

Buffalo Forum



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

Workers of all countries, unite!

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September 22, 2017

Vol. 21 #9

Strong Community Schools — Who Decides?

Buffalo is currently developing Community Schools, including those at Bennett, East, Lafayette and South Park. The schools have evening hours, something long demanded by parents and students alike. And they are working to include a variety of activities, such as sports and cultural events, alongside academics and parent classes.

The Community Schools are mainly in response to a concerted effort in recent years by parents, students and teachers to improve the quality of their public schools and have them better meet the needs of the community. However, the schools designed and approved by the community, through numerous public meetings and actions at the school board, are not the community schools that exist. Instead, the Superintendent and other district officials decided what the programs

Who Decides? • 2

DEMONSTRATE OCTOBER 6

End Criminal War Against Afghanistan All U.S. Troops Home Now

October 6 marks the 16th anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, a criminal war of aggression that has devastated the country and killed untold numbers of children, women and men. Buffalo will be joining cities across the country in demonstrating against the war and demanding *All U.S. Troops Home Now!* It is bringing

troops home, not increasing their number, that contributes to peace and security. It is up to the people of Afghanistan to decide their government and future, not the U.S. The continued war increases violence, anarchy and insecurity, as the past 16 years have shown. It has solved

Demonstrate October 6 • 3

ST. LOUIS NOT GUILTY VERDICT

Cops Have Impunity to Kill

Don Fitz, September 22, 2017

And the cop will not go to jail. This is what has sparked protests by thousands in St. Louis from September 15 through today. When exoneration of the killer cop hit the air, within minutes Zaki Baruti, leader of the Universal African Peoples Organization had pulled together nine

Cops Have Impunity to Kill • 5

Senate's Military Spending Increase Enough To Make Public College Free

*Alex Emmons, The Intercept,
September 18, 2017*

On Monday night, September 18, the Senate overwhelmingly approved an \$80 billion annual increase in military spending. With \$80 billion a year, you could make public colleges and universities in the U.S. tuition-free. The Senate handed President Donald Trump far more than the \$54 billion he asked for. Before the bill becomes law, it has to be reconciled with the version the House already passed, which contains a similar \$77 billion spending increase. It is likely to become law by the end of the year.

The bill would set the U.S.'s annual military budget at around \$700 billion, putting it within range of matching the spending level at the height of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Pentagon Funding Increased • 4

BUFFALO PRIMARY

Voter Turn Out and Need for a New Electoral Process

The recent primary in Buffalo saw only about 26 percent of voters turned out to vote, slightly less than 26,000 people. The election included primaries for Mayor, won by incumbent Byron Brown. It also included the 2nd County Legislative District seat, vacated by Betty Jean Grant

for her run for mayor, won by April Baskin and votes for Buffalo City Court judge, won by Calvo Torres and LoTiempo.

It has been reported that the youth vote was especially low, with some election districts having no voters 18-20 and the under 34 vote smaller than usual. Many

Need for New Electoral Process • 2

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I • NEED FOR NEW ELECTORAL PROCESS

are wondering why the turn out is as low as it is, a trend that generally exists for elections.

For many, at least one main reason is that people do not feel that their vote translates into having their concerns and demands represented. There is repeated experience that politicians make promises to be broken, that systemic problems like poverty, inequality, a jail unfit for human beings and more remain, despite elections. What then is the point, many feel.

In addition, the people have no role in setting the agenda for those running. The candidates announce their campaigns and make their promises without the people having a say. No public meetings are held to discuss and debate their demands. And while in this election for Mayor, Betty Jean Grant, known for taking stands in favor of the people ran, it was also well known that the various Democratic Party factions and their machinery would block her and attack her, which they did.

Clearly, for elections to play a role in politically mobilizing the people, a political process

that favors the people is needed. This is one where the people gather in workplaces and schools and community centers to discuss *their* agenda and demand candidates who represent that agenda. The people themselves would choose the candidates based on their ability to represent, not on their ability to fund a campaign and secure the backing of the rich.

