

May Day 2019

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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May Day celebrations this year marked the many struggles that working people are waging against endless U.S. wars, both internationally and here, against workers facing militarized police and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

But the celebrations also remind working and poor people who march together that they are the many who uniquely hold the potential power to change this system. Many of the demonstrations dedicated the day to building solidarity with Venezuela fighting U.S. imperialist attacks.





Los Angeles

The sentiment defending Venezuela and socialism was echoed at MacArthur Park near downtown Los Angeles, where the theme of community groups and groups independent of the Democratic and Republican Parties was “Fuck Trump! No wall! No war! Defend socialism!”

The event was initiated by *Unión del Barrio*, with participating organizations including MEChA de UCLA, United Electrical Workers (Local 1018), Frente Indígena de Organizaciones Binacionales (FIOB), Association of Raza Educators (ARE), the Socialist Unity Party, United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA), BAYAN USA and Homies Unidos.

Almost all the speakers talked about the need to defend Venezuela and to fight against the many injustices of capitalism. They also pointed out the role of the Democratic Party in enabling Trump’s white supremacy and push toward war, calling for no reliance on corporate-sponsored politicians.

Earlier in the day, primarily major unions in Los Angeles and non-profit organizations with some community organizations held a rally and march starting at 3 p.m., also at MacArthur Park, with anti-Trump, pro-migrant themes. The Socialist Unity Party and Struggle for Socialism-La Lucha por Socialismo also tabled at this event, passing out papers and flyers on upcoming activities and gathering names of those interested in subscribing to the paper or attending meetings at the Harriet Tubman Center for Social Justice.

— John Parker



Baltimore

Labor activists in Baltimore dedicated their annual May Day activity to showing solidarity with the effort of nurses at Johns Hopkins Hospital to form a union.

The rally was called by the Baltimore Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO. Members of many unions came to demand that Johns Hopkins Hospital reinstate a nurse who was one of the leaders of the organizing efforts to establish a local chapter of the National Nurses Association.

Vivian Obijekwu was fired in February over so-called infractions. The reality is that this was an attempt by the hospital administration to try to break the will of those fighting for a union. The termination is even harsher given the fact that Ojibekwu is now 5 months pregnant.

At the noontime rally, attendees lined the sidewalk in front of the East Baltimore campus of the hospital. Each person held part of a block-long red cord to which was attached petition sheets containing the names of hospital staff who support the call for reinstatement.

After several speakers addressed the crowd, they marched to the front of the hospital to confront the hospital director. There, they were met by hospital security who restricted the number of people who would be allowed inside to five. Those allowed inside carried boxes of petitions that totaled 22,165 signatures demanding she be reinstated.

The petitions were given to hospital management representatives. This organizing drive is one of the many that have been initiated at the East Baltimore campus over nearly a decade. The hospital is one of the largest employers in Baltimore city and the overwhelming majority of its employees are not unionized.

— Andre Powell



New York

Struggle-La Lucha activists answered the call of the December 12th Movement, a revolutionary Black organization, for an emergency protest against the latest U.S. coup attempt in Venezuela. The action, near the United Nations headquarters in Manhattan, embodied the fighting internationalist spirit of May Day.

Carrying large Venezuelan, Haitian and Black Liberation flags, and signs denouncing U.S. imperialism, this Black-led, multinational protest marched on the U.S. Mission to the U.N.

"We're doing what we're supposed to do today," emphasized D12's Omawale Clay. "The Venezuelan people are in the streets defending President Maduro and the Bolivarian Revolution. And we are in the streets to support them."

Steve Millies spoke on behalf of Struggle-La Lucha. He denounced the Trump-Bolton propaganda that is attempting to revive the imperialist Monroe Doctrine in their campaign against Venezuela, explaining how it was used to justify terror against nations and peoples throughout the Americas.

