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VOICE OF REVOLUTION

Publication of the U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization

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Fight for an Anti-War Government : 1-6



Defend Rights of Immigrants : 7-11



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DEVELOP DEMOCRACY OF OUR OWN MAKING

Step Up Organizing for an Anti-War Government

Organizing for an anti-war government is urgently needed for the people to secure the peace and security needed. Trump's recent visit to the Middle East made clear that the existing government is

dependent on more war and destruction, with no regard for rule of law. This was indicated through another massive arms deal to Saudi Arabia, which the U.S. is using to brutally

Anti-War Government • 3

GROWING CONFLICTS AMONG LOCAL,
STATE AND FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

Defend Rights of Immigrants, Sanctuary for All

At both the federal and state level, efforts are going forward by various immigrant rights organizations to oppose criminalization of immigrants and those that defend them. This criminalization includes

detaining students who are speaking out, undocumented and unafraid, and workers organizing resistance, many of them living in the country for decades with no criminal

Defend Immigrant Rights • 7

Puerto Rican Patriot and Internationalist Oscar López Rivera is Free

The very day that Puerto Rican patriot Oscar López Rivera completed his prison term he spoke publicly at a massive rally in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Such joy there was, in San Juan and worldwide, in seeing Oscar free at last. His indomitable spirit and commitment to

the struggle for Puerto Rican independence was evident for all to see. The 36 years he was unjustly imprisoned by the U.S., the years of solitary confinement he endured, the constant efforts to convince him to abandon his principles

Oscar López Rivera • 12

DEFEND THE RIGHTS OF ALL, ABROAD AND AT HOME

June edition of ***Voice of Revolution***

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I • Anti-War Government

bomb Yemen, continued U.S. backing for Israel's occupation of Palestine and yet more efforts to use force to divide and conquer in service to U.S. empire. Every effort was made to brand resistance as "terrorism," and condemn the peoples of Syria, Yemen, Palestine and Iran in a situation where it is the U.S. that is committing crimes.

The majority in the U.S. have repeatedly demanded an end to U.S. wars and to *Bring All U.S. Troops Home Now*. But this repeated demand, made through demonstrations, petitions and appeals of various kinds are instead met with more funding for war, more crimes against the peoples worldwide. The existing government cannot provide the democracy needed, one that expresses the will of the majority. On the contrary, it is a government of police powers, where even the semblance of a functioning Congress and functioning elections and adherence to rule of law has been eliminated.

The people are contending with conditions of deepening crisis, where it is not enough to react to Trump and the U.S. path of war. Instead of getting embroiled in the scandals and speculation promoted, what is needed is advancing our own aim for an anti-war government. What are needed are efforts

today to give expression to this direction, to this path forward. Such efforts include house meetings and small-group discussion, focused on the aim of an anti-war government and how to strengthen unity for its development. They include mobilizing among the youth on the necessity to refuse to participate in U.S. wars and instead work for an anti-war government that outlaws aggression and upholds rights abroad and at home.

The rulers want all to be entangled in their conflicts and scandals, so as to prevent serious deliberation on why an anti-war government is not only possible, it is necessary. They want all to remain in the old, appealing to the existing institutions, like Congress, to block war. But such efforts have shown themselves to be untenable. Remaining stuck on the old, backward path the rulers are pursuing, complaining about it, describing how bad it is, will not give rise to the new. A new direction is needed and that new direction can only be advanced by the people themselves, through their own independent efforts and based on their own independent politics. The time is now to organize for the new, an anti-war government, an aim that benefits and unites the people and serves the interests of all, here and abroad.

ACTIONS OPPOSE TRUMP VISIT

Palestinians Affirm: Resistance is not Terrorism

Ma'an News, May 24, 2017

Palestinians in the Gaza Strip continued to express outrage over President Donald Trump calling out the Hamas movement — Gaza's de facto leading party — in a list of terrorist organizations during a speech in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on Saturday May 20 before 50 leaders of Arab and Muslim-majority countries.

Palestinians in Gaza from across the political spectrum united in denouncing the remarks, which have been interpreted as a blanket condemnation of all forms of Palestinian resistance.

"No description of the suffering and depravity can begin to capture its full measure. The true toll of ISIS, al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, Hamas, and so many others, must be counted not only in the number of dead. It must also be counted in generations of vanished dreams," Trump said, in his first speech delivered abroad since taking office.

Shortly after the speech was broadcast, Hamas reacted by accusing Trump of "complete bias" toward the policies of the Israeli occupation by designating the movement as a terrorist organization.

The designation "denies the Palestinian people's legitimate



right to resistance to liberate their land and holy places," Hamas said.

Hamas denounced Trump's message at the summit in Saudi Arabia — which focused heavily on what Trump called "the crisis of Islamist extremism" — for attempting to divide the Muslim world, as Trump meanwhile "ignores the Zionist crimes of killing children and women and demolishing the roofs over their heads."

Israeli officials have routinely claimed that Palestinian armed resistance is part of an international rise in Islamist extremism, while many Palestinians have instead pointed chiefly to the frustration brought on by Israel's decades-long military occupation of the Palestinian territory and the absence of a political horizon.

The Palestinian Popular Resistance Committees organized a rally in Rafah city in Gaza protesting Trump's remarks. Dozens of supporters crowded at Shuhada Square in the center of the city. "Palestinian resistance is a source of pride for the nation fighting its enemy and occupier and trying to liberate its country," leader of the Popular Resistance Committees Abu Fares al-Shamali said.

Trump's remarks, al-Shamali added, were blindly throwing U.S. support behind the interests of Israeli occupation, "which is the true source of terrorism and violence in the region and in the world," he said.

Anti-Trump protests continued elsewhere in Gaza. A main banner stated,

"Resistance is not terrorism." The rallies also showed support for the demands of hunger-striking Palestinian prisoners and firm solidarity with them. [...]

Ahead of Trump's visit to Riyadh — which was marked by the US signing a \$110 billion weapons deal with the Saudi

regime — Middle East and North Africa Director at Amnesty International Philip Luther said that the "potential for President Trump to build toxic alliances with leaders who share his disdain for human rights during his first foray into foreign diplomacy is deeply worrying."

Touching on Trump's ambitions to secure "the ultimate deal" for Middle East peace, Amnesty International's statement also deplored successive Israeli governments for large-scale violations throughout the 50-year-long occupation of the Palestinian territory, which "have inflicted mass suffering on Palestinians."

The international rights group highlighted how the state of Israel has been "emboldened" by the new Trump administration to accelerate the expansion of illegal settlements in violation of international law as well as step up Palestinian home demolitions.

Trump's visit to Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory was also met with a widely observed general strike and protests in the occupied West Bank.

TRUMP'S WARMONGERING TRIP TO THE MIDDLE EAST

U.S. Administration's Strategy of Divide and Rule

Sam Heaton

U.S. President Donald Trump visited Saudi Arabia on May 20 and 21 in his first trip outside the United States since his inauguration. From Saudi Arabia, Trump traveled to occupied Palestine and the Vatican, then attended NATO and G7 meetings in Brussels, Belgium and Sicily, Italy respectively. According to Trump's National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster, the trip was aimed at "reaffirming America's global leadership."

