

A black and white portrait of Che Guevara, wearing his iconic beret with a star and a mustache.

**SYSTEM CHANGE NOT  
CLIMATE CHANGE!**

**CUBA & U.N.  
VICTORY  
AGAINST U.S.  
BLOCKADE**

**VICTORIA DE CUBA**

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## CUBAN SOCIALISM & INTERNATIONALISM

*Pages 8, 19*

A group of diverse children, mostly of South Asian descent, are smiling and posing for a photo. They are wearing white short-sleeved shirts with red neckerchiefs. In the background, there is a statue of a soldier standing on a tall, rectangular stone pedestal. To the left of the pedestal is a stone wall with large, carved figures. The sky is blue with some white clouds.

# VENEZUELA'S BOLIVARIAN REVOLUTION

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A large crowd of people is gathered for a political rally in Venezuela. Many individuals are wearing red and yellow flags, and holding signs. A woman in the foreground wears a blue cap with the Venezuelan flag and a 'NO TRUMP' sign. The atmosphere is festive and patriotic.

# CHILE DESPERTÓ!

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A large crowd of people gathered in a city square, holding a large Chilean flag with the text '#CHILE DESPERTÓ' and '¡STAMOS EN GUERRA!'. The flag is white with a blue star and a red band. The crowd is dense, and the background shows city buildings and a clear sky.

**ALL FOREIGN TROOPS OUT  
OF SYRIA NOW!** *Page 26*

A graphic with a dark blue background. At the top, the text "SUPPORT STRIKING TRANSIT WORKERS!" is written in large, bold, white capital letters. Below the text, there are three white circular icons connected by a horizontal line. The first icon shows a ferry boat on water. The second icon shows a bus. The third icon shows a train. Each icon has a small white plus sign in the top right corner.

## SUPPORT STRIKING TRANSIT WORKERS!

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# Support Striking Transit Workers in Metro Vancouver!

## Their Struggle is Our Struggle!



*By Tamara Hansen*

5,000 Metro Vancouver bus drivers and skilled trades and technical workers that maintain buses and SeaBuses voted 99% in favor of strike action on October 10, 2019. Many transit users across the lower mainland may be wondering why transit workers feel so strongly about this strike.

Unifor Locals 111 and 2200 have been in negotiation with Coast Mountain Bus Company (CMBC) for months, however the employer is offering no acceptable solutions for workers' concerns in relation to pay equity, proper break and bathroom time, and safety on the job.

Transit workers' demands are clearly outlined on the Unifor website, "While wage negotiations are fluid and subject to change, transit operators are demanding enough time during their workday to use the bathroom and have a snack. Coast Mountain maintenance staff are calling for parity with their peers at Skytrain, while drivers are asking for comparisons to cities like Toronto."

Basically, bus routes are scheduled without proper break time due to a lack of bathrooms on bus routes as well as increasing traffic and construction in the Metro Vancouver area. Furthermore, SkyTrain employees make significantly more than Coast Mountain mechanics doing exactly the same job. Also, the CMBC relies heavily on workers' working overtime which was made clear in the

first days of the strike when workers' ban on overtime halted many SeaBus sailings.

The DailyHive, a Vancouver-based news and current events site, explains the employer's point of view, "Coast Mountain Bus Company (CMBC) believes the proposed deal sought by Unifor for its members working as bus drivers and maintenance workers is "not financially sustainable and fiscally responsible." Both sides are \$608 million apart in what they are willing to accept, with CMBC offering wage increases of approximately 10% and 12% for bus drivers and maintenance workers, respectively, over four years."

However, the CMBC's promise of 10-12% over four years barely covers the B.C. rate of inflation of 2.4% annually. Statistics Canada shows that the inflation of the consumer price index for British Columbia is the highest in the country. Meanwhile, bus drivers in Metro Vancouver are paid about \$3 less an hour than their counterparts in Toronto ([globalnews.ca](http://globalnews.ca)).

Meanwhile, the President of CMBC, Mike McDaniel, has been working hard to turn transit users against their bus drivers promoting the false equivalency that CMBC can either afford to pay a wage increase to transit workers OR improve and expand transit options. He is consistently making the case to the public that doing both is impossible.

### TransLink Company and Executive Hypocrisy

Yet when it comes to his own salary and worth Mike McDaniel and other TransLink executives are singing a different tune. While he argues that workers should be happy with around 2.5% increase in pay per year over the next four years, he received a minimum pay increase of 18% just last January.

A Global News article titled, "Bus company head says pay cut would not help end Metro Vancouver transit strike" by journalist Sean Boynton asked McDaniel if he would consider paying less to himself and other top transit executives. The article reports, "When asked if he would consider seeking a reduction in his salary and those of other TransLink executives to help close that gap, McDaniel said it's the union that needs to back down instead."

According to Boynton, combining all six senior TransLink executives' salaries together, they are making a minimum of \$1.7 million annually - additional performance bonuses, regular annual increases, and taxable benefits are added to that. Indeed, McDaniel's salary has skyrocketed! He was paid a \$121,000 basic salary in 2018, and his 2019 salary will range from \$279,818 to \$372,513!!!

McDaniel's pitiful defence to Global News' questions? He said, "I don't set my own salary. [...] That is set through the TransLink board, the Mayors' Council. I don't set that. [...] What I think is important is that we want today to talk about what the union needs to do and come back with a reasonable offer."

Unifor's western regional director, Gavin McGarrigle, calls out McDaniel's hypocrisy counterposing, "It's one set of



rules for executives, another set of rules for the passengers and another set of rules for the workers. If you can't take care of your passengers, and you can't take care of your workers, you're not running a very good transit system."

This capitalist executive managers have no shame when their hypocrisy is exposed.

### Strike Actions Begin

The contract between TransLink and the workers expired in March 2019, it has been months of negotiations in which the employer has shown little willingness to listen to the workers' concerns. After the nearly unanimous strike vote in early October, there were six negotiation sessions which took place, however with little of the workers' demands being met, talks were broken off by the union on October 31.

On November 1 workers began a first phase of job action in which bus drivers stopped wearing their uniforms and mechanics

stopped working overtime.

### Why Should We Support Striking Bus Drivers & Transit Workers?

Poor and working people in Metro Vancouver and across Canada know that each year the pressure to provide for themselves and their loved ones

is increasing. Wages are not rising to cover the basic costs of living and rate of inflation. Meanwhile, we consistently hear about CEOs, executives, and other bosses who are amassing wealth off our work.

Transit workers should earn a living wage which allows them to live a dignified life. Transit workers should be paid equally for equal work. Transit workers deserve proper breaks and a safe work environment. As the employer, it is up to Coast Mountain Bus Company to stop stalling and promise these minimum demands to all Transit workers on strike.

It is not up to transit workers to erode their standard of living so that TransLink can plan for service upgrades and expansions, that kind of transit system is inhuman and unsustainable – we demand CMBC accept Unifor's offer immediately without further maneuvering. We demand better life for transit workers and all workers!

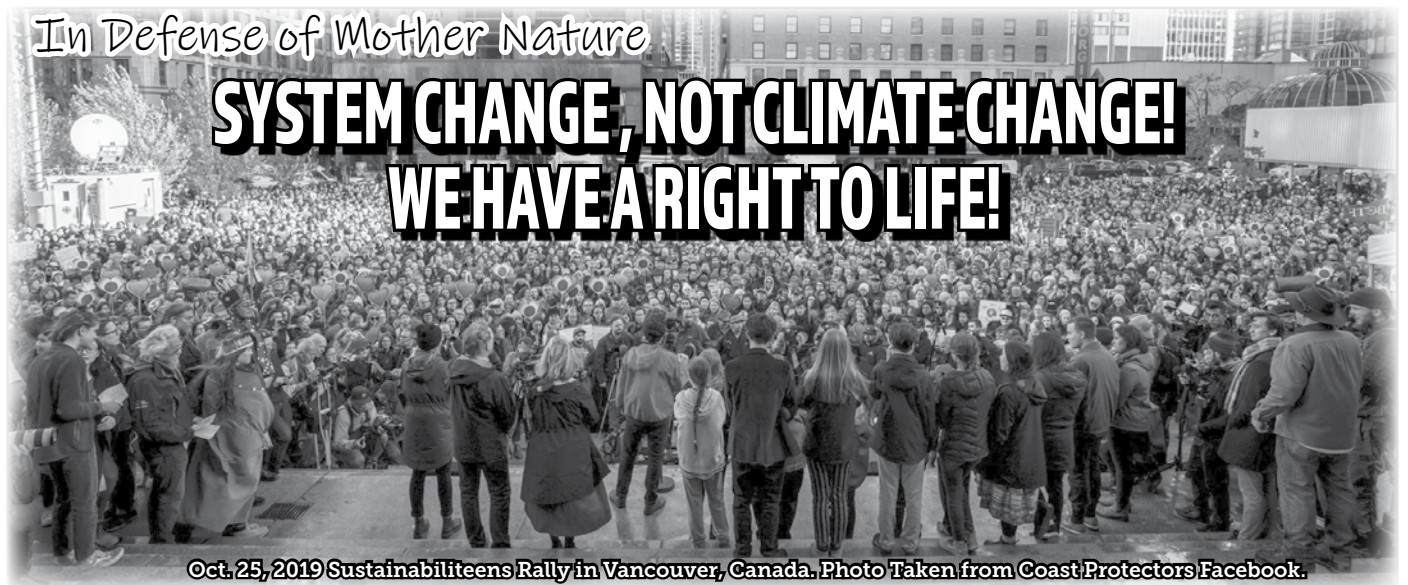
Follow Tamara on Twitter:  
@THans01



↑↑↑↑  
**SCAN ME**

**Show your support for transit workers! Visit the link below or scan the QR code to send a message to Coast Mountain Bus Company CEO Michael McDaniel and Translink CEO Kevin Desmond**

**[www.unifor.org/en/take-action/campaigns/support-and-solidarity-transit-workers](http://www.unifor.org/en/take-action/campaigns/support-and-solidarity-transit-workers)**



*By Alison Bodine*

“We made a decision to move forward on the pipeline because it was in the interest of Canada to do so because the environment and the economy need to go together. We will be continuing with the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion.” – Prime Minister elect Justin Trudeau, during his first post-election press conference, October 23, 2019

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s quick promise to complete the disastrous Trans Mountain pipeline expansion (TMX) project is no surprise. During the 2019 federal election, he always maintained that there was no contradiction between using \$4.5 billion tax-payer dollars to buy a dirty tar-sands oil pipeline, while at the same time claiming to be a “climate leader” on the international stage and declaring a “national climate emergency” in Canada.

However, although they are no surprise, Trudeau’s superficial justifications to continue pouring public money into destroying the climate are a near-perfect illustration of the level of debate about climate change and its devastating impacts during the 2019 federal election. Despite what they wanted people in Canada to believe, all the major political parties – the Liberals, Conservatives, the NDP and the Green Party – had little to nothing to offer for the changes that the government of Canada needs to implement urgently in order to fundamentally address the impending climate catastrophe.

#### **Canada’s Federal Election and Climate Change: The Issue That Wasn’t**

When people in Canada went to the polls on October 21 for the 2019 federal election there was increasing discussion – and a growing international movement – demanding big changes to “business as usual” to save humanity and the planet. On September 27, 2019, 9

million people protested around the world as part of the Fridays for Future movement led by 16-year old climate activist and leader Greta Thunberg. On this day, 1 million in Canada came out to protests in every Province – including 250,000 people in Vancouver.

This mass mobilization made sure that the climate became front and centre as an issue in the election – however, in response, the Liberals, Conservatives, the NDP and the Green Party all continued to put forward platforms and policies that did little to alter the status quo of climate destruction in Canada.

Although each mainstream political parties running in the federal election promised more comprehensive and efficient climate solutions than all the others – none of them provided a plan of the scope and scale to make the changes required to bring Canada in-line with even the modest climate targets that the government committed to during the 2015 Paris Climate Agreements.

For example, the Liberals, NDP, and the Green Party all promised net-zero emissions by 2050, but boiled down to the basics, their plans were all rhetoric with no blueprint of how to achieve the target. From bad to worse, all the parties stood in the same line, among other climate change policies:

- The NDP promised to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 50% from 2005 by 2030
- Green party -promised to cut emissions by 60% from 2005 by 2030
- Bloc Québécois – promised to support policies in line with the tougher 1.5C goal of the UN climate agreements
- The Liberal Party made promises to plant 2 billion trees to help cover-up their commitment to build the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. However, after 4-years of Trudeau, Canada is nowhere closer to

meeting its UN climate commitments then in 2015

- The Conservative Party put their hopes and dreams into businesses coming up with technological solutions. A study by Clean Prosperity, found that their plan would increase Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions

However, no party provided the “how” to achieve their promises in enough detail to give any confidence that the greenhouse gas reduction targets would be met.

In the end, what might be most indicative of the lack of political will to discuss climate change is that there wasn’t even the push from any party for a Canada-wide climate debate. When one was scheduled, it was cancelled after the Conservative party was unable to find a candidate to participate – effectively squashing a discussion all the parties were claiming was significant. On top of this, 48,000 people signed a petition calling on the CBC host a climate debate with the party leaders – but the supposedly public broadcasting network declined to plan a debate – while at the same time insisting that climate was a critical issue in the election, a clear practice of hypocrisy.

Thus, climate change became the election issue that wasn’t an election issue. If the 2019 federal election showed anything it was that elections and campaigning do not address climate change – but people through mobilization and organizing will.

#### **Vancouver Discusses - The Federal Election and the Climate Crisis What are Our Expectations, and What Do We Do the Day After the Election?**

When organizers in Vancouver’s grassroots climate justice coalition Climate Convergence took a look at the political landscape in the weeks leading up to the federal election, it was clear how important it was for the climate justice movement to look at the federal





**Climate Convergence Metro Vancouver Forum on Elections, October, 11, 2019**

election in the framework of our urgent and ongoing work to build a just and sustainable world.

In order to accomplish this, Climate Convergence organized a forum on October 11, 2019, at the Vancouver Public Library. Speakers at the forum, Thomas Davies, a founding member of Climate Convergence, Gene McGuckin from BROKE and Alison Bodine from Climate Convergence and the Editorial Board of the Fire This Time Newspaper framed the discussion for the forum – challenging people to think beyond which political party will win – and towards the kind of climate justice movement that we need to build.

As soon as the discussion period began in the packed house people were expressing their frustration at the lack of urgency and action around the critical issues of climate change during the federal election – and during the last 4-years of the Liberal government. People were also quick to recall the promises that Trudeau had made during the 2015 election – but at the same time also expressed their lack of confidence in any of the other political parties, and their reluctance to spend another election voting for the “lesser evil.”

This public forum, and the dynamic discussion that followed continued an important dialogue about the kind of government that Canada and the world need – a climate justice government that will no longer line the pockets of corporate oil executives in exchange for our future.

#### **Right to Life!**

Just following the federal election – Vancouver’s Sustainabiliteens were out for

their 9<sup>th</sup> Climate Strike on October 25, 2019. This time the level of excitement and outrage at the government of Canada’s inaction towards combatting climate change was amplified by the presence of Greta Thunberg, a young Swedish woman that has ignited the world-wide Fridays for Future movement.

The Sustainabiliteens action brought more than 15,000 people out to the Vancouver Art Gallery plaza on short notice. The rally and march also began with a press conference announcing that 15 young people from across Canada were suing the Federal government of Canada for violating their Charter Rights. Through Our Children’s Trust and the David Suzuki Foundation these young people are taking the government of Canada’s inaction to court for denying them their “right to life, liberty and security of person” as per Section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, also their equality rights under Section 15.

