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Migrants in ICE jails launch hunger strikes

By Kathy Durkin

Sixty im/migrant prisoners began a hunger strike July 17 at the Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility in the Bristol County House of Corrections complex in North Dartmouth, Mass. Another 72 prisoners joined this bold action on July 20. These detainees, some undergoing removal proceedings and others awaiting deportation, are protesting the deplorable conditions of their captivity.

Chief among their complaints are "nearly nonexistent medical care, inedible food, abuse from facility employees and exorbitant commissary prices," says a press release issued July 19 by Families for Freedom, a multinational, New York-based immigrant rights organization and mobilizing center for migrants fighting deportation.

Detainees called the group's hotline to ask for help in publicizing their protests over the facility's terrible conditions. They say the food served them is not nutritious and often rotten, and they are ignored if they get food poisoning. It can take up to two weeks to get needed medical care, if it's provided at all. One prisoner with a broken hand has not seen a doctor for three weeks. People having seizures get no care, and those needing medications don't get them.

Hunger strikers report that showers and bathrooms are full of mold. Phone and commissary prices are double — or more — the cost outside the prison, but the facility's food is so bad that detainees must buy food at the canteen. They report being subjected to racist and other verbal abuse by guards, as well as inhumane treatment, including guards laughing at prisoners who faint from hunger.

Families for Freedom reports: "Bristol County House of Corrections is a facility with a history of mistreatment" and high suicide rates. "Sheriff Thomas Hobson, a Trump fan, is known for his exceptional brutality, misconduct, including receiving kickbacks from prison telecoms and his proposal to use prison labor from his county to build Trump's border wall." (Press release, tinyurl.com/y9padac4)

The hunger strikers' Call to Action succinctly lists their demands for proper medical care, nutritious food and essential hygienic equipment and services. They ask supporters to advocate for them by calling the following officials to ask that their demands be met: Bristol County Detention Facility at 508-995-6400 and Acting ICE Field Office Directors Thomas Brophy and James Rutherford at 781-359-7500.

Women migrants resist!

Across the country, im/migrants are protesting horrendous conditions of their captivity through whatever means they can. Women migrants held at

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WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

An 11-person delegation representing FIRE (Fight for Im/migrants and Refugees Everywhere) visited the South Texas Human Rights Center in Falfurrias, Texas, on June 30.

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WW PHOTO: JULIE VARUGHESE

WWP contingent in New York Disability Pride parade.

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#NoDAPL water protector sentenced to 57 months

By Mahtowin

#NoDAPL water protector Red Fawn Fallis was sentenced July 11 to 57 months in prison by a federal judge in North Dakota. She was given 18 months' credit for time served prior to trial, and will have three years of probation supervision after her release. She and her family await news of where she will serve time, possibly in Arizona.

Red Fawn had previously accepted a plea agreement that included two federal felony convictions — civil disorder and possession of ammunition by a previously convicted felon — in return for dropping a more serious weapons charge that would have carried a minimum prison sentence of 10 years.

Her charges resulted from the Oct. 27, 2016, militarized police attack on the 1851 Treaty Camp near Standing Rock, directly in the path of the Dakota Access oil pipeline (DAPL). Red Fawn was tackled by several cops, who then claimed that she had a gun and fired it during that time.

As it turned out, the gun belonged to Heath Harmon, a paid FBI informant who had weaseled his way into Red Fawn's life as her boyfriend and into her family's good graces. Many believe this spying was done to try and obtain information through Red Fawn about actions and plans at the #NoDAPL camps. Red Fawn, who is from the Pine Ridge Reservation and also Denver, Colo., comes from a proud line of American Indian Movement activists.

Red Fawn understood clearly that there could be no justice for an Indigenous woman in any court in North Dakota. Her lawyers were told they could not introduce evidence at trial about relevant subjects such as treaty rights and the FBI informant who targeted Red Fawn and likely planted the gun at the time of her arrest.

The prosecution refused to produce important evidence that might have cleared Red Fawn. As a result, she accepted a plea deal that would eliminate the more serious weapons charge, out of concern that otherwise she would be found guilty and sentenced to more than 10 years.

More 'civil disorder' charges

As an Indigenous woman, Red Fawn is being severely penalized for daring to defend treaty rights, protect the water and stop the Dakota Access Pipeline. Since the beginning of settler colonialism, Indigenous women have been viewed with utter contempt, and their countless efforts to defend their land and families have been harshly repressed and punished.

Red Fawn Fallis being arrested.

While the #NoDAPL encampments began at Standing Rock more than two years ago, the court cases are continuing to snake through the courts. Indigenous defendants are being hit with the most severe charges and prison terms. Dozens more water protectors still face state charges, and several face federal charges that carry the potential of spending decades in prison if convicted.

Michael "Little Feather" Giron was sentenced on May 30 to a 36-month federal prison term for "civil disorder."

Michael "Rattler" Markus awaits sentencing on Sept. 27. Under his plea agreement, there will be a joint recommendation of 36 months in prison for "civil disorder."

Dion Ortiz is awaiting sentencing on Oct. 22. Under his plea agreement reached on July 17, prosecutors will recommend up to 36 months in prison for "civil disorder."

James "Angry Bird" White entered into a noncooperative plea agreement in July for a sentence of time served plus 12 months of home confinement for "civil disorder."

'Water Is Life!' struggle continues

The cops and federal government intended all their brutality and arrests to put a damper on water protectors during the time of the widespread international effort to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline. Water protectors were arrested by the hundreds, attacked by dogs, sprayed with

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Join us in the fight for socialism!

Workers World Party is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a multinational, multigenerational and multigendered organization that not only aims to abolish capitalism, but to build a socialist society because it's the only way forward!

Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the never-ending quest for ever-greater profits. Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, joblessness and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism.

The U.S. is the richest country in the world, yet no one has a guaranteed right to shelter, food, water, health care, education or anything else — unless they can pay for it. Wages are lower than ever, and youth are saddled with seemingly insurmountable student debt, if they even make it to college. Black and Brown youth and trans people are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis.

WWP fights for socialism because the working class produces all wealth in society, and this wealth should remain in their hands, not be stolen in the form of capitalist profits. The wealth workers create should be socially owned and its distribution planned to satisfy and guarantee basic human needs.

Since 1959, Workers World Party has been out in the streets defending the workers and oppressed here and worldwide. If you're interested in Marxism, socialism and fighting for a socialist future, please contact a WWP branch near you. □

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Trump, Putin and Helsinki

By Fred Goldstein

The Helsinki summit represents a new phase in the attempt by U.S. President Donald Trump to forge a rapprochement with President Vladimir Putin and Russia. This summit, however, comes at a time when the U.S. capitalist state is moving in the opposite direction — toward inflaming relations with Russia.

The basis for the attempted rapprochement is partly a common right-wing political orientation. Trump and Putin are both authoritarian, great-power chauvinists. They are both opposed to the European Union and NATO, but each for his own expansionist reasons. And they are both promoting reactionary, racist, anti-immigration forces in Europe as a tool to weaken European imperialism.

Revolutionaries and anti-imperialists are also opposed to the EU and to NATO. They rightfully want to see these imperialist institutions destroyed. But the EU and NATO must be destroyed in a progressive way: by the working class and the oppressed.

If Europe is disintegrated by right-wing, anti-immigrant, anti-working class forces, it could bring about nationalist, inter-imperialist military conflict. Such disintegration would unleash the forces of conquest and war.

Many on the left in Britain mistakenly backed Brexit because they were opposed to the EU. However, they wound up in an unwanted alliance with the likes of racist, anti-immigrant figures like Boris Johnson, Nigel Farage and rabid anti-immigrant, chauvinist forces wanting to "make the empire great again."

On the other hand, it would be progressive if NATO and the EU were undermined, not by Trump and Putin, but by a united working class, fighting the European bankers and bosses and their military interventions in Africa, the Middle East and eastern Europe. It would be progressive if class solidarity prevailed in the fight against anti-immigrant racism.

Pentagon and spy agencies need an enemy

Trump is trying mightily to reorient Washington's foreign policy. But the Pentagon, the CIA, the FBI and the military-industrial complex are trying to sabotage these efforts. They need to inflate the sense of danger from an "enemy" in order to sustain and expand war preparations and keep military profits rolling in.

The Soviet Union used to be the main Cold War enemy of the U.S. and European ruling classes. Actually, the Cold War was a genuine class war — a struggle between two antagonistic social systems. The USSR was a socialist country that was under pressure around the globe from capitalist Washington's spy agencies, military and diplomatic corps in over 100 countries. As long as the USSR existed, the entire ruling class feared for its property and profits. They feared the spread of socialism.

Capitalist Russia poses no such threat.

Now the U.S. military is driven by the goal of reconquering territories it lost during the Soviet period. That is what the attempted takeover of Ukraine was about. This would have moved the Pentagon to Russia's southern border. It is why Washington moved NATO into the Baltics in 2004 and established a northern military cordon in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. And the U.S. has made Poland into a forward base in Central Europe. It is the strategy of encirclement. Washington also attempted a takeover of Georgia and has now incorporated Montenegro into NATO.

The ultimate goal of U.S. imperialism is to restore its own pro-U.S. regime in Moscow.

Russia's contradictory role

Because of its strategic interests, Russia plays a contradictory role in its struggle with U.S. imperialism.

Putin partially rebuffed the attempt by U.S. and European imperialism to take over Ukraine. It has supported the resistance in the Donbass region and has protected its strategic naval base in the Crimea.

It has also backed the Syrian government in its drive to stop a U.S. takeover of that country. Putin is trying to protect Russia's only land ally and seaport in the Middle East.

Russia has helped Cuba with export credits, automobiles, locomotives, oil and other exports on a strictly capitalist basis. It has forgiven much of Cuba's $3 billion debt left over from the Soviet era. Russia has also helped Venezuela with debt forgiveness, allowing Caracas to retain oil that it uses to pay debts.

It is perfectly understandable for oppressed countries under U.S. sanctions, blockade or military attack to ally with Russia and take aid from it. And revolutionaries and progressives should support and defend that aid. But this does not change the class character of the counterrevolutionary oligarch regime in Moscow.

Publicist lackeys and anti-Russia storm

The ruling-class publicist lackeys of all types have rushed to the public megaphone to do the bidding of the Pentagon and the spy agencies. Bourgeois journalists, news anchors, "expert" panelists, former and present government officials, retired generals and admirals turned "commentators" and "analysts," think tank pundits, even late-night show hosts — all have vied with each other to attack Trump for being a tool of Putin and Putin for being a master manipulator who "interfered with our democracy."

While beating the anti-Russia drums of war, these paid scribes of the ruling class are all rallying behind the FBI and CIA. And who are they? These agencies are two of the greatest enemies of the workers and oppressed at home and abroad. The FBI has infiltrated and framed up generations of communists, socialists, African-American civil rights organizations and liberation groups. It has hunted them down on their jobs and in their homes, imprisoned and even killed them.

> ***While beating the anti-Russian drums of war, the paid scribes of the ruling class are all rallying behind the FBI and CIA. These are two of the greatest enemies of the workers and oppressed at home and abroad.***

For decades the CIA has overthrown governments, too numerous to list. It has carried out assassinations, set up torture sites and disrupted national liberation struggles all over the world. Because Trump is attacking it while trying to save his skin from the Mueller investigation, some liberals and progressives somehow got hoodwinked into defending these two cutthroat organizations.

Trump, the Pentagon, the CIA and FBI all must be equally condemned and fought against as enemies of the people.

Trying to undermine Trump

The Democratic Party leadership and many progressives are hoping that the campaign of Russia baiting will undermine both the Trump administration and the Trump Republicans in Congress, as well as erode his base. In addition to Russia baiting, they are hoping that the Mueller investigation into the Trump campaign will end up with the ouster of Trump.

Both these paths are a dead end for the working class and the oppressed.

