

# PEOPLE'S WORLD

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## Suicide sweeping Indian Country is genocide

By Albert Bender

I must amplify on a report that appeared in People's World's column, This Week In Indigenous News. The reference opened up a subject, a matter of basic survival that needs to be addressed by all of America. This is the agonizing issue of suicide among American Indian youth, particularly on the Northern Plains. There have been five youth suicides on the Pine Ridge Indian reservation in South Dakota since December, and many other attempted suicides. The suicide attempts reportedly number 103 in this timeframe. The suicide rate of Native young people on the reservations is the highest in the Western Hemisphere.

In February, Oglala Sioux President John Yellow Bird Steele declared a state of emergency because of the youth suicides. Reservation spokespersons at Pine Ridge cite poverty as a major factor for the suicides. All of the other cited reasons are directly the spinoffs of poverty such as family dysfunction, drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, emotional and physical neglect of the young.

Hideous racism is also a major factor in this crisis. To cite an example: A 12-year-old victim of suicide had been among a group of young Indian females on an overnight trip to Rapid City, S.D. While there, the group overheard a white woman



call them "filthy Indians" as they passed through a hotel lobby. Commenting on this incident a long-time Lakota activist said, "Our kids today just want to die because they are just sick of all this oppression." Poverty and racism is proving to be a deadly combination for Indian young people.

The unemployment rate on Pine Ridge is still 80-90 percent. In particular, these young people need jobs. The federal government has it within its power to do so, with jobs programs, but so far

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just looks the other way.

The alcoholism rate is said to hover at 80 percent. Life expectancy on Pine Ridge is the lowest in the entire United States and is the second lowest in the entire Western Hemisphere (only Haiti has a lower life expectancy).

**Of the 371 treaties signed by the U.S. government with American Indian nations, all have been broken.**

The intergenerational trauma felt by all Native people, but particularly by Indian youth, is the result of the historical policy of genocide exemplified by the endless massacres, the forced removals and military campaigns that continued to the end of the 19th century, culminating in the Wounded Knee Massacre. Couple this with the present-day racism most openly shown in the outrageous treatment of Lakota children at a January hockey game in Rapid City, which only reinforces intergenerational trauma, and we have all the ingredients for anger, hopelessness and despair that results in suicide.

These young people are hanging themselves with the rope of joblessness, the rope of racism, the rope of despair, the rope of low self-esteem.

As bad as some would paint reservations, there is one thing from which children are shielded there - that is the specter of malevolent racism. On reservations, Indian children don't think of themselves as minorities for obvious reasons. There is no racial profiling for obvious reasons. Again, as bad as reservations are painted from cold statistics, this writer has always felt a real

sense of security and comfort, not having to be concerned about daily racism, living on reservations.

From Alaska to Arizona, tribes near and far have declared states of emergency.

The historical trauma felt by Native youth is fueled by generational grief at the loss of land, language and tradition. Researchers have concluded that large numbers of Indian adolescents think daily of historic sorrows. Of the 371 treaties signed by the U.S. government with American Indian nations, all have been broken. Needless to say, the treaties guaranteed, but did not adequately deliver, health care, education and housing. There must be an end to this poverty and racist-spawned crisis. When will the federal government take action to make a difference in this huge, ongoing disaster?



**Albert Bender is a freelance reporter.**

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## **Cuban Ebola team nominated for Nobel Peace Prize**

**By Emile Schepers**

**T**he Annual Conference of Norwegian Trade Unions, meeting in Trondheim, Norway, voted unanimously in February to nominate Cuba's Henry Reeve Brigade of internationalist health care workers for the Nobel Peace Prize.

The Henry Reeve Brigade, named for a U.S. born medical doctor who participated in Cuba's war of independence from Spain in the 19th century, and which was formed in 2005, consists of doctors, nurses and other health care workers who volunteer to provide care in dangerous and unusual emergency situations around the world.

When the Ebola outbreak began in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone in West Africa last year, 461 members of the brigade, trained by the Pedro Kouri Institute of Tropical Medicine in Havana, were quickly sent out to do the extremely dangerous direct face to face work with patients in a region where health care facilities and even basic infrastructure such as roads and communications systems are minimal.

Cuba's role, far out of proportion to the countries small size and modest material resources, has been widely praised worldwide, including by the World Health Organization.

The Henry Reeve Brigade is only a small part of Cuba's vast system of medical solidarity help to scores of poorer countries.

The Ebola epidemic has infected at least 22,000 people in the three countries, of whom 9,000 have died. At least one of the Cuban Reeve Brigade participants, Dr. Felix Baez, came down with the disease, but has survived. One Cuban administrator died, but of malaria, not Ebola. Currently the epidemic has been beaten down, but could flare up again, either in that area or somewhere else.

Surely there are few entities that are more deserving of the Nobel Peace Prize nomination!

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# Republicans lying about train safety funding

By John Wojcik

**B**y mid-day Thursday, at least seven people were dead with more than 200 injured, in the wake of Tuesday's Amtrak train derailment in Philadelphia.

Perhaps the least-publicized part of the first findings announced by Robert Sumwalt, the lead investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board, was where he told national media that he was certain the tragedy would have been avoided had Positive Train Control been in place along the stretch of track from which the train had derailed.

