

# PEOPLE'S WORLD

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## Economists weigh in on Walmart Black Friday protests

By John Wojcik

**A**s Black Friday strikes and protests continued, growing calls for change were reflected at Walmart. Some 1,600 strikes and protests took place at Walmart stores, according to organizers.

Economists, labor law experts and other professionals joined the huge number of labor unions and allied groups that were endorsing and planning to join in the protests.

Among them were Robert Reich, former U.S. Labor Secretary.

He outlines how America's richest family could single handedly change the direction of Walmart. Labor law expert John Logan weighed in with his own remarks: "The tide may be turning against the billion-dollar corporations like Walmart that provide substandard jobs and expect taxpayers to pick up the tab.

"As a result of escalating protests, international action and community support, workers are finally being heard concerning poverty wages, lack of hours, and erratic scheduling, meager benefits and dead-end jobs."

Carol Joyner of Labor Project for Working Families said that Thanksgiving festivities did not stop her from joining the Black Friday Protests. "I'll gather up my turkey-filled friends and relatives and visit my nearest Walmart. I'll stand outside



in solidarity with workers, do some chanting and maybe take some selfies, deliver a memo to the store manager, and contribute to building a fair economy - for us all."

A new report out from Demos, meanwhile, shows big box retailers spent \$30 million on elections and lobbying during the 2014 election cycle, almost six times more than they spent in 2000- and overwhelmingly supported Republicans over Democrats.

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The report finds Walmart is one of the biggest political donors in the country, and its owners, the Waltons, spent a total of \$7.3 million in campaign contributions between 2000 and 2014, heavily favoring Republican candidates and PACs.

The report, Retail Politics, states: "Walmart is

**Big box retailers spent \$30 million on elections and lobbying during the 2014 election cycle.**

the biggest spender by a wide margin, with \$2.4 million in donations through its Political Action Committee (PAC) and individual donations and \$12.5 million in lobbying expenses during the 2014 electoral cycle.

“This political spending is a problem for democracy, because extensive research suggests that the domination of wealth in our political process can significantly effect public policy, and that the priorities of the affluent often diverge from majority opinion. On issues like taxation, economic regulation, Social Security, and the minimum wage the differences can be stark.”

David Cooper, an economic analyst at the Economic Policy Institute, says low wages in retail across the board and Black Friday deals are connected. He explained why taxpayers should be concerned.

“There’s robust research showing that the exceedingly low wages paid by some large retailers,” he said, “significantly depresses wages at similar competing firms.”

“There are certainly retailers that provide high quality jobs, but the data show that far too often retailers are paying wages that are woefully inadequate to live on. So long as companies can get away with paying unlivable wages, the American taxpayer is getting a bad deal. The savings may seem great on Black Friday, but we’re effectively paying extra all year long.”



**John Wojcik is co-editor of peoplesworld.org**

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## **We honor you for your work**

**David Cavendish**

**It is only when people understand that labor is at the core of all we know that we will make progress toward the creation of a socialist society.**

**W**ith the recent commemoration of Veterans Day, we often heard the phrase “we honor you for your service” directed at those who served in the armed forces. And honored they should be, for they made great sacrifices while in the military. Some received serious wounds, both physical and mental; and if nothing else, they gave up years of their lives, while some were placed in harm’s way in combat zones. We cannot forget the more than 100,000 Americans who gave their lives in conflicts just since World War II.

Even on Labor Day there are few statements honoring workers for their work, other than those from the AFL-CIO, a labor union, or from some in the progressive community. Almost nothing in the media or at sporting events (where professional team owners fall over themselves to honor veterans). Everyone would agree that the average person who gets up in the morning and goes to work—in an office, a factory, a mine, or a hospital,

for example—faces many difficulties. No one needs to go through the list of daily stressful conditions that can lead to burnout, injury, or illness. Not to mention the end product of their work, oftentimes a commodity that an owner sells at a profit.

The bottom line is that the two statements express two very different outlooks on life. Again, no one takes anything away from the veteran, yet the ubiquity of the phrase “we honor your service” is really the outgrowth of a system that has incorporated war and militarism into its basic fabric. “We honor your work” describes a view that the production of goods and services in a society is the result of people making a daily sacrifice—their time and their labor—so that modern civilization can exist.

Maybe it is unrealistic to expect a high level of respect for those who work in a capitalist society. It is only when people understand that labor is at the core of all we know that we will make progress toward the creation of a socialist society.

# Turning Ferguson outrage into united action for justice

## PW Editorial



**O**utrage. That's the sentiment in Ferguson and around the country in reaction to the failure of the Ferguson grand jury to indict Darren Wilson for the murder of Michael Brown.

The decision was not unexpected. From the outset, local and state authorities carried out a campaign to criminalize Brown: video footage was released of him allegedly shoplifting at a local grocery; even grand jury testimony of forensic evidence purporting to favor the policeman's version of the deadly encounter was leaked to the press.

Still many held out a glimmer of hope that a process leading to justice would prevail. Instead the worst fears of decent minded Americans were realized. Once again a deadly pattern of racist police murder of black and brown youth was upheld, a pattern that almost guarantees immunity for the perpetrators in blue.

