Gonzalez. Besides the surplus revenue for the new fiscal year, which began in July, de Blasio plans a \$750 million budget cushion over the next four years. No wonder de Blasio was in a hurry to set a low wage pattern with the influential UFT in May.

In reality, while Mayor de Blasio complained of being left with too little money in the budget for contracts by outgoing Mayor Michael Bloomberg, all budgets must be approved by the Democratic Party majority on the city council. It's all a question of what priorities the ruling class has—and justice for workers is not on the top of its list. The city's top negotiator, Robert Linn, a de Blasio appointee, is himself worth \$4.5 million.

What actually happened? The UFT pact, which represents 110,000 workers, contains two "pattern"-based 4% retro raises for 2009 and 2010 (when former billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg cut off negotiations), for a total of 18% in raises over the life of the agreement. In 2011 and 2012 are two zero raises camouflaged by a \$1000 lump sum payment, a bosses' trick that adds nothing to base pay in future negotiations. Some of the UFT raises will be implemented as late as 2020, after the contract expires and in money reduced in value by inflation.

In a bid to placate the for-profit charter school movement, the agreement allows for a suspension of union rules in 10% of schools, after conducting a teacher vote in affected locations.

Lastly, the UFT pact also contains an ominous \$1.3 billion in as yet unspecified health-care "savings" to offset raises, thus making workers pay for their own raises with inevitable cuts in health care. If the union and the city cannot agree, an arbitrator may be called in to impose the health-care "savings," which may include new membership deductions. Arbitration is a process that claims impartiality but ultimately benefits the bosses, in this case, the city's rulers.

The UFT health-care deal is part of a larger sellout agreement with the city by the Municipal Labor Council, a city-wide union coalition loyal to the Democrats, which agreed to a whopping \$3.4 billion total of health-

care "savings" in all new city contracts. The bureaucrats of the American Federation of Teachers, the UFT's parent organization, squandered \$350,000 in membership dues on de Blasio's election.

The second large contract negotiated by de Blasio is District Council 37, with more than 100,000 members, one-third of the city workforce. DC 37 reached an agreement with the city for a 10% raise spread over seven years, averaging 1.5% per year. The contract contains \$795 million in health-care "savings," to be found by the end of the contract.

The rotten deal includes a "gain-sharing plan," a money inducement that bosses use to agree on saving money through speed-up, downsizing, and other anti-worker measures. An example is the scheme started in the 1980s for sanitation trucks to use two workers instead of three. Getting workers to screw themselves for a couple of extra bucks is a bosses dream!

De Blasio cited the DC 37 deal as what "respect and cooperation can accomplish." De Blasio's campaign theme was income inequality in the world's richest city, as expressed in his slogan, "A Tale of Two Cities." But public union workers now face years of being kicked in the teeth financially with rapidly rising rents and other expenses.

First to agree to a low raise contract in 2014 was the trend-setting transit union, the Transport Workers Union Local 100, whose 34,000 members provide train and bus service for New York City but work for New York State. The contract included an 8% raise over five years, and a two-tier pay scale—which creates second-class new employees, who will reach top pay only after five years, instead of three previously.

The current TWU pact includes an increase in membership health-care deductions to 2%, up from 1.5%, a public worker pattern first agreed to in the New York region

by former New Directions Local 100 President Roger Toussaint in a 2005 contract deal. Democratic Governor Andrew Cuomo, who originally demanded zero-raise public worker contracts, was called in by Local 100 to personally broker the rotten deal in April.

The TWU contract, the first major union out of the gate this year, served to lower expectations for all public workers. The city's Independent Budget Office projects cost-of-living increases as 8.7% between 2012 and 2016, while transit worker raises will be 6% over the same period.

Most affected will be new Cleaners—mostly African American, Hispanic, and immigrant workers—who will start at 60% of full pay and reach full pay after five years but in smaller increments. The agreement is a reversal of a key goal of the 2005 transit strike, securing equality for the "unborn," that is, new workers not yet on the property who are threatened with a higher pension deduction demanded by the Metropolitan Transportation Agency. The agreement is a divisive throwback to the worst days of the Local 100 bureaucracy, when contract raises were sold on the backs of the most vulnerable workers.

The union "leadership," led by President John Samuelson and remnants of the former rebel New Directions Caucus, gave Mayor de Blasio overwhelming campaign support, just as they gave to Barack Obama, who, like Bush, bailed out the banks but not working people. Willfully ignored are the repeated episodes in which Democratic Party politicians have turned the screws against New York City's workforce.

