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Time to unite against racist terror

By Tim Wheeler



In the spring of 1969, Daily World editors asked me to travel down to Charleston, S.C. to cover a strike by Hospital workers, Local 1199. I took the night train. The strikers, virtually all African American women, staged a massive rally at “Mother Emanuel” AME Church.

The church was packed to hear the Rev. Ralph David Abernathy, Coretta Scott King, and other leaders. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had been assassinated a year earlier while leading a strike of sanitation workers in Memphis.

Mary Moultrie, leader of the Charleston strike was softspoken yet the crowd greeted her speech with a standing ovation. These women were seeking a living wage, dignity on the job. “Mother Emanuel” was their sanctuary.

The governor had declared a “State of Emergency,” ordering the South Carolina National Guard into Charleston, turning the lovely city into an armed camp. Ruling circles in South Carolina were determined to smash 1199 in their drive to preserve the South as a “Union-Free Environment.”

Forty-six years later, “Mother Emanuel” AME is back in the news. Nine African American women and men, worshipping peacefully in the church were murdered in an act of racist terrorism by a white supremacist who invaded the sanctuary

and opened fire. Who killed them? The answer from the ruling powers will be that the killer acted alone, a deranged individual. No, he did not act alone. They rant that white people are now the “victims” who must “take back our country” from African Americans, Latinos, uppity women, gays and lesbians, poor people, and all the other folks fighting for dignity, equality, civil rights and civil liberties. These racist elements are open in their incitement of hatred of President Obama, our first

T H I S W E E K :

- Time to unite against racist terror
- Ecuador proposes tax on rich, right wing runs amok
- Fast Track wrong for workers and environment
- Protestas en Carolina del Sur
- CWA's leadership eyes labor's political independence

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African American president.

Among those murdered by the gunman was Rev. Clementa C. Pinckney, pastor of Mother Emanuel AME. Rev. Pinckney was also a South Carolina State Senator who, a few weeks ago, delivered an impassioned speech on the Senate floor

The killers are those politicians in high places who spout racist rhetoric, inciting hatred and bigotry.

denouncing the shooting death of Walter Scott, 50, an unarmed African American, by a white police officer in North Charleston. Scott had been pulled over for having a broken tail light.

Rev. Pinckney's leadership in the struggle against police use of lethal force against innocent, unarmed African Americans, was likely the reason the racist killer targeted him for assassination.

Decades after I attended that Local 1199 strike rally, the unionbusters struck again in Charleston. It was in 2001 and the target was the predominantly African American International Longshoremens Association, Local 1422.

Dock workers peacefully picketing to win a decent contract were viciously assaulted by Charleston police and South Carolina troopers. Five were arrested and charged with incitement to riot. It was the beginning of a year-long nationwide struggle to "Free the Charleston Five."

Roy Rydell, himself a retired National Maritime Union seafarer and I traveled to Columbia, S.C. to cover a massive rally at the state capitol building to demand freedom for the Charleston Five and a just settlement of the strike.

The labor movement mobilized a movement so strong that the shipping companies and union-busting forces were compelled to free the Charleston Five. I returned to Charleston for a victory rally at ILA Local 1422 headquarters, March 2, 2002.

In the spring of 2008, Rev. Pierre Williams and I rode a bus organized by the Black Caucus of the Maryland General Assembly down to Columbia to go door to door to help elect President Barack Obama, our first Black President. That struggle too, ended in victory.

There are lessons from these struggles. The labor movement, all progressive, forces must unite against the racist hatemongers. We must organize solidarity rallies everywhere to express our outrage at this massacre. If the racists succeed in their scheme to divide us along lines of race, ethnicity, or gender, they will always win. If we are strong and united, we will always win.



Tim Wheeler is a correspondent for Peoplesworld.

Ecuador proposes moderate tax increase on rich, right wing runs amok

By Emile Schepers

On June 5, Ecuador's left-wing president, Rafael Correa, announced that he was sending to his legislature a proposed tax reform bill to moderately increase inheritance taxes and to make other adjustments in the tax laws.

Last week, right-wing protesters besieged the offices of Correa's "Alianza Pais" party in the capital of Quito. To the demand that the tax reform bill be withdrawn were soon added calls for Correa to step down, in spite of the fact that he won his last election (in 2013) by a solid 57 percent margin.

Anti-Correa demonstrators have issued calls asking for the army to be ready to intervene, and on Sunday attempted to block roads from Quito's airport to prevent the president from returning from a European trip.

The tax reforms that Correa proposed are modest enough, and by no means "confiscatory," though their aim is unapologetically redistributive - the government promises that all the new revenues achieved by the reforms will go to ben-

efit the mass of the people directly.

Only about 2 percent of the population would be affected by the changes in the inheritance law. Under the changes, there would be a 2.5 percent tax on inheritances valued between \$35,000 and \$70,000. The previous bottom rate was 5 percent on inheritances valued between \$69,000 and \$137,000, with a top rate of 35 percent charged on inheritances above \$827,000.

Under Correa's plan, the new top rate on the larger fortunes would be 47.5 percent. The plan also proposes stiff taxes on windfall capital gains profits from the sale of real estate, and other adjustments.

The per capita gross domestic product of Ecuador is about \$11,000 per year, calculated by the Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) method, compared to about \$55,000 a year for the United States.

Correa's supporters have a huge legislative majority, so it is fairly certain that the proposal will be approved.

Lower and middle-income workers, farmers and small businesspeople are the hardest hit via consumption taxes.

