

Buffalo Forum



Local Publication of the
U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization

Workers of all countries, unite!

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June 17, 2016

Vol. 20 #6

West Hertel and Futures Threatened with Independent Receiver

West Hertel and Futures Elementary schools could be given to an independent receiver over the summer and completely removed from any control by the School Board. This includes the school buildings. The two schools were given one year to improve and that year ends June 30. New York State Education Commissioner Elia likely will not announce her decision until July, when teachers and students are no longer in the buildings.

At present no other Buffalo schools fit the criteria to be given to an independent receiver (three years on priority list) but all 15 of the schools currently on the receivership list will meet that criteria next year. Continuing the fight against receivership and for public control *now* is important, as the overall direction for Buffalo and elsewhere is to eliminate the district as a unionized, public school district and remove the public from any control.

An independent receiver can be: “a non-profit entity or an individual with a proven track record of improving school performance or another school district in good standing appointed by a school district and approved by the commissioner,” (Commissioners Regulations 100.19, p.3, June 23, 2015). Such independent receiver “Shall not be an existing officer or

West Hertel and Futures Threatened • 8

Condemn Orlando Shooting and the Role of the Government in Fomenting Violence

Buffalo Forum condemns the recent mass shooting at the Pulse Club in Orlando Florida, which targeted Latinos and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) community. Fifty people died, including the shooter, and more than 50 were injured, some critically, the majority

young men. Those killed were mainly Puerto Ricans, with undocumented immigrants and Cubans also among those who died. We extend our condolences to the families and friends of all those killed and injured and all those involved. We join

Orlando Shooting • 3

Caving to Post-Orlando Fear, House Betrays Civil Liberties

Nadia Prupis

Late June 16, the U.S. House of Representatives blocked an amendment that would have prohibited warrantless surveillance of Americans’ electronic communications and banned the government from forcing technology companies to install backdoors to encrypted devices.

House Betrays Civil Liberties • 2

“Worst Mass Shooting in American History” and U.S. State Terrorism

The Orlando shooting, with 50 killed, has been widely and repeatedly promoted as the “worst mass shooting in American history.” There are many known facts to dispute this claim, so what is the aim in promoting it? What is its connection to the broad promotion of fear in the name of

U.S. State Terrorism • 4

OPPOSE TFA AND RECEIVERSHIP

Oppose Efforts to Lower the Quality of Buffalo Public Schools

At a recent school board meeting, Superintendent Cash was given authority to negotiate a new 3-year contract with Teach for America (TFA), which places untrained and uncertified college graduates into the classroom (see p.9). This is being done in the name of diversity, but no requirement for the numbers of minority recruits was included. It was also stated that these least qualified and

least experienced recruits were going to be used in receivership schools, for English as a Second Language (ESL) students and Special Needs students — that is, those most in need of the most qualified teachers. The resolution contained no requirement that all certified teachers, including new graduates of area education schools, be hired before any TFA recruits

Oppose TFA and Receivership • 8

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I • HOUSE BETRAYS CIVIL LIBERTIES

The amendment to the House's annual military spending bill, introduced by Representatives Thomas Massie (R-Kentucky) and Zoe Lofgren (D-California), failed by a vote of 198-222.

The vote signals a notable turnaround for the House, which has previously passed the measure in a landslide — twice — with bipartisan support, before progress was stymied by U.S. Senate leadership.

It was a painful loss for privacy advocates ranging from members of Congress to civil liberties groups like the ACLU, the Center for Democracy and Technology (CDT), and the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF).

Massie and Lofgren noted that under Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), Americans' private electronic communications are swept up without warrants or probable cause by law enforcement agencies investigating terrorist links overseas—violating their Constitutional rights.

"I think our citizens are fed up with being spied on by the government," Massie said.

Lofgren added, "This amendment is the most meaningful step Congress can take to end warrantless bulk collection of U.S. persons' communications data, as well as protect that data from malicious hackers and bad actors."

On June 16, lawmakers who voted against the bill tied their opposition to Sunday's nightclub massacre in Orlando, claiming that the measure would prevent intelligence agencies from searching through the communications of shooter Omar Mateen, who was an American citizen. Republicans on the Intelligence Committee sent an open letter to colleagues in the days before the vote petitioning them to "give our Intelligence Community all of the authorities it needs to detect and stop terrorist attacks."

But supporters countered that the amendment would not hamper law enforcement investigations. Massie warned that "Congress should not abandon the Constitution in the face of terrorism."

"This doesn't take any tools away from those that want to investigate what happened in Orlando, none whatsoever," he said. "You obviously can get a warrant on the perpetrator of this crime."

Lofgren said, "With threats to America, we should not endanger the security of our digital environment by weakening encryption that protects everything from the power grid to air traffic control."

Kevin Bankston, digital rights attorney and director of the Open Technology Institute at New America, responded to the vote, "With Orlando fresh in everyone's minds, members of Congress appear to be voting based on fear rather than on reason."

Thursday's arguments cover similar ground as the debate after the San Bernardino attacks, as anti-privacy lawmakers and the intelligence community called for impeding civil liberties in the name of national security—notably, by attempting to force Apple to unlock the encrypted iPhone of suspected San Bernardino shooter Syed Farook.

But as Bankston explained Thursday, "There's no reason to think that mandating backdoors into American companies' encrypted products, or allowing warrantless searches of Americans' private data, would've prevented this weekend's horrible tragedy. But that hasn't stopped security hawks from exploiting the Orlando shooting to defeat this amendment."

