

"We are realists... we dream the impossible" - Che



Fire This Time!



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2017

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CELEBRATING MARCH 8 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

FROM CANADA TO CUBA:

WHAT WOMEN HAVE ACHIEVED & WHAT WE NEED TO KEEP FIGHTING FOR



By Tamara Hansen

March 8th is known around the world as International Women's Day (IWD). Every year it is a time for women around the world to reflect on the gains and challenges our gender continues to face.

At the same time, fighting for women's equality and liberation is not only for women, but for all of humanity. Firstly, because one of the most important steps to improving the lives of all children, is the empowerment of women. Secondly, because the deeply harmful ideology and values that capitalist patriarchy forces on men not only debase and demean women, but men as well. While women are often referred to as a 'minority' we are 51% of the human race, which deserves to find

its rightful and equal place in this world.

Despite our different backgrounds: culture, country, race, age, sexual orientation and class, women all face sexism and oppression based on gender. Our diversity can be our strength, but it often divides us. However, when we are at our most powerful is when we unite and fight to overcome many of these barriers by protecting and advancing our rights.

On March 8, 2017, as we celebrate the gains our sisters have made in struggles for women's equality and liberation worldwide, we must also understand how far we have come and how far we have to go. Here in Canada, women often tout our accomplishments: from the right to vote, to our equality under Canadian law

and the creation of various institutions for women. However, I want to explore the systemic issues that continue to plague the advancement of women's rights in Canada. These systemic issues are inherent under capitalism which needs divisions such as sexism, racism and homophobia in order to keep working and oppressed people divided and easier to exploit. In contrast, I will look at socialist Cuba, which has been working since the victory of their revolution in 1959 to eradicate systemic sexism and sexism in society, to move towards women's true liberation and equality. While Cuba is not perfect, it is an important example of the accomplishments women can make when society sets the elimination of inequality as a real goal in law, policy and action.

Women in Canada: Many obstacles to overcome

Women living in Canada will often compare our gains to those of the past or extreme examples of women's oppression around the world, the conclusion is usually, 'well it is not perfect, but we have it pretty good here'. Those comparisons may be fair, but they do not help us in understanding the long way we have to go to true gender equality. We do not often talk about the fact that in Canada, our gains are not, and have never been, shared by ALL women equally. For example, most textbooks on Canadian history state that women won the right to vote in 1918. However, this ignores that the right to vote was only won by white women in 1918. It wasn't until after World War II in the late 1940s that Asian women in Canada won the right to vote. Still later in 1960, when Indigenous women won their right to vote in federal elections – that's over 40 years apart!

We know from statistics Canada that in 2017, the average life expectancy for women in Canada is projected to be 83 years. However according to Statistics Canada projections, Inuit women are expected to live an average of ten years less, and Métis and First Nations women will live 3-5 years less than the Canadian average. Additionally, despite 'equality under law', we know that the government of Canada has been getting away with systemically underfunding Indigenous children in government care as compared to non-Indigenous children, because of the heroic work of Cindy Blackstock, a Gitksan activist for child welfare and the Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society. Of course, with more finances towards women's physical and mental health and other social programs, both in urban and rural regions, the need for having children living in government care would surely decrease.

While Indigenous women in Canada are disproportionately affected by the



Protesting lack of response to missing and murdered indigenous women. in front of Canadian parliament in Ottawa



Free education, from primary to post-secondary helps ensure more opportunities for Cuban women

government's war at home, all women in Canada are affected by systemic sexism and patriarchy. According to the 2011 Statistics Canada report, "Families,

Living Arrangements and Unpaid Work":

1) "In 2010, women spent an average of 50.1 hours per week on child care, more than double the average time (24.4 hours) spent by men." This statistic includes both working and non-working mothers in Canada. For example, even women who worked full-time and were part of a dual-earner couple reported spending an average of 49.8 hours per week on unpaid child care.

2) "While men reported spending, on average, 8.3 hours on unpaid domestic work, women spent more than one and a half times this amount—13.8 hours."

3) "Even though women are more likely than men to go to college or university, they do not necessarily end up with higher employment earnings than men when they enter the job market. In 2005, young women aged 25 to 29 with full-year, full-time work were earning 85 cents for each dollar earned by their male counterparts."

In March 2016, the Globe and Mail Newspaper did a special on gender parity and the wage gap in Canada, they wrote, "a woman working full time in Canada makes 73.5 cents for every dollar a man makes, according to updated Statistics Canada income data produced for The Globe and Mail – a persistent wage gap that continues even though women's educational attainment has surpassed that of men."

So while we read many positive headlines about women in Canada: "Syrian women come to Canada to continue their education", "Canada pledges up to \$20 million for international abortion fund", "By learning trades, women can save themselves — and maybe even the economy", etc. We have to continue to understand the fight

for women's equality remains a high priority in Canada, even when it is not garnering national mainstream media



headlines.

Of course these statistics are no accident, there are deep systemic issues at play. Under capitalism the drive for profit will always trump the well-being of women, children and even men. Women's unpaid childcare and housework, the wage gap, the rates of violence against women (especially violence against Indigenous women), the fact the poverty disproportionately affects women, and access to women's health services are all issues in need of real solutions. However, this is not possible in a system where everyone is looking to make a buck, rather than invested in the betterment of communities and society as a whole.

The Power of Revolutionary Cuban Women

On June 9, 2015 the New York Times published, "The Cuban woman: A rising power" an article that stated, "Cuba consistently ranks high in international surveys regarding women's status, standing at 18 among 142 nations in women's political empowerment and at number two for percentage of women in parliament, according to the 2014 World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap report. By contrast, the United States is ranked at 54 in women's political empowerment and 83 for women in parliament (U.S. Senate and U.S. House)." Continuing, the article explains, "Today, women make up nearly half of [Cuba's] work force and more than half of university faculties, and hold top portfolios in the ministries."

The last election for Cuban parliament was held in 2013. According to Juventud Rebelde, over 7.8 million Cubans voted in the election, which means their election boasted 90.8% voter turnout. Of the ballots cast, 94% were valid, 1% were spoiled ballots and 5% were blank, this is an amazing voter participation rate, especially because Canada has been fighting to get over 60% turnout, with the exception of the most recent 2015 election when 68% of those eligible to



Cuban women guerrillas entering Havana January, 1959



Cuban literacy brigades were made up primarily of young women volunteers

vote turned out (this was the highest turnout since 1993). In the United States, who claims to be the leader of democracy and democratic values worldwide, the U.S. voter turnout for the November 2016 Presidential election was about 55%.

What is more important for the purpose of this article is not voter turnout, but who they elected. Cuba's national parliament is currently 48.9% female. On the other hand, while Canada was very excited to announce after the federal election in 2015 that 88 women were elected to parliament (a national record!), the Canadian Broadcast Corporation published an article reminding us, "50% population, 25% representation. Why the parliamentary gender gap?" They explain, "A record 88 women were elected in the 2015 federal election, up from 76 in 2011. The increase represents a modest gain in terms of representation, with women now accounting for 26 per cent of the seats in the House." This actually leaves Canada at 62nd place in terms of the percentage

of women in national government compared to countries around the world.

For Cuban women the gains are not only in the national government. In November 2012, Adela Hernandez was the first openly trans person in Cuba to be elected in the municipal elections in Caibarien, Villa Clara province. Since 2007 sex-change surgery has been made available for free to trans people in Cuba under their universal health care system. These are important gains made for women's rights, no matter their gender assigned at birth.

The gains of Cuban women are not only being won in the electoral realm. Cuba's constitution includes a special article for women and gender equality. Article 44 states, "Women and men enjoy equal economic, political, cultural, social, and familial rights. The State guarantees that women will be offered the same opportunities and possibilities as men to achieve their full participation in the development of the country. [...] The State strives to create all the conditions that will lead to the implementation of the principle of equality." This is an important part of the

protection and advancement of women rights under law.

Since 1960, the Cuban Women's Federation (FMC), a mass organization, has been developing policies and programs aimed at achieving full equality for women in all spheres and levels of Cuban society. Among the objectives of this organization is to contribute to the training and well-being of the next generations. The FMC has thousands of branches across the country at the grassroots level, as well as, municipal, provincial and national offices. They organize "Casas de Orientación a la Mujer y la Familia" (Women and family orientation houses), workshops, forums, a magazine, online blogs, laws and policies for workplaces, intuitions and government, and even community block parties.

Childcare is another huge fight for women in Canada. Access to affordable childcare gives women the possibility to

further contribute to society and the economy. In Cuba there are many work places that have free childcare centres to encourage women to participate in the economy and make life easier for Cuban families. In fact, a decreasing birthrate in Cuba, along with aging population, which is generally only a problem in industrialised or 'first world' countries, is leading to some changes in Cuban law. In February 2017, the Washington Post published an article titled, "Cuba wants more babies, so it's giving parental leave to grandparents, too." Journalist Nick Miroff writes, "The island already has one of the most generous parental leave policies in the Americas, allowing mothers and fathers to take more than a year off from work at partial pay. The new decree extends those benefits to maternal and paternal grandparents." This is an interesting new initiative, which demonstrates how Cuba attempts to confront challenges, such as a low birth rate and aging population, in dynamic and creative ways.

How was Cuba able to do all of this?

Since Comandante Fidel Castro and his revolutionary guerilla fighters began their struggle for revolution with the attack on the Moncada army barracks in 1953, there have been courageous women involved in the struggle. Melba Hernández, Celia Sánchez, Vilma Espín, Haydée Santamaría, and the all-women Mariana Grajales Brigade are some famous examples of the importance of women's leadership in the Cuban revolution.

Fidel Castro said, "They talk about the failure of socialism, but where is the success of capitalism in Africa, Asia and Latin America?" The fight for women's equality in Cuba has not been easy and is not finished. However, it is only thanks to Cuba's socialist revolution and on going socialist project, that the space has been opened for women to push forward and advance their causes. This means striving towards equality between genders and an end to the exploitation of one human being by another. Has Cuba totally eradicated sexism and patriarchy? NO! Both Cuban women and men will tell you, they have a long ways to go.



Women liberation in Cuba: Revolution in Revolution

In an interesting observation, Margaret Randall, an American feminist and author of the ground breaking book "Cuban Women Now" (1972), was in Havana this February to launch the Spanish version of her autobiography, "To Change the World: My Years in Cuba" (Rutgers UP, 2009) / "Cambiar el mundo. Mis años en Cuba" (Ediciones Matanzas, 2016). In an interview with Cuban Art News, she spoke about her time living in Cuba from 1969-1980. She explains, "Cuba gave me so much: a life experience in a socialist country that taught me it is possible to build a more just society. I don't know what I gave Cuba, and in any case it's for others to say. I know that at times my feminism was too much for the Cuba of those years. My opinions and attitudes weren't always well received. With the passage of time, I think we've come closer together, Cuba and I." This is the power of the Cuban revolution, a constant evolution and moving forward, correcting mistakes and finding new solutions, this is why it is a truly dynamic revolution.

While Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau calls himself a 'feminist' and has garnered much praise for his open stance on gay marriage and LGBTQ+ rights, we

have yet to see what he will do for Canada's most marginalized women; or how his feminism will work to provide affordable childcare and housing for women who need it; or his policies to end violence against women in Canada; or to improve access to abortion for women in rural communities; or eliminate the wage gap. Of course, we understand that men who call themselves feminists are useless to our cause, unless they take action by our sides.

Women in Canada need to see Cuba as an example in the fight against sexism and patriarchy. If Cuba, as a developing country with a small economy, can make all of these advances through education, organization and revolutionary consciousness, then here in Canada we must push and demand more. Indeed, women's lives depend on it.

Follow Tamara Hansen on Twitter: @THans01

Battle of Ideas Press

5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution
The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership
 By Tamara Hansen

"The battles Cuba has fought have not been easy. Some were physical battles, such as the battle against bandits in the Escambray Mountains or the Bay of Pigs invasion. However, most were not battles of physical might, but battles of ideas. But with every twist and turn, every up and down Fidel has been one of the first leaders to say, 'this way forward' or 'we made a wrong turn, we must change course.'"

Tamara Hansen is the coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC). She is also an editorial board member of The Fire This Time newspaper. She has travelled to Cuba ten times and has written extensively on Cuban politics since 2003.

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A Militant Celebration

Women's Day or Working Women's Day is a day of international solidarity, and a day for reviewing the strength and organization of proletarian women.

But this is not a special day for women alone. The 8th of March is a historic and memorable day for the workers and peasants, for all the Russian workers and for the workers of the whole world. In 1917, on this day, the great February revolution broke out. It was the working women of Petersburg who began this revolution; it was they who first decided to raise the banner of opposition to the

did not want to accept these rights. It was not in the interest of the bourgeoisie to strengthen the vote of the working class in parliament; and in every country they hindered the passing of laws that gave the right to working women.

Socialists in North America insisted upon their demands for the vote with particular persistence. On the 28th of February, 1909, the women socialists of the U.S.A. organized huge demonstrations and meetings all over the country demanding political rights for working women. This was the first "Woman's Day". The initiative on organizing a woman's day thus belongs to the working women of America.

In 1910, at the Second International Conference of Working Women, Clara

workshops, or as servants and charwomen. Women worked alongside men and the wealth of the country was created by their hands. But women remained without the vote.

But in the last years before the war the rise in prices forced even the most peaceful housewife to take an interest in questions of politics and to protest loudly against the bourgeoisie's economy of plunder. "Housewives uprisings" became increasingly frequent, flaring up at different times in Austria, England, France and Germany.

The working women understood that it wasn't enough to break up the stalls at the market or threaten the odd merchant: They understood that such action doesn't bring down the cost of living. You have to

International Women's Day

by Alexandra Kollontai, written 1920



Tsar and his associates. And so, working women's day is a double celebration for us.

But if this is a general holiday for all the proletariat, why do we call it "Women's Day"? Why then do we hold special celebrations and meetings aimed above all at the women workers and the peasant women? Doesn't this jeopardize the unity and solidarity of the working class? To answer these questions, we have to look back and see how Women's Day came about and for what purpose it was organized.

How and Why was Women's Day Organised?

Not very long ago, in fact about ten years ago, the question of women's equality, and the question of whether women could take part in government alongside men was being hotly debated. The working class in all capitalist countries struggled for the rights of working women: the bourgeoisie

Zetkin brought forward the question of organizing an International Working Women's Day. The conference decided that every year, in every country, they should celebrate on the same day a "Women's Day" under the slogan "The vote for women will unite our strength in the struggle for socialism".

During these years, the question of making parliament more democratic, i.e., of widening the franchise and extending the vote to women, was a vital issue. Even before the first world war, the workers had the right to vote in all bourgeois countries except Russia. Only women, along with the insane, remained without these rights. Yet, at the same time, the harsh reality of capitalism demanded the participation of women in the country's economy. Every year there was an increase in the number of women who had to work in the factories and

change the politics of the government. And to achieve this, the working class has to see that the franchise is widened.

It was decided to have a Woman's Day in every country as a form of struggle in getting working women to vote. This day was to be a day of international solidarity in the fight for common objectives and a day for reviewing the organized strength of working women under the banner of socialism.

The First International Women's Day

The decision taken at the Second International Congress of Socialist Women was not left on paper. It was decided to hold the first International Women's Day on the 19th of March, 1911.

This date was not chosen at random. Our German comrades picked the day because of its historic importance for the German

proletariat. On the 19th of March in the year of 1848 revolution, the Prussian king recognized for the first time the strength of the armed people and gave way before the threat of a proletarian uprising. Among the many promise he made, which he later failed to keep, was the introduction of votes for women.

After January 11, efforts were made in Germany and Austria to prepare for Women's Day. They made known the plans for a demonstration both by word of mouth and in the press. During the week before Women's Day two journals appeared: *The Vote for Women* in Germany and *Women's Day* in Austria. The various articles devoted to Women's Day – "Women and Parliament," "The Working Women and Municipal Affairs," "What Has the Housewife got to do with Politics?," etc. – analyzed thoroughly the question of the equality of women in the government and in society. All the articles emphasized the same point: that it was absolutely necessary to make parliament more democratic by extending the franchise to women.

