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The sun shone on massive North Carolina Moral March

By David Bender



Tens of thousands descended on the state Capitol here Saturday in a Moral March demanding equality for North Carolina's families, an end to voter suppression and cuts to unemployment benefits, a renewed commitment to women's rights and education and an end, in general, to right-wing extremism.

The march, organized by the NAACP, labor unions, and religious leaders, amounted to a dramatic comeback of the many Moral Monday protests that drew the attention of the nation here over the last year.

The city was abuzz the night before the Moral March there with services and preparations for the massive demonstration. I had a chance to sit down over North Carolina barbeque and speak with Ned and Betsy Kennsington of Durham.

They said the march was their first demonstration since the Vietnam protests of the 60's. And that they were here because they have seen the far right go off the deep end, with its control of both houses and governorship of North Carolina.

The Kennsingtons, who have a daughter who is an organizer with Unite Here, the hospitality workers' union in Connecticut, say its no accident that the right wing has gotten so powerful because North Carolina is "the least (union) organized state in the nation."

Unless there is a massive mobilization of progressive forces, the say, the right wing remains in a strong position, particularly because state legislative district lines have been gerrymandered. "The way the law is drawn up, district lines will not be changed until 2020," explained Betsy.

North Carolina is also feeling the effects of the recent repeal of section 4 of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Progressives note that the repeal will empower far-right extremists to propose even

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more repeals and policies that make it still harder to vote. According to Rev. William Barber, chair of the North Carolina NAACP, with this repeal, the North Carolina Republicans have passed laws making it harder to vote than in any other state - including South Carolina and Alabama.

“We ain’t going back,” was a common theme of the demonstration.

North Carolinians are not new to struggles for justice. In 1960, in Greensboro, North Carolina four black university freshmen refused to move and sit in the part of the diner that was designated for “colored people”. It began with four students and grew to twenty. Amidst, Jim Crow and lynchings, North Carolina stood firm - so firm, in fact, that in 2008 Barack Obama, the nation’s first black President carried the state.

Now, here we are, in Raleigh for the Moral March of 2014, people are coming together of every shade, “making a beautiful mosaic of people of “all ages from carriage to cane,” as one marcher from New York put it.

The signs were as varied as the people themselves. Signs that speak of a woman’s right to choose, legalizing medicinal marijuana, saving our public schools, fighting to raise the minimum wage, the right to organize unions, stopping voter suppression, and even “no cuts to the movie industry of Wilmington.” were all in evidence. “We ain’t going back,” was a common theme of the demonstration.

Monica Lewis, 50, who was there with her

church and her two kids, said, “I see communities taking a stand because no one should go hungry, no one should go without health care, and no one should be living in poverty. Working people, living in poverty doesn’t make sense.”

Tre Murphy, 18, was there with the National Alliance for Education Justice. “The way I see it,” he said, “education is the civil rights issue of our present day and age. Anything that has to do with jobs has to do with education. Education is at the root cause in disparities of racial inequality across the nation.”

Currently, bills are being proposed that hurt students and teachers of low income communities,. Many young workers said they were there for their children.

Together, they and the many thousands of others marched to the state house, chanting and singing. Tears streaming down many of their faces, sang ‘We Shall Overcome.’ Almost prophetically - during the very last verse, - the sun broke through the clouds.



David Bender contributes to Peoplesworld.org.

The war on the planet

By PW Editorial Board

We usually think of violence as something that is abrupt and explosive - a bomb going off, a bullet finding its mark. The photos on exhibit here tend to reinforce this view. But there is another kind of violence that is increasing worldwide - the violence of climate change. Because it is incremental, it’s mostly invisible or at least not perceived as violence. But we need to reassess this view. Climate change is both violent and largely caused by human activity. It’s as violent as war. People’s homes and livelihoods are destroyed, their countries devastated, their lives taken. According to the United Nations there have been more than 4 million climate-related deaths since the 1970s. As startling as that number is, the relationship between war and the environment is more than the high casualty rates they share. Environmental disasters cause wars and wars cause environmental disasters. War destroys the environment - wrecking agriculture and infrastruc-

ture, killing and displacing millions of people, leaving a landscape of lethal chemicals, heavy metals, and radioactivity in its wake.

If we step back from the news items about war and environment that we see daily, we may be able to perceive a pattern here - a macabre cycle of cause and effect. Our national dependence on fossil fuels makes us intervene in countries that are rich in fossil fuels, which means we need a huge military, which is so dependent on fossil fuels that we have to intervene in other countries to keep it supplied. Even when not engaged in war, the military causes environmental damage. The burning of fossil fuels - coal, oil, natural gas - causes climate change and the U.S. military is the biggest single user of fossil fuels in the world.

And environmental disasters set the stage for war. Climate change is causing droughts, wildfires, floods, famines, and storms like we’ve never seen before. The time for action is now - before the damage is irreparable.

Our national dependence on fossil fuels makes us intervene in countries that are rich in fossil fuels.

Duke Energy ash spill turns Dan River gray

By Art Cook



The Florida Supreme Court recently approved a ballot measure to make medical marijuana legal in the state. The ruling was split 4-3 between liberal and conservative judges. Now Florida's voters will decide the issue this November.

The Dan River, which flows through parts of North Carolina and Virginia until it reaches the Atlantic Ocean, has turned gray.

The reason wasn't heavy rains or wintry weather. Up to 100,000 tons of coal ash and 30 millions gallons of water were released from a pond at a retired Duke Energy plant in Eden, N.C. It happened when a 48-inch pipe from the 27-acre ash pond broke Sunday afternoon, Feb. 2. The polluted ash and water continued to pour into the Dan River as of Tuesday.