Since the presidency of Gerald Ford that began in 1974, the first trips taken by U.S. heads of state have been to Canada, Mexico or Britain. However it is widely known that a state visit by Trump to any of these three countries would result in massive protests and denunciations of the host governments.

The Saudi Kingdom has not only been a British and U.S. outpost in the region since its creation but has been widely accused of overt and covert support for terrorism worldwide.[1] It is also playing the leading role in the cruel U.S.-backed blockade and war against Yemen that has brought the people to starvation and killed more than 10,000 civilians. Despite their massive support of terrorist groups in Syria and innumerable crimes committed, Saudi Arabia and the U.S. have been unable to achieve their aims of regime change in Syria. In that regard, the visit of Trump pushed for further direct military action by the Saudi Kingdom and others under U.S. leadership.

Trump took the opportunity to consolidate the U.S.-Saudi relationship on the backs of the peoples of the Middle East. This included signing unprecedented weapons deals, establishing new military arrangements among U.S.-backed monarchies in the region and pushing divide and rule against the countries and peoples of the region. Despite the well-known role of both the U.S. and Saudi Arabia in sponsoring terrorism, Trump used his Middle East trip to target Iran, Syria and the resistance movements, including in

Palestine, and falsely accuse them of terrorism. Iran was singled out as the main source of terrorism and insecurity in the region.

Push for Zionist-Saudi Cooperation Against Peoples' Resistance

On May 22 and 23 Trump visited Jerusalem in occupied Palestine, meeting the Israeli President and Prime Minister as well as the President of the Palestinian Authority. Hours after landing in Israel, Trump visited an area of Jerusalem that has been under illegal occupation since 1967 and is not recognized internationally as part of Israel. This was the first time a sitting U.S. President has visited the site. Trump's arrival in Israel came via the first ever direct flight from Saudi Arabia.

Trump called for increased Saudi-Israeli collaboration against countries and peoples not under U.S. dictate, raising the specter of Iran. "There is a growing realization among your Arab neighbors that they have common cause with you in the threat posed by Iran," Trump said. "What's happened with Iran has brought many other parts of the Middle East towards Israel." He also stated that under his administration Iran would not be permitted to obtain nuclear weapons, raising the spurious "threat" used to justify sanctions and other measures against Iran in the past.

U.S.-Saudi-Israeli Plans Put Into Effect

Saudi Arabia and its regional allies targeted a fellow Gulf monarchy, Qatar, for its alleged cooperation with Iran and its support for Palestinian resistance movements, which the Saudis and Zionists declare to be terrorism. On June 5, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and others severed all diplomatic contacts as well as all land, air and sea traffic with Qatar and imposed an economic blockade.

U.S. President Trump quickly took credit for the development, stating, “So good to see the Saudi Arabia visit with the King and 50 countries already paying off.” Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir at a speech in Paris on June 6 demanded Qatar end support for Palestinian resistance organization Hamas. Qatar is host to a U.S. airbase with more than 8,000 troops.

Then, on June 7, 17 people were killed and 52 injured in two terrorist attacks in Iran for which ISIL took responsibility. One attack was against the mausoleum of the late Imam Khomeini. The other, an attack by gunmen and a suicide bomber, was against the Iranian Parliament (Majlis) which was in session at the time. The attacks took place less than a month after the re-election of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani. According to media, these were the first terrorist attacks inside Iran in a decade. The White House issued the following ominous statement by President Trump:

“We grieve and pray for the innocent victims of the terrorist attacks in Iran, and for the Iranian people, who are going through such challenging times. We underscore that states that sponsor terrorism risk falling victim to the evil they promote.”

On June 2, the *New York Times* reported that the CIA has appointed Michael D’Andrea to head its Iran Mission Center. According to the report, D’Andrea was a prominent figure in the post-9/11 detention and torture program, organized terrorist attacks targeting resistance groups in Syria and later oversaw President Obama’s



drone warfare in Pakistan and Yemen.

Notes

1. Shortly after Trump’s visit, British media reported that the government’s Home Office suppressed a report on foreign funding of so-called Jihadi groups centered in Saudi Arabia. Like the U.S. and Canada, Britain has significantly increased its weapons sales to Saudi Arabia. (*TML Weekly, cpcml.ca*)

Agreements Target Resistance to Colonialism, Imperialism and Occupation

Hilary LeBlanc

To target peoples of the Middle East and their political movements, Trump and the Saudi King, Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud signed a “Joint Strategic Vision” on May 20 to “embark on new initiatives to counter violent extremist messaging, disrupt financing of terrorism, and advance defense cooperation.” A “Strategic Joint Consultative Group” has been formed to implement the “strategic partnership” between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia.

As well, a \$460-billion agreement has been signed for weapons sales from the U.S. to Saudi Arabia over 10 years, with \$110 billion allocated immediately. According to media reports, Saudi Arabia will purchase Littoral Combat Ships (for operations close to shore, likely to enforce Saudi Arabia’s ongoing naval blockade of Yemen as well as control strategic shipping lanes in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden), THAAD missile defense systems, tanks, armored personnel carriers, missiles, bombs and munitions, communications, and cyber-security technology. This new agreement is set to increase a hundredfold annual Saudi arms purchases from the U.S.[1]

Trump claimed that the agreement “supports the long-term security of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region in the face of malign Iranian influence and Iranian related threats.” The weapons deal also “bolsters the Kingdom’s ability to provide for its own security and continue contributing to counterterrorism operations across the region, reducing the burden on U.S. military forces,” Trump said.

Trump asserted that Iran was behind all acts of “terrorism” in the region, which he equated with the resistance movements against Israeli occupation Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine. Speaking to representatives of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, Trump stated, “No discussion of stamping out [terrorism and extremism] would be complete without mentioning the government that gives terrorists all three -- safe harbor, financial backing, and the social standing needed for recruitment. It is a regime that is responsible for so much instability in the region. I am speaking of course of Iran.”

“From Lebanon to Iraq to Yemen, Iran funds, arms, and trains terrorists, militias, and other extremist groups that spread destruction and chaos across the region. For decades, Iran has fueled the fires of sectarian conflict and terror.”

“Until the Iranian regime is willing to be a partner for peace, all nations of conscience must work together to isolate Iran, deny it funding for terrorism, and pray for the day when the Iranian people have the just and righteous government they deserve.”

The U.S. and Saudi Arabia further announced their intent to establish an “integrated regional security architecture” amongst countries in the Middle East, in which military and security forces of Gulf monarchies and other U.S.-backed states are placed under joint U.S.-Saudi control for deployment against the peoples.

To support these nefarious aims, two other “security” institutions were launched during the visit. A “Terrorist Financing Targeting Center” is to be co-chaired by the U.S. and Saudi Arabia and joined by all members of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Also established was a “Global Center for Combating Extremist Ideology.” Both are to be headquartered in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Trump and the Saudi King also announced greater cooperation between the U.S.-led “Global Coalition Against ISIS” and the Saudi-led “Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism.”[2]

To undermine the resistance to Zionist occupation, which prevailed during the 2006, Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia announced that they will support the Lebanese state in “enforcing its sovereignty on all of its territory, disarm terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah, and bring all weapons under the legitimate supervision of the Lebanese army.”

In addition to the signing of military and arms deals, various business deals were signed between U.S. monopolies and Saudi state-owned business.

