By Loan Tran
Durham, N.C.

The impact of Hurricane Florence, which made landfall 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 Occoneechee 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

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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Hurricane Florence vortex
White supremacy, capitalism, environmental degradation
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, and members of the Coalition to Free Clarence Brandley helped fill the large New Loyalty Masonic Baptist Church in northeast Houston. Dozens of members of his high school graduating class were in attendance, 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, who 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 print-ed 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 the capitol.

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

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

The U.S. is the richest country in the world, yet no one has a guaranteed right to shelter, food, water, health care, education or anything else — unless they can pay for it.

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Occupy ICE shut 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 known as ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement).

Sept. 11 was used by the U.S. to fuel the most 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 these very immigrants.

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, FIERA (Fight for Immigrants 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 terrorist 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. 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 Department, U.S. Marshals and the Department of Justice.

The Department of Homeland Security van from leaving the 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-
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 multifaceted 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 immigrant, are not represented by a union and 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 because 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 even in their communities and, in this case, the country.

Sexual harassment is rife within the restaurant industry. The Restaurant Opportunities Opportunities United Center reported in 2014 that 90 percent of women employ- ees 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 super- visors. 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).

Anita Donald 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 com- pany implement and enforce policies to create a safer workplace with zero toler- ance for abuse. One major demand is for the establishment of a national commit- tee to deal with workplace sexual mis- conduct at the company’s franchises — a committee that would include workers.

A strike vote was approved by hun- dreds of workers at McDonald’s franchises. Then a judge ordered the Trump admin to reunite the families. Obviously, in the face of ICE/police col- laboration and against incarceration. Another hero is Tarana Burke, an Afri- can-American woman who has not been given the recognition she deserves for her initiative in combating sexual ha- rassment. In 2007, she established JustLOUD for 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, multigenera- tional working class in garment factories and laundries, hotels, restaurants, offic- es, on farms, in all workplaces. Oppressed people have always resist- ed 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 strug- gle against sexual abuse and taking on this global multi-billion-dollar corporation. This is a message to the rest of the rigged system and the workers throughout the service industries — and to unionized workers, too.
Nike’s choice of Kaepernick signals POC and youth power

By M. Matsemela-Ali Odom

Nike announced on Sept. 3 that former National Football League star Colin Kaepernick would be the face of the company’s 50th 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 “rational 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 on July 10, asserting that the NFL acted “without consultation with the NFLPA, [which] is inconceivable 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-five percent of players are Black. Yet 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 25 percent black viewers.

Yet for Nike, undoubtedly the top NFL sponsor, the numbers and the economies 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 or comprising 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 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 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 33 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 giant Michael Jordan.

Yet Kaepernick is a worker, and his rebellion has been defined as part of the workers’ struggle. Kaepernick’s collusion with NFL owners has never lost his employment, has been allowed to proceed in the courts. The new Nike contract emphatically upholds the NFL owners’ argument that Kaepernick’s value and skill have diminished 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 Black Freedom struggles. 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 superhero film “Black Panther” at the French Open. The American Federal Bureau of Investigation has also been out in force against Kaepernick, attended a Williams’ match at the U.S. Tennis Open, they were greeted with a standing ovation for other radical protests.

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 two years have been an amplification and strengthening in social movements.

History shows that moments of reform following oppressive rule on the part of a radical class can be because 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 Interna-
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 Talibah Obuya, a national organizer for the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement and a member of the New African People’s Organization, and Dianne Mathiowetz from Workers World Party.

Talibah Obuya spoke about the historical 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 systemic 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.”

Talibah Obuya connected both historical and contemporary resistance needed to combat oppressive conditions and 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 Bridgittet Simpson from Women on the Rise — an organization of formerly incarcerated women — and Kevin Caron from Georgia Department of Corrections. 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.

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 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 the 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!