The first International Women's Day took place in 1911. Its success exceeded all expectation. Germany and Austria on Working Women's Day was one seething, trembling sea of women. Meetings were organized everywhere – in the small towns and even in the villages halls were packed so full that they had to ask male workers to give up their places for the women.

This was certainly the first show of militancy by the working woman. Men stayed at home with their children for a change, and their wives, the captive housewives, went to meetings. During the largest street



Revolutionary marxist leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin at the Second International Conference of Working Women, 1910.

demonstrations, in which 30,000 were taking part, the police decided to remove the demonstrators' banners: the women workers made a stand. In the scuffle that followed, bloodshed was averted only with the help of the socialist deputies in Parliament.

In 1913 International Women's Day was transferred to the 8th of March. This day has remained the working women's day of militancy.

Is Women's Day Necessary?

Women's Day in America and Europe had amazing results. It's true that not a single bourgeois parliament thought of making concessions to the workers or of responding to the women's demands. For at that time, the bourgeoisie was not threatened by a

bourgeois parliament thought of making concessions to the workers or of responding to the women's demands. For at that time, the bourgeoisie was not threatened by a



Suffragette march by the National Federation of Women Workers in London, May 1911

socialist revolution.

But Women's Day did achieve something. It turned out above all to be an excellent method of agitation among the less political of our proletarian sisters. They could not help but turn their attention to the meetings, demonstrations, posters, pamphlets and newspapers that were devoted to Women's Day. Even the politically backward working woman thought to herself: "This is our day, the festival for working women," and she

hurried to the meetings and demonstrations. After each Working Women's Day, more women joined the socialist parties and the trade unions grew. Organizations improved and political consciousness developed.

Women's Day served yet another function; it strengthened the international solidarity of the workers. The parties in different countries usually exchange speakers for this occasion: German comrades go to England, English comrades go to Holland, etc. The international cohesion of the working class has become strong and firm and this means that the fighting strength of the proletariat as a whole has grown.

These are the results of working women's day of militancy. The day of working women's militancy helps increase the consciousness and organization of proletarian women. And this means that its contribution is essential to the success of those fighting for a better future for the working class.

Women Workers Day In Russia

The Russia working woman first took part in "Working Women's Day" in 1913. This was a time of reaction when Tsarism held the workers and peasants in its vise like a grip. There could be no thought of celebrating "Working Women's Day" by open demonstrations. But the organized working women were able to mark their international day. Both the legal newspapers of the working class – the Bolshevik *Pravda* and the Menshevik *Looch* – carried articles about the International Women's Day: they carried special articles, portraits of some of those taking part in the working women's movement and greetings from comrades such as Bebel and Zetkin.

In those bleak years meetings were forbidden. But in Petrograd, at the Kalashaikovsky Exchange, those women workers who belonged to the Party organized a public forum on "The Woman Question." Entrance was five kopecks. This was an illegal meeting but the hall was absolutely packed. Members of the Party spoke. But this animated "closed" meeting had hardly finished when the police, alarmed at such proceedings, intervened and arrested many of the speakers.

It was of great significance for the workers of the world that the women of Russia, who lived under Tsarist repression, should join in and somehow manage to acknowledge with actions International Women's



Working Women's Day protests in St. Petersburg mark the beginning of the February Revolution, March 8, 1917.



Day. This was a welcome sign that Russia was waking up and the Tsarist prisons and gallows were powerless to kill the workers' spirit of struggle and protest.

In 1914, "Women Workers Day" in Russia was better organized.

Both the workers' newspapers concerned themselves with the celebration. Our comrades put a lot of effort into the preparation of "Women Workers Day." Because of police intervention, they didn't manage to organize a demonstration. Those involved in the planning of "Women Workers Day" found themselves in the Tsarist prisons, and many were later sent to the cold north. For the slogan "for the working women's vote" had naturally become in Russia an open call for the overthrow of Tsarist autocracy.

Women Workers Day During the Imperialist War

The first world war broke out. The working class in every country was covered with the blood of war. In 1915 and 1916 "Working Women's Day" abroad was a feeble affair – left wing socialist women who shared the views of the Russian Bolshevik Party tried to turn March 8th into a demonstration of working women against the war. But those socialist party traitors in Germany and other countries would not allow the socialist women to organize gatherings; and the socialist women were refused passports to go to neutral countries where the working women wanted to hold International meetings and show that in spite of the desire of the bourgeoisie, the spirit of International solidarity lived on.

In 1915, it was only in Norway that they managed to organize an international demonstration on Women's Day; representatives from Russia and neutral countries attended. There could be no thought of organizing a Women's Day in Russia, for here the power of Tsarism and the military machine was unbridled.

Then came the great, great year of 1917. Hunger, cold and trials of war broke the patience of the women workers and the peasant women of Russia. In 1917, on

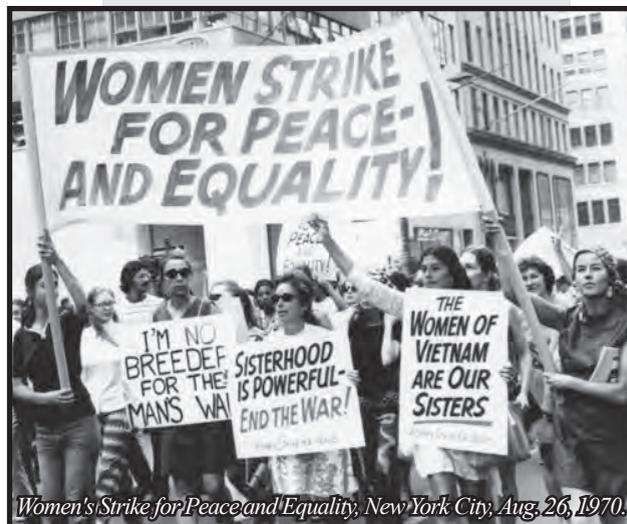
the 8th of March (23rd of February), on Working Women's Day, they came out boldly in the streets of Petrograd. The women – some were workers, some were wives of soldiers – demanded "Bread for our children" and "The return of our husbands from the trenches." At this decisive time the protests of the working women posed such a threat that even the Tsarist security forces did not dare take the usual measures against the rebels but looked on in confusion at the stormy sea of the people's anger.

Russia. In the soviet republic the working women and peasants don't need to fight for the franchise and for civil rights. They have already won these rights. The Russian workers and the peasant women are equal citizens – in their hands is a powerful weapon to make the struggle for a better life easier – the right to vote, to take part in the Soviets and in all collective organizations.

But rights alone are not enough. We have to learn to make use of them. The right to vote is a weapon which we have to learn to master for our own benefit, and for the good of the workers' republic. In the two years of Soviet Power, life itself has not been absolutely changed. We are only in the process of struggling for communism and we are surrounded by the world we have inherited from the dark and repressive past. The shackles of the family, of housework, of prostitution still weigh heavily on the working woman. Working women and peasant women can only rid themselves of this situation and achieve equality in life itself, and not just in law, if they put all their energies into making Russia a truly communist society.



Members of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers on the picket line in 1915 in Chicago.



Women's Strike for Peace and Equality, New York City, Aug. 26, 1970.

The 1917 Working Women's Day has become memorable in history. On this day the Russian women raised the torch of proletarian revolution and set the world on fire. The February revolution marks its beginning from this day.

Our Call To Battle

"Working Women's Day" was first organized ten years ago in the campaign for the political equality of women and the struggle for socialism. This aim has been achieved by the working class women in

And to quicken this coming, we have first to put right Russia's shattered economy. We must consider the solving of our two most immediate tasks – the creation of a well organized and politically conscious labor force and the re-establishment of transport. If our army of labor works well we shall soon have steam engines once more; the railways will begin to function. This means that the working men and women will get the bread and firewood they desperately need.

Getting transport back to normal will speed up the victory of communism. And with the victory of communism will come the complete and fundamental equality of women. This is why the message of "Working Women's Day" must this year be: "Working women, peasant women, mothers, wives and sisters, all efforts to helping the workers and comrades in overcoming the chaos of the railways and re-establishing transport. Everyone in the struggle for bread and firewood and raw materials."

Last year the slogan of the Day of Women Workers was: "All to the victory of the Red Front." Now we call working women to rally their strength on a new bloodless front – the labor front! The Red Army defeated the

external enemy because it was organized, disciplined and ready for self sacrifice. With organization, hard work, self-discipline and self sacrifice, the workers' republic will overcome the internal foe – the dislocation (of) transport and the economy, hunger, cold and disease. "Everyone to the victory on the bloodless labor front! Everyone to this victory!"

The New Tasks of Working Women's Day

The October revolution gave women equality with men as far as civil rights are concerned. The women of the Russian proletariat, who were not so long ago the most unfortunate and oppressed, are now in the Soviet Republic able to show with pride to comrades in other countries the path to political equality through the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and soviet power.

The situation is very different in the capitalist countries where women are still overworked and underprivileged. In these

landowner, an aristocrat.

In France, too, the question has been coming up lately of extending the franchise to women.

But what use are these rights to working women in the framework of bourgeois parliaments? While the power is in the hands of the capitalists and property owners,



Palestinian women protest against the Israeli occupation, a day before International Women's Day, March 7, 2015



Women's March in Vancouver, January 21, 2017.



countries the voice of the working woman is weak and lifeless. It is true that in various countries – in Norway, Australia, Finland and in some of the States of North America – women had won civil rights even before the war.

In Germany, after the Kaiser had been thrown out and a bourgeois republic established, headed by the "compromisers," thirty-six women entered parliament – but not a single communist!

In 1919, in England, a woman was for the first time elected a Member of Parliament. But who was she? A "lady." That means a

no political rights will save the working woman from the traditional position of slavery in the home and society. The French bourgeoisie are ready to throw another sop to the working class, in the face of growing Bolshevik ideas amongst the proletariat: they are prepared to give women the vote.

Mr. Bourgeois, Sir – It Is Too Late!

After the experience of the Russian October revolution, it is clear to every working woman in France, in England and in other countries that only the dictatorship of the working class, only the power of the soviets can guarantee complete and absolute equality, the ultimate victory of communism will tear down the century-old chains of repression and lack of rights. If the task of "International Working Women's Day" was earlier in the face of the supremacy of the bourgeois parliaments to fight for the right of women to vote, the working class now has a new task: to organize working women around the fighting slogans of the Third International. Instead of taking part in the working of the bourgeois parliament, listen to the call from Russia –

"Working women of all countries! Organize a united proletarian front in the struggle against those who are plundering the world! Down with the parliamentarism of the bourgeoisie! We welcome soviet power! Away with inequalities suffer by the

working men and women! We will fight with the workers for the triumph of world communism!"

This call was first heard amidst the trials of a new order, in the battles of civil war it will be heard by and it will strike a chord in the hearts of working women of other countries. The working woman will listen and believe this call to be right. Until recently they thought that if they managed to send a few representatives to parliament their lives would be easier and the oppression of capitalism more bearable. Now they know otherwise.

Only the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of soviet power will save them from the world of suffering, humiliations and inequality that makes the life of the working woman in the capitalist countries so hard. The "Working Woman's Day" turns from a day of struggle for the franchise into an international day of struggle for the full and absolute liberation of women, which means a struggle for the victory of the soviets and for communism!

**Down with the world of Property and the Power of Capital!
Away with Inequality, Lack of Rights and the Oppression of Women –
The Legacy of the Bourgeois World!
Forward To the International Unity of Working Women and Male Workers in the Struggle for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat –
The Proletariat of Both Sexes!**

*First Published: Mezhdunarodnyi den' rabotnitz, Moscow 1920;
Translated: Alix Holt 1972;
www.marxists.org*

** Alexandra Kollontai (1872-1952)
Russian revolutionary leader. During the 1917 Russian Revolution, she was a member of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik party. She was the first woman to be appointed as a Soviet diplomat, as the Ambassador to Norway in 1923. She is renowned for her feminist writings.*



WOMEN AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE BOLIVARIAN REVOLUTION



Venezuela has a long history of women's struggles, and since 1999, efforts to elevate the status of women and provide guarantees for women's rights have become an integral part of the country's Bolivarian Revolution.

According to the 2013 Human Development Report and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Venezuela has the third best Gender Inequality Index (GII) in Latin America. This index measures the resulting loss in human development due to inequality between men and women, on a scale of 0 to 1. The closer to 1, the greater the inequality between genders. Venezuela has a GII value of 0.4.

According to the UNDP, Venezuela has achieved a good gender parity index in primary education: for every 100 boys, there are 109 girls enrolled. In secondary education, for every 100 boys, 97 girls are enrolled; and in university education, for every 100 men, there are 144 women studying.



International Women's Day in Caracas, Venezuela. Banner reads "Obama repeal the decree now!" and "Women Against Imperialism" March 8, 2016

Furthermore, Venezuela was praised for ameliorating gender inequality in the country during the 59th United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in Geneva, Switzerland in 2014. The UN recognized that the female unemployment rate has dropped significantly over the past years, going from 16% in 1999 to 7.5% in 2014.

Meanwhile, the number of female

l a w m a k e r s in Venezuela has tripled in roughly a decade. In 1997, prior to the revolution, less than 6% of lawmakers were women, while in recent years, women have occupied between 16 to 19% of seats in the National Assembly. During the Bolivarian Revolution, women have been appointed or elected to lead four out of five branches of the government and women currently lead the Electoral Branch and the Judicial Branch. Furthermore, 60% of the candidates in the PSUV (United Socialist Party of Venezuela) National Assembly primary elections are women, after President Nicolás Maduro challenged the party to have at least 50% of the party's candidates be women.

Women's involvement in local politics has increased significantly. Many women serve as state governors, comptrollers, legislators, and mayors. The election of women to municipal councils has also increased - from 6.7% in 1995 to 19.4% in 2014. In local communal councils, they often comprise 70% of members. Women currently hold 16% of state governorships.

This structural transformation is complemented by changes to other institutions in Venezuela. The governments of President Hugo Chávez and President Maduro have created various agencies, policies and organizations that demonstrate the Bolivarian Revolution's commitment to women and to gender equality, some of which are described below.

MINISTRY OF PEOPLE'S POWER FOR WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Created on March 8, 2009, this Ministry

is the governing body of public policies and programs aimed at increasing women's participation in people's power and guaranteeing the exercise of gender equality rights established in the Constitution and Venezuelan law. Its core values are:

- Equality
- Non-Discrimination
- Intersectionality
- Solidarity
- Inclusion
- Protagonism
- Citizen participation
- Recovery of women's collective memory

BANMUJER WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT BANK

Established on March 8, 2001, by Presidential Decree, the goal of this public financial institution is to include women in the socio-productive system in order to achieve social equality. To date, it has benefited more than three million Venezuelans through its financial and non-financial services. So far it has granted a total of 36,430 loans nationwide, 90% of which have gone to women.

HOMES OF THE NATION - SOCIAL MISSION

Homes of the Nation launched in June 2014 and consolidated prior missions, including Mothers of the Neighborhood and Neighborhood Children. Over 400,000 families from poor neighborhoods have signed on to this social program that protects the rights of the nation's poor and vulnerable populations, provides community organization and training, and spurs participation in the productive economy in order to promote new social relations and a culture based on fulfilling social needs and providing economic autonomy for families in poverty. Its programs also contribute to ending violence against women and children, and to transforming the patriarchal aspects of our society.



UNAMUJER - NATIONAL UNION OF WOMEN

The National Union of Women aims to unite different grassroots and revolutionary groups, as well as female leaders around the country, in order to strengthen the Bolivarian Revolution and help construct a society based on full equality and gender equity. This network was discussed and created at the Third National Congress of Women held in March 2015 in Caracas. As of May 2015, 1,255,000 women have affiliated with UNAMUJER.