This round of New York City contracts once again confirms the importance of the strategy that socialists put forward for the labor movement in order to win. This includes organizing for working-class political independence, democratic fighting unions, and job actions including strikes. ■

## Low-wage workers strike: \$15 Now!

Tony Savino / Socialist Action



On Sept. 4, fast-food and other low-wage workers in over 100 U.S. cities walked out to demand higher wages. Everywhere, the demand can be heard for a minimum wage of \$15. The strike was organized largely by the SEIU and Fast Food Forward. (File photo: NY workers in global fast-food strike in May 2014.)

## Montreal city workers rock austerity bosses

By M. GALLANT

On Aug. 19 a large contingent of municipal workers stormed Montreal City Hall and disrupted a council session. As the majority of city councilors present fled the scene, preferring to avoid the clear consequences of their austerity plans, firefighters threw water about, and angry workers unceremoniously dumped papers from desks. The police were called, but never came.

Outraged pundits and bourgeois media bosses tried to spin the story as a case of out-of-control unions and selfish workers. Orders to disperse the protest, it seems, were not received, and were never issued by police HQ or dispatch.

So, why did the Montreal police, so eager and brutal in their suppression

of the 2012 Quebec student strikes and demonstrators, stand idly by this time?

The answer is simple—pensions. Specifically, the police acted in defense of their own pensions. As warlords and emperors have discovered throughout history, the one force you must never alienate is the one you use to impose your will.

Montreal Mayor Denis Coderre, it seems, didn't get the memo. So how did Coderre, a popular figure widely compared to Jean Drapeau (the mayor credited with Expo '67 and with ushering in Montreal's rise to prominence as a "world-class" city, from the 1960s to the 1980s), allow things to turn so sour?

Enter Bill 3, a provincial government austerity law, for which Mayor Coderre is not responsible, except for his active

support and encouragement of it. Presented on June 12, and currently still being debated in the Quebec National Assembly in Quebec City, the bill paves the way for huge cuts, particularly to public sector employees' pension funds. It's in the interest of "encouraging fiscal health," its sponsors claim.

The bill would reopen all public sector union collective agreements and pension provisions, and subject them to an actuarial valuation. Further, if time-limited negotiations and conciliations fail, the government would be able to appoint an arbitrator who could impose a settlement.

Municipal workers, amongst others, want to keep the pensions issue off the table. Theirs is a serious bid to resist concessions. It sets a very welcome example for public and private sector

workers across the Canadian state.

Arbitrators appointed under Bill 3 would be required to look at the government's "ability to pay," but not its ability to tax big business and the rich.

Keep in mind that Liberal Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard pays no income taxes on his offshore tax haven investments, nor during his four-year tenure as a private neurosurgeon in the despotic petrostate of Saudi Arabia.

As we go to press, media barons are baying for blood. Inquiries have been launched to look into the police brotherhood, the firefighters' union, and public sector workers' organizations. "Fines!" enraged talk-show hosts howl. "Discipline!" cry the newspapers. "PUNISHMENT!" demand the elite against the dogs who dare to bite their masters' hands.

What punishment, and for whom, remains to be seen, as the Quebec labour movement rises to this challenge. ■



## People's Social Forum – A magnet for thousands of anti-capitalists

By BARRY WEISLEDER

For critics of the capitalist system across the Canadian state, this was one of the largest, most representative gatherings ever. Thousands of activists from Quebec, English Canada, and aboriginal communities—including workers, students, seniors, and the unemployed—converged at the University of Ottawa for a four-day People's Social Forum, Aug. 21-24. Women constituted a large proportion of the participants.

Major unions and mass organizations, whose members speak English, French, and indigenous people's languages, resourced the festival. The hundreds of workshops, and scores of film screenings, art exhibits and topical assemblies took years of planning.

At the same time, this grand venue of issues, campaigns, and discussions exhibited the political weakness common to the main organizers and social partners—the lack of an anti-capitalist plan of action, much less a socialist strategy centred on working-class struggle.

An opening day "Unity March" to Parliament Hill, its contingents festooned with scores of union flags and political banners, was preceded and concluded by speeches of labour officials. They condemned austerity and neoliberalism, but not the Liberal Party, nor the pro-capitalist leadership of the labour-based New Democratic Party.

Calls to defeat the widely hated Stephen Harper Conservative Party regime in the 2015 federal election were not matched by appeals for a Workers' Government committed to socialist policies. Only the last of a dozen speakers at the front steps of Parliament, Vancouver-based Harsha Walia, identified capitalism as the main enemy, and socialism as the goal. And those words were spoken as the crowd, estimated by the Montreal daily newspaper *Le Devoir* as between 5000 and 10,000 at its peak, scattered under a heavy thundershower.

During four days of workshops and assemblies, activists seized the opportunity to educate and forge links on a wide range of issues, including cuts to public services, climate justice concerns, electoral reform, and the scandal involving thousands of missing and murdered aboriginal women.

