

PEOPLE'S WORLD

www.peoplesworld.org

April 21, 2012

99% Spring blooming nationwide

By Mark Gruenberg
and John Wojcik

Activists nationwide are ensuring that the 99% Spring is in full bloom. They gathered and trained the week of April 9-15 - and planned “non-violent direct action” they say will help them take back the nation for the 99%.

The mark of the labor movement was evident in all the activity, with the Communications Workers, the Steelworkers, Unite Here, the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees, the Service Employees, the American Federation of Government Employees and the Teamsters, handling everything from training activists in union halls and churches to getting permits for marches and demonstrations outside the offices of big banks and other corporations.

“This is the 99% Spring for workers’ rights and economic justice,” Communications Workers President Larry Cohen told an Economic Policy Institute session in the nation’s capital on April 11. “There are more than 60,000 people being trained at sites around the country.”

Organizers of the movement had set a goal of training 100,000 activists to go out in the streets and campaign peacefully for retaking the nation back for the “99%,” adopting the symbol for the rest of the country that was first popularized by Occupy Wall Street.

“We have a narrative about the economy and about the collapse of democracy, where billionaires control the political process. It fits with economic justice and the issues and the fact of virtually no collective bargaining rights” in the private sector, Cohen added.



Leading banks and corporations are among the targets of the non-violent demonstrations, not just on April 15 but beyond.

There were plans, for example, for many “tax days of action,” among them a major event at the Fairfield, Conn. Headquarters of General Electric, a company that has paid no federal taxes for several years and has actually received tax rebates instead.

In Pittsburgh on April 16, activists demanded that the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, the area’s largest employer, pay its fair share of taxes. “They’re our number one tax dodger,”

T H I S W E E K :

- **99% Spring blooming nationwide**
- **Editorial: 2012 election: Building a new foundation**
- **After 44 days, killer of Trayvon Martin charged**
- **Mayor opposes anti-LGBT discrimination**
- **Los sindicatos en marcha hacia Río+20**

READ MORE NEWS AND OPINION DAILY AT WWW.PEOPLESWORLD.ORG

an area activist said. “We give UPMC special tax breaks with the idea that they invest in our com-

The mark of the labor movement was evident in all the activity.

munity. Yet they've taken the millions we give them each year and spent their huge profits on CEO pay and building hospitals in the affluent suburbs while closing them in working-class communities."

Also, in the Bronx, People's Moratorium planned to stage a "Singing Foreclosure Auction Blockade" at the state Supreme Court. "We're calling for an end to the suffering caused by the nation's largest banks," activists said.

Wells Fargo was the target in several locations, including Spokane, Wash. Activists there demanded that Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, R-Wash., vote to end tax breaks that gave the big bank \$21 billion over the last three years.

"Things should never have reached this point," the 99% Spring Coalition said in their mission statement. "Every day, the American Dream seems a little farther away. More of our grandparents are being thrown from their homes. Our mothers and fathers can't retire because their pension funds tanked. Our brothers and sisters are burdened by student loan debt. For our chil-

dren, budget cuts resulted in crumbling schools, skyrocketing class sizes, and teachers denied the supports they need to do their best.

"In recent years, millions of jobs have been destroyed, homes foreclosed, and an unconscionable number of children live in poverty.

"And worst of all: This is no accident. It is a result of rampant greed - deliberate manipulation of our democracy and our economy by a tiny minority in the 1%, by those who amass ever more wealth and power at our expense.

"We are at a crossroads as a country. We have a choice to make: Greater wealth for a few or opportunity for many. Tax breaks for the richest or a fair shot for the rest of us. A government that can be bought by the highest bidder, or a democracy that is truly of the people, by the people, and for the people.

"The choice is in our hands. This spring, we will act on that choice."



John Wojcik is People's World Labor Editor.

2012 election: Building a new foundation

By PW Editorial Board

The class struggle, rather than stopping during an election, actually intensifies. In this election the most reactionary section of the 1 percent is making a big push to advance its political agenda. When we consider this and the fact that not all progressive forces who could have been involved in 2010 were involved, we see the urgency of bringing all progressive forces into motion in 2012.