Significantly, in the week before coming to Vancouver Greta Thunberg also spoke in Edmonton, Alberta, where 15,000 people came out to the Provincial Legislature. This was a significant show of support from one of the cities that is the heart of the oil and gas industry in Canada.

When Greta spoke to the energized crowd at the end of the rally in Vancouver, she did so to remind people of the negligence of so-called world leaders and corporate giants when it came to making changes required to fight climate change decades ago. As she said, “Severn [Cullis-Suzuki, who spoke at an international Climate Conference in 1992 and was also at the rally with Greta] told the world everything the world needed to know 27 years ago and the science told us, told our world leaders everything they needed to know 27 years ago. If people would have listened back then, the world would be a completely different place than it is today. But the world ignored her, and world leaders continued to choose to look away from this crisis, even today.”

#### **No to the TMX Pipeline Expansion! Organize, Educate, Mobilize!**

In October 2019 the Keystone Pipeline which runs from Alberta to Nebraska and Illinois in the U.S. leaked 383,000 gallons of oil into North Dakota wetlands. This was the second big spill in two years – because no matter what the big oil companies say, profits will always come before safety and environment – and the

best-built pipelines will continue to leak, and the best-built tanks will explode.

This disaster is exactly what people protesting the Trans

Mountain Pipeline Expansion are working to prevent. With Prime Minister Trudeau continuing to push full force with this project, we must continue building a more united and stronger climate justice movement. In Vancouver, this means supporting the ongoing work of Climate Convergence, Extinction Rebellion, BROKE, Sustainabiliteens, Mountain Protectors and other grassroots groups.

On Thursday, November 14, 2019, Climate Convergence and SFU-350 are working together to organize an event on Burnaby Mountain. With a rally and teach-in, the action will highlight the extreme danger of expanding the already-existing tank farm on Burnaby Mountain, which will come as a result of the TMX pipeline. Already there are reports about how it could take as long as 6 hours to respond to a major fire, which would have the potential to take lives and destroy homes and environment on the mountain.

#### **Build an Anti-capitalist Climate Justice Movement**

Beyond the TMX pipeline, we must also continuously push for the government of Canada to meet and exceed their climate change reduction targets – and Canada has a long way to go. Take away the nice words about protecting the ocean and planting trees and Canada is in the same climate-destroying club as the United States and the world’s biggest polluters. According to a report card released by the Climate Action Network, “current policies are consistent with global warming exceeding 4 C compared to pre-industrial levels, more than twice the stated goal of the Paris agreement of staying as close to 1.5 C as possible.”

It is also important to understand that Canada has the highest greenhouse gas emissions per person of any country in the G20. The newly elected Federal government has shown no signs that they are slowing down the government of Canada’s path towards climate catastrophe. It is up to us that believe in a future for humanity on this planet that must organize for system change, not climate change, in Canada, and around the world.

The struggles of people against massive resource extraction projects are startlingly similar between places like Standing Rock, North Dakota and the Amazon Rain Forest in Brazil. No one country, no one group, will be able to solve the climate crisis by itself – by its nature, the struggle for a sustainable world requires international cooperation, solidarity and more importantly unity across borders in order to become a powerful and effective force.

To get involved with climate justice organizing in Vancouver with Climate Convergence and for information on upcoming meetings, events and outreach actions visit [www.climateconvergence.ca](http://www.climateconvergence.ca).

*Follow Alison on Twitter: @Alisoncolette*

### **Battle of Ideas Press**

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## **SYSTEM CHANGE NOT CLIMATE CHANGE**

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### **By Thomas Davies**

Thomas Davies is a social and environmental justice organizer based in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. He is a member of the Editorial Board of the Fire This Time Newspaper and a founding member of Climate Convergence Metro-Vancouver.



# Achievements And Progress Of The Bolivarian Revolution

*By Dr. Luis Acuna*

In the name of the People of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, I want to thank the organizers of the 8th International Conference of Che Guevara for inviting us to participate in this very important activity, whose central theme is: "Socialism yesterday, today, and tomorrow: The Cuban socialist project.

Today, I will refer to the Bolivarian Revolution, to its short but pedagogical history and where

are we today. A revolution which we call Bolivarian because it expresses the will to return to the conception of "La Patria Grande de Bolívar", to the Latin American and Caribbean integration, to the constitution of a great country, of a territory for America that encompasses all the Caribbean and extends from the south of the Rio Grande to Patagonia, a united and strong America.

To honor the central theme of this event, I quote Commander Fidel Castro when he says: "Revolution is a sense of historical moment; it is to change everything that must be changed; it is full equality and freedom; it is to be treated and treat others as human beings; it is to emancipate ourselves and with our own efforts; it is to challenge powerful dominant forces inside and outside the social and national sphere; it is to defend the values in which one believes at the price of any sacrifice; it is modesty, selflessness, altruism, solidarity and heroism; is to fight with boldness, intelligence and realism; it is never to lie or violate ethical principles; it is a deep conviction that there is no force in the world capable of crushing the force of truth and ideas ..."

## **Venezuela Bolivarian Revolutionary Process**

I formally want to begin my words by saying that the genesis of the Bolivarian Revolution could be fixed in December 1998, when Hugo Chávez Frías, winner of the constitutional elections of that year, came to power. Eight years earlier, in 1992, this young military man had led a failed armed rebellion against the



**From 8th International Che Guevara Conference from October 26-27 in Vancouver, Canada. From Left to Right: Keith Bolender, Arnold August, Dr. Luis Acuña, Miriam Meza de Acuña & Alison Bodine**

government in turn, a fact that he paid with dispossession of his military and prison status, but a rebellion that sowed him in the soul of the great majority of the People of Venezuela

Upon his release from prison, in 1994, Hugo Chávez planned his access to political power in Venezuela and began a face-to-face talk with the people around the country. He did it with a speech where he mixed his intense charisma with his will to promote a profound change in the political structure of the Nation, to produce a departure of Venezuela from its dependence on the United States and to return to the ideas of Liberator Simón Bolívar.

The young military achieved popular support and won the elections in December 1998.

Hugo Chávez began his term with important changes, the most relevant of them, a call to a National Constituent Assembly, to elaborate a new Constitution, one that allows him to revolutionize the country's legal architecture, to modify the laws that made us dependent for so long.

With the support of a popular referendum, in December 1999, a new Constitution was approved and Venezuela became the "Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela", in honor to Simón Bolívar, El Libertador, the greatest American man, the one who freed America from the Spanish yoke, the one who brought independence to Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, the territory that today constitutes Panama and the one of the Upper Peru, where it creates and founded Bolivia.

The Magna Carta approved in 1999 is the first block stone for the relations between Venezuela and the United States. The fight begins.

The new constitution of 1999 came loaded with equality and full freedoms for everyone: for women, indigenous and Afro-descendants. It was born impregnated with humanity; with provisions that opened the certain possibility of transforming the role of the national armed force and consolidating the civic-military union. It allowed enacting laws with which to challenge the powerful oligarchies, those that had dominated the economy, controlled the use and possession of the land, dominated the administration of justice for two hundred years of republican life. A Constitution open to a more social conception of the economy, with a humanist and solidary vision of education and health, politically aimed at Latin American integration and a multipolar world.

The 1999 Constitution, for example, materialized the Moral Power proposed by Simón Bolívar, Power that as a branch joined the existing and traditional Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches of the government in the countries around the world.

Likewise, the constitution established full recognition of Indigenous Peoples and their social and political rights, but above all, it introduced the transcendental article 2 which defines Venezuelan as a "democratic and social State of Law and Justice". It is the "Rule of Justice".

The 1999 Constitution was the first front that



the Bolivarian Revolution exhibited against the imperialist policy of the United States. Based on this constitution, in the first half of 2001, 21 laws were enacted, including the emblematic Hydrocarbons Law and Land Law, which unleashed the wrath of North America, which resulted in the conspiracy and the counterrevolutionary coup d'état of April 2002, with the corresponding overthrow of President Hugo Chávez. That was the way how the war that has been going on for 20 years began, and whose results you know, the war that you kindly and revolutionarily help us to fight.

### U.S. Intervention in Venezuela

I must inform you that the April 2002 coup d'état against President Chávez had full support from the United States.

But this coup d'état was defeated by the Venezuelan People, who rescued Hugo Chavez from the island where he was kidnapped. The people returned him to the presidency in 47 hours.

Simón Bolívar knew more than 200 years ago that the United States would be the ruin of the Latin American countries and this is stated on August 5, 1829, when he states: "The United States seems destined by the Providence to plague America of Misery on behalf of the freedom"

This first conspiracy charge was followed by a stoppage of the business oligarchy and immediately after a mixture of stoppage with sabotage in the Venezuelan oil industry, PDVSA, the economic heart of the country. At the end of 2002 the oil industry was completely paralyzed, which reduced the country's income to zero. Sabotage cost Venezuela billions of dollars in losses and repair costs.

But again, the United States and the oligarchies were defeated by the people of Venezuela. The United States retreated to rethink the way how to start its new offensives against the Bolivarian Revolution and how to attack again to try to take control of the precious booties that they had always used for years and that refuses to lose. Namely:

- Venezuelan oil, the largest hydrocarbon reserve in the world, capable of being transported to the United States in four days by freighters which transit in calm waters, unlike Middle Eastern oil, which requires 45 days of travel of freighters transiting in waters under permanent conflict.

- Gold, the greatest mining resources in the world.

- The geopolitical position: the dominance of the Caribbean and traffic across the Atlantic.

### The Revolutionary Alliance

The alliance of the Bolivarian Revolution with the Cuban Revolution allows Venezuela to achieve important political and social conquests for its people and for the rest of Latin America. Meanwhile, the United States arms its strategies for the future.

As an example of progress, Venezuela, leveraged in the Cuban method, makes significant investments, works hard, creates the Robinson Mission as a mass literacy program and on October 28, 2005, Unesco declares Venezuela as "Free Territory of Illiteracy".

The Cuban-Venezuelan alliance brought the method and instruments to Bolivia and many other rural areas of Latin American border countries where illiteracy was the first cause of poverty. Thus, the Latin American peoples advance socially.

Defeated illiteracy, Venezuela advances in basic education and secondary education with the creation of thousands of public schools, with free meals for children and adolescents.

By 2006 the University education ceases to be a privilege of a few to become a right of all Venezuelans. With the arrival of the Bolivarian Revolution Venezuela was ranked as the fifth country in the world and the second in Latin America with the highest university enrollment, according to data from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco). More than two million students enrolled.

In terms of health, the important investments



**Discussion Period after Dr. Luis Acuña talk at the International Che Guevara Conference**

in equipment and infrastructure of Venezuela, and the solidarity support of over 30 thousand Cuban doctors, brought free health to Venezuelan and to other habitants of Latin American and African brother countries.

President Hugo Chávez created in 2004 the Miracle Mission and the Smile Mission, which, with the solidary and mutual collaboration between Venezuela and Cuba, restored sight and gave oral health to hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans, all for free.

Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez signed in 2007 the Sandino's Commitment aimed to form and train, between Cuba and Venezuela, of 200,000 doctors for America and Africa. That is the way the Venezuelan Latin American School of Medicine is born in Caracas, daughter of the prestigious institution already existing in Cuba.

### Our Revolutionary Achievements

The Bolivarian Revolution significantly reduced Venezuela's poverty rates, all done by driven policies of providing the population with access to food, free health and free

*Continued on page 28*



**Venezuelans demanding the return of President Hugo Chavez after the U.S. backed coup against him in April 11, 2002.**

# BUILDING THE SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT: OUR TASKS AND PERSPECTIVES IN THE IMPERIALIST EPOCH

## #UNBLOCKCUBA

By Tamara Hansen

*Talk given at the 8th International Che Guevara Conference in Vancouver, Canada.*

Thank you Alison for your comments about building Venezuela solidarity. I am going to shift the focus back to Cuba and building the Cuba solidarity movement.

So, for those of you who consider yourselves activists, or progressives, or interested intellectuals in what is happening in the world, people who are questioning what is happening in the world, I think that a lot of us have come to the conclusion that the current direction of humanity on a global scale - whether we are discussing war, human rights, or environmental degradation - is that there is something wrong. Any that we need to do something about it.

So, the question comes down to what. What are we going to do about it? And, what can we do about it?

In Cuba you will often hear the slogan “un mundo mejor es posible” or “a better world is possible”. And, more and more people are adding “y necesario” – which means “and necessary.” This better world is not only possible, it is increasingly necessary, and Cuba can provide, a think, an important inspiration for us in this struggle.

Since the triumph of the Cuban revolution in 1959, Cuba and its revolutionary leadership have embarked on a different path, a path towards self-determination, sustainability, improved health and education, unity, and creativity and these are all important examples we can all learn from.

Under the leadership of Comandante Fidel Castro, the Cuban revolution promised: jobs to the jobless; healthcare and education to those who had never been able to afford it; electrification and proper housing; land for peasant farmers who had always worked the land of rich

landowners; nationalization of many industries previously owned by U.S. corporations; the creation of a planned economy; and so much more.

### U.S. Aggression and Revolutionary Cuba Response

The U.S. government tried to defend its interests in Cuba by imposing severe economic sanctions as well as mounting a U.S. orchestrated invasion at the Bay of Pigs in April 17 1961, just one day after Fidel Castro declares the socialist character of the Cuban revolution. However, the revolution pushed forward and, in the case of the Bay of Pigs, in 72 hours U.S. imperialism was decisively kicked out of the country. It was the first major defeat of U.S. imperialism in the Americas. Then, a year later in February 1962, a full blockade



was imposed against Cuba announced by U.S. Democratic President John F. Kennedy. And now, for over 57 years this unjust and cruel blockade has been a cornerstone of U.S. policy towards Cuba.

Now, when Obama was President and formal diplomatic ties were re-established between Cuba and the United States, just five years ago on December 17, 2014, a lot of people thought that the blockade just vanished. A lot of people thought that,



all of the sudden, relations were perfect. The truth is that the blockade never went away. Obama said that he wanted to end the blockade, but he actually didn't have the votes in order to end it, nor really the political will to push for that change. It was more words and rhetoric than it was a real concrete action towards ending this policy towards Cuba.

### Trump Severs the Tides the Belt Around Cuba, A Timeline

Now with the election of U.S. President Donald Trump, at first Cuba seemed to be a little but, in his crosshairs, but basically during his first year in office he took very little action against Cuba. But then, since January 2019, we have seen a concerted effort to tighten and strangle Cuba by increasing the blockade.

I want to go through how this blockade is not just history, this blockade is ongoing, and is strengthening. I am going to go through some of the things that you may or may not have heard have happened since May of this year.

On May 2, the U.S. government tightened its 57-year-old blockade on Cuba by invoking “Title III” of the Helms-Burton Law. This Helms-Burton Law was enacted by President Bill Clinton in 1996 and all following U.S. presidents – including Trump until this May – had decided not to implement “Title III” of the Helms-Burton Law. The Helms-Burton Law is meant to really strengthen the U.S. blockade, but Title II was seen





as so gross and over-reaching that they had decided it was a law, but that every six-months a U.S. President had to sign a paper that said that they would not implement Title III.

This year in May, for the first time, Donald Trump decided not to sign that paper and said that they will start enforcing Title III of the Helms-Burton Law.

On June 5, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control, also known as OFAC restricted non-family travel to Cuba by removing a previous authorization for "people-to-people educational travel". So, they have restricted how Americans can travel to Cuba and what kind of travel is allowed under the blockade, and now they are restricting any educational travel. This is meant to stop Americans from visiting Cuba in an educational capacity, for sports, artistic, cultural or other educational exchanges. These measures are meant to isolate Cuba but also ensure that fewer Americans will travel to Cuba and see with their own eyes the important gains of the Cuban revolution.