Dozens of simultaneous, compelling topics made it difficult to decide which forum to attend. Highlights included Palestine and Cuba solidarity, ecosocialist strategies in the fight against climate change, and an assembly to Take Back the Labour Movement. Each of these attracted over 100 participants.

Under the banner of justice for Palestine, activists heard reports and discussed ways to advance the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions campaign aimed at the Israeli apartheid state. Sadly, even as Gaza is being pummeled by the U.S.-Canada-E.U.-backed Israeli war machine, some insular leftists oppose BDS on the grounds that it "divides the working class." The overwhelming sentiment of the Social Forum favoured the Palestinian and global labour-backed campaign to starve the Zionist state of weapons and commerce, and to mobilize protests to end the siege and the occupation. A spate of recent sit-ins at local offices of NDP MPs across Canada has drawn broad critical attention to the reactionary pro-Israel policy of NDP Leader Tom Mulcair.

Ecosocialists gathered to consider how to strengthen opposition to various pipeline construction projects, and to go farther. Their aim is to develop a class-conscious movement for socialist transformation of the carbon-burning, private profit-obsessed, capitalist energy economy. Only a planned economy under workers' and community control can marshal the resources needed to effect such a colossal change. Many will take that message to the monster Climate march scheduled for New York City on Sept. 21.

The Take Back the Labour Movement assembly, a three-hour Saturday morning forum convened by organizers of the Hassan Hussein campaign for president of the Canadian Labour Congress last spring, reviewed decades of struggles to reform the CLC, including the heroic efforts of former CUPW President Jean Claude Parrot, who spoke to the crowd. The assembly, consisting of individuals from dozens of unions, bolstered by a large contingent of CUPW members, demonstrated a radical outlook. Kyle Buott, president of the Halifax-Dartmouth Labour Council, put it this way: "It's not enough to oppose neoliberalism. We need to talk about capitalism being the fundamental problem, and socialism as the alternative."

After small group discussions on a distributed set

## Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>



Socialist Action

of questions, including "What should be the basis of unity of this movement?", the Take Back assembly chair reconvened the plenary and called for reports. A group of Socialist Action union members and other workers made the following proposals:

Establish a cross-union, class-struggle caucus that is anti-capitalist, anti-concessions, anti-austerity, and pro-union democracy.

Our movement or caucus strives for change based on policies, not personalities. It seeks to replace current union mis-leaders on political grounds and union democratic principles, from the bottom up.

Instead of giving political support to one or another wing of the labour bureaucracy, we strive to build an independent, class-struggle movement from below; we seek to change the overall direction of the unions; we support union activists who battle concessions and anti-democratic practices in the labour movement, and engage with social justice movements.

Subsequent speakers at the mics endorsed these proposals, and made additional ones, mostly of a programmatic nature, such as by indicating a commitment to aboriginal rights, anti-racism, anti-sexism, for climate justice, etc. When a postal worker asked for support for the current campaign to keep home mail delivery and expand services by adding postal banking, the meeting erupted in loud applause.

Later, the chair indicated that a steering committee, comprised of some 24 volunteers from across the country, would soon be convened via teleconference or skype to take the next steps to establish an active body of labour radicals and commence its work. This was widely seen as the way to confront and to replace labour officials who condone the spreading cancer of two-tier wages and benefits—a pernicious assault on young workers—and to remove bureaucrats who concede pension, work-safety, and job-security losses.

Unfortunately, at the final gathering of the Social Forum on Sunday morning, which heard reports from over 20 assemblies, the Take Back Labour summary did not mention any of the above points. It called vaguely for rank-and-file leadership of the unions, and proposed the creation of networks of activists. It ended with the exclamation "See you in the streets!"

Even more disappointing was the conference-concluding "Call to Action—Social Movements Convergence." The unsigned statement, cobbled together by labour officials and PSP organizers, is a broad declaration of disenchantment with the status quo. It condemns "the disparities between the rich and the poor, men and women, whites and people of colour" and called for the defense of "public services and social programs." "We must propel the social movements' current convergence towards an active, non-partisan role and lead a combative campaign against the Conservatives."

While it is reasonable to target the Conservatives for

(Above) People's Social Forum: Rally in front of the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa.

defeat in 2015, it is important to remember that Liberals are Tories too. They represent the same ruling business class. In fact, the Liberal federal government under Paul Martin made bigger cuts to social expenditures and corporate taxes than the Harper Conservatives have done. The Liberal provincial government in Ontario suspended the right to strike and imposed austerity cuts on education workers, schools, cities, and hospitals. Kathleen Wynne is now known by welfare and social housing advocates as the "Poverty Premier."

If the People's Social Forum represents a new political moment, it signified, at least at its inception, that the chief problem facing humanity, the environment, and all species is capitalism—not simply capitalist austerity. To that degree, the PSF not only fell short of its projected attendance figures, but more importantly, of its vision for fundamental change.

