

# Hurricane Florence vortex

## White supremacy, capitalism, environmental degradation

By Loan Tran  
Durham, N.C.

The impact of Hurricane Florence, which made land-fall in North Carolina on Sept. 15, is expected to linger for days due to record rainfall and flooding. As the storm continues to move inland, the coastal area of Eastern North Carolina — the poorest section of the state — will receive the most devastation. Though the state ordered an evacuation of nearly 1.5 million residents along the shore, many people simply could not afford to leave their homes, and jobs, and then pay for shelter, food and gas for transportation inland.

Communities in North Carolina being impacted most severely by the storm are rural, working-class, Black and Indigenous communities, especially in the eastern part of the state. North Carolina is still home to many members of the Oconeechee Band of the Saponi Nation, Cherokee and Lumbee, among other peoples. African Americans in Eastern North Carolina have lived in communities since their ancestors' enslavement as workers in plantation cotton, tobacco and rice — and also since they formed "runaway" maroon communities in lowland swamps after self-liberating from slavery.

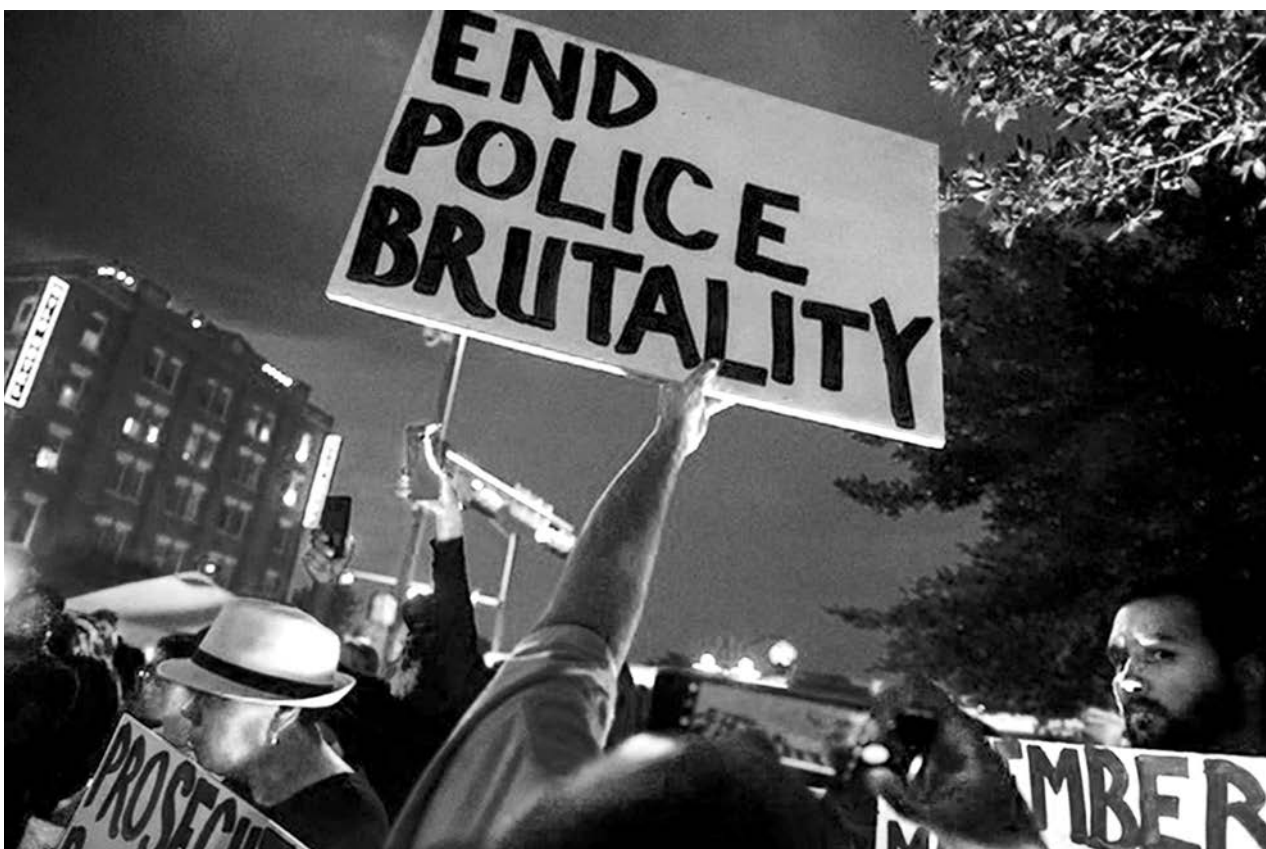
Many of these communities have fought tirelessly to retain ownership over their land despite the predatory and harmful actions carried out originally by European colonizers and later plantation owners. More recently, the communities are endangered by the multibillion-dollar hog farm industry with its massive contained animal feeding operations.

Eastern North Carolina is one of the top producers of pork products in the U.S., and the communities surrounding these enterprises bear the burden of this exploitation due to environmental regulations that protect corporations, but not people. Many residents are sick from the excessive hog waste that contaminates the air, drinking water and land. Flooding from Hurricane Florence will spread this toxic waste everywhere.

Also impacted by Hurricane Florence will be farmworkers, those in tobacco farming as well as on the hog farms. The Farm Labor Organizing Committee here has exposed the extremely harsh conditions that many migrant farmworkers work under, while living in subpar work camps. Due to the intense anti-migrant climate, begun by Obama-era deportations and promoted by the Trump administration, it is likely that migrant communities impacted by Hurricane Florence will be bureaucratically barred from hurricane relief efforts.

ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) is now on the ground in Eastern N.C., confirmed by activist photos. Its public story is that the agency is there to "assist with hurricane recovery efforts," instead ICE is using the state of emergency to do surveillance, possible

*Continued to page 8*



**A vigil for Botham Jean**, a 26-year-old Afro-Caribbean man killed Sept. 6 inside his own apartment by a white policewoman, was held outside the Dallas, Texas, police headquarters the evening of Sept. 7. More on pp. 6-7.



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# CLARENCE BRANDLEY

## A legacy of perseverance and struggle

By Gloria Rubac  
Houston

Death row exoneree #40, Clarence Brandley, was honored and remembered at his funeral on Sept. 14. His five children, other relatives, his attorneys, investigators and members of the Coalition to Free Clarence Brandley helped fill the large New Loyalty Missionary Baptist Church in northeast Houston. Dozens of members of his high school graduating class attended, as did Texas Rep. Harold Dutton, who introduces a bill every session to abolish the death penalty. Brandley died Sept. 2 at age 66.

Brandley was on death row for 10 years after a high school student, Cheryl Dee Ferguson, was murdered at a volleyball tournament in 1980. Brandley was the supervisor of the custodial staff at Conroe High School, 40 miles north of Houston, and the only African American on the staff.

During a supposed investigation, Texas Ranger Wesley Styles told two janitors, “One of you all is going to have to hang for this.” Pointing to Brandley, he said, “Since you’re the n\*\*\*\*r, you’re elected.” Six months later Brandley was on Texas death row, convicted by an all-white jury in a town where the KKK still held regular meetings.

Conditions on death row were horrific. In the summer, temperatures in the cells rose to 130 degrees. Medical care was almost nonexistent and the food was awful. Guards were racist, violent and cruel. A group of guards who worked the solitary confinement section called themselves the “White Is Right Squad.”

Brandley joined other prisoners in a chain hunger strike in protest. A couple of prisoners would strike a week or two, and then another two prisoners would take the next weeks. This went on for more than a year.

During that time, the number of people on death row had rapidly grown to well over 400. The entire Texas prison population had seen a big increase as well. The Texas Department of Corrections had been found liable for cruel and unusual punishment, in violation of the U.S. Constitution’s Eighth Amendment, in the historic 1979 Ruiz v. Estelle case. The federal court ordered massive changes in 1980, but Texas prison officials resisted.

Brandley’s family, and particularly his brother Ozell, never gave up on freeing him. Ozell helped form the Coalition to Free Clarence Brandley, which met at Houston’s S.H.A.P.E. Community Center every Tuesday night for years.

“I was always wishing and hoping that someone would just look at the evidence and the facts, because the evidence was clear that I did not commit the crime,” said Brandley from death row.

The coalition relentlessly took every avenue to call attention to the case and build public support. It held mock trials, marched, protested, packed courtrooms, held a freedom ride to major shopping areas and printed T shirts. Group members slept outside the Montgomery County Courthouse while the Klan rode around the square.

The coalition held community forums in Conroe and Houston, and members put cow manure on the steps of

Continued on page 6



Clarence Brandley with Gloria Rubac.



Walking out of prison in January 1990.



Clarence Brandley with his mother the day he was released.

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Los Angeles

Occupy ICE shuts down ICE

By Workers World Los Angeles bureau

Occupy ICE Los Angeles called a protest press conference on Sept. 11 at the Metropolitan Detention Center. The purpose was to bring awareness that the day remembered by many as the anniversary of an “act of terrorism” in the U.S. actually led to the creation of a terrorist organization in 2003 known as ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement).

Sept. 11 was used by the U.S. to fuel more imperialist wars that create the crises and conditions that force people to become immigrants and refugees in the first place. Now ICE kidnaps and incarcerates those very im/migrants.

The Occupy ICE LA demands were to close all detention centers, end family separation, and abolish ICE, the police and the Pentagon.

Several organizations hosted and supported the press conference, including Humanity First, American Indian Movement SoCal, Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, Black Lives Matter, Assistance for the Resistance, Puerto Ricans in Action, Union del Barrio, FIRE (Fight for Im/migrants and Refugees Everywhere), Democratic Socialists of America and Workers World Party. The National Lawyers Guild was also present.

The people decide: ‘Shut it down!’

John Parker of WWP spoke at the press conference on the role of U.S. imperialism in forcing migration, the war that

targets Black and Brown people within U.S. borders, and the necessity for people to resist these terroristic policies and close down ICE by any means.

After the press conference, attendees collectively decided to take direct action to shut down the ICE facility. First, several banners were used to block the Alameda entrance to stop a Department of Homeland Security van from leaving the facility. Then DHS officers started pushing and throwing people out of the way and into the street, ultimately arresting several people.

But the people’s action forced the cops to put the main entrance into lockdown. This, ironically, would later result in three Orange County sheriff’s buses, the cars of some government “employees,” and several DHS vehicles being blocked and denied entry.

DHS agent Jason Lynd, who is known for his white nationalist tattoos, and another officer then used their vehicle to drive over and destroy a memorial that had been placed at the Occupy ICE encampment on Aliso Street.

Finally, all three entrances were taken by the people. When an escalation occurred between the demonstrators and cops at the Temple Street entrance and DHS staff became more violent, the protesters took direct action, which shut down that entrance entirely. After that, several state agencies got involved, including officers from DHS, Los Angeles Police Department, LA County Sheriff’s

On Sept. 11, LA cops arrested CJ Fitisemanu (far left) and WWP member John Parker (center) for blocking entrance to Metropolitan Detention Center, in support of Occupy ICE.



WW PHOTO: REECE EVANS

Department, U.S. Marshals and the Department of Justice.

After all entrances to the facility were successfully shut down for a large portion of the day, LAPD arrested CJ Fitisemanu and John Parker.

Fitisemanu, who works with Assistance for the Resistance and Humanity First Coalition, later stated: “[I] have been a part of the Abolish ICE actions taking place at the Downtown Metropolitan Detention Center LA (where [the state] holds immigrants trying to seek asylum) for over three months. I feel strongly that our government is practicing unjust and inhumane acts against these families who are seeking asylum. ... My wife Lanee Fitisemanu and I feel protesting and going to jail is a small price to pay when there are kids and babies that can’t even speak yet who are being separated from their families and put in cages by companies like GEO Group, which are profiting off human trafficking. We will not be silent and we will not stop until all families are safely together and out of prison!”