Elected representatives have once again been scared away from "standing up for Americans' civil liberties," Bankston said. (*Common Dreams*)



I • ORLANDO SHOOTING

people nationwide in mourning these losses. And we salute all the first responders and doctors and nurses who rushed to scene and to the hospital to assist the injured.

Now is a time for sadness, for mourning. It is also a time for anger with the level of violence generated by U.S. society. It is a time for serious discussion about the sources of violence in society and the role of the government in fomenting such violence. In this regard, it is useful to look at how the people are responding, with many mass vigils to unite all concerned and with discussion about the need to defend rights and oppose discrimination based on sexual orientation or identity or racism — and how the government is responding.

New York Governor Cuomo, for example, immediately responded with a show of force by police and National Guard at transportation hubs and “large public gatherings.” He said, “While there is no specific intelligence that suggests any link between the attacks that occurred in Orlando with New York, out of an abundance of caution, I have directed additional security measures at key points around the state as a precaution.”

These measures included “increased patrols and checks of bags, buses, trucks and trains,” and a “surge in patrols, increased step-on/step-off patrols of trains, and random bag checks at various locations.” There was also a “stepped up presence of uniformed and plainclothes” police for the NYC subway and “police canine teams and units with heavy weapons.” That is, more use of force, more targeting of individuals who have committed no crime, more efforts to frighten people with the prospect of an attack. And efforts to make it “normal” for there to be such armed forces in public spaces and random bag and ID checks without cause — often done on the basis of racist and religious police profiling.

At the federal level, President Obama called for increased attacks abroad and called for everyone to support him in doing this: “Now, if we’re honest with ourselves, if, in fact, we want to show the best of our humanity, then we’re all going to have to work together at every level of government, across political lines, to do more to stop



killers who want to terrorize us. We will continue to be relentless against terrorist groups like ISIL and al Qaeda. We are going to destroy them. We are going to disrupt their networks, and their financing, and the flow of fighters in and out of war theaters. We’re going to disrupt their propaganda that poisons so many minds around the world.”

More than 12,000 bombings have already been carried out against ISIL and other groups in Iraq and Syria, commonly massacring civilians, many women and children. Yet Obama states the “best of our humanity” can be shown with yet more violence and terrorism. He undoubtedly will use more bombings, drones, assassinations, more use of special forces “in and out of war theaters,” more FBI and CIA spying and repression abroad and at home. Already the U.S. has decided to keep 10,000 troops in Afghanistan.

All of these attacks are state terrorism by the U.S., are illegal aggression and, as the whole “war on terror” has shown, do nothing to solve the problem of terrorism, do nothing to provide security, at home or abroad.

The “good-cop,” “bad-cop” for U.S. empire routine of Clinton and Trump

followed the same pattern and if anything called for even more mass killings abroad. Clinton said, “Whatever we learn about this killer and his motives in the days ahead, we know already the barbarity we face from radical jihadists is profound,” She added, “The attack in Orlando makes it even more clear we can not contain this threat. We must defeat it.” She called for “ramping up the air campaign,” against Iraq and Syria. Trump said, “We have generals that feel we can win this thing so fast and so strong, but we have to be furious for a short period of time, and we’re not doing it!” He again called for banning Muslims and people from other countries.

Clinton also said, referencing George W. Bush and the post-9/11 period that, “It is time to get back to the spirit of those days.” That spirit, of combined presidential and Congressional action, was to widely use torture and indefinite detention at Guantánamo for no crime; launch the war against Afghanistan; and pass legislation like the *Patriot Act* that sanctioned widespread spying and repression against those standing up for rights, along with impunity for government officials.

All of which have also solved no problem. It all does show that the aim of the rulers is not eliminating violence and terrorizing of civilians, but using incidents like the Orlando shooting to justify inflicting U.S. state terrorism and violence against the peoples on a much broader scale. Days following the shooting, Congress voted to increase funding for the FBI for “terrorism” investigations while also voting down an amendment that would have blocked FBI spying in the U.S. without warrants and forcing companies to give the FBI “back-door” entrance to encrypted phones and other electronic devices (see p.1).

Focus on Individual Diverts from Government Responsibility

Brutal violence, assassinations, massacres of children — such as in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Pakistan, Palestine — are the norm for the monopolies and their state. They stop at nothing to their striving for world empire. That individuals then act in

Orlando Shooting • 4

1 • U.S. STATE TERRORISM

potential “terrorist” attacks and the silence concerning the many massacres by the U.S. government, both present and past?

In the present they are primarily abroad but certainly part of American history.

The Granai massacre, where 86 to 147 Afghan civilians, 93 of them children, were killed by U.S. bombers on May 4, 2009, in the village of Granai, Afghanistan. The Deh Bala wedding party on July 6, 2008, where 47 Afghan civilians, mostly women and children, were killed. The bombing of the Wech Baghtu wedding party that killed 63 people including 23 children, in November 2008. The bombing of the village of Azizabad in August 2008 killed an estimated 78 to 92 civilians, mostly children. In Yemen, a wedding party was hit by a drone strike killing at least 12 civilians, in December 2013. Many civilians have also been massacred by drones in Pakistan.

There are also the millions slaughtered when the U.S. used nuclear weapons to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the many massacres of hundreds of civilians in U.S. wars against Korea and Viet Nam; the millions of children who have died in Iraq and elsewhere as a result of U.S. bombings and sanctions, and more.

