

# PEOPLE'S WORLD

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## More than regrets needed after D.C. shooting

By John Wojcik



**T**welve people were killed at the Washington Navy Yard last week by gunman Aaron Alexis, in yet another go-around of mass killing, followed by lamentation by elected officials, followed by lack of action on gun control or anything else. Police shot and killed Alexis during a gun battle inside the building.

Shots were fired at the Defense Department facility within sight of the Capitol in a city whose mayor, Democrat Vincent Gray, had said after the Newtown killings that “nothing like this could ever happen in Washington D.C.”

Senators who couldn't bring themselves to vote even for minimal background checks were on lockdown only a few blocks away Monday, unable to leave or enter their own offices - blocked by military vehicles that surrounded the Capitol.

West Virginia's Democratic Senator Joe Manchin already announced that same day that there were still not enough votes to get his bill passed and not one lawmaker opposed to gun control announced any change in his or her position. Just hours before the shooting, recall elections in Colorado, bought and paid for by the NRA, cost two Democratic lawmakers their congressional seats. Their crime was that earlier this year they supported tighter gun controls.

Proponents of gun control are asking how

many more mass killings will have to happen before someone decides to change his or her vote.

It's not just inaction on gun control that is seen as the culprit in this latest horror show, though. Washington D.C. Mayor Gray is already questioning whether congressional inaction on the sequester has contributed to the mass killing.

Gray is saying that sequestration - the law that cemented these automatic budget cuts across the board into federal agencies - may have re-

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sulted in tightening security funds that otherwise would have been spent to keep the Naval Yards more secure. The DOD has had, under sequestration, to cut its budget by \$37 billion. While there are certainly \$37 billion worth of things that Defense could cut, Mayor Gray, and just about every-

**How many more mass killings will have to happen before someone decides to change his or her vote?**

one else, knows that the cuts are not going to be aimed first at wealthy defense contractors.

Gray was also concerned about how “someone with a record as checkered as this man could conceivably get clearance to be able to get on the base.” Missouri Sen. Claire McCaskill, a Democrat, wanted to know to what extent the private contractor for which Alexis worked might bear responsibility.

The Pentagon says it is reviewing security practices around the world - hopefully the review will take a close look at the practice of privatizing and hiring contractors to do what U.S. troops and government employees used to do.

Then there is the issue of mental health and the availability of mental health care in this country.

Rhode Island police had apparently warned the U.S. Navy last month that Alexis had called to tell them he was “hearing voices” while on business in Newport. They turned over a copy of their report to the Navy.

Alexis had also been arrested twice, in 2004 and again in 2010 for illegally firing guns.

Background checks the FBI relied on cleared Alexis anyway for entry, with his weapons, into the Navy Yard. Here again, many background checks the government relies upon these days are conducted by private contractors. “I want to know if this background check was done by a private contractor,” McCaskill said to the press.

One thing is clear so far: A number of things came together to contribute to this latest mass shooting. Many of those factors - lack of meaningful gun laws, availability, and quality of mental health care, sequester cuts and widespread use of private contractors in place of government workers - must be dealt with and they must be dealt with soon.

Alexis fired down from a fourth floor atrium into a cafeteria where workers were having breakfast. Some barricaded themselves in conference rooms, others escaped the building altogether. But, 12 ended up paying the ultimate price for failure to deal with the problems mentioned.



**John Wojcik co-edits Peoplesworld.org.**

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## **What does the UN Syria report really say?**

By PW Editorial Board

**U**nited Nations weapons inspectors, in their long-awaited report on the alleged Aug. 21 chemical weapons attacks in the Damascus area, did not determine who perpetrated the attacks. The team, headed by Ake Sellstrom of Sweden, will return to Syria soon, possibly next week, to continue their investigations, including at other sites where chemical weapons were allegedly used.

Contrary to what headlines in major U.S. media have implied, the UN inspectors made no mention or suggestion of who might have carried out the Aug. 21 attacks. What they said was this: “the conclusion is that chemical weapons were used” in the Ghouta area of Damascus “against civilians, including children, on a relatively large scale.” They also said they had found “clear and convincing evidence that surface-to-surface rockets containing the nerve agent Sarin were used.” (According to Wikipedia, surface-to-surface rockets may be fired from hand-held or vehicle-mounted devices, or from fixed installations.)

What some U.S. media have done is state a conclusion that they, or certain people they have consulted, have drawn about who the guilty party is. For example, the New York Times headlined a Sept. 17 article: “U.N. Data on Gas Attack Point to Assad’s Top Forces.” However the article itself deals solely with conjecture about rocket trajectories at two out of the five sites the weapons inspectors visited. It may well be that further investigation finds definitive evidence the Syrian government indeed carried out the attacks. But as of now, the case is not closed. Nick Brown, editor-in-chief of the British IHS Jane’s International Defense Review, said that though the UN report appears to prove that sarin was used in significant quantities in Syria, “I have not personally seen any compelling data that proves beyond doubt who the weapons were used by. Placing Syria’s chemical weapons under international control will be a positive step forward. It must be matched by a peace conference and a negotiated settlement.

**Placing Syria’s chemical weapons under international control will be a positive step forward.**

# Occupy Wall Street stages 2nd anniversary march

By Gabe Falsetta

Occupy Wall Street, the movement that coined the term for and dramatized the plight of the the overwhelming majority (the 99 percent) of Americans, was back on the streets here yesterday, marking the second anniversary of its birth.

The demonstration came on the heels of a primary electon in which overwheming majorities of voters cast their ballorts for candidates who rejected the big business poltics of Republican Mayor Bloomberg.