At the PSF, significant numbers of people argued for defeat of the capitalist parties and in favour of a working-class government that would expropriate capital and express the power of the vast majority. Many explicitly demanded that the NDP and the unions fight for socialist policies, defend the people of Gaza and Palestine, and oppose colonial occupation and imperial wars of intervention from Mali to Afghanistan, from Libya to Iraq. They called for heavy taxation of big business and the super-rich, conversion from carbon fuel consumption to green energy use, and the funding of human needs, not private profit.

Socialist organizations joined antiwar coalitions, pension lobbyists, electoral reformers, Jewish opponents of Zionism, supporters of Cuba, anti-mining groups, and all kinds of crafts vendors at display tables set up on a central campus pedestrian mall.

Socialist Action presented one of the most prominent and busy displays at "People's Square." The SA table was staffed four to eight hours a day, sold over \$475 in books, buttons, and newspapers, and collected contact information from 45 people who want to keep in touch. Members distributed hundreds of leaflets promoting the Toronto September 20 mass picket in defense of postal services, the Sept. 6 Ontario NDP Socialist Caucus conference in Toronto, and the SA/LAS workshop held on Aug. 22 at the PSF.

Titled "Fighting Capitalist Austerity means challenging both the corporate bosses and the labour - NDP bureaucracy", the Socialist Action / Ligue pour l'Action socialiste workshop, with this writer speaking, attracted 24 participants. During the four days, SA members sold over 100 copies of the August edition of *Socialist Action* newspaper—a sure sign of the growing interest in socialist ideas evident at this memorable event. ■



(Left) Haitian woman living in the Dominican Republic cooks food on charcoal stove.

## Should 'population' be on the climate justice agenda?

By CHRISTINE MARIE

The fight to save the planet as a viable home to our species will require the most powerful social movement ever organized. Necessarily central to that project is solidarity and collaboration with those who are most immediately vulnerable to the dire effects of the capitalist carbon-fueled economy.

An international movement that fails to inspire and articulate the needs of the vast majority of the world's population—made up of poor small farmers, fisherpeople, rural dwellers, and indigenous populations—will be completely ineffective. An international movement that fails to recognize the rights and autonomy of the women who are, at minimum, integral to these economies—and more often than not, the prime movers of these economies—is doomed to fail.

Unfortunately, the notion that "overpopulation" is contributing to climate change is leading to a new acceptance of old and reactionary ideas and policies promoting coercive family-planning programs in the underdeveloped world. Sensitive to a world public opinion that finds eugenic ideas loathsome, these family-planning programs are cloaked in language about the health and rights of women and children. Upon examination, it turns out that they are overtly motivated by neo-Malthusian arguments and ignore the basic principles honed by feminist activists attempting to completely bury the legacy of the racist, sexist, and anti-working-class legacy of the population control and eugenicist movements of the past.

The term neo-Malthusian is often used to refer to ideas that bear some of the political characteristics of the famous "Essay on the Principle of Population," written by Thomas Robert Malthus in 1798. This book played an important ideological role for the Eu-

ropean ruling classes in the wake of the Great French Revolution. It blamed poverty on a supposed "natural law" that said that the poor would reproduce faster than the food supply.

Thus, Malthus argued, poverty, disease, and early death of the majority of the working population was not the result of the nature of the economic system (human-made and therefore, changeable) but part of the natural order of things. Today, those who think that the size of the human population is the cause, or a major cause, of poverty and ecological destruction—called "populationists"—disagree with many of Malthus' basic postulates, but the association sticks because they continue to blame the activity and reproduction of the poor for the climate crisis.

One of the most troubling initiatives based on these ideas is the global "Family Planning" project of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Others include a category of conservation programs referred to as "Population-Environment" or "PE" projects. Many of these are funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID), an agency notorious for assisting U.S. imperialist aims abroad.

The danger to the moral and political authority of the climate justice movement posed by PE projects has been explored deeply by James Oldham, the founder of Las Lianas Resource Center, an organization that supports indigenous communities in the Amazon region. In a paper called "Rethinking the Link" and supported by the feminist Population and Development Center of Hampshire College, he discovered the ways in which Malthusian arguments regarding environmental degradation were being used to disrupt peasant economies and associate conservation with overt efforts at population control.