Then there are also the many massacres of native peoples and African Americans. To name just a few, against native peoples:

- 1840, Rangers under Colonel Moore massacred 140 Comanches (men, women

and children) in their village on the Colorado River;

- 1846, Captain Frémont’s men attacked a peaceful band of Indians on the Sacramento River in California, killing between 120 and 200 people;

- 1855, the Harney Massacre where U.S. troops killed 86 Sioux, men, women and children at Blue Water Creek, in present-day Nebraska;

- 1864, the Sand Creek massacre where 70–180 Cheyenne and Arapaho were killed, about two-thirds women and children;

- 1890, Wounded Knee where some 300 men, women and children were massacred.

In addition there are the many massacres against African Americans:

- 1873, Colfax massacre in Louisiana, between 83-153 African Americans killed defending the courthouse and after being taken prisoner, in an elections dispute, during efforts to block African Americans from being elected;

- 1917, East St. Louis massacre, an estimated 100-150 African Americans killed by National Guard and organized racist gangs;

- 1919, Helena and Phillips, Arkansas. Descendants of former slaveholders attacked the African American community after sharecroppers met to form a union and demand their rights. The sharecroppers were armed and resisted, but outnumbered and a

massacred ensued. By the end of the attacks, an estimated 854 African Americans were killed.

- 1921, Tulsa, Oklahoma, fomented by the state and their racist gangs, the Greenwood District, then the wealthiest black community in the U.S., was burned to the ground. An estimated 55-300 were killed, 6,000 arrested and detained and about 10,000 black people were left homeless,

The promotion of Orlando as the “worst shooting” is done to deny and divert from the role of the U.S. state in terrorizing and killing the peoples, abroad and at home, today and in the past. It is to contribute to whipping up fear. However, those participating in vigils and other actions bring out that they will not rely on government officials, who claim concern while calling for more violence and doing nothing to guarantee rights, for the LGBTQ community, for Puerto Ricans, for immigrants, for all.



3 • ORLANDO SHOOTING

a similar manner is not a surprise, rather a reflection of the violence of the U.S. state. Yet that is not to be discussed. Should there not be vigils and mourning whenever U.S. dreons massacre civilians, such as the wedding parties they have attacked? the hospital? We are all one humanity and the grief and outrage can be no less.

Government officials and the monopoly media repeatedly divert attention from the U.S. state to the individual and every detail of his life and possible motivations. We are to accept that the individual involved, and others like him, are a threat that merits far more violence and mass killings abroad. Gun control focuses not on controlling and eliminating

U.S. use of weapons of mass destruction, like drones, but on individuals.

Those in power have abandoned political solutions and are using violence as the weapon of choice to avoid providing economic, political, cultural and social problems with solutions that serve the people. That is what is to blame for mass shootings by individuals.

An alternative is to demand the U.S. lead by example and call a halt to all violence and killings by the government and its policing agencies, abroad and at home. End U.S. aggression and state-organized racism and discrimination and stop the use of violence and force — that would contribute to peace and security.

Join with those across the country who are defending rights and demanding the government do the same.

Let discussion focus not on speculation about the individual shooter and the individual incident, but on the role of the government in fomenting violence — and on changing that government. Let us discuss organizing for an anti-war government as an aim that can contribute to security, abroad and at home. Let our sadness and anger be directed at the racist and terrorist U.S. state, not the people.

No to the Use of Violence to Sort Out Conflicts at Home and Abroad!

Our Security Lies in Our Fight for the Rights of All!

Before Orlando, Omar Mateen Worked for G4S, Known Human Rights Abusers

Phyllis Bennis, June 14, 2016

How do we even talk about the horrific killings in Orlando, which left at least 50 LGBTQ revelers dead and more than 50 more injured in the middle of pride month? First we mourn. Then we rage. Then we hug our loved ones, especially our LGBTQ friends, comrades, and family members.

Then we look again, and we see the horror — that this murderer was licensed to carry guns and had no trouble buying incredibly powerful military-style weapons. So casually. So legally. So common, across our country. That is when we start to rage again.

More troubling still, Omar Mateen worked for a company that was perpetrating systemic violence against vulnerable people long before he took up arms against his LGBTQ neighbors. For nine years Mateen worked for G4S Security, a British-based corporation that contracts with the U.S. and Israeli governments for work that often violates human rights on a massive scale.

G4S, which brags about having 600 staffers on the southern border, has contracts with U.S. immigration authorities to detain and deport people back to Mexico, as well as to run private juvenile detention facilities. In Israel, meanwhile, G4S profits from providing equipment and services in Israeli prisons

and interrogation centers where Palestinians are routinely tortured. It is also involved in running Israeli military checkpoints in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Incidentally, G4S is the company that trained Mateen to work as an armed security guard, which licensed him to carry and use weapons. And although his coworkers told supervisors that Mateen “frequently made homophobic and racial comments,” the company did nothing. It kept him on board — and kept him armed.

Should this company continue to profit from multi-million-dollar contracts with the U.S. government?

Since 2012, there has been a major campaign against G4S, resulting in decisions by major mainstream institutions — like the ... Methodist Church, numerous European universities, important charities in South Africa and the Netherlands, UN agencies in the Middle East, and more — to divest from G4S holdings, or to cancel or not renew service contracts. G4S is profiting from anti-Arab and anti-Latino racism, Islamophobia, and xenophobia...