Notes

1. To put the size of the Saudi weapons deal in context, Valentin Katasonov writes for Strategic Culture Foundation that “between 2011 and 2015 the U.S. sold a variety of weapons abroad, with a total value of \$46.4 billion, accounting for almost a third of the entire international arms market (32.8 per cent). During that time, Saudi Arabia was the world’s biggest weapons importer (almost exclusively from the U.S.) — with purchases totaling \$4.57 billion, an average of less than \$1 billion per year.”

2. The “Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism” was founded by Saudi Arabia and first announced in December 2015 by Saudi Minister of Defense Mohammad bin Salman Al Saud. The Alliance is said to have 39 members including: Bahrain, Bangladesh, Egypt, Malaysia, Pakistan, Sudan, Tunisia, Turkey, UAE, and Yemen. It has a Joint Command Center in Riyadh and is commanded by former Pakistani Army head, General Raheel Sharif. Iran, Iraq and Syria are not part of the Alliance.

SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY:

U.S. Attacks on Syrian Army Support Terrorism

SANA, June 7, 2017

Syria’s Foreign and Expatriates Ministry stressed that the act of aggression launched by the illegitimate international coalition led by the U.S. against the Syrian Arab Army’s forces on June 6 is an act of supporting terrorism and jeopardizing regional and international security and stability. The US-led coalition attacked a position of the Syrian Arab Army on al-Tanf road in the eastern countryside of Homs, leaving a number of Syrian soldiers dead and causing material damage.

In two letters addressed to the United Nations Secretary General and the Chairman of the Security Council, the Ministry said the coalition’s new aggression discloses the real U.S. goals which have nothing to do with fighting ISIS.

“The real goal is implementing agendas that aim at targeting the steadfastness of Syria and its army and attempting to debilitate it through prolonging the terrorist war on it,” the Ministry added. The crimes committed by this illegitimate coalition are the clearest proof of the misleading of international public opinion and the Security Council in particular. While these countries falsely claim that they respect international humanitarian law and human rights, they are leading a coalition that is practicing terrorism and violating the rules of international humanitarian law, the UN Charter and the Security Council resolutions on Syria which all stress respecting the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Syria.

“Syria renews its condemnation in the strongest terms of these attacks carried out by this illegitimate coalition against the Syrian Arab Army that is leading a relentless war on the terrorism of ISIS, Jabhat al-Nusra and other terrorist organizations,” said the Foreign Ministry in its letters.

It went on saying that Syria warns the coalition of the dangers of this escalation and its repercussions and demands that the U.S.

administration and the countries of the coalition stop launching such horrifying attacks “which have so far yielded nothing but making ISIS stronger, at a time when the Syrian Arab Army and the allied forces are making daily achievements in confronting the forces and organizations of terrorism.”

The coalition’s repeated attacks on the Syrian Arab Army and Syrian citizens and infrastructure must stop as they serve to support terrorism and would, if continued, constitute a threat to security and stability in the region and the world, the Ministry said. Syria demands that the Security Council shoulder its responsibilities towards these attacks on Syria’s sovereignty and army and civilians and hold this illegitimate coalition to account.

US-led attacks targeting civilians and infrastructure

The Ministry also condemned the repeated U.S. backed air strikes that caused human and material losses. The US-led coalition committed a new crime in Raqqa city on June 2 which claimed the lives of over 43 civilians. The city of al-Mayadeen in the southeastern countryside of Deir Ezzor province was also shelled, killing 35 civilians, the majority of them women and children, in addition to injuring scores of people.

The Foreign Ministry reiterated its condemnation of this illegal murder of civilians and destroying of infrastructure. The aggression targets Syrian civilians’ lives in violation of international humanitarian law, human rights laws, and the goals and principles of the UN Charter. The Ministry urged UN member states to stop listening to the coalition’s representatives who are proficient at twisting facts in Security Council sessions to cover up their heinous crimes. The UN must uphold Syria’s sovereignty and independence

I • Defend Rights of Immigrants

record or only minor traffic violations. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) statistics show that in the first 100 days of the new administration, arrests of individuals with no criminal convictions increased by 157 percent. In New England, for example, ICE arrests of undocumented immigrants with no criminal record have more than tripled so far this year. That



criminalization will continue is indicated by Trump's budget, which calls for a 66 percent increase in the already massive immigration detention system and adding 1,500 more enforcement agents.

At the state level, laws are being passed that sanction racist government profiling and criminalization not only of immigrants but local elected and university officials as well. Texas recently passed Senate Bill 4 (SB4). It sanctions local police questioning the immigration status of people they detain, even if only for a traffic violation. It criminalizes university and elected officials who do not cooperate with federal immigration agents by turning immigrants over to them. Known as the Sanctuary Law, it is designed in part to block broad organizing among the people, especially university youth, to provide sanctuary and protection for immigrants. The law also provides for arbitrary implementation and impunity to detain people, as police can question the immigration status of anyone they think will "aid" in their investigations and detain them if they refuse to cooperate.

The impunity of the law is such that many cities and counties in Texas, including Austin, Dallas, El Paso and others, are filing lawsuits contending the law is unconstitutional. Court rulings are still pending. Organizers are not waiting for the courts however, and a summer of resistance is planned, demanding not one more deportation and sanctuary for all. The need to rely on the people's

own efforts, based on defending rights, is clear.

The lawsuits also reflect the growing conflicts among the various contending authorities in the U.S., at the local, state and federal level, all of which have police forces of various kinds at their disposal. County sheriffs and city police chiefs are among those opposing SB4, and also among those who could face criminal charges

by the state. Similar efforts are being made in Congress, to pass laws that effectively make "legal" government impunity to attack immigrants and those that defend them.

One of the difficulties the rulers face is that in a situation where the government of laws has been eliminated, and a government of police powers prevails, resolving conflicts among the contending armed authorities is difficult. This is further exacerbated by the fact that laws and court rulings are not followed, as indicated by government actions on the ground to deport those guilty of no crime and keep children in detention camps for months and even years. Courts ruled that they could not be detained for more than 20 days and international law forbids it entirely. Yet Trump's budget calls for a 66 percent increase in the immigration detention system and adding 1,500 enforcement agents.

Stepping up organized resistance is the means to oppose government impunity. This can be done by defending the rights of all, relying on the people's own efforts, not the courts or politicians. Local officials can be encouraged to join in defending rights and submitting to the people's agenda. Clearly, a government of police powers is a government unfit to govern, as it cannot uphold rule of law and even just the pretense of democracy. It is the people themselves who must govern and decide, and can do so by organizing for an anti-war government that upholds the rights of all and recognizes that *No Human Being is Illegal*.

Immigrant and Civil Rights Organizations Call for Summer of Non-Compliance Against SB4 in Texas

National Day Laborers Organizing Network (NDLON)

The passage of Senate Bill 4 (SB4) in Texas has set a new precedent for the prohibition of sanctuary cities and will open the door to the systematic targeting, profiling, and harassment of all Texans by Trump-inspired law enforcement. Since its passage, organizations and advocacy groups from around the country have been ramping up efforts to challenge its constitutional

standing and prepare local communities from around the state for increased enforcement and to defend themselves from violations of their rights. On June 5, seasoned activists from the fight against Arizona's SB1070 joined Texas community leaders and organizations to launch the "Summer of Resistance" against SB4.