This mentality of getting rid of Trump, no matter how, is very dangerous. Russia baiting plays into the war drive of the military. It will only drain the funds that should be used for social spending and reduce the already starved social safety net. It runs the increased risk of war, in which the working class of both countries would be the primary victims.

It will aid the Democratic Party establishment in its drive to maintain its political dominance over the broad masses of progressive forces, as well as reinforcing bourgeois chauvinist ideology. Using war propaganda to divert Trump's anti-immigrant, pro-cop followers only substitutes one capitalist evil for another.

Subverting 'our democracy' by interfering in elections?

One of the most pernicious propaganda narratives of the anti-Russian propaganda is that the Russians interfered in "our democracy."

First of all, it is not "our democracy." This is the democracy of the capitalist class. The rich control every platform of publicity, TV, newspapers, radio, film, etc. The bosses own all the major halls, arenas, theaters, stadiums. They own the newsprint, the presses and other forms of print media. They control the ideological and political content of every major public propaganda organ.

Democratic rights that may exist for the masses under this constricted, truncated capitalist democracy have been won through organization and struggle, at the cost of much blood, whether it's union rights, civil rights, women's rights or LGBTQ rights. Nothing has been given by the ruling class without a fight.

Democratic rights in the U.S. are in fact being taken away — but not by Russia. Voter suppression by every means possible has reduced the votes of African Americans, Latinx, Native people, Asians and poor whites.

This has been done by the imposition of voter ID laws, closing polling stations, gerrymandering electoral districts to reduce the electoral weight of oppressed communities, and just plain illegally purging voter rolls. The mass incarceration of millions of Black, Latinx and poor white workers is a shortcut to disenfranchisement, and not just during their term of imprisonment. Many states take away the right to vote of so-called felons for long periods afterwards.

And this is to say nothing of the police killing of Black, Latinx and Indigenous people that goes on day after day across the country.

And where are the democratic rights of millions of migrants to be free from persecution by Border Patrol stormtroopers and from Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents who roam the country, raid workplaces and neighborhoods? They kill, brutalize, imprison and deport with impunity.

The rights of women to control their bodies are denied every time a new anti-abortion law is passed; every time a women's health care clinic is shut down. Every time a batterer is ignored by the authorities, women's very lives are at stake.

These are real-life examples of interference with democratic rights that so many people have been jailed or died in order to realize.

Trump and democracy

Trump is an authoritarian, right-wing, racist, misogynist, militarist bigot. He is trampling on institutions and rights that were established for society's protection. The numerous government agencies that have been created over the years to curb corporate abuses are being completely destroyed by Trump.

These agencies and institutions have been regarded as riot insurance by the bosses. They were set up to limit the damage done by the capitalists in the jurisdictions indicated by their names. Corporate bribery and corruption have always allowed the bosses to weaken and circumvent various regulations. But Trump has taken it to a new level.

He keeps the loyalty and acquiescence of big business by destroying all progressive limitations on capitalist plunder and reducing the funds spent on regulation, such as the trillion-dollar tax cut, the transformation of the regulatory agencies into permissive enablers of the plunder of the environment, the destruction of public education, removing government oversight of public transportation, drugs and pharmaceuticals, Big Oil and mining, etc.

With all the tumult about Trump and Russia, the rights of the masses are under attack on a daily basis. The movement must turn its attention to combating these attacks. The enemy is not only the Trump administration and the capitalists who support him, but the capitalist system of plunder and exploitation as a whole. ☐

#NoDAPL water protector sentenced

Continued from page 2

mace and pepper spray over and over, hit with concussion grenades and rubber bullets, seriously injured, denied medical care, strip-searched and placed in dog cages upon arrest.

The militarized attacks against the camps at Standing Rock were part of a centuries-old history of government repression directed against Indigenous people who defend their lands.

Once again, that repression has backfired. Resistance continues to grow. From British Columbia to Louisiana, from the nation of Colombia to Minnesota, pipeline fighters and water protectors continue to spring up everywhere. Throughout Turtle Island, Indigenous people and allies rise together to say, "Water Is Life!"

Part of supporting that resistance is to ensure that our political prisoners are never forgotten or left behind. For updates and information about how to contact Red Fawn and other #NoDAPL political prisoners, go to tinyurl.com/y8qlcb23/. ☐

Big win for University of Michigan teachers

By Martha Grevatt
Detroit

After nine months of tough negotiations, nontenured lecturing instructors at the University of Michigan's three campuses have won an agreement that provides substantial pay increases, improved access to health benefits, increased pension contributions and stronger job security guarantees.

The 1,700 members of Lecturing Employees Organization, American Federation of Teachers Local 6244, voting July 11-13, ratified the new contract by a 98 percent majority. There was strong member participation in the electronic ratification process.

Under the old contract, starting pay for full-time lecturing instructors was only $27,300 at the Flint campus, $28,300 in Dearborn and $34,500 in Ann Arbor.

But many instructors make much less. Many are part time, with no control over their course load, which is decided each semester by the administration. Instructors working less than 60 percent of full time have no health benefits. Those working less than full time pay a large

PHOTO: LEO

percentage of their health care premiums. A lecturer who teaches two or more classes one semester could lose access to health benefits the next semester if their course load drops to one class.

This deplorable situation is not unique to Michigan. Across the country, fewer professors are being hired for full-time, tenure-track positions and are being replaced by lecturers who are paid lower salaries and do not have job security or even a predictable income due to last-minute scheduling.

The new contract at UM will raise pay by an average of 50 percent by the third year of the contract. Currently employed lecturers will receive substantial raises. Access to health benefits is now based on an average annual course load.

The union did not win everything it had asked for and hopes in future bargaining to address the pay discrepancy between the main Ann Arbor campus and the Flint and Dearborn locations. Lower-paid teachers at the satellite campuses were the most active in the contract struggle.

Victory for teachers and students

"We've been working since October 2017 to create an agreement that will ensure quality education for our students and fair compensation for our members," said LEO President Ian Robinson, a lecturer in the Sociology Department at UM in Ann Arbor, in a June 22 LEO news release.

Kirsten Herold, a lecturer at the UM School of Public Health, LEO vice president and manager of the LEO bargaining team, added: "Higher pay will lead to less turnover, more lecturers working full time — rather than holding multiple part-time jobs — and a more stable learning environment for our students to whom our membership are so dedicated."

This victory was not achieved through skilled negotiations alone. LEO built a public "Respect the Lecs" campaign that included rallies, electronic petitioning and an April 22 sit-in inside the administration building.

The union hired organizers who made a point of talking to every member, hearing what their primary issues were and giving regular updates. Teachers were all set to go out on a two-day strike, which was only called off when the administration began agreeing to LEO's proposals.

There was mass support from tenured faculty, the Graduate Employees Organization, other campus workers, students and members of the Board of Regents. Students filled out hundreds of postcards giving their reasons for supporting the union. GEO and LEO have a history of mutual solidarity, which has benefited both groups of exploited education workers.

There was also strong support from the nurses in the UM hospital system, who have been dealing with the same hostile management in their negotiations. LEO members are being urged to attend rallies to back the nurses.

The upsurge of education worker resistance, beginning with the powerful strike in West Virginia, has spread to higher education. ☐

Federal workers mobilize against Trump's union busting

By Sue Davis

While the right-wing majority on the Supreme Court awarded two major wins in anti-union, anti-worker cases this spring — the reactionary Epic Systems and Janus decisions — the bullying billionaire boss in the Oval Office was also busy, issuing union-busting executive orders on May 25 and July 9. These unpublicized orders are designed to strip 700,000 federal workers, particularly women and people of color, of their rights on the job.

A crime of such magnitude against working people has to be exposed and fought with a mighty fist.

The Trump administration's new rules are designed to dramatically decrease the threshold needed to fire unionized federal workers. The evidence needed to take disciplinary action against employees has been reduced from over 120 days to 30 days. J. David Cox, president of the American Federation of Government Employees, which represents the workers, told Payday Report: "I have no doubt that the policies and actions of this administration disproportionality impact women and minorities.

"The agencies that have been attacked most severely, agencies like [Housing and Urban Development, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Social Security Administration] and the Department of Education not only provide the greatest amount of services to women and minorities, they also have very high percentages of women and minorities in their workforce." (July 11)

Traditionally, affirmative action programs and a workforce unionized at four times the rate of private sector unions have made the federal government a more welcoming workplace for women and people of color. Though African Americans account for only 10 percent of the "civilian" workforce, they account for 18 percent of federal workers.

PHOTO: AFGE

"The new executive orders are going to make it even harder for us to recruit and retain people of color," said Linda Ward-Smith, president of AFGE Local 1224, representing workers in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The African-American union leader asserted, "This is just giving management more power to just get rid of people because of whatever reason."

Trump's rules also weaken the union's ability to represent workers. For example, all Title 38 employees at the VA, including many nurses, physicians and mental health specialists in the majority female workforce, are no longer allowed to have shop stewards represent them in disciplinary hearings on official government time. Now, stewards have to clock out.

Studies show workers with union representation are better able to reduce the chances of getting fired.

No longer are workers allowed to use federal computers or email to communicate across workplaces, making it difficult for stewards to meet and talk with workers on the job. "They are making us all at-will employees," notes Ward-Smith. "A lot of times, we take these jobs for protection. This is why we come to the federal government because we have unions, but now it is just as bad as the private sector."

National fightback needed

At the Social Security Administration, where 32 percent of the workforce is African-American, the Trump administration has banned unions from holding meetings in federal buildings, though that's been accepted practice for decades. Even unions offering to rent office space at market rate have been refused, despite other businesses having been allowed to do it.

AFGE Council 220, representing about 29,000 employees in Social Security Administration field offices and service centers, has filed four class-action grievances against the SSA for using a promotion system they say is discriminatory. Statistics over four years show that "twice as many whites as minority people get the highest rating," said Witold Skwierczynski, president of Council 220. Now, SSA workers won't be allowed to file grievances showing the promotion system is discriminatory.

Council 220 officials view such signs

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Skyscraper window washers on strike

By Jeff Sorel
Chicago

Suppose you had to earn your living washing skyscraper windows a thousand feet in the air? In summer you scald in the sun as you dangle from your rope, while in winter your soapy, water-covered skin freezes.

At a minimum, you would expect sizeable pay and benefits for engaging in such risky work. After all, billion-dollar Chicago buildings like Trump Tower enjoy massive tax breaks.

Yet many of the workers who scale these gleaming edifices are paid as little as $12 an hour, not nearly enough to make ends meet and raise a family in this expensive city.

Demanding decent pay and affordable health care, hundreds of Chicago window washers — dressed in superhero costumes — and family members poured into Chicago's downtown the morning of July 10 to protest. Their signs read, "Window washers are Chicago's real skyline superheroes." They temporarily blocked the busy intersection of Michigan Avenue and Randolph Street before rallying in Millennium Park.

WW PHOTO: JEFF SOREL

Window washers protest low pay and benefits, July 18.

About 260 union window washers represented by Service Employees Local 1 have been on strike since July 2 — right in the middle of peak washing season. When their contract expired on that date, they traded in their squeegees for picket signs. The six companies that employ them handle most of the windows in the city's downtown buildings.

On July 18, as the strike continued, they marched on City Hall, which led a majority of the City Council's 50 members to express their support.

The union seeks an increase in starting wages to a range of $16 to $25 an hour. It also wants an increase in life insurance coverage (which makes plenty of sense, given the risks of the job) and removal of the current cap on employer health insurance contributions.

The workers say they won't go back to work until their employers start bargaining in good faith. ☐

Disability Pride parade targets potential service cuts

New York City

WWP contingent in Disability Pride parade.

WW PHOTO: JULIE VARUGHESE

By New York Disabilities Bureau of Workers World Party

On a glorious Sunday morning, after a thunderstorm had cleared the air, thousands of disabled New Yorkers with their friends and families walked, rode, rolled and scooted down Broadway from Madison Square Park to Union Square Park in the July 15 Disability Pride Parade. A festival was scheduled at the end of the parade.