“MAMA ROSA” PLAN

One of the strategic goals of the “Mama Rosa” 2013-2019 National Plan for Equality and Gender Equity is to achieve equal participation between men and women in all spheres of public life, including elected offices. This plan also protects and ensures the human rights of vulnerable women, including those of diverse sexual and gender orientations, women with disabilities, prisoners and girls, among others. It also seeks to eliminate all forms of gender violence.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN LAW

LOTTT (Labor Law)

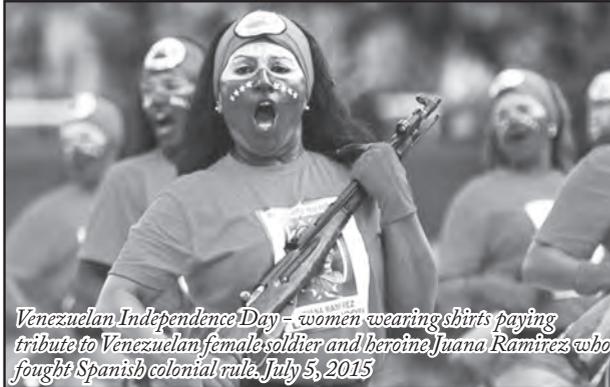
– Grants 6 weeks of prenatal maternity leave and 20 weeks of postnatal maternity leave to women. Pregnant women are protected by a firing freeze that lasts from the beginning of the pregnancy until two years after giving birth. Leave and protection also applies to parents who adopt children under 3 years old.

Law on Promoting and Protecting Breastfeeding – Protects the rights of mothers and children to breastfeed and aims to reduce the use of formulas and bottles by promoting the benefits of breastfeeding. Formulas now carry stickers signaling the importance of breast milk.

Law on the Right of Women to Live Free from Violence – Breaks the paradigm of domestic violence as part of the private sphere and aims to prevent all forms of violence against women through protective measures and immediate action once complaints are filed. Between 2011 and 2012, over 25,000 protective measures were issued. Includes ground breaking sections on obstetric violence (dehumanizing treatment by doctors and nurses, over-reliance on medication and unnecessary c-sections), labor violence, institutional violence and economic violence.

INAMUJER - NATIONAL WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Originally a precursor to the Ministry For Women and Gender Equality, Inamujer runs, among other things, women's shelters, a hotline for domestic violence, programs for cancer survivors and patients, programs



against gender-based violence and violence in general, and training programs for collectives, social movements and communities to prevent violence against women at the grassroots.

HEALTH AND SAFETY PROGRAMS

800-MUJERES – This hotline offers general information, guidance and help to women suffering or at risk of violence. Offering free help 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, this service helped over 16,000 women between 2010 and 2011.

Women's Shelters – These offer temporary housing to women and their children who are at risk of violence. They provide safety, counseling and care, meeting the physical, emotional, social, labor, recreation and pedagogical needs of resident women and children.

Reprinted from the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United States

OUR HERITAGE



Clara Zetkin

German Marxist theorist, activist, and organizer of the first International Women's Day in 1911

Excerpt from Social Democracy & Woman Suffrage, London 1906.

We must always press on the question of Woman Suffrage when we are agitating about the Suffrage. We have always argued in the Suffrage agitation that it was a question of equal rights for men and women, and we must continue to do so till we succeed. We must be united. We know that we shall not attain the victory of Woman Suffrage in a short time, but we know; too, that in our struggles for this measure we shall revolutionise hundreds of thousands of minds. We carry on our war, not as a fight between the sexes, but as a battle against the political might of the possessing classes; as a fight which we carry on with all our might and main, without hatred of the other sex; a fight whose final aim and whose glory will be that in the broadest masses of the proletariat the knowledge shall arise that when the day of the historical development shall have made sufficient progress then the proletariat, in its entirety, without distinction of sex, shall be able to call out to the capitalist order of society: “You rest on us, you oppress us, and, see, now the building which you have erected is tottering to the ground.”



Long Live Chavez!

Long Live Fidel!

*Long Live the
Revolutionary
Women of Cuba
& Venezuela!*

By Tamara Hansen

Every year the Venezuelan Consulate in Vancouver, Canada organizes an evening to remember the anniversary of the passing of the leader of the Venezuelan revolution, Comandante Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías. This year Tamara Hansen, coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) & editorial board member of Fire This Time Newspaper, was invited to share her thoughts on this great leader. Below is her talk.

Hello everyone, my name is Tamara Hansen and I am the coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC). I want to thank the Venezuelan Consulate in Vancouver and the Hugo Chávez People's Defense Front for inviting me here tonight to take part in this event to remember the late leader of the Venezuelan Bolivarian Revolution, Comandante Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías. I would like to use this opportunity to remind everyone of the great friendship between Comandante Chávez and another great revolutionary we lost this year, the leader of the Cuban revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz.

Long live Chávez & Fidel!

Tonight it is hard to believe that we mark 4 years since the passing of Comandante Chávez, on March 5, 2013. Just a couple of days later, Fidel Castro wrote a beautiful reflection on the life of Comandante Chávez, calling him "the best friend the

Cuban people have had throughout their history." Comandante Fidel explained what an honour it was to fight alongside him, writing, "the honor befell us to have shared with the Bolivarian leader the same ideas of social justice and support for the exploited. The poor are the poor in any part of the world."

What does it mean to support the exploited and the poor? For Comandante Chávez, who was first elected president of Venezuela in 1998, it meant working towards the eradication of poverty in Venezuela. Lee Brown, a journalist for the Huffington Post & Telesur, wrote, "In the 15 years prior to Hugo Chávez, from 1983 to 1998, just 37 percent of the state budget went on social investment. In the 15 years of the since Hugo Chavez initiated the Bolivarian Revolution that figure has shot up to 61 percent." Why was this investment so important and impressive? Again according to Brown, "when Chavez arrived in office in 1998, Venezuelan poverty levels were at 44 percent. The Revolution has reduced this substantially to 27 percent today. Whilst extreme poverty has declined from 20% to 5.4%." These accomplishments of the Bolivarian Revolution mirror many of the accomplishments achieved by the Cuban revolution, however in a very different context.

Maduro & Raúl continue the legacy

After the passing of Comandante Chávez, while Fidel declared Chávez the "Best

Friend" of Cuba, Cuban President Raúl Castro also reflected on the importance of Comandante Chávez. Raúl stated, "He was invincible. He left victorious and no one can take that away. It is fixed in history." These words recalled all of the important victories Comandante Chávez made against his political opponents with the support of the Venezuelan people both electorally and in the streets of Venezuela.

In November 2016, it was Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's turn to express his feelings towards Cuba after the passing of Comandante Fidel Castro. Maduro said, "Fidel was a human being beyond what is normal, we all know that. He was and will remain a living legend." The friendship between Cuba and Venezuela extends far beyond just its leaders. The people of these two countries have come together on many efforts to build and strengthen the gains of their revolutions.

International Women's Day 2017

Many articles have been written about the work these two great revolutions have done together. Mostly from the point of view of formal trade agreements or the founding powerful regional organizations such as ALBA (the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America) and CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States). However, these institutions are so much more, allowing Cuba and Venezuela to cooperate on improving food, education, health,

transportation, energy, science, sports, culture, technology and the environment for their peoples. Their cooperation has been built on mutual respect and a desire for fair and just trade agreements rather than the free trade model of neo-liberal capitalism, which always leaves the poor getting poorer and the rich getting richer.

However, because International Women's Day is only a few days away, I wanted to take a moment to discuss the respect and advancement of women's rights in Venezuela and Cuba under the leadership of both Comandante Chávez and Comandante Fidel.

Venezuela

The Venezuelan Constitution passed by referendum in 1999, contains an important provision for women and gender equality, Article 88 states, "The State guarantees the equality and equitable treatment of men and women in the exercise of the right to work. The state recognizes work at home as an economic activity that creates added value and produces social welfare and wealth. Housewives are entitled to Social Security in accordance with law." The idea of paying women for staying at home and being housewives, continues to be a revolutionary one, not often accepted around the world. Adding to this, in October 1999, Venezuela saw the creation of INAMUJER, the National Women's Institute. In March 2006, Venezuela announced the creation of *Misión Madres del Barrio* (Mission Mothers of the Barrio). This mission aimed at lowering youth drug use, lowering unwanted pregnancies in young women and girls and finally aiding mothers whose families were living in extreme poverty. In ten years this mission has benefited more than 100,000 Venezuelan women and their families with education, food and recreational projects. This includes providing women living in extreme poverty with a monthly stipend from the government. This was followed in 2009 by the foundation of MinMujer, Venezuela's Ministry of Women and

Gender Equality.

Under the leadership of Comandante Chávez, Venezuela put forward many new and revolutionary initiatives to support women. At the same time, we must recognize that the Cuban revolution had been working on many similar projects since 1959, when Comandante Fidel called women's struggle for equality, "a revolution with the revolution". Working with prominent Cuban women, such as: Celia Sanchez, Melba Hernandez, Haydee Santamaria and Vilma Espin, Comandante Fidel helped initiate the Cuban Women's Federation (FMC) in 1960.

Cuba

Cuba's first constitution after the revolution, passed by referendum in 1976, included a special article for women and gender equality, similar to the Venezuelan one. Cuba's article 44 states, "Women and men enjoy equal economic, political, cultural, social, and familial rights. The State guarantees that women will be offered the same opportunities and possibilities as men to achieve their full participation in the development of the country. [...] The State strives to create all the conditions that will lead to the implementation of the principle of equality."

Because of these gains and many others, Cuban and Venezuelan women have consistently been on the front lines defending both the Cuban and Bolivarian revolutions. Comandante Chávez, Fidel, Maduro and Raúl have always made sure to give women the credit they deserve, acknowledging on many occasions that the success of these two revolutions is due to the grassroots work and sweat of women.

On September 12, 2012 Comandante Chávez spoke at a meeting with women in defence of the homeland. He asked the crowd, "¿de dónde debe surgir ese conjunto de nuevas políticas para



Venezuelan women in support of the Bolivarian Revolution



Organizers with the Cuban Women's Federation

ir logrando de manera mucho más firme la igualdad de género? ¿De Chávez? ¿De las ministras? No. De las mismas mujeres, de las bases populares, de las mujeres organizadas, de los movimientos de las mujeres, como aquí lo estamos oyendo ahora mismo." In English: "Where should new policies to strengthen gender equality emerge from in order to continue our achievements? From Chávez? From the ministers? No. It should be from the same women, from the grassroots, from organized women, from women's movements, as we are hearing here today."

Long live the revolutionary peoples of Venezuela & Cuba!

Of course these revolution owe a great debt to their unwavering and incorruptible leaders, but these leaders could not pursue their objective of a better world without oppressed and working people who are willing to take action. The great and revolutionary people of Venezuela and Cuba, especially the women of these countries, are to be celebrated for their work and accomplishments under the guidance of these great leaders.

¡Viva Chávez! ¡Viva Fidel!
 ¡Viva Maduro! ¡Viva Raúl!
 ¡Viva las Mujeres Revolucionarias de Venezuela & Cuba!

Follow Tamara Hansen on Twitter:
 @THans01



Tamara speaking at event commemorating the life of Comandante Chavez



* EN ESPAÑOL *

inicio de la Revolución Bolivariana a valientes mujeres en altos cargos de gobierno como por ejemplo desde Presidentas de Consejos Comunales, Comités de Tierras Urbanas, Mesas Técnicas de Agua, Comités de Salud, Comités de Madres del Barrio, Facilitadoras, Concejalas,



Diputadas, Gobernadoras de estados, Alcaldesas, así como Juezas, Magistradas, Ministras, Presidenta del Tribunal Supremo de Justicia, Fiscal General de la República, Defensora del Pueblo, entre otros.

Cabe recalcar que el Presidente Chávez, tenía muy clara la situación de la mujer venezolana en sus pensamientos y en sus sentimientos por la que luchó desde siempre para darle su sitio merecido en el accionar político del país en todos los

Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia, Ley de Protección y Apoyo a la Lactancia Materna, Ley de Protección de las Familias, la Maternidad y la Paternidad, Protección laboral de la Maternidad y Apoyo a la Lactancia Materna, entre otros instrumentos legales, sumado a Fiscalías, Casas de la Mujer, Institutos estatales y municipales de atención a la Mujer entre otros que le da derechos y protección, logros que se han alcanzado en la Revolución Bolivariana.

Cada 8 de marzo, las mujeres venezolanas celebran la lucha, en su rol como trabajadoras y los logros alcanzados de la construcción y consolidación de la Revolución Bolivariana. En Venezuela la mujer ha tenido avances y logros significativos y dignificativos, alcanzando liderazgo y participación protagónica en el contexto actual del país y que se replican por toda América Latina y el Caribe gracias a las ideas revolucionarias, socialistas y feministas del Comandante Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías.

Larga es la lista de mujeres venezolanas luchadoras y aguerridas que han hecho Revolución y que han dado su vida por sus ideales libertarios y de igualdad de derechos e inclusión en todas las áreas de la vida del país desde tiempos pasados, y es en la actualidad cuando la mujer venezolana ha tenido los mayores logros de participación protagónica en la construcción de la Patria.

Es así como se puede observar desde el



La Mujer Venezolana de Revolución en Revolución

niveles y áreas de participación y es por eso que en su declaración como feminista, señaló que la mujer venezolana debe ocupar el lugar que le corresponde en la construcción de la patria socialista. "Soy Feminista" dijo, y aseguró que "no puede haber Revolución sin la participación de las mujeres de la patria".



Actualmente la mujer venezolana cuenta con el Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Mujer y la Igualdad de Género, el Instituto Nacional de la Mujer, la Ley de Igualdad de Oportunidades para la Mujer, la Ley Orgánica sobre el Derecho de las

En estos tiempos cuando nos enfrentamos al desafío económico que tiene por delante Venezuela, es la mujer quien enciende con fuerza uno de los Motores de Producción Socialista puestos en marcha por el Presidente Nicolás Maduro, con los que se busca poner en una senda positiva la economía del país, y éste es precisamente el Motor Agroalimentario; orientado al impulso de la soberanía alimentaria repotenciando la producción del campo y el desarrollo de la industria agropecuaria.

"La mujer como ente, la mujer como ser, la mujer como esencia solo puede liberarse en medio de una revolución socialista, no hay otra forma"

Hugo Chávez, marzo del 2010.

Créditos: Victoria Del Nero
Prensa Inamujer (Caracas, 8.03.2016)
www.inamujer.gob.ve



By Janine Solanki

Violence against women in Canada is an often overlooked, silent tragedy. For Indigenous women in Canada this tragedy is even more severe, as the reported rates of violence, including domestic and sexual assault, are 3.5 times higher than for non-Indigenous women. To add insult to injury, cases of murdered or missing Indigenous women often are not properly investigated and their killers are not brought to justice. After decades of outcry, a 2014 RCMP report concluded that there were 1,181 people-reported cases of homicides and long-term disappearances involving Indigenous women and girls between 1980 and 2012. However this does not include deaths deemed not suspicious or disappearances which were never reported. Estimates bring the true number of killings and disappearances closer to 4,000.

In Vancouver the lives of the murdered and missing women are remembered at the Downtown Eastside Annual Women's Memorial March. For 27 years every February 14th, Valentine's Day, this march pays respects to the mothers, daughters and sisters lost and demands that justice be

served. The march calls attention not only to the fact that women are being murdered or going missing, but to the conditions that make them especially vulnerable. The government of Canada is failing women, particularly Indigenous women, when it does not deal with systematic racism, poverty, homelessness and addiction.