"Based on what we know right now," Sumwalt told reporters, cameramen and women, and television anchors from all across America, "we feel that had such a system been installed on this section of the track, this accident would not have occurred." Yet, the focus of media coverage for the rest of the day was on the 106-mile-per-hour speed that the train was traveling, and on whether the engineer was responsible for the tragedy.

Positive Train Control (PTC), which is in place along other parts of Amtrak's Northeast Corridor, involves using GPS to slow a train for any reason that causes it to breach a particular speed limit on a particular stretch of track, including a driver emergency, a driver mistake, a switch left in the wrong position, hijacking, or a major storm. The PTC system was not in place along the track in Philadelphia.



Seven years ago, the U.S. Congress passed the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008, requiring railroad operators to have PTC in place everywhere by December 2015.

Already existing budget cuts have slowed Amtrak's ability to comply with that mandate.

The House Appropriations Committee voted entirely along party lines to cut 20 percent of Amtrak's budget. House Ways and Means Chairman Paul Ryan lied when, after that, he said that Congress had already funded implementing the safety system it had mandated in 2008.

He went on Fox TV saying that Congress should not "rush to judgement and try doubling the size of government programs" in response to what he said was human error.

In addition to finally admitting that the funds had not been made available to Amtrak, Ryan also did not mention that the funds that are still in the pipeline do not include money that Amtrak had requested precisely for installation of the PTC system. Further underlining the falsehood of Ryan's claims is the filing only two weeks ago of a bill in the Senate, delaying the PTC implementation deadline from December 2015 to 2020. Were Ryan's claims true, such a filing would have been entirely unnecessary.

**The Republicans in Congress voted to slash yet another \$250 million from Amtrak's funding.**

## Labor launches hotline for millions buried under student debt

Special to Peoplesworld.org

**M**ore than 40 million Americans are buried under a \$1.3 trillion mountain of student loan debt but have limited resources and lack affordable assistance to help repay their loans.

To help these borrowers manage their debt, apply for government programs, and enforce their legal rights, a group of labor unions, consumer advocacy, youth and student debt relief organizations are creating a free three-day hotline.

The hotline will operate as a triage system to inform borrowers of what their available options are and provide resources such as referrals to student loan attorneys and vetted credit counselors.

Only 25 percent of eligible borrowers have taken advantage of federal resources to get favorable loan repayment options and far too many fall prey to predatory debt relief companies and scams. Driven by the belief that no one should pay for FREE government services, the coalition created The Borrowers Hotline to help all student loan borrowers who are in desperate need of assistance.

The groups behind the hotline are also urging the Department of Education to create a system to help borrowers better navigate the many programs that are available to help.

## La Europa neoliberal y la izquierda alternativa

Jordi Córdoba

**E**s esta la única Europa posible? ¿La Europa de los recortes del incipiente estado del bienestar? ¿La Europa que quita competencias a los gobiernos y a los parlamentos estatales para traspasarlas a instituciones carentes de legitimidad democrática? ¿La Europa que tolera los recortes del estado de derecho para las minorías, como sucede en las repúblicas bálticas? ¿La Europa que permite que uno de sus miembros, Hungría, plantee volver a implantar la pena de muerte?

Es la Europa conservadora de Jean-Claude Juncker, Donald Tusk, Angela Merkel o David Cameron, la que pretende imponer sus políticas por encima de la soberanía popular, la que hace unos meses amenazaba más o menos sutilmente el pueblo griego para que no votara Alexis Tsipras y Syriza en las recientes elecciones del país heleno.

Es la Europa neoliberal que apoya y comparte la política imperialista de Estados Unidos, que ha provocado la caída de numerosos regímenes considerados “enemigos”, pero también la muerte de miles de personas inocentes, para acabar cayendo a menudo en el caos más absoluto, como ocurre actualmente en Libia o en las zonas controladas por el Estado Islámico. Una política imperial que ha provocado demenciales reacciones anti-occidentales como los atentados del 11-S en Nueva York (2001), del 11-M en Madrid (2004), de Londres en 2005 o de París más recientemente.

Lamentablemente, es la Europa conservadora y neoliberal a la que socialdemocracia se ha acabado adaptando,

una socialdemocracia cada vez más alejada de su ya muy descafeinada tradición de izquierdas, como demostró hace unos años la “tercera vía” de Toni Blair y el llamado “Nuevo Laborismo”. Una tercera vía especialmente compartida hoy por el Partido Democrático italiano, un revoltijo de excomunistas “arrepentidos” y demócrata-cristianos desorientados que ya hace unos años afirmaban, a través Walter Veltroni, que eran “reformistas, no de izquierdas”.

No es casualidad que otro de sus líderes, el defenestrado primer ministro Enrico Letta, comparta actos con Josep Antoni Duran Lleida, o que Matteo Renzi haya gobernado a menudo con el apoyo de la derecha y haya conseguido recientemente la aprobación de una reforma electoral dudosamente democrática, con el rechazo de toda la oposición e incluso de una parte significativa de su propio partido.

Esta nueva “tercera vía” social-liberal ya cuenta con un referente internacional, la Alianza Progresista, una organización fundada hace poco más de dos años por socialdemócratas alemanes, laboristas británicos, demócratas italianos y demócratas estadounidenses, y que pretende sustituir la ya muy desacreditada, dentro del ámbito de la izquierda, Internacional Socialista.

Ahora lo que hace falta es que también mucha gente, del Este o del Oeste, se dé cuenta del fracaso sin paliativos del “capitalismo real”.

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