In many cases, these population control programs

actually *hindered* more effective community-initiated and community-controlled efforts to protect the environment, giving political cover to gross neglect of women's health and independence, and performing ideological work that minimized the role of both colonialism and current imperialist intervention to create situations friendly to corporate profit in creating ecological havoc. At minimum, the coercive aspects of PE projects, which offer some reproductive health aid *in return* for peasants giving up land, are immoral and make new solidarities in the interest of the climate impossible.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, whose literature stresses their interest in women's health and universal access to voluntary family planning without "coercion or discrimination," in fact, has targeted Sub-Saharan Africa as the site of a massive distribution of the dangerous long-acting contraceptive, Depo-Provera. Depo-Provera is a contraceptive used on female U.S. prisoners because it is injected once and its effect lasts two years.

This particular contraceptive has been chosen by the Gates Foundation, because, combined with a new syringe-less device they are developing, it can be administered without any medical personnel on hand. That is, it will reduce poor rural populations without the cost of building a real medical infrastructure to take care of the diseases that actually increase mortality. Depo-Provera often produces devastating side effects, including loss of libido and dangerously brittle bones (osteoporosis), in very young women.

The long-acting impact and side-effects of Depo-Provera mean that it is used disproportionately, in circumstances likely to be coercive, on women of color. (In 2011, seventy-two percent of all injectable long-acting contraceptives shipped by USAID went to Africa.) In addition, a 2012 *Lancet* report indicated that the drug might *double* the risk of HIV transmission. Yet, it is being pushed as an alternative to other birth-control methods that require international and national commitments to real health care, to say nothing of support to movements capable of challenging the imperialist economic order and the poverty and sexism it fosters.

If the climate movement in the United States becomes associated with the coercion, racism, and arrogance of the population projects pushed by USAID and the Gates Foundation, we will be cutting ourselves off from some of the most important allies for the struggle ahead.

Again and again, the working poor and farmers of the underdeveloped world have risen up to challenge the U.S. and Europe and demanded another kind of world based on human needs. Today, the international movements against GMOs, for food sovereignty, against the privatization of water, etc., are led by women from the underdeveloped world, whose empowerment and autonomy is critical to our struggle.

Part of building a global movement to stop warming is educating ourselves and other activists about the dangers that the "populationists" pose—to women, to those under the imperialist boot, to working people, and to true climate justice. For a wealth of information and curricula on these issues, visit the website of Pop/Dev: For People, For Justice, For the Environment.

To help build a climate justice movement that places women and international solidarity at the center, consider joining Socialist Action. ■

## ... Waterways

(continued from page 4)

of what can happen.

Acid-mine drainage from hard-rock mining of both ferrous and non-ferrous metals from sulfur ores is everywhere throughout the American West. Rivers have turned yellow with sulfuric acid, rendering the water undrinkable and the aquatic environment unlivable. Northern Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan's Upper Peninsula are threatened with acid-mine drainage in perpetuity if more mining is allowed there.

Added to this is an array of heavy-metal contaminants. Mercury, not only from coal-fired power plants but iron mining too, is transformed into methylmercury by bacteria in aquatic environments and bioaccumulates up the food chain.

All of our aquatic ecosystems are in trouble. Acid precipitation from sulfur and nitrous oxides has created dead lakes. Invasive species released with the dumping of bilge water from foreign vessels has completely altered the Great Lakes ecosystem.

As human beings have attempted to hammer Nature into submission, our waterways have been grossly over-

engineered, with the straightening, dredging, and damming of rivers for navigation, electricity, and flood control and the deliberate draining of wetlands for cropland and urban development. Because of levees, rivers are no longer allowed to overflow onto their flood plains and deposit silt that renews the land. Wetlands no longer absorb excess precipitation, often making flooding worse, and wildlife habitat has been obliterated.

Damming prevents fish such as salmon from spawning, and many of our salmon runs have died out. Reservoirs, the creation of which has destroyed millions of acres of forests and habitat, silt up and emit methane. This reshaping of the landscape impedes the natural hydrological fluxes and flows required by healthy ecosystems to function.

The sanctity of the commons is being violated daily by the drive for private profit, and we are left with a compendium of water woes. Like the planet, our bodies are 70% water, and our brains 90%. When we become dehydrated, our ability to think and cope with stress is undermined. Water is the Essence of Life. Therefore, it must be protected. The onslaught against this vital resource must end now if we are to survive in a world being swiftly transformed by climate change.

Socialist Action is for System Change, Not Climate Change. We can cope with the magnitude of the prob-

lem through a democratically organized and collective effort. To start, a powerful mass movement must be built to bring down the limitless-growth economy that exploits Mother Earth as a mine for raw materials and a dump for wastes and replace it with an egalitarian, cooperative society that exists in complete harmony with Nature, while allowing it to regain its once healthy state.