Identified as #BastaTexas & #OrganizeTX, the summer of resistance is a call for activists and allies from across the country to organize and mobilize local community members in defiance of unjust racial profiling and criminalization of immigrants, Latinos, and the African-American community. More information for the emergent campaign, and how to get involved, can be found at www.BastaTexas.org

“SB-4 will not only impact immigrants, it will affect Latino and Mexican-American Tejanos who have lived in the state for generations; African Americans who already face a disproportionate impact when encountering police will be further affected; indigenous people who are fighting for their lands and history” said Tania Mejia, Communications Director for JOLT.

“Additionally, SB4 criminalizes elected officials that express dissent, it makes it illegal to support or work to advance sanctuary policies in support of the rights of immigrants. Making it illegal for our elected officials to voice dissent, or to speak freely, is an impediment to our democracy and sets a precedent for an authoritarian regime” she concluded.

“We know that SB4 is politically motivated, said Salvador Sarmiento, National Campaign Coordinator for NDLO. “In the era of Trump, SB4 is a dangerous step toward the extremist targeting of immigrants and all people who look or speak differently. It’s clear by now that Trump cannot punish immigrants to the extent he wishes, within the bounds of federal law. He is relying on States to do the dirty work for him” he concluded.



In 2010, activists were galvanized when confronted with SB1070 in Arizona, which sought to eliminate immigrants through attrition, racial profiling and deputizing local law enforcement to enact immigration law. Local groups mobilized against the bill and against then Sheriff Joe Arpaio who was known for his immigrant detention camp and disregard for civil rights. The campaign garnered national attention and was able to defeat the legislation, as well as force Sheriff Arpaio to lose re-election.

Karla Quiñones, Jolt Summer Organizer said “We have to organize and mobilize within our communities. We call on those who see the injustices that our community is facing, the attacks we are receiving and ask that you join us in resisting.”

El Paso County, Austin, Dallas File Lawsuits Seeking to Halt Texas “Sanctuary” Law

Julián Aguilar, Texas Tribune, June 7, 2017

The county of El Paso and other organizations on Monday filed a lawsuit against Texas Governor Greg Abbott, Attorney General Ken Paxton and Texas Department of Public Safety Director Steve McCraw seeking a federal court ruling declaring the state’s new immigration law unconstitutional.

Senate Bill 4 allows peace officers to question the immigration status of people they legally detain or arrest and punishes department heads and elected officials who do not cooperate with federal immigration agents by turning over immigrants subject to possible deportation. Elected or appointed officials found in violation could face criminal charges in the form of a class A misdemeanor and possible removal from office. Abbott signed the bill May 7, and it is scheduled to go into effect September 1.

Critics note that bill author state Senator Charles Perry said during the floor debate that “lawful detention” could mean something as minor as a traffic violation. And though the bill prevents officers from questioning the immigration status of most victims or witnesses to crimes, it allows them to ask the question if they feel it is necessary to further the investigation. It is that broad spectrum that opponents of the measure argue opens the door to legalized racial profiling.

The lawsuit, filed by El Paso County, its Sheriff Richard Wiles and the Texas Organizing Project Education Fund, a client of the Texas Civil Rights Project, charges that the law, if enacted, would violate several provisions of the U.S. Constitution, including the 14th Amendment’s guarantee of the equal protection of laws; the 14th Amendment’s due process clause; and the Fourth Amendment protection against unreasonable searches and seizures.

The plaintiffs also allege the bill would violate the U.S. Supremacy Clause, which states that federal law — including statutes dealing with immigration enforcement — is “wholly dedicated to the federal government and may not be usurped by the states.”

“All law enforcement agencies and jurisdictions that opt to stay out of immigration enforcement face stringent civil liability,” the lawsuit charges. “And, persons in Texas, particularly Mexican-Americans, those of Hispanic descent, and immigrants and their families, will be caught in the crossfire.”

The lawsuit, filed in San Antonio, which is part of the Western District of Texas’ federal judicial district, comes after the City of El Cenizo and Maverick County filed suit against the state earlier this month. The city of Austin also voted last week to file a suit to stop the controversial measure.

El Paso County is in a unique situation, however, because it agreed in 2006 to a court settlement after a local resident sued, accusing sheriff's deputies of conducting unlawful immigration checks at roadside checkpoints. The parties reached an agreement: The sheriff's office had to "memorialize in writing its policies that prohibits Sheriff's Department Deputies from enforcing civil immigration law."

"El Paso also has adopted policies, which may violate SB 4's unconstitutional mandates," the complaint reads. "Specifically, the El Paso County Attorney's office has adopted a policy that prohibits its investigators from making inquiries into the citizenship or residency status for the purpose of determining whether an individual has violated civil immigration law or for the purpose of enforcing those laws." [...]

Dallas Also Files Lawsuit

The list of lawsuits filed against the state is growing. The Austin City Council voted to go to court, and a representative from San

Antonio said during a rally at the state Capitol that San Antonio stands "shoulder to shoulder" with other cities who have taken up the fight. Houston has joined as well.

Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings June 7 announced that the city council decided to join a number of Texas cities and counties in fighting the state's immigration bill, Senate Bill 4, in federal court.

The city's move comes after the state of Texas launched a pre-emptive strike in May and asked a federal court to declare the law constitutional.

Opponents of the law call it unconstitutional and racist and argue that it undermines the ability of local governments to craft their own polices as they see fit in order to keep their cities safe.

The American Civil Liberties Union also filed a motion on behalf of the Texas LULAC and its members, the City of El Ceni-zo, and Maverick County asking a federal district court in San Antonio to fast-track a ruling on the constitutionality of SB4.

California State Professors Defend Student Detained for Speaking Out

Beth Baker and Alejandra Marchevsky, Cal State LA Professors, June 8, 2017

On the morning of May 18, California State Los Angeles student Claudia Rueda disappeared in East Los Angeles. The 22-year-old immigrant rights activist stepped outside her aunt's home to move her mother's car for street cleaning, but never returned. Hours later her family learned that she had been surrounded by three unmarked cars carrying an estimated nine plainclothes Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers who whisked her off to a detention center 130 miles away.



Claudia is a Latin American Studies major at Cal State L.A., where we are faculty. At the time of her arrest, Claudia was enrolled in one of our courses on U.S. immigration policy that studied the effects of deportation on families and communities. This subject was not just academic for her; it hit close to the bone.

Claudia is the face of immigration enforcement under the Trump administration. Under current executive guidelines, any immigrant suspected of a crime, even if never arrested, charged, or convicted, has become a priority for deportation. Basic due process, such as the right to know the charges and evidence against you, is absent in the immigration system. This policy has led to a 32% increase in immigrant detentions in the first three months of Trump's presidency

compared with the same time last year, and a 100% increase in the detention of people with no criminal record or with only minor traffic infractions. "Criminal investigations" serve as a pretext for a policy of mass deportation of immigrants who have deep ties in local communities.