This year on Tuesday February 14th, families of the murdered and missing women started off the day with a gathering at the Carnegie



Community Centre Theatre in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES), to share memories of their loved ones. At noon the intersection of Main and Hastings filled with hundreds of people including DTES and Indigenous community

members, social justice activists and people who wanted to stand up against the ongoing violence against women. The memorial march made its way through the streets, led by the powerful drumming of Indigenous elders, and stopped at various points to commemorate where a women had been last seen or found. The march returned to Main and Hastings for speeches from community activists, before the crowd continued to nearby Oppenheimer Park for a healing circle. The day came to a close with

a community feast at the Japanese Language Hall.

This annual march continues to draw attention to the crisis of violence and abuse that women, especially Indigenous women face. The government of Canada is spending half a billion dollars celebrating Canada's 150th birthday, a founding that marks the colonial theft of Indigenous lands and the genocide of Indigenous nations. One must ask, how can such extravagance be spent when women's centers and addiction and rehabilitation centers are grossly underfunded and homelessness is on the rise? It is up to justice-loving people to take on the struggle to end violence against women each day, and to demand action from the government of Canada to end poverty, homelessness and violence against women.

Follow Janine on Twitter: @janinesolanki



Syrian government is winning the war

President Assad must stay, Imperialists and mercenaries must go!

By *Azza Rojbi*

“The words ‘never again’ ring hollow as the city of Aleppo, Syria, has fallen to regime forces of Bashar al-Assad. A brutal siege that has ground on for years was finally brought to a bloody end by a surge of Russian airpower, Iranian shock troops and assorted regional militia fighters. As we eulogize the dead of Aleppo, we must acknowledge the United States’ complicity in this tragedy,” US Senator John McCain wrote in a Washington Post opinion piece.

McCain was not the only one to mourn the liberation of Aleppo by the Syrian Arab Army. The mainstream media was quick to publish stories and reports condemning the so called ‘war crimes’ committed by the Assad government in Aleppo. Attacks on Assad and the Syrian government continue to be a justification for war and occupation in Syria.

The media campaign against the Syrian government has escalated most recently with Amnesty International releasing a report on ‘Human Slaughterhouses’ claiming atrocities committed by the Syrian government. The validity and credibility of the report has been questioned by several investigative journalists who pointed out numerous discrepancies and stories from unverified witnesses. In an interview with Sputnik, Peter Ford, the former British ambassador to Syria, questioned the motives behind the release of this Amnesty report and said that it would not withstand scrutiny. This of course did not stop CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera and all major mainstream media from jumping into the opportunity to spin these stories against the Syrian government.

The timing of the release of the report is also questionable. It was released at the same time as we saw images and stories of Syrians celebrating the liberation of Aleppo and returning to the devastated former rebel-held districts to rebuild their lives. In an interview on CBC radio’s The Current, Reverend Ibrahim Nseir, a resident of Aleppo said, commenting about Aleppo today, “Today, life is better, and life is going to get even better...We know some people

who went back to their homes, and started to rebuild.”

What Really Happened in 2011?

The ‘civil war’ on Syria started in 2011, created and fueled by the United States and its imperialist allies. Money and weapons poured into Syria to support the so called ‘moderate rebels’ overthrow the Syrian government of Bashar Al-Assad.

In 2015, the Pentagon had planned to spend \$500 million to create and train ‘moderate’ rebels to fight in Syria. The plan was a total failure and the Pentagon eventually suspended the program, but not before spending roughly \$384 million. However, the cancellation of the program didn’t equal a stop in US support for terrorist groups in Syria. The US announced that it shifted its strategy to finance and arm the already existent rebel groups on the ground. This US policy of arming and funding anti-government forces in Syria has resulted in the rise of Daesh (ISIS/ISIL) and other terrorist organisations. These are the same terrorist groups that the US and its allies are claiming to be fighting against today in Iraq and Syria.

The United States took advantage of internal disagreements

and disputes in Syria to impose an armed conflict in the country to overthrow the government of Bashar Al-Assad and impose their own puppet regime. The US has no interest in the democratic or human rights of the Syrian people, just as it had no interest in the well being of the Afghan, Iraqi and Libyan people.

Turning Point

In September 2013 US President Obama announced that the Syrian government had crossed a ‘red line’ and threatened direct military intervention in Syria. This ‘red line’ was based on unverified accounts of the Syrian government’s use of chemical weapons against its own people. Since





then, evidence appears to indicate that anti-government terrorist groups were responsible for these attacks, which they carried out with the goal of drawing more military support. The so called 'red line' case collapsed and was diffused by Russia's intervention to broker a deal with the Syrian government.

The US and its allies have continued their campaign of deception and lies against the Syrian government, while pretending to champion human rights and the fight against ISIS/ISIL. Although, it is becoming increasingly clear that the US-led coalition to fight ISIS/ISIL never had the goal to eradicate the terrorist group. Instead, their goal is to create more chaos in Syria and aid in the overthrow of Assad's government.

However, on the ground, the coalition of Russia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon Hezbollah and Syria has been carrying out its successful military campaign to eliminate ISIS/ISIL and other terrorist groups. Since their campaign began, hundreds of terrorist camps and facilities in Syria have been destroyed and the Syrian Arab Army has launched many successful military offensives against terrorist groups.

As of July 2016, Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu announced that, "With active aircraft and artillery support of the Russian group, Syrian troops have seized back 586 settlements, including 150 cities and more than 12,000 square kilometers of land. This gave possibility for 264,000 refugees to return to the places of their permanent domicile."

The tides are turning against the US government and their mercenaries as they continue losing ground and influence in Syria.

Syria and the New Era of War and Occupation

In the last 16 years, since the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 under the pretext of fighting against terrorism, we have constantly seen examples and images of

the daily tragedies and bloodshed that imperialist forces and their allies have inflicted upon the people of Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Libya, Mali, Syria, Palestine, Yemen and many other oppressed countries. This New Era of War and Occupation is expanding every day fuelled by a global economic crisis and the competition of

imperialist governments for hegemony in the region.

As one of the only few remaining independent states in the Middle East that does not abide by US rules, defeating Syria is strategically important for imperialist forces. No matter if you agree or disagree with the Syrian government, the question is: will its overthrow by imperialist powers and their mercenaries put the Syrian people in a better position? Do the US and its allies really have the well being of the Syrian people in mind? We need only to look to the chaos and destruction that the US wars and occupations have created in the Middle East and North Africa. Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya have been completely destroyed by imperialists so called "humanitarian interventions" and "democracy building" projects.

Building the Syria Solidarity Movement, Building a Stronger Antiwar Movement

The United States and its allies have no interest in the well being of people in the Middle East and North Africa. The Syrian people deserve a future with peace and prosperity, not more death and destruction. How would that future will look and who would be leading it, is up to them to decide without any imperialist intervention or US backed mercenaries.

"I have hope now that a new sun will soon rise to cover all the destruction," said Isahak Kraymeen to an LA Times journalist as he took a break from selling tamarind juice at the Hamidiya souk in Damascus' Old City.

A defeat for the imperialist agenda in Syria is a victory for poor and oppressed people through the world. As peace loving people we must oppose this latest imperialist war and aggression against the Syrian people and join our voices together to create an effective campaign to demand:

US Hands Off Syria! No War on Syria!

*Follow Azza Rojbi on Twitter:
@Azza_R14*

DEFIANT SYRIA:
dispatches from the Second International Tour of Peace to Syria



by Ken Stone

Veteran, Canadian, anti-war activist Ken Stone has written a series of reports from the Second International Tour of Peace which visited Syria from April 12-18, 2016. The eye-witness reports document the observance of the Syrian parliamentary elections of April 13; the destruction and reconstruction in Homs; the peace and reconciliation efforts of the Syrian government towards the armed opposition; the damage wrought by ISIS upon the ancient world heritage site at Palmyra; and the defiant, upbeat, and resilient attitudes of Syrians about the future, despite five long years of foreign aggression against their country.

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**Independent Journalist
Eva Bartlett
Resource for
SYRIA
News and Analysis**



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Eva Bartlett is an independent writer and rights activist with extensive experience in Syria and in the Gaza Strip. Since April 2014, she has visited Syria 6 times, including two months in summer 2016 and one month in Oct/Nov 2016. Eva continues writing and speaking about Syria at many international institutions; including at a United Nations press conference that was reported on around the world.

By Alison Bodine

On February 15, 2017 CCN en Español (CNNE) television station was taken off the air in Venezuela. Without missing a beat, mainstream Western media condemned the government of Venezuela and the President of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro for this action. In their reporting, these same media sources completely brushed-aside Venezuela's sovereignty, excluding any references to the laws and regulations in Venezuela that governed the decision to take CNNE off the air.

Why was CNN Taken Off the Air in Venezuela?

In simple form, CCN en Español (CNNE) was sanctioned and taken off the air in Venezuela because they broke Venezuelan Law.

In Venezuela there is a regulatory body that governs radio and television broadcasts, called the National Telecommunications Commission (CONATEL). Outside of functions such as regulating children's programming, or determining hours of adult content, this body enforces the Law on Social Responsibility in Radio, Television and Electronic Media, which was passed by Venezuela's National Assembly in 2004. This law requires that media outlets "promote social justice and further the development of the citizenry, democracy, peace, human rights, education, culture, public health, and the nation's social and economic development" with their programming.

To better understand the intentions of the Law, which CNNE broke, it is useful to here it explained from a Venezuelan perspective. In 2011, Venezuela's Ministry of Communication and Information did an interview with Venezuela Analysis. When asked to explain the modifications to the Law made in 2010, they stated "Concretely, the law provides for sanctions against those who use the Internet to incite hate, criminal activity, war propaganda, alterations in public order, homicide; or advocate to disobey constitutional authority." The Law has the same intention when applied to television and radio.

It is CONATEL that ordered CNN en Español to be put under administrative restrictions and removed from Venezuelan cable and satellite news channels for violating this Law. As CONATEL stated "This decision is the result of content that CNN en Español has been systematically and repeatedly disseminating... Content that [could constitute] direct attacks that threaten the peace and democratic stability of our Venezuelan people..."

What Does CNN en Español Say?

In response to the actions of CONATEL, CNNE released a statement claiming their

CNN THE MOUTHPIECE FOR U.S. INTERVENTION IN VENEZUELA EN ESPAÑOL

innocence and stating that "CNN stands by our network's reporting and our commitment to truth and transparency."

So, what is the "truth" and "transparency" when it comes to the reporting of CNNE?

One does not have to look too far back to see the lies and manipulations in CCN's statement. At the beginning of February, 2017 CCN en Español aired a report called "Passports in the Shadows," (titled "Pasaportes en la Sombra" in Spanish) which also aired on CCN's English network. Among other accusations, this report claimed that the Venezuelan Embassy in Iraq, as well as identification and passport offices in Venezuela, have been issuing passports, visas and Venezuelan identification to members of terrorist organizations. The report even goes as far as to claim that they have received a "confidential intelligence report from the region" that implicated Venezuela's new Vice President Tareck El Aissami, with issuing "173 Venezuelan passports and IDs issued to individuals from the Middle East, including people connected to the terrorist group Hezbollah."

"Passports in the Shadows" was based on the word of three main "witnesses." One was Misael Lopez, a former official at the Venezuelan Embassy in Iraq who now lives in Spain. As reported by Venezuela's foreign minister, Delcy Rodríguez, Lopez has been charged with sexual harassment, identity theft and unauthorized travel related to his work as a representative of Venezuela in Iraq. Photos have also proven

that Lopez has close ties to Venezuela's counter-revolutionary opposition. CNNE did not include this important information about their star witness in any of their reports.

Their other "witness" was Marco Ferreira, a Venezuelan now living in Miami in the United States. Ferreira left Venezuela after he was implicated in the 2002 coup against the leader of the Bolivarian Revolution and Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez.

CCNE also centered their report on an interview with Roger Noriega, a long-time agent of U.S. imperialism in Latin America and proponent of U.S. regime change programs in Latin America and the Caribbean. Among other infamous credentials, Noriega was the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemispheric affairs under George W. Bush when the U.S./Canada and France overthrew the democratically elected President of Haiti, Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Noriega's comments about Venezuela were a thinly veiled call for intervention in Venezuela, "If we do not get our arms around this problem, people are going to die, our facilities are going to be attacked by networks abetted by the Venezuelans...the passports are a critical part of this. They are literally their ticket into the hemisphere."

This year was not the first time that CCN en Español has been implicated in the fomentation of violence and unrest in the Venezuela. In 2015, the



Top: Rally against CNN outside the National Commission of Telecommunications, Caracas, Venezuela. February 16, 2017.

Right: Rally against CNN, signs read "CNN Get Out of Here" Caracas, Venezuela. February 21, 2017.



CONATEL launched investigations into CNNE for their false reporting of violence in Venezuela. In reply, CNNE blamed the lies on human error and mistakes.

Increasing U.S. Attacks on Venezuela

Major media would like people to believe that the "information" uncovered in the "Passports in the Shadows" report is the reason that CCNE was taken off the air. However, considering this report in the context of the political situation around the world, it is clear that the role of CCNE goes much deeper than one piece of so-called investigative journalism.

It is no coincidence that CNNE's report and provocations against the government and sovereignty of Venezuela come at a time of increasing U.S. threats of against the Bolivarian Revolution. At a time of increased U.S. wars and occupations and in the name of the so-called "War on Terror," this is also a very dangerous attack. By attempting to tie the Venezuelan government to "terrorist groups," they are encouraging U.S. and international imperialist intervention.

These attacks, supported by mainstream Western media, have especially come against Venezuela's new Vice President, Tareck El Aissami, who was appointed Vice President in January, 2017. In seemingly perfect coordination, the CNNE report which tied Tareck El Aissami to U.S. declared terrorist organizations came only days before the U.S. Department of Treasury issued sanctions against him on February 13, 2017, claiming him to be a "specially designated drug trafficker." Tareck El Aissami has responded

to these unfounded allegations in a letter to the head of the U.S. Treasury, originally published as an advertisement in the New York Times, which also appears in this issue of Fire This Time)

These latest escalated attacks on Venezuela's Vice President are also in-line with a February 8, 2017

funded through the United States have all worked together to try and create dissent and destabilization in Venezuela.

Through lies and manipulations, media outlets like CNN en Español work to foment fear, anxiety and division among the people of Venezuela and promote foreign intervention. In this work they are hand-in-hand with the U.S. government and the counter-revolutionary opposition in Venezuela in their attempt to overthrow Nicolas Maduro and overturn the gains of the Bolivarian Revolution.

As President Maduro stated on his "Sundays with Maduro" television program on February 9, "They are going to open the door to a criminal intervention by the Empire, to ask for intervention, and that is a crime in any country, an affront to the Constitution is treason to the Homeland."

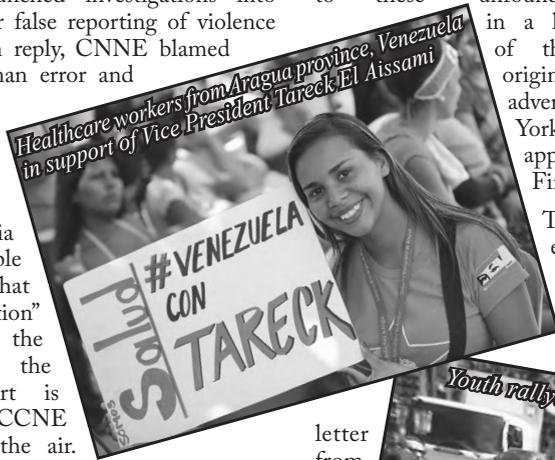
Solidarity with Venezuela: Now More Than Ever Before!

In response to these latest attacks, the people of Venezuela are continuing to stand in defense of the Bolivarian revolution.

They continue organizing and mobilizing on the streets of Venezuela, as well as working to build community and grassroots media to combat the control of privately owned media in Venezuela.

From Canada and the U.S. it is especially important that we stand in solidarity with the people of Venezuela as they fight to defend the tremendous gains of their revolution. We must demand an end to U.S. intervention in Venezuela, and also stand with the right of Venezuela to their sovereignty and self-determination. Who is CCN en Español, the New York Times, or any capitalist media outlet to define what gets played on the Venezuela airwaves! Let the people of Venezuela and their Bolivarian Revolution decide!