Indeed, the election process itself, not the candidates, needs to be publicly funded, so that public forums and meetings can be organized and all candidates would have an equal footing — equal media time, equal advertising, equal time to present their solutions to the agenda set by the people. Negative campaigning would be outlawed and instead an electoral commission would have responsibility to provide all the facts, context and information needed for the public to have an informed vote.

When people are involved in deciding the agenda and deciding the candidates and they know all candidates have an equal chance of winning, then voter participation will increase.

I • WHO DECIDES?

and activities would be. It was not the parents, students and teachers, of each school and its surrounding community, that decided. In fact, a number of the programs put in place were directly against what was wanted by the community. The program at East for example, does not take advantage of its advanced laboratory facilities. The one at Lafayette is eliminating its integrated student body of both non-English speakers and English speakers, something greatly valued.

The new Bennett has two new schools now in the building, mainly serving the Medical Center and its needs, the High School for Innovative Technology and the Research Laboratory for Bioinformatics & Life Sciences. “We’re looking forward to developing our young students into the next generation for the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus,” said Angela Cullen, Research Laboratory High School for Bioinformatics & Life Sciences principal.

The general orientation is that education, both in high school and college, is to be for

securing a job. Teachers, students and parents are not to be decision makers, but rather consulted, through surveys for example (and students generally do not even get this level of consultation). Issues like modernizing the curriculum, cross discipline and combined ages, student involvement in projects designed to solve social problems of the city, country and world, education for enlightenment generally, are all to be dismissed. Why are there no schools devoted to the social movements of the people, their contributions to change in service to humanity? When education is reduced to getting jobs, those providing the jobs will gain greater ability to dictate the content and youth will be trained as robots, to do as they are told by the given monopolies, not thinking human beings.

As the struggle to improve the quality of education goes forward, the right of parents, students and teachers to together decide these matters and design community schools that belong to them is vital.

Visit our website **usmlo.org**

No to War Call to Action

No to War

October 6, 2017, marks the 16th anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan – the longest foreign war in U.S. history.

The Afghan war, which has been a thoroughly bipartisan effort, was originally railed against by Donald Trump when he was running for president. He claimed to be against U.S. troop involvement in Afghanistan. Now he is moving forward with a “secret” plan of escalation that will also include Pakistan. He says the secrecy is to keep the “enemy” from knowing his plans, but it also keeps the U.S. people from knowing what he is doing in our name and from judging the human costs for the people of Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United States

What we do know is that military escalation has repeatedly failed to bring peace in Afghanistan. It has caused more destruction and more deaths of civilians and soldiers alike and has cost trillions of dollars that could be spent on meeting basic needs here at home while repairing the destruction we have carried out abroad.

Trump also emboldens the war machine here in the US against Black and Brown people and immigrants by fanning white supremacy and xenophobia and continuing the militarization of the police and ICE to incite racially-motivated violence and justify repression, including mass incarceration and mass deportations. US wars of aggression and militarism abroad

go hand-in-hand with increased state repression and militarization of the police state here at home.

Trump’s new escalation comes at a time when there is no end in sight to the continuous wars, including drone and mercenary warfare, throughout the region and when he is threatening military action against Venezuela, North Korea, Russia, Iran and other countries.

Therefore, we the undersigned antiwar leaders in the U.S. are calling for non-violent protests in cities across the country during the week of the 16th anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. We appeal to all antiwar organizations in the United States and around the world to join us.

I • DEMONSTRATE OCTOBER 6

no problem as what is needed is a political resolution, not a military one.