Spirits were high. Concerns about the heat had been raised in social media by many groups, including the NY Peoples Power Assemblies. The PPA had carried out a vigorous "We Want the Shade" campaign to reverse the route so the parade would end at Madison Square Park and the three-hour festival could be held in the shade. Many disabled people are adversely affected by excessive heat. In 2015, three participants had to be hospitalized due to heat exhaustion.

As a result of this campaign, the city spent a significant amount on two large tents to provide shade in the paved, treeless part of the park where the festival was held.

The theme of the parade was "Express Yourself" and prizes were awarded to the most creative expression of that. The feeling was definitely celebratory. Two men sitting on benches played bongo drums. Wheelchair dancing took place in a designated area in front of the stage. At one point, a wheelchair user threw her hands up in joy as her partner twirled her around several times. "Move whatever you've got — a toe, a head, an arm," encouraged the emcee.

Protest serious cutbacks

At 12:15 p.m., disabled people gathered in front of the stage to protest Gov. Andrew Cuomo's threat to close the Independent Care System, which provides essential services that enable disabled people to live at home.

Wheelchair user Sharifa Abu-Hamda, founder of the Civic League for Disability Rights, thrilled the excited crowd with a speech demanding Cuomo end his horrific plan to close ICS. She emphasized that the Civic League has fought to protect Medicaid, to maintain funding for wheelchairs and equipment, and to make public transit more accessible.

She explained: "Today we are fighting to save Independent Care Systems also known as ICS. ICS exists for one reason: to make sure that people like me, people with physical disabilities, are able to live independently. No other insurance does that.

"Governor Cuomo is planning to close ICS. He says we will be able to get the same services from any other plan we enroll in. That is not true. The state wants to close ICS to save money, and the only way to do that is to cut our services. Because of my condition, I need 24-hour home care, which ICS pays for. No other plan has ICS's disability expertise. ICS made it possible for me to work and live in my own home [and] undergo complicated surgery and emerge in good health when my own doctors did not have a clue how to make that happen. My story is multiplied thousands of times. ...

"We have the right to live independently with dignity instead of being locked up in institutions. Governor Cuomo: Save ICS."

Some 50 wheelchair users then surrounded the stage. Holding up a handmade paper sign reading, "ICS Is the Best," they chanted, "Save ICS!" for more than 15 minutes.

Disability rights movement more diverse than ever

An inspiring list of more than 50 organizations participated in the event. The grand marshal of the parade was Judy Heumann, a wheelchair user who pioneered the disability rights movement. As a student at Long Island University, she organized disabled students to fight for ramps. She sued her school district for the right to teach. In 1970, she founded Disabled in Action, a vanguard group in the disability civil rights movement. In 1977, she took part in a 28-day sit-in for disability rights in San Francisco. In 1981, she helped found the World Institute on Disability.

More than 30 signs prepared by Workers World Party, Peoples Power Assemblies, Peoples MTA and Parents to Improve School Transportation were handed out through the crowd; some were enthusiastically mounted on wheelchairs. Issues included the police killings of disabled people, lack of elevators and access to the subway system, and defending Medicaid, the Americans with Disabilities Act and ICS. □

Crumbling infrastructure spewed deadly asbestos

By G. Dunkel
New York

Early on the morning of July 19, part of the infrastructure crumbled in New York City's bustling Flatiron district, a mixed business and residential area. An 86-year-old steam pipe broke, spewing steam, asphalt, mud and toxic asbestos into the air in a jet stream that reached at least 200 feet high. The explosion left a crater the size of a city bus at 21st Street and Fifth Avenue. Several utility access holes in that area also popped open.

Since it was relatively early in the morning, stores and offices were closed. Only five people were injured, none seriously. Forty-nine buildings were evacuated. As of July 23, nine buildings have been cleared for re-entry. Several streets that had been blocked have been re-opened.

Workers from Con Edison, the city's billion-dollar energy supplier, and the New York Fire Department are in the process of power washing the outside walls of buildings contaminated by asbestos. They are filtering the water, bagging the asbestos and setting it aside to be buried.

Just breathing in one asbestos particle can produce mesothelioma or other types of cancer. According to some health experts, it takes 20 to 30 years to develop diseases caused by repeated asbestos exposure.

Con Edison is the company that distributes steam — which is produced mainly as a byproduct of electricity generation. It is used for heat, hot water, air-conditioning and sterilization for 1,700 residential or commercial buildings. Con Edison gets 5 percent of its $13 billion annual revenue from steam.

Con Edison sent its Biological/Chemical Weapons Response Team to handle this crisis, even though no government official or agency has suggested that the explosion was caused by a terrorist attack.

The New York Times of July 19, 2007, reported there had been at least 12 steam pipe explosions since 1989. All of them spread asbestos. The city's 100 miles of steam lines consist of asbestos-covered pipes that are at least 50 years old.

Con Ed warned 20 years ago

It's ironic that this steam line eruption happened only a block north of a major water main break followed by a gas line explosion in 1998. The water main was over 100 years old. After the water was turned off, a gas line broke, setting off a fire that took hours to put out. Asbestos was spewed everywhere. Hundreds of offices and stores were closed, Subways were shut down. Traffic was rerouted. Gas, water, electrical, steam heat and telephone services were disrupted.

The latest catastrophe wasn't as intense as the one in 1998, but Con Edison had been warned about these problems 20 years ago and hasn't done much to avoid them from recurring.

Underneath Fifth Avenue, as with many Manhattan streets, are layers of services — water, gas, electricity, telephone, cable, sewerage, subway and other train lines, and pedestrian tunnels. City officials, who are responsible for coordinating all these services, project the attitude that maintenance is costly and not necessary — and that repairs should only be done when the infrastructure breaks down.

The city administration prioritizes costs over the quality of lives of the millions of people who live, work, shop in or visit this neighborhood — or anywhere in New York — where they face unpredictable hazards.

It has taken many struggles by workers and impacted Con Edison customers to get the utility company to handle asbestos clean-ups even in a minimal way. The asbestos wrappings around the pipes should be removed, the steam lines reinsulated with safe materials and the pipes upgraded. This should be done immediately — despite Con Ed's opposition because the company considers this undertaking too expensive. □

WW SUPPORTER PROGRAM

Continue defense of Cuban Revolution

On July 26, 1953, Cuban revolutionaries stormed the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba, Cuba. Less than six years later, Fidel and his guerrillas ousted the U.S.-backed dictatorship, marching into Havana in early January 1959.

That same year, Workers World newspaper began to publish. After more than a decade of anti-communist reaction in the U.S., the Cuban Revolution helped revive interest in revolutionary socialism. The more outrageous the anti-Cuba propaganda in the corporate press, the harder Workers World has worked to tell the truth about this great victory over U.S. imperialism.

In 1961, when the U.S. announced that it was breaking diplomatic relations with Cuba, WW's first editor, Vince Copeland, led a protest inside the United Nations, his booming voice proclaiming the U.S. "speaks for the bankers, not the people."

In the early 1990s, Cuba endured great economic hardships after the Soviet Union fell and the U.S. tightened its blockade. Workers World helped build the Peace for Cuba International Appeal to end the blockade, the travel ban and all intervention against Cuba.

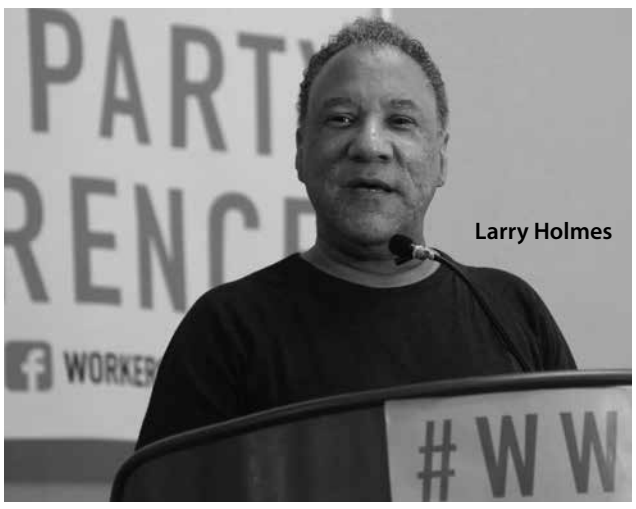
Despite the choking blockade, the Cuban Revolution only grows stronger and more respected as it sends life-saving medical teams all over the world. As the Trump administration increases its hostility to the socialist country, Workers World remains dedicated to defending revolutionary Cuba. Donations from WW supporters have helped get our pro-Cuba writings in print, distributed and posted at workers.org.

We invite you to join the 41-year-old WW Supporter Program to help us continue to publish articles in solidarity with workers and oppressed peoples worldwide and in opposition to U.S. wars. The newspaper is a source of anti-racist, anti-sexist, pro-LGBTQ news and working-class truth, while it supports immigrants, opposes Islamophobia and helps build pro-socialist campaigns.

To join, write checks to Workers World and mail them, with your name and address, to 147 W. 24th St., 2nd floor, New York, NY 10011. Or donate at workers.org/donate/. Supporters who contribute $75 a year receive a year's subscription, a monthly letter and five free subscriptions. Sponsors who contribute $100 also get a book published by World View Forum. Sustainers who contribute $300 or more receive five books. Thanks for your help in building the revolutionary press in the U.S. □

Meeting the challenges facing the working class,
The need for a political and organizational strateg

An important issue under discussion inside Workers World Party, which resulted in members of the WWP Detroit branch resigning on July 14, is over the issue of "identity politics." The former Detroit members held the position that the issue of "identity politics" is harming the working class. The majority in the Party disagree with their position. The internal party document below, prepared for a recent leadership meeting, and now being made public, was written by WWP First Secretary Larry Holmes on May 14, 2018, to contextualize some of these differences, particularly the section entitled "We must push aside all barriers to organizing our class."



Larry Holmes

WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

In the view of Workers World Party, the term "identity politics," used both affirmatively and derisively by differing forces in the broad working-class movement and on the left, essentially poses this question: Is acknowledging and supporting the legitimate struggles of oppressed sections of our class and all of society against racism, sexism and LGBTQ oppression, antithetical to or integral to the class struggle against capitalism? We believe it to be integral. More will be said later in this document.

The party must begin to orient itself to the next stage of the class struggle. Obviously, we cannot predict the course of future events. But that fact alone is no reason for the party not to prepare politically and organizationally for a new level of global class struggle, however quickly or slowly or unevenly this might develop. The new level of struggle is predicated on the extreme character of the global capitalist crisis, what our class must prepare for, and what the party must do if we truly want to inhabit the vacuum that is waiting for a real revolutionary workers party to step up.

The working class, including the organized, and especially the far larger unorganized, section of it has reached a kind of precipice.

Either something changes or the setbacks that we have witnessed over three or more decades will accelerate.

The Janus case before the Supreme Court, a threat to the labor movement that I assume comrades are familiar with, is only symptomatic of the crisis that our class must confront and transcend.

Not so long ago, there was a school of thought among bourgeois academics that predicted that the working class was withering away. Just the opposite is true. The working class is growing as more of society is pushed into it by the vicissitudes of capitalist change and decay. The composition and parameters of our class are constantly changing and expanding.

Yet, the conventional thinking of most of the trade union leadership remains the same. That thinking maintains that if a group of workers regardless of where they work is unable to win union recognition or negotiate a contract or engage in collective bargaining and pay union dues, then these workers cannot gain entrance to the labor movement. This thinking excludes the overwhelming majority of workers from the labor movement. Both in thinking and in practice this norm must change.

The term that many, ourselves included, call this thinking is "business unionism." Business unionism has long since exhausted its ability to defend the working class.