John Parker said, in part, after his arrest: “Officials working at the Metropolitan Detention Center, the LAPD and what-

ever government entity was advising these forces, seemed unprepared for the level of militance by activists and their organizations on the day that facility was essentially shut down by midafternoon. ... The participants of this demonstration were determined to block all three of the entrances into the Detention Center, in spite of the shoving, even if it meant arrests.

“We decided it was time to do something that would stop traffic permanently and force an arrest. So, we simply sat down in front of the driveway. They then amassed about 17 LAPD cops, cops with bean bag guns, then more cops on horseback to be used to surround and intimidate us — still we didn’t move!”

This action truly demonstrated the movement chant, “When we fight, we win.” Righteous people’s resistance shut down one of the state’s detention centers in Los Angeles for almost an entire day.

A total of four people were arrested during this action. There will be court support for them on Oct. 3. The resistance has inspired plans for more actions, even as Occupy ICE LA continues to hold weekly events.

The vow is to continue to fight until ICE and the system that creates these terroristic, fascist forces are abolished. □

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Trump admin ramps up attack on migrant families

By Tony Murphy

The heartless separation of migrant families at the Mexico/Texas border has galvanized a nationwide response, resulting in multiple occupations of Immigration and Customs Enforcement offices and popularizing the demand to abolish ICE.

This movement to stop Trump’s war on migrants has grown alongside a month-long prison strike, raising the opportunity for solidarity between both struggles against racist violence and oppression. The Boston chapter of FIRE (Fight for Im/migrants and Refugees Everywhere) organized a protest on Sept. 8 outside the Bristol County Jail with a loud sound system that broadcast solidarity with the strike demands.

Both movements evoke the 1971 Attica prison rebellion’s naming of prisons as “concentration camps for the poor,” since the true criminals of society — the rich, the warmongers, the police — never face justice for their 24/7 crimes against the people.

Now the Trump administration is scheming to withdraw from the 1997 Flores v. Reno settlement agreement, which prevents migrant children from being detained for more than 20 days.

The Department of Homeland Security is attempting to scrap that rule and be allowed to legally lock up migrant children and their families indefinitely. Withdrawing from the settlement would give the administration legal

cover to create actual concentration camps.

The Flores settlement also requires the government to provide decent conditions for migrants who are detained. However, it has been widely reported that ICE and the centers it hires break that law repeatedly. Under detention, migrant children have suffered physical and sexual abuse, forced psychotropic drugging, neglect and exploitative labor.

Withdrawal from the Flores settlement would make it legal for ICE to run family detention centers without getting state licenses, immunizing it from lawsuits that could arise from the rampantly appalling conditions it oversees. More children would be kept in prisonlike facilities for the duration of their immigration proceedings, which can take up to a year.

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Migrant children lined up at an immigrant detention tent city in Tornillo, Texas, run by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.





# McDonald’s workers in historic strike against sexual abuse

By Kathy Durkin

A historic strike is about to take place. On Sept. 18 at noon, McDonald’s workers in 10 cities across the U.S. will close their grills and cash registers and walk off the job to protest workplace sexual harassment. This will be the first multicity job action focused on sexual abuse in this country.

This is a courageous and groundbreaking action. These low-paid workers, many of them African-American, Latinx and im/migrant, are not represented by a union. They are taking a risk — but have decided that they have had enough abuse and are boldly standing up for their rights. They are taking the lead in this struggle. Low-wage workers in the service industry face some of the worst and most frequent incidents of sexual abuse, yet their stories don’t usually make the headlines. Because of their bravery and unity, this time they will be heard.

Sexual harassment is rife within the restaurant industry. The Restaurant Opportunities United Center reported in 2014 that 90 percent of women employees and 70 percent of male workers had faced a form of sexual harassment from managers, co-workers and customers. Workers are often repeatedly abused by the same perpetrators, very often supervisors. LGBTQ employees are also targets. The report also said that women who work in this industry filed more charges with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for this type of misconduct than workers employed in any other industry. ([tinyurl.com/n9yw53h](http://tinyurl.com/n9yw53h))

Arwa Mahdawi explained in the Sept. 15 Guardian newspaper that many of the organizers of this protest filed complaints with the EEOC about sexual harassment at McDonald’s franchises. They say that the company has done absolutely nothing to respond to their grievances. They are demanding that the fast food conglomerate implement and enforce policies to create a safer workplace with zero tolerance for abuse. One major demand is for the establishment of a national committee to deal with workplace sexual misconduct at the company’s franchises — a



The Fannie Lou Hamer Women’s Committee of Stand Up Kansas City and Fight for Fifteen march on Sept. 18 in the one-day walkout against McDonald’s.

committee that would include workers.

A strike vote was approved by hundreds of members of women’s committees employed at McDonald’s eateries across the U.S. The strike comes at the same time that union-backed organizations have fought for improved working conditions and a \$15-per-hour minimum wage at this restaurant chain which employs tens of thousands of workers at low pay. Two-thirds of McDonald’s workers are women and people of color.

### ‘It’s time to stand up for what we believe in’

Kim Lawson of Kansas City reports that women’s solidarity will strengthen their actions: “Everybody’s been brave about it. Now it’s time to stand up for what we believe in.” (APNews.com, Sept. 12) The walkouts will take place at many, but not all, McDonald’s restaurants in Chicago; Durham, N.C.; Kansas City, Mo.; Los Angeles; Miami; Milwaukee; New Orleans; Orlando, Fla.; San Francisco; and St. Louis.

The Fight for \$15 campaign and TIME’S UP Legal Defense Fund are supporting the women workers in their struggle, which has been boosted by the growing movement against sexual misconduct. The defense fund is administered by the National Women’s Law Center Fund and was established to assist low-income

workers to fight on-the-job sexual harassment. Sharyn Tejani, TIME’S UP LDF director, says it has received thousands of complaints from women in every industry. She notes says that many are fired or demoted for reporting abuse: “Since nothing is done to stop the harassment, nothing changes.” (CNBC, Sept. 14)

McDonald’s has a history of sexual abuse violations. The EEOC has sued several of its franchises in the last 10 years for sexual harassment. But most women have to struggle for justice on their own, a difficulty for young workers and those struggling to feed their families. Often the lowest-paid workers — those who are Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian and im/migrants who desperately need their paychecks — are those targeted by abusers.

No one should have to face sexual assault to earn a living!

### Resistance in U.S., a country rife with sexual violence

A hero in this struggle is Anita Hill. This African-American woman courageously testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee in October 1991 about the sexual harassment she experienced at the EEOC while working for Clarence Thomas, then a nominee for Supreme Court justice, who was ultimately confirmed. The all-white, all-male panel

of senators, Democrats and Republicans, would not allow other women who backed her testimony to speak. Overtly racist and sexist, they viciously ripped apart Hill’s words, grilled and insulted her, as did much of the corporate media.

Nevertheless, Hill told her story. For three days, millions were riveted to their televisions, watching her speak. Public attention was focused for the first time at a mass level on workplace sexual misconduct. Immediately following Hill’s appearance, thousands of women filed complaints about their own experiences of sexual abuse on the job to the same EEOC where, ironically, Thomas had harassed Hill.

Another hero is Tarana Burke, an African-American woman who has not been given the recognition she deserves for her initiative in combating sexual harassment. In 2007, she established Just Be Inc., a nonprofit organization geared to helping women victims and survivors of sexual harassment and assault. She named her movement: “Me Too.”

The true history of the U.S. is one of sexual harassment and violence against oppressed people ever since European colonialists set foot on Native land, and throughout the enslavement of people of African descent, the Jim Crow era and beyond. Chicanx and Latinx immigrants have been sexually attacked in the fields and now in detention centers.

The capitalist class has assaulted the multinational, multigender, multigenerational working class in garment factories and laundries, hotels, restaurants, offices, on farms, in all workplaces.

Oppressed people have always resisted and strongly fought back against all forms of repression and exploitation. The history of the workers’ movement shows that women workers have gone on strike, walked off the job and marched for their economic and civil rights.

But now in this new phase of fightback, McDonald’s workers are sparking a struggle against sexual abuse and taking on this global multi-billion-dollar corporation. This is an inspiration to other unorganized workers throughout the service industries — and to unionized workers, too. □

# Trump admin ramps up attack on migrant families

Continued from page 3

### Thousands of migrant children still in detention

DHS is attempting to discard the Flores requirements even as news broke on Sept. 12 that at least 12,800 children were still in detention centers. The report shows that the number of locked-up migrant children had increased fivefold in one year, contradicting the widely reported number of 400.

The number of 400 actually represents the children who have not yet been reunited with their families after the zero-tolerance, criminal separations of refugees and asylum seekers began at the border in May. It was originally 2,600 children; then a judge ordered the Trump administration to reunite the families. After advocate pressure, the government complied, but 400 of these children are still separated.

The other 12,800 still in detention are mostly children who made the journey from Central and South America on their own — without parents. Before the Trump crackdown, they could get out of a detention center if a family sponsored

them. But now the Trump administration requires sponsors to be fingerprinted.

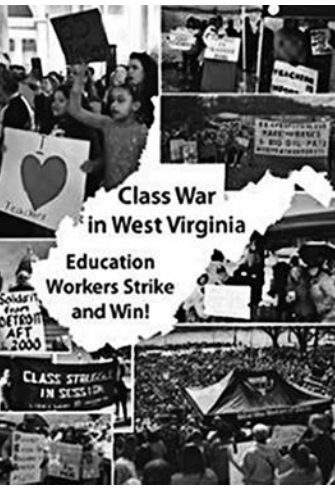
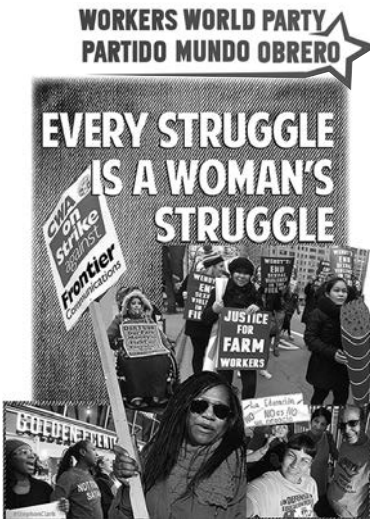
This further criminalization of migrants has dramatically reduced the number of people willing to be sponsors, and it has increased the number of children locked up in detention centers. Obviously, in the face of ICE/police collaboration, migrants don’t want to submit fingerprints to what has turned into a vicious deportation machine. But even those families willing to be fingerprinted in order to become sponsors have to wait months to complete the process.

Of course, nobody can accept the DHS rationale for the fingerprints — that the government is vetting sponsors out of concern for the children. “Children who enter the country illegally are at high risk for exploitation by traffickers and smugglers,” a DHS spokesperson claimed.

“The main ‘traffickers’ and abusers of migrant children and their entire families are ICE agents, operating under orders from the racist Trump administration,” said Teresa Gutierrez, a FIRE leader. “Whether it’s the prisonlike condi-

tions in for-profit detention centers — or situations like the one in Phoenix, where military contractor MVM kept dozens of children in vacant offices with no kitchen and few toilets — migrant children do need protection by the people’s movement and against incarceration.” □

The Syracuse, N.Y., community rallied for immigrant families, friends and neighbors on Aug. 1.



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# Nike’s choice of Kaepernick signals POC and youth power

By M. Matsemela-Ali Odum

Nike announced on Sept. 3 that former National Football League star Colin Kaepernick would be the face of the company’s 30th anniversary “Just Do It” campaign. In the ensuing media coverage, it was revealed that Kaepernick had never lost his endorsement from the athletic apparel titan and had remained on Nike’s pay-roll even after being closed out of the NFL.