To that end, we must:

- Stop all government subsidies to the Carbon Barons.
- Tax corporate polluters to the hilt.
- Nationalize the energy industry.
- End all fossil fuel combustion and biomass burning.
- Replace fossil fuels with renewable wind, solar, and geothermal energy to draw down carbon to a safe 325 ppm with zero GHG emissions.
- Decommission all nuclear power plants.
- Retool for green manufacturing & chemistry.
- Ensure a just transition for all workers.
- Ditch Big Pharma and return to natural healing.
- Launch public works for restoration and remediation of ecosystems & rewild our urban areas.
- Switch to chemical-free, organic farming & permaculture.
- Glean and recover materials from landfills; reduce, restore, reuse, and recycle for zero waste. ■

# THEATRE

By MARTY GOODMAN

*"My sleepers will flee toward another America." — Jean Genet*

As a New Yorker, I make sure to avoid Broadway's annual run of middle-class junk. But in August, a production by the Sydney Theatre Company of Jean Genet's great 1947 play "The Maids" got me shelling out bucks. I'm a big Jean Genet fan.

It was a wallop of a performance, starring Cate Blanchett and Isabelle Huppert, two amazing actors. Blanchett plays the maid Claire, and Huppert, Claire's sister, the maid Solange. A third, lesser-known actress, Elizabeth Debicki, plays the boss, Madame, the seldom seen character who is at the center of power, love, death, and hate in the minds of the two sisters.

Directed and translated from the French by Benedict Andrews, the set was simple perfection, except for the giant video screen that hung down from the rear of the set. It gave wonderful close-ups of the actresses, mostly Blanchett, who, with her back to the audience, put on makeup in front of a mirror. Different close-up views of the bedroom provided an alternate reality to what was visible from the audience. Just great.

The entire play was set in Madame's bedroom, a closet brimming with clothes, bed, sofa, and the affects of a young bourgeois socialite. However, Madame appears only toward the end. Meanwhile, Clair and Solange tear each other apart with power games and head trips, each trying on Madame's dazzling dresses between the drudgery of cleaning her room. The sisters role-play at being Madame, but also play being each other, dispensing cruelty with razor-sharp insults. The dialogue Genet sets up here is rich, brilliant, sexy, and sometimes really, really funny.

The sisters love each other but hate each other with equal passion—just as they hate/love Madame. Class hatred is usually eclipsed by self-hatred aimed directly at the other sister, when not directed inward. Solange says to Clair, "I want to help you. I want to help you, but I know I disgust you. I'm repulsive to you. And I know it because you disgust me. When slaves love one another, it's not love." Likewise Claire, as Madame, tells Solange, "Avoid pawing me. You smell like an animal. You've brought those odors from some foul attic where the lackies visit us at night."

At the center of the plot are anonymous letters the sisters sent to police to implicate Madame's thug of a boyfriend in crime. When Madame eventually returns, she's in a tizzy on hearing that her love has been ar-

## Genet's revolutionary 'The Maids'



(Left) Cate Blanchett and Isabelle Huppert in Jean Genet's "The Maids," a Sydney Theatre Company production.

rested for robbery. Whether he's innocent, or more likely guilty, she swears her undying devotion and ridiculously imagines herself as a selfless martyr to love. She tosses her expensive clothes to Clair and Solange.

What evolves is a series of failures by the maids as they attempt to hide their role in the arrest of Madame's boyfriend and attempt to poison Madame, who is certain to discover their role in her grief. The ending is both blunt and unsparing.

Genet's work fascinated the well-known French existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, who wrote an extensive study of him, "Saint Genet." Sartre was a "dissident" Marxist for most of his life. He had a limited critique of the Stalinized and reformist French Communist Party, which nevertheless made him anathema to political hacks.

The existentialist Sartre had no time for the simplistic Stalinist worker vs. capitalist dichotomies in art. He sought a deeper, richer explanation of human emotions. Sartre expertly dissected Genet's house of mirrors in "The Maids," as the characters change identities, masking and double-masking their true selves, much of which must reflect Genet's life as a gay man and outlaw.

In fact, it is said that Genet wanted his characters in "The Maids" to be played by men ("Genet" by Edmund White), something that he later denied—but then again, Genet lied a lot! (I actually saw "The Maids" per-

formed by men at the National Theatre in Havana.) Sartre wrote in his penetrating introduction to "The Maids," "The most extraordinary example of the whirligigs of being and appearance, of the imaginary and the real, is to be found in his [Genet's] play, 'The Maids' ['Les Bonnes']. It is the element of fake, of sham, of artificiality, that attracts Genet to the theatre." Later, Sartre wrote, "Genet betrays his actors. He unmasks them. ... Illusion, betrayal, failure; all the major categories that govern Genet's dreams are here present."

Genet was a writer who turned reality upside down and inside out, peeling off the lies and self-delusion in the capitalist world of domination and cruelty. Genet's genius was to fearlessly go deeply into the very bones and marrow of how oppression mentally enslaves us by class, race, gender, and sexual preference.