Business unionism defines a narrow, limited and conservative approach to organizing workers that is fundamentally based on a nonstruggle, class-collaborationist orientation. One of the big problems with this kind of unionism is that it tends to prioritize defending the gains of unionized workers over the need to organize more workers. Both needs should have equal priority. Until that is the case, it will be easier for the ruling class to pit sections of the working class against each other.

The problem of business unionism is not new. Militant and progressive trade unionists have been combating it for a very long time.

However, a tipping point has been reached. The struggle against conservative conceptions of unionism must be intensified, ideologically, politically and through concrete action — not only on the part of the rank and file of the labor movement, but on the part of revolutionary and radical forces both in and outside of the organized labor movement. And most importantly, this fight must be joined by more and more workers no matter what their circumstances are.

The party, and all who are truly interested in the struggle of the working class, must analyze this problem and plan action on the basis of a fresh perspective.

The fact that our party is small in comparison to the scope of this crisis is no excuse to sit on the sidelines.

In a way, the rebellion of education workers that is still spreading across the country (a struggle that is being joined on college campuses by janitors, cafeteria workers and graduate students) is probably the biggest sign that workers know that they must embrace a militant, rank-and-file, community-involved orientation as against the trade union bureaucracy.

Let's open this discussion at our meeting at the end of May

I am strongly recommending to the party that one of the major points on the agenda for the upcoming leadership meeting should be the beginning of a thorough review of the party's approach to the working class, including a critical assessment of questions such as:

- What is our view of the trade union movement?
- What must be done to maximize the organization of the working class?
- Who or what is the working class?
- What is a real and contemporary Marxist view of the working class?
- What will it take to truly strengthen solidarity and internationalism in our class?
- What practical steps can the party take?

These are just a few of the questions that need to be taken up. Even if we were able to devote the entire meeting to these questions, which we can't do, it would still only be the beginning of the discussion.

A brief background to problems facing the working class

Karl Marx did not call for reforming capitalism; he called for overthrowing it. Marx explained why capitalism could not be reformed. Marx also explained that the capitalist system was inherently unstable and subject to greater and even greater catastrophic crises. He warned that any improvement in the conditions for workers won in the class struggle with capital was subject to being reversed so long as the capitalist class held power.

What's more, in documents he prepared for the convening of the First International almost 150 years ago, Marx explained that the labor movement, as it evolved to higher and higher stages, needed to abandon all narrow or limited conceptions so that its initial aim, the improvement of the conditions for workers, changed/evolved to become the overthrow of the capitalist system.

The influence of these central principles of revolutionary Marxism in the broad working-class movement has diminished over a protracted period. This is especially true for the working class in the centers of world imperialism, like the U.S. It is less true for the national liberation movements, the workers and oppressed in what is sometimes referred to as the Global South, which includes most of the Americas, Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

How did this come to be? The short answer is that historical developments over the past three-quarters of a century gave capitalism and imperialism a new lease on life. Consequently, much of the working-class movement bought into the illusion that capitalism was more or less permanent, as well as more or less stable. It is this illusion, with the help of the capitalist ruling class, that gave rise to the bourgeois, social-democratic political parties, i.e., the Democrats in the U.S.

Capitalism has now entered another epoch, the epoch of advanced permanent crisis and decay. Capitalism can no longer afford the price of social democracy. Moreover, the capitalist class no longer needs social democracy as an anti-communist bulwark against the former Soviet Union and the other former socialist countries.

The collapse of social democracy: a major dilemma for the working class

The collapse of social democracy has left the working class temporarily disarmed. The next period of the political development of the working class is how, through action, organizing, struggle, experience, political development and solidarity, it rearms itself.

The magnitude of the crisis remains, for a time, far beyond the political level of the working class and its organizations. That will and must change. Simply wishing that the workers were somehow able to catch up overnight to what the crisis demands of them won't make it so.

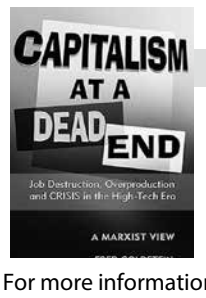
Nonetheless, communists must understand that however long it might take, at a certain point significant sections of the working class will understand the necessity that the struggle must be for more than gaining or defending concessions, that it must be for complete emancipation.

As some comrades have pointed out over the years, we have at our disposal transitional demands and other strategies to challenge the rule of capital and generate confidence and consciousness among the workers that will help them cross the bridge from the struggle for reform to the struggle for power.

The party has a tremendous amount of experience in the working-class struggle in virtually every industry and in every region of the country. The comrades in the labor fraction have been doing a great job, especially with the limited time and resources they have. Going forward, the party must begin to transform itself in preparation for this challenge.

We must push aside all barriers to organizing our class

The inability or unwillingness of the business unionism model to embrace and lift up immigrant workers and the abandonment of the campaign to organize fast food workers, which many considered never serious to begin with, are examples of the crisis in the labor movement. In spite of this, hundreds of thousands of workers are either being organized or self-organized — a tremendous sign that workers are waking up and taking matters into their own hands.



Capitalism at a Dead End

Job destruction, overproduction and crisis in the high-tech era

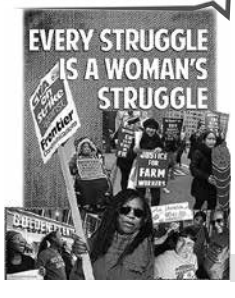
For more information on these books and other writings by the author, Fred Goldstein, go to **LowWageCapitalism.com**

Available at all major online booksellers.

El capitalismo en un callejón sin salida

Fred Goldstein utiliza las leyes de la acumulación capitalista de Marx, y la tasa decreciente de ganancia, para demostrar por qué el capitalismo globalha llegado finalmente a un punto de inflexión.

WORKERS WORLD PARTY
PARTIDO MUNDO OBRERO



The booklet shows women rising up in a wide range of struggles that oppose the reactionary administration and assert our rights: against racism and white supremacy; for health care and control of our bodies; for ending the pay gap and for union power; and for recognition of transgender people's rights.

Learn more. Read pamphlets that are comp

including 'identity politics'
gy

There have been more workers' strikes this year than at any time since the late 1970s.

I wholeheartedly agree with Marx and Sam Marcy that the political movements of the oppressed, be it Black Lives Matter or migrant workers or women or LGBTQ people, are not separate from the class struggle, but rather part of it and integral to it. The same is true for the unemployed, street vendors, cultural workers, people with disabilities, sex workers, prisoners and retirees.

As important as the economic-based struggles of our class are, the political struggles against war or in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle or the people of Puerto Rico and against the capitalist system itself are no less important than the economic ones. Ultimately, the political struggles are far more important.

The youth, who are drawn to the fight against white supremacy, racism and fascism, in my view, are very much part of the class struggle. In the first decade of our party's existence, most of the cadre we recruited came off the campuses. In most instances, the first experience of comrades back then was in the anti-war and anti-racist movements. Fifty years ago, the chances of someone with a college degree, a master's degree or a doctorate degree having a fairly comfortable life were pretty good.

Today, young people with college degrees are trapped in the precarious "gig" economy, constantly moving from job to job, apartment to apartment, and saddled with tens of thousands of dollars in student loan debt.

Working in an Amazon warehouse

The point being: The young radicals that the party is recruiting today are more likely to be in the working class than was the case a half century ago. There are some comrades who believe that identity politics is anti-working class. I disagree.

Those in the movement who have minimized or disparaged identity politics have not helped our class gain a deeper understanding of what is required to forge greater solidarity with the most oppressed. We need to struggle over whatever differences there may exist in our own ranks so that we can more effectively struggle for this view in the wider movement.

There are aspects of the gender nonconforming, nonbinary struggle that have revolutionary implications. Backward ideas tend to thrive where people's knowledge of the world they live in is limited by the level of the productive forces.

The material basis for the new confidence that women and LGBTQ people have in asserting their rights is in part because of the incredible development of the productive forces due to technology. This is true, even though the productive forces remain under the ownership of the capitalist ruling class. Like every struggle, the gender nonconforming struggle has a potential to be co-opted by the ruling class and, at the other extreme, a potential to be revolutionary. The significance of the revolutionary potential is a full-scale rebellion against patriarchy, which is a key pillar of class society.

The time has come for our class to take another look at the struggles of prisoners and sex workers and all other sectors of our class who have been told that they are not part of the working class. Class solidarity is about multiplication, not subtraction and division.

The communications technology that is derived from the incredible growth of the productive forces makes real working-class internationalism, which not so long ago was mostly symbolic, now practical and available.

Third worldism, a continuing discussion related to our class

The discussion of third worldism might seem separate from a discussion of the problems facing our class. It is not. A few months ago, I promised some comrades that I would enlist their ideas in helping the party deepen its understanding of third worldism. I apologize for not being able to do so yet, but I intend to follow through on this as soon as possible.

The term Third World, which was very popular in the progressive and revolutionary movements, as well as in the national liberation struggles during the 1950s, 60s and 70s, was used to describe underdeveloped countries, colonies or neocolonies. It was also used to describe a block of countries that wanted to be independent from both the big imperialist countries as well as the socialist countries.

Today the term third worldism is used by several overlapping yet distinct ideologies. The ideology that most of the comrades of my generation associate the term with is essentially the nationalism of the oppressed in the struggle for liberation and self-determination. The term is also used by a section of the Maoist left. The grouping that uses this term to describe themselves that I am the least familiar with are those who consider white workers to be settler colonialists and therefore reactionary and undeserving of any support.

The reason this came up in the party was that during the education workers' strike in West Virginia back in March, a few former comrades in West Virginia unfortunately did not support the strike, at least initially, and even disparaged it on social media, basing their position on the white-settler variant of the term. Some of us had hoped to hold on to and educate these comrades, but they chose to leave the party.

Mond from Detroit and Mahtowin from Boston wrote interesting pieces on this question, which I believe have drawn attention both inside and outside of the party.

Of course, we understand and support the movements of oppressed peoples, especially Indigenous peoples, who justifiably consider themselves the survivors of white settler colonialism.

The charges against imperialism, colonialism and before it slavery, the genocidal displacement of Indigenous peoples, along with the occupation and theft of the entire southwest from Mexico, are undeniable historical facts. It is also true that imperialism has used some of the wealth (a mere fraction of it) that it has stolen from the land and labor of oppressed peoples to, in a sense, buy off sections of the working class.

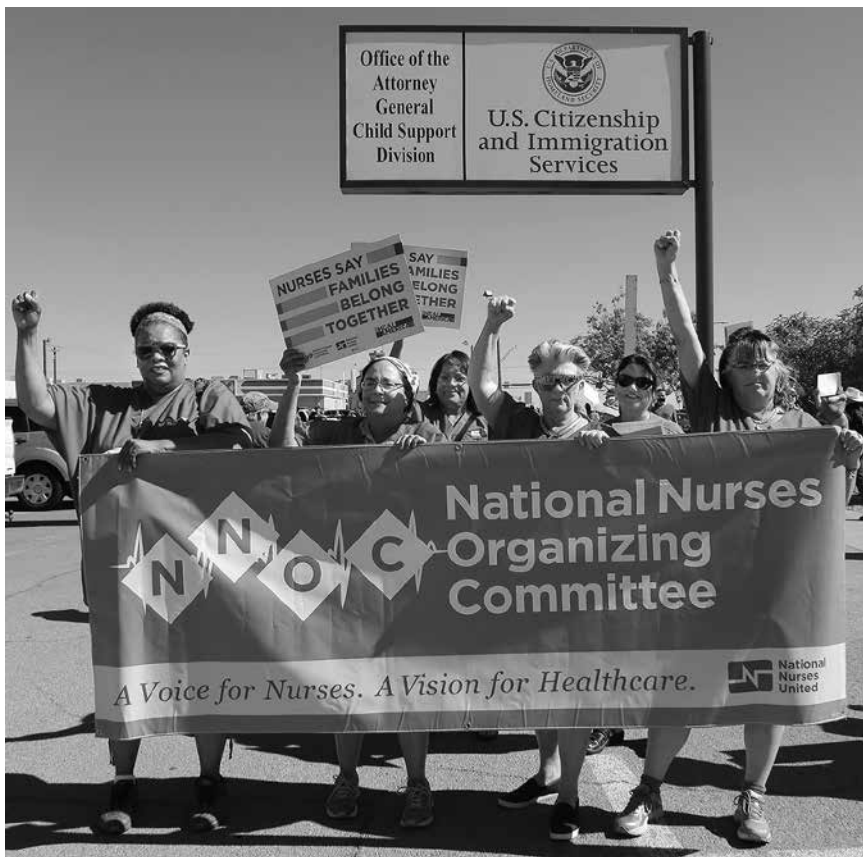


PHOTO: NATIONAL NURSES UNITED

Outraged nurses march against border detention facilities in El Paso, Texas, on June 19.