Nike blasted out a broadside meme featuring Kaepernick’s face and the quote, “Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything.” Also announced was that Kaepernick had trademarked #IMWITHKAP and planned to produce a line of apparel.

The news caught Kaepernick’s supporters and detractors equally by surprise and reinvigorated the public debate over Kaepernick’s public protests against racism during the U.S. national anthem in 2016.

Nike’s endorsement of Kaepernick’s civil disobedience is not without historical precedent. In 1944, Swedish economist and sociologist Gunnar Myrdal argued that the U.S. had a particular dilemma. Its old racist capitalist order could not stand. Civil disobedience, decolonization, the persistence of Jim Crow discrimination in the U.S. despite the defeat of European fascism in World War II — all this made visible the contradictions in U.S. political structures that claimed to be for “democracy” and “equality.”

As a result, the U.S. government and corporations began to put forward liberal policy reforms in matters of race in an effort to win over African Americans, as well as the hearts and minds of people in Africa and other parts of the decolonizing world. The desegregation of the military and of professional baseball; the Supreme Court ruling against school segregation in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which overturned its “separate but equal” *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling of 1896; U.S. state-sponsored global tours of jazz musicians and basketball players; and even Coca-Cola’s endorsement of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1964 — all reflected this turn toward “racial liberalism.”

Visible in a 1954 film by Black-owned Johnson Publishing Co., in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Commerce, “The Secret of Selling to the Negro Market,” the discernible goal was to acquire Black consent to the U.S. Cold War liberal order.

But the result was the contrary. Racial liberal reforms amid continued racist violence, segregation and class oppression produced decades of Black revolt.

### Owners push, players fight back

Now, in 2018, there is Nike’s Kaepernick campaign, concluded after a spring and summer of heightened conflict between NFL players and owners. NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell announced a new policy in May that would sanction players who did not stand for the national anthem, as Kaepernick had refused to do

during 2016.

With the even more punitive belligerence of Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones, it seemed the NFL owners had triumphed over the players. Yet some owners, such as the New York Jets’ Christopher Johnson, began to break with the decision as player dissent increased. Johnson, for instance, promised to pay the fines of his



Colin Kaepernick kneels during U.S. national anthem at NFL game.

players and not punish any dissenters. The most defiant NFL player was Tennessee Titans All-Pro defensive end Jurrell Casey, who promised continued protest.

The NFL Players Association filed a grievance against the policy on July 10, asserting that the NFL acted “without consultation with the NFLPA, [which] is inconsistent with the collective bargaining agreement and infringes on player rights.” On July 19 the NFLPA agreed to a “standstill agreement” with the NFL.

The NFLPA’s resistance underscores the divide by race between workers and owners in the NFL. Seventy percent of players are Black. But only one-fourth of the head coaches are Black. There are no Black owners. NFL viewership mirrors U.S. demographics with 75 percent white viewers and 15 percent Black viewers.

Yet for Nike, undoubtedly the top NFL sponsor, the numbers and the economics are quite different.

In March, Nike extended its contract with the NFL for an undisclosed amount of money, though it’s known to have exceeded the previous \$1.1 billion agreement. In 2016, *Fortune* magazine reported that people of color comprised 52 percent of Nike consumers and Black people 21 percent. *Forbes* recently noted that over two-thirds of Nike consumers are under 35 years old.

### People of color and youth back Kaepernick

For the past two years, it has been constantly reported that the vast majority of young people and people of color support Kaepernick, with his largest support among Black youth.

Nike’s campaign sparked an immediate backlash from many parts of conservative white “America.” Some people publicly burned their Nike shoes — sometimes with the shoes still on their feet! Some stores have proposed Nike liquidation sales; a handful of small colleges have abandoned their contracts with the shoe giant. On Sept. 4, these reactionary protesters and conservative columnists rejoiced in the news that Nike’s stock had dropped 3 percent.

However, since then the company’s online sales have risen 31 percent, suggesting Nike’s cost-benefit analysis of its sales ploy was accurate. As for Kaepernick, he launched a line of #IMWITHKAP football jerseys retailing at \$180 each, with all the proceeds going to his nonprofit foundation, Know Your Rights.

For some conservatives and some progressives, the Nike campaign is a commercial ploy or a capitalist appropriation of grassroots struggle. Certainly Nike’s endorsement of Kaepernick’s civil disobedience does not obscure the company’s history of oppressive labor practices in globalization, nor its silence amidst public outcry over the authenticity of Nike’s clothing line, Jordan Brand, named after National Basketball Association great Michael Jordan.

Yet Kaepernick is a worker, and his rebellion has been defined as part of the workers’ struggle. Kaepernick’s collusion lawsuit against NFL owners, for denying him employment, has been allowed to proceed in the courts. The new Nike contract emphatically disrupts the NFL owners’ argument that Kaepernick’s value and skill have decreased over the past two years.

Professional sports has been a useful space for racial, class and intersectional struggle in the U.S. For instance, arguably the most profound solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement has been from members of the Women’s National Basketball Association. Top NBA players such as LeBron James have also voiced support for BLM. For the second year in a row, the NBA champions, the Golden State Warriors, have declined to attend a meeting with Trump at the White House.

In the week preceding Nike’s announcement about Kaepernick, a Republican official called kneeling football players “baboons,” and Serena Williams was banned from wearing an outfit inspired by the Afro-Futurist, superhero film “Black Panther” at the French Open. Yet, when Colin Kaepernick and 49er Eric Reid, who has been outspoken in defense of Kaepernick, attended a Williams’ match at the U.S. Tennis Open, they were greeted with a standing ovation.

Nike’s endorsement of Kaepernick is recognition of the growing power of young people and people of color. Notwithstanding the doubts of many progressives and radicals, the past suggests this concession signals an amplification and strengthening in social movements.

History shows that moments of reform following oppressive rule often preface radical change. Because, instead of being co-opted, activists also recognize their power and begin to demand more control. □

## ‘Labor Day’ unmasked — Build Workers World!

**Did you know that the federal holiday “Labor Day,” held the first Monday in September, was founded in 1894?** The reason Labor Day is not May 1, celebrated today in more than 100 countries as International Workers’ Day, has nothing to do with honoring the role of labor in building this country. Rather, it has everything to do with denying the role of socialists, anarchists and other radical organizers in the labor movement.

The American Federation of Labor, ever fearful of alienating the ruling class, suggested in 1887 that Labor Day be “celebrated” in September to take attention away from May Day and the fight of working people for the 8-hour day in Chicago. A police riot against organizers there on May 4, 1886, known as the Haymarket Massacre, resulted in cops killing four workers (and seven of their own), and rounding up leading labor organizers. Most of these were well-known socialists or anarchists who had not even been on the scene. Four were executed by the state in 1887.

There is nothing honorable, worthy or celebratory behind “Labor Day.” Its roots are deeply embedded in the

most vile kind of capitalist lies, police terror and fear of working people’s rights — including our righteous demands for a socialist revolution.

That’s the kind of information you’ve come to expect from *Workers World* — hard-hitting, anti-racist, anti-sexist, pro-LGBTQ and pro-working class truth. But *Workers World* can’t do it without your help. We established the *Workers World* Supporter Program 41 years ago so readers could invest in the paper and promote working-class truth that heralds revolutionary change.

For a donation of at least \$75 or \$100 a year — and much more if you’re able — members receive a year’s subscription to *WW*, a monthly letter about timely issues and five free subscriptions to give to friends. Write checks (either monthly or once a year) to *Workers World* and mail them, with your name and address, to 147 W. 24th St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10011. Or sign up to donate online at [workers.org/donate/](http://workers.org/donate/); it’s easy to set up monthly deductions. Know that we’re grateful for your help in building *Workers World* — for today and for the future. □



# THE STRUGGLE AGAINST POLICE MURD

## Atlanta meeting says: ‘Tear down prison walls!’



WW PHOTO: CHRISTIAN NOAKES

By Christian Noakes

The multiorganization Atlanta Prison Strike Solidarity Committee gathered together some three dozen people on Sept. 9 in downtown Atlanta for a teach-in, discussion and potluck. The event was held to mark the end of the 2018 nationwide prison strike and to commemorate the anniversary of the Attica Uprising, a historic prisoner rebellion in New York state whose demands also included worker demands.

The teach-in highlighted the role of prisons in capitalist society and the structural dehumanization of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people. It also emphasized the need to provide “outside” support and assistance wherever possible to the ongoing “inside” struggle that the recent prison strike represents.

The first panel consisted of Taliba Obuya, a national organizer for the Mal-

colm X Grassroots Movement and a member of the New Afrikan People’s Organization, and Dianne Mathiowetz from Workers World Party.

Taliba Obuya spoke about the historic and contemporary role of prisoners as agents of change. She outlined the legacy of the 1971 Attica Uprising, which she connected directly to the 2018 prison strike. The Attica Uprising was a radical response to systematic dehumanization. It was a bold assertion of the humanity of inmates made necessary by brutal material conditions.

As Elliot James “L.D.” Barkley, a leader of the uprising who was killed by state police, proclaimed: “We are men! We are not beasts and do not intend to be beaten as such. The entire prison populace [in Attica] has set forth to change forever the ruthless brutalization and disregard for the lives of the prisoners here and

throughout the United States.”

Taliba Obuya connected both historical and contemporary resistance needed to combat oppressive conditions and for the perennial drive for the affirmation of humanity.

Dianne Mathiowetz complemented this historically grounded material analysis of prisoner struggles by looking at the role of prisons in capitalist society. She emphasized that to fully grasp the role of prisons, the key is to understand the overall function of the state.

Mathiowetz noted: “The state [is] an organ of class rule, an entity that perpetuates the oppression and exploitation of the ruling class on society, that employs armed bodies of men, police, prisons, courts to enforce their rule. So simply, the state or government of the U.S. is not a neutral body, dispensing laws or judgments impartially, but a tool of the capitalist class, engaged in perpetuating its dominance and supporting its profit-making goals.”

Mathiowetz continued: “Prisons serve multiple purposes then. The most obvious is the threat to take away a person’s liberty. Capitalist law is designed to protect property. In particular, [capitalists’] property. Working-class people can get years in jail for shoplifting or robbing a store, but hundreds of thousands of families lost their homes to fraudulent loan schemes hatched by top executives at some of the biggest banks and mortgage companies, and no one went to jail. That’s called white-collar crime, a form of white supremacy, I might say, where all is forgotten after paying a fine.”

The second panel consisted of Bridgette Simpson from Women on the Rise — an organization of formerly incarcerated women — and Kevin Caron from Georgia Detention Watch and World Without Police. Women on the Rise has been instrumental in putting pressure on the city to close the Atlanta City Detention Center. Looking forward, Simpson considered how

the towering structures of prisons might be converted to serve rather than control working-class communities of color.

She challenged the audience to imagine “a center for freedom, for well being, for just being.” To create a more just society from the appropriated structures implies realization of direct democracy in which empowered communities are decision makers on how to utilize space — not capitalist politicians invested in the profits of the current exploitative system.

Kevin Caron analyzed the development of the 2018 strike, which included hunger strikes, work stoppages, sit-down strikes and boycotts. By relying on multiple tactics, organizers were able to create a more inclusive — and thus further reaching — coordinated mass action of resistance.

The historical significance of the dates chosen for the strike also reflects the conscious effort of organizers to educate other inmates about the legacy of prison revolt. The beginning of the strike was called for Aug. 21, the anniversary of the 1971 assassination of George Jackson, prisoner organizer and Black Panther in San Quentin State Prison, while the last day was Sept. 9, the anniversary of Attica.

