

PEOPLE'S WORLD

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July 04, 2015

Confederate flags, monuments, going down in wake of massacre

By Sue Webb

The Confederate flag was ordered down from state capitol grounds and big box store shelves this week following the racist massacre of nine African American worshippers in Charleston, S.C. by a white man who identified himself with that flag.

In response Walmart, Amazon, Sears/Kmart and eBay announced they will stop selling Confederate flag-themed items.

These retail giants have been selling thousands of Confederate-related products for years, evidently not concerned that this might be offensive to millions of shoppers or grist for racists. Now, however, spokespersons for the companies have told reporters they are pulling the items because they “do not want to offend” anyone. The flag, they said, has “become” a symbol of divisiveness and racism.

Meanwhile Republican politicians across the South are moving to distance themselves from what is known as the Confederate battle flag, and are calling for its removal from state flags and capitols.

Among those speaking out for taking the flag down was Republican state Sen. Robert Thurmond, son of U.S. Senator Strom Thurmond, the notorious racist and segregationist who died in 2003. “Our ancestors were literally fighting



to keep human beings as slaves, and to continue the unimaginable acts that occur when someone is held against their will,” Robert Thurmond said.

On Wednesday morning, Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley had four Confederate flags removed from a memorial at the state Capitol.

In Mississippi, the speaker of the state House, Philip Gunn, a Republican, called for taking a Confederate battle cross off the state’s flag. (Mississippi is the only state in the country that still di-

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rectly reproduces a Confederate symbol in its flag. Six other former Confederate states have elements of the Confederacy’s flags in their state flags.)

On Wednesday, both of Mississippi’s U.S. senators, both Republicans, called for changing the state flag to eliminate the Confederate em-

The 170-member S. C. Republican legislature voted nearly unanimously to take up a bill to remove the Confederate flag from the Statehouse grounds.

blem. In the morning, Sen. Roger Wicker said the flag should be replaced by “one that is more unifying to all Mississippians.” This was a reversal of his statement two days earlier that the issue was up to the state. Wicker chairs the National Republican Senatorial Committee, a major Republican political campaign apparatus. His colleague, Sen. Thad Cochran, likewise at first claimed the flag was a state matter, but by the afternoon he conceded that the state should “consider” changing the flag.

“The recent debate on the symbolism of our flag, which belongs to all of us, presents the people of our state an opportunity to consider a new banner that represents Mississippi,” Cochran said, adding that “we should look for unity and not divisiveness in the symbols of our state.” Interestingly, Mississippi’s black voters are credited with helping Cochran win a tough 2014 primary against a tea party Republican.

In Tennessee, a number of political leaders are saying a bust of Nathan Bedford Forrest, a Confederate general and Ku Klux Klan founder, should be moved out of the Statehouse.

In Virginia, Gov. Terry McAuliffe, a Democrat, ordered that the Confederate flag no longer appear on license plates. This is also being raised in Maryland, North Carolina and Tennessee.

Of course, the Alabama Confederate Memorial, whose cornerstone was laid by former Confederate president Jefferson Davis in 1886, remains in place on that state’s Capitol grounds, and Confederate flags remain in its Old House and Senate chamber.

Tributes to the slaveocracy and its racist legacy persist around the country. Debates are unfolding in many places, not just the South, over government buildings, schools, streets and other public sites named after Confederate leaders, or containing statues honoring them. That includes the U.S. Capitol, where a number of statues of Confederate figures are displayed. “There are few places where those symbols are in more abundance,” The New York Times notes.



Sue Webb is co-editor of the Peoplesworld.

Bernie Sanders ‘political revolution’

By Joelle Fishman

The uprising underway for a more just society is the context of the amazing response to Bernie Sanders’ presidential campaign.

Sanders himself has said that he is stunned by the huge turnouts as he campaigns around the country. His program challenges income inequality and financial domination of politics, standing squarely on the side of the 99%.

Sanders emphasizes he is not campaigning against Hillary Clinton, Lincoln Chaffee or Martin O’Malley. Rather he is campaigning to take on the corporate agenda of the Republicans and offer positive solutions.

“The answer to unemployment and poverty is not and cannot be the mass incarceration of young African Americans,” Sanders said. His Employ Young Americans Now Act (S1506), sponsored in the House by Rep. John Conyers (HR 2714) would provide \$5.5 billion to employ one million youth.

The campaign for this legislation could link movements like the Fight for 15 and Black Lives

Matter.

Days after Sanders’ entry into the race, delegates at the Wisconsin Democratic convention voted in a straw poll: Clinton - 49% and Sanders - 41%. Soon after, the South Carolina AFL-CIO called upon the national AFL-CIO to endorse Sanders as the “strongest candidate articulating labor’s values.”

The Sanders campaign is a wonderful development for 2016 and beyond. It has the potential to inspire engagement in the political process, increasing voter turnout and creating progressive structures and coalitions at the local level.

Furthermore, Sanders identifying as a democratic socialist opens discussion on what socialism is and could be in our country.

There are times in history when things move fast. This may be one of those times.

Excerpts from report to CPUSA National Board 6/10/15 by Joelle Fishman.

Sanders’ campaign is shaking up the political landscape.

Community faces down prep school board over firings

By Patrick Foote

Last week, 80 community members rallied outside of Urban Prep on Chicago's south side. The all-boy public charter school, is being held to task for the firing of 17 teachers coinciding with a 61% vote in favor of unionization with the Chicago Alliance of Charter Teachers and Staff.