If the early reports are accurate, G4S's long-serving employee is responsible for the worst mass shooting in recent U.S. history.

And here let us continue to be careful with our numbers. As people have been pointing out, our nation's origins are grounded in genocide and slavery. Earlier history has to take into account things like the 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee, when between 150 and 300 children, women, and men were gunned down. That mass shooting is part of our history, too.

But our nation's history also includes the great movements that have risen against war, racism, sexism, homophobia, and more. The party at Orlando's Pulse club was part of a month-long Gay Pride celebration rooted in the movement that grew out of the 1969 Stonewall revolt, when bar patrons fought back against police brutality toward gay men and lesbians.

June 12, the night of the massacre, happened to be Latin Night at the Pulse. Reverend William Barber, a leader of the Moral Mondays movement in North Carolina, reminded me that June 12 is also the anniversary of the 1963 Mississippi assassination of the civil rights leader Medgar Evers.

One more link between our movements — from Stonewall to Orlando, and Mississippi to Palestine. (*Foreign Policy In Focus*)



CHARLESTON ANNIVERSARY

An attack Engendered by the Racist U.S. State

(June 17 marks the one year anniversary of the brutal racist attack, in a church, in Charleston, South Carolina. The people, in Charleston and across the country, responded with actions defending their rights and demanding equality. We reprint below an article published in Voice of Revolution, July 3, 2015 addressing these issues and calling for a democracy of our own making, with a constitution that guarantees equal rights for all.)

* * *

On June 17, 2015 a horrific racist attack took the lives of nine African Americans in a church, in Charleston, South Carolina. While a young white man carried out the attack, it occurred in the context of the long-standing violence and racism of the U.S. state. This includes the many police killings of unarmed African Americans already this year and the genocide of racist mass incarceration. It was an attack engendered by the racist U.S. state, its support and protection of Nazis and groups like the KKK — and its refusal to guarantee the equal rights of all. Such a guarantee is a minimum required for a wealthy productive country like the U.S. But conditions today, and the entire history of the U.S. shows it cannot provide equality, cannot provide even the most basic rights of education, housing, healthcare and a livelihood. It cannot eliminate its racism, as it is a necessary weapon for repression and exploitation, during slavery and today.

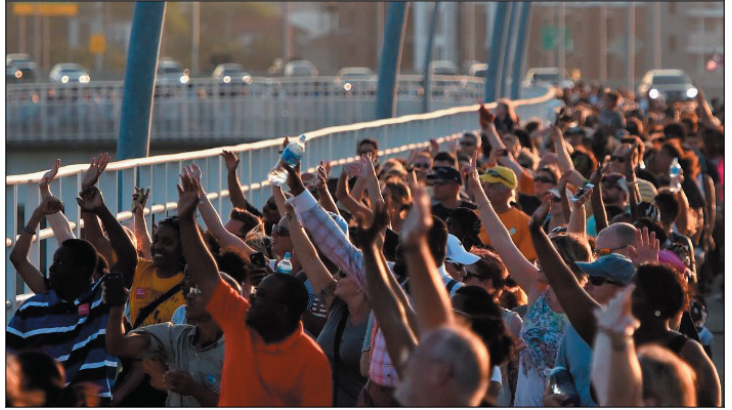
This attack also occurred in the context of growing resistance to racist state violence, as evident in the many “Stand with Charleston” actions that took place and the continuing resistance in Ferguson, Baltimore, Cleveland and elsewhere. Racist state violence is used to terrorize and divide those resisting and standing up for rights.

Charleston itself is an example of this. Denmark Vesey, a founder of the Mother Emanuel Church, where the recent attack occurred, was also an organizer for a broad insurrection in 1822,

uniting African Americans enslaved on the plantations and free in the city and with the support of whites. This effort to arm and free slaves was met by state terrorism against those who resisted, including executing Vesey and burning the church to the ground. But efforts then and now have persisted in uniting all to stand as one against such state racism and violence, as could be seen in the united march in Charleston and elsewhere June 21.

For July 4, people were greeted with yet another show of force by police at airports and train stations, supposedly in response to a “terrorist” threat. The FBI and homeland security repeatedly issue such threats, but more than 40 such “high alert” warnings have occurred with no such threats materializing. It is evident that they are used to justify yet more U.S. terrorism abroad and more police repression at home. New York State, for example, recently hosted a joint “terrorism” exercise that brought together first responders, policing agencies from all levels and the military to prepare for potential “emergencies.” First responders, like firefighters and healthcare workers have long opposed being used as a repressive force against the people, integrated into the police machinery. These exercises are a means to eliminate that resistance and create an integrated policing force, commanded by the military, for use against the people.

The failure of the “war on terrorism” to solve any problem and the increasing inequality, racism and terrorism of the U.S. state indicates that the existing



March in Charleston, June 2015, unites participants in demanding rights

rulers have no solutions. The U.S. Constitution has not prevented the inequality and terrorism of the U.S. state and cannot do so — that is what experience has shown.

Far from modernizing democracy, including a new constitution that enshrines rights, the U.S. state is going backward. It is increasingly concentrating power in the executive, especially the president but also Governors, while eliminating elected governance, such as local school boards. This too is no solution.