After an engaging and highly collaborative discussion, fueled by a steady stream of audience testimony, comments and questions, those attending sat down to dinner and continued to discuss the prison system, rebellions and the role of people “on the outside.”

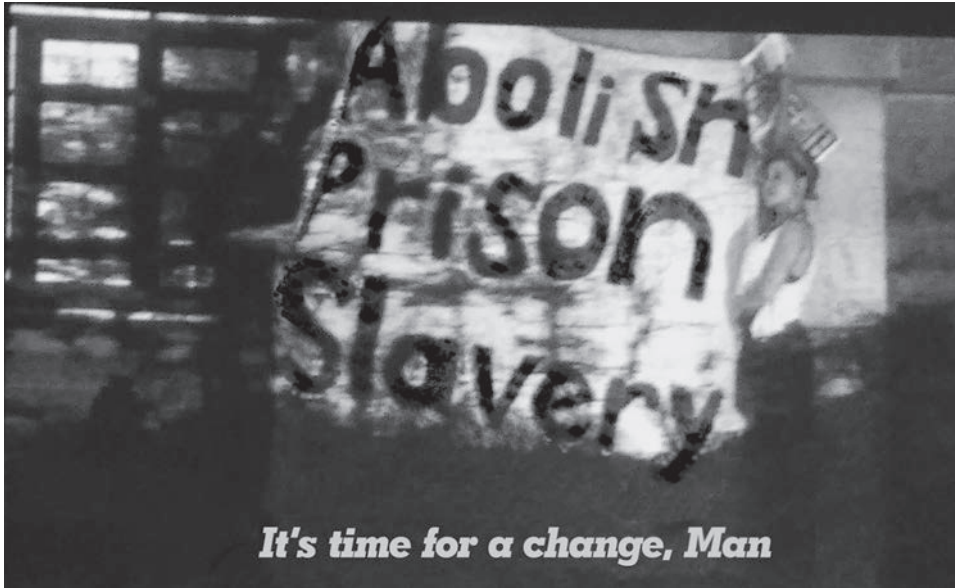
The theme of continued struggle echoed the sentiment of a message smuggled out of Attica almost five decades ago: “The uprising at Attica did not begin here, nor will it end here.”

The 2018 strike reflects an evolving strategy born out of this legacy. It is through generations of struggle that mass resistance grows stronger, more resilient and more adaptive to the material conditions.

The struggle continues without pause beyond the 2018 nationwide prison strike. Free the people! Tear down the walls! □

### BALTIMORE

## Solidarity with national prison strike



WW PHOTO: CHERYL LABASH

A segment of the Vaughn uprising video.

By Cheryl LaBash  
Baltimore

A new short video premiered here on Sept. 12 in solidarity with the National Prison Strike. The video focused on the Feb. 2, 2017, prisoners’ rebellion at the James T. Vaughn Correctional Center in Smyrna, Del., when a notoriously abusive guard was killed. The video also documented the support demonstration outside Vaughn at the time. The uprising illuminated the universally horrific conditions in U.S. prisons.

A prisoner narrates the powerful 15-minute representation of the oppressive conditions in Vaughn that gave rise to the rebellion. Videographer and producer Rasika Ruwanpathirana has made an important and compelling tool to build solidarity with the human beings now held in U.S. prison concentration camps, still incarcerated in the legacy of slavery.

The meeting recognized U.S. political prisoners Mumia Abu-Jamal and Leon-

ard Peltier and remembered Clarence Brandley, who died Sept. 2. Unjustly convicted of murder, Brandley was freed through the struggle of the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement. South African revolutionary Steve Biko was also remembered. A speaker from the Prisoner Solidarity Committee commented that the beatings described in the Vaughn video reminded them of Biko’s murder.

The People’s Power Assembly reported that Baltimore’s monthly Worker Solidarity Day was held in support of striking prisoners on Sept. 5. Meeting participants welcomed an appeal to support the Days of Action to End the Blockade against Cuba, scheduled in Washington, D.C., for Sept 24-27, and the Puerto Rico International Tribunal to be held in New York City on Oct. 27.

The People’s Power Assembly and the Prisoner Solidarity Committee sponsored the meeting. For more information or to get involved with the PSC in the Baltimore area call 443-221-3775.

## CLARENCE BRANDLEY A legacy of perseverance and struggle

Continued from page 2

the governor’s mansion. They released 100 balloons reading “FREE CLARENCE!” in the rotunda of the Texas Capitol. They met with the Black Legislative Caucus and raised thousands of dollars for investigators.

In 1987 new evidence was discovered, and witnesses finally told the truth. An evidentiary hearing was held in Galveston before retired District Judge Perry Pickett. More than 150 people attended every day for two weeks, coming 85 miles from Conroe and 45 from Houston. “60 Minutes” and “The 700 Club” aired special television programs on the case. Centurion Ministries got involved.

Finally, that October, Judge Pickett declared, in his 30 years as a judge, “No case has presented a more shocking scenario of the effects of racial prejudice, perjured testimony, witness intimidation [and] an

investigation the outcome of which was predetermined.” He said two other janitors, both white, were the likely killers, and officials had railroaded Brandley out of racist motives.

He recommended to the state’s Court of Criminal Appeals that a new trial be held. It took that court 14 long months before it finally accepted the recommendation. Texas decided not to retry Brandley.

### Clarence walks out — and into organizing

Clarence Brandley walked out of the Ellis Unit prison in January 1990. He spent the next 28 years speaking out against the death penalty.

In small neighborhood churches, universities and the Texas Legislature, Brandley’s story has changed hearts and minds and motivated many to fight for abolition.

Brandley joined Witness To Innocence, an organization composed exclusively of death row exonerees. WTI empowers



# WEED AND PRISON SLAVERY CONTINUES!

## Defending Botham Jean

The night of Sept. 6 in Dallas an off-duty policewoman, Amber Guyger, entered the apartment of a 26-year-old Afro-Caribbean man, Botham Jean, and shot and killed him. Guyger, who is white, alleges she confused his apartment with her own — which was actually on a different floor in the building. Local protests of Jean’s killing have included a Mothers Against Police Brutality vigil on Sept. 7.

The community marched on Sept. 16 against this and other instances of racist cop violence. Advancing on the stadium where the Dallas Cowboys were playing a National Football League game, a symbolic funeral procession included a hearse, caskets, a motorcade and buses organized to carry demonstrators demanding the police officer be fired and charged with murder instead of manslaughter. Other protesters were arrested for blocking the road around the stadium. There have also been protests at Dallas Police headquarters about the killing of Jorge Olguín, slain in front of his children by an apartment security guard on Sept. 3. — WW Staff

By Mikisa Thompson

I really hate capitalism and its effects on our Black lives while we be minding our business, trying to exist in this "great country" that puts on a blue uniform and shield of certification, approval and impunity to kill us at will, to lynch us at OUR door without much ado. Business as usual.

Botham Jean is the man that now can tell no tale. Allegedly, he had some marijuana in his apartment where he was murdered by the uniformed lyncher. Cops found “evidence” after asking for and receiving a search warrant — for the home of the victim! But how many times

do the cops mention the bullets that killed him, the gun held in the hands of his police killer?

The cops are criminalizing the victim. “Weed” is “legalized” in many places in this country, yet many Black and Brown people are still disappeared with arrests for “substance” — taken from their families, sent to be abused and used in prisons. There, they are forced to labor for nothing or a token wage while being price gouged by companies that profit handsomely from this neoslaveocracy. Slavery in prisons was created postemancipation in the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution — a legislative “gift” to then rich

landowners that keeps on giving to capitalist profits now.

For sure, the cops and the newspapers aren’t talking about the unions of strong Black men and women and others fighting oppression, such as the Black Panther Party, which changed the mental trajectory of so many people here and abroad about taking control of our neighborhoods; about being alright and at peace with our identity in spite of the systemic abuse to our psyches, bodies, physical health and safety. Black people have fought public miseducation sent out though the business media and the “public schools” — propaganda purposely designed to erase and water down our Black story, history, experience, exceptional abilities and contributions to the world.

I belong to another group of people who also came together to fight — a multinational, multigenerational party with various identities and backgrounds, with an internationalist point of view, fighting for and with the workers of the world against racism, colonialism and imperialism.

Workers World Party has been on the frontlines since 1959 against racist discrimination and the prison-industrial



complex. WWP, which fights for workers, LGBTQ people, women, im/migrants and more, is still here and growing, in the perfect mashup of the revolutionary dust-up, fanning the embers that our souls require, that pushes fire through our bodies, to push through again, until the next rally or next movement that will ultimately bring our oppressors to their knees for the crimes against our people and class.

So, yeah, some of us may need to cope in this brutal world with plants such as weed, as we are continually traumatized as Black people, day in, day out, just trying to mind our own business.

But this ain’t got shit to do with weed. Capitalism kills. □

## South Carolina prisoners

# Society turns people into criminals

PART 6

Jared Ware conducted this interview after an April 15 rebellion at Lee Correctional Institution, a South Carolina maximum security prison. It was the deadliest prison uprising since the Lucasville Uprising on April 11-21, 1993. (Lucasville prison uprising 25th anniversary, Workers World) Individuals inside Lee who participated are identified by their initials for safety. One of these prisoners identified as a member of Jailhouse Lawyers Speak, the group of imprisoned human rights advocates who initiated the National Prison Strike of Aug. 21 to Sept. 9. This is part 6 of a series available at workers.org.

**S:** People aren’t born criminals. They are criminalized by the environments they are socialized within. The U.S. Constitution’s 13th Amendment is proof alone that the mass amount of the warehousing of prisoners is not by accident. [Ed. The amendment permits slavery to be imposed on people convicted of a crime. The post-Civil War historical context was the attempt to re-enslave freed African-American people as workers in the U.S. South.]

Even prisoners convicted of violent crime or who may be involved in violent activities, they may one day return to society. People’s cases can be overturned, some have got max-out dates, some may make parole. Wouldn’t it be wise to be implementing programs that would better the prisoners, not make them worse? They should want to heal anything that they consider to be “sick.”



Society promotes and produces violence. People ain’t getting like that in prison, they’re already like that out there in society. Some of these guys that are locked up in here are juveniles. That’s a learned behavior. They weren’t born violent.

**D:** Most prisoners, when they come to prison, come with the mindset that they want to get themselves together, and I think a lot of people miss that [fact] right there. Even the ones that are labeled violent. And when I hear people say “violent,” we have to be careful with that term. We’re seeing politicians saying, “We’re not going to be supporting violent offenders.” It’s a new theme now, just to promote policies [that benefit] “nonviolent offenders.” And that kind of sickens me because, at the end of the day, who determines what’s violent? Who determines what’s a violent offender? To me, a bunch of people making up these laws, they determine what’s violent and what is not.

The people they want to categorize and label as violent offenders, for the most part, these brothers and the women come into prison, they come with the mindset that they want to do the right thing. But I think the minute they enter through those gates, and the minute they begin to observe their surroundings, they begin to

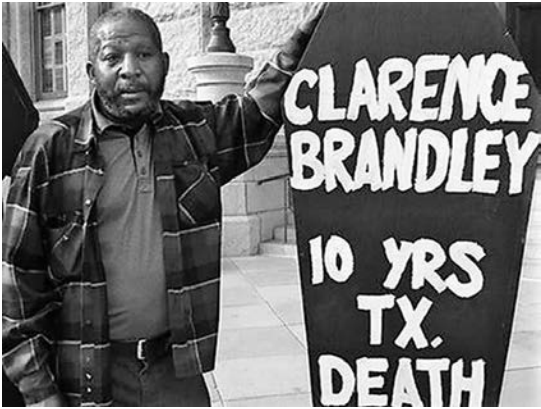
recognize immediately that any change they wanted to do, they don’t need to do it, because they’re going to be perceived a certain way, and they’re going to be handled a certain way, and it’s going to be a lose-lose situation for them.