Dr. Cheryl LaBash

Baltimore

Solidarity with national prison strike

A short video previewed here on Sept. 22 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 Leonard 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 hearings 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 prisoners on Sept. 5. Meeting participants welcomed an appeal to support prisoners on Sept. 5. Meeting participants welcomed an appeal to support prisoners on Sept. 5. Meeting participants welcomed an appeal to support prisoners on Sept. 5.

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.

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The governor’s mansion. They released 100 balloons reading “FREE CLAR-ENCE!” 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 Galves- ton before retired District Judge Perry Pickett. More than 130 people attended every day for two weeks, coming 85 miles from Conroe and 45 from Houston. “60 Minutes” and “The 700 Club” aired special segments on the case. Cen- tral:Ministry got involved.

Finally, that October, Judge Pickett de- clared, in his 30 years as a judge, “No case has presented more significant aspects of the effects of racial prejudice, perjured testimony, witness intimidation [and an investigation the outcome of which was predetermined.” He said two other junc- tors, both white, were the likely killers, and officials who railroaded Brandley out of racist motives.

He recommended to the state’s Court of Criminal Appeals that a new trial be held. But that court, for long motives before it finally accepted the recommendation. Texas decided not to retry Brandley.

Clarence walks out — and into organizing

Clarence Brandley walked out of the El- lis Unit prison in January 1990. He spent the next 38 years speaking out against the death penalty.

In small neighborhood churches, uni- versities and the mainstream media, brand- ley’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 endures

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The struggle against police murder and prison slavery continues!

By Mikisa Thompson

I really hate capitalism and its effects on our Black lives while we are mind-bending 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 Black community.

Botham Jean is the man that now can speak. Perhaps he was a fairy tale, and they are all lying; I have no idea how many times I’ve been, and he was murdered by the uniformed lynchers. Cops found “evidence” after asking for and receiving a 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 incarcerated 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 hand-somely 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 newspaper aren’t talking about the unions of strong Black men and women and others fighting oppression as the Black Workers’ Party, which changed the mental trajectory of so many people here and abroad about taking control of our neighborhoods; about being all right 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 through 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 and classes.

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 be.

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

South Carolina prisoners Society turns people into criminals

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 21-22, 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.]

E: Most prisoners, when they come to prison, come with the mindset that they want to get together themselves, 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 sickness is not just at the state or local level, who determines what’s violent? Who determines what a violent offender is? To me, a bunch of people making up these laws, they define 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 who 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 the same thing they were doing. They’re going to be perceived in a certain way, and they’re going to be handled in a certain way, and it’s going to be a lose-lose situation for them.

People have to understand that humans are entering 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 at 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 homie boy, 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 eliminates our contacts, our family ties, is really detrimental to prisoners to re-entering society successfully.

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. (Lucasville prison uprising 25th anniversary, Workers World) Individuals inside Lee who participated are identified by their initials for safety. 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 documentary, stayed for an extended period and did a compelling show, “The Fourth Estate.” Botham Jean is the man that now can speak. Perhaps he was a fairy tale, and they are all lying; I have no idea how many times I’ve been, and he was murdered by the uniformed lynchers. Cops found “evidence” after asking for and receiving a 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?

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Society turns people into criminals

Clarence Brandley at Capitol in 2011 when activists sponsored a Day of Innocence.
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 the data 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 rising. And according to the Census Bureau (this 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 $65,372. (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 $2,000 to $8,000 a month. Outside of Manhattan, market rents are less, but still unreachable for many workers who make less than the minimum 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 rich people who make huge numbers for business profits 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, where those living less than full time not by choice, "discouraged" workers, those marginally attached — who would work but can't find a job — that adds about 12.5 million people to the unemployed. That rate amounts to 7.6 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 can't find a job — that adds about 12.5 million people to the unemployed total. This raises the rate of unemployment to 7.6 percent.

Even this rate is incomparable 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 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 intimadated into relinquishing their settlement.