Leo Gerard: Fast Track wrong for workers and environment

Special to Peoplesworld

Before the U.S. House of Representatives is set to vote on Trade Promotion Authority—also known as Fast Track—the BlueGreen Alliance urged members of the House to reject the proposal because it removes critically important checks and balances.

“Approving Fast Track would be bad for our economy and our environment,” said Leo W. Gerard, International President of the United Steelworkers (USW). “The USW is not against trade, but unfortunately the history of trade agreements is clear: I don’t know anyone who can name an agreement passed under fast track that has resulted in a net gain of jobs for working Americans.”

“The Sierra Club and our 2.4 million members and supporters oppose Fast Track, and we’re in good company,” said Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune. “Leaders from environmental, labor, civic, and faith groups agree—Fast Track is a bad deal for our climate and our communities, and the House should reject it.”

Under Fast Track, Congress gives up its constitutional authority over trade negotiations and trades away its ability to ensure that trade deals protect communities, workers, and the environment. The groups argued that Fast Track would encourage a race to the bottom and could lead to allowing companies to have expanded rights to challenge our en-



vironmental and other laws in a special trade tribunal outside the U.S. court system.

“Fast Track will offshore jobs, cut wages, close factories and threaten the well-being of our communities,” said Amalgamated Transit Union President Larry Hanley.

The House vote comes just a few weeks after the Senate approved Fast Track. However, a strong bipartisan effort to reject the measure has gained ground in the House in recent months. A broad and growing movement of workers, environmentalists, people of faith, consumers, and community activists has been pushing to stop Fast Track.

“The House should reject Fast Track to ensure we have fair trade agreements that don’t engage us in a race to the bottom,” said James Boland, President of the International Union of Bricklayers & Allied Craftworkers (BAC).

“This is a critical vote,” said Kim Glas, Executive Director of the BlueGreen Alliance. “Fast Track would deny the ability of Congress to amend deals to achieve those things. Our message to House members is simple: Don’t let Fast Track put America on the wrong track; vote no.”

Fair trade deals should not be hidden from the public’s view.

LOCAL NEWS

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CWA's new leadership eyes labor's political independence

PAI

Chris Shelton, the longtime activist and leader of Communications Workers District 1 in New York and New Jersey, and Sara Stefens, a rapidly rising organizer from The News Guild, won the top two posts at the CWA convention in Detroit last week.

The building of a separate workers' party was one of several goals Shelton set out in his acceptance address, along with fighting discrimination, and campaigning for a financial transactions tax.

Shelton addressed the need to build even more "unity and militancy at the bargaining table" and stressed his commitment to continuing Cohen's pro-democracy campaign against big business and big givers' monetary dominance in politics.

"We will unite and fight because we are fighting to defend the living standards not just of our members, but of the entire working class..."

But it's not necessarily the Democrats' mission, he added, specifically citing President Barack Obama's push for so-called "fast-track" trade promotion authority and the trade pacts it would lead to. Those pacts have no worker rights, no environmental protections and could lead to outsourcing factory jobs, he said.

"It's time to quit relying on the Democrats to move this (progressive) agenda forward," Shelton declared.

Protestas en Carolina del Sur

La Jornada

En la capital estatal, Columbia, se realizó una marcha contra la bandera de guerra confederada desplegada en el edificio de la legislatura desde la época de la guerra civil, la que para muchos es símbolo del racismo todavía vigente en la región.

Luego del asesinato de nueve personas por el joven blanco Dylann Roof en la Iglesia Africana Metodista Episcopal Emanuel, el miércoles pasado, las banderas estadounidense y de Carolina del Sur fueron colocadas a media asta.

La histórica iglesia afroestadunidense reabrirá el domingo para una ceremonia religiosa. Washington auguró que será conmovedor el servicio religioso de mañana y que acudirá gran número de personas.

La Oficina Federal de Investigaciones, en tanto, revisa un manifiesto racista, al parecer escrito por Roof en una página de Internet, y fotos, en una de las cuales el asesino confeso muestra una bandera confederada, considerada símbolo divisionista por activistas de los derechos civiles. En otra sostiene el lábaro nacional estadounidense en llamas.

También daría una explicación sobre los asesinatos en la iglesia, al señalar que no tengo opción (...) Elijo a Charleston, porque es la ciudad más histórica de mi estado y en algún momento tuvo la tasa más alta de negros frente a blancos en el país.

Según archivos de Internet, esa página fue creada el 9 de febrero mediante un servicio ruso de registro con los detalles personales del propietario escondidos. En ella también aparece una diatriba contra judíos, latinos y asiáticos del este. De los hispanos menciona que son nuestros enemigos. Ellos, obviamente, son un enorme problema para los estadounidenses.

Roof, quien enfrenta nueve cargos por homicidio y uno por posesión de armas, asegura que no creció en un hogar o en un ambiente racista, pero que tomó conciencia racial por el asesinato en Florida del joven afroestadunidense Trayvon Martin, ocurrido en 2012 a manos del vigilante comunitario blanco George Zimmerman.

Una multitud protestó contra la bandera confederada ubicada en el terreno del Capitolio de Carolina del Sur por considerarla símbolo de odio, no de herencia histórica, por haber sido la insignia del sur conservador, el cual defendía la esclavitud.

La policía no proporcionó cifras sobre el número de gente que acudió a la manifestación, pero parecía haber cientos de personas, si no es que miles.

Corearon: "¡Quítienla!", y concluyeron el mitin entonando la canción We shall overcome (Lo superaremos). La manifestación duró más de una hora y hubo varios oradores.

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