The times demand a modern democracy of our own making. It demands a new constitution that puts rights at the center, guaranteeing them and making it a government crime to fail to provide equal rights for all. It is time to discuss what such a modern democracy looks like, what elections and legislatures should look like, and join in efforts to begin creating such a democracy today. Such efforts include organizing to be decision makers in our collectives, at work, in schools, in organizations, in our united actions. The issue of *Who Decides?* and the people’s answer *We Decide!* is something on the agenda in every battle against state racism and for rights. It is a guide to action to persist in. Decision making cannot be handed over to others but kept in our hands as we advance our program and initiatives. This is our society, these are our rights and *We Decide!*

Honoring Muhammad Ali

In this issue, *Buffalo Forum* honors Muhammad Ali, a man who stood up for his principles and did so despite efforts by the U.S. government to force him to change his stand against the war in Viet Nam and against racism and inequality at home. Ali died

June 3 from respiratory complications from Parkinson's disease. We take this opportunity to extend our condolences to his family and many friends worldwide. We salute his actions to defend principles — the principles of standing against aggressive war, against state

racism and for equality. These public positions, still resonating today, counter the imperialist culture promoted that winning is everything and any crime, any violence, any action necessary to win is acceptable. We reprint a tribute to Ali and let him speak for himself:

"Why should they ask me to put on a uniform and go 10,000 miles from home and drop bombs and bullets on Brown people in Viet Nam while so-called Negro people in Louisville are treated like dogs and denied simple human rights? No I'm not going 10,000 miles from home to help murder and burn another poor nation simply to continue the domination of white slave masters of the darker people the world over. This is the day when such evils must come to an end. I have been warned that to take such a stand would cost me millions of dollars. But I have said it once and I will say it again. The real enemy of my people is here. I will not disgrace my religion, my people or myself by becoming a tool to enslave those who are fighting for their own justice, freedom and equality"

Veterans For Peace Salutes "The Greatest" Muhammad Ali

Veterans for Peace

Veterans For Peace recognizes the extraordinary life and courage of Muhammad Ali. Ali was, without question, the greatest heavyweight boxer in history because of his prowess in the ring and because he was a champion who did not shrink from the responsibilities of his times. Winning the world heavyweight boxing championship on February 15, 1964 when the U.S. faced extremely tumultuous times, he could have easily ridden a wave of celebrity and adulation. Instead, Ali challenged the status quo of the nation. He made the U.S. question the war it conducted in Viet Nam, the role of racism in the war, and the right of a person to follow their conscience and not the dictates of government. [...]

Ali was a Vietnam-Era conscientious objector, consummate peace activist, civil rights advocate and lover of all humanity.

The physical courage he had to stand in the ring, taking painful punishment to his body, pales in comparison to his moral courage in standing up for his principles. In 1966, when Ali was informed that he was reclassified as 1-A, which meant he was eligible for the draft and induction into the U.S. Army, he publicly declared that he would refuse to serve and considered

himself a conscientious objector.

Why did he take this stance? Perhaps his own words on the subject of peace and conscience say it best, "My conscience won't let me go shoot my brother, or some darker people, or some poor hungry people in the mud for big powerful America. And shoot them for what? They never called me ni---r, they never lynched me, they didn't put no dogs on me, they didn't rob me of my nationality, rape and kill my mother and father... Shoot them for what? ...How can I shoot them poor people? Just take me to jail."

On April 28, 1967, when he appeared at his scheduled induction into the Armed Forces in Houston, as expected when his name was called he refused to step forward.

He was stripped of his heavyweight title, restricted from fighting in the U.S. and denied a visa to fight abroad while his case was pending. He was not able to work as a fighter from March 1967 to October 1970, at the age which many consider prime physical time in a fighter's career. During this period, he toured speaking out against the Viet Nam War and advocating African American pride and racial justice. Of course, this period of time was very hard on Ali financially, but

he stood his ground on principle.

June 28, 1971, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld Ali's status as a conscientious objector. He had regained license to enter the ring and was on the road to regaining his title as world champion, which he did. In 1974, he defeated then champion George Foreman in the famous fight known by many as the Rumble in the Jungle. It was a kind of moral victory for Ali and all who supported him and the stance he took against the Viet Nam War.

Losing his title to Leon Spinks in 1978, Ali fought a rematch against Spinks and won it back for an unprecedented third time as heavyweight champion. Ali retired from boxing in 1980. He continued to be an advocate for peace and a lover of humanity. [...]

Muhammad Ali never stopped standing up for what is right. As recently as December 2015, he released a statement titled "Presidential Candidates Proposing to Ban Muslim Immigration to the United States." The statement spoke out against the violent acts of "those who use Islam to advance their own personal agenda."

Today the world needs people to follow the example of The Greatest, Muhammad Ali. We already miss him.

I • OPPOSE TFA AND RECEIVERSHIP

are brought in.

Increasing the number of TFA recruits necessarily lowers the quality of the public schools, as they are not trained and certified professionals. They also commonly remain only 1-2 years, contributing to instability and a more inexperienced teaching staff as a whole. They also lower quality by undermining the collective strength of teachers. Teachers work as a collective, assisting and learning from each other through working together over a period of years. As more and more of the staff have less than three years experience, the wisdom and quality of the collective thinking and action is undermined. So too is the dedication to the public good. While most people who are certified as teachers remain in the field for five years or more, TFA recruits do not. Their motivation is often not a commitment

to teaching and the importance of education for society, something common to those who take up the profession.

Additionally, two elementary schools, Futures and West Hertel, could be turned over to an independent receiver over the summer, (see p. 1). This includes handing over the school buildings. It is entirely up to a single, appointed individual, Commissioner Elia, to decide. And while district officials say privately that Elia has been positive about improvements in the two schools, it remains possible that she will appoint an independent receiver. This would remove these two schools from the district and school board control and put them entirely under state control. This too is harmful to the public good, as the public is further removed from governance.