Trump recently claimed, "We are not after the Dreamers. We are after the criminals." However, data show a 25% increase in the deportation of Dreamers, as DACA

(Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) recipients are known, in the first three months of Trump's presidency, compared with the same time last year. Immigrant youth who encounter the police are more likely to have their DACA status revoked and be detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. [Dreamers are youth and students brought to the country as children by their parents, many of them having lived their lives here but without documentation. DACA allows some of these youth to remain, work and go to university. — VOR Ed. Note]

Claudia's case also illuminates the government's apparent practice of going after undocumented activists who challenge its immigration policies. Claudia's detention less than one week after her mother was released seems like payback by the CBP for her

activism and leadership. She is one of several youth activists since Trump's inauguration who have been targeted by immigration agencies in what seems to be an attempt to silence them.

In March, undercover ICE agents in Vermont arrested three prominent undocumented activists associated with the group Migrant Justice, all of them under 25. In that same month, ICE agents in Mississippi detained 22-year-old DACA recipient Daniela Vargas after she spoke at a rally calling on the Trump administration to establish a path to citizenship for immigrants.

Those concerned about creeping authoritarianism in U.S. governance should be deeply troubled by Claudia's experience.

After four weeks in detention without seeing a judge, Claudia will finally have a bond hearing on June 9. ICE can and should exercise its discretion to release her immediately and process her application for DACA. State and local politicians who promised to create sanctuaries for residents like Claudia need to ensure that local law enforcement agencies are not using valuable public resources to sow fear by collaborating with immigration enforcement efforts."

(Beth Baker is professor of anthropology and Alejandra Marchevsky is professor of liberal studies and women's, gender and sexuality studies at Cal State Los Angeles.)

Trump Administration Budget Aims to Undermine Due Process and Implement Mass Deportation Plan

American Immigration Lawyers Association

AILA opposes the Trump Administration's newly released Fiscal Year 2018 budget request, which would fund massive increases in immigration enforcement and border security and undermine due process in immigration law through the power of the purse. This request for billions more dollars to grow an enormous deportation force — which has already ripped apart families and communities — is especially extraordinary considering that President Trump is demanding deep cuts in domestic programs that are vital to working class Americans. Most troubling, the Administration's budget would fund a 66 percent increase in the nation's already sprawling immigration detention system and add 1,500 enforcement agents.

The proposed budget is not based on any demonstrated border security or public safety needs. In fact, border apprehensions have declined steadily during the past two decades. Moreover, the Administration is indiscriminately arresting and detaining undocumented people, families, and Dreamers. ICE statistics show that, in the first 100 days of the new Administration, arrests of individuals with no criminal convictions increased by 157 percent.

The proposed budget goes hand-in-hand with several bills now being moved through Congress that constitute an unprecedented expansion of immigration enforcement that is fundamentally inconsistent with principles of due process and fairness. Together the budget and these enforcement-only bills would enable the Administration to implement an immigration agenda focused solely on mass detention and deportation without regard to the harm it would do to American communities.

Benjamin Johnson, AILA Executive Director noted, "Nowhere in this budget is there any recognition that immigrants have been crucial to America's success. This budget ignores the desperate need in our country for smart immigration reform that will benefit all Americans and offer a chance for the undocumented to legalize their status - something 90 percent of Americans want. This budget fails on so many levels."

The Administration and DHS budget documents released include the following provisions:



Increased Enforcement and Detention

The Trump Administration budget is seeking funding to maintain an average daily detained population of 51,379, an increase of 66% over prior Congressional authorizations of 34,000 detention beds. There is currently no need for any additional detention capacity. In order to maintain an average daily population above 51,000, ICE will have to arrest, detain and deport tens of thousands of long-time residents who pose no threat to public safety.

DHS disclosed in its budget documents that ICE will no longer expect the overwhelming majority of its detention facilities to comply with any set of ICE detention standards under an alarming rationale: that it has been difficult for some field offices to find new detention facilities as so many "are unable or unwilling to meet ICE's detention standards."

The Trump Administration budget would hire an additional 1,000 immigration enforcement agents for his deportation force.

Through the budget process, the Administration is attempting

to rewrite federal law to prohibit state and local law enforcement agencies from restricting compliance with constitutionally-suspect ICE detainer requests. States and localities would almost certainly challenge this provision as unconstitutional.

The proposal includes almost \$23 million for the E-Verify identification program, which includes money to work towards mandatory, nationwide use of the program. [Mandatory E-verify is expected to eventually require federally issued biometric identification cards for all workers — VOR Ed. Note]

Border Wall and Additional Border Patrol Agents

The Administration budget proposes spending \$1.6 billion on a wasteful and unnecessary border wall that confers no operational advantages. The Administration budget also proposes the hiring of another 500 unneeded and inadequately screened and trained Border Patrol officers.

The immense budgets allocated to CBP under the prior two Administrations have already funded the deployment of costly and extensive border security resources, incorporating a layered system

of physical barriers and border security technologies supplemented by a huge force of Border Patrol and other CBP personnel.

The DOJ Budget

The Administration’s budget seeks the hiring of 70 new U.S. Attorneys at the Department of Justice to prosecute people for immigration-related offenses. Immigration prosecutions already comprise the majority of all federal prosecutions. This is a disproportionate allocation of criminal justice resources in comparison to the far more serious federal felonies for which the Department of Justice is responsible.

Refugee and Humanitarian Assistance

The proposed budget would slash funding for international refugee and humanitarian assistance, including a complete elimination of the Emergency Refugee and Migration Fund, which is critical for the U.S. government’s capacity to respond to urgent crises. This plan will reduce the number of refugees resettled in the United States to 50,000 in 2018, far short of what is needed.

Texas Judge: ICE Detainers Unconstitutional

Jason Buch, San Antonio Express-News, June 8, 2017

The same San Antonio federal judge who will hear the lawsuits challenging the constitutionality of the state’s new “sanctuary cities” law ruled earlier this week in a separate case that the Bexar County sheriff violated the constitutional rights of a Mexican citizen when he was held in jail on an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) immigration detainer after his criminal charges were dismissed.

In a summary judgment, Judge Orlando Garcia found the Bexar County Jail regularly honors ICE detainers, which are requests that the jail hold for 48 hours people who were arrested on state criminal charges and were ordered released but are *suspected* of violating immigration laws. Because immigration violations for the most part are civil matters that do not incur criminal penalties, the Sheriff’s Office does not have probable cause to hold them, he ruled.

“In short, the county’s assumption that probable cause must exist to detain any individual for whom it receives an ICE detainer request was unreasonable,” Garcia, wrote. “Its routine detention of such individuals made it inevitable that it would engage in warrantless detention of individuals who were not suspected of any criminal offense, but who became the subjects of ICE detainer requests either because they fell within a non-criminal ... enforcement priority or because a detainer request was lodged despite their non-priority status.” [...]

Compelling county jails to honor immigration detainers is part

of the new law, Senate Bill 4, which San Antonio, Bexar County and other plaintiffs are challenging in lawsuits against the state. It goes into effect Sept. 1. The law creates penalties for jurisdictions that do not honor ICE detainers and prevent their law enforcement officers from asking about immigration status.

The local governments allege the law is unconstitutional. A hearing on a request for a preliminary injunction to block the law is scheduled for June 26.

“I think every county in the state that has a jail and is honoring ICE detainers should read this case very closely, because they’re on notice of the legality of (honoring detainers) and they could be sued and have to pay damages for it,” said San Antonio immigration attorney Lance Curtright, who is representing plaintiff Julio Trujillo Santoyo in the case.