People have to understand that humans are entering through these gates and becoming prisoners, and in the process of that, the environment here is making it worse. It is creating something in these prisoners that is a lot worse than when they came in, at least for a lot of these guys and women.

Once again, [the prisoners] may have done some terrible things out there, but for the most part, when they start going through [the system] and they recognize the days ahead of them, they want to change. They want to do something different. Hell, I know I was about that when I came in here, until I went through the “reception and evaluation center,” and saw it wasn’t going to work out that way.

That is another reason why some people want to group up. Some people want family here as well. I like to call them street formations [as opposed to using the term gang]. People need someone that can look out and care for their best interests, too. Not just in the protection role, but also somebody that gives a damn, because the system is so cold. So when you’re sitting here, and you’re drinking, you’re smoking, you’re dabbing, you’re talking about your loved ones with your homeboy there, that’s a different feeling versus when you’re looking just at the prison itself, which is a cold place.

Everybody looks for some sense of comfort, some sense of love, which is another reason I think the prison system eliminating our contacts, our family ties, is really detrimental to prisoners re-entering society successfully. □



Clarence Brandley at Capitol in 2011 when activists sponsored a Day of Innocence.

WW PHOTO: GLORIA RUBAC

be held on Oct. 20. Brandley spoke at the march for many years. As Brandley had done, these exonerees will speak to university students, religious institutions and legislators while in Texas.

Brandley’s case sparked worldwide interest in the death penalty. British writer Nick Davies came to Texas to write an article, stayed for an extended period and wrote a compelling book, “White Lies: Rape, Murder and Justice Texas Style.” The Showtime television network made a movie based on the book. Davies attended the funeral.

Clarence Brandley will be missed by so many for his quick smile and honesty, ability to captivate any audience and dedication to abolish the racist death penalty. □

exonerees to speak out about their own stories and the injustices of capital punishment. They play a powerful role in the movement to abolish the death penalty. (witnessinnocence.org)

WTI is sending five exonerees to speak and organize at Texas’s 19th Annual March to Abolish the Death Penalty, to



# U.S. economy

# Rosy for the rich, grim for workers and poor people

By G. Dunkel

The big-business media — TV, radio, the press — is overflowing with good news on the economic front. But the question is whether or not the news is true and whether the media analysts are interpreting it correctly.

Here is their news: The U.S. gross domestic product — which is the sum of all goods and services produced in the U.S. — is up 20 percent since 2008. (St. Louis Federal Reserve) The official unemployment rate is 3.9 percent, after reaching a high of 10.2 percent in October 2009, and the median household income is now \$61,372. (Bureau of Labor Statistics)

The tax cuts, which flew through Congress to President Trump’s desk in record time, mean more take-home pay in nearly everyone’s paycheck.

Despite the media’s optimism and good cheer, workers and the poor face a harsher reality. Over 8 million people have no health insurance. Even for those who have insurance, co-pays and deductibles can push the cost of life-saving drugs like insulin out of reach.

Housing is impossibly expensive in many cities. Using New York as an example, it takes a few million dollars to buy a two-bedroom apartment in Manhattan or you can rent such an apartment for \$7,000 to \$8,000 a month. Outside of Manhattan, market rents are less, but still unreachable for many workers who make less than the median wage.

New York is at the upper end of housing costs in the United States, but elsewhere housing costs are also fueling the rise in homelessness and taking bigger and bigger chunks of workers’ incomes.

Manhattan is the epicenter of U.S. capital, the physical home of Wall Street, filled with new construction, tourists and displays of vast wealth. Because the real

estate firm Douglas Elliman was having trouble renting storefront property these days in Manhattan, it conducted a survey of vacancy rates. It found that 20 percent of Manhattan storefronts are currently vacant, up from 7 percent in 2016. (The Real Deal, Sept. 9)

That vacancy rate is a bad sign for the economy.

There are vacant stores on Fifth Avenue, one of the most exclusive shopping streets in the world, on posh 57th Street and on 14th Street, a mecca for working-class shoppers for decades. The alleged recovery from the 2008-09 crisis is neither consistent, nor coherent, despite the improvement in unemployment statistics.

### Unemployment rate: deception and accuracy

The current calculation of the unemployment rate involves dividing the number of jobless people who are looking for work by the total labor force — defined as all those people working or actively looking for work. In August that was 3.9 percent.

If you factor in underemployed workers, those working less than full time not by choice, “discouraged” workers, those marginally attached — who would work but feel they can’t find a job — that adds about 12.3 million people to the unemployed total. This raises the rate of unemployed to 7.6 percent.

Even this rate is incomplete because it doesn’t count the 2.2 million people locked up in jails, who are most certainly part of the working class. There have been a number of prison strikes from coast-to-coast since the beginning of August, which meant prisoners were asserting their status as workers by withholding their labor.

For the last 30 years people of prime

working age, 25 to 54, have been leaving the labor force in greater and greater numbers for a variety of reasons. To get a figure that better reflects economic reality, some economists have been urging the government to report a rate that is a simple ratio of “employed people aged 25-54 divided by the total population between ages 25-54.”

That labor force participation rate is better now than it was in 2009. But it’s not a record you can boast about. It was around 67 percent in 2000. (St Louis Federal Reserve)

The 3.9 percent official unemployment rate is not false news, but it doesn’t accurately reflect what is happening to jobs in the U.S. economy. All of these rates ignore the special problems that people of color, youth and elders, Native people, mothers who want or have to work, and anyone with less schooling and training have in finding and keeping jobs. The government and the media just want one number, especially if it makes the system look good.

If those in office can claim that unemployment is low and the economy is good, it blames the individual jobless worker. It gives the government a pretext to avoid funding job training and investments in job creation.

### Rise in the GDP and incomes

To be more precise, the gross domestic product is the monetary measure of the market value of all the final goods and services produced in a period of time, generally a quarter (three months) or a year. The U.S. GDP grew by 20 percent from the first quarter of 2009 to the first quarter of 2018.



The question is: What does this growth mean for workers?

The growth of the GDP fueled a tremendous surge in business profits,

which meant that returns to the wealthy who collected them also surged. But in 2016, net worth among white middle-income families was down 19 percent below 2007 levels (adjusted for inflation). Among Black families, net worth was down 40 percent; for Latinx families, it was down 46 percent.

The major contribution to the net worth of Black and Latinx families is the investment they make in their homes. However, home prices still have not recovered. White families started out with higher levels of wealth, with a smaller proportion of it in their homes. (New York Times, Sept. 12)

In August, the median wage for all workers — the wage where half of all workers’ wages are lower and half are higher — reached where it had been in 2007 (adjusted for inflation). This means that after a decade of “recovery,” wages are back where they had once been.

An Economic Policy Institute Jan. 6, 2015 report on wage stagnation makes the point that “middle-class wages are stagnant — middle-wage workers’ hourly wage is up 6 percent since 1979, low-wage workers’ wages are down 5 percent, while those with very high wages saw a 41 percent increase.”

Fox News and Trump supporters express surprise about the lack of popular enthusiasm for the state of the economy, which is booming for Wall Street, the banks and the super-rich. Yet for the vast majority of workers, the state of the economy is grim. □

## Hurricane Florence vortex

## White supremacy, capitalism, environmental degradation

Continued from page 1

arrests and possible raids. Immigrant rights networks are activating to verify and record ICE activities and distribute “know your rights” information for those at risk.

Prior to the hurricane landfall, North Carolina’s Division of Prisons announced that no prison inmates would be evacuated. This means tens of thousands, as during previous hurricanes, could be trapped in their cages as waters rise from flooding, as predicted. Solidarity with prisons has been building locally, including a protest at Hyde Correctional “Institute,” which is located in a coastal swamp close to New Bern, which has been featured prominently in mainstream news as a city drowned by the storm.

Workers and oppressed people in North Carolina are facing a true capitalist disaster. The lack of supportive infrastructure for people in the eastern region, along with the state’s bowing down to the hog, tobacco and prison industries, demonstrates a complete disregard for the oppressed. A high concentration of unemployed people is callously dealt

with through environmentally induced illness, prison or “natural” disasters.

### Resistance to capitalist-made disaster

Recently, communities in Duplin County in Eastern North Carolina won a major settlement against the hog farming industry. But the \$25 million award, though tremendous, will likely still be enough to deal with the chronic illness, land loss and other negative impacts of capitalism on the quality of life for residents. Now, even this insufficient settlement for residents is under threat, although a Duplin County solidarity network, which includes Workers World Party comrades, is working to ensure that residents will not be targeted and intimidated into relinquishing their settlement.

Other key organizations in the eastern region have done a tremendous amount of positive work battling the exploitative and entrenched conditions that exist under capitalism. Some of those organizations include the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee and the Coalition Against Racism. These have ensured that the question of environmental justice is not separated from

systemic white supremacy, an issue so heavy and deeply persistent in more rural parts of North Carolina. In the wake of this storm, people from many of these groups, including Workers World Party, are traveling to Eastern North Carolina to help begin repairs and distribute resources.

In 2016, right around this time of year, Charlotte was rising up against police brutality in the aftermath of the shooting of Keith Lamont Scott, a Black man with disabilities. At the same time, Hurricane Matthew was hitting the coast of North Carolina. Then Gov. Pat McCrory ordered the National Guard to the coast — and at the same time spent \$25 million to continue the litigation for HB2, an anti-trans, anti-worker bill in court.

That historic confluence of events reminds us that, as environmental disasters become more and more the norm, there is an intensified need for a strong network of fighters to build connections and solidarity across issues, geographies and identities.

There are many connections to be forged, for instance, between the people of North Carolina and the people of Puerto Rico, who are still fighting for the

recovery and destiny of their island after the tremendous onslaught of Hurricane Maria that killed thousands and left thousands more homeless without food, water or medical care, while U.S. aid was murderously too little and too late. The island still needs massive resources for complete recovery; meanwhile, U.S. capitalist bosses are rushing in to seize every chance to prey and profit on a disaster they have helped create.

Unless we act to build solidarity now, we will not have viable solutions to what rapid climate change brings, as these storms surge into a deadly vortex of white supremacy, capitalism and environmental degradation. □

Available online at: [workers.org/books](https://workers.org/books)

## WHY COLIN KAEPERNICK IS RIGHT

Articles from Workers World/Mundo Obrero

**Excerpt:** ‘Kaepernick, the African-American former quarterback for NFL’s San Francisco 49ers, was asked why he was wearing a Muhammad Ali t-shirt. He said, “To pay homage. [Ali] fought a very similar fight and was trying to do what’s right for the people.”’



# Lesson from Cuba: Disaster capitalism and socialist planning

*The following was adapted from a Workers World Party talk given Nov. 11, 2017, after the “In the Footsteps of Che International Brigade” returned from Cuba. Over 200 people from over 20 countries traveled with the brigade to show solidarity with the Cuban Revolution and to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Che Guevara’s death.*

By Nathaniel Peters

So far this year, three Category 4 or 5 hurricanes have made landfall in the Caribbean or southern United States: Harvey, Irma and Maria. It’s commonplace to speak of these storms as natural disasters. After all, they are natural events, albeit abetted by human-made climate change.

But there is nothing natural about the destruction that follows in a hurricane’s wake. Not in these times, when the dangers of hurricanes can be observed, predicted and communicated days in advance of landfall.

Nowadays, hurricanes are a human-made disaster, because the extent of their damage is determined based on the principles by which the societies they affect are organized.