Now is the time to be vigilant about

these issues. The state is counting on summer, when teachers and students are out of the buildings, to go forward with these plans. They are hoping there will not be resistance as everyone becomes pre-occupied with summer activities. Instead, all should be prepared to reject any effort to hand West Hertel and Futures over to an independent receiver and to continue to demand repeal of the receivership law and an end to receivership and the state testing that permits it. The demand is oppose more untrained TFA recruits and raise the working conditions of teachers by providing an improved contract. Working conditions of teachers are learning conditions of students and raising them serves quality, just as increasing the role of parents, students and teachers — raising the quality of democracy — also raises the quality of the schools.

I • WEST HERTEL AND FUTURES THREATENED

employee of the school district at the time of the appointment,” p.3. “The Commissioner shall contract with the independent receiver,” p.18, meaning the receiver is accountable to the Commissioner, not the public and there is not public recourse for their removal.

Let all concerned raise the following questions to the school board and any other organization active in fighting for the right to education:

1) West Hertel and Futures, two schools that remained on the persistently struggling list, face the possibility of the Commissioner taking them completely out of the control of the school board and turning them over to an independent receiver. This is true even though they are to become “community schools.” An independent receiver is approved by and contracted with the Commissioner. While the school board appoints them, it is from a list provided by the Commissioner. The independent receiver is not accountable to the public or district, but to the Commissioner. While the unions, teachers, students and activists continue to fight receivership in the courts and through demonstrations and other actions, the unions and all concerned should join in issuing public statements alerting



people to the possibility of an independent receiver and opposing the appointment of an independent receiver for these two schools. They, like all schools, should be removed from receivership.

2) The unions should lead in urging the Commissioner and District to provide public information concerning the potential for an independent receiver and whether it is, or is not likely, that the Commissioner plans instead to keep the schools under Dr. Cash for another year.

Elia can do so if she decides a school “has made demonstrable improvement.” She is also required to do so “in consultation and collaboration with the school district,” Regulations, p.15. As well, by June 30 there is to be “written notification to parents” and students at all receivership schools concerning the reasons the schools remain on the list. We urge the union and all concerned to call on the Commissioner and District to conduct public meetings, with translations, for this purpose as well as written notification, including in the many languages needed.

3) In addition, the union, school board and all concerned should call for repeal of the receivership law as harmful and anti-education and a moratorium on receivership until a repeal is done. There should also be a moratorium on state testing and testing related activities, consistent with the state’s decision to have a moratorium on use of the Common Core tests in evaluating teachers and students. If the tests are invalid, so is receivership and all schools should be removed from the list. Such a call can be forwarded to local and state representatives and organizations involved in defending the right to education.

BTF Passes Resolution Opposing TFA

At the Buffalo Teachers Federation (BTF) June Council of Delegates meeting, delegates initiated discussion on Teach for America and the planned new contract for more uncertified, inexperienced teachers in Buffalo. Members spoke out against TFA, bringing out that it is undermining

teaching as a profession and part of efforts by big monopolies, like Walmart, to eliminate the system of public education. TFA puts inexperienced, uncertified teachers into classrooms and also contributes to high turnover and instability, as most remain only 1-2 years. People brought out

various other facts about TFA and how it is serving private charter schools and more generally the privatization of public schools, using public dollars to do so. The Council unanimously passed a resolution loudly affirming the union's opposition to TFA in the Buffalo public schools.

Teach For America Serves Privatization and Undermines Teaching as a Profession

Buffalo Superintendent Cash has been given authority to hire more Teach for America (TFA) recruits. Other districts may do the same.

At the last Buffalo school board meeting a resolution was passed giving the superintendent authority to negotiate a new 3-year contract with TFA, to fill what are called "hard to fill" positions. The district will pay up to \$5,000 per recruit, per year to TFA, in addition to their salaries. They will become Buffalo Teachers Federation (BTF) members. No restriction was given on the number to be hired. Dr. Cash specifically said he wanted to use TFA to replace permanent and other substitutes, especially in receivership schools and for English as a Second Language (ESL) and Special Education positions. Supposedly, TFA will assist with "diversity," with half the recruits minorities, but nothing in the resolution required this.

TFA recruits are college graduates without teaching experience or the standard certification. TFA is largely funded by monopolies like Walmart (\$20 million in 2013, another \$5 million in 2015; more than \$100 million since 1993) Bank of America, Boeing, Goldman Sachs, Exxon, Monsanto, and many more; charter school backers; and in Buffalo, M&T Bank. The Walton foundation specifically states they fund TFA because of its "proven ability to create a pipeline of outstanding education reform leaders." These include Michelle Rhee, known for wrecking the DC public school system and KIPP charter school founders Mike Feinberg and Dave Levin. KIPP is notorious for its horrendous disciplinary practices and use of humiliation against mainly minority students.

New Orleans is also an example where



by 2007, after Katrina in 2005, nearly half of the city's teachers were in their first three years of teaching, with one in three students having a TFA teacher. There are now no public schools in the city.

No one should not be silent on this matter as TFA, especially connected with receivership, serves privatization and the undermining of teaching as a profession. It is important to call on unions, school board members and all concerned to address the following questions:

1) Will the school board and union *guarantee* that all certified teachers, including students graduating from area education schools, will be hired *before* any TFA recruits are used? There are known ESL teachers and others looking for work in Buffalo and there needs to be a guarantee they will be hired first.