Has this been an obstacle to the political development of the working class as an independent anti-capitalist social force? Yes, it's been a problem. Has this affected the whole of the working class in the imperialist countries? No. It's mostly affected the higher-paid workers. Has it stopped the day-to-day class struggle? No, as any comrade and millions upon millions of workers can attest to. Has it made the working class or sections of it irreversibly reactionary? No.

As a matter of fact, central to the political crisis of capitalism is the fact that the systemic crises of the capitalist system are depriving it of the extra crumbs it has relied on to pacify sections of the working class.

The economic crisis is leveling the degree of inequality in the working class. However, inequality obviously exists, and that will continue to be the case for some time to come. This inequality will be used to divide workers, especially if it is ignored instead of being addressed by progressive and revolutionary workers.

This discussion is relevant to an understanding of the attraction of the many variants of anarchism, particularly those that are the most anti-working class, in which category I place the ideas that influenced a few of our former comrades in West Virginia.

As long as the working-class movement, including the organized labor movement, is more or less tied to business unionism, the Democratic Party and class collaboration — which endangers every unionized worker and puts the rest of the working class in even greater peril — some radicals will write off the working class as well as Marxism and gravitate to dead-end, pseudo-radical

Continued on page 11

WWPHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

June 24, New York City. Reclaim Pride contingent sparks resistance.

WORKERS WORLD PARTY
PARTIDO MUNDO OBRERO

Class War in W.Va.: Education Workers Strike, Win

In West Virginia, famous for battles between union miners and the coal barons, class war raged with teachers and school workers on one side and right-wing capitalist politicians on the other.

ilations of WW articles online at: www.workers.org/books

Aug. 21-Sept. 9

Prisoners call for national strike

By Terri Kay
Oakland, Calif.

A deadly atrocity took place at Lee Correctional Institution, a South Carolina maximum security prison, on April 15. The jailers intentionally set up what was essentially a gladiator fight, housing rival groups of prisoners together in densely overcrowded cell blocks, locking the gates with no means of escape and turning their backs for hours. It was a setup that led to the deaths of seven prisoners.

In response to this, a core group of organized inmates, including prisoners in the collective, Jailhouse Lawyers Speak, have issued a call for a national prison strike from Aug. 21 to Sept. 9.

August 21 is the anniversary of the assassination of Black Panther Party Field Marshal and prison activist George Jackson in 1971. September 9 is the anniversary of the Attica Prison Rebellion, which erupted two weeks after Jackson's assassination.

In an April 24 press release, Jailhouse Lawyers Speak stated that the Lee uprising "could have been avoided had the prison not been so overcrowded from the greed wrought by mass incarceration, and a lack of respect for human life that is embedded in our nation's penal ideology. These men and women are demanding humane living conditions, access to rehabilitation, sentencing reform and the end of modern day slavery." (sawarimi.org/national-prison-strike)

Incarcerated people from at least 17 states have already confirmed their participation in the upcoming strike. They have asked for solidarity and support from people outside the walls in a number of ways. Hashtags for solidarity messages and actions are #prisonstrike and #August21.

Prison strike demands and support

Jailhouse Lawyers Speak lists these 10 demands from "men and women in federal, immigration and state prisons":

1. Immediate improvements to the conditions of prisons and prison policies that recognize the humanity of imprisoned men and women.
2. An immediate end to prison slavery. All persons imprisoned in any place of detention under U.S. jurisdiction must be paid the prevailing wage in their state or territory for their labor.
3. The Prison Litigation Reform Act must be rescinded, allowing imprisoned humans a proper channel to address grievances and violations of their rights.
4. The Truth in Sentencing Act and the Sentencing Reform Act must be rescinded so that imprisoned humans have a possibility of rehabilitation and parole. No human shall be sentenced to Death by Incarceration or serve any sentence without the possibility of parole.
5. An immediate end to the racial overcharging, over-sentencing, and parole denials of Black and Brown humans. Black humans shall no longer be denied parole because the victim of the crime was white, which is a particular problem in Southern states.
6. An immediate end to racist gang enhancement laws targeting Black and Brown humans.
7. No imprisoned human shall be denied access to rehabilitation programs at their place of detention because of their label as a violent offender.
8. State prisons must be funded specifically to offer more rehabilitation services.
9. Pell grants must be reinstated in all U.S. states and territories.
10. The voting rights of all confined citizens serving prison sentences, pre-trial detainees, and so-called "ex-felons" must be counted. Representation is demanded. All voices count!

Jailhouse Lawyers Speak also announced that the strike will have multiple strategies, including work strikes, sit-ins, boycotts and hunger strikes. They emphasized that some work strikes may also generate "a local list of demands designed to improve conditions and reduce harm within the prison."

Inmates ask for solidarity through various actions, such as contacting relevant "local, state and federal political representatives" about their demands, especially that prisoner votes be counted. They ask supporters to spread up-to-date news of the strike to other places of detention and community organizations. For the media, inquiries can be made to prisonstrikemedia@gmail.com. Supporters can connect to local prisoner rights organizations through millionsforprisonersmarch@gmail.com.

They ask that financial boycotts of services to prisoners be based only on the stated wishes of those inside.

WWP supports the prison strike

Workers World Party is one among a large number of organizations nationwide that have endorsed this call for a national prison strike. In addition to helping publicize it, many of our branches across the country are supporting solidarity actions and have also reached out to our comrades inside the walls to make their voices heard.

Workers World newspaper recently published interviews with individuals inside Lee Correctional, including a member of Jailhouse Lawyers Speak. (workers.org/author/jared-ware)

In California, the Bay Area National Prison Strike Solidarity Committee has been formed and is organizing a mobilization and call to action on Aug. 25 at San Quentin State Prison. Its objective is "raising awareness of the inhumane conditions, treatment and policies that afflict those held in these gulags throughout amerikkka."

Prisoners are part of the working class, being forced to work as slave laborers under the most inhumane conditions. Workers World Party not only supports their right to organize and strike, but is for the complete abolition of prisons and mass incarceration, which are tools of capitalist rule and white supremacy. We are for the abolition of all exploitation, wage slavery and capitalism itself.

Note from the editors of Workers World: Prisoners denied their right to receive any issue of Workers World newspaper should file a grievance. Workers World Party has demanded in our complaints to prisons that $100 be given to every prisoner denied an issue of our paper. If prisoners agree, that demand should be part of their grievance.

In battle for freedom, women inmates fight blazes

By Dolores Cox

Wildfires have been raging ferociously in California this year. According to meteorologist Craig Clements at San Jose University, wildfires have also been much larger than usual. Fire seasons typically run from May to November in northern California, Napa Valley and Sonoma counties. In the summer, 100-degree temperatures dry out the grass, and droughts add to the problem.

In 2017, fires in California were the deadliest since the beginning of record keeping, with 100,000 people forced to evacuate and around 75,000 displaced when their homes and businesses were destroyed. It took more than 11,000 firefighters to battle those blazes.

Officially, at least 35 to 40 percent of Cal Fire, the state's firefighting force, are prison inmate crews, and the number may be even higher. "Any fire you go on statewide, whether it be small or large, the inmate hand crews make up anywhere from 50 to 80 percent of the total fire personnel," says Lt. Keith Radey, a commander in charge of one of the inmate fire camps. (Daily Beast, Oct. 14, 2017)

About 4,000 inmates each week fight wildfires alongside civilian firefighters. That number includes approximately 250 women. There are 43 inmate firefighting camps. The three camps for women were opened in 1983.

In the fires, women wear either yellow or orange fire-retardant suits, helmets and handkerchiefs to cover their mouths and necks. Each one carries 50 to 60 pounds of gear and equipment in her backpack, and some also carry chainsaws. Crews of 14 people each fight on the front lines.

Firefighting is dangerous, grinding work requiring endurance and includes injuries and some deaths. Prison crews in California firefighting bring to mind chain gangs without the chains.

Prison labor and fires

Inmates have been doing work as prisoners in California since the mid-1800s. The earliest state prison was on a ship. Prisoners slept on deck at night and during the day built San Quentin, the state's first prominent prison.

In the early 1900s, inmates were paid to build roads and highways. During the Depression, they were moved into temporary camps in a public relief program. They also harvested crops and repaired infrastructure. During World War II, prisons became factories for the military.

In 1946, the Conservation Camp Program began using prison labor to fight deadly fires, under the joint supervision of the Division of Forestry and the Department of Correction, and later under the supervision of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR).

Nowadays, California's institutionalized inmates make license plates, prison uniforms, office furniture for state employees and anything else the prison may need. They usually earn between 8 cents and 95 cents per hour.

But inmates in the forestry program are paid more to fight fires. They can make up to $2.56 a day in camp, plus $1 an hour when fighting fires, though during training they may be paid nothing at all.

In comparison, full-time civilian firefighter salaries start around $40,000 yearly or $17 per hour minimum.

In 2014, when California courts took up the issue of overcrowded prisons, the state attorney general's office argued against shrinking the number of inmates because prisoners were needed to fight fires. In 2015, Gov. Jerry Brown agreed. Other states use prisoner firefighters, but not nearly on the scale that California does.

Most California inmates volunteer to fight fires. They must pass a fitness test, and then they receive as little as three weeks' training, compared to a three-year apprenticeship for full-time civilian firefighters.

Prisoners fighting fires are serving terms for nonviolent, low-level crimes, such as drug or alcohol-related offenses. Volunteers have to earn the right to be chosen for "rehabilitation work." High risks are involved, but they earn more money than in other prison jobs — in a less violent atmosphere, in more physical space than a prison cell offers. The risks are weighed against the same amount of time served inside a correctional facility.

At-risk women prisoners

Women prisoners interviewed have given a range of feelings about being in the forestry program. At firefighters'

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Israeli 'nation state' legislation parallels Nazi Nuremberg Laws

By Susan Abulhawa

Roughly 80 years after Nazi Germany enacted what became known as the Nuremberg Laws in September 1935, Israeli lawmakers in July codified a new Jewish supremacy law, which effectively mirrors the Nazi-era legislation of ethnoreligious stratification of German citizenry.

Rights exclusive to Jewish citizens

Dubbed the "nation state" law, its first clause stipulates that "actualization of the right of national self-determination in the state of Israel is unique to the Jewish people." In other words, the 1.7 million Palestinian citizens of Israel, the native inhabitants who managed to remain in their homes when European Jews conquered Palestine in 1948, shall be without sovereignty or agency, forever living at the mercy of Israeli Jews.

One of the early anti-Semitic laws in Germany, the first of the Nuremberg Laws, was the Reich Citizenship Law, which likewise deemed citizenship privilege exclusive to people of "German or kindred blood." Since there was no scientifically sound way to distinguish Jewish Germans from the rest of German society, as they were racially white Europeans and ethnically German, lawmakers looked to genealogy for Jewish grandparents. That will not be necessary for Indigenous Palestinian citizens of Israel because, since its creation in 1948, Israel put protocols in place to ensure that non-Jews do not assimilate into mainstream Jewish society.

Ethnoreligious purity

This brings us to the second Nuremberg Law: "Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor," which sought to prevent mixing of Aryan blood, dubbed "race defilement."