SLL attended several other May Day actions held across New York, including a march for immigrants rights organized by Filipino organizations in Queens, a 200-strong rally to support laundry workers in East Harlem, and multi-issue marches targeting Trump buildings on Wall Street and Midtown Manhattan.

— Greg Butterfield



Oakland, Calif.

Thousands rallied and marched in Oakland, Calif., to mark International Workers Day 2019. As was done last year and years before, International Longshore and Warehouse Union, Local 10, shut down the city's port in observance of the day.

Earlier, the Alameda Building Trades Council led a rally to commemorate May Day and push for unionized jobs in the city.

That rally was followed by a march downtown with teachers, and union and social justice activists led by ILWU Local 10. The march began at the Howard Terminal and then marched to block the Port of Oakland headquarters.

Clarence Thomas, a retired longshore worker and ILWU spokesperson, told Struggle-La Lucha that he was marching and rallying on May Day to help protect

union jobs and also to oppose the proposed the Oakland A's baseball stadium and condominiums scheduled to be built at the Howard Terminal located at the port.

Thomas said: "This could create job losses and increase the drive toward gentrification in West Oakland. In addition, building on a maritime facility violates current restrictions, specifically the Public Trust Protections for State Tidelands, which includes waterfront property. John Fisher, who owns the Oakland A's, is attempting to get exemptions so he can have a pass on environmental obligations. ... When a billionaire can get away with building a ballpark at a location that threatens the economic engine of northern California, it's a sterling example of the crisis of capitalism."



San Diego

In San Diego, there was a combined march co-hosted by the San Diego-Imperial County Central Labor Council and a number of grassroots community organizations that had combined as the May 1st Planning Committee. This committee included the San Diego branch of the Socialist Unity Party, Unión del Barrio, the Association of Raza Educators, the San Diego Committee Against Police Brutality, the Free Mumia Coalition, the Friends of Leonard Peltier, the Peace and Freedom Party, the Party for Socialism and Liberation, the Palestinian Youth Movement, the San Diego Education Association, the California Teachers Association, the Otay Mesa Detention Resistance, the Migrant and Refugee Coalition, Indivisible and the Democratic Socialists of America, among others.

The Labor Council marched across the downtown area to the Sempra Energy building. Union speakers were heard at both the start and end of the march. The union leaders reminded those gathered of the history of May Day as International Workers' Day and talked about local union struggles and victories, including the ongoing struggle for fair wages and better health care benefits for the employees of Sempra Energy's San Diego Gas and Electric Company.

At the Sempra Energy building, the community organizations took over the march and continued to Chicano Park in Barrio Logan. Throughout both legs of the march, chants of "Union power!" "The people united will never be defeated!" "When workers' rights are under attack, we say stand up! Fight back!" "Hands off Venezuela!" and "¡Vive la revolución bolivariana!" were heard.

Speakers from the community organizations spoke of the need to fight for the rights of working people for affordable housing, quality health care and education; to be protected from police brutality, police killings, Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Border Patrol raids on the community at schools, hospitals, courts and places of work; the unjust policies of this administration against immigrants and

asylum-seeking refugees at the southern borders; stopping the attempted coup against the legally elected government of Nicolás Maduro; ending the illegal sanctions against Venezuela and the illegal seizure of Venezuelan assets; ending the ongoing attacks and threats against Cuba and Nicaragua in an attempt to enforce the Monroe Doctrine; and ending the militarization of local law enforcement at the borders.

The second march was characterized by organizations that have waged militant political struggles against racist police brutality and imperialist war. This was laid out in a press statement from the coalition written by Socialist Unity Party member Gloria Verdieu stating: “Workers and the poor around the world must join across false barriers to build a new world where life is more precious than profits. Workers must unite to abolish capitalism and its poverty, and imperialist wars and oppression. Build socialism!”

As the marchers proclaimed, “Long live the international workers’ struggle, which has no borders, and for a just and socialist world!”

— Mary Lou Finley