Teachers, both fired and unfired, from Urban Prep, as well as parents and students were on hand to speak their minds during the public comment period of the Urban Prep board meeting. Present in solidarity were contingents from Chicago labor and community groups.

Speaking to CEO Sam King, Samuel Smith, eight-year veteran educator at Urban Prep said, "If black students matter to you Mr. King, you will immediately reinstate the 17 teachers..."

People's World obtained copies of the captive audience PowerPoints teachers were forced to watch in captive audience meetings. In them, Urban Prep management portrays the union's stance in support of public education as anti-Urban Prep.

In all, the slides represent a paint-by-numbers anti-union campaign. Over and over again, the slides refer to the union as something outside of the employees, as another layer of bureaucracy.

Without irony, the PowerPoints list all of "what may be at risk" should the teachers vote the union



in. The teachers through their elected bodies would, ostensibly, be negotiating for their interests. The question becomes who is really putting things like salaries and vacation time at risk? This reporter would characterize this language as a veiled threat.

The crowd of 80 flooded into the auditorium as the board called their meeting to order. Chants of "bring them back!" echoed in the halls.

Shoneice Reynolds, parent of a young man at Urban Prep with a 4.1 GPA, spoke at the meeting and attributed her son's success to two of the fired teachers she referred to as Mr. Gibson and Mr. Brown.

"I believe that we need a voice and a more democratic process. It shouldn't just be market forces but what students, teachers, community and parents say."

Students spoke of unbreakable bonds with their former teachers.

"These types of actions cannot continue. It does not build a school, it does not build a foundation of trust between teachers, students and [administration]. We need to change the narrative in our own building... Make sure you're ready for a fight because it's going to be a fight" said Samuel Smith.

I believe we need a voice and a more democratic process that involves students, teachers, parents and the community.

In 6-3 decision, Supreme Court upholds Affordable Care Act

Special to Peoplesworld.org

The Supreme Court today in a 6-3 decision rejected a lawsuit aimed at overturning the Affordable Care Act, also referred to as Obamacare. Had the plaintiffs in the case, King v. Burwell, won their suit, financial assistance to millions of insured would have been eliminated. State exchanges would have all but collapsed.

If the challengers had won, at least 6.4 million people in at least 34 states would have lost the subsidies whose average value is \$272 per month.

Richard Trumka, president of the AFL-CIO, responding to the news said, "Today's decision is an important victory for the millions of people who need financial assistance to make health insurance affordable and for everyone committed to improving America's health care system."

President Obama speaking in the Rose Garden said, "After more than 50 votes in Congress to repeal or weaken this law, after a presidential election based in part on preserving or repealing this law, after multiple challenges to this law before the Supreme Court, the Affordable Care Act is here to stay."

Otra jornada histórica en Venezuela

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El presidente Nicolás Maduro informó a la ciudadanía que la participación del Psuv para este evento electoral se duplicó frente a todos los comicios internos anteriores

"Estamos haciendo una jornada histórica. Quiero felicitar al pueblo de Venezuela que desde las ocho de la mañana se volcó a los centros de votación a votar", afirmó Nicolás Maduro, presidente de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela al referirse a la jornada de elecciones primarias del Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela (Psuv)

Asimismo, añadió que "este es el modelo incluyente que ha hecho un proceso más que ejemplar, inspirador. "Hemos abierto las puertas de la historia para que el poder político esté donde tiene que estar, con el pueblo", agregó.

Maduro informó a la ciudadanía que la participación del Psuv para este evento electoral se duplicó frente a todos los comicios internos anteriores.

Expresó que esa contundente participación ciudadana en los sufragios es la voz "de un pueblo que quiere patria, prosperidad, educación, que quiere las misiones, que está dispuesto a defender el legado de Chávez con su propia vida".

El mandatario dijo que "somos una realidad, de conciencia y de lucha, no yo como presidente, no Chávez, es el pueblo de Venezuela. Aquí hay una Revolución que está renovándose con el liderazgo de los jóvenes y las mujeres.

Es un camino de historia, por los mismos senderos que recorrió Bolívar, Ezequiel Zamora, Negro Primero".

Tras calificar a la jornada de extraordinaria, Maduro sentenció que "el pueblo no habló, está hablando todavía. Esta es la democracia revolucionaria, socialista, verdadera que quiere. El pueblo quiere paz, que se le respete, se le ha retado y ha respondido".

El Consejo Nacional Electoral (CNE) decidió extender hasta las 20:00 hora local el cierre este domingo de casi cuatro mil centros de votación en sufragios internos del Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela.

De acuerdo con la rectora del máximo organismo comicial, Socorro Hernández, las mesas debían iniciar el cómputo de votos a partir de las 18:00 horas, pero se extendió el lapso dos horas debido al creciente número de personas que se encontraban en los colegios distribuidos en 87 circuitos y los 335 municipios del país, pasadas las seis.

El jefe de campaña del Psuv, Jorge Rodríguez opinó al respecto que es reflejo de que se vive una fiesta popular en unos comicios convocados con padrón abierto a los 19,4 millones de votantes inscritos en el registro electoral.

De estas primarias saldrán electos 98 candidatos de las fuerzas revolucionarias que aspirarán a uno de los 167 escaños de la Asamblea Nacional, elecciones señaladas para el 6 de diciembre próximo.

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