In Israel, anti-miscegenation laws are already in place, masquerading as traditional values where marriage can only be performed by religious officials. The Orthodox rabbinate has exclusive purview over Jewish marriages, where Jewishness is a narrowly defined bloodline and interreligious marriage is strictly forbidden.

Exclusivity of Jewish symbols

The Reich Flag Law, part of the Nuremberg Laws, established that black, red and white were the national colors, and the swastika flag was the new national flag. The second clause of Israel's nation-state law regarding national symbols indicates that "the flag of the state is white, two blue stripes near the edges, and a blue Star of David in the center." Two days after it was passed, Israeli police and military soldiers arrested a Palestinian boy for holding a Palestinian flag outside Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.

Judaizing Jerusalem

The third clause of the nation-state law reiterates Israel's illegitimate claim to the whole of Jerusalem as its capital, an illegal and internationally unrecognized claim that has been emboldened by Donald Trump's move of the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem. Interestingly, however, this new law does not define state borders and Israel remains the only country in the world without declared borders. This is not surprising, as Israel is a still-expanding settler-colonial state, even though their admission to the United Nations in 1948 was based on their claim to only the 1948 armistice line, which does not include Jerusalem or any other part of the West Bank.

Erasing Arabic

This new law also marks the beginning of the erasure of Arabic from the land, as it decrees Hebrew to be the only official language of the state, while Arabic has "special status." The fourth clause further explains that use of "the Arab language [sic]" institutionally "will be regulated by law."

Colonizing the whole of Palestine, ghettoizing and robbing Palestinians

As for the 4.5 million Indigenous Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank who do not have Israeli citizenship, the nation-state law alludes to their fate in the seventh clause, which states: "The state views Jewish settlement as a national value and will labor to encourage and promote its establishment and development."

Simply stated, Israel will continue to work in earnest to build Jewish-only colonies on seized Palestinian land, ostensibly where a Palestinian state was to be formed as per the Oslo Accords.

We can expect that more settlements will simply accelerate Israel's ongoing displacement of Palestinians to replace them with imported Jews. We know from the past 51 years of settlement construction that this process is accomplished by systematic dispossession, marginalization, ghettoization and robbing of Indigenous Palestinian inhabitants. This process more closely resembles the Manifest Destiny removal and marginalization of First Nations in North America.

Western media should stop mincing words by calling the nation-state law "controversial" when in fact it is encoding the worst human impulses into law, the likes of which were found in Nazi Germany, Jim Crow America, the Indian Removal Act and other abominable moments in human history.

Abulhawa is a Palestinian author. Her latest book is "The Blue Between Sky and Water."

Postal union protests police killing

By Lyn Neeley
Portland, Ore.

Some 6,000 members of the National Association of Letter Carriers at their annual convention in Detroit during the third week of July protested the brutal killing of Jason Washington by Portland State University campus police. The union is also addressing the recent increase in the number of racist murders of letter carriers by cops.

Washington, a married father of three, worked for Portland's U.S. Postal Service. He was a 45-year-old Black Navy veteran who had a concealed-carry firearm permit to carry a gun.

Washington had been at a PSU campus bar on June 29 when a fight that started over a racist slur moved outside. Washington followed and attempted to break it up. When his gun slipped out of his holster, falling to the ground, he reached to pick it up. That's when he was fatally shot by campus cops Shawn McKenzie and James Dewey at least six times, according to cell phone footage.

Washington's friends and family say he was a well-respected member of the community. Along with university students, they staged a vigil and a march through campus protesting Washington's killing. They are calling for the immediate firing of the two cops and for PSU to change its policy of allowing campus cops to carry firearms. They want the university to train its officers to deal with conflict without using weapons.

In spite of vocal objections by the students, PSU cops have been allowed to carry guns since 2016.

Andre Washington, Jason's brother, said, "Split-second decisions made by poorly trained, inadequate and overzealous campus police caused our family and our community to lose a wonderful human being." He said the death of Jason Washington won't go unnoticed and that Black men being gunned down by white police officers is an affliction in the United States. (The Oregonian, July 6) ☐

Immigrant hunger strikes

Continued from page 1

the Port Isabel Detention Center, a prison-like ICE facility in Los Fresnos, Texas, have intense feelings of isolation, grief and anxiety, exacerbated by separation from relatives, especially their children. The women are even cruelly prohibited from hugging each other for comfort. Yet they have found ways to resist.

Some women at Port Isabel are objecting to the lack of telephone calls with their children by staging rolling hunger strikes. Most women have only been allowed a few calls. The Intercept blog reported that as of July 18, about 15 women had been alternating fasting days for two weeks — not eating for two days, after which another group fasts for two days.

Debbie Nathan, Intercept's reporter, spoke with 24 women detainees, including one who had not been allowed to call her child for several weeks. After her two-day hunger strike, this woman was permitted three calls. Despite being threatened with placement in solitary confinement if they fast, a number are courageously doing it anyway. ☐

Remember and support Ramsey Orta!

By Henry Hagins
New York

Courageous Ramsey Orta must not be forgotten!

As witness to a grave injustice being committed on Staten Island on July 17, 2014, this fearless young man, using his cellphone, recorded the infamous and deadly chokehold assault on Eric Garner. That unwarranted action by police officer Daniel Pantaleo resulted in Garner's demise, even as he was desperately proclaiming, "I can't breathe."

Fellow officers stood by, offering no assistance to the obviously stricken neighborhood resident, who had been wrestled to the ground from behind.

Garner had been stopped by members of the New York Police Department on the pretext that he was selling individual cigarettes on the down low. After Garner verbally denied the charges raised against him, Pantaleo subdued him with the fatal chokehold from behind.

Ramsey Orta's crime? He had the heroic temerity to record these actions in the face of police objections and share it with the public, making him a target of the police. His recording went viral and helped to spark widespread indignation. It also contributed to the Black Lives Matter campaign to expose once again the outrages of police brutality in communities of color.

Write him a letter

Having stood up for a member of his community, Brother Ramsey Orta needs to know that he has not been forgotten and is appreciated for this noble deed. A campaign is underway to encourage sending letters of support to Brother Orta.

Letters should be addressed to:
Ramsey Orta, 16A4200, Altona Correctional Facility, P.O. Box 3000, Altona, NY 12910-2090.

It's very important that the sender put their full name and return address on both the letter and the envelope in order for it to be delivered. The number 16A4200 is also critical, in case Orta is moved to another prison, in which case mail is supposed to be forwarded to him.

The only information on the outside of the envelope should be the sender's full name and address, Orta's address, including his number, and postage. Only the letter can go inside the envelope, which should contain no cash, checks or other gifts.

Keep in mind that the letter will be opened and read by prison authorities. ☐

WORKERS WORLD editorial

Venezuela: Popular militia advances

In the face of economic sabotage, subversion, an abortive military coup and threats of open military intervention from U.S. imperialism and its puppet gangster regime in Colombia, the Bolivarian government of Venezuela has taken steps to strengthen its armed forces and to reinforce ties among the soldiers, workers and peasants of the country.

In May, the government arrested 40 officers of the armed forces after it discovered a plot to kidnap President Nicolás Maduro and put him on trial. For a more long-term plan to eliminate the threat of a coup and to strengthen popular defense of the country, the Bolivarian government announced steps in early July to integrate popular organizations with the armed forces.

The most important step is to activate local defense committees, officially called "Committees for Security and Integral Defense," and to select one person from each of the 50,000 local committees to train with the country's Bolivarian Militia units.

According to an article published July 11 in venezuelanalysis.com, "Those selected representatives will then form a link between the Venezuelan state's militias and the communal councils, which since 2006 have organized groups of 20 to 400 families across the national territory."

To the extent that these plans succeed in training additional fighters and establishing links to the population, they multiply significantly the ability of the armed forces to defend Venezuela's sovereignty from imperialist aggression. In addition, they connect the armed forces to the desires and needs of the most politically active sector of the population.

U.S. imperialism, under both Democratic and Republican administrations, has been attempting to undermine and overthrow the Bolivarian government since the late Hugo Chávez first took office in 1999.

A coup in 2002 failed and left Chávez stronger than before. Violent street demonstrations the last few years have also failed. Despite the daily hardship faced by the workers and farmers in obtaining necessities of life, including food, the right-wing opposition parties have been completely discredited and Maduro easily won last May's election.

With the failure of disruption and "regime change" comes the possibility that U.S. imperialism and its West European allies will rely on direct military intervention. U.S. media outlets recently broke the news that the U.S. president raised — both to his inner circle and to a group of Latin American presidents — the possibility of a direct U.S. military intervention.

The Caracas government is taking this threat seriously. Its latest steps to strengthen both the military and popular resistance and to defend the opportunity for the workers and farmers of Venezuela to struggle for a socialist future can only be applauded by those who support a sovereign Venezuela. □

Federal workers mobilize

Continued from page 4

as Trump's preparation for an all-out war against the agency. "They wanna short-circuit the bargaining we already agreed to by making changes to 21 articles we already agreed to," stated Skwierczynski. Workers fear agency management will impose a contract on them, instead of bargaining when the current contract expires this summer.

In March, the administration imposed a union contract on Department of Education workers that stripped them of many civil rights gains the federal workforce had won over decades.

A major focus of AFGE's fightback strategy so far has been on Congress. AFGE has been supported through a series of letters from lawmakers calling for Trump to rescind his union-busting orders that undermine workplace rights. The latest, sent July 9 and signed by 132 members of Congress, noted: "Federal workers are public servants who deserve the workplace rights and protections that last month's Executive Orders would take away. Those Orders are unfair and will make it harder to attract and retain a qualified federal workforce." (afge.org, July 16)

A hearing on the AFGE lawsuits against the executive orders is set for July 25, which AFGE calls #RedforFed Day of Action.

Not only is a protest planned on the Mall adjacent to the Capitol in Washington, D.C., but, as of this writing, 15 other demonstrations are planned around the country.

"We gotta get the word out," says West-Smith. "We gotta fight back." □

Descolonizar a Puerto Rico
Decolonize Puerto Rico

Tribunal to expose U.S. colonial crimes in

By Berta Joubert

This year marks the 120th anniversary of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Puerto Rico during the Spanish-U.S. war, which ended with the U.S. capturing Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Philippines and Guam.

July 25, 1898, was the day when U.S. ships, commanded by General Nelson A. Miles under orders of President William McKinley, landed in Guánica on the southwestern coast of Puerto Rico. However, little is said about May 12 of that year, when 11 U.S. military ships bombed San Juan on the northern coast. This fact is important to remember, since the apologists for colonization want to dismiss the violent nature of the U.S. invasion.

It was clear from the start what the U.S. had in store for Puerto Rico. This was exposed in a speech Gen. Miles gave in Ponce, just three days after the invasion.

"To the Inhabitants of Puerto Rico: In the prosecution of the war against the kingdom of Spain by the people of the United States, in the cause of liberty, justice, and humanity, its military forces have come to occupy the island of Puerto Rico. They come bearing the banner of freedom, inspired by a noble purpose **to seek the enemies of our country** and yours, and **to destroy or capture all who are in armed resistance.**" (Author's emphasis) (enciclopediapr.org)

This ongoing destruction, in the form of persecution, torture, long imprisonment, repression and assassination of independence movement representatives, has been well documented throughout the history of the occupation of Puerto Rico.

Anniversaries of invasion

Since that July 25, several events have occurred on this disastrous anniversary, beginning with the July 25, 1952, proclamation of a "new" constitution by the first elected Puerto Rican governor under colonial rule, Luis Muñoz Marín. What had been an official holiday commemorating the U.S. invasion was then called "Constitution Day."

But this farce, called the "Free Associated State" (Estado Libre Asociado) or Commonwealth, was another U.S. strategy.