On June 20 of this year, Cuba was added to the "lowest tier" on the U.S. State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons Report. Giuvell talked about this more yesterday morning. The U.S. Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo explained that Cuba was being put on this list because of Cuba's internationalist medical missions. They are being accused of trafficking human beings because they are sending doctors to treat people for free in other countries. The U.S. government is trying to paint this program as human trafficking, saying that Cuban doctors and other educational professionals are being coerced by the Cuban government into participating in this program.

This is a huge lander against the incredible work that these doctors are doing all over

the world, saving tens of thousands of lives, and providing basic healthcare, in rural communities in many cases, for people that have never had doctors before.

With this, the U.S government is attacking a world-renowned program that receives awards consistently from the World Health Organization, UNESCO, and other United Nations institutions. They are trying to undermine these life-saving programs by accusing the Cuban government of threatening or coercing its doctors into participating in the medical missions.

On September 6, the U.S. Department of the Treasury released a statement that was also strengthening its sanctions on Cuba. The changes that they made on September 6 further restrict Cubans living in the U.S. from sending remittances, that is sending money back to their family members in Cuba. They have also halted all what they call U-turn transactions, which is when a company that is based in Canada uses a Canadian bank, but that Canadian bank runs their money through a U.S. bank. So, even though it is paid in Canada, and the bank that receives it is in Canada, it is a U-turn transaction because it does a "U" through the United States. Some different credit card or different types of banking do this. The U.S. government, on September 6, announced that it was halting these U-turn transactions as well.

It seems that there was some of this happening earlier, because, I think some of you may have heard of the case of a Cuban coffee truck in Toronto that was selling Cuban coffee all summer. They



were using a Square, a technology for quick payments on credit cards, and boasts that even if you are a tiny business you can use this cheap method to be able to accept credit cards. Well, all of the sudden the Cuban coffee truck company said that they were getting receipts that said that there was \$20,000 in their account, but that they went to the account and the money wasn't there. It turned out that this Square company uses, I believe, Wells Fargo in the United States, and all of the money was being held by Wells Fargo, who wouldn't send it back to their Canadian bank account.

So, this small food truck that has been selling Cuban coffee all summer is now out tens of thousands of dollars because the Square company wasn't honest about what was happening, and how they were implementing part of the U.S. blockade against Cuba. This got some national headlines in September.

Then at the end of September, On September 24, U.S. President Donald Trump spoke at the United Nations General Assembly and he stated, "The dictator Maduro is a Cuban puppet, protected by Cuban bodyguards, hiding from his own people, while Cubans plunder Venezuela's oil wealth to sustain its own corrupt communist rule." So, so many lies that Donald Trump is able to say on the world stage with very few questioning him. And, again, like many of Trump's statements, this is verifiably false. Maduro's bodyguards are not Cuban, they are Venezuelan.

Of course, when President Trump talks about Cuba "plundering Venezuela's oil wealth," it is one of these things where he has projected his desires on the government of Cuba. What he is referring to are international contracts that Cuba and Venezuela have together. It is not about plunder of one country of another, these are international accords where Venezuela sends cheap fuel to Cuba in exchange for healthcare professionals, related to exchanging cheaper oil for Cuban doctors and medical professionals, educational professionals who are working throughout Venezuela. This is a very dignified method of fair and respectful trade, where two countries are working together, to put their resources, whether they are human resources or natural resources, to use in cooperation with each other.

Then on September 26, just a month ago, the Trump administration imposed new sanctions again. This time on former Cuban President and leader of Cuba's Communist Party, Raúl Castro and all



**Tamara Hansen at the 8th International Che Guevara Conference, Oct 26, 2019**

of his children. This is, again, largely symbolic. Raúl Castro is not asking to travel to the United States, possibly in the future to go to the United Nations, but the new U.S. measures are not going to have any direct impact on Raúl Castro's life. These are just to symbolize that the U.S. government wants to keep Cuba on its toes and wants to put Cuba in a position where it is on the defensive, and in a very difficult situation to do international transactions and international trade.

### **What is Blockade?**

So then, we have to ask the question, why does this blockade exist in the first place? Has it "worked"? For 57 years has imposed this blockade, have they achieved their goals?

Since the triumph of the Cuban revolution, the U.S. government has been searching for ways to destroy the Cuban government and, with it, Cuba's independence. The U.S. government cannot afford to have governments' independent of its hegemonic and imperialist agenda anywhere in the world, which is building again on what Alison said about Venezuela, and much less can they afford to have an independent island only 90 miles off their shores.

Cuba is also the threat of a good example of what Americans, and also the world can learn about from the gains of the Cuban

revolution. When I say the threat of the good example, I mean the good example of free healthcare, of free education, and many other areas. Americans might start to ask why those gains have not been made in their country, the wealthiest

country on planet earth. Why is the U.S. government unable to provide these services for free, when a small natural-resource-poor so-called third-world nation to the south is providing them for their people? And not only are they providing them free to Cubans, but to people in countries all around the world.

The blockade is meant to divide people in the

United States and Cuba, but it is also meant to create shortages and poverty within Cuba so that the Cuban people become disillusioned with their own socialist revolutionary project. It is meant to create desperation and misery so that the Cuban people and government give up on their socialist vision for the future.

In over 57 years this policy has been unsuccessful, and rather than isolating Cuba, this policy has isolated the U.S., which President Obama admitted in 2014. However, the U.S. government seems intent today, under Donald Trump, to double-down on this policy of blockade, which means deepening hardship for the people of Cuba.

On November 6-7 of this year, in just a few days, the United Nations General Assembly will hold its 28th annual debate and vote on the "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba." Last year the world community stood together with 189 countries voting in favour of ending the U.S. blockade on Cuba.

Once again, last year, the United States and Israel stood on the wrong side of history as the only two countries who stood in favour of the blockade.

However, it is not only this annual vote at the United Nations. Around the word



in letters, petitions, on social media, giving interviews across all continents and participating in regular actions to condemn the U.S. blockade on Cuba.

In Canada on the 17th of every month, here in Vancouver Friends of Cuba



Against the U.S. Blockade organizes a picket, but also friends in Montreal, Table de concertation et de solidarité Québec – Cuba have their monthly protest, and in Ottawa, Ottawa Cuba Connections are in front of the United States Embassy, raising their voices against the U.S. blockade. Also know that it is not only in Canada, we have friends in Kiev, Ukraine who gather in front of the U.S. Embassy in Kiev every month, on the 17th, also raising their voices against the U.S. blockade.

Of course, the strongest and most steadfast opposition to the blockade for over 57 years has come from the people of Cuba and their revolutionary socialist government who have stood together and protested the impacts of the blockade on their society, their economy and their daily lives.

It is up to us now to think about what we can do and how we can build stronger unity and solidarity. Cuba is an important reminder of the truth of the words of Ernesto “Che” Guevara, who our conference is named after, when he said, “We are realists, we dream the impossible.”

Cuba has not only dreamed the impossible, it has also done the impossible.

In a period of increasing U.S. attacks on Cuba we have a human responsibility, a revolutionary responsibility to work to defend Cuba’s independence, self-determination and socialist revolution. We also have an opportunity to talk

with people about the incredible gains made by the Cuban revolution to inspire them to defend Cuba. But even more interestingly, by explaining the gains of the Cuban socialist revolution, we can challenge people on what is possible right here in Canada.

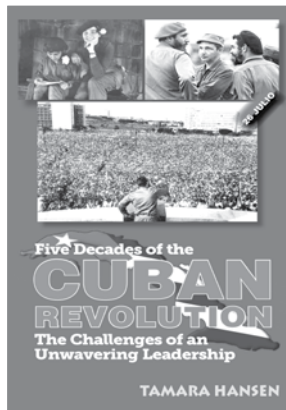
So today Alison and I have worked together to build the case for WHY – our perspective on why we need a Cuba and Venezuela solidarity movement. Now we hope to have a chance, if you agree, to discuss the HOW – our tasks. What can we do to build a stronger more united solidarity movement?

How can we strengthen the work already being done? What new approaches can we take? I look forward to our discussion. Thank you.

Follow Tamara on Twitter: @THans01

## Battle of Ideas Press

### 5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership



By Tamara Hansen

Coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC). She is also an editorial board member of The Fire This Time newspaper. She has travelled to Cuba over a dozen times and has written extensively on Cuban politics since 2003.

April 2010, paperback, \$10.00

314 pages, illustrated,

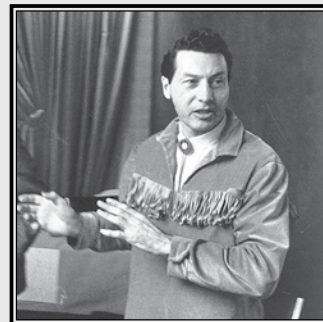
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## MOTHER OF ALL STRUGGLES

### Indigenous struggle against colonialism



Howard Adams (Métis)

1921 - 2001

*Revolutionary Métis Marxist scholar and professor Howard Adams grew up in a Métis community in Saskatchewan. He was a leader in the struggle for Indigenous rights, self-determination, and socialism.*

One of the characteristics of oppressive cultural action that is almost never recognized is the emphasis on a local view of problems rather than on seeing them as parts of the larger whole. In community development, the more a region or area is broken down into local projects, the more alienation and powerlessness is intensified. The more isolated and individualized people are, the easier it is to keep them divided. Intensifying the local and individual way of life of the oppressed hinders the colonized in perceiving reality critically, and keeps them isolated from the common problems of oppressed people in all Third World areas. [...]

When cultural action, as a mass process, begins in a community from the bottom upward and not among its leaders, the former leaders go along agreeably with everyone else, or they are replaced by new leaders who emerge from the rank and file. The result is a new social consciousness of the total community. The oppressors do not favor promoting the community as a whole, but selected leaders, whom they pick. By preserving a state of alienation, they hinder the emergence of political consciousness. And, without this consciousness, it is difficult to achieve the unity of the oppressed as a class.

*Excerpt from Prison of Grass - Chapter 14 "The Failure of Native Leadership"*

# The World Stands United Against the U.S. Blockade on Cuba The U.S. Illegal, Brutal & Immoral Blockade Exposed & Condemned at the UN

*By Tamara Hansen*

This November, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) once again held its annual vote against the unjust U.S. blockade on Cuba. For the 28th consecutive year, the vast majority of the world stood with Cuba condemning the cruel and harmful blockade.

Prior to the vote, it was anticipated that the U.S. would gain votes from previous years. In the past 6 months Washington has been tightening the screws of the blockade, attempting to pressure the people of Cuba – through hardship and economic shortages – to abandon the gains of the Cuban revolution and submit to the domination of the United States' hegemonic agenda. Many Cuban officials tweeted that their colleagues around the world informed them that the Trump administration had been contacting governments and diplomats around the world to pressure them to side with the U.S. against Cuba in this, annual international vote.

Despite the Trump administration's best and concerted efforts, the world stood

firm against the blockade and in, of the Cuban people and government. The final tally was 187 countries in favour of Cuba's resolution condemning the blockade. Only 3 isolated countries stood against Cuba, the U.S., Israel, and Brazil. Two other countries cowered to Washington and abstained from the vote, Columbia and Ukraine.

The U.S. blockade on Cuba has put enormous strain on Cuba's economy causing Cuba to lose approximately \$4.5 billion this year alone, and nearly \$1 trillion dollars (\$922.6 billion - adjusted for inflation) during nearly 60 years of blockade. This cruel U.S. policy – which Cuba refers to as genocidal – prevents the island from accessing vital medicines; industrial machinery; school supplies; construction supplies; medical equipment; computer technology; and financial transactions with many international institutions.

While previous U.S. President Obama made some positive first steps towards normalizing U.S.-Cuba relations, the blockade has remained in place. Throughout 2019, President Trump has worked hard to roll back many small gains made under Obama, including several new restrictions on U.S. citizens who want to travel to Cuba.

Despite the Trump administration and previous U.S. administration's best efforts, each consecutive government has failed to turn the tide at the United Nations General Assembly against the Cuban government and Cuban people. For the 28th year in a row, the world community stood together to condemn the United States' unjust and cruel blockade on the people of Cuba.

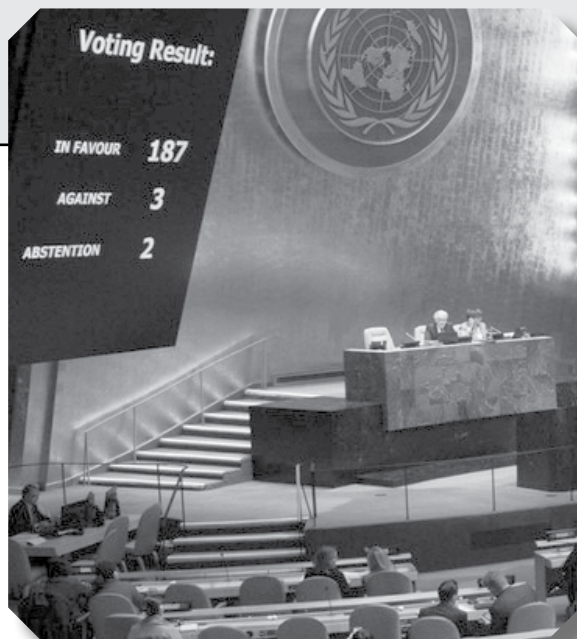
However, the world's repudiation of the blockade is not only seen at the UN. Every year around the world groups and individuals continue to mobilize with petitioning, posting on social media, chanting & singing, rallying, and protesting around the united demand, "End the Blockade on Cuba NOW!"

## CNC Statement The World Stands With Cuba! Down with the US Economic Blockade of Cuba!

For the 28th successive year on November 7th, 2019, the international community will resoundingly reject Washington's economic war against revolutionary Cuba and its heroic people when the United Nations General Assembly votes on the resolution, Necessity of Ending the Economic, Commercial and Financial Embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. Just a year ago, on November 1st, 2018 by a vote of 189 to 2, the nations of the world massively repudiated U.S. economic aggression against Cuba.

Every U.S. government has pursued the illegal and immoral economic embargo – tantamount to a blockade – of Cuba, zealously pursuing and implementing the extensive series of criminal economic sanctions arrayed against the island nation.

In 2014, the world rejoiced to see the restoration of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuba in a signed agreement between then Presidents Raúl Castro Barrack Obama. The world held out great hopes that relations between the two countries would be normalized. Canada helped by providing a venue for the



talks which led to the improvement of those relations. However, under the administration of Donald Trump, we have witnessed a return to the policy of overt and ever escalating hostility and aggression against Cuba. The United States continues to zealously pursue and implement the extensive series of economic sanctions, including the activation of Title III of the Helms-Burton Act, which allows U.S. companies and citizens to sue in U.S. courts not only Cuban companies but also Canadian and other international companies engaged in business and other economic activity in Cuba.

The U.S. economic war against Cuba continues unabated, with the objective of negating and extinguishing Cuba's right to self-determination and independence. Moreover, Washington

continues its ongoing campaign of subversion, and maintains the U.S. naval base that sits on the illegally occupied Cuban territory of Guantanamo Bay.

The Canadian Network On Cuba, therefore, calls on the Canadian people to join in the efforts of the global Cuba solidarity movement to end the immoral U.S. economic blockade, the occupation of Guantanamo Naval Base and the ongoing campaign to destabilize Cuba. Such an achievement would make a crucial contribution to the worldwide struggle for justice, peace and human dignity.