He unravels layer upon layer of self-degradation, submission, self-hatred, and illusion. As a thief, prison convict, and gay man—when being gay was the greatest of all scandals—Genet's life embraced, as with the great French poets of extremes, Baudelaire and Rimbaud, what polite society would call evil.

Despite the insipid, cutesy review of "The Maids" in *The New York Times*, Genet was a 1960s-style revolutionary activist, with all of its strengths and weaknesses. When he wrote of oppression he understood that capitalism lay at its root. He was a spokesperson for the Black Panther Party and, up until his death in 1986, a supporter of the Palestinian liberation struggle and lived for extended periods in refugee camps. By a twist of fate, Genet actually witnessed the horrific massacre at the Sabra and Chatila camps in Lebanon in 1982, when invading Israeli troops set loose Lebanese and Israeli fascists who slaughtered some 2000 innocent Palestinians.

Genet lived and wrote about society from the very bottom and then elevated it into art. He was in utter rebellion against the social order. Said Solange, "My jet of spit is my spray of diamonds." ■

## N. California Climate Rally

By JEFF MACKLER

Some 100 Northern California environmental, peace and social justice, and faith-based organizations have set Sept. 21 for a mass People's Climate Rally at Oakland's Lake Merritt Park Amphitheater, 2-5 p.m. Thousands are expected to join this action in solidarity with the 350.org national mobilization set for New York City on the same date.

Major Northern California demands include:

- For a world with an economy that works for people and the planet
- For a world safe from the ravages of climate change
- For a world with good jobs, clean air and water, peace and justice, and healthy communities.

The broad range of endorsing and sponsoring organizations include 350 Bay Area, Sierra Club, the San Francisco and Alameda Labor Councils, United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC), Bay Area System Change Not Climate Change, some 15 Bay Area peace and justice centers, and a dozen socialist organizations—including Socialist Action.

Expectations here are extremely low that the UN Climate Summit of world corporate leaders, and polluting nations, set to meet two days before the Sept. 21 mass march in New York City, will end with any significant agreements.

The main flyer distributed in the tens of thousands in Northern California states, "Tragically, more inaction or inadequate action can be expected. We want to show the world that the climate crisis can no longer be ignored, that the planet earth is burning, and that massive and unprecedented measures must be taken now to assure humanity's future."

The flyer continues, "While people all over the country are mobilizing for New York, many of us will gather in support in Oakland. Oakland and the East Bay are the site of many battles against carbon pollution—shipping coal through the Port of Oakland, health and safety problems with dirtier oil at Chevron in Richmond and the other four Bay Area refineries, hauling flammable crude oil by rail through East Bay communities—and overall, working to build a clean energy economy with 100% renewable energy."

Similar Sept. 21 actions are set for Los Angeles and San Diego. ■

Jeff Mackler is a leader of the Northern California People's Climate Rally Outreach and Publicity Committee and a member of the coalition's Steering Committee.

## ... Michael

(continued from page 12)

ment spending/budget by ½ by 2016, and invest that money into Black communities most devastated by poverty in order to create jobs, housing, and schools." This is a demand that directly attacks the premise that our youth are better served by hyper-surveillance, harassment, and brutality rather than investing in the community.

Another popular demand has been to demilitarize the police, and this is included in the demands released by #BlackLivesMatter as well. CNN quoted author and former Marine logistics officer Jeff Clement as saying, "Our [Rules of Engagement] regarding who we could point weapons at in Afghanistan was more restrictive than cops in Missouri." The scenes of police that looked like soldiers, pointing laser-beamed weapons at unarmed protesters in Ferguson made the powers that be very distraught about the image of the U.S.

Already, and as a result of events in Ferguson, the San Jose, Calif., police department has made plans to get rid of armored vehicles made to withstand roadside bombs (which were given to them for free from the U.S. Department of Defense), while the Davis, Calif., and Albuquerque, N.M., police departments are reviewing possibly giving them back.

Demilitarizing the police is an important demand, and links should be made between the militarization that people are subjected to in the United States and what the U.S. military subjects people to abroad.

But let's be clear that even without military equipment, the police forces of the U.S. will still be committing abuses.

We also have to point out that this problem is deeper than a few bad cops. This is a systemic problem, an institutionalized problem; it is not a problem that can be solved by removing one officer, or even one local department, as some believe.

Al Sharpton said at the Eric Garner protest in Staten Island, "Don't act like we are here against police. We're for police! But let me tell you something, you have a bag of apples, and there's a rotten apple in the bag, the only way to protect the good apples is to take the bad apple out."