The U.S. was in the middle of the Cold War and had to appear as a democratic nation. When it explicitly had a colony, it had to give yearly reports to the U.N. and was seen as an imperialist nation. Therefore, the ELA was established to give the illusion of a certain "sovereignty" in Puerto Rico.

This was the reason that Rafael Cancel Miranda, Lolita Lebrón, Irvin Flores and Andrés Figueroa Cordero went to the halls of the U.S. Congress in 1954 and fired at the ceiling to call attention to this farce.

Another crucial July 25 was the Massacre of Cerro Maravilla. In 1978, two young independentistas, Arnaldo Darío Rosado and Carlos Soto Arriví, were ready to call attention to the country's colonial status on its 80th anniversary. But they were deceived by an undercover police agent, part of the repressive apparatus involving the FBI against the independence movement. When they arrived at Cerro Maravilla, they were killed in cold blood.

Now, on this July 25, 2018, Puerto Rico is facing the most important legal challenge to its political status. What is happening now is the culmination of the process of destruction of a people that began on the day of the U.S. invasion in 1898.

In 2016, the U.S. Congress, under President Obama, imposed the PROMESA Act to make Puerto Rico pay an illegitimate public debt of $74 billion. Since then, the Fiscal Control Board — whose seven unelected members were nominated by the same Congress — has been dictating severe austerity measures aimed at dismantling the economic and social base of Puerto Rico. The imposition of this board is like wolves guarding the sheep, since board members represent the economic forces that caused this debacle.

This July 25, the federal court assigned to cases involving PROMESA, under U.S. District Judge Laura Taylor Swain, will begin to hear several cases relating to the constitutionality of PROMESA and its Fiscal Control Board. In effect, it will deal with the island's colonial status.

Whatever happens, one thing is indisputable: The colonial situation has now been exposed and is no longer simply an issue of the "independentistas." In fact, the outcome of the hearing might just reaffirm the U.S. Supreme Court decision in the 2016 Puerto Rico v. Sanchez Valle case. The court ruled then that "the sovereignty of Puerto Rico resides in the U.S. Congress" or, more clearly, that Puerto Rico is not a Free Associated State with any sovereign power, but an actual colony of the United States.

A People's Tribunal

Under these circumstances, Puerto Rican activists, together with the International Action Center, began to conceive

INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL
on
U.S. Colonial Crimes in
PUERTO RICO

Save the date
October 27, 2018
HOLYROOD CHURCH / IGLESIA SANTA CRUZ
715 West 179th Street • New York • NY 10033
Tribunal to bring charges against the U.S. for 120 years of Colonialism in Puerto Rico with all the manifestations of that initial crime

For more information, go to puertoricotribunal.org, to the Puerto Rico Tribunal on Facebook or to TribunalPuertoRico@gmail.com.

Puerto Rico

of an International Tribunal on U.S. Colonial Crimes in Puerto Rico. (puertoricotribunal.org)

The call reads: "The Puerto Rico Tribunal Ad Hoc Committee is convening this important war crimes tribunal in order to expose the true nature of the U.S. war against Puerto Rico. This call for action is not made solely for the sake of posterity, but also seeks to strengthen the worldwide struggle for self-determination today. What is happening in Puerto Rico is different only in scale and duration from U.S.-perpetrated destruction elsewhere. Only a people's campaign in solidarity with the Puerto Rican struggle for decolonization, self-determination and justice can begin to end the continued U.S. presence and domination, not only of Puerto Rico, but in the Caribbean, Latin America and elsewhere."

The Tribunal will be held Oct. 27 at the the Holyrood Church/Iglesia Santa Cruz in New York City.

Many criminal actions have been perpetrated against the Puerto Rican people by the U.S., both in Puerto Rico and in the U.S.

The main charge before the Tribunal is the invasion and colonization of the archipelago. The criminal manifestations of this occupation make up the rest of a very long list that includes: the highest percentage of forced sterilization of women in the world, the use of Puerto Ricans as guinea pigs for the pharmaceutical industry, and the use of young people as cannon fodder in U.S. wars of invasion and imperialism.

U.S. destruction of the Puerto Rican economy comes not just from the PROMESA Act but from earlier laws, such as the 1920 Jones Act, which requires that only U.S. ships be used to transport goods between U.S. ports. (For a more extensive list, visit tinyurl.com/yc772xmy/.)

Among the conveners are well-known figures like Puerto Rican ex-political prisoner Rafael Cancel Miranda; Ismael Guadalupe, leader of protests against the U.S. military occupation of Vieques; peace and human rights educator and artist Esperanza Martell; labor lawyer Alejandro Torres, president of the Puerto Rican Bar Association 2016-18; internationalist Father Luis Barrios; Déborah Berman Santana, professor emerita of Ethnic Studies, Mills College; and organizations like Colectivo Se Acabaron las Promesas (Puerto Rican Collective No More Promises), Call to Action on Puerto Rico, Philadelphia-Camden Boricua Committee and the International Action Center.

The charges will be brought by Augusto Zamora, professor of International Law, who represented Nicaragua in its case against the U.S. in the International Court of Justice, judicial arm of the United Nations.

Goals of the Tribunal

The goals of the Tribunal are to expose in the U.S., and at the international level, the facts regarding Puerto Rico for which the U.S. bears enormous responsibility. For that the Tribunal aims to hear testimonies of individuals, organizations and experts in their field who will reveal the truth of the charges.

Volunteers and funds are urgently needed. For more information, go to puertoricotribunal.org, to the Puerto Rico Tribunal on Facebook or to TribunalPuertoRico@gmail.com. ☐

Meeting the challenges facing the working class, including 'identity politics'

Continued from page 7

ideologies. I believe that this has exacerbated the general tension in the working-class movement on a world scale.

The fact that some radicals are influenced by anti-working class ideas is only symptomatic of much larger problems, which are the weaknesses of the working class and its organizations.

This is all the more reason for us to rise to the occasion.

Solidarity must come first!

The ideas, norms and the institutions that have been put in place by the ruling class to maintain its power are fraying and crumbling. Whatever else Trump's rise signifies, the decay of the capitalist system is high on the list. Clearly, many young people are turning against capitalism and are attracted to socialism. On top of growing economic deprivation and insecurity, there is a sense that everything that the masses have come to expect or rely on is no longer certain. Underneath all of this, the next cataclysmic capitalist crisis is in the making.

The most astute among the capitalist economists expect the onset of a big economic crisis. They do not know exactly when it will hit. They differ on which event or series of events will trigger the crisis. It could be a war against Iran or an escalation of U.S. imperialism's trade war with China or Canada and Europe or the political crisis regarding Trump in the ruling class that could morph into something destabilizing. It could be the breakdown of long-lasting imperialist alliances. It might just be an increase in interest rates or the bursting of some of the many bubbles in the grotesquely inflated financial markets. It could be a combination of all the above.

Whatever the trigger is, the crisis is virtually searching for an excuse to explode. In fact, the capitalist economists mostly agree on two points: the scope of the crisis will be frightening, and there is very little that central banks and governments can do to prevent it.

All of this will propel our class forward. But before that, it may cause tremendous fear. Understanding this is to understand the importance of solidarity. Solidarity in our class and in our own ranks is likely to be more important than understanding all that is happening around us, at least for a while.

Class division or class solidarity?

The most active dialectical contradiction facing the working class is that capitalism throws workers into violent competition with each other for their very survival. This contradiction does not diminish as the crises deepen; it is intensified. This is part of the process that's responsible for Trump. Perhaps the clearest mission of Trumpism is to smash our class into a thousand pieces.

Capitalism in its end stage presents a revolutionary opportunity to the working class to emancipate itself. But before that, it widens divisions in our class. As life for our class becomes more difficult and oppressive, insecure, alienating and ultimately unbearable, the seduction of division becomes more and more powerful.

This process will begin to rapidly reverse when the rising struggle of the workers becomes a counterforce with more gravity than division. The struggle between class solidarity and class division in a period of unprecedented capitalist crisis is not only applicable to the working class in the general sense. It is a contradictory force, whether visible or not, in every union, every progressive movement or organization — and in our own party.

Our Party's culture and internal tensions

I'm not going to comment at any significant length here on the tensions in our party associated with the opening days of the Interim Central Committee (ICC). In my view, to say more would be premature.

It is my hope that the ICC will resume and that it will get over its rocky beginnings. In hindsight, everyone involved, regardless of differences, should have agreed that the very first priority of the ICC should be to win the confidence of the entire party and demonstrate that it will strengthen solidarity in the party instead of testing it. Going forward, I hope comrades will take heed.

I know that there are comrades who view the culture of the party as being too liberal or too petty bourgeois or not communist or Leninist enough.

There is much about our party that can be improved. Some areas of our work, our organization and our practices are in desperate need of improvement. But our essential culture is not one of them. We need make no apologies for making solidarity central to our party's culture.

Solidarity should be first in all things big and small. Even when comrades are angry and frustrated, we must treat each other with respect. I consider this to be a principle. Absent this principle, we will be weaker. Comrades have made a commitment to devote their lives to the party and to our class. Comrades must fight to get respect on their jobs and in all their interactions with people and institutions outside of the party. They should not have to fight for respect inside the party.

The best of our culture is an extrapolation of what has distinguished the party's world view, its history and priorities. Our culture reflects the political essence of our very existence. It is a culture that has tried to assimilate into its thinking and its initiatives that almost every major historical mistake and innumerable smaller day-to-day mistakes made by the working-class movement have been associated with a failing or retreat on the question of forging solidarity between the workers and the oppressed.

In truth, our culture is about the lengths we are prepared to go to support the most oppressed sections of our class. More importantly, our culture is a major reason why our party has been able to survive for almost 60 years through periods where other communist and socialist organizations, which once held the loyalty of many brave and devoted cadre, sadly no longer exist.

I urge comrades to take this proposal seriously: to open a major review of our understanding and approach to our class, including to each other, and to prepare for it.

Comradely,

Larry Holmes

Women inmates fight blazes

Continued from page 8

camp, they have woodworking areas, softball fields and libraries. They enjoy being outdoors and having barbecues with family visits. Children see their parents in a camp environment rather than inside a restricted prison.

And women may get to see their children on the outside sooner because their sentences are reduced due to firefighting credit. For every day they are in a camp, their sentence is reduced by one day. Some women provide this labor for years. They resent the hardship and intense physical labor, but say it is worth the risk.

Since women in the firefighting camps are available 24 hours a day for work, they are considered a "resource" for the state. California's firefighting program saves taxpayers close to $100 million each year, according to the CDCR. The cost for housing each inmate in a prison facility is $76,000 a year, as opposed to using them to fight blazes.

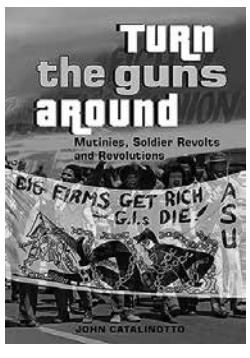
But the ACLU's director of the National Prison Project, David Fathi, points out that such dangerous work outside prison walls certainly runs the risk of governmental abuse and that inmate firefighters may not also be aware of the long-term health risks. (The Daily Beast)

Prisoner firefighters put their lives on the line for very little money. Fire camp may be a "nicer way" for them to be in prison — but they're still prisoners. ☐

Turn the Guns Around

Mutinies, Soldier Revolts and Revolutions

John Catalinotto



Available at online booksellers

WORKERS WORLD MUNDO OBRERO

Breve historia de la OTAN

Continua de pagina 12

eron a la alianza en 2009. Ahora hay 29 miembros, además de otros países como Suecia que tienen una relación especial con la OTAN, y Colombia que es el primer socio global en América Latina.

Los apologistas de la OTAN afirman que la alianza defiende la libertad y los derechos humanos. Por el contrario, el papel de la OTAN ahora es reconquistar aquellas áreas del mundo que se habían independizado del imperialismo durante la existencia de la Unión Soviética.