Follow Alison Bodine on Twitter: @Alisoncolette



letter from 3 4 U.S.



members of Congress to President Trump. This inflammatory letter calls for sanctions against Venezuelan government officials as well as increasing funding for "pro-democracy" programs in Venezuela. It is no surprise that this letter was spear-headed by reactionary Cuban-American Senators Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Robert Menendez, who are strong promoters of U.S. intervention and regime change programs in Latin America and the Caribbean.

It is no surprise that the U.S. State Department has also joined in these increasing attacks against Venezuela. With a statement released on Saturday, February 18 titled "Venezuela: Political Prisoners Should Be Released Immediately," they declared that "We call for the immediate release of all prisoners of conscience, respect for the rule of law, the freedom of the press, the separation of constitutional powers within the government, and the restoration of a democratic process that reflects the will of the Venezuelan people." The record of U.S. intervention around the world from Iraq and Libya to Somalia and Syria has shown us the real meaning of U.S. calls for "democracy" and "rule of law." They are nothing but code words for U.S.-led wars and occupations and intervention.

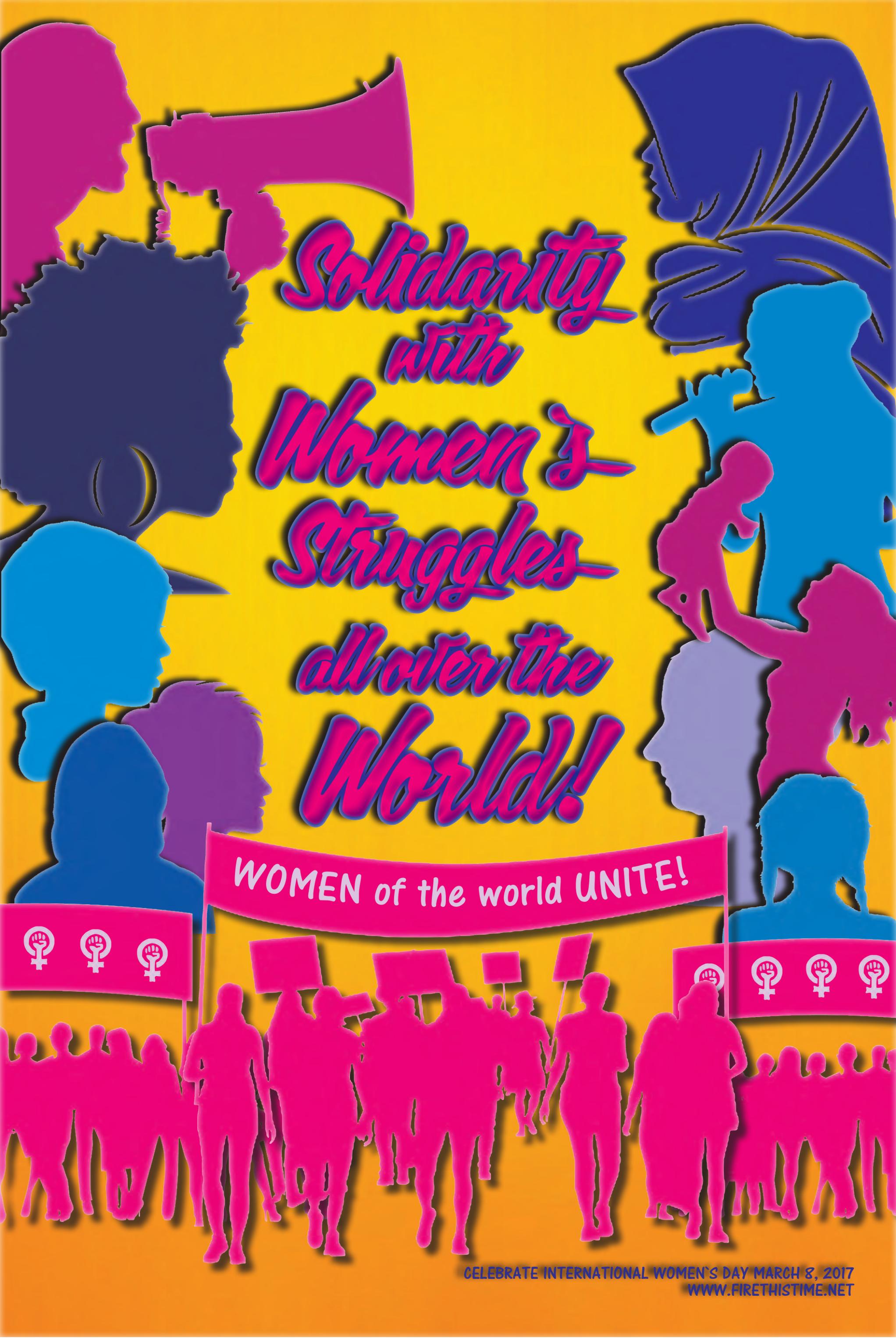
Media and the Bolivarian Revolution

Media attacks against Venezuela are nothing new; in fact the mainstream media is one of the main tools used by the U.S. and their allies against the government of Venezuela and the Bolivarian Revolution since Comandante Hugo Chavez was elected in 1998. International capitalist media, privately owned media in Venezuela and finally, civil society and press organizations directly



Cartoon reads "If Telesur can't go to the US, why must Venezuela have CNN en Español?"





*Solidarity
with
Women's
Struggles
all over the
World!*

WOMEN of the world UNITE!





Refugees at the border fence between Macedonia and Greece

FROM TRUMP TO CANADA TO THE EU: Attacks on Refugees and Immigrants Continue

By Alison Bodine

In the middle of winter, the icy and barren border between the United States and Canada is the last place anyone would want to be. Let alone, to be out walking without sufficient clothing, carrying what little that you own in duffle bags and rolling suitcases. However, this unforgiving landscape is exactly where hundreds of refugees have found themselves as they continue their difficult and dangerous journey to find somewhere to be safe.

Nearly 450 refugees crossed from the United States into Canada between January 1 and February 21, 2017 by walking through the bitter cold into Quebec, Manitoba, and British Columbia, some losing fingers and toes to the frostbite.

Crisis for Humanity

The tragic experiences of these refugees are not isolated and they are not rare. Millions of people are continuing to flee the wars, occupations and destruction caused by U.S.-led intervention in the Middle East and Africa. In 2016, the United Nations (UN) announced the world was facing the largest refugee crisis ever seen. 65.3 million people on this planet have been displaced from their homes.

More than 80% of refugees fleeing their

homes stay in the region which they have fled according to the UN Refugee Agency. Turkey, for example, is hosting more than 2.8 million Syrian refugees and refugees in Lebanon now make up one-fifth of the population of the entire country. What the last two years have shown the world, however, is that staying the region is no longer an option for millions of displaced people. They have been forced to leave the Middle East and Africa entirely, risking their lives for Europe because there is just nowhere else that they can be.

In the face of this tragedy, first 2015, then 2016 became the deadliest year ever recorded for refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea. As reported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in 2016 alone, over 5,000 people lost their lives in its unforgiving waves. Just this year, more than 485 refugees have already drowned as they have continued to flee the devastation of imperialist intervention in their countries.

Europe Continues to Fail Refugees

For more than two years, European countries have claimed to be working on a “solution” to the refugee crisis, but the situation for refugees in Europe is worse than ever before. Since 2015, only 13,546 refugees have been relocated within

Europe from make-shift refugee camps in Greece and Italy, where tens of thousands of refugees have been forced to live. The number of refugees stranded in these overcrowded, often dirty and unsafe camps continues to grow.

The United Kingdom is one example of the inhuman and callous response to the refugee crisis in Europe. In 2016, the U.K. resettled less than 3,000 refugees. To put this in perspective the IOM reported that nearly 365,000 refugees landed in Europe that same year.

In France, Social Workers Without Borders has visited the centres for refugee children that were once living in the make-shift refugee camp in Calais, France. They found that “...some of the centres fail to provide adequate support for the deteriorating mental wellbeing of most of the youngsters, including a 14-year-old boy who has attempted suicide multiple times.” In many cases, these children are in France because they have been denied entry into the U.K.

U.S. President Trump’s ban

Then there is the completely inhuman response of the United States to the refugee crisis, both under President Obama and now under President Trump. Over the eight years that Obama was President of the U.S. only 18,000 Syrian refugees were resettled



Refugees cross from the U.S. into Canada near Hemmingford, Quebec - Feb. 20, 2017

in the United States (Migration Policy Institute). In fact, during the refugee crisis, from September of 2015 - September 2016, only 85,000 refugees from anywhere in the world were re-settled in the United States.

Now, the U.S. government has launched an assault on refugees. At the end of January, President Trump issued an executive order halting the U.S. refugee program for 120 days, and banning Syrian refugees for an indefinite period. At the same time, this order also barred entry into the United States for visitors, immigrants and refugees from seven Muslim countries: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. Although most of this order is now held up in the court system, President Trump is expected to issue another similar order in March. However, one part of the order that remains in place is a cap on the number of refugees that will be accepted in the U.S. this year at 50,000.

Canada and the Refugee Crisis

Despite not yet being able to implement a complete ban on refugees, President Trump's executive order did introduce a new wave of fear into the immigrant and refugee community in the United States. One result of this fear campaign, as well as the growing campaign of racism and Islamophobia that preceded it, was an increase in the number of refugees crossing from the U.S. into Canada over the last few months. For example, during the month of January, the border crossing at Saint-Bernard-de-Lacolle, Quebec reported that they had received 452 asylum seekers, up from usual rates of 10-20 per month.

The refugee support group in Vancouver, the Settlement Orientation Services, has also

reported that they have already received 60% more refugees than they would expect to see in an entire year, with most of them coming from Iraq and Afghanistan.

The fear mongering by the U.S. government is one factor that brings refugees to cross the border into Canada. Another factor is the Canada's false image as a country that welcomes refugees with open arms. Through a well-crafted public relations campaign, the government of Canada has been able to build themselves up as a so-called good example of a how a government in the West should respond to the refugee crisis. But, what really is the reality for refugees in Canada?

#WelcometoCanada?

One day after President Trump issued the executive order, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau sent out a Tweet - "To those fleeing persecution, terror & war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength #WelcomeToCanada"

To most people, this would sound like an appeal to refugees to come to Canada, especially those that had been the target of persecution in the United States. This, however, is not apparently what the government of Canada meant. In fact, contrary to this tweet, the Liberal government lowered the cap on the number of refugee applications, and the number of refugees that would be allowed into Canada this year was lowered as well to 40,000.

The government of Canada's policy towards

refugees is also further exposed through the Safe Third Country agreement with the United States. The Safe Third Country agreement is still in place to this day, meaning that refugees are not able to claim asylum in Canada at an official U.S./Canada border crossing and are forced to risk their lives to cross into Canada irregularly to have a chance at staying.

Beyond these recent responses to a continuously growing refugee crisis, the government of Canada also failed to fulfill their promise of bringing 25,000 government-sponsored Syrian refugees to Canada. In fact, to this day they have only brought 21, 876. Including private sponsorship, a total of 40,081 Syrian refugees have been settled in Canada since November, 2015. This is nothing when compared to the more than 11 million people in Syria who have been displaced by the U.S.-proxy war on their country.

On February 21, 2017, the government of Canada announced that they would be accepting 1,200 Yazidi refugees from Northern Iraq this year. However, rather than being a gesture based in humanity, this decision is a calculated political maneuver. Yazidi's are not Muslim, so any U.S. "Muslim-ban" would not apply to them. Yes, the Yazidi people, as with all other victims of Daesh (ISIS/ISIL) need to be granted



refugee status, but their case carries the same urgency as millions of other refugees fleeing wars and occupation in the Middle East and North Africa.

Already, Canada ranks 20th in world for the number of refugees accepted per capita. As of 2014, Canada had accepted 1 refugee for every 2000 people in Canada, less than 0.5% of the population. So, where is the #WelcomeToCanada for refugees from Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and all countries where Canada has a history of intervention and destruction? What about refugees from Afghanistan, where Canada deployed

their largest military mission since World War II? In fact, in the years between 2010 and 2015 Canada settled less than 2,000 refugees from Afghanistan. And this is a country that Canada helped to destroy with more than 40,000 troops over 13 years.

What About Refugees Who Claim Asylum in Canada?

It is also important to examine Canada's treatment of refugees that claim asylum once they are in Canada. These refugees, including those that are walking through the U.S./Canada border in the middle of winter, are first processed by Canada's Border Services Agency (CBSA), often after being arrested by the RCMP. If the refugees can prove their identities and are not deemed a threat to Canada, they are supposed to be released into Canada to await a hearing in front of the Immigration and Refugee Board.

This, of course is not always the case and some refugees are held in detention centres across the country. As the CBSA reports, at any given time there are 450-500 people detained in Canada, some of whom are detained in jails although they have committed no crime. Since 2000, 15 immigrants and refugees have died while being held in detention centres in Canada.

Canada is also a country that allows for the indefinite detention of immigrants and

reported by CBC that there is a lack of CBSA officials to deal with the increasing number of asylum claims, meaning more and more refugees must wait in detention and uncertainly. Canada's Minister of Immigration has also claimed a shortage of personal to process refugee applications as a reason for lowering the cap. Instead of claiming not enough workers to process applications, putting the lives of thousands of people in limbo at best, and danger at worst, how about they just hire more people to do the work?

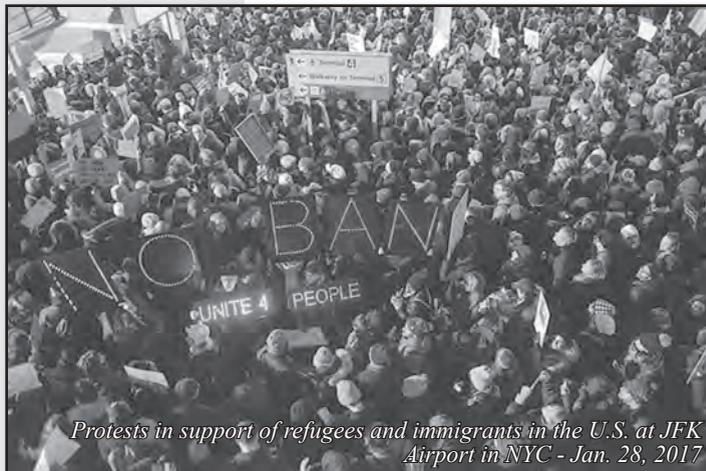
Open the Borders NOW! End Wars and Occupations!

Despite what mainstream media and U.S. President Trump would like people to believe, being an immigrant is not a crime. Being a refugee is not a crime. Crossing a border between the U.S. and Canada or floating on an unstable rubber dingy through the Mediterranean from Libya to Italy, these are not crimes.

In 2016, 40% of all the refugees who risked their lives crossing the deadly waters of the Mediterranean were from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. This is evidence

This, Mr. Trump is the crime.

Whether in Europe, the United States or in Canada, refugee resettlement programs have amounted to little more than empty gestures for millions of refugees. However, these are the exact countries that need to



Protests in support of refugees and immigrants in the U.S. at JFK Airport in NYC - Jan. 28, 2017

be taking responsibility for their murderous actions. These are the countries that must instead open their arms to refugees, granting them immediate human, democratic and legal rights.

Ultimately, the only solution to the refugee crisis facing humanity today is an end to imperialist wars, occupations and interventions in the Middle East and Africa. However, countries like the U.S. and Canada must also respond to the crisis before them today. To even begin to alleviate the human suffering caused by their warheads and fighter jets, the United States must accept at least 500,000 refugees immediately. The government of Canada, for its role as a major

imperialist aggressor and ally of the United States must also take responsibility and immediately accept 200,000 refugees.

There would be no refugee crisis if there were not wars, occupations by imperialist countries and U.S.-led foreign intervention in

the Middle East and Africa.

