

Honors for Hugh Mulzac, the captain who fought Jim Crow, Hitler, and McCarthy



By Tony Pecinovsky

Hugh Mulzac opened my eyes to another part of the sea...he opened my eyes to another part of life in this country, to racism,” Jeremy Hope, International Vice President of the Masters, Mates, and Pilots Union told over 200 World War II Merchant Marine veterans, their families, and union members here for a Sept. 24 event at the Maritime Conference Center.

In 1942, at the age of 56, Mulzac became the first African-American man of Caribbean descent to captain a U.S. Merchant Marine ship, the S.S. Booker T. Washington—six years prior to the formal end of segregation in the U.S. armed forces.

During WWII, Mulzac would captain various Liberty ships and make 22 round-trip voyages, transporting 18,000 soldiers and tons of wartime armaments to both the European and the Pacific theaters of war. In all, 250,000 Merchant Marines served with honor in WWII.

Mulzac wasn't just a WWII hero, though, he was “a hero of the civil rights and labor movement,” Hope told those gathered in Baltimore.

Self-critically, Hope noted that his union hadn't always championed diversity and civil rights. “We enforced institutional racism and discrimination,” he added. But Mulzac knew the power of unity. Hope recalled that despite the racism he faced, Mulzac refused to ever cross seafaring picket lines.

“He stood with our union, though he was refused membership. He refused to be a scab,” Hope continued.

To Mulzac's descendants—many of whom were in attendance—Hope said: “We're sorry!”

The union and veterans then presented the Mulzac family with a plaque, as well as an original oil painting of the Booker T. Washington, the integrated ship Mulzac captained in 1942.

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On the ship's first voyage, Mulzac mused, “What sweeter triumph could a man wish for himself, his race, and his country.”

The gathering was part of the 2020-21 National Convention of the American Merchant Marine Veterans (AMMV), which culminated in the Sept. 24

In 1942, Hugh Mulzac became the first African American man of Caribbean descent to captain a U.S. Merchant Marine ship, the S.S. Booker T. Washington.

Congressional Gold Medal celebration and reception dinner in tribute to Captain Mulzac. Drafts of the Congressional Gold Medal were also displayed and will be presented in early 2022.

Henry Mulzac, Hugh Mulzac's nephew, spoke on behalf of the family and noted that Captain Mulzac sacrificed "himself, his career, and his family at a crucial point in U.S. history.

"He helped to usher in the integration of the U.S. armed forces," Henry Mulzac added. "He refused to be part of a Jim Crow program."

Captain Donald Marcus, International President of the Masters, Mates, and Pilots Union, told the assembled veterans and their families that this "was a long time coming" and that he was "thrilled to honor Hugh Mulzac."

Connecting the war-time struggle against fascism to the postwar fight against McCarthyism, Captain Marcus added, "Mulzac not only fought racial injustice, he fought fascism, and he fought McCarthyism" after the war.

By the late 1940s, Mulzac was blacklisted, once again unable to command a ship due to racist political repression. Shortly thereafter, he retired from seafaring and ran for office on the American Labor Party ticket, then considered a so-called "Communist front." The U.S. government also revoked his seaman's papers and license, though by 1960 they were reinstated.

According to Captain Marcus, Mulzac was "a great, great gift to the labor movement, and to the American people."

Mulzac's autobiography is expected to be back in print by late this year or early next year.

Born on the island of Union in the Caribbean, part of the nation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, on March 26, 1886, Mulzac died on Jan. 31, 1971. The AMMV's Congressional Gold Medal Dinner was a wonderful tribute to Mulzac and all Merchant Marines who fought against fascism abroad and Jim Crow and McCarthyism domestically.

6.5 million people fell off cliff when unemployment supplemental expired 9/4

By PAI

The financial bottom dropped out for almost 6.5 million people nationwide in the week after Sept. 4, the Labor Department's weekly unemployment insurance claims report said. That week was when their federal jobless benefits came to a dead halt.

The decline was in programs to keep people financially afloat during the coronavirus pandemic. On Sept. 4—their last day—8,540,680 people got the money that week. One week later, late joiners who still got those \$300 checks totaled 2,051,061.