A main aim in demonstrating is to give public expression to the anti-war stand of the majority. It is a means to reject the massive funding for the Pentagon now being debated in Congress, with an additional \$80 billion planned. It is a means to stand up for principle, which is that wars of aggression are crimes to be punished and U.S. occupation of Afghanistan must end now. It is also a means to unite in action, bringing together the many groups and forces. Taking united action is the means by which to build working relations and strengthen the unity and organized character of resistance. Strengthening the anti-war movement through mobilizing public support and working together in action is especially important as the U.S. increases its plans for more war. Buffalo Forum urges students, teachers and all concerned to join in taking a stand: *U.S. Out of Afghanistan Now! All U.S. Troops Home Now!* Many will also take the opportunity to denounce U.S. threats of war against Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. Diplomacy, including signing a

peace treaty and accepting the Korean’s proposal of a freeze for a freeze, with Koreans freezing nuclear development and the U.S. freezing its massive war games, is the way forward.

In his speech at the United Nations, Trump indicated the U.S. is preparing for more war. He specifically threatened the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea saying, if the U.S. is “forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea.” He then threatened the entire world, claiming, “From now on, our security interests will dictate the length and scope of military operation, not arbitrary benchmarks and timetables set up by politicians. I have also totally changed the rules of engagement in our fight against the Taliban and other terrorist groups.” This means the U.S. will expand its attacks and justify use of drones and Special Forces anywhere, anytime, in the name of fighting “terrorist groups.” Sovereignty is not the right of



each country to determine its own affairs, but the “right” of the U.S. to dictate and decide the government in each country.

It is clear that the U.S. is planning and preparing more war, itself a crime. This brings the need to discuss and organize for an anti-war government to the fore. Organizing for an anti-war government is a unifying aim and one that directly contributes to the demand of the peoples here and worldwide for peace. It is necessary to make the U.S. a factor for peace. In demonstrating together, let us also discuss together the need for an anti-war government.

DEMONSTRATE OCTOBER 6, 4PM ELMWOOD AND BIDWELL

U.S. Out of Afghanistan Now! All U.S. Troops Home Now!

No War Against Korea!

I • COPS HAVE IMPUNITY TO KILL

people to protest by the courthouse. Within a few hours, the crowd of demonstrators mushroomed to hundreds.

By Monday, September 18 students had walked out of class in at least 3 high schools and 2 universities. In addition to street demonstrations, hundreds marched through shopping malls. There have been so many spontaneous marches that no one knows for sure how many people have participated – many thousands for certain by Tuesday, September 19.

As demonstrations spread across St. Louis City and County, Governor Greitens appeared with National Guard tanks announcing his willingness to do whatever necessary to maintain order. Having a more gentle approach, Mayor Lyda Krewson showed herself to be one of those Democrats

who agree that Black Lives Matter while cooing that White Property Matters even more. Krewson appears daily on TV with Acting Police Chief Lawrence O'Toole – she assures protestors that she feels their anguish while the cops promise to lock up “agitators.”

Corporate media praises police from a variety of municipalities for their “restraint.” But that is not what protestors say, especially when night makes it more difficult to record police activities. Many report being harassed, gassed, and arrested by police as they attempt to leave evening demonstrations. Mackenzie Marks had to wash her eyes after “They boxed us in and started pepper spraying us.”

A funny thing happened at Central Reform Congregation (CRC) the evening of

September 15. Feeling threatened by police as they marched from Kingshighway and Pershing, demonstrators asked for sanctuary at CRC, which they received.

After things quieted down and demonstrators tried to leave CRC to go home, police pepper sprayed them, forcing them back inside. Then the police showed the media where CRC had red paint splattered on it, and, TV did as prompted and reported that demonstrators had vandalized CRC. But why would anyone vandalize a synagogue that gave them sanctuary? It does not add up. The pieces only fall into place if it was a police provocateur who did the damage.

Another incident revealed cops' giving non-verbal threats of their willingness to

Cops Have Impunity to Kill • 5

U.S. Senate Passes 2018 Defense Authorization Bill

Yi Yong-in, Hankyoreh, September 20, 2017

The US Senate passed a defense authorization bill on Sept. 18 demanding the administration increase its extended deterrence and security capabilities in the Asia-Pacific region. The bill, which applies to the 2018 accounting year, was approved by a vote of 89 to 8.