Trujillo, who has been ordered deported by an immigration judge, sued because he was held in Bexar County Jail for more than two months after his misdemeanor assault charge was dismissed March 24, 2016. Judge Garcia found that Bexar County’s policy of holding for 48 hours immigrants who do not face criminal charges violated Trujillo’s Fourth Amendment rights to protection from unreasonable search and seizure.

The use of detainers increased dramatically at the start of President Barack Obama’s administration before falling off, but the agency still issues more than 5,600 detainers every month, according to the American Immigration Lawyers Association. [...]

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I • Oscar López Rivera Free

and denounce the struggle for independence — none of it could break this patriot and hero. On May 17 he stood proud and firm, calling for the unity of all to win independence. He also denounced the U.S. imposed Control Board that is brutally attacking the people, demanding yet more cuts to public education, pensions and more, all in the name of paying debts. Oscar urged all to refuse to pay the debts, which were not created by the people. “No solution coming out of the Fiscal Control Board is good for the people,” he said.



His internationalism also shown bright, as he denounced the continued incarceration of many other political prisoners, including African American Mumia Abu Jamal, and Native American Leonard Peltier and supported the Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike. He expressed his unity with the struggles of the Cubans and Venezuelans against U.S. interference and his broad support of people’s worldwide fighting for justice.

Speaking at a mass rally in Chicago the following day and elsewhere, Oscar emphasized the need to give expression to love of the homeland by uniting to end colonization: “I believe in unity. I believe we can create a broad tent where all of us who love our homeland can fit, because we need to love our homeland in order to make Puerto Rico the nation that it has the potential of being,” (telesurtv.net, May 21).

Voice of Revolution joins with all those celebrating the achievement of Oscar’s freedom and sends its warmest greetings

OSCAR LÓPEZ RIVERA TO PUERTO RICANS:

Refuse to Pay the Debt!

The following is a letter written by Oscar López Rivera, January 6, 2016, before his freedom was won by the peoples’ movements in Puerto Rico, the U.S. and worldwide. It speaks to the demands by Wall Street that Puerto Rico accept massive cuts to jobs, pensions, education and healthcare in order to pay debts the people do not owe. We reprint excerpts now as part of saluting the just stand of Oscar while in prison, and now when he is free.

* * *

In my pack of worries, there are two very big concerns that have been added: the debt crisis in Puerto Rico and that my granddaughter Karina has to incur a huge debt to gain entry into a dental school. I have to admit that for the last one, I have no way of doing anything to help her. Student debt is more than

and congratulations to Oscar, his family and legal team, the many other patriots who faced similar imprisonment and most importantly to the Puerto Rican people’s movements for the liberation of political prisoners and self-determination. We demand the U.S. end its crime of colonization now, beginning by removing all its military and police forces and providing reparations. The difficulties Puerto Ricans face today stem from colonialism and it is the U.S. that owes the debts, not Puerto Ricans.

We also take this opportunity to salute another Puerto Rican patriot and internationalist, the late Dr. Luis Nieves Falcón. He and the Puerto Rican Committee for Human Rights he organized fought tirelessly for the freedom of the Puerto Rican political prisoners, including visiting them and rallying broad support for them. Dr. Nieves Falcón and the committee contributed greatly to popularizing their cause and to uniting and mobilizing all sectors of Puerto Rico for their freedom and for national independence, most vividly shown in the historic march of 100,000 people in San Juan on August 29, 1999. It is the foundations laid by this work that made Oscar’s freedom possible.

As Oscar himself is demonstrating, his freedom is an important accomplishment in a struggle that continues for the independence of Puerto Rico and right of Puerto Ricans to decide their own affairs. Now is the time to step up the struggle against U.S. colonialism, demanding to cancel the debt, end the Control Board and remove all U.S. troops.

\$3 trillion and growing. It is painful to see my granddaughter Karina adding her name to the list of student debtors.

The Snares of Student Debt

Today, students from working-class families have fewer and fewer opportunities to enter graduate schools. And with an enormous debt, the opportunities are fewer. And if you are in the fields of medicine, engineering and other well-paid professions, the chances are even lower. It is not because students are not smart enough or because they are not academically prepared, but because of the cost and the system that has been created to entrap them in the snares of student loan debt.

How can a student of a working-class family come up with \$68,000 a year for four years just for education? By the time my

dear granddaughter graduates from dental school, she may have a debt of almost half a million dollars. So she will begin her career in the red and stay in the red for many years.

Who talks about that system? Who denies life to a student who has worked hard to get into a dental school, only because she was not born into a family with money and influence?

This is the age of debts. The system runs on debts. But nothing is said to the public about debt entrapment being part of the system. The only time we have heard about the debt trap is when a nation cannot afford to pay up. Puerto Ricans know now what the debt trap does to the working class. Puerto Rico has an unpayable debt, and the Governor has informed them that it cannot be paid.

Decades of corrupt politicians piling on debt has impoverished Puerto Rico and has forced many young people with good professions to migrate, causing a massive brain drain. In addition, it forces Puerto Rico to privatize some of the best public corporations that provide good jobs and help to boost the economy. The unpayable debt was created by the vultures of Wall Street, the neoliberal Washington politicians, and the corrupt politicians in Puerto Rico. They are the ones who should be paying off the debt. I can see my beautiful granddaughter ten years from now, still paying to the creators of the debt, for wanting to be a good dentist. And she is not the only young Puerto Rican going through this same ordeal.

Let Those who Made the Deals Pay the Debt

In order to deal with the debt, I will start with a suggestion about what we must do and can do. My first suggestion is that all we Puerto Ricans get organized and take just one position: Refuse the debt payment and start a debt boycott. To begin with, we can start chanting: "That's a debt I will not pay, those who borrowed it must pay." ("Esa deuda no la pago yo, que la pague el que la incurrió.") Let us call for a boycott and start organizing. The debt crisis is a problem that affects all Puerto Ricans, and each and every one of us must take a stand and refuse to pay for it. In every city and in the Diaspora, every Puerto Rican must say that we cannot pay the debt and therefore we refuse to pay it.

Every child, youth and adult, including the elderly, must be part of this massive boycott in Puerto Rico. And every Puerto Rican should ask for compensation for all the pain, exploitation, repression, persecution and destruction we have experienced since 1898, after the United States invaded and occupied and militarized Puerto Rico. We can accept no austerity plan, not even one imposed on us.

We are poor, but we are hard workers and have every right to say no to the impositions that Wall Street and Washington will try



to put on us. Every Puerto Rican who cares about the future of Puerto Rico and wants a better and fairer world must say NO to the payment of the debt. And every Puerto Rican who aspires to political office must agree to be part of the boycott. And every pro-independence militant must do everything he or she can possibly do to create unity among them in the struggle for independence.

On another note, several compañeros and friends have asked me how I feel about having the name of Ana Belén Montes linked with mine in the campaign for my release. For

me it would be a great honor. I think that every Puerto Rican who loves justice and freedom should be proud of Ana Belén. What she did was more than heroic. She did what any person would have done who believes in peace, justice and freedom and the right of every nation to govern itself in the best possible way and without intervention or threat from anyone. She did what she did because she knew that the U.S. government intended to destroy the Cuban government and impose a system designed by Washington on the Cuban people with another regime-change. The objectives of the U.S. government were criminal, and if she had not acted as she did, she would have wound up supporting those acts. Let us all be proud of her, support her and demand her release from prison.