The Canada-Cuba solidarity movement is confident that the Cuban people can and will overcome any challenges that they face including the latest provocations and the escalation of the U.S. economic war against Cuba. The Cuban people can be confident, that they can count on the ongoing undiminished support and friendship of Canadians. That support and friendship is rooted in the overwhelming respect of Canadians for Cuba's rights, independence and self-determination and a profound admiration for what the Cuban people have accomplished despite facing the unceasing aggression of the United States. This respect and admiration have forged unbreakable ties of friendship between the people of Canada and Cuba.

¡Abajo el Bloqueo!  
¡Cuba sí, bloqueo no!

Isaac Saney, CNC Spokesperson,  
October 27, 2019



Stephany Mazuera Vargas at the 8th International Che Guevara Conference  
Oct 26, 2019



*Stephany Mazuera Vargas was born in Zarzal, Valle de Cauca, Colombia. Stephany was a member of Amigos de Cuba (Cali-Colombia). From 2007, she studied at the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) in Havana, Cuba and the Ernesto Che Guevara faculty in Pinar del Rio, Cuba. Beginning in 2014, she worked as an emergency doctor in Colombia and moved to Vancouver in 2017.*

*Stephany gave the following remarks at the Vancouver Premier of the renowned documentary: "Cubanas, Mujeres en revolución" as part of the 8th International Che Guevara Conference.*

*The documentary was directed by journalist and award-winning documentary filmmaker Maria Torrellas and produced by Resumen Latinoamericano. The film evokes the continuous role of women in the Cuban Revolution, both in the guerrilla struggle and in the construction of the new Cuban society, through the testimonies of heroines such as Vilma Espín, Celia Sánchez and Haydée Santamaría, the founding figures of the Revolution, and also of contemporary women from different sectors of Cuban society.*

#### Stephany Mazuera Vargas Talk

Those of us who know the Cuban Revolution because we have lived in it, also know that it is a global revolution. When we talk about the battle of ideas, we are referring to everyone: women, men, children, elders, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ people.

We also know that Cuba is a country that works daily to defend its independence amid an economic blockade imposed by the United States since 1962, which is getting tougher and more inhuman.

Whatever work that needs to be done is performed equally by women and

and later fill job vacancies according to their abilities and achievements. Therefore, it isn't rare to see women holding important positions and roles sometimes in a bigger proportion than men. We saw an example of this in the movie, Marta Ayala Ávila, who is the Deputy Director-General of the Cuban Center of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (CIGB). There are more examples in the scientific sphere, where women have a leading role, as well as in universities and cultural centers.

During my clinical rotations in different hospitals, I could see the same proportion



**Cuban doctor at Cuba's medical brigade in Bolivia**

between women and men nurses, neurosurgeons, gynecologists and other specialties. In many other countries these jobs are stereotypically gendered. Professional Cuban women don't let anyone limit them because of their gender.

The fight of revolutionary Cuban women leaders, supported since the beginning by Fidel, has become every Cuban woman's fight, and it is reflected in the active attitude of the Cuban people. Cuban women know their rights. Many of them taught us as foreign students

# MY EXPERIENCE AS A WOMAN LIVING IN CUBAN SOCIETY



men in Cuba. They are organized in universities with the same opportunities,

how to overcome stereotypes and use our education in our favour.

The Cuban health care system has developed a mother and child program with a comprehensive integrated care plan for pregnant women. I experienced this in my hospital rotation in gynecology. The family doctor and I would visit every house and family examining pregnant women, filling out health reports, and updating registration sheets that are later compiled by the doctor's office, polyclinics and by the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR) [neighborhood councils across Cuba].

Hospital care is organized in such a way that risk of chronic diseases during pregnancy is caught early and women are hospitalized before delivery. If they fail to show up at the hospital, the CDR is responsible for contacting them. I believe that CDRs are an idea that has been maintained because they work. These are networks that have such an exact and precise organization that each one knows how many families, citizens, elders, children, pregnant women, people with disabilities, and patients with sexually transmitted diseases there are,

guaranteeing an equal treatment with individualized attention to everyone in need.

The role of women in the fight for an equal society has been propelled in Cuba because the revolution has always prioritize educating people, the level of culture is high, and if you have ever traveled to Cuba and had a conversation with an average citizen, you know this.

Contrary to what many people think, or are made to think, the island is not isolated

*Continued on page 27*

Stephany Mazuera Vargas nació en Zarzal, Valle del Cauca, Colombia, Stephany fue miembro de Amigos de Cuba (Calí-Colombia). Desde 2007, estudió en la Escuela Latinoamericana de Medicina (ELAM) en La Habana, Cuba y en la facultad Ernesto Che Guevara en Pinar del Río, Cuba. A partir de 2014, trabajó como médico de urgencias en Colombia y se mudó a Vancouver en 2017.

Stephany hizo los siguientes comentarios en el Vancouver Premier del documental: "Cubanas, Mujeres en revolución" como parte de la 8ª Conferencia Internacional Che Guevara.

El documental fue dirigido por la periodista, comunicadora y documentalista Maria Torrellas y producido por Resumen Latinoamericano. La película evoca el papel continuo de las mujeres en la Revolución Cubana, tanto en la lucha guerrillera como en la construcción de la nueva sociedad cubana, a través de los testimonios de heroínas como Vilma Espín, Celia Sánchez y Haydée Santamaría, figuras fundadoras de la Revolución, y también de mujeres contemporáneas de diferentes sectores de la sociedad cubana.

#### Charla de Stephany Mazuera Vargas

Los que conocemos la revolución cubana porque hemos vivido en ella sabemos que esta es una revolución global. Cuando se habla de lucha de ideas, esta se refiere a las ideas de todos: mujeres, hombres, niños, ancianos, personas LGBT, discapacitados.

## MI EXPERIENCIA COMO MUJER EN LA SOCIEDAD CUBANA

Sabemos también que Cuba es un país que trabaja a diario por defender su independencia en medio de un bloqueo económico impuesto por estados unidos desde febrero de 1962, el cual es cada vez más crudo e inhumano.

Este trabajo que se ha venido haciendo, se hace por igual, mujeres y hombres se forman en universidades con las mismas oportunidades y llenan plazas laborales según su desempeño y capacidades, por lo que no es raro ver mujeres ocupando altos cargos en diferentes áreas, a veces en proporción mayor que los hombres, como la directora del centro de genética, hay muchos ejemplos en el área científica en la que las mujeres tienen un papel preponderante así mismo en las universidades y centros culturales.

Durante mis rotaciones en distintos hospitales podía ver misma proporción de enfermeros y enfermeras, neurocirujanos hombres y mujeres, ginecología y otras especialidades etc. lo cual en muchos países viene ligado al sexo. La mujer profesional cubana, no se deja limitar por el género.

La lucha de aquellas mujeres líderes revolucionarias apoyadas desde el comienzo por el comandante fidel se ha vuelto la lucha de todas, lo cual se ve reflejado en la actitud activa de la ciudadanía, la mujer cubana conoce sus derechos, muchas de ellas nos enseñaron a las y los estudiantes extranjeros como vencer esas diferencias y poner la educación a nuestro favor.

El sistema de salud ha desarrollado un programa maternoinfantil

con una atención integral a la mujer embarazada. Yo lo pude comprobar en mis rotaciones por ginecología y medicina familiar y salí junto con el médico familiar de casa en casa examinando a las embarazadas, llenando las hojas de registro que son compiladas en consultorios, policlínicos y CDR (o los comités de defensa de la revolución).

La atención hospitalaria se organiza de tal manera que las embarazadas ya captadas como riesgo por enfermedades de base son hospitalizadas semanas antes del parto y si no llegan a presentarse el CDR las contacta.

Considero que los CDR son una idea que se ha mantenido porque funciona. Estos son centros que llevan una organización tan exacta que cada uno sabe exactamente cuántas familias, ciudadanos, ancianos, niños, mujeres embarazadas, discapacitados y pacientes con enfermedades de transmisión sexual existen, garantizando un un trato igualitario con una atención individualizada.

El papel de la mujer en la lucha para una sociedad igualitaria ha sido más activo en Cuba porque la revolución siempre ha querido personas ilustradas, el nivel de cultura es elevado y cualquier persona que haya viajado y tenido una conversación con un ciudadano de a pie lo puede comprobar.

Al contrario de lo que muchas personas piensan o les hacen pensar, la isla no está aislada del resto del mundo, el acceso a la información existe y el pueblo a pesar del bloqueo económico tiene una visión realista y crítica de lo que pasa, ellos saben que aún hay muchos problemas a los que enfrentarse y la mayoría está dispuesto a mejorarlos.

Con la entrada de esta información, del turismo, de los mismos estudiantes extranjeros, llegan muchas influencias como muchos géneros musicales que aunque gusta entre los jóvenes no ayudan mucho en esta pelea contra la sexualización y cosificación de la mujer en una sociedad tradicionalmente machista como lo es Cuba. Pero en esto recalco el actuar de la juventud cubana.

Estando en Camagüey tuve la oportunidad de conocer a una técnica dental y a su hija estudiante de bachillerato, ella se sentaba largas horas a explicarme sobre la Unión de Jóvenes



continúa en la página 27



# Chile Despertó! Chile Has Woken Up!



## The Rising Fight Against Neo-Liberalism in Chile



Chilean student protesters peacefully confronting the military, Oct 25, 2019

*By Alison Bodine*

*¡Chile despertó!  
¡Piñera, renuncia!  
¡Piñera ya fue!  
¡Que se vayan los milicos!*

*Chile Has Woken Up!  
Piñera Resign!  
Piñera Has Gone!  
Let the "Milicos" leave! ("Milicos" is a derogatory word for police and military personnel)*

These are some of the powerful chants that have echoed throughout the streets of cities small and large in Chile during mass protests that began in October 2019. Poor, working and oppressed people and students have united to demand dignity and human rights - in one word, an end to neo-liberalism in Chile.

This movement began following the October 6 announcement by the government of Chile that there would be a 30-peso transit system fare hike. This increase, which amounts to about \$0.04 USD, was enough added pressure to an already tight household budget for many Chileans to bring millions of people out into the streets.

**"It's not about the 30 pesos. It's about 30 years"**

For the first two weeks, protests were organized by high school students who called on people to refuse to pay transit fares. By

October 18 the President of Chile, Sebastián Piñera had not responded to the students' demands - and instead declared a State of Emergency and deployed the military and riot police to attack the students.

Despite the extreme repression and curfew, people in Chile continued to demonstrate. Then, on October 21, President Piñera, extended the State of Emergency, declaring, "We are at war against a powerful enemy, who is willing to use violence without any limits." With these words, Piñera displayed outright contempt for the people of Chile, and his true colours as an ally of the U.S. and staunch supporter of neo-liberalism in Chile at the same time. By then, protests which had largely been contained to the capital city of Santiago, spread to other cities. At least 10,500 police and soldiers had been deployed by October 21 (BBC).

Protests against the government and neo-liberalism have continued to grow and spread throughout the country and into the most oppressed sectors of society. The Indigenous Mapuche people of Chile, who make up about 10% of the population, have also organized and led protests demanding their self-determination and land rights.

Despite the severe repression, on October 25, 2019, 1.2 million people marched in Santiago, representing diverse sectors of Chilean society including social movements, Indigenous people, women, retired people, unions, students and more. The protests have continued since then, and the repression and cruelty of the Piñera government and his military and police goons has reached a severity not seen in Chile since the bloody Pinochet dictatorship ended over 30 years ago.

As reported by the National Institute of Human Rights (Instituto Nacional de Derechos Humanos - INDH), a non-governmental organization in Chile, at least 177 people have faced severe eye injuries or lost their vision after being deliberately hit in the face by tear-gas canisters and rubber bullets. The same organization has also investigated possible torture sites, and documented cases of un-uniformed police or military throwing people into car trunks and vans. As of October 30, 2019, at least 19 people have been killed and over 1,200 people have been wounded. INDH has also filed 18 cases of sexual violence, including rape, and 92 cases of torture, against police and soldiers.

### Why are People in Chile Protesting?

So, how is it that in the face of so much violence, people in Chile have continued their mass protests? What started with a transit fare increase has led to a revolt against Chile's neo-liberal government and institutions - and even demands to change the constitution. As Alan Vicencio, a 25-year-old call-center worker told Time Magazine, "The whole constitution makes me angry, the constitution allowed the privatization of every aspect of our lives and it's being doing it for more than 30 years."

*Continued on page 18*



Police violently detaining a demonstrator during a protest in Chile, Oct 25, 2019



**“I AM CERTAIN THAT  
MY SACRIFICE WILL  
NOT BE IN VAIN...  
LONG LIVE CHILE!  
LONG LIVE THE  
PEOPLE!  
LONG LIVE THE  
WORKERS!”**

**SALVADOR ALLENDE  
SEPTEMBER 11, 1973**



**> STANDING IN SOLIDARITY WITH CHILE!  
> STOP NEOLIBERAL POLICIES  
> STOP POLICE & STATE VIOLENCE!  
[WWW.FIRETHISTIME.NET](http://WWW.FIRETHISTIME.NET)**



Continued from page 15

Often hailed as “business friendly” and the prime example of the “success” of a free market system, Chile is the most unequal of the 36 countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In 2017, the United Nations released a report “Unequal. Origins, changes and challenges in Chile’s social divide,” which explained how the richest 0.1% of the people in Chile control 19.5% of the wealth.

Privatization runs rampant in Chile through all sectors of life including water, roads, energy, healthcare and the pension system. Although some education is public, there is a great divide between the public and private school systems.

The minimum wage in Chile is not enough for a dignified life – especially as everything is privatized, making everyday life in Chile very expensive. For example, if someone in Chile made minimum wage the cost of transit to and from work would eat up 21% of their paycheck (NACLA.org).

Protestors in Chile are fighting for their dignity. They are fighting against inequality. They are fighting against police and military brutality. These are all symptoms of neo-liberalism, which is the economic policy expression of the agenda of imperialism around the world.

One only must look towards to the United States’ relationship with the government of Chile to understand just how Chile has become such a good ally to the U.S. With regard to the violence against protestors, the White House stated that, “The United States stands with Chile, an important ally, as it works to peacefully restore national order,”

and “President Trump denounced foreign efforts to undermine Chilean institutions, democracy, or society.”

More broadly, as President Trump put it in a press conference a year ago, “There are so many issues that we have to discuss because Chile and the United States are likeminded countries. We share the most important things,

which are values — democracy, human rights, freedom. But Chile is really something special. If you look at what they’ve done, how far they’ve come. You look at how well run the country is.” This is what is sounds like when a government in Latin America is following the orders of the U.S. government and their financial institutions.

Clearly, behind the repression in Chile is the support of the United States, but also the support of many of their imperialist allies, including the government of Canada. In fact, Prime Minister Trudeau had a phone call with Piñera in the midst of severe police and military repression and didn’t say one word to him – as reported by CTV News, “A summary from the Prime Minister’s Office of Trudeau’s phone call with Piñera made no direct mention of the ongoing turmoil in Chile, a thriving country with which Canada has negotiated a free trade agreement.”

This is no surprise given that, as reported by the government of Canada, 14% of Canada’s mining assets are in Chile including copper, gold and silver mines. This includes Barrick Gold, which had to shut down a \$429 million gold mine earlier this year due to severe human rights and



Sign at a protest in Chile reads “Neoliberalism was born and will die in Chile”

environmental violations.

Both the governments of the U.S. and Canada also want to hold up the repressive Piñera government because having a neo-liberal “success story” and a staunch ally in Chile serves them well in their drive to re-establish imperialist hegemony in Latin America. Having a U.S.-supported government in Chile puts imperialists in a better position for their continued attacks against the sovereign and independent countries of Cuba and Venezuela.