The defense authorization bill that passed the Senate stipulates that the Secretary of Defense must submit plans within 30 days of its enactment for improvement of US extended deterrence and security capabilities in the Asia-Pacific region. The bill indicates that the plan should include increased weapons sales to allies in the region and expanded military cooperation, exercises, and integrated defense with allies.

The bill further requests a plan for deployment of and training with strategic weaponry, including dual-capable strategic aircraft that can carry both conventional and nuclear weapons, and increased Asia-Pacific defense capabilities and visible presence of key US military assets, including medium- to long-range strike assets.

Additional content reaffirmed the US's commitment to deployment of a THAAD antimissile system on the Korean Peninsula and other defense of regional allies and to its existing extended deterrent using all available defense capabilities to guarantee security, including its nuclear umbrella. Not included in the plan was the Asia-Pacific redeployment of subma-

rine-launched nuclear cruise missiles, a possibility that was raised at one point.

The bill also omitted specific demands related to North Korea sanctions. The changes were seen as reflecting the mood in the Senate – which unlike the House of Representatives sees current legislation for North Korea sanctions as sufficient.

The defense authorization bill previously passed the House in July and has undergone fine-tuning between the two houses of Congress. But the two bills' inclusion of roughly similar content in terms of the Asia-Pacific region and provisions for increased military pressure against both North Korea and China suggests some potential for increased regional tensions.

I • PENTAGON FUNDING INCREASED

To put that in further perspective: If the package becomes law, U.S. military spending would exceed the total spending of its next 10 rivals put together, going off of 2016 military spending estimates from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

Put another way, with a \$700 billion military budget, the U.S. would be spending

more than three times as much as China on its military, and 10 times as much as Russia. According to SIPRI, the U.S. already accounts for more than a third of all military spending. Or if the additional military spending over the next 10 years instead went to pay off student debt, it could come close to wiping it out entirely. [...]

The Senate voted 89-8, with three

senators not voting, to approve the military money. Spendthrift Sanders joined only four other Democratic senators to vote against the bill: Kirsten Gillibrand, New York, Patrick Leahy, Vermont, and Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden from Oregon. Republicans Bob Corker of Tennessee, Rand Paul of Kentucky, and Mike Lee of Utah also voted against it.

4 • COPS HAVE IMPUNITY TO KILL

cause severe bodily injury or death. The *Riverfront Times* reported that at 7:30 pm on September 17, a cop “driving an unmarked patrol car put the blue Impala in reverse and shot through an approaching crowd, narrowly missing protesters who scrambled out the way.” As everyone is acutely aware of the August 21 murder of an anti-racist by a Nazi racing his car into a crowd in Charlottesville Virginia, the police action in St. Louis was a not-so-subtle reminder of what the boys in blue can get away with. [...]

Since the corporate press increasingly echoed the police verbiage that property damage was caused by “agitators,” [those resisting] questioned whether demonstrators or police had actually begun it. The release noted that:

1. In the 1960s, the U.S. secret police agency, the CIA, introduced massive amounts of drugs into black community in an intentional effort to destroy the arising movement for black self-determination;

2. Throughout the Viet Nam war, and ever since, police departments across the country have sent agent provocateurs into crowds to incite individuals to act violently in order to justify police attacks;

3. Police agents infiltrate organizations and suggest violent behavior;

4. Individual police often keep a ‘throw-away’ gun in their car to plant it on victims they kill; and,

5. Individual police, local police departments and federal agencies justify these actions to themselves and others with a belief that ‘If the person or group didn’t commit this crime, they did something else we have to get them.’

Why did Judge Wilson set off a bomb by exonerating Stockley? One passage of his 30-page decision stands out. In the critical issue of Stockley’s throwing the gun into the car, the judge said he had to believe the cop’s claim that it was already there because “A heroin dealer without a gun would be an anomaly.” This was despite the report that the person who had just been riding with victim Anthony Smith reported that Smith did not have any heroin or a gun.