[Thousands] of people have died in Puerto Rico in Maria’s aftermath. Harvey and Irma killed at least 160 people in the continental U.S., including 12 left to die in a Florida nursing home across the street from a functioning hospital. Why did more people die in that nursing home than in all of Cuba during Hurricane Irma?

Cuba safely and efficiently evacuated over a million people before Hurricanes Ivan and Dennis in 2004 and 2005, while over 100 people died during the 2005 Houston evacuation ahead of Hurricane Rita.

The Puerto Rican and Cuban electrical grids were both completely shut down by recent hurricanes. The vast majority of the Puerto Rican people are still without electricity at this moment. Yet the Cuban electrical grid was 70 percent restored within a week and fully restored within three.

Why is the U.S., the wealthiest country in the world, with all its infrastructure, industry and communications technology, unable to deal with hurricanes, while Cuba, a small island with a fraction of the wealth, a fraction of the infrastructure, a fraction of the industrialization, is able to respond so well?

The answer is in one word: Socialism! Cuba is a country organized under socialist principles for the benefit of its people and led by a Communist, Leninist Party. The U.S. is a capitalist, imperialist country, run by and for the bourgeoisie, their banks and their profits, with Puerto Rico, held as a U.S. colony, run by the banks through a Fiscal Control Board.

It’s all well and good to say socialist principles are why Cuba responds so well to hurricanes. But what I had the opportunity to learn in Cuba is how socialism enables Cuba to respond so effectively.

## Cuba’s socialist defense against disasters

An hour’s drive from the northcentral Cuban coast, where the impact of Irma was greatest, our delegation visited the University of Sancti Spiritus. There, we met officials from Cuban National Civil Defense and representatives of the students and administration to learn about their response to hurricanes.

National Civil Defense is an integrated system, mobilizing all of Cuba’s response to protect its people, economy, social institutions and natural resources from both climate change and war.

That’s right, Cuba explicitly frames hurricane response as defense against climate change — a dramatic difference



PHOTO: CUBANITO EN CUBA VIA TWITTER

In 2017 the Cubans evacuated six dolphins from their home at a dolphinarium on Cayo Guillermo, just north of Cuba’s main island, to save them from the brunt of Hurricane Irma.

between Cuban and U.S. approaches.

In the revolution’s early years, Civil Defense concentrated on preparing the Cuban people to defend themselves against foreign military intervention. But Hurricane Flora, striking Cuba in 1963 and killing more than 1,200 people, showed painfully the need for disaster preparation, now the Civil Defense’s main focus.

Every Cuban adult goes through a civil defense training program preparing them to assist during evacuations. Since 1986, National Civil Defense has organized a yearly, nationwide, two-day hurricane preparedness drill. In every part of Cuba, evacuation and shelter plans are in place. When a hurricane arrives, people carry out what they have already practiced.

Stores of building materials, medications, tents and other supplies are strategically maintained across the island. Before Hurricane Harvey, Houston officials said it was impossible to organize an evacuation with just a few days notice. Exactly! You have to plan beforehand.

When hurricanes are imminent, a four-phase Cuban plan is set in motion:

- 1. Inform:** Media begin broadcasting warnings. Students and members of mass organizations go door-to-door so everyone knows about the danger.
- 2. Alert:** Evacuations begin. Those living in sturdy homes take in neighbors. Large buildings like churches and universities serve as shelters. Unions, the University Students Federation, the Young Communist League and the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution are mobilized under the leadership of the National Civil Defense. Civil defense relies on preexisting communication and coordination plans within the mass organizations and does not have to create an ad-hoc communication network with every emergency. Cubans are evacuated along with their belongings, pets, and whatever tools and equipment they need for work. Elderly and sick people are looked after. Everyone is accounted for and no one abandoned. Evacuation plans include contingencies to protect farm animals, machinery and other means of production to minimize economic losses. All these measures

require extensive planning, and everyone is encouraged to participate. The U.S. approach could not be more different: No mechanism is in place to mobilize people in a coordinated fashion, there are no large-scale hurricane response drills, and people are abandoned, left to organize their own evacuation, so that poor, infirm and elderly people are often unable to leave.

- 3. Alarm:** The hurricane arrives. Civil Defense works to maintain communication and national media broadcast information about the storm. The Federation of Amateur Radio Enthusiasts provides communication if phone lines are lost.
- 4. Recover:** Damage is assessed and rebuilding begins. Unions mobilize skilled workers from across the island to travel to affected areas. Cuba’s system of reservoirs traps rainfall for use during drier times. Neighborhood committees are set up to distribute building materials directly to the people. Depending on a family’s financial means, people receive free materials, a subsidy, a loan, or they purchase materials at price.

## Disaster capitalism and socialist planning

The day after Irma hit, the price of all construction materials in Cuba was halved. This is the difference between disaster socialism and disaster capitalism. Under capitalism, needed products become fabulously more expensive, and the capitalists make superprofits off people’s suffering.

But in Cuba the prices fall, because that’s what the people need. This happens despite the fact that building materials are one of the most difficult products for Cuba to purchase because of the U.S. blockade.

At the meeting we brigadistas attended, university students and administration representatives described their personal experiences with hurricane response.

In addition to the school providing civil defense courses, students regularly visit coastal fishing villages to develop relationships essential in an emergency. As Irma approached, students traveled to Yaguajay, a nearby town, to inform people of the need to evacuate. At least 1,000 Cubans from the coast were sheltered at the University of Sancti Spiritus ahead of Irma.

University staff lived on site and provided beds, food and also cultural activities, which are viewed as an essential need. Medical care, as always in Cuba, was available and free.

After the hurricane, students returned daily to Yaguajay and the surrounding areas to help with repairs, provide information about the rest of the country and eventually redecorate the community. Again, the arts are not seen as a luxury or bourgeois decadence: The community’s cultural decoration is seen as a basic material need.

Under long-term planning that is characteristic of socialism, Cuba acknowledges the tragic reality that many coastal villages will eventually be lost to rising sea levels because of climate change. Rather than abandoning these communities, the university helps them gradually relocate their homes to higher ground. The U.S. could not be more different: Consider the recent boom in high-priced, high-rise construction along the Miami waterfront.

The speed of repairs in Yaguajay and in Havana, where the storm surged 6 meters, was incredible. Some damage was still visible when we were there, but daily life, both economic and social, had resumed. Contrast that with the U.S., where New York City is still repairing subway damage from Hurricane Sandy in 2012, and Puerto Rico is a massive humanitarian disaster.

One of the tragedies of hurricanes is their predictability. Year after year they come, and each time Cuba admirably provides for its people, while the capitalist world abandons its masses to their fate.

Lives are saved under socialism in Cuba, while people are left to die in the U.S. Why is capitalism utterly unwilling to respond to hurricanes?

Because under capitalism, the lives of the working people and the oppressed are worth only the surplus value, otherwise known as profit, that can be extracted from them. In the era of capitalism at a dead end, when the crisis of overproduction is a continuous state of affairs, when the reserve army of labor is large and always growing, workers are easily replaced.

The death of hundreds and the displacement of millions isn’t seen as much of a problem for the capitalist class. Just the opposite! Disasters are a fantastic investment opportunity for capitalists, stimulating demand and increasing prices.

But what is the lot of our class, the lot of the working and the oppressed, under disaster capitalism? Exploitation, poverty, displacement, death.

If I can bring back one lesson from Cuba to you, it is that revolution is possible. We can and must win.

Let us today, 50 years after Che’s death, and 100 years after the October Bolshevik Revolution, consider and draw strength from what Che said to us in the United States in 1964, borrowing from Cuban hero José Martí: “You North Americans are very lucky. You are fighting the most important fight of all — you live in the heart of the beast.”

Let us consider the awesome responsibility with which his words charge us.

Let us not shirk from the task before us, but go forward, confident in ourselves and our class. ¡Venceremos! ¡Hasta la Victoria Siempre! □



# Palestine under attack

The White House has expanded its of-fensive against the rights of the Palestin-ian people for self-determination on two fronts, including the right to return to the lands taken from them by the Israeli state. Workers World supports the Palestinian people in their struggle for these rights.

The most recent front is in Palestine and involves a drastic cut in what is nor-mally described as humanitarian aid. The U.S. cut its \$200 million contribu-tion to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for its aid work in occupied Palestine on Aug. 24. The U.S. decision leaves UNRWA's provision of health care and emergency aid as well as education for 526,000 Palestinian refugee children facing a serious shortfall.

By taking this step, the U.S. adminis-tration now adds collective punishment to its crimes against the Palestinian peo-ple. And it adds this cut to its earlier de-cision to recognize the city of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital. This blow aimed at Palestine occurred when the U.S. Embas-sy was relocated there on May 14.

A leading organization in the Palestin-ian freedom struggle, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, said in a Sept. 1 statement that it considers the decision of the United States of America to stop funding UNRWA as an addition-al confirmation by the administration of its partnership with the Zionist enemy in its declared war against the Palestinian cause and rights.

Back in the U.S.A., the administration has sharpened its attack on people who work in solidarity with Palestinians and with Palestine, falsely accusing them of anti-Semitism. Kenneth Marcus, As-sistant Secretary of Civil Rights at the Department of Education, wrote a letter to the Zionist Organization of America promising to reopen an investigation of students at Rutgers University. These students are charged with anti-Semitism because they held a meeting in 2011 with a panel of Jewish Holocaust survivors under the heading "Never Again for Any-

one." The charges had been dropped by the Obama administration in 2014. (AP-news.com, Sept. 12)

A Sept. 14 statement by Jewish Voice for Peace calls Marcus' letter the begin-ning of an intimidation campaign be-cause it threatens universities with losing federal funding. It says Marcus is abus-ing the DOE Office of Civil Rights.

Anti-Semitism, which was at one time blatant in U.S. ruling-class circles, still exists. Scenes from Charlottesville, Va., in August 2017 made it clear that Nazis and Nazi sympathizers held vicious anti-Semitic beliefs along with racist, anti-Muslim, homophobic and misogy-nist tenets. That Marcus doesn't start his investigation with the Charlottesville fas-cists makes it obvious it's not anti-Semi-tism the administration aims to stop, but solidarity with Palestine.

These two steps by the Trump admin-istration are completely in line with U.S. policy since Washington supported the creation of the Israeli state in 1948. More blatant, but continuity.

While Washington and Tel Aviv have not always agreed on every tactic over 70 years, they have always shared com-mon reactionary interests in that area of West Asia where Israel is a regional power. Israel was and is a settler state, isolated from its neighbors and oppress-ing the Indigenous population it removed from their homes and lands. The Israeli state has been both dependent on West-ern — and especially U.S. — imperialism for military, political and diplomatic aid. And it has also acted as an enforcer of imperialist interests in the region against anti-imperialist peoples and states.

That the U.S. administration is more open and blatant about its oppressive role wipes out any remaining illusion that Washington can be an "honest broker" in the region. Those of us inside the U.S. must fight for the right to expose the Israeli state's crimes and the reactionary nature of Zionist ideology. That is our challenge and our role. □

# Western powers threaten new attack on Syria

*Syrian government troops, with the support of Russian and Iranian forces, have prepared to retake the province of Idlib in northwestern Syria, the last bastion of the reactionary forces that have been trying, with the aid of the U.S. and other NATO powers, to overthrow the Damascus government. Washington and its allies have threatened military strikes. The following article, by journalist Karin Leukefeld, was published in the Sept. 15 edition of the German daily newspaper Junge Welt and translated by Workers World Managing Editor John Catalinotto.*



The U.S. airstrike on Syria on April 14 was visible from many parts of Damascus, the country's capital.