### Chile – Target of Imperialist Aggression and Exploitation

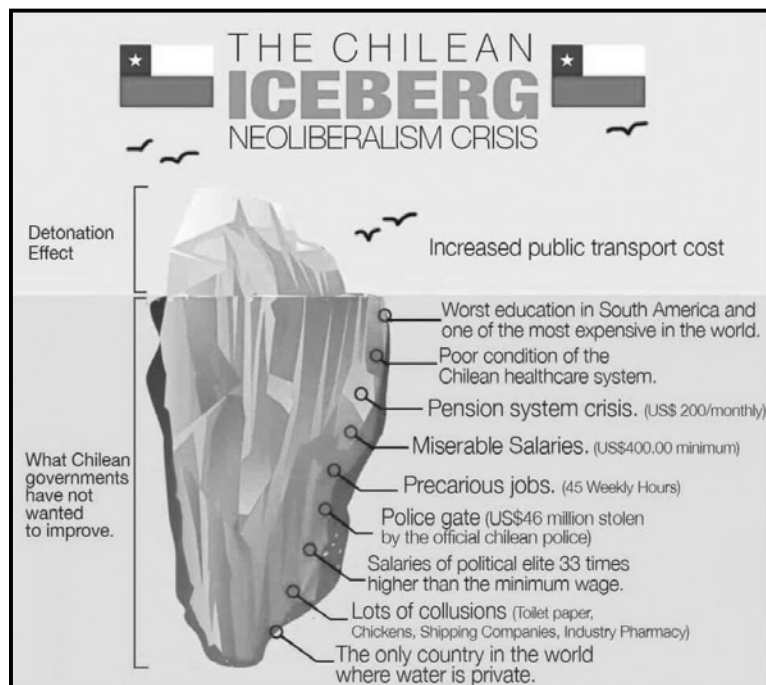
The modern history of Chile is a history of colonization, imperialist domination and exploitation. Although Chile won independence from Spain in 1818, it wasn’t until 150 years later that the people of Chile had the opportunity to be truly independent from colonial and imperialist rule.

In 1970, the people of Chile chose to reverse their history of colonization and exploitation, and elected Salvador Allende, who had a progressive and popular agenda to improve the life and oppose imperialist exploitation of Chile.

However, only three years after his election, in 1973, the United States and their imperialist allies orchestrated a bloody coup d’état, murdering Allende and installing a bloody military dictatorship. In just the first 5 years of his brutal rule, the U.S.-backed dictatorship of General Agosto Pinochet imprisoned and tortured at least 30,000 people and disappeared 3,000 people. A constitution written under the dictatorship, which is the same one that enshrines privatization, is still in place in Chile today.

Reviewing the modern history of Chile also helps to explain the continued determination of the people of Chile to continuing protesting

Continued on page 30



*By Giuvael Orozco*

*Excerpt from talk given by Giuvael Orozco at the 8th International Che Guevara Conference*

Some book authors, professors, journalists, social researches, politician and historians has stated that one of the most remarkable aspects of the Cuban Revolution continues to be its internationalist vocation.

Of course, I am referring to Ernesto “Che” Guevara, an inspiring figure, inextricably linked to the history of Cuba and our America, whose work inspires and guides us, and we welcome his name to inspire us in events such as this 8th International Conference in Vancouver.

The international support towards the last stage of the warfare for the independence of Cuba, leaded by Fidel Castro and reached finally on January 1st of 1959, was the same

in different parts of the world, became a principle to be followed by the State and the new revolutionary government. This principle got constitutional hierarchy since the Constitution of 1976 and remain as it in the new Constitutional text.

But young leader of the Revolution was awareness of that debt of gratitude of the newborn revolution could only be paid by building a solid and exemplary Homeland, ready to reach out to those who needed it.

# The Cuban Socialist & Internationalist Revolution

## The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership

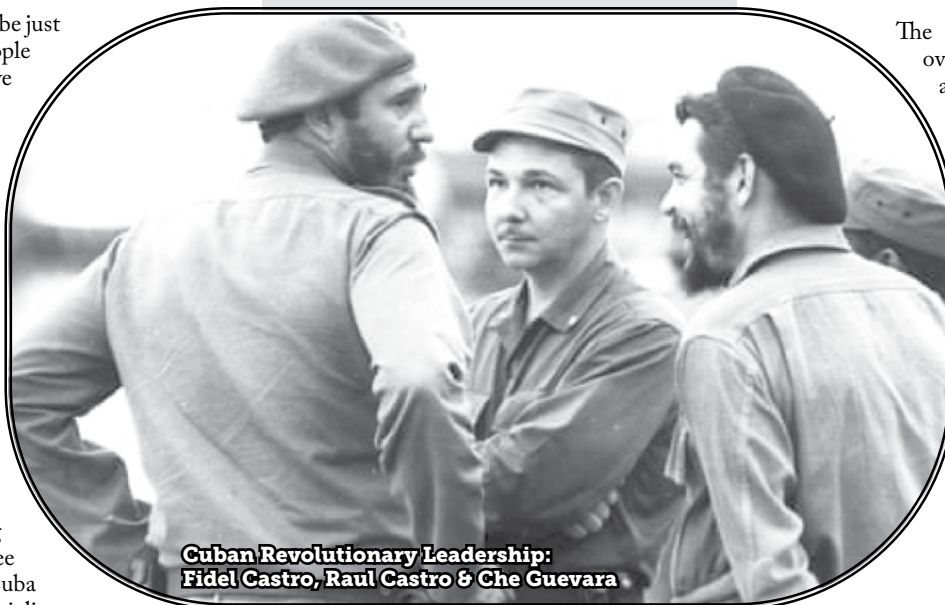
### How Far Have We Come?

However, we should be just

to say that many people of the world, have always been very much supportive with the cause for the independence of Cuba, the Revolution and the Cuban people as well. We knew on the attempts from Simon Bolívar, Liberator of America and the government of Mexico at the beginning of the 19th century, in preparing expeditions to free the Island of Cuba from Spanish colonialism

and there are uncountable expressions of international solidarity with Cuba during our struggle for the independence, mainly from the American continent. We were proud off the presence of hundreds of foreigners on the ground, fighting alongside the Cuban people for their independence. I can mention on this occasion to Dominican Maximo Gómez, the north American Henry Reeve, the Polish Carlos Roloff Mialofsky (was born in Warsaw, Poland) or the Canadian William Ryan who was born in Toronto, participated in the first war of independence of Cuba from 1868-1878, reached the rank of Brigadier General and offered his life fighting for that beautiful cause.

On this background, I must also mention another symbol of international solidarity, in the closest history of Latin America, truly icon in the anti-imperialist struggle and for the sovereignty and independence of nations.



**Cuban Revolutionary Leadership:  
Fidel Castro, Raul Castro & Che Guevara**

like previous periods. Women and men from all over the world helped, in various ways, the triumph of the Cuban Revolution on January 1, 1959.

Then, a few years after the triumph of Cuban revolution while was assted the aide received by Cuba during different stage of the struggle for the independence, Fidel himself stated, “Internationalism is the most beautiful essence of Marxism-Leninism and its ideals of solidarity and fraternity among peoples. Without internationalism, the Cuban Revolution would not even exist. Being an internationalist is paying off our own debt to humanity”.

This feeling of duty and thankful towards woman and men from different countries has leaded the conduct of the Cuban Revolution. The solidarity vocation that the Cuban people, also showed towards noble causes

The Revolution had to overcome all types of aggressions and threats, both internal and external such as:

- ✓ economic and trading measures taken by the government of USA in order to squeeze the live of the people and take away the popular support to the government;
- ✓ the invasion of Bay of Pigs which ended with the Imperialism's first defeat in Latin American and the Caribbean;
- ✓ the October Crisis well-known as Missile Crisis;
- ✓ the draining of human resources needed by the country to its own development and using migratory policies as a weapon against the Cuban Revolution;
- ✓ the fight against bandits who served the Central Intelligence Agency, just to give a few examples.

At the same time, Cuba start a glorious stage of its internationalism and the aide for other peoples. From the early years of the revolution until now, Cuba has sent thousands of doctors, professors, engineers and other personnel, to various countries, but cooperation in the field of health care, mainly on humanitarian assignments, has had a highlighted role.

The medical assistance provided to the Algerian people started on May 21, 1963. Since that year, Cuba developed a systematic



and institutional collaboration with several countries, which number increased rapidly, namely, Algeria and Viet-Nam in 1963, Mali in 1965, Congo (Brazzaville) in 1966, Guinea (Conakry) in 1967.

Owing to the prestige of Cuban revolutionary medicine, some States with considerable natural and economic resources, which were able to pay for this type of cooperation to other developed countries with which they share a long cultural tradition and keep good political relations - preferred to request this cooperation to Cuba. For example, Iraq, Libya and Kuwait adopted this form of cooperation in 1978, 1979 and 1985, respectively. Angola and Algeria started in 1978 and maintain it up to date under mutually beneficial agreements of exchange of resources and services, with an important economic compensation (Compensated Technical Assistance).

Faced with the collapse of the socialist bloc in the 1990s, Cuba entered into a "Special period", which brought about a new type of cooperation focused on the economic improvement of the Cuban people. This new type of cooperation was known as 'compensated internationalist missions', by means of which Cuban collaborators were hired directly, and Cuba received an income in the form of remittances (South Africa, Brazil, Yemen, and Jamaica). However, in the mid-1990s, Cuba had three times as many doctors as the World Health Organization serving abroad and providing free medical treatment.

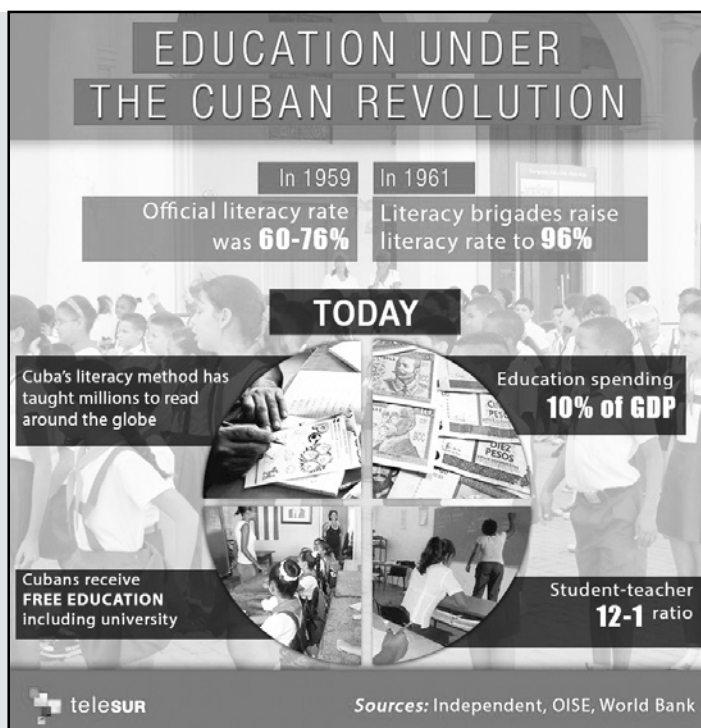
Special mention goes to the Henry Reeve International Contingent of Physicians Specialized in Situations of Disasters and Serious Epidemics, founded by Fidel, which has earned more reputation to the Cuban collaboration in this field. This contingent, made up by specially trained personnel, was founded on September 19, 2005, with the objective of providing immediate health care

assistance to any country affected by any kind of disasters, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes or other natural disasters, or suffering from epidemics. The Henry Reeve International Contingent has rendered its services in more than twenty countries, has provided medical assistance to more than 3.5 million people and has saved more than 80,000 lives. I can remember right now the medical assistance provided for this brigade after different earthquakes struck Pakistan, Haiti, Nepal and Chile.

Since May 21, 1963, when Cuba officially began its international medical cooperation in Algeria, over 407,000 health professionals and technicians (including more than 183 thousand medical doctors) have fulfilled the honorable mission of saving lives and improving health indicators in 164 countries. Cuba has also trained almost 29,000 doctors from 100 countries at the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM).

During these 56 years of medical cooperation, the humanist vocation of the Cuban Revolution and of the "army of white coats" that provides its support for the wellbeing of humanity, has been validated once again.

Our international cooperation effort currently



involves about 33,000 professionals in 85 countries (including near of 29 African nations), who voluntarily provide services to the population in health care, education, construction, sports, among others.

In Cuba, there are 12,699 young people from 133 nations, who are currently trained as professionals. The links with most of these countries are a successful example of what the United Nations calls "South-South cooperation", based on complementarity and self-sustainability among developing countries.

As you may know, independence and sovereignty life of Cuba, have not been easy. Since the beginning of the triumph of the Revolution, the successive governments of USA have been strengthening the pressure on Cuba in order to force a regime change. Sabotages, covert operations to damage the key sectors of the economy and to commit the assassination of Fidel Castro and main leaders of the Revolution, armed invasion, diplomatic pressures, spy operations, the support with arms, financing and training to counterrevolutionary forces inside and outside of the isle, terrorist attacks, and a criminal blockade in force for almost 60 years, have been lived examples what Cuban revolution and its people have had to face.

In fact, Commander in Chief Fidel Castro, while addressed to the Havana's population at the moment he arrived at the capital city on January 8, 1959, he foresaw: "I think this is a decisive moment in our history: tyranny has been overthrown. The joy is immense. And yet, much remains to be done. We do not fool ourselves into believing that in the future everything will be easy; maybe in the



Giuvel Orozco at the 8th Vancouver International Che Guevara Conference Oct 2019

future everything might be more difficult”.

The economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the government of the United States of America against Cuba for almost six decades is the most unfair, severe and extended system of unilateral sanctions ever applied against any country.

The blockade has not only continued to be implemented rigorously against Cuba, but it has been significantly intensified as well. It remained extremely fort in the field of financial transactions but now it has been reinforced by many important areas for the economic and trade relations with the isle.

The United States Government has decided to activate Title III of the Helms-Burton Act, which allow taking action in US courts against entities that have legitimate commercial dealings or invest in properties legally nationalized in Cuba during the 1960s, thus violating International Law, the principles of the UN Charter, the rules established by the World Trade Organization and the sovereignty of other States. Its main goal is to hamper Cuba's capacity to attract direct foreign investments to support its development.

Since April 2019, the United States has implemented another set of major coercive measures aimed at denying Cuba access to financial resources and depriving the Cuban people of its main sources of income. It once again put a cap to the remittances that Cuban residents in the U.S. send to their families, prohibited travel by cruiser for American citizen to Cuba and restricted even further travel by plane, ended “U-Turn” transactions limiting Cuba's access to the U.S. financial system, and imposed sanctions against insurance and reinsurance companies, ships and shipping companies involved in transporting fuel to Cuba.

The USA's government has prohibited travel by cruiser for American citizen to Cuba and restricted even further travel by plane, aimed to reduce the amount of tourism visiting Cuba and damage a key sector in Cuban economy due to its dynamic and productions chained with other sector and Cuban enterprises, damaging even the private sector in Cuba linked with this activities.

The accumulated damage caused by the blockade to Cuba and the Cuban people in almost six decades amounts to \$922,630

million, taking into account the depreciation of the dollar with regard to the price of gold on the international market. At current prices, the blockade damages amount to \$138,843.4

Despite of this adverse framework, Cuban people have managed to make substantial progress, and they have continued to intensify their revolutionary transformation with the goal of building a society that is increasingly just, free, democratic, caring, participatory and prosperous.

Some educational and health indicators reached by the Cuban population can be compared with rates of the most developed countries.