Background

In 2011, St. Louis cop Jason Stockley fired

5-7 shots at Anthony Lamar Smith, killing him. Stockley claimed that Smith was selling drugs and chased him at high speed and shot him to defend himself. The story was briefly reported as another drug deal gone bad, and it was just incidental that the cop was white and the victim was black.

But the case turned out to be a lot more than that. His mother, Annie Smith, said that “They wouldn’t let me kiss him or hug him goodbye.” Kirkwin Taylor reported that he and his 5-year-old son had been riding with Smith and were at a fast-food restaurant with him. Taylor was inside when the police approached. He disputed that Smith had drugs and a gun. “I wouldn’t have had my son in there if there was a gun.”

When Stockley first approached Smith’s car, he carried his own AK-47, an unauthorized weapon, as well as his police gun. Was it possible that Smith sped away because he was terrified of the cop and not because he was selling drugs?

Stockley received a 30-day suspension for carrying the AK-47 and resigned from the police force in 2013. He moved to Houston Texas to take a lucrative management job. After a wrongful death suit brought on behalf of Smith’s young daughter resulted in \$900,000 damages the City’s prosecuting attorney found new evidence and charged the former cop with murder in 2016.

A device from inside the police car recorded Stockley telling his partner, “I’m gonna kill that *****!” as they chased Smith at over 80 miles per hour through the streets of St. Louis. Additionally, a video showed that after Stockley killed Smith, we went back to the police car, grabbed an object and placed it by the victim.

The prosecuting attorney charged that Stockley had planted a .38-caliber revolver so he could falsely claim “self-defense.” Tests showed that the gun had DNA from Stockley but not from Smith. The prosecutor also pointed out that it would make no sense for an officer who had killed a suspect to handle the evidence, since they are trained not to.

It is Not Self Defense, It is Genocide

Stockley decided to not request a jury trial, so that a single judge would decide his fate.



That went to Judge Timothy Wilson. His attorney was probably well aware that of 83 cops have been charged with killing civilians during the last 12 years and none has ever been convicted in a “bench trial.”

Judge Wilson waited almost a month to announce his decision. The verdict would come out only a few miles from Ferguson Missouri, where white cop Darren Wilson killed an unarmed black man, Michael Brown in 2014. [...]

In the days immediately before the September 15 announcement of the verdict TV news stories featured the new Missouri Governor Eric Greitens (a Donald Trump Republican) and the new St. Louis City Mayor Lyda Krewson (a Hillary Clinton Democrat) calling for “calm” when the verdict was announced. It was clear that both had been told what the verdict would be and that the Democratic and Republican bosses were closing ranks. [...]

On September 15, the verdict was announced and the entire progressive community was stunned. Jason Stockley would not get the death penalty. He would not get life imprisonment. He would not get 30 or 20 or 10 years imprisonment. He would not even do one day in jail. Judge Wilson decreed that he was innocent and set him free.

The verdict of Stockley’s “innocence” fell like a ton of bricks because, at some level, everyone knew what it meant: If he could not be convicted of any crime, the judge’s decision said that no white cop should ever be convicted of killing a black man, regardless of the evidence against him. [...]

BUFFALO STATE SPEAK OUT

Charlottesville, KKK and the Need for an African American Studies Major

As a new semester gets underway, many are concerned about racist killings by police and impunity for them. Efforts by the Nazis and KKK to rally in Charlottesville and the broad protest against them, the hundreds of rallies in support of Charlottesville and against the Nazis all across the country, demonstrations in St. Louis as yet another killer cop was acquitted, all bring to the fore the broad anti-racist sentiment of the people and their growing anger with the impunity for racist killings. There is a demand for equality now and growing recognition that the government cannot provide it and in fact stands behind the Nazis and KKK and protects them, while targeting those standing against inequality and for rights.