Those \$300 weekly checks topped state-paid jobless benefits, replaced them for 13 weeks for workers whose state benefits had run out, or sent funds to workers the regular jobless benefits system doesn't cover, including, home health care workers, farm workers, independent contractors, and even unionized musicians.

Congress enacted those pandemic aid programs when the coronavirus trashed the economy, officially in mid-March 2020. But by this past July, lawmakers and Democratic President Joe Biden believed the recovery was well underway and did not extend the checks beyond Labor Day.

Republicans in Washington and in state capitals

across the country had already been trying to kill the aid for months prior to the expiration.

BLS said in the two weeks since Sept. 11, a total of 604,836 workers filed new claims for state-paid jobless benefits. Those benefits vary wildly. The lowest maximum is in Mississippi, with \$235 for each of 26 weeks. GOP-run Missouri doles out \$320, but for the shortest time, 13 weeks. Massachusetts pays the most: \$843 weekly for a worker, or \$1,234 if she has dependents.

In those weeks, 2.51 million people got state benefits in the week ending Sept. 11 and 2.461 million got those state checks, funded by contributions from firms, in the week ending Sept. 18. Only 10 states distributed more checks in the second week. The rest gave out fewer.

Six states saw the number of benefit checks rise by fewer than 1,000 workers each.

Illinois was the outlier. Its state Department of Employment Security sent out 84,591 more checks in the week ending 9/18, compared to Sept. 11, rising to a total of 231,842. IL didn't tell BLS why the number increased by 57% in one week. The DES's spokeswoman's phone mailbox was full and could not take questions about the reason for the spike.

Congress enacted those pandemic aid programs when the coronavirus trashed the economy.

Venezuela's foreign minister: We have survived everything the U.S. throws at us



By Communist Party USA

Last week the People's Forum in New York City hosted Félix Plasencia, Venezuela's new foreign minister, who was in town for the United Nations' 76th session of the General Assembly.

In attendance were leftist and progressive activists ranging from Bahman Azad of the U.S. Peace Council to Medea Benjamin of CodePink. The NY Young Communist League's co-chairwoman, Justine Medina, along with the Communist Party's Maicol Lynch were also in attendance.

Félix Plasencia's speech began with apologies for arriving a few minutes late due to the ongoing bilateral conversations he was having at the UN headquarters a few blocks away. "As many of you can imagine, many delegations wish to meet with us to understand what's happening in Venezuela. And other delegations which think they understand what's happening in Venezuela must meet with us because they have the wrong idea completely."

Plasencia and the Venezuelan delegation expressed concern for all of the poverty they saw in the streets of New York and reiterated that Venezuela, "only wishes the best for the United States and its people. While the Trump and Biden administrations may look for us to be the enemy, we want to make it clear that we are not your enemy. We respect your election results and we ask that your government respect ours."

Amid the rumors circulating over the past two-and-a-half years regarding the failed coup that took place in April of 2019, Plasencia commented, "We have been able to survive everything that the United States throws at us. The Venezuelan people have not bent a knee to the imperialist siege." When asked about the complex issue regarding immigration to and from Venezuela as a result of the economic crisis and the ongoing political tension in neighboring Colombia, the foreign minister replied, "We do not refer to Colombian people living in our country as 'immigrants.' We refer to them as 'Venezuelans of Colombian origin.' That's how we see them. After all, we were once part of the same country founded by Simon Bolivar two centuries ago."

The speech given by the Venezuelan delegation at the People's Forum reiterated Venezuela's hope for peace as well as their perseverance even in the most trying of times.

In addition to the solidarity from fellow socialist governments in Latin America such as those of Bolivia, Cuba, and Nicaragua, the foreign minister asked that the radical left educate American workers about the situation in Venezuela so that a stronger and more unified anti-war and anti-sanctions movement can be built in this country and beyond.

Venezuela's foreign minister meets with supporters in NYC.

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Indian unions plan massive joint protests against government's privatization schemes

By Industrial

Indian unions took action on Oct. 7, the "World Day for Decent Work," against plans by the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to privatize key assets and sectors of the economy.