This January 6, I cannot be with you physically, but even from within these walls I can help. Let us make 2016 the year that we Puerto Ricans rise up together in order to put an end to colonialism. We can do it. No matter if the person has been a red PPD, a blue PNP, a green and white PIP or a red Socialist, if we are an authentic Puerto Rican, we love freedom and justice and we want to be treated with respect as human beings, we will unite and stand up together.

Enjoy the moment and feel inspired by the beautiful example that Compañero Juan Santiago left for us to emulate. Let us dare to fight and to win.

Hugs and much love to all.

In resistance and struggle,

Oscar López Rivera

Notes:

1) Ana Belén Montes is a Puerto Rican woman who worked in the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, and is now isolated in a Texas prison for defending the people of Cuba.

2) PPD is the Democratic Popular Party, the current administration that defends the colonial position of Puerto Rico as a "Free Associated State."

3) PNP is the New Progressive Party, pro statehood.

4) PIP is the Puerto Rican Independence Party.

5) Juan Santiago is a people's lawyer who defended independence activists and died in June 2012.

CHICAGO HOMECOMING

Palestinian Organizer Rasmia Odeh Salutes Oscar

Rasmia Defense Committee

Rasmia Odeh is a lifelong organizer for the freedom and rights of Palestine. She was persecuted, imprisoned and tortured by the Israelis and now, after living more than 20 years in the U.S., is being deported for her constant commitment to the struggle for justice and liberation for the Palestinian people and her social love for all peoples working to be free from oppression. Below is her statement to the mass rally welcoming Oscar to Chicago.

* * *

In my organizing career, I have spoken in front of the Palestine National Council, the Palestinian legislative body in exile, and in front of a United Nations special committee in Geneva, but I am as proud to be in front of this audience tonight as I have ever been in my entire life.

Oscar, I was released after 10 years as a political prisoner in Palestine two years before you started your sentence, and I know your story very well, because your life is an example to me and to all of us. You have taught us what it means to be principled and committed to your people and all oppressed peoples of the world. We thank you for your sacrifice and your strength, and the way you motivate us to fight for our rights and our liberation like you always have.

The Puerto Ricans in this city have always been close to our community. We have faced similar grand jury repression and attacks on our activism. We have marched together in dozens of protests for immigrant rights, Palestinian independence, Puerto Rican independence, and other social justice issues. We organized together at University of Illinois, Chicago, in the radical student days, and no other community mobilized like yours when the government came after the Palestine support movement and the Anti-War 23 in Chicago in 2010.

NYC PUERTO RICAN DAY PARADE

Defend Decision to Honor Oscar

Joining with Puerto Ricans and peoples worldwide, the National Puerto Rican Day Parade Board decided to honor Oscar Lopez Rivera this year, proclaiming him a National Hero in the fight for Freedom (“Prócer de la Libertad”). In response, a number of major corporations, like Goya, AT&T, Coca-Cola and JetBlue, whose sponsorship largely funds scholarships for students, withdrew. They have pressured the board to denounce Oscar, repeating the U.S. slanders that he is a “terrorist.” Oscar was not convicted of any act of terror or violence. He was unjustly framed on a charge of seditious conspiracy because he fought for Puerto Rico’s independence and freedom. He was and remains a freedom fighter, organizing for the liberation of Puerto Rico from U.S. colonialism. It is this principled stand, which he has upheld and fought for despite years in prison, that frightens the rulers — and wins him broad support among his

And now we get to celebrate together — with the National Boricua Human Rights Network and the Puerto Rican Cultural Center and all of you — the freedom of your leader Oscar Lopez. But he is not just your leader. He is our leader too.



Oscar, over six thousand Palestinians are political prisoners in Israeli jails because they fight for what you fight for, self-determination and an end to colonialism and full and complete independence. One thousand eight hundred of them are currently on an open-ended hunger strike in its 31st day, and they are in need of your voice of support, because they are inspired by your freedom and your refusal to accept anything less than all of your people’s demands.

I have faced my own criminalization by the U.S. government, and will have to leave my home here in a few months. Wherever I land, I will continue my fight for Palestinian independence, and I will continue to support the independence of Puerto Rico. And I pray that we both live long enough to see our two nations free from the evils of colonialism and U.S. imperialism. Welcome home, Oscar!

people and those worldwide.

Imprisoning those who fight for independence is one means the U.S. uses to maintain Puerto Rico as a colony. The withdrawal of support for the parade is yet another. The Control Board imposed another. The notion being pushed is that Puerto Ricans have no right to determine their own affairs and must submit — in this case to corporations, in others to the U.S. government. It is the government that has imposed a Control Board on Puerto Rico, using unelected officials to dictate massive cuts to pensions, healthcare and education, privatizing resources and increasing poverty, all to pay debts created by and for U.S. financiers. Oscar has publicly denounced the Control Board and called on Puerto Ricans, *Do Not Pay the Debt!* This too is why there is an effort to force the Parade Board to denounce him. Oscar’s is a principled stand for rights.

The parade takes place in NYC on June 11, the same day as the U.S. imposed non-binding referendum on the status of Puerto Rico occurs on the island. While initially the referendum was to have only the options of statehood and independence/free association, a letter from the Trump administration recommended to add the Commonwealth, the current status. The option had been removed in response to the results of the referendum in 2012, which asked whether to remain in the current status and No had won. However, the Trump administration demanded that it be added.

U.S. refuses to submit to the U.N.'s decolonization process,

and instead uses these non-binding referendums to justify its continued occupation of the island. It uses its military forces and economic role and threats to deny benefits, all as a means to block the right of Puerto Ricans to determine their own affairs, free from U.S. interference. The effort to prevent Oscar from being honored is part of this same U.S. refusal to honor the right of Puerto Ricans to self-determination and the requirement to end U.S. colonialism. Oscar is a staunch representative of this fight for independence. Defending the decision of the board to honor him and joining the parade are means to reject this U.S. dictate and stand for the right to self-determination.

WHAT SIDE OF THE OPPRESSION ARE YOU ON?

Oscar López Rivera Is a Symbol of Puerto Rican Defiance

Vagabond, May 30, 2017

On January 17, 2017, a few days before former President Barack Obama left office, he pardoned Oscar López Rivera, a U.S.-held Puerto Rican political prisoner of war who spent 35 years in prison for fighting U.S. colonialism in Puerto Rico.

What is a Puerto Rican political prisoner of war?

Puerto Rico is a colony of the U.S. and has been since 1898, and before that, it was a colony of Spain for about 400 years. There has been a long and rich history of resistance to both Spanish and U.S. colonial foreign rule in Puerto Rico. In the 1970's and 1980's, Oscar was a part of the FALN (Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacionalista), the Armed Forces of National Liberation, a clandestine revolutionary movement to usurp U.S. colonial rule in Puerto Rico by any and all means necessary.

On May 29, 1981, Oscar was arrested and charged with use of force to commit robbery; interstate transportation of firearms and ammunition to aid in the commission of a felony; and seditious conspiracy to overthrow the U.S. government. During the trial, he took a prisoner of war status, and defined himself as an anti-colonial fighter in an anti-colonial struggle and refused to recognize the U.S. courts as having any legal power to prosecute him under international law.