- ✓ The infant mortality rate is 4 deaths per 1,000 live births.
- ✓ Life expectancy at birth of the Cuban population is which has reached an overall average of 78.45 years.
- ✓ maternal mortality rate has been reduced to 38.0 deaths per 100,000 live births.
- ✓ Likewise, as a result of the Comprehensive Cancer Control Program, in the last three years mortality rates due to this disease have ceased to grow.

technology, as well as the application of scientific research in the productive process, and in education itself.

- ✓ The country currently invests 10% of its GDP in education, and more than 1% in research and development.
- ✓ Cuba has more than 40 institutions of higher learning and the teaching is provided at not cost for the population. It also has more than 200 scientific research centers across the island.

At the end of the year 2010, was begun the talk of updating economic and social system. After deep and broad debates with the population, were approved and updated by the Congress of the Communist Party held in 2012 and 2016, respectively, the guidelines of the economic and social policy of the party and the revolution. After that, was submitted to a broad process of popular consultation the project of new Constitution of the Republic of Cuba. It received near 800 000 proposal of amendments that led to change 60% of the articles of the original project. On October 24, 2019, was submitted to popular referendum the Constitutional project. At that time, a 90.15 percent (8,705,723 people) went to the

polls and 86,85 percent of them (6,816,169 citizens) gave their approval to the new Constitution of the Republic of Cuba while 9 percent (706,400) voted No. As you can see, all Cubans had the opportunity to participate and contribute to the most important decisions for the life of the nation. The new Constitution makes significant changes to the country's political, social, and economic order. I understand, tomorrow, we will have the opportunity to debate about the constitutional reform in Cuba.

As our president Miguel Díaz – Canel said on

October 10, while taking possession of the new position of the President of the Republic: No one is going to take from us the confidence in the future which we owe our children.

And I want to finish with a phrase which is very popular in our country and show the strong will of Cuban people to defend the conquests of the Revolution and the developments plans that we have chosen: “Whoever attempts to take Cuba will collect only the dust from its blood-soaked soil, if he does not perish in the fight.”

Thank you to all of you for your attendance and your tireless support and solidarity towards Cuba.



- ✓ Cuba counts with a Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology and a Cientific Pole which have done incredible results in this field, In a short period of time, taking into account the average of time and resources needed to scientific researches, Cuba has developed more than 50 biotechnological products to meet a large portion of the nation's needs in diagnostics, analysis, vaccines, and high-tech products, while representing great economic potential given their value added.
- ✓ Cuba has carried out policies prioritizing investment in education, science, and



# LIFT THE CRIMINAL AND IMMORAL U.S. BLOCKADE ON CUBA NOW!



*By Janine Solanki*

On September 28, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla spoke at the United Nations General Assembly and responded to the U.S. government's ongoing attacks on Cuba. He affirmed that, "economic aggression, no matter how hard threats and blackmails might be, will not extract a single concession from us. Those who know the history of Cubans during their long struggle to achieve emancipation and their steadfast defense of the freedom and justice they have conquered, will understand, beyond any doubt, the significance, honesty and authority of these strong beliefs and ideas treasured by our people."

These comments are in response to not only almost 60 years of the cruel U.S. blockade on Cuba, but also to recent statements and actions by the Trump administration. On September 24, U.S. President Trump spoke at the United Nations General Assembly attacking Cuba and Venezuela and using false pretexts to justify the cruel and unjust U.S. blockades against both countries. Two days later, on September 26 the Trump administration imposed new sanctions on former Cuban President Raul Castro and all of his children. These recent and increasing hostilities by the U.S. government are some of many inhuman measures the Trump administration is taking to tighten the cruel blockade on Cuba.

## Vancouver in action

On **October 17**, Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade held their monthly picket action in Vancouver, Canada, in coordination with protests in Ottawa and Montreal, Canada and Kiev, Ukraine. Between rounds of picketing in front of the U.S. Consulate, the protesters gathered to hear from speakers, including a solidarity message from Ottawa Cuba Connections who also held a protest that day.

Organizers also spoke over the megaphone about the upcoming vote in the United Nations General Assembly that every year condemns the U.S. blockade on Cuba with overwhelming support. This year's vote, on November 7, passed for the 28<sup>th</sup> consecutive year with 187 countries voting with Cuba against the blockade, and only 3 countries shamefully voting for the blockade (the U.S., Israel and Brazil).

The protest wrapped up with the customary group photo under the U.S. Consulate building sign, with picket signs, banners and Cuban flags held high, in defense of Cuba's sovereignty and self-determination!

To find out about upcoming actions and events against the U.S. blockade on Cuba, visit [www.vancubavsblockade.org](http://www.vancubavsblockade.org) and follow Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade on Facebook and Twitter @NoBloqueoVan

*Follow Janine on Twitter: @janinesolanki*

# NO SANCTIONS! NO WAR! NO TRUMP! U.S./CANADA HANDS OFF VENEZUELA!

*By Janine Solanki*

On September 11, 2019 U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced an escalation of war against Venezuela. Together with 10 other right-wing Latin American governments, the U.S. invoked the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR). The TIAR is a dangerous cold-war era mutual defense treaty which enables further U.S.-led intervention against the people of Venezuela.

This latest move comes after increasing U.S. sanctions, blockade and economic warfare have failed to topple the legitimate Venezuelan elected President Nicolás Maduro. While the Venezuelan people continue to stand in defense of their president and the Bolivarian revolution, U.S. sanctions have a brutal impact on the people of Venezuela. An April 2019 report by the Center for Economic and Policy research found that U.S. sanctions contributed to more



than 40,000 deaths in Venezuela between 2017 – 2018. At the same time as the U.S. government is inflicting crippling sanctions on the Venezuelan people, the U.S. Trump administration is delivering a hefty \$52 million paycheck to their puppet and self-proclaimed "interim president" of Venezuela Juan Guaido and the Venezuelan opposition, as announced by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) on September 25, 2019.

In Vancouver, Canada, the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign of Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice is out on the streets every month, demanding U.S./Canada Hands off Venezuela! On October 4, activists came together for this monthly action starting with a picket action in front of the U.S. Consulate. Protesters raised their picket signs and voices to demand "U.S. Hands Off Venezuela!" and in between rounds of picketing, gathered to hear from local speakers. After gathering for a customary group photo in front of the U.S. Consulate building sign, the protest moved to the busy downtown Vancouver Robson Square. Passersby were attracted to the information table by banners and a huge Venezuelan flag, and many signed on to the petition demanding the government of Canada end its sanctions on Venezuela.

The FTT Venezuela Solidarity Campaign is committed to continuing these monthly protest actions and other events in defense of Venezuela and the Bolivarian revolution, until the U.S. and Canada end their sanctions and foreign intervention against Venezuela. To find out about upcoming events visit [www.firethistime.net](http://www.firethistime.net) or follow on Facebook, on Twitter @FTT\_np and on Instagram @FTT.Venezuela

## SUPPORT THE EMBASSY PROTECTORS DEFENSE COMMITTEE!

Collecting funds for the Embassy Protectors who defended the Venezuelan Embassy in Washington, DC from U.S. government sponsored pro-coup Venezuelans for 37 days in the Spring of 2019.

Funds will go toward legal defense for the four members of the Embassy Protection Collective that have been charged with "interfering with protective services" and now face up to a year in jail and up to a \$100,000 fine, as well as other supporters.



**Scan to donate!**

**<https://defendembassyprotectors.org>**

# U.S./CANADA AND ALL IMPERIALISTS, HANDS OFF THE MIDDLE EAST PROTEST 18 YEARS OF THE NEW ERA OF WAR & OCCUPATION

*By Janine Solanki*

Last month marked 18 years of the war on Afghanistan, the longest war in U.S. history. Now into its 19th year, the war is still bringing death, destruction and immense hardship to the people of Afghanistan. On September 19, a U.S. drone strike in Afghanistan killed at least 30 farmers harvesting pine nuts in Nangarhar province. A few days later, on September 23, at least 40 civilians, including women and children, were killed at a wedding by a U.S.-led attack on a village in southern Helmand province.

Since the war on Afghanistan started, the U.S. and their imperialist allies have advanced a new era of war and occupation, especially in the Middle East and North Africa. This includes Yemen, in its fifth year of a U.S.-backed, Saudi-led war. The war has killed at least 100,000 people since 2015, according to a recent report by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) on October 2019, and The Guardian, British newspaper on June 2019. This number doesn't include those killed by starvation in what the United Nations has called the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, or those killed by cholera in the world's cholera outbreak – both effects of the Saudi war. This brutal war has been dubbed the “forgotten war” as it has received minimal coverage in western mainstream media – also forgotten has been the quiet support of the government of Canada to Saudi Arabia,



including the \$15 billion arms deal for so-called “light” armored vehicles.

## Vancouver Action

In Vancouver, Canada, the antiwar coalition Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) is on the streets every month to protest the imperialist new era of war and occupation, which started with the war on Afghanistan and continues today. On October

11, MAWO stood in solidarity with the March on the Pentagon's “Rage Against the War Machine” actions which took place in Washington, DC, and demanded the complete end to the wars abroad, the

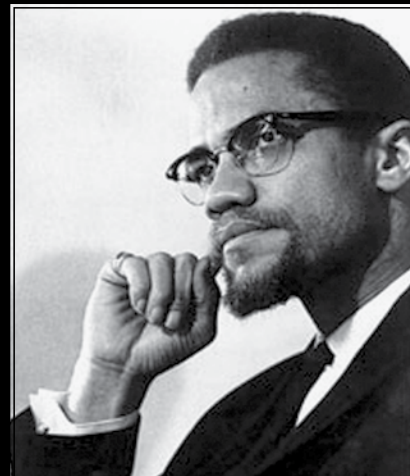
closure of foreign bases, and that the Pentagon budget be dramatically slashed to fund health and social programs at home.

The Vancouver action on October 11 was held at downtown Vancouver's busy Robson square, with picket signs and banners demanding “U.S./Saudi Arabia Hands Off Yemen!” and “Self-determination for the People of Yemen!”. Organizers talked to passersby and collected signatures on a petition against Canada's \$15 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia, and many people stopped by the information table to find out more and pick up antiwar literature.

To find out about MAWO's upcoming actions and events, visit [www.mawovancouver.org](http://www.mawovancouver.org) or follow on Facebook and Twitter @MAWOVan

*Follow Janine on Twitter: @janinesolanki*

## “By Any Means Necessary...”



## MALCOLM X SPEAKS

*On Afro-American History (January 24, 1965)*

When you jump out around some Black Americans and speak as if everything is on your side, why, they think you're crazy. But they think you're crazy because they can't see what you see. All they see is Charlie, all they see is the white man. And because he is all they see, to them he looks like a giant. But you're looking beyond the white man. You see the nations of the earth that are black, brown, red, and yellow, who used to be down, now getting up. And when you see them, you find that you look more like them than you look like Sam. And then you find yourself relating to them, whereas you formerly tried to relate to Sam. When you relate to them, you're related to the majority. But when you relate to Uncle Sam, you automatically become a minority relative. You understand? He examines us all the time. He has the Black community throughout this land always under a microscope just like in a scientists laboratory, to find out how you're thinking, to keep up to date on how you think, on the beat of your pulse—are you beating too hot, or is your temperature running too hot, or is it cool. He wants to know how you think and how you feel. If you seem to be working up a temperature that he's not responsible for, it worries him. As long as your temperature rises when he puts the pressure, that's okay. But if he sees you making some reactions that are motivated other than by something that he has done, then he begins to worry. He finds that something else is influencing you and controlling you beyond his control and influence. And he should worry when you begin to get like that.

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**By Azza Rojbi**

Azza Rojbi is a Tunisian anti-war and social justice organizer based in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. She is an executive member of Vancouver's anti-war coalition Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) and a member of the Editorial Board of the Fire This Time Newspaper.





# 8TH INTERNATIONAL CHE GUEVARA CONFERENCE A GREAT SUCCESS!

**"SOCIALISM YESTERDAY, TODAY, TOMORROW  
CONTINUITY OF THE CUBAN SOCIALIST PROJECT"**  
VANCOUVER, KAMLOOPS & CALGARY, CANADA



*By Janine Solanki*

*"It is necessary to explain what the Cuban Revolution is, what this special affair is that has made the blood of the empires of the world boil, and has also made the blood of the dispossessed of the world — or at least of this part of the world — boil, but with hope"*

*— Che Guevara, from his speech at the Organization of American States meeting on August 8, 1961 in Punta del Este, Uruguay*

These words, spoken by revolutionary hero and visionary Che Guevara 58 years ago, ring just as true in today's world. Imperialist forces today have taken a major offensive against progressive and revolutionary governments and movements throughout Latin America. These revolutionary advances are what makes the blood of imperialist countries boil, as Che Guevara said. It also fills them with fear, as oppressed peoples look to the examples of Cuba and Venezuela and threaten the hold of imperialism in Latin America, and around the world.

It is with the revolutionary spirit of Che Guevara's legacy that the International Che Guevara Conference first started in 2008, organized by Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC). Since the triumph of Cuba's 1959 revolution to today, the vision and political ideas that shape the Cuban revolution remain a source of inspiration, discussion and debate around the world. This one-of-a-kind conference is an opportunity to explore these ideas from a uniquely working-class perspective. The Che Guevara Conference brings together intellectuals, activists, authors, and political leaders from Cuba, Venezuela, North America and Europe, with the goal of not just discussing but learning from these ideas.

The 8th International Che Guevara Conference on October 26-27, 2019 in Vancouver, and October 29 in Kamloops and Calgary, centered on the theme: "Socialism Yesterday, Socialism Today, Socialism Tomorrow: Continuity of the

Cuban Socialist Project".

## Day 1 – Saturday October 26

The first day of the 8th International Che Guevara Conference, held at the Russian Hall in Vancouver, Canada, started off with an Indigenous welcoming led by Kelly White, who is a Coast Salish elder, teacher, broadcaster, and long-time social justice activist. Following Kelly, VCSC coordinator Tamara Hansen gave an opening to the conference, before introducing the first keynote speaker, Giuvel Orozco Ortega, the Deputy Head of Mission and Counsellor at the Cuban Embassy in Ottawa, Canada. His keynote talk addressed the topic, "The Cuban Socialist and Internationalist Revolution. The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership. How Far Have We Come?" This very comprehensive talk is printed in this issue of Fire This Time on page 19.

The first workshop of the day was titled "The Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution: 60 Years of Developing the Leadership of Revolutionary Youth". This

workshop was given by David Aldama Pando, the Third Secretary of the Embassy of Cuba in Canada in charge of academic affairs and relations with Cuba solidarity groups in Canada. David Aldama spoke from his experience as a young Cuban revolutionary, as he outlined both the historic and ongoing role of youth in the Cuban revolution.

## VANCOUVER



Top to bottom: Miriam Meza de Acuña, Dr. Luis Acuña, Giuvel Orozco & David Aldama Pando at the Indigenous closing ceremony; David Aldama Pando's workshop on Leadership of Revolutionary Youth in Cuba; Keith Bolender signing his books; Keith Bolender, Arnold August, Dr. Luis Acuña, Miriam Meza de Acuña & Alison Bodine

The workshop “Cuban Sovereignty, Sustainability and Community – Food Security is just the Beginning” was delivered by Wendy Holm, an agrologist, columnist, author and speaker, who organizes the Canada-Cuba Farmer to Farmer project and has written extensively on Cuba’s commitment to sustainable farming practices. The next workshop “Cuba and Venezuela: Independence and Unity in the face of U.S./Canada Aggressions” was delivered by Arnold August from Montreal, Canada. He is an accomplished author and journalist, whose latest book “Cuba-U.S. Relations: Obama and Beyond” (Fernwood, 2017) was bought by many participants. This workshop opened a critical subject, in light of the escalating imperialist aggression against Cuba and Venezuela.