One of the problems presenting itself is where to direct the fight for rights and equality. Should it mainly be directed against the KKK, Nazis and individuals from such groups identified in the vari-

ous protests? Or should it be directed at the racist U.S. state? Or both? And which is the most responsible? Can the federal government be relied on or is it integral to the racist killings, violence and impunity?

Starting from the present and examining the social movements that have developed to oppose government racism and inequality can answer such questions. It is necessary to be informed about the movements as they exist today, and their history of struggle against the KKK, Nazis and pro-Confederate forces and for equal rights. Such examination readily shows that those standing up against the KKK far outnumber these racist forces. The people as a whole are anti-racist and for equality. It is the government that is racist to the core and stands behind and often directly organizes, through informants, the KKK and Nazis.

An African American Studies Major

would need to include such examination of social movements, their results and history. And students should have a direct say in the content of such a major. Students bring a lot of experience to bear on the subject, especially when it comes to police brutality and racist killings. They also bring to the fore the need to direct their studies toward solving social problems. It is not useful to have a major that is detached from the present problems. Rather, that must be its starting point if it is to contribute to contending with the racist U.S. state, its instruments like the KKK, and advancing the struggle for equal rights for all.

Further, a major addressing social movements for political and human emancipation are also required. Supporting the call for such courses and signing the petition calling for students to participate in decision making is a

African American Studies Major • 7

Mass Protests Rout Racists In Richmond

The Virginia Defender, September 17, 2017

The events of August 12 in Charlottesville, Virginia ignited a fierce national wave of revulsion against the organizations, like the KKK and Nazis, whose violence resulted in the death of protester Heather Heyer and injuries to more than 30 other people. In the following days, some 60 “alt-right” events across the country were hastily cancelled.

Then a Tennessee-based group calling itself the New Confederate States of America announced it would hold a rally September 16 at the 61-foot-tall Robert E. Lee statue on Richmond’s Monument Avenue. Although there was no indication it would result in anything like Charlottesville, Mayor Levar Stoney and Police Chief Alfred Durham managed to whip up a near-hysteria in the city — not about the racists, but about the anticipated protesters. The public was warned to stay away, the 31,000-student Virginia Commonwealth University cancelled all classes scheduled

for September 16, streets around the Lee statue were blocked off, some with dump trucks, and the statue itself was surrounded with metal-fence barricades. Many scores of riot-equipped police were deployed.

So it was in an atmosphere of real tension that hundreds of people of all races came out to condemn the neo-Confederates, who managed to turn out a total of seven people. As the protests grew in size, the police shut down the “rally” early and escorted the neo-Confederates to their pick-up truck — one pick-up truck. There, they found that two of their tires had been slashed. Pursued by dozens of angry protesters, the mighty New Confederates fled the area, ruining their truck wheels, which forced them to set up a GoFundMe appeal for donations to help them escape from what they called “hostile territory.” By the end of the day they had raised \$20.

[As part of bringing a working-class,

anti-racist message to the protests, the Virginia Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality marched with others from historically-Black Jackson Ward to the Maggie Walker rally, holding signs that read: “Money for Schools & Jobs, not to maintain Racist Statues! Take ‘em down NOW!” Many then proceeded to the Lee statue, holding signs, banners and chanting for hours until the racists had left the area.

By the end of the day, seven people had been arrested, but it is still unclear how many were actually part of the protests. The lessons? First, Richmonders made it clear that white supremacists are not welcome in their city. And second, the police chief and mayor need to seriously rethink the question of who is the real problem in these situations: the racists or the anti-racists? You would think the answer would be obvious, but apparently some Richmond officials are having trouble figuring it out.

NO TO MILITARIZATION OF RELIEF EFFORTS

Full Funding for Hurricane Relief and Reconstruction in Puerto Rico, Florida, Texas

Buffalo's Puerto Rican community, like that of New York City has rallied support for the millions contending with no power and the broad devastation across Puerto Rico. It is the people who are setting up facebook pages to provide information about conditions in various towns, reach out to family in Puerto Rico where lack of power means communication is down, set-up fund raising campaigns, and more. They are being joined by people across the city and country.