Para enfrentar la embestida del imperialismo estadounidense, es necesario decir "¡Abajo Trump!", e igualmente "¡No a la OTAN!"

Catalinotto, editor auxiliar del periódico Workers World-Mundo Obrero, co-editó el libro "Hidden Agenda: U.S./NATO Takeover of Yugoslavia", Nueva York: International Action Center, 2001.

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Breve historia de la OTAN

Por John Catalinotto

16 de julio — Solo porque el presidente estadounidense, un misógino, xenófobo y enemigo de la humanidad abiertamente racista, criticara a la OTAN (Organización del Tratado del Atlántico Norte) en la Cumbre de Bruselas del 11 al 12 de julio, alguien podría tener la falsa impresión de que se debe defender a esta organización. Pero no es así.

Cualquiera que sea el objetivo a largo plazo de Donald Trump con respecto a la OTAN, suponiendo que lo tenga, esta alianza es enemiga de los pueblos del mundo como siempre lo ha sido.

Un vistazo a sus miembros y su historia muestra el por qué.

La OTAN consiste de ...

Durante la mayor parte de su historia, la OTAN ha incluido a todas las principales potencias imperialistas excepto a Japón y Australia. Los miembros han sido Estados Unidos, Francia, Bretaña, Italia y Canadá desde 1949 en adelante, y Alemania desde 1955, cuando era Alemania Occidental. Estos seis, más Japón conforman los países del G7 que actualmente establecen reglas económicas para el mundo.

La OTAN también incluye a países más pequeños que son antiguos miembros del mundo imperialista, como España, Portugal, Bélgica, los Países Bajos, Luxemburgo, Noruega, Dinamarca y la pequeña Islandia. Grecia y Turquía también están en la OTAN.

Los principales poderes de la OTAN son los países imperialistas porque sus clases gobernantes corporativas y financieras, principalmente a través de sus bancos, controlan la mayor parte de la riqueza mundial. El capital bajo su control se usa para explotar la mano de obra y extraer recursos en todo el mundo.

Hasta la Segunda Guerra Mundial, Bretaña y Francia gobernaron directamente vastas partes de África y Asia en forma de colonias. Alemania también tenía colonias, pero menos que esos dos poderes. Los Países Bajos, Bélgica e incluso la pequeña Dinamarca tenían colonias más grandes que ellos.

Los principales países de la OTAN ahora poseen tecnologías de vanguardia, controlan los medios de comunicación, fabrican armas poderosas y son los más fuertemente armados. Venden armas al mundo, pero guardan las armas más avanzadas para ellos.

A través de su control del mercado mundial, los intercambios de divisas y la banca, y con sus ventajas tecnológicas, estos siete países ahora oprimen directa e indirectamente a la mayor parte del mundo.

De los países del G7, el imperialista Estados Unidos, con la economía nacional más grande y con la mayor potencia militar, es el más peligroso para la humanidad.

El papel de la OTAN 1949-89

Durante la primera mitad del siglo 20, estos estados depredadores pugnaron por mercados, colonias y materias primas. En su rivalidad, lanzaron dos guerras mundiales que juntas mataron de 100 a 200 millones de personas, en su mayoría trabajadoras/es, campesinas/os y otras/os jornaleros.

Después de que terminó la Segunda Guerra Mundial, la clase de saqueadores y ladrones que gobernaba a esos países vio que, mientras luchaban entre sí, un tercio de la humanidad se había liberado de su control.

La Revolución Rusa, que puso fin a la Primera Guerra Mundial, también sobrevivió la embestida de la Alemania nazi. La Segunda Guerra Mundial terminó en Europa con las revoluciones yugoslava y albanesa y la marcha del Ejército Rojo Soviético a Berlín. En 1949, toda China fue liberada y la mitad de Corea. El pueblo vietnamita estaba ganando contra los franceses.

Había una guerra civil revolucionaria en Grecia. Los regímenes coloniales comenzaban a desmoronarse alrededor del mundo. La clase trabajadora en Francia e Italia parecía estar a punto de tomar el poder en estos países donde los partidos comunistas habían organizado la resistencia armada de las/os trabajadores contra el fascismo.

Así que en 1949, Washington, la potencia imperialista dominante más fuerte, fundó entonces la OTAN para evitar las revoluciones obreras en la Europa occidental que estaba devastada por la guerra y para enfrentarse a la Unión Soviética y sus aliados en Europa del Este. Fue en 1955 que la Unión Soviética estableció el Pacto de Varsovia con sus aliados en Europa del Este.

El papel reaccionario de la OTAN incluyó la planificación de un golpe militar en Grecia en 1967 que duró hasta 1974. Se sospecha que participó en una "estrategia de tensión" de 1968-82 en Italia, cuando agrupaciones derechistas clandestinas en la clase dominante y el estado italiano llevaron a cabo ataques terroristas. En 1975, la OTAN envió buques de guerra para intervenir en Portugal y evitar que la clase obrera de allí abriera una lucha por el socialismo, después de que una revolución derrocara al régimen fascista.

El presidente de los EUA siempre elige al comandante de la OTAN, y el general a cargo siempre es del Pentágono. Por lo tanto, la OTAN siempre ha sido una herramienta de la política imperialista de los EUA. Y sigue siendo así, a pesar de las quejas de Trump.

Nueva función de la OTAN: policía capitalista mundial

En 1990, durante las negociaciones entre los líderes soviéticos y estadounidenses para poner fin a la Guerra Fría, Washington prometió no mover la OTAN hacia el este. El propósito declarado de la OTAN hasta ese momento era "defender a las naciones miembros, de las amenazas de los países comunistas". Este propósito aparentemente terminaba con la inminente desintegración de la Unión Soviética en 1991 y la disolución del Pacto de Varsovia.

Pero desde 1991, lejos de disolver la OTAN, Washington ha insistido en que el pacto militar se expanda, mientras permanece bajo el mando de los EUA.

La política de los EUA convirtió a la OTAN en un tipo de fuerza policial imperialista. Ya no confinada a Europa, la OTAN se ha convertido en una fuerza de intervención mundial al servicio de los monopolios transnacionales que explotan el trabajo y los recursos mundiales.

Polonia, Hungría y la República Checa se unieron a la OTAN en abril de 1999. Esta expansión coincidió con la guerra aérea de EUA-OTAN en los Balcanes que destruyó el país soberano y multinacional de Yugoslavia.

Los imperialistas aún mienten sobre las razones de la guerra en Yugoslavia, alegando que era para defender a Kosovo, un área de mayoría musulmana. En su libro "Waging Modern Warfare" (Librando una guerra moderna), el comandante de la OTAN en 1999, el general Wesley Clark, admitió que la guerra de Kosovo era "diplomacia coercitiva ... mucho más como las intervenciones de una época anterior", es decir, antes de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, en un momento en que las potencias imperialistas ocuparon abiertamente colonias y protectorados. (p.418)

La ex Yugoslavia, que una vez fue un estado que representaba a unos 20 millones de habitantes de los Balcanes, fue dividida en siete mini estados que son presa fácil para el imperialismo de Europa Occidental y Estados Unidos.

Otras intervenciones militares de la OTAN siguieron, lideradas por EUA. Los EUA invadieron Afganistán en Asia Central a partir de 2001, utilizando el pretexto del ataque del 11 de septiembre e invocando el Artículo 5 de la carta de la OTAN que llama a la defensa colectiva. La ocupación continúa con la ayuda de la OTAN.

En 2011, con el más frágil de los pretextos, la OTAN atacó y destruyó Libia. Ese mismo año, los países de la OTAN también sabotearon y derrocaron al gobierno de Damasco en Siria.

La destrucción que provocaron estas intervenciones ha exacerbado horriblemente la crisis de refugiadas/os que continúa en la actualidad.

Francia y Alemania rehusaron unirse a la invasión EUA-Bretaña a Irak en 2003 porque sus gobiernos lo consideraban un esfuerzo peligroso e imprudente. Por esa razón, la OTAN no comenzó ese desastre. Más tarde, sin embargo, muchos estados de la OTAN ayudaron a la ocupación de Iraq, a pesar de que era un secreto a voces que el pretexto de EUA para la guerra - la existencia de las "armas de destrucción masiva" iraquíes - era una mentira.

La última expansión de la OTAN

Bulgaria, Estonia, Letonia, Lituania, Rumania, Eslovaquia y Eslovenia fueron admitidas en la OTAN en 2004. Albania y Croacia se adhiri-

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EDITORIAL WW-MUNDO OBRERO 16 de julio

El futuro es ya

No hace mucho tiempo, los expertos políticos y gurús económicos cuyos análisis tienen mucho espacio en los medios corporativos, predecían que la revolución de alta tecnología que entonces comenzaba a acelerarse elevaría a las/os trabajadores industriales en este país a la "clase media", capaz de ganar más dinero al dejar atrás los trabajos sucios y peligrosos reemplazados por la automatización.

Esta visión optimista del futuro para la clase trabajadora fue desacreditada por Sam Marcy, el entonces presidente del Partido Workers World-Mundo Obrero, en su libro, "High Tech, Low Pay: Un análisis marxista del carácter cambiante de la clase trabajadora", en 1986. El análisis de Marcy luego fue actualizado por Fred Goldstein en dos libros más, "Capitalismo de bajos salarios" (2009) y "Capitalismo en un callejón sin salida" (2012). (Para obtener más información sobre estos libros, visite workers.org y lowwagecapitalism.com).

Los hechos y las cifras económicas que ahora tienen a los economistas burgueses rascándose la cabeza confirman por completo lo que estos revolucionarios marxistas explicaron desde hace más de tres décadas. La revolución de la alta tecnología eleva la promesa de un mundo futuro de abundancia y facilidad, pero esa vida puede ser alcanzada por las masas solo si el capitalismo es abolido.

Hay que ver lo que realmente sucedió. Sí, muchos de los trabajos que solían existir en la manufactura, minería, ventas minoristas, comunicaciones, trabajos de oficina, transporte, agricultura y otros, son ahora obsoletos. Los dueños de los medios de producción se han desprendido de la mano de obra humana a un ritmo prodigioso en la búsqueda de ganancias cada vez mayores. Los millonarios se han convertido en multimillonarios en el proceso. Pero, ¿y las/os trabajadores?

Como sugiere el título del libro de Marcy, la alta tecnología ha descalificado o eliminado por completo millones de empleos. El resultado es salarios más bajos y una existencia precaria para más y más trabajadoras/es.

Junto con la idea de que todas/os se estaban convirtiendo en clase media, surgió la idea de que las/os trabajadores y los patronos se necesitan mutuamente y deberían colaborar para un futuro mejor. Los patronos ciertamente necesitan trabajadoras/es - hasta que estén listos para reemplazarlos con una nueva máquina o un mejor programa de computadora. No habría ganancias sin las/os trabajadores, porque las ganancias provienen del valor que las/os trabajadores producen por encima de lo que reciben en compensación por su trabajo (Otro concepto marxista que los patronos niegan).

Pero, ¿las/os trabajadores necesitan jefes?

Cada vez más las/os trabajadores jóvenes dicen que no. Están comenzando a vislumbrar un mundo socialista donde los patronos, no las/os trabajadores, quedarán obsoletos.

Mientras tanto, las condiciones para las/os trabajadores se vuelven cada vez más desesperadas ya que los trabajos a tiempo parcial, de bajos salarios y sin beneficios reemplazan a los empleos permanentes de tiempo completo con sueldos defendidos por los sindicatos.

Los patronos son nuestros enemigos, no nuestros socios. Trump es el epítome del multimillonario "benévolo" que promete la luna mientras nos despoja de todo.

Solo hay una respuesta a esto, y no es la colaboración de clases. Es la lucha de clases. No es una idea nueva, sino una que ha resistido la prueba del tiempo y es lo que se necesita ahora. Deje que las conmovedoras huelgas de las/os maestros de esta primavera den el ejemplo de lo que es necesario y posible. □