Before continuing to the evening portion of the program, a special announcement was made by Janine Solanki, national coordinator of the Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade. Janine encouraged participants to travel to Cuba and experience this revolutionary island for themselves through the Calixto Garcia Brigade (December 2019) or the Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade (Spring 2020).

The highlight of Saturday evening was the Vancouver premier of the documentary “Cubanas, Mujeres en Revolución”, which captivated the audience by weaving together the historical and current role of women in the Cuban revolution. The screening was preceded by a special video introduction from Maria Torrellas, the director of the film, who sent heartfelt messages of solidarity from Argentina. Following the film, a commentary and discussion was led by Stephany Mazuera and Azza Rojbi. Stephany Mazuera, who is from Colombia, spoke from her experiences studying medicine in Cuba at the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) in Havana and the Ernesto Che Guevara faculty in Pinar del Rio, Cuba. (Her speech is printed

in this issue of Fire This Time on page 13) Azza Rojbi then spoke to reflect further on the film and the advancements of women in Cuba’s “revolution within a revolution”. Azza Rojbi is a Tunisian social justice, LGBTQ+ activist and coordinator of Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. blockade – Vancouver, as well as author of “U.S. & Saudi War on the People of Yemen” (Battle of Ideas Press, 2019).

#### Day 2 – October 27, 2019

After Tamara Hansen opened the second day of the conference, participants delved into the theme “Venezuela’s Bolivarian Revolution Today: How Far We Have Come”. This keynote address was presented by Dr. Luis Acuña Cedeño from Sucre, Venezuela, currently living in Ottawa, Canada. Luis Acuña who is the Chargé d’Affaires at the Venezuelan Embassy in Ottawa, Canada, was former Minister of Higher Education in Venezuela under then-President Comandante Hugo Chavez (see his talk on page 6 of this issue of Fire This Time). His speech on this vital topic set the tone for the following workshop, “#UnblockCuba #UnblockVenezuela – Building the Solidarity Movement: Our Tasks and Perspectives in the Imperialist Epoch” given by Tamara Hansen and Alison Bodine. Tamara Hansen, alongside being the coordinator of VCSC, is also a member of the executive of the Canadian Network on Cuba (CNC) and is author of the book “5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution: The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership” (Battle of Ideas Press, 2010). While Tamara’s talk focused on building solidarity with Cuba (see her talk printed on page 8 of this issue of Fire This Time), Alison focused on the Venezuela solidarity movement and the importance of defending Venezuela against U.S. aggression. Alison Bodine is the coordinator of the Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice Venezuela Solidarity Campaign and is the author of “Revolution & Counter-Revolution in Venezuela” (Battle of Ideas

Press, 2018).

Following a lunch break, the afternoon explored the theme “The Cuban Tightrope: Between the Plan and the Market” presented by Helen Yaffe. Speaking via video conference from Glasgow, Scotland, Helen Yaffe is a Visiting Fellow at the Latin America and Caribbean Centre and a Lecturer in Economic and Social History at the University of Glasgow. She is also the author of “Che Guevara: The Economics of Revolution” (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

The next workshop was presented by Keith Bolender, and also served as the first book launch for his newly published book, “Manufacturing the Enemy: The Media War Against Cuba” (Pluto, 2019). Keith is a freelance journalist who worked for more than 10 years with the Toronto Star, is a member of the Institute for Public Accuracy on their Roster of Experts for Cuban Affairs, and lectures at the University of Toronto School of Continuing Studies.

Next, Macarena Cataldo, a Chilean activist and host of “El Bus de las 7” on Coop Radio 100.5 FM, spoke passionately for 15 minutes about what is currently happening in Chile and the years of oppression that have brought Chileans out to the streets now.

Nearing the end of the conference, Kelly White and MaryAnn led a beautiful Indigenous blanketing ceremony to honour the Cuban and Venezuelan guest speakers.

The final workshop was titled “Cuba’s New Constitution & the Continuity of the Cuban Socialist Project” delivered by Giuvell Orozco. This workshop examined the process and outcome of Cuba’s new constitution, and its significance as Cuba charts its future.

As the conference drew to a close, the closing keynote address was given by Ali Yerevani, who is the Political Editor of the

*Continued on page 29*

## CALGARY



## KAMLOOPS



# WWW.CHEGUEVARACONFERENCE.CA



# ALL FOREIGN TROOPS OUT OF SYRIA NOW! LET THE SYRIAN PEOPLE GO HOME!

The United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC) stands in solidarity with the long-suffering people of Syria. We oppose all foreign occupation of Syrian territory. Syria belongs to the Syrians.

The current Turkish incursion into northern Syria is in violation of Syrian sovereignty. So is the continued U.S. intervention.

Turkey has been an ally of the U.S. in its regime change program in Syria. Both countries are in Syria against the wishes of the Syria government and have caused great destruction in the region.

The U.S. claim that it is in Syria to fight ISIS, is fiction. Recent U.S. involvement started in 2011 with the CIA program called "Timber Sycamore," which was geared to overthrow the Syrian government and replace it with a government friendlier to Washington and Wall Street. This program supplied money, weapons and training to internal and external forces fighting the Assad government. ISIS wasn't formed in Syria till around 2014, years after the U.S. regime change program started. Washington used ISIS as their reason to expand U.S. bombing and destruction.

Syria requested assistance from Hezbollah forces in Lebanon, then from Iran and Russia to aid their resistance to the U.S. orchestrated destruction. This determination defeated U.S. plans.

President Trump in early October tweeted that he would be withdrawing U.S. forces from Northern Syria where they have been working with the Kurdish SDF (Syrian Defense Forces) to maintain the occupation of the northeastern region of Syria, the home of most of Syria's oil and grain production. Trump claimed to have come to an accommodation with Turkish President Erdogan. Immediately thereafter, Turkish soldiers crossed the border and began to attack the Kurds,

These actions caused a great debate in the U.S. Many politicians, who wanted the U.S. to stay in Syria, claimed that Trump had abandoned the Kurds.

The U.S. is no friend of the Kurds and has betrayed their interests over and over again throughout the last century and was never a protector of their interests.

Syria's population of 22 million includes Arab, Kurdish, Assyrian, Armenian, Turkoman and Circassian nationalities as well as Sunni, Alawi, Shia, Druze, Yazidi, and Christian religious sects. Based on decades of past U.S. military intervention in the region there are 1.5 million Palestinian and Iraqi refugees in

Syria and 5 million Syrian refugees outside of Syria.

The Syrian government is determined to maintain and rebuild Syria as a secular, multi-ethnic, multinational, multi-religious country that respects the identity and culture of every group, free of foreign interference.

U.S. strategists have always tried to maintain dominance in the Middle East by divide and conquer tactics of inflaming sectarian, national, ethnic and religious differences.

We oppose Turkish aggression in the region and demand that Turkish and U.S. forces leave Syrian territory where they never were invited by the Syrian government. As Turkish forces move into Syria, the Kurds have opened negotiations with the Syrian government and the Syrian Arab Army moved to defend the border towns where Kurds live.

It is in the interest of the Kurdish and non-Kurdish Syrian people for the US, Turkey and their supported mercenaries from around the world to leave the country. It is only under these circumstances that the Kurdish people and the Syrian government can work to solve the problems of the Kurds in Syria.

As the Syrian government wins back more and more of their territory from foreign aggressors, it is calling for refugees to come home. They are offering amnesty and assistance for all those returning.

In numerous recent tweets, President Trump confirmed that U.S. will not actually leave Syria. They will refocus on the oil producing area of Syria to supposedly "protect the oil."



"We're keeping the oil," "I've always said that — keep the oil. We want to keep the oil, \$45 million a month. Keep the oil. We've secured the oil." Trump asserts that the U.S. will decide what to do with Syria's oil in the future. He has implied that maybe Exxon should be given the oil

Clearly the theft of oil is for U.S. corporate profit and to deprive Syria of the means to rebuild.

U.S. and EU Sanctions keep Syria from importing essential supplies to repair and rebuild Syria. Sanctions also prevent Syrians from importing or exporting oil. Without oil, the country cannot re-build.

The plan for U.S. troops to occupy the oil fields is to prevent Syria from being energy sufficient, as they were before 2011.

The theft of Syrian oil and the continued sanctions on Syria must be condemned by our movement and by the entire world.

We demand:

U.S., NATO, Turkey, Israel and all foreign invading forces out of Syria!  
End the sanctions against Syria!  
U.S. stop the theft of Syrian oil!  
Let the Syrian people go home!

*The United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC)  
November 3, 2019  
www.unacpeace.org*



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from the rest of the world. Access to information exists and people, despite the economic blockade, have a realistic and critical vision of what's happening. They know that they are still facing many problems and the majority of people are willing to participate to solve them.

With the penetration of Western Culture from tourism and foreign students, there are many new influences, like many musical genres, that although they are liked by some of the youth, they don't help in the fight against the objectification and sexualization of women in a traditionally macho country such as Cuba.

But, let me emphasize the actions of Cuban youth towards progress. While in Camagüey, Cuba I had the opportunity to meet a dental technician and her daughter who's a high school student. She would explain to me for long hours about the work of the Union of Young Communists of Cuba (UJC) and their participation in the fight against machismo and for the recovery of many ethical values that have been lost. As commander Fidel once said, "without ethical values there are no revolutionary values".

Women of the UJC are committed to the socialist ideal of humanity and dignity for all. All these principles stayed with me, and I know that it also touched a many of the other doctors that have graduated from Cuba as well.

Those ideas of a revolution that are human and in solidarity with humanity are part of all the doctors that were formed in Cuba. We are part of the army of white coats, therefore we also stand in the fight, either as a doctor giving the patient attention and a dignified human treatment, or as fighters in other fields in which we are needed to defend the Cuban revolution, that is also our revolution.

A part of me stayed on the island and I keep with me more than my doctor's degree - a unique human training for which I will be eternally grateful.

Thank you, Fidel, thank you to the Cuban Revolution, thank you to the Cuban people.

Viene de la página 14

Comunistas de Cuba y su participación en la lucha contra el machismo y la recuperación de muchos valores éticos que se han perdido, por lo que el comandante Fidel una vez dijo "sin valores éticos no hay valores revolucionarios".

Las mujeres de la UJC están decididas a mantener el ideal socialista de humanidad y dignidad y todos estos principios se quedaron conmigo y sé que en gran parte de los médicos graduados de Cuba también.

Las ideas de una revolución humana y solidaria hacen parte de los médicos que hacemos parte del ejército de las batas blancas y por tanto nosotros también nos mantenemos de pie en la lucha, ya sea desde el consultorio médico dándole un trato digno al paciente o desde cualquier otro ámbito en el que tengamos que salir a defender la que también es nuestra revolución.

Una parte de mí se quedó en la isla y yo me quedé no solo con mi grado de médico sino con una formación humana única por la que estaré agradecida eternamente.

Gracias Fidel, gracias revolución cubana, gracias pueblo de Cuba.

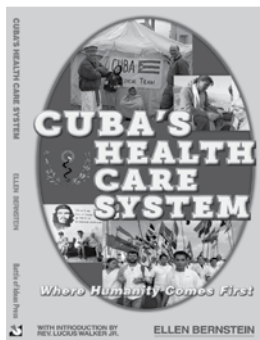
## Battle of Ideas Press

### CUBA'S HEALTH CARE SYSTEM WHERE HUMANITY COMES FIRST

BY ELLEN BERNSTEIN

*"The unfailing dedication of Cuban health care professionals has led to dramatic improvements in quality of life, for millions of people who previously had no other hope of receiving decent medical care. IFCO/Pastors for Peace is pleased to honor the diligent health care professionals of the Cuban health care system. We especially pay tribute to Cuba's national leadership, whose vision of universal health care as a right of every citizen sets an example for the world."*

Ellen Bernstein has served as Associate Director of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO) since 2003. She has been a key staff member of IFCO's project Pastors for Peace, and has been deeply and integrally involved in IFCO's historic work with Cuba.



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# OUR HERITAGE



**Vilma Espín Guillois**

1930 - 2007

*Cuban revolutionary leader and feminist. Founder and Eternal President of the Cuban Federation of Women.*

And all of the peoples of our America, faced with the harassment of imperialism, have stood up and demanded that their governments defend Cuba's right to win its definitive independence.

Independence that is spelled out in the complete abolition of latifundism, in the nationalization of factories, in the Urban Reform which recognizes the right of every man to possess the roof over his head, in growing industrialization, in the struggle against illiteracy and low cultural levels - the root of all superstitions and fanaticism; in the creation finally of a new consciousness. Everyone who visits Cuba can already feel this new consciousness in the atmosphere, this consciousness which has returned to the Cuban the dignity of a free and independent people which can now stand up erect face to face with its friends and enemies, no matter how great be their stature. Now for the first time we can speak out without having our answers dictated to us. On our feet and not on our knees, which is an unworthy posture, not to speak of being highly uncomfortable for carrying on a conversation. And we are ready to converse with the whole world, including the United States, whenever we are both standing or both seated, which is even more comfortable. But as equal to equal and without any attempt to force the agenda on us beforehand.

*Excerpt from speech to Latin American Conference. March, 1961*



*Continued from page 7*

education, promoting employment sources and extension of social security.

In 2012, Venezuela ranked third in the countries with the lowest percentage of poverty in Latin America, according to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) granted in 2012 recognition to Venezuela for reducing hunger and extreme poverty by more than 50 percent.

The Bolivarian Revolution always gave priority to culture as a social and political right of the Venezuelan people. Of the hundreds of examples, I just want to cite the National System of Youth and Children's Orchestras and Choirs of Venezuela, led by maestro José Antonio Abreu, known for systematizing collective instruction and practice in

individualized music, which is currently a model that is replicated worldwide.

Key was also, and keep being, the support for the Afro-descendant community that has always been an integral part of Venezuelan society.

Since 1999, Comandante Chávez focused his efforts on the good living of the Venezuelan people. Under the premise that "The drama

of housing has no solution in capitalism" and that in Venezuela "we will solve the drama of housing with socialism and more socialism", the leader of the Bolivarian Revolution launched in 2011 the Great Housing Mission Venezuela.

In just one year, at the end of 2012, 556 thousand homes had already been delivered to Venezuelans of all socioeconomic levels at very low costs. Today, October 2019, three million homes have been delivered to the same number of families, to Venezuelans who never dreamed a benefit of such magnitude.

In the area of telecommunications also there were great progresses. With the support of China two satellite were launched into space, in 2006 the Simón Bolívar telecommunication one, and in 2012 the remote territorial and environmental observation satellite Francisco de Miranda.

Also, the Alba-1 fiber optic submarine cable, which connects Venezuela with Cuba and Jamaica, boosted access to the Internet and telephone networks in those nations.

### **Cuba and Venezuela Revolutionary Unity**

This is how the leader of Cuba, Fidel Castro, and the leader of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez, joined efforts for the construction of the Bolivarian Alliance of the Peoples of America, ALBA, and accompanied by others leaders of America like Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua, brought an awakening of the people and strengthening of leaders like Evo Morales in Bolivia, Ignacio Lula da Silva in Brazil, Nestor and Cristina Kirchner in Argentina, Rafael Correa in Ecuador, Pepe Mujica in Uruguay, Tabare Vasquez in Paraguay and many others in the Caribbean. The progress was overwhelming and in a 2008 is created the Union of South American Countries UNASUR, in 2010 the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, CELAC, structures that should replace the OAS, without the United States and without Canada.

In June 2005, the PETROCARIBE Energy and Solidarity Cooperation Agreement was created to address the asymmetries in access to energy resources by the Caribbean countries, our brothers who live in the Caribbean start feeling the solidarity from the Bolivarian Revolution and from their brothers in Americas.