Follow Alison Bodine on Twitter: @Alisoncolette



Over 160,000 people protest in the streets of Barcelona, Spain in support of refugees - Feb. 18, 2017



refugees, including children. A recent study by the University of Toronto's international Human Rights program reported that an average of 48 Canadian-citizen children were detained at the immigration holding centre in Toronto each year, not to mention the hundreds of non-citizen children. This includes children that are detained for years, unable to go to school while the immigration and refugee cases of their parents are settled.

Despite the growing refugee crisis, the government of Canada is not preparing to take in more refugees. It has been

that it is state-sponsored terrorism of the U.S. government and their allies that have torn entire societies and countries apart.

TRUDEAU: WE'RE WATCHING YOU!



National Day of Action to Repeal Bill C-51!

#ProtectPressFreedom

By Thomas Davies

Onlookers might have been confused to see a large group of people crowded together in the middle of one of the most iconic squares of downtown Vancouver. They spaced themselves out deliberately with a larger group spreading out to surround a smaller group standing close together. It wouldn't have made sense right away, but it will to Justin Trudeau when he gets an aerial photograph of people making the shape of an eye with the caption, "Trudeau, We're Watching You!" In fact, Justin Trudeau will be getting photos from groups across Canada who participated in the Canadian Journalists for Free Expression's National Day of Action "Protect Press Freedom".

That National Day of Action was called in response to an Ontario court ruling that VICE news reporter Ben Makuch must hand over confidential correspondence to the RCMP from his reporting on an alleged Canadian member of ISIS in Syria. The case could set a dangerous legal precedent in Canada, opening the door to police to force journalists to hand over their confidential sources and information, and undermining their independence and ability to report on sensitive issues.

Importantly, organizers connected this fight to overall struggle in Canada to defend our democratic and human rights. The Day of Action also called for a repeal of the controversial Bill C-51, and an, "End mass surveillance and protect the private data of people and

groups in Canada, including Indigenous communities, Muslims, journalists, environmentalists, labour organizers and academics while creating independent watchdog agencies for privacy and national security."

The Vancouver action was hosted by the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51. It also made the evening news on CBC, CTV and Global, as well as being featuring on the News 1130 and many other local print and web-based publications

Actions also took place in Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, St. John's and London. Important community, media and human rights organizations also got on board including the Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec, Leadnow, Scrap C-51 Now, OpenMedia, Unifor, Reporters Without Borders, Rabble, and the Communications Workers of America (CWA/SCA Canada).

The cross-country action took place while Canada is at a human rights cross roads. Many felt they were voting for a human rights defender in Justin Trudeau in the last federal election – and have been severely disappointed. A recent Edelman poll found that only 43 per cent of Canadians say they trust their government — down from 53 per cent a year earlier. Also, 80 per cent feel the country's elites are out of touch with society.

Here's a couple of examples why:

- Despite a Liberal election promise to repeal a measure under Bill C-24 that allows the government to revoke the citizenship of foreign nationals, at least 236 people have been served notice of Canadian citizenship revocation since the Liberals came into federal office - a dramatic increase over the 65 total people targeted between 2007 and 2014 under Stephen Harper. None have been allowed a court hearing.

- After promising to make public all of the submissions to its national security "public consultation", the government of Canada has been silent and avoided the issue – much like everything else related to controversial Bill C-51.

The message of "Trudeau, We're Watching You!" is important. We must constantly compare which the Trudeau Liberal government says, and what the Trudeau Liberal government does. There are often huge contradictions which need to be exposed, especially when it comes to sensitive and important areas like human rights. Bringing this many organizations and cities together to organize for common demands is an important initiative which can and should be built on continue a longterm campaign to defend our human rights.

Trudeau, We're Watching You!
Protect Press Freedom!
Repeal Bill C-51!

Follow Thomas on Twitter: @thomasdavies59

OPPOSE CANADA'S RENEWAL OF THE MILITARY TRAINING MISSION TO UKRAINE!



Canadian Army instructors and Ukrainian Armed Forces during Exercise RAPID TRIDENT in Stryzhi, Ukraine on June 30, 2016

The Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War wrote the following article, which was published by the Hamilton Spectator newspaper. Among other antiwar campaigns, the Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War is active in organizing against US and Canadian government support for the right-wing coup government in Ukraine, and against US and Canadian military involvement in Europe including within NATO. The below article is the basis for a petition campaign calling to oppose renewing Canada's military training mission in Ukraine and calls for Canada to cut ties with NATO at <https://www.change.org/p/prime-minister-justin-trudeau-oppose-canada-s-renewal-of-the-military-training-mission-to-the-ukraine>

David Rennie*

Canada's military mission to Ukraine expires in March. For several reasons, it shouldn't be renewed.

First, the present Ukrainian government, installed in a coup orchestrated by Washington, isn't worthy of our support. According to the BBC, former US Assistant Secretary of State, Victoria Nuland, admitted that the U.S.A. spent \$5 billion over a number of years to instigate regime change in Ukraine. (1) She overthrew the democratically-elected Yanukovich government in 2014 which had less than one year remaining in its term of office and was trying to deal with competing pressures to take a financial bailout from either Russia, on the one hand, or the European Union, on the other. (2) On February 21, 2014, Yanukovich secured an agreement with European Union officials on EU economic assistance, sharing of power in Ukraine, and moving up Ukrainian elections. (3) The agreement was not good enough for US Senator John McCain and other key Democratic US policy-makers. After violent street protests, the US installed a pro-western junta, headed by billionaire Poroshenko.

According to the CBC, the Harper government allowed the Canadian embassy in Kiev to shelter the violent street protesters for one week and one embassy staffer to use an embassy vehicle (later burned) to take part in the protests. (4) In other words, Canadian tax-payers supported US regime-change in Ukraine.



Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau visiting Ukrainian President Poroshenko in Ukraine, July 12, 2016

Second, the agents of regime change recruited by Nuland were none other than gangs of thugs from several fascist parties, remnants of the very same Ukrainian fascists allied to Hitler in WW2. They fought soldiers and police in the main squares of Kiev and other cities. Poroshenko's coup government has the dubious distinction of being the only government in Europe with fascists in cabinet, several holding key security posts. Canadian veterans might be surprised to learn that the Trudeau government is considering renewing Canada's military mission to a country with the same fascists in government that they fought in WW2.

Third, the Ukrainian junta immediately implemented divisive policies, such as banning the use of the Russian language and some of the country's most popular political parties. It seems logical that Crimea would have been less likely have voted overwhelmingly to leave Ukraine and rejoin Russia, and eastern Russian-speaking regions of Ukraine would

been much more hesitant to seek independence if a more moderate and tolerant government took office following constitutional procedures. War and economic decline could have been avoided as well. Ukraine, a former Soviet republic (and a province of Tsarist Russia for the previous two hundred years) could have sought peaceful relations and constructive economic engagement with both East and West and particularly the booming economic "silk road" trade deals with China. Instead, seeking EU and NATO membership, while implementing draconian austerity policies, have only brought Ukraine to the point of economic and social collapse.

A fourth reason is the reaction of the Ukrainian government to the brutal Odessa massacre of May 2, 2014. On that day, over 40 peaceful anti-government protesters were killed and some 200 injured when pro-government thugs set fire to the Trade Union House in which they had taken shelter. This incident has not been properly investigated and no culprits arrested or punished.

Finally, contrary to the promises made to the last Soviet president, Mikhail Gorbachev, NATO expansion continued to the east, along with a continuing military build-up, missile installations, and war games right up to Russia's borders. It's completely understandable why Russians feel encircled by NATO, especially now with the possibility of Ukrainian membership. We should remember that Russia was invaded twice in the twentieth century from the West costing tens of millions of Russian lives and huge devastation. A major war, possibly WW3, could develop from aggressive NATO expansion along the Russian frontier. Placing Canadian soldiers there makes no sense at all.

It's time that the Trudeau government broke with aggressive Harper-era policies and dealt fairly and diplomatically with the Russian Federation. For this reason, it would be far wiser for the Trudeau government not to extend the military mission to Ukraine and to pull its troops and equipment out of all the frontier states with Russia. Indeed, Canadians would benefit from cutting ties with NATO altogether and pursuing instead a peaceful, humane, and independent foreign policy.

* David Rennie writes on behalf of the Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War. www.hamiltoncoalitiontostopthewar.ca



Nazi flags held by Azov battalion soldiers taking oath of allegiance to Ukraine in Kiev before deployment to Donbass region.

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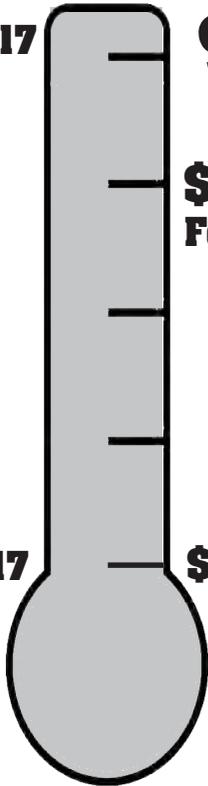
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 Editorial Board of the Fire This Time Newspaper

Israel, Palestine & the Art of Endless Negotiation



By Noah Fine

“I’m looking at two-state and one-state,” pronounced President Trump at a press conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on February 15th. “I like the one that both parties like. I’m very happy with the one that both parties like. I can live with either one.” With that barely coherent thought, Trump outlined the path forward for Israel’s colonization of Palestine and the Trump regimes unequivocal support for Israel’s desires against those of Palestine.

For 60 years already, since 1947, endless negotiations, treaties, peace deals and more have been debated and signed by the leaders and ‘experts’ of the conflict. But after so much time has passed with no progress it would appear that perhaps the art of the deal is more important than the deal itself.

Road to Peace or Dead End?

Since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 by the Israeli PM at the time Yitzhak Rabin and PLO leader Yassir Arafat, little has changed the course of Israeli development

and further occupation in the illegally occupied territories of the West Bank. The Accords which were meant to usher in a Palestinian State alongside Israel, halt Israeli expansion into the West Bank and withdraw Israeli military from Palestinian territory among many other items in the agreement, have all been a failure. Israel has not only continued in action to reject all aspects of the Accord they have hastened the process of colonization of the territories meant to

become a Palestinian State.

Today the Palestinian West Bank is divided by the 8 meter tall apartheid wall which when complete will snake through the Palestinian territory with a length of 650 kilometres. The wall divides Palestinians from each other and makes travelling to school or work nearly impossible with long line-ups to pass through the Israeli checkpoints dispersed across the wall.

Today despite the Oslo Accords and over a dozen UN resolutions condemning Israeli settlements in the West Bank more than 600,000 Israeli settlers live in the Palestinian territory and since President Trump has come to power the Israeli government has approved another 4,000 settlements to be built there.

The Palestinian Gaza Strip is subjected to bi-annual bombing campaigns which level entire areas leaving Palestinians in a constant state of either being bombed or rebuilding what they lost.

In the 24 years since the Road Map to Peace or Oslo Accords were signed the situation has not improved yet quite to the contrary has become much worse for Palestinians.

“I like the one that both parties like”

The main problem with Trump’s statement, besides the fact that it appears as a joke is: of which parties is he speaking? We know the Israeli regime is one but the other is not so clear. Israel refuses to negotiate with the Palestinians they do not want to negotiate with.

Israel will only negotiate with the





Israeli apartheid wall. West Bank, Palestine.

an organized act of hate perpetrated against both Jewish, Muslim and Palestinian people to keep them divided.

No other time in history has it been clearer that Jewish and Palestinian people can and must unite together to dismantle the Israeli State and live together in peace under a democratic and secular state of Palestine, the former and proper title of the land, which Israel illegally occupies.

Much like South Africa, each human being given the

right to their vote and opinion on the organization of their future together. Let's no longer leave it to the corrupt politicians like Trump and Netanyahu to plot our fait.

Follow Noah Fine on Twitter: @noahfine

Palestinian Authority (PA) which they themselves with US help established in order to be the friendlier party to Israeli interests at the expense of Palestinians. Furthermore Palestinians have nothing to negotiate with. Their land has been stolen by Israel, they have no army, they have no resources. So on what grounds could negotiations be settled? Aren't negotiations about finding a compromise between two parties? But Palestinians have nothing left to compromise. During these decades of endless negotiations, Israel has continued stealing all Palestinian bargaining chips, their land.

Do Jews and Palestinian Inherently Hate Each Other?

Jews and Palestinian, have much greater things in common than they do against each other. In fact, acts of hate against each of the peoples have brought them closer today then ever. It is in this light that the State of Israel must be seen: As

So what is the Goal?

A couple of possibilities arise when analyzing the manoeuvrings of Israel and their political/financial backers in the US. One: that Israel plans to use their new great ally in the US government to completely colonize and ethnically cleanse Palestinians from their land, create an apartheid system in Israel where Palestinians live as second or even third class citizens or Two: that Israel and the US are quite pleased with continuing the illusion of negotiations at the expense of the Palestinian people. And after all, it has been a successful strategy of all former Israeli and US regimes for well over 25 years.



Viral photo shows Muslims & Jews standing together against Trumps Muslim Ban. Chicago O'Hare airport. January 30, 2017. Photo: Nuccio DiNuzzo

The Balfour Declaration 1917

When Zionism "Found" Land



Early Palestinian Refugee Camp

By Max Tennant

Almost one year before the end of World War I in 1918, with the defeat of the Ottoman Empire almost guaranteed, the British, along with France, were preparing to carve up the Ottoman Empire's Middle Eastern territories for their own interests. The plan was not only to create a Jewish "Home Land", but rather to create an imperialist outpost to advance their interests by suppressing and dividing the Middle East and North Africa. The advancement of technology and industrial revolution in Europe and the US, necessitated the exploration and plunder of new lands to provide the necessary raw materials for their industrial and technological development. Imperialist countries, namely Britain and France, had their eyes on the immense natural resources, especially oil, or black gold, of the Middle East and North Africa. Notably, this plan included occupying Palestine with the assistance of the Zionist movement, solely to keep the flow of needed resources to imperialist countries.

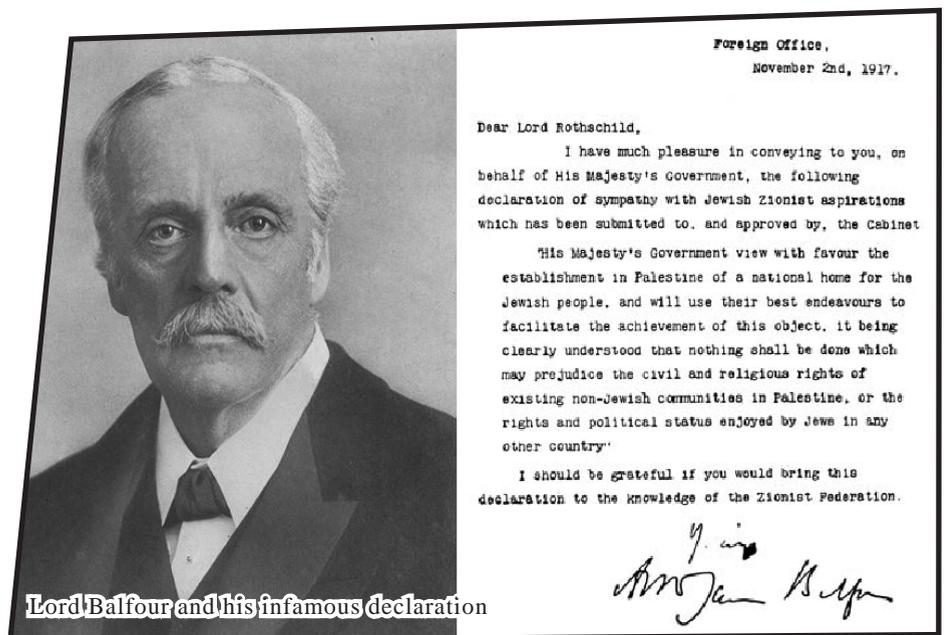
This was made very clear on November 2nd, 1917, almost 100 years ago, when the Balfour Declaration was created. It was a letter sent from the British Foreign Minister Arthur James Balfour on behalf of the British cabinet to a prominent Zionist leader in England, Lord Rothschild. It was the first acknowledgement by the British Government of their support of the Zionist

cause for a "Jewish" national home in Palestine.