Indeed, the grand jury process from the beginning had the appearance - if not reality - of being rigged. From the outset, St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney Bob McCulloch's close ties to local police were cause for concern, concerns that were justified when the prosecutor failed to provide the grand jury with possible charges against Wilson.

Calls for a special prosecutor went unheeded, additionally undermining public confidence.

It's no surprise then that faith in justice system, particularly among young people has been lost.

Sadly, some of the outrage in Ferguson took violent forms last night complete with the familiar pattern of police provocation and the reaction of some protestors. But the call of Michael Brown's parents along with the civil rights, labor and community organizations to honor his life with peaceful protests is sure to prevail.

The NAACP is calling for a 120-mile 7-day "Journey for Justice" march from Ferguson to the governor's mansion in Jefferson City.

The country may be reaching a turning point. The spate of police murder of young black and brown men is at new level. Nearly 400 are killed yearly by police, exceeding the numbers lynched during the height of Jim Crow.

Whether a turning point will be reached will depend on the degree of public pressure to insure justice is done.

We urge our readers to continue fighting for justice for Michael Brown by participating in the militant and peaceful protests occurring all over the country. Let's keep the pressure on!

**Nearly 400 are killed yearly by police, exceeding the numbers lynched during the height of Jim Crow.**

## St. Louis protesters demand justice for VonDerrit Meyers

By James Raines

Some 100 protesters congregated on Shaw Ave. near the spot where 18-year-old VonDerrit Myers was killed by off-duty police officer Jason Flanery on Oct. 8. The police claim Myers was armed and fired at Flanery. While that has yet to be independently confirmed, an independent autopsy shows that Myers was shot seven times, six times in the back of his legs, and once in the face.

The historic Shaw neighborhood is a well-integrated neighborhood compared to much of St. Louis or any other city of its size. As the group of mostly college-aged white residents marched through the mist towards Grand Ave., chanting familiar slogans, a dozen police vehicles followed.

From the number of Guy Fawkes masks, college students in keffiyehs, and familiar chants the group shuffled through, you could mistake them for Occupiers ("This is what democracy looks like!").

Janece Jones, Tynisha Smith, and Brittany Furr are out this evening to support the fight against police violence. While police violence and institutional racism are nothing new Janece Jones said that the movement in St. Louis "is different." She said that all of the "people coming together is new, this generation is different, we're not as crazy as people make us out to be." The three women laughed. "Maybe this will be an example," Smith said. Her friends nodded in agreement: "It isn't even about race anymore," she said. "It is about injustice."

## Tabaré Vázquez y el gobierno que viene

Prensa Latina

**L**a abrumadora victoria electoral de Tabaré Vázquez, del gobernante Frente Amplio (FA), considerada histórica, augura un próximo gobierno poco común para el país y la región.

Aparte de vencer con casi 13 puntos porcentuales por encima de su rival, Luís Lacalle Pou (41), del opositor Partido Nacional (PN) y sus aliados, su votación -53,6 por ciento- es considerada la más alta de la historia del país.

El ex presidente (2005 al 2010) recibirá el tercer gobierno del FA (2015-2020), el próximo primero de marzo, de manos del presidente José Mujica, quien deja la presidencia con una cifra record de popularidad: 65 por ciento.

En las elecciones del pasado 26 de octubre, Mujica (89) fue electo senador con la más alta votación, por lo que seguirá trabajando por el FA dentro del Parlamento. Preguntado sobre su futuro, respondió: "ya no puedo dejar de ser militante".

Vázquez (74) también entrará en la historia como el primer presidente reelecto en este siglo (el tercero en la historia del país), y contará además con mayoría en ambas cámaras del Parlamento, que asume funciones el venidero 15 de febrero.

El FA obtuvo en las elecciones de octubre, 50 de los 99 miembros de la Cámara de Diputados y 15 de los 30 integrantes del Senado, al que ahora se suma el vicepresidente electo, Raúl Sendic (52), que presidirá ese cuerpo. Los analistas señalan que esa mayoría -alcanzada por tercera vez consecutiva por el FA- proporciona tranquilidad al nuevo mandatario, porque las

leyes que envíe al Parlamento -que no requieran mayorías especiales- serán aprobadas.

Así, el gobierno Vázquez-Sendic podrá cumplir sin obstáculos el programa gubernamental, aprobado en reciente congreso del FA.

Sorprendió a algunos observadores que el FA no sufriera, como es común, un desgaste electoral luego de 10 años en el gobierno y que, además, creciera en el interior del país, otrora bastión de los partidos tradicionales.

El FA ganó en 12 de los 19 departamentos del país, incluido Montevideo, lo que muchos expertos consideran un dato clave con miras a las elecciones departamentales y municipales a realizarse en mayo del próximo año.

En ese sentido, Vázquez manifestó interés en iniciar cuanto antes la transición del actual gobierno al próximo, para lo cual Mujica ordenó a sus ministros preparar los documentos pertinentes sobre la marcha de sus respectivas carteras.

Lo más probable es que ese proceso comience después del día 10, que el presidente uruguayo regresará de una gira por Venezuela, Ecuador y México.

Mientras tanto, se espera que en los próximos días, Vázquez anuncie los nombres de sus futuros ministros, aunque ya informó que el actual vicepresidente Danilo Astori, será su ministro de Economía y Finanzas.

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