Also, in 2005, Comandante Chávez proposed and created TELESUR, an information medium that allowed breaking the monopolies of the great transnationals of North American communication. Also, in that year the Bank of the South is created

### **Hugo Chavez and Nicolás Maduro, A Revolutionary Continuity**

Immediately after the death of Hugo Chavez, the leader of Bolivarian Revolution, ran and in April of 2013 he is elected President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Five years later, in May 2018 he is reelected for a second term 2019-2025.

From the very beginning of his mandate, Nicolás Maduro has faced a brutal campaign against him by the United States, an Empire that in 2015 declared Venezuela "An extraordinary threat to the security of the United States", and attacked with an escalation of asphyxiating sanctions, the financing of the opposition, the promotion and support of violent riots in 2014 and 2017 and an economic war aimed at destroying the currency and to make food and medicine inaccessible to Venezuelans.

In 2017, in an extraordinary democratic political move, Nicolas Maduro called the National Constituent Assembly, which was elected with a Bolivarian majority which stopped the escalation of violence that had encouraged the US-funded opposition.

Given the impossibility of obtaining a majority vote in the OAS to condemn and to apply to Venezuela the Democratic Chart, the United States convinced Latin American right-wing countries to create the Lima Group, which, led by Canada, became an anti-Bolivarian front. In turn, and by force of blackmail, the United States convinced the European Union and other countries to promote the creation of a parallel government and the recognition of a parallel President.

## **Battle of Ideas Press**

### **Revolution & Counter Revolution in Venezuela**



#### **By Alison Bodine**

Writer and researcher on Venezuela. She is a member of the Fire This Time Newspaper Editorial Board and is the coordinator of the Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign. Alison Bodine is an electrical designer based in Vancouver, Canada.

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**Dr. Luis Acuña, Chargé d'Affaires in the Venezuelan Embassy in Ottawa, Canada speaking at the 8th International Che Guevara Conference.**



World-renowned Youth and Children's Orchestras and Choirs of Venezuela

In January 2019, the United States, the Lima Group and other countries recognized as Interim President of Venezuela to a person who proclaimed himself president in a public square and give diplomatic recognition to representatives appointed by this imposter. It is the madness of the century in the diplomatic world.

I must make it clear that in all this time President Nicolás Maduro has made great efforts to guarantee the food and health of Venezuelans. He created the Local Supply and Production Committees, CLAP, which receive inputs and food to be distributed at solidary prices to more than six million families. These Committees every day make efforts in their eagerness to reach the category of communes, they have defeated the capitalist, speculative and hunger market.

President Maduro has also made more than 300 calls for dialogue and peace to sectors of the Venezuelan opposition, but the order of the United States Government is to overthrow Maduro, nothing to do with conversations.

Venezuela requested in 2017 its withdrawal from the Organization of American States (OAS), an instance that from its General Secretariat, guided by the foreign policy of the United States, has assumed a direct interference policy in the internal affairs of Venezuela.

#### Revolution Continues...

I want to conclude saying that Donald Trump's arrival to the Presidency gave continuity to the hostile US policies against Venezuela, following Obamas footsteps. President Trump has been pressuring international banks to prevent any operation related to the Venezuelan State.

The United States has applied a group of unilateral an illegal coercive measure, wrongly

labeled sanctions against the main enterprise in the country PDVSA, directly affecting 95% of the Nation's income. By suffocating PDVSA, the blockade seeks to collapse the social protection system founded by Hugo Chávez in 1998 which I showed you how many benefits brought to our people.

According to some experts, this policy is equal to committing crimes against humanity with serious damages directly affecting the lives of over 30 million Venezuelans.

Besides the economic pressure, the United States has also been boycotting the main navigation routes destined to Venezuelan ports which has complicated the arrival of food, medicine, parts and raw materials. This criminal boycott is aimed directly at collapsing the food distribution program promoted by CLAP that until now guarantees services to 6 million families.

Our people continue developing sources of production and distribution of food that had previously been imported. The blockade imposed by the United States is the toughest challenge that Venezuelan society has had undergo because it dared to create a sovereign, participatory and protagonist model

Today we are stalked, with barricades on all the roads that lead to progress but working to opening up and go through the tremendous difficulties we are facing, backed by peoples of the world like you, who give us their solidarity. We are moving forward with the Diplomacy of Peace on one hand and in the other hand with men and women committed to freedom, with people like you who will never give up no matter how strong the enemy might be.

We say with pride:

Bolivar Vive! Chavez Vive! Venceremos!

*Excerpt from talk at the 8th International Che Guevara Conference in Vancouver, Canada. All subtitles are added by Fire This Time.*

*Continued from page 25*

Fire This Time Newspaper. His address, "Socialism Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow: Continuity of The Cuban Socialist Project" encompassed the theme of the conference and reviewed the reasons why Cuba is an example for those looking to socialism as a way forward towards a better world.

Tamara Hansen closed the conference by reflecting on the inspiration for holding this conference. In a world that is plagued by capitalist crisis and injustice, Cuba stands as a beacon of hope and struggle. Tamara reviewed the two days of the conference and all the very relevant and important topics discussed by more than 200 people who came to the conference.

#### Che Guevara Conference on the Road!

On Tuesday October 29, Dr. Luis Acuña Cedeño and David Aldama Pando spoke to students and professors at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, BC, where they were hosted by the TRU School of Social Work & Human Service. The Venezuelan and Cuban diplomats had a fruitful exchange with students who were eager to ask questions and learn more about what is happening in Cuba and Venezuela today.

A short flight later, and the Che Guevara Conference touched down in Calgary, Alberta. This event was co-organized by Colectivo por la Memoria Salvador Allende, Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association-Calgary-CCFA, and Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba. After Luis Acuña and David Aldama delivered their talks many engaged in a dynamic discussion with the speakers.

Over three days and across three cities, the 8<sup>th</sup> International Che Guevara Conference covered a wide breadth of important topics presented by amazing speakers. This conference was truly a success as it gave people an opportunity to discuss and debate topics aimed at the struggle for a better world, with Cuba as an example. As well during the conference more than 100 books were sold. With participation from activists and organizers to those simply interested and wanting to learn more, this is not just a conference to attend, but a springboard for further developing ideas with Cuba as an inspiration and an example.

**Check out [www.cheguevaraconference.ca](http://www.cheguevaraconference.ca) for information from the conference, and find Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba on Facebook to watch the conference livestream!**



*Continued from page 18*

in mass in the streets until their demands are met. Despite some concessions that Piñera has been forced to give, such as the increases to monthly pensions or the minimum wage, a cabinet shuffle, or agreeing not to raise the transit fare, people are not leaving the streets.

As, Vilma Alvarez, a leader of the Jumbo Union (Jumbo is a chain of grocery stores in Chile) explained in an interview with the Argentinian news agency Pagina 12, the concessions that Piñera has offered to the protestors are not enough. They are, "another way to continue transferring money to the financial sectors and not giving any relief to the population," and "The demand is for Piñera to resign and for a Constituent Assembly to be held." The people of Chile have had enough.

### **Building Solidarity with the People of Chile**

Why should working and oppressed people in Canada support the struggle of people in Chile? For one, the people of Chile are facing a criminal and violent repression of their basic human rights. They are being arrested, tortured, raped and killed because they have taken to the streets in the millions to oppose inequality and austerity and to struggle for their basic dignity.

As Isabel Sanchez stated to Aljazeera news on October 26, "We are of the generation that began our lives in the dictatorship, and we had no youth. We lost friends; we saw people slaughtered. We lived with fear, but now the young people have blossomed, they have lost that fear." It is time also for us, as poor, working and oppressed people in Canada and the United States to recognize the courage and struggle of the people of Chile, stand with them, and echo their voices.

Also, as people living in the United States and Canada, we have the added responsibility to stand in solidarity with the people of Chile because the governments of Canada and the U.S. are supporting the brutality and repression of the Piñera government.

### **Chile Diaspora Supports the Struggle**

In the U.S. and Canada, members of the

Chilean community and their allies have also taken to the streets to call for human rights for people in Chile and denounce the indiscriminate violence waged against protestors by the Piñera government. There have been solidarity protests organized in major cities across the United States, and in Canada, including in Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Vancouver and Victoria. These solidarity actions have not only brought together people from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences, but also many generations of Chileans – from those that fled during the Pinochet dictatorship, to young people from Chile who are in the Canada and the U.S. to study.

In Vancouver, the Chilean diaspora has come together with others living in Canada in a new group named Van4Chile. Van4Chile has organized protests and public demonstrations in solidarity with the people of Chile, including an energetic protest in front of the CBC in downtown Vancouver on November 2, 2019. At this action, more than 200 people, from all walks of life, came together to demand that the CBC cover the protests in Chile. They also called out the government of Canada's complicity in the repression of people's human and democratic rights in Chile. To get involved and follow the work of Van4Chile find them on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @Van4Chile.

### **Don't Boycott Chile**

It is also important to say that within the movement in solidarity with the people of Chile, there has been calls for a boycott against Chilean wine or other products produced in Chile. While this call for boycott may have been made with good intentions, the most important action that we, as peace-loving people in Canada and the U.S. can take for the courageous people of Chile is not to boycott them, but to support them. Perhaps, we must think more critically about what boycotting Chilean wine will do for people in Chile.

Today in Chile the working class and oppressed people are under brutal attack, economically, politically and socially, by the Sebastian

Chile, increasing the austerity, pressure and inequality that they face. And Chile is not only a wine producer! Do we want also to boycott the mining, metal, mineral companies whose products amount to 60%, or \$40 billion, of all of Chile's exports, making up 20 percent of Chile's GDP? The wine industry exports only \$2 billion of the \$70-77 billion of total exports from Chile.

That being said, do we really want the wine industry in Chile go bankrupt? Who is benefiting from that? Working people? Of course not. Do we want workers and people who work in wine industry to lose their jobs, or do we want to help the capitalist class to find excuses to lay-off workers and impose downsizing and overtime? Aren't these the very policies of neoliberalism that Chilean people, and we, are opposing? Isn't this shooting ourselves in the foot?

Furthermore, it is also important to consider the alternative – if people around the world are asked to boycott Chilean wine because the government of Chile is reactionary – is drinking wine from the U.S., Canada, France, Spain, England, Australia, Italy, or Germany, who are responsible for the slaughter of tens of millions of people around the world (including Chile's coup September 11, 1973), really any better? The difference is that Chile is an oppressed country, a third-world country. Chile is not an imperialist country with vast finances and industrial resources. Chile as a country struggles within the world market which is overwhelmingly dominated by imperialist countries and their corporations (including wine companies).

Applying any given tactic to any struggle could be very damaging to the struggle itself if it is not well thought out. In the history of the struggle for a better world, a boycott movement has never been the most effective way to build solidarity. The only effective boycott movement was one that was demanded by the people within the country being boycotted, and this was the successful boycott movement against apartheid South Africa.

If we can take all the energy that could go into a boycott, and instead use it to raise sympathy and solidarity with Chilean people in Canada and the U.S. through street actions, petitioning, educational events, and more, our impact will be much greater.

As poor, working and oppressed people in Canada/U.S., and around the world we must raise the question of human rights, torture, rape, execution, repression and yes, neoliberalism and austerity measures in Chile. We need to expose the atrocities of Piñera, and the complicity of governments like the U.S. and Canada in this brutality.

Sebastian Piñera must go!

*Follow Alison Bodine on Twitter: @Alisoncolette*



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Piñera government and imperialist exploitation. So, it is possible that a boycott that targets Chile's economy has the potential to damage their movement and to reinforce the austerity which they are already living under. Any damage to the economy of Chile will surely be passed on from Chile's richest families and capitalist class (they have billion dollars to survive) to poor and working people in

# GET UP. STAND UP. STAND UP FOR YOUR RIGHTS! OUR RIGHTS ARE DEFENDED ON THE STREETS, NOT IN BALLOT BOXES!

By Janine Solanki

On October 15, the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 held their 224<sup>th</sup> bi-weekly protest action at Lougheed Town Center Skytrain Station in Burnaby, BC. With the federal election just a few days away on October 21, commuters who stopped to talk to organizers had elections at top of mind. If we think back to the 2015 election, the controversial and widely protested Bill C-51 was an election issue, with Justin Trudeau elected as Prime Minister on promises to amend and fix the bill. Fast forward to today - Bill C-51 still stands, and the Trudeau government's idea of "fixing" the bill is the recently passed Bill C-59, which not only doesn't solve Bill C-51 but infringes further on our human and democratic rights! Organizers at the October 15 action made the point that the 2019 federal election had no mention of Bill C-51 or C-59 by any of the major parties, all of whom have no interest in defending the rights of poor and working people in Canada.

## What are Bill C-51 and C-59?

Passed under the Conservative Harper government and supported by Liberals, Bill C-51 was introduced as an anti-terrorism bill, using scare tactics to cover its true purpose of cutting back human and democratic rights. The bill gave a vague definition to terrorism, lending itself to further Islamophobia and applicable for use against climate activists and striking union members, to give a few examples. The bill gave sweeping powers to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), including the chilling and undefined powers of "disruption" and ability to violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Government agencies were given the power to share your personal information and "no-fly lists" were expanded, violating our freedoms and privacy.

Bill C-59 did not fix Bill C-51, in fact



Picket at Lougheed Station, Oct 15, 2019

it went further to create an even worse cyber surveillance regime. Furthermore, just one week after Bill C-59 was passed in June 2019, the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association (BCCCLA) published thousands of pages of heavily-redacted documents disclosed by CSIS that suggest the agency spied on the peaceful protest and organizing activities of Indigenous groups and environmentalists who were opposed to pipeline expansion - and actively shared and reviewed classified information with oil and gas corporation representatives.

## Stand up for your rights!

It's clear that it is up to poor and working people to defend the rights that the government of Canada has attacked. Since Bill C-51 was originally introduced, the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 has been consistently organizing and protesting across Metro Vancouver, demanding that Bill C-51 and now Bill C-59 be repealed. The October 15 action demonstrated the commitment of activists to continue standing up in defense of our rights, as it marked the 224<sup>th</sup> time activists have come out to the streets with picket signs and banners reading "repeal Bill C-51 and C-59!" The interest of passersby to sign petitions and talk to organizers also tells us that people in Canada are concerned about their rights being stripped away! The Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 encourages more people to join in the protests, which can be found at [www.repealbillc51.org](http://www.repealbillc51.org) or on Facebook and Twitter @stopbillc51

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**RETURN GUANTANAMO TO CUBA!**

**THURSDAY  
November 7<sup>th</sup> ALL DAY**

VANCOUVER, CANADA

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CAMPAIGN FOR CUBA

"THE WORLD UNITED AGAINST THE BLOCKADE"

→ → **USE HASHTAGS: #SOMOSCUBA**

#UNBLOCKCUBA #NOMASBLOQUEO

**SUNDAY  
NOVEMBER 17<sup>th</sup>**

**4 PM**

**U.S. CONSULATE**

1075 W. PENDER ST. - VANCOUVER, CANADA

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**WWW.VANCUBAVSBLOCKADE.ORG**



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**FRIDAY  
NOVEMBER 15  
2019 VANCOUVER**

**NO WAR**

All human beings are in truth, like body parts,  
akin; All in creation share one origin.  
When fate allots a member pangs and pain,  
No ease for other member then remains.  
Unperturbed by others' grief  
You are not worthy to be called human.  
Saadi Shirazi, 1210, Shiraz, Iran

**RALLY &  
PETITION DRIVE**

**5:00 PM  
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ROBSON & HOWE**

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FOR PEACE**

**7:30 PM  
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**WWW.MAWOVANCOUVER.ORG  
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**\*monthly protest\***

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**friday  
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