By Karin Leukefeld

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas met with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov in Berlin on Sept. 14. While the official occasion for the visit was a Ger-man-Russian economic forum, most likely their meeting was focused on the situation in the Syrian province of Idlib.

In the lead-up to the meeting, Lavrov told the German Press Agency (dpa) that he was prepared to coordinate the Astana process led by Russia, Iran and Turkey to end the war in Syria with the "small Syria group" to which the U.S., Britain, France, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Germany be-long. Once again [Lavrov] called on Berlin to cooperate in the reconstruction of Syria.

The German government makes par-ticipation in the financing of reconstruc-tion dependent on a "political solution" in Syria, as Maas informed the dpa. Ac-cording to Maas, the aim is to prevent a "new humanitarian catastrophe." Russia would play a "key role" in this.

Maas did not address whether the foreign and defense ministries in Berlin would take part in a possible military "re-taliatory strike" against Syria. The U.S., Great Britain and France are already pre-

paring such a renewed aggression. The pretext for this is again the alleged plan to employ poison gas in Syria.

In the past, the government in Damas-cus has regularly been held responsible for such attacks, although there is no con-clusive evidence to support it. Syria has repeatedly rejected the allegations. Rus-sia, too, argues that the Western-backed combat units want to stage a poison gas attack in Idlib to provoke a Western mil-itary strike.

British Labor Member of Parliament [and shadow Foreign Secretary] Emily Thornberry called this week for an inde-pendent investigation of suspected chem-ical-weapon deployments in Syria before London takes part in an attack. The U.S. envoy for Syria, James Jeffrey, on the other hand, said there was "plenty of ev-idence" that Damascus was preparing an attack with chemical weapons.

France's foreign minister, Jean-Yves Le Drian, stated that a military offensive on Idlib could scatter "many terrorists." Among the up to 15,000 jihadists were many of French origin. The Syrian offen-sive is "a risk for European security," Le Drian told the French television station BFM.

The offensive planned by Syria is di-rected against the Islamic State [group] and al-Qaida-related groups that have been militarily controlling Idlib since 2012. While the United Nations states that there may be about 10,000 troops from these groups there, the successor organization of the Nusra Front — Haiat Tahrir Ash-Sham (HTS) — listed as a terrorist organization, states that it has more than 30,000 fighters at its disposal.

Local elections are scheduled for Sun-day in Syria. This will involve filling the local political offices that were introduced in 2011. Around 35,000 candidates com-pete on two lists. The "list of national unity" is drawn up by the ruling Arab So-cialist Ba'ath Party, but may also include members of other parties. On the second list there are independent candidates. □

## WAR WITHOUT VICTORY

by Sara Flounders "By revealing the underbelly of the empire, Flounders sheds insight on how to stand up to the imperialist war machine and, in so doing, save ourselves and humanity."

– Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann  
President, U.N. General Assembly, 2008-2009; Foreign Minis-ter of Nicaragua's Sandinista government.  
PentagonAchillesHeel.com  
Available at all major online booksellers.

## Chemnitz, Germany

# 65,000 people say 'Nazis out!'

By Kathy Durkin

A banner saying "Confront the Nazis" waved over a crowd of 65,000 people who gath-ered for an anti-racism rally and concert on Sept. 3 near the Karl Marx monument in Chemnitz, Germany. The day's events were held in opposition to recent far-right anti-immi-grant mobilizations and vio-lence in the city. The activities were held under the slogan "We are the majority!"

Chants of "Nazis out!" rang out. Anti-fascist and anti-racist signs peppered the large crowd, comprised of mostly young people. Participants com-municated a strong message of solidari-ty with immigrants. Many of the bands' lyrics conveyed anti-xenophobic and an-ti-racist messages.

Organizers, among them members of



anti-fascist groups, aimed to show that there was "no place for Nazis in Chem-nitz." They adamantly stated they didn't want the activities to be called a "festi-val," but an opportunity "to show solidar-ity with all those who have been attacked by neo-Nazis." "Racism should not be left uncontested on the street," they stressed.

(cnn.com, Sept. 3)

The rally began with a moment of silence for Daniel Hillig, an anti-fascist whose murder on Aug. 26 was wrongly blamed on refugees in false rumors spread by so-cial media and some press. Ultra-right forces, supported by the Alternative for Ger-many (AfD) party and the xenophobic Pegida move-ment, used his death as an excuse to aggressively hunt down and brutally attack mainly Arab and African im-migrants over several days.

In response, 5,000 anti-fascists, mo-bilized under the slogan of "Heart, not hate," linked arms and chanted "Ref-ugees are wanted here!" and other an-ti-fascist slogans. They militantly con-fronted the Nazis at several locations as they marched on Sept. 1 in Chemnitz. □



## Week of Action

# 'Decolonize Puerto Rico Tribunal' grows

By Cheryl LaBash

As the current resident of the White House stokes anger by continuing to minimize the growing Puerto Rican death toll from hurricanes Maria and Irma, organizing grows to put the U.S. on trial for 120 years of colonial crimes in Puerto Rico. The International Tribunal for this purpose convenes at Holyrood Church/Iglesia Santa Cruz in New York City on Oct. 27.

A national Decolonize Puerto Rico week of actions supports the aims of the Tribunal through organizing solidarity with Puerto Rican events marking the first anniversary of Hurricane Maria on Sept. 20 and the first Puerto Rican uprising for independence, Grito de Lares, on Sept. 23.

A day to defend Puerto Rican public education is scheduled on Sept. 21, with a massive call-in to Puerto Rico's Secretary of Education Julia Keleher (787) 759-2000 or tweet: @educacionPR, @SecEducacionPR.

All are encouraged to support the Tribunal throughout the week beginning Sept. 20, and then continue to the Tribunal on Oct. 27. Supporters are urged to sign and share the Decolonize and Pay Reparations to Puerto Rico Now petition at <https://bit.ly/PRSolidarity>.

The people of Puerto Rico have struggled for independence since the El Grito de Lares uprising on Sept. 23, 1868 — 150 years ago. The U.S. branded the Puerto Rican people with official citizenship that obscures the actual colonial status of the Borinquen peoples. This distances them from solidarity with the struggling peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean, and divides them from the struggles of the im/migrant communities in the U.S. because on the surface Puerto Ricans "have documents." Hurricanes Maria and Irma one year ago stripped away this falsehood and opens the way to organized solidarity with the people of Puerto Rico.

The conveners of the Tribunal include Rafael Cancel Miranda, a Puerto Rican hero who on March 1, 1954, along with Lolita Lebrón, Irving Flores and Andrés Figueroa Cordero, fired on the U.S. Congress to bring attention to the colonial status of Puerto Rico, which had just been made a U.S. commonwealth; Augusto Zamora, professor of International Law and former lawyer for Nicaragua in the International Court of Justice; Alejandro Torres Rivera, Boricua labor lawyer and president of the Puerto Rico Bar Association 2016-2018; Vieques activist Ismael Guadalupe; Puerto

# DECOLONIZE PUERTO RICO!

**WEEK OF ACTION Sept. 20-27**

## 1 One year since Hurricane Maria - Day of Action

**Sept. 20**

1. Support Boricua-led actions in your area!  
Check the list of actions at **PuertoRicoTribunal.org**
2. Organize a demonstration at Santander Bank or U.S. Federal Building to demand: *Reparations & Decolonization for Puerto Rico!*

## 2 Defend Public Education in P.R. - Call-in Day

**Sept. 21**

- Tell Puerto Rico's Secretary of Education, gringa Julia Keleher, to demand: *Stop Closing Schools! Stop privatizing education! Quality education is a right!*  
**Call:** (787) 759-2000 **Tweet:** @educacionPR, @SecEducacionPR

## 3 Grito De Lares - Commemorates P.R. Uprising for Independence

**Sept. 23**

- This day marks the 150th anniversary of the historic uprising for independence in Puerto Rico
1. Support Boricua-led actions/events in your area!  
Check the list of actions at **PuertoRicoTribunal.org**
  2. Organize a film screening of a P.R. film or other cultural event.

## 4 Sign & Share the Petition to the U.S. Government

Decolonize & Pay Reparations to Puerto Rico now: <http://bit.ly/PRSolidarity>

## 5 Build the Int'l Tribunal on U.S. Crimes in Puerto Rico

October 27, 2018 - Holyrood Church (715 179th Street) in New York City

1. Attend: organize a delegation to the Tribunal
2. Donate: [gofundme.com/tribunalpuertorico](http://gofundme.com/tribunalpuertorico)
3. Endorse: Get local unions and orgs to sign up at [puertoricotribunal.org/endorse/](http://puertoricotribunal.org/endorse/)

Planning an action? Sign up here and tell us what you are doing at <http://bit.ly/PRDaysofAction>



**@PRTribunal**  
#DecolonizePR

**PuertoRicoTribunal.org**  
TribunalPuertoRico@gmail.com



**@PuertoRicoTribunal**  
#PRTribunal

Rican peace and human rights educator, organizer and artist Esperanza Martell; Father Luis Barrios; Déborah Berman Santana, Ph.D.; Iris Colón Dipini, Puerto Rican independence activist, New York City; Call to Action on Puerto Rico/Llamado de Acción por Puerto Rico; Comités de la Resistencia Boricua; Colectivo Se Acabaron las

Promesas; Comité Boricua Filadelfia-Camden; and the International Action Center.

These conveners are supported by a growing list of endorsers and supporters who are listed on the website: [PuertoRicoTribunal.org](http://PuertoRicoTribunal.org). A downloadable sticker for the Tribunal is also available there. □

**WORKERS WORLD  
MUNDO OBRERO**

## Palestinos solidarios con huelga de prisión de EUA

Continúa de página 12

racismo vicioso tanto interna como externamente, y el sistema penitenciario refleja esa realidad. Comunidades negras, comunidades latinas, comunidades árabes están siendo atacadas, enfrentando encarcelamientos masivos y un sistema que busca encarcelar y explotar en lugar de apoyar y alimentar a jóvenes y ancianos.

Hoy, los trabajadores penitenciarios son algunos de los trabajadores más explotados en EUA, y la misma clase dominante que se beneficia de la confiscación de tierras y recursos palestinos y del bombardeo de niños en Yemen también se beneficia del trabajo forzado de los prisioneros. Su lucha es una lucha de los trabajadores que es parte de nuestro conflicto global contra la explotación cruel que nuestros pueblos enfrentan hoy en día.

Esta lucha dentro de las cárceles pone de relieve las profundas conexiones entre el racismo y el capitalismo y cómo la lucha contra ellos nunca puede desvincularse.

La campaña de boicot que es parte de su huelga también enfatiza el papel crítico del boicot al enfrentar la explotación y la opresión. Si bien nuestras circunstancias y vidas pueden variar mucho entre sí de muchas maneras, también nosotros enfrentamos la explotación económica a través de un sistema de "cantina" que busca sacar provecho de nuestro encarcelamiento como palestinos. Sabemos que los aprovechados de las prisiones en EUA también se benefician de las cantinas en prisiones, llamadas telefónicas y otras compras, y saludamos su campaña de boicot. Esta es la misma razón por la que hacemos un llamado a las perso-

nas de todo el mundo para que se unan al movimiento de boicot, desinversión y sanciones contra Israel. No podemos ni debemos ser consumidores de quienes se benefician de nuestra miseria y opresión.

Al ingresar a su huelga, les saludamos a ustedes y a su lucha, e instamos a todos los que aún no se han comprometido, a unirse a la huelga. Extendemos un especial saludo revolucionario a los luchadores encarcelados del Movimiento de Liberación Negro y otros movimientos de liberación, incluido Mumia Abu-Jamal, cuyo internacionalismo consistente y lucha de principios se conoce y resuena en todo el mundo. Exigimos la libertad de estos luchadores por la libertad en las cárceles de EUA, desde Leonard Peltier a Mutulu Shakur.

