

Baltimore #SayHerName protest elevates voices of women vets

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SLL photo: Sharon Black

Baltimore — The Peoples Power Assembly and Women In Struggle/Mujeres En Lucha held a rally and march to “Say Her Name” at the Garmatz Federal Courthouse in downtown Baltimore July 30. It coincided with a march in Washington, D.C., for murdered Army Spc. Vanessa Guillén, who was stationed at Fort Hood, Texas. The event also highlighted women killed by police, including Breonna Taylor, Sandra Bland, Korryn Gaines and others.

Annetta Johnson, a veteran from Baltimore, led the protest. Earlier, she attended the march for Vanessa Guillén in D.C. Johnson is the founder of Purpose Driven Journeys and has spoken out on the lack of services for women and Black veterans.

Ellen Barkfield, an organizer with the Philip Berrigan Memorial Chapter of Veterans for Peace, also spoke out. Barkfield was also stationed at Fort Hood. She gave a moving account of her own experience of sexual assault and the futility of reporting it to the U.S. military command.

The protesters pointed out that rape and sexual violence are an intergral part of police and military culture. It is a form of terror used by U.S. imperialism both abroad and inside its own military as a method of genocide and control.

The Rev. Annie Chambers, Peoples Power Assembly organizer, said, “Our fight is right here in the U.S.” She emphasized, “We live in a capitalist, racist country, and if we never fight them then it won’t change.”

The action ended with a march around the courthouse under the watch of an overwhelmingly large presence of Department of Homeland Security agents, which included dogs and a score of white vans lined up close to the protest.