Obama has made some bad policy moves, but he does not see eye to eye with the Republican policy, and most of the 1 percent wants the first African American president defeated in the worst way. This battle is bigger than Obama the candidate. The issues involved are critical to the fight for democracy and advancing the class struggle.

The AFL-CIO understands what's at stake. Even though they have disagreements with some of Obama's policies, they are jumping into this election with both feet. Their recent announcement that they would put 400,000 union members in the field going door-to-door talking to working families all across the country is crucial to defeating the right danger in November. This massive grassroots crusade to convince working families to go to the polls and vote their class interest is just what is needed. Four hundred thousand

union workers going door-to-door educating and organizing for a big vote and talking face-to-face with millions of working and middle-class families can have a tremendous impact. Door-to-door and face-to-face they will have to challenge racist and anti-working-class ideas that are fostered by the extreme right.

The national civil rights organizations also understand what is at stake. The black vote could be over 80 percent for Obama and against the Republicans. Latinos and youth and students should be a landslide for the president too. But for these things to happen, work must be done.

Recently, hundreds of thousands all across the country have taken to the streets to protest the cold-blooded murder of Trayvon Martin. They forced the final arrest and indictment of Zimmerman.

This was a huge victory and at the press conference one of the speakers connected justice for Trayvon with a call for voter registration. This is what is needed if victory is to be achieved in November.

Victory will be ours but we must lay the foundation for it and this cannot be done through propaganda and agitation alone. It requires the mobilization and organization of millions.

This is what is needed if victory is to be achieved in November.

After 44 days, killer of Trayvon Martin charged

By Teresa Albano

Forty-four days after 17-year-old Trayvon Martin was gunned down while walking to his father's home in Sanford, Fla., his killer, George Zimmerman, has finally been charged with second-degree murder. Florida special prosecutor Angela B. Corey announced the charge April 11.

Zimmerman, who has claimed the killing of the unarmed teen was in self-defense, appeared briefly in court today. The judge found "probable cause" and ordered Zimmerman to be held pending a May 29 formal arraignment.

Florida's pro-vigilante Stand Your Ground law enables Zimmerman's self-defense claim. A judge could dismiss the charge if prosecutors fail to show Zimmerman was the aggressor.

After Sanford police failed to arrest or charge Zimmerman, Martin's family appealed to the public with a petition on change.org, which went viral, collecting more than two million signatures.

The killing and failure to charge Zimmerman has been widely seen as an example of racism and racial profiling. Zimmerman, who is a white Hispanic, allegedly profiled Martin because he was African American.

"We simply wanted an arrest," Martin's mother Sybrina Fulton said. "We wanted nothing more, nothing less, we just wanted an arrest, and we got it and I say thank you, thank you, God, thank you, Jesus."

It was Fulton's and the entire Martin family's love and determination that sparked a mass movement for decency and justice for Trayvon.

Tracy Martin said the multiracial movement for justice, of which the family has found itself the center, is just the beginning.

"We got a long way to go, and we have faith," he said.

"We will continue to walk by faith. We will continue to hold hands on this journey, white,



black, Hispanic, Latino, we will march and march until the right thing is done."

The Martin's family tragedy and subsequent struggle has awakened a nationwide anti-racist movement challenging the killings of unarmed young black men, in many cases by police officers, that plagues the country.

As charges were announced, NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg and the NAACP joined forces to challenge National Rifle Association-inspired Stand Your Ground laws in Florida and the other 24 states where they exist.

"In reality, the NRA's leaders weren't interested in public safety but in promoting a culture where people take the law into their own hands and face no consequences for it. Let's call it by its real name - vigilantism."

The NRA had a powerful ally in its campaign to promote "vigilantism." The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a far-right, well-funded group that aims to pass anti-union, anti-environmental and other reactionary legislation in state legislatures, is also behind the "shoot first" laws, according to ColorofChange.org.

The group's executive director, Rashad Robinson, said the National Rifle Association and ALEC "exported Florida's Stand Your Ground law to more than 20 states across the country, jeopardizing the safety of Americans nationwide."

The Martin family tragedy and subsequent struggle has awakened a nationwide anti-racist movement.