Progressives look forward to a victory in the general election by Bill Di Blassio, the winner of the Democatic primary and a progressive majority on the City Council - putting an end to what they see as having been 20 years of government in the interest of the rich and powerful in New York.

Among the demonstrators were members of the Transit Workers Union, Local 100, the New York State Nurses Adssociation and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 3.

“For the last two years we have tried to negotiate a contact with the MTA,” said David Dowling, a train operator and chief of staff of Local 100. “Gov. Cuomo has insisted that they maintain a position of three-year wage freeze and pay \$5,000 per member per year for health care; we’ve said ‘no,’ we refuse to make those concessions.



“The answer is simple,” Dowling added. “Every year the Transit Authority pays \$100 million dollars to Wall Street banks in what is known as an interest rate swap. Renegotiate your interest rate swaps, insist that they sit down and renegotiate the swaps that were set before the financial crisis.”

As the march followed the planned route, chants and cheers could be heard for blocks: “The banks were bailed out, we were sold out,” and “Restore the Robin Hood Tax,” the stock transfer tax that was eliminated in 1977 when Democrat Abraham Beame was mayor. A 0.2 percent tax on commodity futures trades and 0.25 percent on stock trades would raise millions of dollars.

Maria Roca, another demonstrator, said, “I’m here because I’m a patient. Brooklyn is the fastest growing borough and we have had the largest number of hospital closures, most of them because of the profit that can be made from off their real estate values. It doesn’t make sense economically long term, if you would want a world-class city as we are always touting the world that we are, without world-class health care.”

**The march came on the heels of an election that rejected the big business poltics of Mayor Bloomberg.**

## Detroit bankruptcy coming to your city next?

By John Rummel

**D**etroit is the canary in the coalmine, warned speakers at a public forum on the city's bankruptcy, held at Detroit's Fellowship Chapel. Sponsored by Congressman John Conyers Jr., the event brought together an impressive 14-member panel of local and national leaders to discuss, with input from an overflow crowd, the ramifications of the recent bankruptcy filing by appointed Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr.

Moderating the panel was Georgetown University professor Michael Eric Dyson. Dyson predicted that what happens here will affect Philadelphia, Atlanta, Chicago, and 125 other cities - and even states - from coast to coast that are facing financial stress. The entire nation is looking at Detroit and asking, will they be forced to take the same path, said Dyson.

"Forced" is the key word. Conyers said never in U.S. history has an emergency manager, not elected by voters, opted to seek bankruptcy for a city. Conyers said Orr's constitutional authority to act on the city's behalf is "very much in doubt" and, to make matters worse, the action was taken with "precious little public discussion and no accountability."

The "pillaging" of Detroit is part of a national right-wing agenda, said Rev. Dr. Wendell Anthony. Anthony said Republicans are intent on blocking any federal help for cities in distress. Sen. Lindsey Graham even proposes extreme legislation forbidding federal funds for cities in distress.

## Resolución 5 en la convención de la AFL-CIO

Por AFL-CIO

**H**areth Andrade-Ayala nunca se imaginó que el video de su poema se convertiría en uno de los más exitosos del canal de You Tube de la AFL-CIO.

"Para mi es maravilloso ver que la gente está viéndolo a través de todo el país", dijo Hareth, una Soñadora (DREAMer) que reside en Virginia junto con su familia. "Incluso he recibido mensajes de personas de diferentes países del mundo apoyándome en esta lucha".

En este video Hareth recita su poema - el cual habla sobre la unidad familiar, las contribuciones de los inmigrantes y la necesidad de una reforma migratoria con una vía a la ciudadanía - al frente de más de un millar de personas que asistieron a la convención cuatrienal de la AFL-CIO que se llevó a cabo durante la segunda semana de septiembre en el Centro de Convenciones de Los Ángeles, California.

"Cuando escribí este poema pensé en mi familia, y que como le podía contar a la gente sobre nuestra historia, sobre la situación de mi padre que se encuentra luchando para no ser deportado," dijo Hareth, quien previamente había recitado su poema durante un evento para apoyar la ciudadanía al frente de importantes líderes políticos y del movimiento laboral.

Pero una de las partes más conmovedoras de este video ocurre justo antes de que Hareth comience a re-

citar su poema, en el momento cuando ella se dirige a la audiencia para hacer una petición:

"Unidos somos más fuertes. Así que les voy a pedir que se paren si es que quieren decirle al Presidente Obama que detenga la deportación de mi padre".

En ese instante todos los asistentes - delegados de los sindicatos afiliados a la AFL-CIO, invitados, aliados y socios comunitarios -- se pararon y comenzaron a aplaudir con todas sus fuerzas y con solidaridad.

"Fue increíble ver a más de un millar de personas pararse para expresar su apoyo por mi padre y por la reforma migratoria", señaló Hareth. "Solo dije lo que me salió de mi corazón. Definitivamente no esperaba el aplauso de la unidad. Me sentí alegre, porque ese aplauso fue para mi papá".

Al siguiente día todos los delegados de los sindicatos afiliados a la AFL-CIO votaron unánimemente por aclamación para aprobar la Resolución 4, la cual reafirma el compromiso del movimiento laboral para apoyar una reforma migratoria inclusiva que incluya una vía a la ciudadanía y protecciones laborales para todos los trabajadores.

Hareth no pudo quedarse para ver este histórico momento debido a que tuvo que regresar al área de Washington, DC, para apoyar a su padre durante su audiencia de inmigración.

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