But the level of violence against Black, Brown, and even white people by police is beyond a few bad apples. While there truly are a few bad apples, and Darren Wilson most definitely is one, policing a population that is institutionally and purposefully held down will never look pretty. It will be brutal; it will be murderous. Until widespread racial and economic inequality is addressed, brutality and murder will be a common occurrence when "enforcing law and order."

We cannot accept the "bad apple" theory of police brutality; the statistics and the reality force us to move beyond this simplistic explanation. The problem is systemic, not personal. The apple is rotten, the barrel is rotten, and the whole ship the barrel is sailing in is rotten.

Seize the moment! There is a Michael Brown in every city in this country! Double your efforts to mobilize people at this special moment! End police brutality! End the New Jim Crow! No Justice, No Peace! ■

## Michael Brown lives on in the movement

Tony Savino / Socialist Action



Tony Savino / Socialist Action



-By CLAY WADENA

The United States is moving closer and closer to a period of reckoning in regard to centuries of racist exploitation, oppression, and murder. The young Michael Brown, whose life was taken on Aug. 9 by Ferguson police, haunts the dreams of those who wish to beautify, hide, and deny the brutal treatment of African Americans in the United States.

Aug. 30 marked yet another set of solidarity demonstrations in Ferguson, with people joining from across the country, three weeks after Brown's death. The exemplary conduct of the local community of Ferguson, the leaders of the present movement, must be noted again and again.

Despite police showing up in military gear and physically cracking down on protesters (the "hard touch") and powerful leaders attempting to cool out the people's rage (the "soft touch"), community residents have defied them all and continually mobilized in the streets, forcing this issue into the national scene and beyond.

There are many factors involved in

the creation of this movement, but none of them would matter were it not for the local community's valiant commitment to hitting the streets. As a result, protesters across the country have mobilized in solidarity demonstrations, often making connections between Brown's death and similar local incidents.

With each death the contradiction is further exposed: this country can elect a Black president but can't seem to face or stop the New Jim Crow.

As much as the events in Ferguson have become an inspiration to fight oppression for so many, they have also become a rallying point for the racists on the other side of the battle lines. The public has been subjected to the horrific and disgusting spectacle of fundraising websites for Officer Darren Wilson (the triggerman who murdered Michael Brown). These sites have raised over \$400,000 and counting, leading some to conclude (rightfully so) that there are apparently hundreds of thousands of dollars in bounty money for any police officer who kills an African American.

The apologists for the police and vigi-

lantes will always tell those who wish to protest to wait. They say, "we need more details" and "we must wait for the official investigation to be completed." These are their rallying cries. But for those who have lived under the brutal heel of the New Jim Crow, waiting for the "official investigation" to be completed is outweighed by the understanding (backed by life's experience) that law enforcement can murder and brutalize Black and Brown lives with impunity and does so regularly. This is reflected in a Pew Research Poll in which 76% of African Americans said that they had little or no confidence in investigations (only 33% of whites said the same).

To see the community fight back and to see the solidarity actions across the country warmed the heart of activists and victims who have worked for the day of a mass movement to confront police brutality, racism, and mass incarceration. Are we turning the corner to a new era of nationwide activism to fight police brutality and the New Jim Crow? Only time will tell, and we have to do all we can to ensure that this is so.

One positive development is that connections are being made between activists, and networking is happening across the country on a level unseen in a long time. When the mothers of Sean Bell, Trayvon Martin, and Michael Brown recently got together on CNN, it was a powerful sight—demonstrating in front of our eyes the widespread and national character of the U.S. racism and police brutality problem. From New York to Florida, Missouri, and beyond, this nationwide problem needs a

nationwide, mobilized response.

In Staten Island on Aug. 23, thousands marched in solidarity with Eric Garner (an unarmed Black man choked to death on camera by the NYPD earlier in the summer), and the national connection was visible; many held signs saying, "Hands Up, Don't Shoot!" which was made popular by protests for Michael Brown.

Kadiatou Diallo, mother of Amadou, an unarmed immigrant from Guinea shot 41 times by police in the Bronx in 1999, said at the Garner rally that "police cannot judge our sons and execute them for no reason." Ramarley Graham's mother also spoke at the rally; she has been waiting over two years for justice after the NYPD killed her unarmed 18-year-old son. It's been a year since the Department of Justice said they had opened an investigation into it—without any results.

Justice is a righteous demand, and remains the primary demand. Even after the murder of Oscar Grant was caught on film, it only resulted in a "slap on the wrist" for his killer (he received a sentence of two years with time served and is now free). But due to the widespread nature of this issue, justice cannot be our one and only demand.

On top of justice, the movement needs to raise demands that are focused on exposing a society that prioritizes criminalization and death over the wellbeing of the community. To that end, one of the demands brought up by the #BlackLivesMatter group (which helped organized Aug. 30 demonstrations in Ferguson), was particularly interesting: "Decrease law enforce-

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