Sabemos por nuestra experiencia que

es a través de la lucha y el enfrentamiento que se puede realizar la verdadera libertad. Su huelga se inicia dentro del corazón del imperialismo estadounidense, el mayor peligro que enfrentan nuestros pueblos palestinos y la gente del mundo. Sabemos que su victoria también será una victoria para Palestina, así como nuestras victorias en Palestina serán una victoria para todas las luchas contra el imperialismo, el racismo y la opresión en EUA y en el mundo.

Con saludos revolucionarios,

Los prisioneros palestinos del Frente Popular para la Liberación de Palestina dentro de las cárceles israelíes, y

Los prisioneros liberados palestinos del Frente Popular para la Liberación de Palestina

20 de agosto de 2018 □





FOTO: JOHN MCPHEE

## Carceleros encierran presos en huelga

Por Ted Kelly  
Filadelfia

12 de septiembre —Miles de prisioneros en toda Pensilvania han sido confinados en sus celdas desde el 29 de agosto. Fue entonces cuando el secretario del Departamento de Correcciones del estado, John Wetzel, declaró un cierre indefinido de todas las instalaciones bajo su jurisdicción.

El encierro, que comenzó pocos días después de la Huelga Nacional de Prisioneros (del 21 de agosto al 9 de septiembre), es el más evidente de una serie de tácticas represivas a las que el estado ha recurrido en respuesta a la huelga. Fue programado para adelantarse a algunas de las principales acciones de huelga planificadas por los prisioneros.

### Atacado al derecho a un abogado

Una semana después del cierre, Wetzel apareció junto al gobernador de Pensilvania Tom Wolf, quien anunció una serie de nuevas políticas que constituyen una represión sin precedentes sobre los derechos de los prisioneros. Entre las muchas políticas mezquinas y punitivas, como prohibir que los prisioneros tomen fotos con sus visitantes, también hay nuevas medidas que sistemáticamente niegan a los prisioneros su derecho a la privacidad con un abogado.

Toda la correspondencia enviada a los prisioneros debe ahora ser transportada a una instalación de terceros en Florida, donde será abierta y fotocopiada antes de que las copias sean enviadas a las respectivas prisiones para ser entregadas a los destinatarios previstos. Dado que, al menos, en teoría, los funcionarios de prisiones no pueden abrir ningún correo que contenga correspondencia legal, excepto en presencia de su destinatario, se ha introducido un nuevo método absurdo para evitar esta protección.

Un prisionero en una facilidad estatal describió cómo se hace esto: el correo se coloca en una caja de laboratorio para el manejo de materiales peligrosos donde se abre. El sobre y el contenido se pasan luego a otro oficial de correcciones con guantes de neopreno, que los fotocopia. Las copias se entregan al prisionero, mientras que los originales se mantienen en poder de las autoridades de la prisión durante 15 días. Después de eso, las autoridades dicen que serán destruidos.

Tanto en la teoría como en la práctica, este arreglo termina el derecho restante que los prisioneros tenían a las comunicaciones privadas con un abogado. Los funcionarios de prisiones y correccionales ahora sabrán de antemano cuando un prisionero planea reunirse o se ponga en contacto con abogados, así como las estrategias legales que planean usar para ganar su caso. “Y dado que las prisiones son un ala de la fiscalía, esto constituye una violación atroz de nuestros derechos”, dice Bryant Arroyo, prisionero abogado y ambientalista de SCI Frackville que exitosamente desafió un historial de abusos del DOC.

### Crisis de salud: falsa y real

El DOC afirma que varios funcionarios de prisiones han enfermado en las

últimas semanas, principalmente en la región occidental del estado. Los primeros recuentos de este tipo comenzaron el 6 de agosto, pero hay escepticismo sobre los pocos detalles que se han revelado. No ha surgido un patrón claro de enfermedad. En un incidente, se le administró Narcan a un oficial, que se usa para tratar sobredosis de narcóticos, pero no está claro en qué circunstancias.

Otro caso que presuntamente contribuyó al encierro involucró a un guardia que escoltaba a un prisionero que, según afirmó, “parecía” estar bajo la influencia de una droga. Más tarde, ese guardia desarrolló una “erupción en su frente” y fue al hospital unas horas antes de ser dado de alta. El DOC está usando estos incidentes menores para sugerir que una crisis de salud generalizada y repentina entre el personal es la razón del cierre sin precedentes.

De hecho, hay una crisis de salud generalizada en las cárceles de todo el país, que es uno de los factores que incitó al paro nacional. El agua tóxica, los niveles de temperatura inseguros y la negativa de atención médica son condiciones extremadamente peligrosas que son causadas por las políticas de DOC.

### Periódico WW-MO prohibido, prisioneros acosados

Este encierro es solo el último de una serie de nuevos casos de represión que los prisioneros han denunciado en los últimos meses. El mismo periódico Workers World-MO ha sido notificado de que se ha prohibido la distribución de tres números recientes en las instalaciones de Pensilvania, donde más de 300 prisioneros son suscriptores y quizás miles sean lectores. La razón dada para esta censura - el tercer incidente este año en que WW-MO se ha prohibido en las prisiones de Pensilvania - fue su reportaje sobre la huelga nacional de prisiones.

Por semanas hasta el primer día de la huelga, el escáner de iones que supuestamente realiza pruebas de sustancias tóxicas o ilegales comenzó a emitir docenas de falsos positivos en SCI Frackville. Los guardias rechazaron más de 20 visitantes por día, lo que encendió las tensiones entre internos y oficiales. Desde el cierre, los confinados en Frackville informan que se les está sirviendo comida inservible (bananas podridas, por ejemplo, y arroz aguado y frío con brócoli y coliflor) y experimentan retrasos en la entrega de alimentos de la comisaría, por los que tienen que pagar.

Este verano también ocurrió el tan esperado cierre del famoso SCI Graterford, sitio de una de las peores condiciones de agua tóxica en el estado. Los confinados fueron trasladados a una nueva instalación de \$400 millones llamada SCI Phoenix, solo para ser recibidos por guardias que habían destruido sus propiedades, embarrando sus ropas con comida y tierra y triturando su correo y documentación legal mientras iba en tránsito. Varios prisioneros informaron que sus propiedades habían sido destrozadas y garabateadas con insultos raciales y dibujos de esvásticas. Al menos un recluso fue hospitalizado debido al acceso inconsistente a la medicación necesaria.

Entre los trasladados a SCI Phoenix estaba Michael Africa Sr., uno de los nueve miembros de la Organización MOVE que fue arrestado en 1978 y falsamente condenado por dispararle a un policía de Filadelfia. Es uno de los muchos miembros restantes de MOVE 9 que finalmente podrán estar en libertad condicional en los próximos meses. El encierro no solo coincide con la próxima audiencia de libertad condicional de Michael Africa, que está cerca, sino que también previno una acción de huelga. Los prisioneros tenían la intención de lanzar un boicot a las compras telefónicas y a la comisaría el 2 de septiembre.

Desde el cierre del 29 de agosto, los prisioneros han protestado gritando consignas y golpeando sus puertas al unísono durante horas enteras. Algunos bloques de celdas también han comenzado a rechazar la comida. Esa misma táctica fue implementada por prisioneros retenidos en el Centro Penitenciario Industrial de Pensilvania, quienes iniciaron una huelga de hambre a principios de este verano para protestar por un cierre.

Cuando Wetzel y Wolf anunciaron sus nuevos cambios radicales, no se hizo ningún anuncio en español ni en ningún otro idioma, a pesar de la considerable población carcelaria que no habla inglés, según Bryant Arroyo, quien es bilingüe.

### La represión continúa bajo los Demócratas

El gobernador Wolf es uno de varios demócratas que asumió el cargo con una agenda supuestamente “progresista”, y desde entonces ha entrado en asociaciones de alto perfil con supremacistas blancos reaccionarios. Wolf llegó al poder junto al alcalde de Filadelfia, Jim Kenney, quien eliminó los campamentos de protesta que surgían alrededor de la ciudad dándole poder a la policía para golpear a los manifestantes y destruir sus propiedades. Incluso llevó excavadoras para cavar la tierra por todo el Ayuntamiento la misma mañana que los campamentos fueron removidos.

La nueva política penitenciaria con respecto al correo legal es una gran ayuda para el fiscal en jefe Larry Krasner, cuya oficina de fiscalía ha llegado a un obvio acuerdo con la Orden Fraternal de la Policía para mantener a Mumia Abu-Jamal en prisión hasta que las condiciones lo maten. Los abogados de Mumia, que se encuentran reclusos en SCI Mahanoy, están en una lucha constante con la oficina del fiscal de distrito por la divulgación de archivos que demostrarían mala conducta procesal y judicial en el caso de Mumia. La oficina de Krasner ha destruido los documentos o los está reteniendo. Eso debería demostrar lo peligroso de que todo el correo legal para los prisioneros en todo el estado esté ahora básicamente a la vista de los fiscales y funcionarios de prisiones.

WW-Mundo Obrero continuará protestando en nombre de los prisioneros cuyo derecho a leer esta publicación se niega ilegalmente. Además, el Abolitionist Law Center solicita que cualquier informe de abuso o violación de los derechos relacionados con el encierro se informe a ckeys@alcenter.org. □

## Palestinos solidarios con huelga de prisión de EUA

*La siguiente declaración fue publicada por palestinos del Frente Popular para la Liberación de Palestina que han sido encarcelados por el colonialismo sionista por su papel en la lucha por la liberación de su pueblo. Están entre los casi 6.000 palestinos actualmente encarcelados por la ocupación israelí. Su solidaridad extiende puños de resistencia y manos de la unidad a través de los barrotes de la prisión para apoyar la huelga nacional de prisiones de EUA que comenzó el 21 de agosto.*

Escribimos hoy como palestinos encarcelados del Frente Popular para la Liberación de Palestina, detenidos en cárceles israelíes por nuestra participación en la lucha por la liberación de nuestra tierra y nuestro pueblo. Hoy, extendemos nuestra solidaridad a los prisioneros en las cárceles de EUA que participan en la huelga nacional de prisiones que comienza el 21 de agosto, luchando contra la explotación, el racismo y el capitalismo desde el corazón de las cárceles imperialistas.

Comenzamos expresando nuestro luto por George Jackson, el revolucionario y mártir encarcelado de la lucha de Liberación Negra. La huelga comienza en el 47º aniversario de su muerte, un evento que fue reconocido en Palestina y en todo el mundo en ese momento como un asesinato de una verdadera voz de lucha por parte de la clase dominante de EUA. Como prisioneros palestinos, también sabemos que George Jackson era un internacionalista y que las obras del poeta palestino Samih al-Qasem, que aborda el encarcelamiento y la resistencia, fueron encontradas en su celda después de su asesinato. Hoy, les escribimos para forjar una vez más esa conexión de lucha, a pesar de nuestras diferentes circunstancias.

La huelga en prisión es una lucha de trabajadores oprimidos y explotados, ante todo, enfrentando la brutalidad desenmascarada del capitalismo tras las rejas. En todo el mundo, los presos han protegido sus derechos humanos y han obtenido victorias mediante la lucha. Sabemos que están exigiendo mejores condiciones, el derecho a luchar en el tribunal por sus derechos y el fin de las sentencias excesivas y de por vida. También están exigiendo que se ponga fin a la nueva forma de esclavitud que se encuentra en las cárceles de EUA, donde a los trabajadores penitenciarios se les pagan centavos para producir bienes y prestar servicios a algunas de las corporaciones más grandes del país.

También saludamos su lucha contra el racismo. El colonialismo de asentamiento e imperialismo de EUA practican su

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