Following on the heels of Irma, which caused \$1 billion in damages to homes and buildings, Hurricane Maria, with 155 mile-per hour winds, punished Puerto Rico like no other natural disaster has since at least 1928, when Hurricane San Felipe crippled the island. Maria was an even greater catastrophe of such magnitude that it has created a humanitarian crisis in Puerto Rico. Much of the island remains without communications. Entire towns are isolated. And now tens of thousands are being forced to flee massive flooding, as the Guajataca Dam failed. It was known that this was going to occur, yet little was done in advance to prevent

it. The 90-year-old dam, much like the levees in New Orleans with Katrina in 2005, was not strengthened and upgraded as required.

On Friday night, the National Weather Service warned the failure of the dam might be "imminent" and could lead to "life-threatening" flash floods for the estimated 70,000 people living in the immediate area. "This is an *Extremely Dangerous Situation*," the NWS wrote. "All the areas around the Guajataca River must evacuate *now*. Your lives are in *danger*." On Saturday rushing water was sweeping through the municipalities of Isabela and Quebradillas.

The dam failure could have been prevented and is thus a government-made disaster. Similarly, while the government routinely calls for evacuations, as it did in Houston and south Florida, it has no plan to guarantee such an evacuation. Families are left to fend for themselves. And if they cannot afford to leave or have no means to do so, they cannot evacuate.

Puerto Rico, crippled by U.S. colonialism, and specifically the Control Board imposed which has massively cut funding

for social programs and infrastructure, is especially vulnerable. It is also now without funds for rebuilding and still under the dictate of the Control Board, which requires that debt payments come first. Current conditions overall are also government made, in that funding for infrastructure was not sufficient. While Trump declared Puerto Rico a disaster area, which releases federal funding, providing the immediate resources now is also not occurring at the level required. The same can be said of reconstruction efforts in Houston and south Florida. So while an additional \$80 billion is being provided to the Pentagon, making a yearly budget of about \$700 billion, funding for relief and reconstruction is far below that. This too is a government-made disaster. Full and immediate funding is required.

Disaster Relief as Military Exercise

There is also great concern about the military's role in emergency operations in Texas, Florida and now Puerto Rico. For many, the military presence is more like an occupation than assistance. Every

Full Funding for Hurricane Relief • 8

6 • AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES MAJOR

step forward in contributing to the fight for equality.

Below is the content of the petition. Sign on!

Petition for a Major in African American Studies and a New Cross-Discipline Major: Inequality and Political and Human Emancipation

Buffalo State has a diverse student population, with an estimated 26% African Americans, 12% Puerto Ricans, Native Americans and students from countries of Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Caribbean and the Americas. All are confronted by various forms of political and social inequality and concerned about the problem of how to emancipate humanity from the

current problems it faces. What is the history of and wisdom gained from the quest for political and human emancipation? What ideological, philosophical, political and economic questions have been solved, and what questions remain? Scientific inquiry into existing and previous movements for emancipation is needed. Research projects that take up the problem of emancipation from the present informed by the wisdom of the past to which many cultures and peoples have made contributions are needed. Study and investigation of social movements, present and past are needed — to understand them it is important to find out about them directly. We are demanding a broad, inclusive, cross-discipline major

to address these problems.

We demand:

1) A new cross-discipline major with programs for undergraduate and graduate students: Inequality and Political and Human Emancipation

2) We demand that the current minor in African and African American Studies become a major and the program in Social Justice for graduate students be extended to undergraduates.

3) That students and faculty work together to decide course content and character for new majors and programs

4) That public forums to discuss and debate development of new majors and programs be organized on campus to involve all concerned

— Full Funding for Hurricane Relief and Reconstruction in Puerto Rico, Florida, Texas — from p.7

branch of the armed services — the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard — deployed significant contingents to the Houston area, in some cases sending along the sort of specialized equipment normally used in major combat operations. The combined response included tens of thousands of National Guard and active-duty troops, thousands of Humvees and other military vehicles, hundreds of helicopters, dozens of cargo planes, and an assortment of naval vessels. And just as operations in Texas began to wind down, the Pentagon commenced a similarly vast mobilization for Hurricane Irma.