The strongly worded letter clearly states "His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people." This open support by the British Government was not a matter of some kindness towards Jews facing persecution. It should be noted that during this time the



Palestinian refugee still with the key to her family's house in occupied Palestine



Lord Balfour and his infamous declaration

majority of Jews did not support Zionism or a migration to Palestine. Therefore, it was a very conscious move made by the British government to use Palestine as a wedge for British, and then later other imperialist countries, to intervene and meddle in the Middle East.

Let this upcoming 100th anniversary of the Balfour declaration – the blueprint of the Israeli Occupation of Palestine – encourage Jews and all human loving people to, more than ever, increase our efforts for the liberation of Palestine.

Follow Max on Twitter: @maxtennant

By Janine Solanki

Islamophobia has been on a steady rise for years, but since the election of Donald Trump it has taken a sharp and dangerous spike. Following months of Islamophobic rhetoric from Trump, on January 27, 2017 newly inaugurated President Trump signed an executive order banning nationals from seven Muslim-majority nations from entering the United States. This was quickly recognized as a racist, Islamophobic Muslim ban and met with huge protests at airports and city centers across the US, from people of all faiths and backgrounds.

This state-sponsored Islamophobia has done much to encourage and embolden racist attacks in both the US and Canada. This was made tragically clear on January 29th when a terrorist attack on the Centre Culturel Islamique de Québec in Quebec City, Canada, resulted in six Muslim men being gunned down and killed. The terrorist in

this case was a white man who supported Donald Trump. While this attack got the attention of the news, in Canada there are often unreported incidents of arson attacks, racist graffiti and vandalism against mosques, Muslim women being attacked for wearing the hijab, and other Islamophobic attacks.

February 4

In Vancouver, peace and justice loving people felt the necessity to come together against Islamophobia. On Saturday February 4th, members of the Muslim community in Vancouver organized “Love Over Fear: Rally Against Islamophobia”. The rally was preceded by a vigil at the

Vancouver mosque Al-Jamia Masjid, before nearly a thousand people from all faiths and backgrounds filled the Jack Poole Plaza in Downtown Vancouver. Protesters held candles in the freezing snow and many brought handmade signs, some saying “Love Over Hate” “Refugees Welcome” “in Solidarity with Our Muslim Community” “We Stand with Muslims” and “If You Build a Wall My Generation will Knock it Down!” Many people stopped to take

Muslim women in high school, was called under the banner “Resist 4 Peace” against Islamophobia. The rally started off with a welcoming by Indigenous elder Kelly White, powerful drumming and a speech from Musqueam Indigenous activist Cecilia Point to bring attention to Canada’s colonial history and the fact that this rally was taking place on unceded Indigenous land. After a program of speakers, high school student and rally organizer Nora

Fadel led hundreds of protesters in marching and chanting through the streets, up to the US Consulate. At the US Consulate a moment of silence was held, and the entire crowd turned their backs to the US Consulate. The march then returned to the Jack Poole Plaza and heard from some final speakers, including a passionate poem from high school student Angie and a speech calling for unity against Islamophobia, war and occupation by Azza Rojbi, executive committee member of MAWO.

With these actions and more Vancouverites are joining people around the world who are organizing and protesting against Islamophobia.

In response to fear mongering and hate, more and more stories are coming out of communities standing up for each other, especially between Muslim and Jewish communities. Another rally will be held under the banner of “Love Over Fear: Rally Against Racial Discrimination” on Sunday March 19th at 11am at Jack Poole Plaza (1085 Canada Place, Downtown Vancouver).

No to Islamophobia!
No to War and Occupation!

*Follow Janine Solanki on Twitter:
@janinesolanki*



a photo beside a banner reading “No to Islamophobia! No to War and Occupation!” brought by Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO). The rally featured prayers and speakers from many different faiths and organizations, with a message of love and unity.

February 25

A few weeks later on Saturday February 25th, Vancouverites came together again to continue standing against Islamophobia. On this day the infamous “Trump Tower” hotel in Downtown Vancouver was having its official opening with two of Donald Trump’s sons, which was met with protests. This rally, organized by two young

By Janine Solanki

Over two years ago, diplomatic relations were reestablished between Cuba and the US. While there have been some steps forward and the easing of some restrictions, the US still maintains its cruel and vindictive blockade against Cuba.

Like his predecessors, President Trump is planning to continue and possibly expand belligerent US policies against Cuba. Rex Tillerson, the new US Secretary of State and former Chief Executive of oil giant ExxonMobil, has already said that he will review or reverse Obama's executive orders which opened limited relations with Cuba. He has also said he will continue so-called "democracy promotion" projects against the Cuban government.

In Vancouver, Cuba solidarity activists have known from Obama's December 17th, 2014 announcement that this is a time of opportunity to lift the blockade, not inevitability. The last two years in which the US and Cuba have held talks have been accompanied by protests of Cuba solidarity activists against the blockade, in Vancouver and around the world.

On Friday February 17th, Friends of Cuba Against the Blockade – Vancouver (FCAB-Van) organized their monthly picket action in front of the US Consulate. With banners



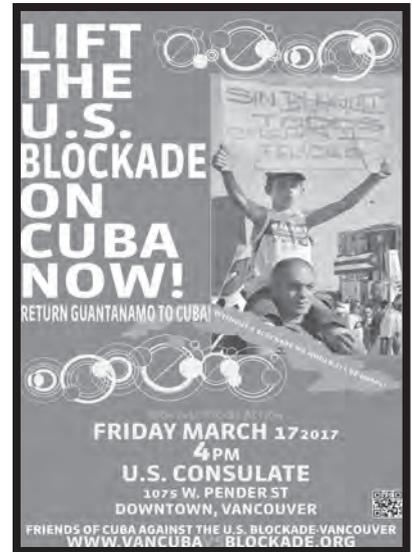
Vancouverites Stand with Cuba Against the US Blockade!

and picket signs, Cuba supporters picketed in front of the US consulate chanting "Lift the Blockade on Cuba Now!" and "Return Guantanamo to Cuba Now!" Alongside local speakers, a message from Ottawa was played for the crowd, from the Ottawa Cuba Connections picket action also occurring monthly in front of the US Embassy in Ottawa.

As long as the US blockade is still inflicting its damages against Cuba, Friends of Cuba Against the Blockade will continue holding these

monthly protests, along with other cultural and educational events against the blockade. To join in the next picket action or to find out more about the continuing US blockade on Cuba, visit www.vancubavblockade.org or follow @NoBloqueoVan on Twitter.

End the Blockade on Cuba Now!
Return Guantanamo to Cuba Now!
US Government Stop the Campaign of 'Regime Change' in Cuba and Immediately Stop Interfering in Cuba's Sovereignty and Self-Determination!



Join the National Cuba Conference in NYC!

Relations between the U.S. and Cuba are anything but normal. Mainly, the most fundamental criminal aspects of the U.S. blockade have been maintained. The U.S. military has also continued its occupation of Guantanamo and U.S.-backed regime-change programs persist.

In response to continued United States policy against Cuba, activists from the U.S. and Canada have joined together as the U.S.-Cuba Normalization Committee to organize a "National Conference for the Full Normalization of U.S.-Cuba Relations." This important conference is taking place at Fordham University Law School, from March 26-27, 2017.

Over 140 organizations and individuals from the U.S. and Canada have endorsed the conference, which will include workshops, plenary sessions, a large public meeting with prominent Cuba speakers and cultural events. During the conference, there will also be special emphasis on how people can take action in their own cities and communities to demand the US government normalize relations with Cuba.

In Vancouver, Canada, Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and Friends of Cuba Against the US Blockade – Vancouver (FCAB-Vancouver) have both endorsed the conference and joined the US-Cuba Normalization Committee. We will be hosting two workshops at the conference, "The Revolutionary Legacy of Fidel Castro", which is co-hosted with Ike Nahem of Cuba Solidarity New York, and "Lift the Blockade of Cuba: Building Cuba Solidarity in Action."

Especially as close neighbors of the United States, people in Canada have the responsibility to do whatever we can to fight for normalized relations between the US and Cuba. VCSC and FCAB-Vancouver encourage people and organizations in Vancouver, BC and across Canada to get involved in this important and exciting initiative.

For more information about the conference visit: www.nationalcubaconference.org

End all U.S. economic, financial and travel sanctions against Cuba!
Return the Guantanamo territory to Cuban sovereignty!
Stop U.S. funded covert 'regime-change' programs against Cuba!





Vancouver Activists Demand "U.S. Hands Off Venezuela!"

By Janine Solanki

Venezuela's Bolivarian revolution has made huge strides in the last 17 years, with missions to improve literacy, education, health and housing, access to subsidized food and the development of art and technology. The Bolivarian Revolution has the support of Venezuelans who themselves have become engaged and organized as force to move their country forward. This is reflected in the massive demonstrations in support of the Bolivarian Revolution – actions which we don't see reflected in mainstream news here in North America.

Despite these gains, the U.S. and the right-wing counter-revolutionaries of Venezuela are doing everything they can, including waging an economic war on Venezuela, in an attempt to sabotage the Bolivarian Revolution and turn back the progress it has made. As one of his final acts as U.S. President, on January 13, 2017, Obama renewed the executive order declaring Venezuela "an extraordinary threat" to U.S. national security. This outrageous action enables the U.S. Congress to continue their sanctions

against Venezuela and ensures that U.S. intervention in Venezuela has a smooth transition to the next administration.

It is clear that the Trump administration also stands for escalating foreign intervention in Venezuela. As the new U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said in his confirmation hearings, "I would urge close cooperation with our friends in the hemisphere, particularly Venezuela's neighbors Brazil and Colombia, as well as multilateral bodies such as the OAS, to seek a negotiated transition to democratic rule in Venezuela." "Negotiated transition" is just another way of saying regime change, and U.S. "democracy" promotion programs in Venezuela means continued funding and arming of violent opposition groups. Since December of 2015, the Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign has called on people in Vancouver, in BC, and in Canada to echo the voices of the Venezuelan people for an end to U.S.-led intervention in their country. On February 9th, the FTT Venezuela Solidarity Campaign organized its monthly action, starting with a picket action in front of the US Consulate in Downtown Vancouver. Activists held up signs demanding "USA: Hands Off Venezuela!" and "Self-Determination for Venezuela!" while picketing and chanting loud and clear against U.S. intervention

in Venezuela.

Following an action of picketing and speakers, the protest moved to the busy square in front of the Vancouver Art Gallery. As people passed by the huge Venezuelan flag, activists approached passers-by to sign the petition demanding that the U.S. stop its interventions and sanctions against Venezuela. An information table was busy with people stopping to talk to organizers and to get more information about what is really happening in Venezuela.

The February action wrapped up with the commitment to continue organizing in support of Venezuela's Bolivarian revolution. Venezuela is under attack for fighting for a better and more just world, and for working to improve the lives of their people. As peace and justice loving people, it is more important than ever to stand in solidarity and demand the U.S. stop intervening in Venezuela. To find out about more actions from the Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign please visit www.firethistime.net or follow on Twitter @FTT_np

President Trump Repeal the Decree Now!
U.S. Hands Off Venezuela!
U.S. Respect the Sovereignty & Self-Determination of the Venezuelan People!
Long Live the Venezuelan Bolivarian Revolution!

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LESSONS FROM THE ONGOING STANDING ROCK STRUGGLE



By Thomas Davies

“They can cut all the flowers, but they can’t stop the spring.” - Pablo Neruda

The Sacred Stone camp in Standing Rock North Dakota accomplished the impossible. It survived the worst of the North Dakota winter while the U.S government, police, military and the Dakota Access oil corporation did everything they could to squash the camp. Under snow and under siege in the middle of the middle of nowhere, the struggle at Standing Rock became a powerful symbol around the world of what is possible when we stand together against injustice. The camp stood in the way of the Dakota Access pipeline project, which was supposed to be a done deal, and created a corporate crisis. The international climate justice movement was also re-energized and focused by the struggle of indigenous nations and their allies.

The Sacred Stone camp itself is now empty – the threat of a flood from snow thaws forced an evacuation. Many have moved to nearby camps to continue the on-the-ground struggle, while many more are now spread across the United States vowing to continue the fight against the pipeline.

The struggle at Standing Rock is changing shape, but it continues. It is essential that

we build on the important gains made so far, and extract as many lessons as possible for moving forward in the fight against the Dakota Access pipeline as well as many more pipeline and resource extraction projects governments and large corporations are trying to ram down our throats.

These are definitely not the only lessons from Standing Rock, but a few we found important to apply to the immediate climate justice work.

Leadership: Understanding the roots and importance of indigenous leadership in the climate justice movement is essential

Professor Ward Churchill, author of many books including, “A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas 1492 to the Present” documented the reduction of the North American indigenous population from an estimated 12 million in 1500 to barely 237,000 in 1900. This was not accidental. The foundation of Canada and United States is based on the forced displacement of indigenous nations from their lands, the introduction of deadly diseases and often times their outright murder.

Things did not improve from there. Every major quality of life indicator continue to be significantly lower for indigenous people when compared to national averages. The Health Canada

website even acknowledges such shameful statistics such as, “Suicide rates are five to seven times higher for First Nations youth than for non-Aboriginal youth.” It would take massive space to document the systemic injustice against indigenous nations since colonization, but it’s simple to say that they have suffered incredibly.

In Standing Rock, 41% of citizens live in poverty. That is almost three times the national average. It’s no wonder that they opposed yet another multi-billion dollar pipeline whose benefits would be the same billionaires who stole their land and poisoned the water – while their community still lacks proper schools and hospitals.

Indigenous self-determination jeopardizes the foundation of the capitalist economies of Canada and the United States, where resources have been continually exploited without proper consent or compensation. It is on indigenous nations land that the richer have gotten richer, and indigenous, poor and working people have gotten poorer. That’s why governments react so violently to indigenous people asserting their rights. They are always afraid it will set a positive precedent for others to assert their own land rights as well.

It’s a moral and political necessity that those whose traditional territories these projects are built on be given the final say as to what happens on them. Time and time again indigenous nations

have shown themselves capable and committed to putting people and planet before pipelines and profit.

Allies: Support from non-indigenous people is crucial to successful campaigns

Indigenous peoples make up approximately 4% of Canada's population and 2% of the population of the United States. Given these small numbers, what they've been able to accomplish in terms of presence in environmental struggles is incredible. But they can't do it alone! The Standing Rock struggle was the most successful ever at mobilizing the support of non-indigenous communities in the United States and literally around the world. We need to work much harder to convince poor and working people that they have much more in common with indigenous nations fighting these planet killing projects than they ever will the the millionaires and billionaires who run governments and corporations. It is possible. One of the most powerful moments of the Standing Rock struggle was when hundreds of US military veterans joined the camp and vowed to defend it against any raids.

Resistance and fight back: Governments will do anything possible to try and destroy effective resistance.

Despite being peaceful and unarmed, the Standing Rock water protectors faced constant and violent attacks. Private security with attack dogs. Water cannons spraying in sub-zero temperatures. Police departments from 24 counties and 16 cities in 10 different states. 700 arrests. Hundreds more injured. Helicopters. Tear gas. Rubber bullets. Concussion grenades. Sound cannons. Drones. Constant surveillance. The National Guard with actual missile launchers. Ambulances being blocked. Threats to block food deliveries. We can have no illusions about what governments are willing to do in support of these resource extraction projects, and that's why it's so important that these struggles are documented and supported by mass movements. This makes it much more difficult for them to brutalize water protectors. Imagine what the police would have done at Standing Rock is no one was watching and no one outside of North Dakota cared!