In August, the government of India announced a policy called the "National Monetization Pipeline" (NMP), listing many important public infrastructure assets to be sold off to the private sector over the next four years, including mining, aviation, ports, natural gas and petroleum product pipelines, railways, and the power sector. This is not merely a funding mechanism for the government; it marks an overall shift to privatization of core sectors.

In an additional move, which will lead to precarious employment and unsafe working conditions, the Indian government is pushing for labor law amendments which would exclude and deprive workers of a number of current legal protections and likely lead to violations of human rights and the elimination of core workers' rights.

Dr. G. Sanjeeva Reddy, president of Indian National Metalworkers' Federation and IndustriALL executive committee member, says:

"India is facing a social and economic policy paralysis as the government is moving to lease or sell all infrastructure services and core industries to private companies. We, the trade unions, will together organize, campaign, and hold a country-wide protest under the name of 'Mission India.'

He called on all working people in India "to come forward and participate in this joint demonstration and struggle so that our legitimate rights and jobs will be protected."

Sanciones e ineficiencia gubernamental afectan vacunación contra la COVID-19 en Venezuela

By JOSÉ M. ALCALÁ

La pandemia de la covid-19 avanza en el país sudamericano, quien arriba a los 355.061 casos de contagio y 4.301 personas fallecidas para la fecha del domingo 19 de septiembre según reportes de las autoridades sanitarias de Venezuela. La crisis capitalista mundial ha generado grandes consecuencias en la población venezolana, quien padece producto a la falta de acceso a los alimentos, medicinas, insumos médicos y el deterioro de los principales servicios básicos (agua, transportes, electricidad, gas doméstico) situación que ha conllevado a la agudización del estilo de vida durante la pandemia en el año 2020.

En la actualidad Venezuela arriba a los 550 días de pandemia luego de haber diagnosticado el primer caso de contagio el 13 de marzo de 2020, en el que fueron suspendidas las actividades presenciales en el sector educativo y económico en todo el territorio nacional. Posterior a tres meses fueron restituidas en el denominado esquema de flexibilización 7x7 para los sectores de prestación de servicios y de comercio, así como el establecimiento del sistema de educación a distancia "Cada Familia una escuela y Universidad en Casa" altamente cuestionado por la población venezolana por el detrimento en la calidad educativa producto de la poca disposición de recursos tecnológicos de docentes y estudiantes, la disminución de las salario y las constantes fallas o la inexistencia de internet en las zonas populares.

Desde el arribo del primer lote de vacunas rusas Sputnik V el 13 de febrero del 2021, Venezuela ha recibido más de 11 millones de vacunas con-

tra la covid-19 entre ellas la Sputnik V, vero cell Sinopharm y la cubana Abdala en lo que arroja según cifras publicadas por el ministerio de salud 4.271.397 vacunadas para la fecha.

El acceso a la adquisición de vacunas por parte del gobierno de Nicolás Maduro es objeto de acusaciones de diversos sectores políticos y sindicales que acusan a la gestión gubernamental de ineficiencia en la rapidez de las instituciones para brindar vacunas contra el covid-19.

En una entrevista a Omar González representante estudiantil del sector salud y secretario de los servicios médicos para estudiantes de Centro de Estudiantes de la Universidad de Las Ciencias de la Salud Hugo Chávez de informó que en la actualidad han tenido dificultades para tener el acceso a los insumos médicos y equipos de protección personal ante la covid-19.

"Hemos tenido muchas dificultades para obtener el material de bioseguridad ya que el estado no lo garantiza, por eso es necesario evaluar de manera real el regreso a clases presenciales en otros sectores y universidades ya que hace falta vacunar a muchos estudiantes" informo el dirigente estudiantil Omar González.

Ambos entrevistados aseguraron que los puntos de vacunación implementados por el gobierno nacional han estado atendiendo principalmente a los sectores de avanzada edad de manera eficiente, pero aseguran que debe masificarse en mayor presencia en comunidades y centro educativos para tener mejor acceso a las vacunas.

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