The military's response to Harvey began with front-line troops: the National Guard, the U.S. Coast Guard, and units of the U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM), the joint-service force responsible for homeland defense. Texas Governor Greg Abbott mobilized the entire Texas National Guard, about 10,000 strong, and guard contingents were deployed from other states as well. The Texas Guard came equipped with its own complement of helicopters, Humvees, and other all-terrain vehicles; while NORTHCOM provided 87 helicopters, four C-130 Hercules cargo aircraft, and 100 high-water vehicles.

Still more aircraft were provided by the Air Force, including seven C-17 cargo planes and, in a highly unusual move, an E-3A Sentry airborne warning and control system, or AWACS. This super-sophisticated aircraft was originally designed to oversee air combat operations in Europe in the event of an all-out war with the Soviet Union. Instead, this particular AWACS conducted air traffic control and surveillance around Houston, gathering data on flooded areas, and providing "situational awareness" to military units involved in "restoring order."

For its part, the Navy deployed two major surface vessels, the USS Kearsarge, an amphibious assault ship, and the USS Oak Hill, a dock landing ship. "These ships," the Navy reported, "are capable of providing medical support, maritime civil affairs, maritime security, expeditionary logistic

support, [and] medium and heavy lift air support." Accompanying them were several hundred Marines from the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit based at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, along with their amphibious assault vehicles and a dozen or so helicopters and MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft.

When Irma struck, the Pentagon ordered a similar mobilization of troops and equipment. The Kearsarge and the Oak Hill, with their embarked Marines and helicopters, were redirected from Houston to waters off Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. At the same time, the Navy dispatched a much larger flotilla, including the USS Abraham Lincoln (the aircraft carrier on which President George W. Bush had his infamous "mission accomplished" moment), the missile destroyer USS Farragut, the amphibious assault ship USS Iwo Jima, and the amphibious transport dock USS New York. Instead of its usual complement of fighter jets, the Abraham Lincoln set sail from its base in Norfolk, Virginia, with heavy-lift helicopters; the Iwo Jima and New York also carried a range of helicopters for relief and control operations.

Despite this massive military mobilization, ensuring power and clean water for the people impacted by the hurricanes was commonly not the main aim. The military is capable of quickly establishing power, water and food to run a small city. It could readily do so in the many towns left isolated in Puerto Rico. It has not done so. Rather, checkpoints were established and impacted areas patrolled by armed guardsmen. When federal relief comes in the form of armed National Guard troops patrolling the storefronts of flooded streets, weapons trained on local residents in the name of "the maintenance of civil order," it is clear that an exercise in military occupation is taking place. People are being treated as a threat, rather than as human beings with rights to water and shelter.



Armed Guardsman at checkpoint in Florida

Few have forgotten the military occupation of New Orleans following Katrina. Concentration camps were put in place for residents, families were separated and forced to evacuate, armed troops were used to protect private property while families were left stranded on their roofs. Brigadier General Gary Jones, the commander of the Louisiana National Guard's Joint Task Force notably stated, "This place is going to look like Little Somalia. We're going to go out and take this city back. This will be a combat operation to get this city under control." With orders from their commanding officers to confront looters and shoot to kill, soldiers and local police alike targeted the residents of New Orleans, especially the mainly African American areas.

The long-term recovery needed in Puerto Rico and all the areas hit by the hurricanes likely mean a continued military presence. Instead what is needed is full funding now for the needs of the people and providing them with the resources and power to decide how best to utilize the funds. It is defending the rights of the people that is required, not the property of the few. Further, for Puerto Rico, an immediate assistance would be to *Cancel the Debt!* And make the Wall Street financiers that imposed it and benefit from it pay for recovery.