2) TFA serves to make it possible for receivership to better function, as there is a relationship between reluctance by qualified teachers to come to Buffalo and receivership — with all its uncertainties and possibilities of involuntary transfers and firings. TFA is designed to fill this gap. Instead receivership must be eliminated. There should be no TFA recruits permitted in receivership schools as these are also schools and students in need

of the most qualified teachers. How is it that receiver Cash can claim he needs powers for involuntary transfer so he can put "the most qualified teachers" in receivership schools, then say he wants to use TFA recruits, the least qualified in receivership schools?!

3) Superintendent Cash also said he wanted to use TFA recruits for English as a Second Language (ESL) and Special Education. These are also the students most in need of qualified, experienced teachers. Instead of funding TFA, fund a new contract to attract new, certified teachers.

4) TFA serves as a mechanism to undermine teaching as a profession and strengthen efforts to privatize schools, using charters. The New Orleans example shows this: there are currently no public schools and one in three students have a TFA teacher. When combined with receivership, which also contributes to privatization, including the many schools eligible for an independent receiver next year, bringing more TFA recruits to Buffalo worsens receivership.

5) Even though TFA recruits become members of the union, they commonly are not active in the union. And they create a very difficult situation in the buildings. The TFA recruits generally have no commitment to Buffalo, to the schools where they are placed, often to teaching in general. Yet, in the interest of the students, time and effort is to be spent assisting and training them, only to see them leave within two and sometimes one year. It creates a two-tier system and instability and constant turn-over within the schools that is not favorable for anyone. How does the superintendent and school board suggest dealing with this?

Buffalo Schools Slated to be Community Schools

There are twelve Buffalo public schools and one charter (Westminster) that are slated to become “community schools,” (see list below). These schools are grouped in what are called “Community Zones.” Each zone (Northeast, East, West and South) has several schools associated with it, including one high school.

The district’s plan is for each elementary school to have about 50 percent of students who are within walking distance (.7 miles or less), and include another 30 percent within a radius of 1.5 miles. About 20 percent will be students from homes district-wide. For the high schools, 40 percent are from within the community zone and 60 percent district-wide. Parents living within the zones still have “choice,” in that they can choose to send their child to the “community school” or not.

Most of the schools involved are currently under receivership, with Dr. Cash as the receiver. Becoming a “community school” does not remove receivership. Most will remain in receivership under Dr. Cash next year, although West Hertel and Futures could be given to an independent receiver this year (see p. 1). If at the end of next year (June 2017) NY State Education Commissioner determines that the schools in receivership have not shown “demonstrable improvement,” based mainly on state testing scores, the Commissioner can determine to give the schools, including the buildings, over to an independent receiver. This then would remove the school entirely from control of the school board and the public more generally.

The high schools slated to be “community schools” each have particular programs, usually linked to the needs of particular monopolies, as well as other for profit and non-profit groups and universities. South Park, for example, is linked to Solar City. The computer technologies program at Bennett does not list specific monopolies but does state “Industry partners will assist in developing curriculum” and provide internships and other “work-based learning experiences.”

The School Board webpage promises



the following:

“A community school builds bridges between families and communities leading to improved student learning, increased parent engagement and healthier students by connecting community-based and faith-based organizations, colleges, city and county services and businesses with the school. The goals of this strategy are as follows:

“Implement strong educational programs which reduce learning gaps, enrich and expand the curriculum, and strengthen parent and community engagement in the school.

“Coordinate with Say Yes and other local resources to offer medical, dental, health and wellness services at the school.

“Implement high quality extended day and year programs of excellence (e.g. academic, cultural, artistic, athletic, language and needs-based).”

We encourage all to hold the district to account on these promises and to especially pay attention to:

1) Whether curriculum is actually being enriched and expanded in a manner that serves the interests of the students for all-round education and enlightenment rather than the more narrow interests of specific

monopolies;

2) Whether the for profit and/or non-profit agencies contracted for “medical, dental, health and wellness services” are required to use certified professionals and required to raise the quality of services, not lower them. Commonly, contracting out of services to private interests rather than public sector workers lowers their quality, as has been experienced by many in healthcare. In Chicago, for example, where nursing services were contracted out, now faces a crisis as the individuals assigned to the schools are not certified nurses and often cannot even administer medicine.

3) Whether “community schools” serve to hand over yet more public dollars to private interests that are not accountable to the public.

Schools Slated to Become “Community” Schools

Northeast Community Zone

Highgate Heights #80 (currently under an Educational Partnership Organization, EPO)

Westminster Community Charter School
Bennett High School (in receivership)

East School Zone

Lovejoy Discovery School #43

Hamlin Park #74 (in receivership)

Harvey Austin School #97 (in receivership)

Marva J. Daniels Futures Academy #37 (in receivership and could be given to independent receiver for 2016-17)

East High School

West School Zone

West Hertel Academy #94 (in receivership and could be given to independent receiver for 2016-17)

Herman Badillo #76 (in receivership)

Lafayette High School (in receivership, but scheduled to re-open in good standing as Lafayette International High School)

South School Zone

Southside Elementary #93

South Park High School

Community Schools, Private Interests and Improving Quality

Buffalo is expected to have 13 “community schools” in the coming school year, 12 public schools and Westminster charter. Most of the public schools involved are currently in receivership. Becoming a community school does not eliminate receivership and nor does it prevent the possibility of the school being handed over to an independent receiver next July. In fact, the receivership law and regulations specifically call for and define what constitutes a “community school.”