After World War II, many colonized nations sought independence, and the United Nations took up the issue in resolution 1514, Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, which stated that the colonized have the right to seek independence in any way that the colonized see fit. In 1960, when resolution 1514 went to a vote, nine nations abstained. The U.S. was one of those nine nations. [...]

Thirty-five years into that 70-year sentence, on May 17, 2017, Oscar was set free, after a long and protracted international struggle [...]. This year NYC's National Puerto Rican Day Parade decided to honor Oscar, and with that, the debate over whether Oscar is a terrorist or revolutionary has drawn battles lines both inside the Puerto Rican diaspora and outside of it.

Goya, a major sponsor of the parade since its inception 60 years ago, pulled out because it believed Oscar was a terrorist.

Other corporate entities followed Goya's move: the New York Yankees, JetBlue, The Daily News, WNBC, Univision, Tel-emundo, AT&T, McDonald's, to name a few. [...]

Another Parade

The parade's corporate sponsors have created another kind of parade — as a long line forms of those who refuse to be seen supporting a so-called “Puerto Rican terrorist” march to the podium, making grand statements about wanting to support the Puerto Rican people but not wanting to support “terrorism.” That kind of parade would not be complete without the State and its military apparatus — the NYPD. Not to be upstaged by corporations, the NYPD Hispanic Society will not march in the parade. The NYPD Dominican Officers followed suit, as well as the NYPD Police Benevolent Association. Not to be outdone, NYPD Commissioner James O'Neil also said that he will now not honor the parade with his presence.

All because of Oscar.

This second parade of pompous self-righteous abandonment of the Puerto Rican Day Parade would not be complete without politicians. New York Governor Andrew Cuomo said he will not march but will not give a reason why. New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli and Senator Charles Schumer will not attend. Why this new parade of pompous self-righteous abandonment? Because the way in which one defines a “terrorist” or a “revolutionary” depends on what side of the oppression you are on.

Nelson Mandela was a “terrorist” to the South African apartheid government. To Black South Africans struggling for freedom and white people who supported that struggle, Nelson Mandela was a revolutionary. People forget that Mandela used violence as a means towards the liberation of Black people in South Africa. It is how he wound up in prison for 27 years.

However, to his supporters in South Africa and to the rest of the world that called for his freedom, Mandela was a revolutionary. The South African government was forced to free Nelson

Mandela by a popular people's movement, both within South Africa and internationally.

When Mandela was finally liberated, he was given a hero's welcome. People recognized that the apartheid system was a form of internal colonization, and colonization is something that most freedom-loving people recognize as being inherently wrong. And when Nelson Mandela came to New York, the politicians lined up for the photo ops while the NYPD remained completely silent on his use of violence. The corporations that refused to take a part in the international call to boycott South Africa over apartheid also hoped no one would notice that they continued to financially benefit from the internal colonization of the apartheid system.

Threatened by Oscar's Ideals

To the credit of the Board of Directors of the National Puerto Rican Parade, it has refused to buckle under the pressure, issuing a statement that clearly stated that the boycotts by both corporate and state entities would not sway them in honoring Oscar. [...]

Lines have been drawn, but how else was this supposed to play out? Oscar López Rivera is a revolutionary, a freedom fighter who wants to free Puerto Rico from U.S. colonial rule, which oddly enough manifests itself corporately, militarily and politically. So it is no surprise that corporations, military organizations (like the NYPD) and politicians do not want any part of a parade that honors a man who is the antithesis of everything they stand for.

Do not be fooled into thinking that this is about "terrorism" or by the rhetoric of politicians who make internal colonialism possible with the NYPD so that corporations can reap the financial benefits. Puerto Rican communities in NYC have been ravaged by gentrification in Williamsburg, in the South Bronx, in East Harlem, in Park Slope, in Sunset Park and in the Lower East Side—spearheaded by politicians in service to corporate real estate who use the NYPD to "clean up" neighborhoods with tactics as small as "stop and frisk" and as great as brutality and murder.

These tactics are not just being applied to NYC. The Puerto Rican Day Parade is a celebration in exile because those very same tactics have been used in the past, forcing Puerto Ricans to leave the island to come to the U.S. Those tactics are being employed in Puerto Rico as the colony faces a massive \$74 billion debt crisis, brought on by U.S. colonialism, served up by politicians (both in the U.S. and in Puerto Rico) once again in service to U.S. corporate interests and using militarization to quell the protests that will accompany the draconian measures being dropped onto Puerto Ricans. Wall Street hedge funds that bought up Puerto Rico's debt for pennies on the dollar, now claim that Puerto Rico owes \$74 billion dollars in loans and they want "their" money now. Wall Street has demanded austerity in Puerto Rico and the U.S.-controlled colonial Puerto Rican government has begun instituting such measures,



closing schools, hospitals and cutting back on social services.

Rising From Scandal

For most of its 60-year history, the parade has been a very conservative pro-politician, pro-corporate, pro-military event. A few years ago, a scandal shook the parade with investigations into how it was run, with over a million dollars being embezzled to enrich organizers. The parade almost did not survive, as many of its key organizers were forced to resign in shame and a new board was formed. [...]

However, even before this scandal, many Puerto Ricans felt that the parade was more about an opportunity for corporations to market and sell to Puerto Ricans than it was a celebration of a people. As a result, many Puerto Ricans in the New York City area who had been disgruntled about the direction of the parade, gathered to meet, seeing an opportunity to reclaim the parade and bring the focus back to Puerto Ricans. The parade took its mission much more seriously. In 2013, an Oscar López Rivera float demanding his liberation marched in the parade. In 2014, the parade organizers launched an outreach program in support of Oscar's freedom. Now in 2017, Oscar is free and it would only make sense that the parade honor him, since it did make an effort to free him.

This is how it is supposed to be. It is the right of a people to decide who their heroes are and who they will honor. The politicians and the corporations and the NYPD are not used to Puerto Ricans dictating terms. [...] After all, it is the Puerto Rican Day Parade not the JetBlue, Goya, AT&T, Daily News, NBC, Univision, NYPD, Governor Cuomo Parade for Puerto Ricans. Those entities do not get to dictate who we are and what we want and who we will decide to honor. That is not how this works. We Puerto Ricans have a parade, and if you want to support that then we are glad to have you, but do not confuse past colonial practices of bending towards your will for your ability to infringe upon our sovereignty as a people, even if our island nation still continues to be U.S. colony.

The difference between a "terrorist" and a "revolutionary" is what side of the oppression you are on.

Oscar López Rivera is a symbol of Puerto Rican defiance, a symbol of resistance to U.S. colonialism, and if U.S. politicians, U.S. corporations and U.S. military outfits like the NYPD benefit from U.S. colonialism both internally (as in the gentrification of Puerto Rican neighborhoods in New York City) and externally (as in the colonization of Puerto Rico), then how do they not take offense?

Is it not obvious what the issue really is?

These entities are threatened by Oscar and his ideals.

These entities are abandoning the parade because Oscar's ideals may just become the ideals of a majority of Puerto Ricans and a shift of power from the colonizer to the colonized... The question is not whether or not Oscar Lopez Rivera is a "terrorist" or a "revolutionary." The question is — what side of the oppression are you on?