Duke Energy and local officials assure residents that the water is fine. End of subject.

But the crisis isn't over. In a prepared statement Duke Power indicated it has a long road to travel before the damage is stopped.

"We had some temporary solutions that have intermittently worked at times during the day, but we are still working on a short-term solution and a long-term repair," said Duke Energy spokesman Erin Culbert.

Environmental organizations which have filed a lawsuit to force Duke and other utilities to

remove ash stored near waterways quickly point to the company's lapse in notifying the public. Sound like West Virginia?

The first public notification came at 4:03 p.m. Monday. North Carolina last year sued Duke over these ash ponds. The Eden plant closed two years ago and is about one hour from Raleigh, N.C.

North Carolina environmental agencies contacted communities which use water from the river. The first community is here in Danville, Va. Officials here report no problems with drinking water.

All water leaving Danville's water treatment facility has met public health standards, said Barry Dunkley, the city's water director. The pond is located 6 miles from Danville.

Coal ash can be toxic if there are high concentrations of metals. Results are as yet not known from water samples taken by the state and Duke Energy after the breach.

Duke officials say the pond's dam remains secure at this time. Erosion has been found on the side of the pond near the river. Engineers are working on firming up that part of the pond.

A 2012 report stated that the dam had significant hazard potential if the pond were breached.

Coal ash can be toxic if there are high concentrations of metals.

Lockout continues despite big snowstorm

By Special to Peoplesworld.org

Utility Workers Union of America System Local 102 today strongly criticized the continuing lockout of nearly 150 utility workers by Pennsylvania electric utility Penelec and its parent company FirstEnergy, notwithstanding power outages affecting 750,000 Pennsylvania customers caused by Winter Storm Nika.

"It is reckless and irresponsible for FirstEnergy to keep 142 skilled electric utility workers sidelined while hundreds of thousands of citizens go without power during a dangerous winter storm," declared Bob Whalen, president of System Local 102.

"FirstEnergy has refused to allow these veteran first responders to perform their jobs delivering essential public services since late November. To keep skilled linemen locked out of their jobs during a massive power outage - all for the sake of padding the corporation's profits at the expense of public safety - is inexcusable."

Harsh winter weather conditions such as the existing ice and snowstorm across the northeastern U.S. can severely strain electric power systems throughout the entire region, as power outages force utilities to scramble to find sufficient skilled workers to restore service. Electric utilities routinely call upon other utility companies to supplement emergency power restoration crews.

Management has rejected numerous proposals from the union that the company should immediately return all locked out workers to their jobs, while the parties continue to negotiate a new labor agreement at the bargaining table.

Murió a los 88 años fundador del Instituto de Cine

Por Telasur

El cineasta José Massip, uno de los fundadores del Instituto de Cine de Cuba en 1959, falleció este sábado en La Habana a los 88 años de edad, luego de una larga enfermedad, según informó esa institución.

La información fue divulgada por la Agencia de Información Nacional de Cuba (AIN). Nacido en 1926, Massip forma parte de la avanzada de intelectuales y realizadores, como Julio García Espinosa y Alfredo Guevara, que en 1959 fundaron la institución cinematográfica.

Director de "Historia de un Ballet" (1962); "Páginas de diario de José Martí" (1971) y "Baraguá" (1986), entre otras obras, Massip integró el pequeño grupo junto a Alfredo Guevara y Julio García Espinosa, que fundaron el ICAIC en 1959.

También colaboró con García Espinosa, Guevara y Tomás Gutiérrez Alea en la filmación de El Méjano, trabajó a las órdenes del gran documentalista holandés Joris Ivens, y dirigió cintas como Historia de un ballet (Suite Yoruba) (1962), considerado un clásico del cine cubano pos-revolucionario.

Reconocido por su labor como crítico, pedagogo y ensayista, Massip recibió en 2012 el Premio Nacional de Cine, en reconocimiento a su larga trayectoria y aportes a la filmografía nacional.

Massip, nacido en La Habana el 28 de junio de 1928, contaba con una

sólida formación intelectual que no solo reflejó en su obra cinematográfica sino también como poeta, investigador y profesor.

Se graduó de Filosofía y Letras por la Universidad de La Habana y más tarde en Sociología en la Universidad de Harvard, en Estados Unidos.

Fue uno de los fundadores de la sociedad cultural "Nuestro Tiempo" que reunió a numerosos intelectuales, escritores, músicos y artistas de la plástica que se oponían a la política del régimen de Fulgencio Batista, derrocado al triunfar la revolución cubana el 1 de enero de 1959.

En una entrevista reproducida en la página web oficial Cubadebate, Massip consideró a "Nuestro Tiempo" como el antecedente más importante del Icaic porque opinó que esa sociedad "significó un espacio cardinal en la historia de la cultura cubana".

Massip también fue corresponsal de guerra en África y su experiencia durante las guerras de liberación de Guinea Bissau y de Angola las llevó al cine a través de varios documentales como "Angola: victoria de la esperanza" que dirigió en 1976, y además escribió el libro "Los días del Kankouran".

Como investigador ofreció conferencias y escribió artículos y ensayos sobre la historia de Cuba, entre ellos, colaboró con el historiador Emilio Roig de Leuschenrig en el libro de éste "Ideología de Antonio Maceo".

NATIONAL CONTACT

Editorial: (773) 446-9920 Business: (212) 924-2523

Email: contact@peoplesworld.org