UNITY: When we work together in a coordinated way, the possibilities are endless

When we visited the Sacred Stone Camp six months ago to document the struggle

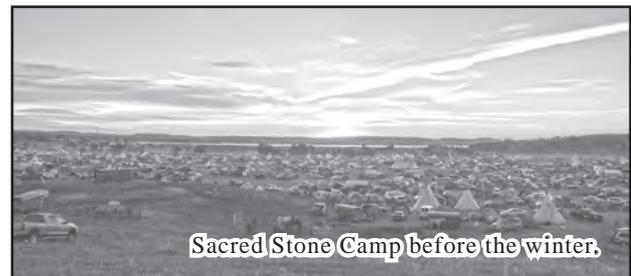
for the Fire This Time newspaper, what we witnessed was incredible. The camp had not yet reached its peak of 15,000 peomembersple, but there were thousands of people of all ages and backgrounds determined to stop the pipeline. The camp was supported by a worldwide movement which sustained the it through donations, information sharing and solidarity actions. No one had ever stopped a pipeline already under construction, especially one so close to completion, yet time and time again the struggle at Standing Rock forced the government and oil corporations b a c k w a r d s . Deadlines were missed. Billions of profits lost through lose revenue and divestment. The impossible became possible.

D i s m a n t l e capitalism: We are fighting an entire system, not just a pipeline.

In the end, the most important criteria for any individual struggle is if it advances the overall struggle for social and environmental justice. In the case of Standing Rock, the answers is undeniably yes. Thousands of people have already been energized, mobilized, and educated in the ongoing struggle. This movement of people will place major factor in politics in the years to come, which is exactly what the government and oil corporations are afraid of. We can't stop now. We need to continue to oppose these individual projects, while at the same

time connecting it to the larger fight of poor and oppressed people to build a new world which puts people and planet before pipelines and profits. Standing Rock turned the key, we need to rush through the door.

Follow Thomas on Twitter: @thomasdavies59



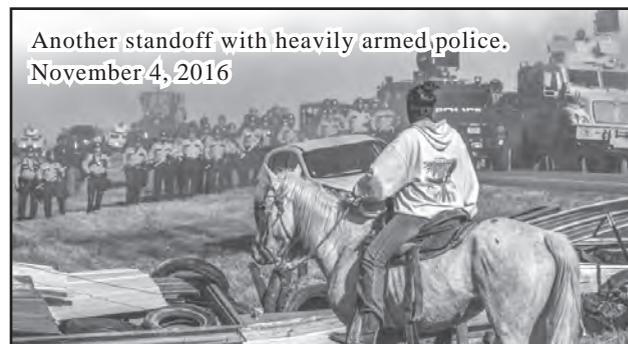
Sacred Stone Camp before the winter.



Protecting burial grounds from bulldozers, September 4, 2016



Winnipeg solidarity rally



Another standoff with heavily armed police, November 4, 2016



WE STAND WITH STANDING ROCK!



ANOTHER DYNAMIC 'INTERSACTION' TAKES OVER DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER

By Thomas Davies

Chants of “We Stand with Standing Rock!” rose above the usual loud downtown hum of cars and foot traffic as hundreds marched continuously for two hours at the busy intersection in front of the central branch of the TD Bank in downtown Vancouver. They only stopped to form a solid line for the entire block in front of the bank with banners, homemade signs and petitions demanding an immediate and permanent halt to construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). The distance between downtown Vancouver and the Sacred Stone Camp in North Dakota might be around 2200 kilometres, but the struggle against the DAPL feels immediate and close to home to thousands in Vancouver and around the world.

The action was organized by the Climate Convergence coalition in Vancouver, which brings together grassroots organizations and individuals who are committed to organize for climate justice. The coalition had decided to organize at least one action a month against the Kinder Morgan pipeline

expansion, but an international period in solidarity with water protectors at Standing Rock was called and organizers responded quickly.

The action was held in front of the TD Bank, which is a major investor in the Dakota Access Pipeline. Calls to “DeFund DAPL” have become increasingly organized and effective. Norway’s largest bank, DNB, recently sold its assets in DAPL after a well organized public campaign and the delivery of 120,000 petition signatures. Seattle’s City Council voted to end its 3 billion a year banking relationship with Wells Fargo over its financing of DAPL after a similar public campaign.

Organizers in Vancouver also set up an info table and distributed information regarding the struggle against the pipeline and how to get involved in the international campaign to stop its construction.

The action was both open and closed by Gordon August, a hereditary Chief of the Sechelt Nation and an organizer with Climate Convergence. He sang, drummed and spoke about the importance



of recognizing the rights of the indigenous nations on whose lands these pipeline projects are being forced upon without consent, and also the need for unity among all peoples to stop them once and for all.

The campaign to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline has not stopped. March 10 is another International Day of Action. Indigenous nations and their allies will be converging on Washington, DC while groups around the world hold solidarity actions. Vancouver will definitely be among those taking to streets and bringing people to say, “From Standing Rock to BC, Make the Land Pipeline Free!”

Follow Thomas on Twitter: @thomasdavies59

Soon the Eyes of the World Will Be on BC Fire This Time participates promotes Climate Justice Forum

By Thomas Davies



Ongoing climate justice organizing is happening all across British Columbia. In small towns, major cities and everywhere in between. More proof of this was the recent successful SOFIA Collective forum held at the Surrey Central Library. Titled, "Soon the Eyes of the World Will Be on BC", it brought together a diverse panel of speakers to open up important topics related to climate justice, social justice, indigenous rights and economic inequality.

Fire This Time Editorial Board member Thomas Davies was one of the panel speakers which also included activist and artist Brandon Gabriel of the Kwanltan First Nation, Sikh youth organizer Ishaval Gill and Climate Convergence activist Eric Lescaubeau.

Thomas emphasized the need and real potential to bridge the gap between

the climate justice movement and workers who are currently employed by the unsustainable resource extraction industry. He criticized the Canadian government for always having enough money to subsidize oil companies or fund wars, but which is somehow unable to properly fund education, healthcare and job creation in sustainable developments. In contrast, he pointed out, "Cuba is a country where people are actually able to work in cooperation with their government to create a society based on social and environmental justice – it's even part of their constitution".

There was a lot of time given to comments, questions and discussion between everyone who came. This lead to a lot of dynamic and critical exchanges about how to move forward to work together to protect the environment and build a better world.

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From Africa to Cuba:

Legacy of Black Resistance Celebrated in Black History Month in Vancouver

By Janine Solanki

February marked Black History Month, and in Vancouver Black History Month was alive with discussions, music, poetry and dance. Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) joined with the African Descent Society of BC (ADSBC) to participate in and organize events marking Black History Month.

Besides the fact that 40 – 60% of Cubans are of African descent, Cuba historically and today has many links with the African continent. From Cuba's war of independence to the Cuban Revolution, Afro-Cubans have been leaders in these struggles to move Cuba forward. Cuba's revolutionary internationalism has also extended to supporting revolutionary movements abroad, including in 1965 when Ernesto "Che" Guevara and a group of mostly Afro-Cuban soldiers went to the Congo to assist in training Congolese revolutionary fighters. Nelson Mandela, who was a close friend of Cuba and Fidel Castro, has attributed the fall of apartheid in South Africa to Cuba's contribution. In both 1975 and 1987 Cuba sent troops, as well as teachers and doctors, to Angola to fight off the invading South African apartheid army, resulting in a decisive victory in the battle of Cuito Cuanavale that dealt a major blow to South African Apartheid.

Today Cuba's role on the African continent is felt with their contribution of doctors, particularly in West Africa during the fight against Ebola. In Cuba itself, Afro-Cuban culture and heritage is being celebrated and promoted more and more, and Afro-Cubans have a large and increasing role in Cuban society and politics.

February 4th

On Saturday February 4th, the African Descent Society of BC organized a Forum on People of African Descent with



a walking tour and a full day of art, music, food, speakers and discussion at the Orpheum Annex. Cuba was represented with a presentation by Tamara Hansen, coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba and author of the book "Five Decades of the Cuban Revolution: The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership" (Battle of Ideas Press, 2010)". Tamara's presentation, "Fidel, Cuba, Africa and People of African Descent" gave an in-depth picture of Cuba's role in Africa and the role of Afro-Cubans in Cuba. Tamara's speech can be read in *Fire This Time* Volume 11 Issue 2.

February 17th

On Friday February 17th, VCSC and the ADSBC co-organized the event "Celebrating Cuba, Africa and People of African Descent" at Cafe Deux Soleils in Vancouver. The evening was emceed by Tamara Hansen and Peter Wanyanya, and started off with a welcoming of drumming and song from Indigenous elder and activist Kelly White. The audience learned about Cuba's connection to Africa through video clips on Cuba's brigade of doctors fighting Ebola in West Africa, as well as a music video from the Afro-Cuban Hip Hop group Obsession. Angela Gilliam, faculty emerita at Evergreen State College provided a voice message on Cuba's impact in Africa and her first hand experience with Cuban doctors in Africa. Poetry was also featured in the evening, with the poem "Black Women" by renowned Afro-Cuban poet Nancy Morejón read in both Spanish and English, by Mayra Climaco and Azza Rojbi. The audience was treated to the beautiful singing of South African gospel singer/songwriter Jubulile, as well as a dancehall performance by Jenaye. Throughout the evening speeches were given by Mr. Kebede Abate, President of the African Descent Society of BC, Dr. Charles Quist-Adade, author and faculty of the Department of Sociology at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, and Yasin Kiraga, executive director and founder of ADSBC. A main feature of the evening was several performances by the band Young Lions, whose music got people up on their feet and dancing throughout the night!

With these events, Black History Month in Vancouver was vibrant and provided everyone who attended a greater perspective on the history, culture and powerful role of Africa, people of African Descent and Cuba in today's world. For more events organized by VCSC go to www.vancubasolidarity.com.

Mobilization Against War & Occupation Campaign Against Islamophobia

By Janine Solanki

Today's world is a world defined by a new era of war and occupation that started with invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. Anyone under the age of 16 has never known a world where imperialist forces are not constantly and continuously opening new fronts of war, occupation, military intervention, sanctions, drone attacks or covert operations. This new era of war and occupation has been mainly centered on the Middle East and North Africa, destroying Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Yemen and Syria to name the hardest hit targets.

In order to justify their war drive, the governments of the US, Canada and other imperialist countries are using Islamophobia as a tool of fear-mongering, spreading hatred and division. Islamophobia has gone hand in hand with the wars and occupations of Muslim majority countries, as well as gone hand in hand with attacks against the Muslim community here at home. We saw this most recently with the January 29th terrorist attack on the Centre Culturel Islamique de Québec in Quebec City, Canada, where six Muslim men were gunned down and killed. We have also seen Islamophobia come out of the Trump administration with their Muslim travel ban, and anti-Muslim rhetoric.

February 10th: MAWO Forum on Islamophobia

To discuss Islamophobia, and how and why it is used as a tool in this new era of war and occupation, Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) organized a forum on Friday February 10th titled "No to Islamophobia! No to War and Occupation!" The forum started out with a series of film and media clips which documented the rise and incidents of Islamophobia especially in the US and Canada. The clips also reflected the inspiring response to Trump's Muslim ban, with huge protests saying no to Islamophobia and against the Muslim ban across the US.

The panel of speakers started out with Mamdoh Ashir, an Iraqi-Canadian and Muslim community activist, who appealed for people of all religions to come together against Islamophobia. Mamdoh was followed by Azza Rojbi, a Tunisian social justice activist and MAWO executive committee member. Azza spoke on how Islamophobia is being used as a tool to divide communities at home and to fuel war mongering abroad. The final speaker was Ali Yerevani, an Iranian social justice activist and political editor of the Fire This Time Newspaper. Ali highlighted how Islamophobia, while targeting Muslims, enables governments to also cut back on the rights of all people, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. The speakers were followed by a discussion from forum participants, who given the recent tragic and angering Islamophobic events in the US and Canada had much to say.

February 24th: MAWO Rally

On Friday February 24th MAWO activists and supporters brought antiwar politics to the streets in downtown Vancouver, for MAWO's monthly antiwar rally and petition drive.



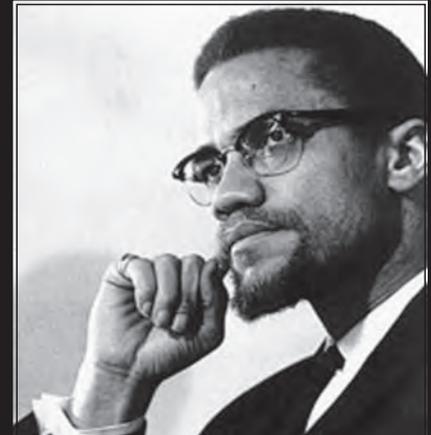
Banners, picket signs and voices raised the demands of "US Hands Off Syria!" and teams of petitioners collected signatures demanding that the government of Canada stop its military involvement against Iraq and Syria. The info table was busy with passers-by who stopped to talk with organizers and to sign petitions and pickup more information.

Islamophobia, and how it's being used in wars abroad and dividing communities at home, must be discussed, protested and exposed for what it is – a tool of dividing and conquering, and a means to attack and diminish the rights of all poor and working people. Mobilization Against War and Occupation is committed to continuing educating, organizing and mobilizing against Islamophobia and against these brutal wars, occupations and all imperialist military actions taken against our brothers and sisters around the world. To find out about MAWO's upcoming events go to www.mawovancouver.org or follow @mawovan on twitter.

US Hands Off Syria!
Canada Hands Off Ukraine!
US/Canada Hands Off Iraq!
US and Saudi Arabia Hands Off Yemen!
No to Islamophobia!



"By Any Means Necessary..."



MALCOLM X SPEAKS

*Excerpt from Malcolm X Speech on
Afro-American History
January 24, 1965*

When you jump out around some Black Americans and speak as if everything is on your side, why, they think you're crazy. But they think you're crazy because they can't see what you see. All they see is Charlie, all they see is the white man. And because he is all they see, to them he looks like a giant. But you're looking beyond the white man. You see the nations of the earth that are black, brown, red, and yellow, who used to be down, now getting up. And when you see them, you find that you look more like them than you look like Sam. And then you find yourself relating to them, whereas you formerly tried to relate to Sam. When you relate to them, you're related to the majority. But when you relate to Uncle Sam, you automatically become a minority relative. You understand? He examines us all the time. He has the Black community throughout this land always under a microscope just like in a scientists' laboratory, to find out how you're thinking, to keep up to date on how you think, on the beat of your pulse—are you beating too hot, or is your temperature running too hot, or is it cool. He wants to know how you think and how you feel. If you seem to be working up a temperature that he's not responsible for, it worries him. As long as your temperature rises when he puts the pressure, that's okay. But if he sees you making some reactions that are motivated other than by something that he has done, then he begins to worry. He finds that something else is influencing you and controlling you beyond his control and influence. And he should worry when you begin to get like that.

INTERNATIONAL DAYS OF ACTION

U.S.A. HANDS OFF! VENEZUELA!



¡GHÁVEZ PRESENTE! MARKING THE 4TH ANNIVERSARY OF
THE PASSING OF COMANDANTE HUGO GHÁVEZ FRIAS

FRIDAY MARCH 3 2017

PROTEST ACTION

4-5pm
U.S. CONSULATE
1075 W PENDER ST

PETITION DRIVE

5:30-6pm
VANCOUVER ART GALLERY
ROBSON AT HOWE ST

FIRE THIS TIME VENEZUELA SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN
WWW.FIRETHISTIME.NET



MARCH 8

CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



free public forum
speakers-multimedia-cultural activities

**Women's Liberation And
Building The Antiwar Movement**

Friday March 10 2017
7:30pm

Joe's Cafe
Large North Hall
1150 Commercial Drive
Vancouver

www.mawovancouver.org
Mobilization Against War & Occupation - MAWO