While these schools sound good on paper, it is important to investigate what role they will play in 1) serving private interests; 2) in undermining public control and schools that serve the public good; and 3) further limiting the quality of the schools, including their curriculum.

It is also the case that the plans for them have not involved broad public participation by the community or any decision making by them as to the content and character of the schools. They are “community” only in the sense that some students will be walking distance to them.

The receivership law and corresponding regulations by NY State Education Commissioner Elia promote “community schools,” as does Governor Cuomo. Funding from the state is being providing for their development, with \$12.5 million for this purpose in Buffalo. These are the same people that imposed receivership and are pushing more use of state Common Core testing, despite widespread opposition and test refusals by parents and teachers statewide.

The Commissioner’s Regulations 100.19 state:

(8) Community school shall mean a school that partners with one or more agencies with an integrated focus on rigorous academics and the fostering of a positive and supportive learning environment, and a range of school-based and

school-linked programs and services that lead to improved student learning, stronger families, and healthier communities. At a minimum, programs must include, but are not limited, to:

(i) addressing social service, health and mental health needs of students in the school and their families in order to help students arrive and remain at school ready to learn;

(ii) providing access to services in the school community to promote a safe and secure learning environment;

(iii) encouraging family and community engagement to promote stronger home school relationships and increase families’ investment in the school community;

(iv) providing access to nutrition services, resources or programs to ensure students have access to healthy food and understand how to make smart food choices;

(v) providing access to early childhood education to ensure a continuum of learning that helps prepare students for success; and

(vi) offering access to career and technical education as well as workforce development services to students in the school and their families in order to provide meaningful employment skills and opportunities; and

(vii) offering expanded learning opportunities that include after-school, summer school, Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math programs (STEAM) and mentoring and other youth development programs,” (p.8).

Existing experience with such public-private partnerships, whether with private monopolies or non-profits like Say Yes, is that public funds are used to serve the private interests and the public has little or no control over the agencies contracted to carry out the various services. Further, while there is a great need for more



certified guidance counselors and nurses in all the schools, contracting out these services to private agencies is likely to further undermine the quality of these services, again, using public dollars for private interests largely outside the control of the public. People currently in the schools from Say Yes, for example, are accountable to Say Yes, are moved around by them, with their responsibilities decided mainly by Say Yes with little input from teachers, students and parents. Community schools promise to bring more of these conditions of public dollars funding private interests with little or no accountability to the public.

Public schools can best be improved by improving the quality of democracy, of decision making by the public, for the public good. The role of private monopolies should be to fund the public schools, and leave decisions about them to parents, teachers and students — the real experts.

Visit our website: usmlo.org

Action Opposes Cuomo's Attempt to Block Support for Palestine



On June 15 various organizations and activists stood together to defend Palestine and defend the right to speak and organize for Palestine. The action denounced Governor Cuomo's June 5 executive order, calling for a "blacklist" of universities and companies that support the Boycott, Divest, Sanctions (BDS) efforts as part of the struggle against Israeli aggression and occupation of Palestine. Participants rightly stood up for their right to speak and organize and rejected Cuomo's blackmail of withholding state funds from public universities that join BDS, or even permit demonstrations in support of BDS.

The BDS efforts, many organized by students, commonly call for universities to divest from Israeli companies and those that support Israel, until such time as Israel recognizes the rights of Palestinians and ends the occupation. The battles, such as those organized by Students for Justice in Palestine at New York University (NYU) and elsewhere, are defending Palestinian rights, including the Right of Return for the many refugees forced from their homes by U.S.-Israeli aggression. Palestinians make up the largest group of refugees, many forced into refugee camps

for decades.

Cuomo's action is directed not only at those who defend Palestine, but also at the right to speak and organize. Given many of the BDS actions are on college campuses, it is also an effort to silence youth, using the threat of the withdrawal of public state funds from public universities.

The executive order specifically states, with no basis in fact, "The State of New York unequivocally rejects the BDS campaign and stands firmly with Israel." It adds, "The State of New York will not permit its own investment activity to further the BDS campaign in any way, shape or form, whether directly or indirectly." It requires the Commissioner of the Office of General Services to compile a list of all "institutions and companies that the Commissioner determines, using credible information available to the public, participate in boycott, divestment, or sanctions activity targeting Israel, either directly or indirectly or through a parent or subsidiary." State funds would be withheld from any put on the list.

The order does not define what it means to participate indirectly, but it could easily be interpreted to mean any university that

allows BDS demonstrations would be put on the list and denied funds. Even calling for such an action could be considered "indirect" support. As well, the many calling for an end to military funding to Israel could also be considered to "threaten the sovereignty and security," of Israel.

In addition, all state entities were directed to "divest their money and assets from any investment in any institution or company that is included on the Commissioner's list." And "No money or assets shall be invested by any Affected State Entity in the future in any institution or company that is included on the Commissioner's list." In this manner, public institutions are being blackmailed into supporting Cuomo's attack on the right to speak and organize, for Palestine and more generally. And developing a "blacklist" of public institutions based on the dictate of Cuomo is a dangerous precedent. As Cuomo said, his is a first-in-the-nation order. It cannot be allowed to stand.

*Defend the Right to Speak and Organize!
Defend Palestine's Right to Be!*