Mayor opposes anti-LGBT discrimination

By Blake Deppe

Mayor Greg Stanton, D-Phoenix, is looking to update the Arizona city's outdated laws regarding human rights protections by drafting an ordinance that would outlaw discrimination against the LGBT community. This development comes after a recent example of such prejudice, in which a lesbian couple was kicked out of a restaurant.

The incident in question occurred in the city's downtown Sheraton Hotel, specifically in its District American Kitchen and Wine Bar. There, the bar's manager forced the couple to leave after a customer reportedly saw them kissing and complained. The hotel now faces a possible boycott by the gay community, reports the LGBTQ Nation.

To exacerbate the situation, attorneys for the couple notified them that they had no grounds for a lawsuit due to the city's lack of LGBT anti-discrimination laws.

Stanton is a member of "Mayors for the Freedom to Marry" - a bipartisan coalition of over 200 mayors who have publicly stated their support for LGBT marriage equality.

Stanton appointed an openly gay teenager as a "youth and diversity liaison;" that teen, Caleb Laieski, 17, spent a few weeks in Washington in 2011 to lobby Congress to make schools safer the LGBT community.

Laieski founded the organization Gays and Lesbians United Against Discrimination, successfully petitioned his former school district to add sexual orientation to their list of protections, and testified in support of the Arizona Safe Schools Act and SB 1462, both of which are directed toward putting an end to bullying.

"I want Phoenix youth to have a voice in my office," said Stanton. "I want our students to be able to concentrate on education for future success, not be bullied. All our kids deserve to live their lives."

Los sindicatos en marcha hacia Río+20

Por International Trade Union Confederation

Qué es Río+20? La Conferencia de las Naciones Unidas sobre el Desarrollo Sostenible (también conocida como Río+20) se desarrollará durante tres días, del 20 al 22 de junio de 2012. Se pedirá a los líderes mundiales que reafirmen sus compromisos en relación con la sostenibilidad y debatirán cuestiones como la economía verde, el marco institucional del desarrollo sostenible y temas como empleo, alimentación y energía, entre otros.

Río+20 estará acompañado por múltiples eventos (la Cumbre de los Pueblos, la Asamblea Sindical sobre Trabajo y Medio Ambiente, etc.). Las propuestas sindicales serán presentadas por una amplia delegación sindical nacional e internacional.

¿Por qué es Río+20 importante para los sindicatos?

Estamos convencidos de que esta cumbre debe convertirse en un evento donde nuestras presiones sobre los líderes mundiales para que emprendan una vía distinta, una vía hacia un modelo económico auténticamente sostenible, deberán ser más fuertes que nunca.

Pedimos puestos de trabajo, empleos verdes y trabajo decente. Queremos garantías respecto al piso de protección social para toda la población mundial, con la debida financiación para su implementación y reforzar la protección social en los países más pobres. Queremos además que la codicia del sector financiero contribuya a financiar la sostenibilidad por medio de una tasa sobre las transacciones financieras (TTF).

Los sindicatos tienen tres demandas

Los Empleos Verdes

Un cambio en las políticas públicas, que garantice la creación de más empleos decentes mediante inversión en "economía verde" respetuosa del medio ambiente, y la transformación de millones de puestos de trabajo más en empleos sostenibles. Es lo que se denomina Empleos Verdes.

El Piso de Protección Social

El compromiso de proporcionar protección social a todos los trabajadores y trabajadoras, asegurarse de que los trabajadores/as y sus familias estén protegidos ante las múltiples crisis medioambientales y económicas que deben afrontar. Es lo que denominamos el Piso de Protección Social.

Tasa sobre las Transacciones Financieras

Una Tasa sobre las Transacciones Financieras, que aportaría las reservas necesarias para financiar el desarrollo y la lucha contra el cambio climático, además de contribuir a la reforma del sistema financiero que fue el principal causante de la crisis.

20 demandas clave de los sindicatos con respecto al borrador cero para Río+20.

Otras demandas (los principios para una economía verde, derechos laborales, fiscalidad, etc) están disponibles aquí: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/rio-20-los-sindicatos-presentan.html>

El mundo debe actuar YA para lograr un futuro más sostenible, donde ni los trabajadores y trabajadoras, ni el planeta y sus recursos, sean explotados.