Other key organizations in the Eastern region recently began a tremendous amount of positive work battling the exploitative and entrenched conditions that exist throughout North Carolina. 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 deeply intertwined in the history 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 — $25 million to continue the litigation for HB2, an anti-trans, anti-worker bill in court.

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 up 19 percent. But 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-classes wages are stagnant — middle-wage workers' hourly wage is up 6 percent since 1979, low-wage workers are down 5 percent, while those with very high wages saw a 41 percent increase."

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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 prisoner 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 solidarity with prisons has been building locally, including a protest at Hyde Correcational Institution, 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-made disaster. There is a network of fighters to build connections and la

The 3.9 percent official unemployment rate is not false news, but it doesn't accurately reflect what is happening in 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 in the first quarter of 2009 to the first quarter of 2018.

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Available online at: workers.org/books

WHY COLIN KAEPERNICK IS RIGHT

Articles from Workers World/Mundo Obrero

Except: "Kaepennick, 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 hom-

age. (At) 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 caused by 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 on the principles by which the societies they affect are organized. [Thousands] of people have died in Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane 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 Rita?

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 Katrina.

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 weeks.

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

The easiest thing one can say: 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, its 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 I had the opportunity to learn in Cuba 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 expressly frames hurricane response as defense against climate change — a dramatic difference 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 Civil Defense’s main focus.

Every Cuban adult goes through a civil defense training program preparing them to assist with evacuation. 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, medicaments, tents and other supplies are strategically maintained across the island. Before Hurricane Irma arrived, Health Ministry officials said it was impossible to organize an evacuation with just a few days notice. Exactly! You have to plan beforehand.

When hurricanes immolate, 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 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 if they are 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 mass 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 reservoir 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 relationsh ips 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. Their cultural decoration is seen as a basic 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. Among the arts and letters, projects to combat luxury or bourgeois decadence: The community’s cultural decoration is seen as a basic need.

Under long-term planning that is characteristically socialist, 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 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 save lives?

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 and glut of goods is always growing, workers are easily discarded.

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 those who are concerned about disaster capitalism? Exploitation, poverty, displacement, death.

Let us consider the 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 80 years after the October Bolshevik Revolution, consider and draw strength from what Che said to us in the United States in 1964, borrowing from an African hero: Fidel Martínez: “The more Americans are very lucky. You are fighting the most important fight of all — you live in the heart of the enemy.”

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 offensive against the rights of the Palestinian people for self-determination on two fronts. One is 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 normally described as humanitarian aid. The U.S. cut its $200 million contribution 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. administration now adds collective punishment to its crimes against the Palestinian people. And it adds this cut to its earlier decision to recognize the city of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital. This blow aimed at Palestine occurred when the U.S. Embassy was relocated there on May 14.

A leading organization in the Palestinian freedom struggle, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, said in a Sept. 14 statement: “Our decision to recognize the city of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital is an expression of the annexation of the Palestinian territories and the annexation of the Palestinian Arab people. And it has also acted as an enforcer of 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 being “antisemites”. Secretary of Homeland Security, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of Civil Rights at the Department of Education, wrote a letter to the Zionist Organization of America promising to open an investigation of students at Rutgers University. These students are charged with anti-Semitism because they support the BDS movement and have 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 beginning of an intimidation campaign because it threatens universities with losing federal funding. It says Marcus is abusing 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-Semitism beliefs along with racist, anti-Muslim, homophobic and misogynist tenets. That Marcus doesn’t start his investigation with the Charlottesville fascists makes it obvious it’s not anti-Semitism the administration aims to stop, but solidarity with Palestine.

These two steps by the Trump administration 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 common interest in the area of West Asia where Israel is a regional power. Israel was and is a settler state, isolated from its neighbors and oppressive the Indigenous population it removed from its homes and lands. The Israeli state has been both dependent on Westerners and especially U.S. imperialism for military, political and diplomatic aid. And it also has 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.

By Kathy Durkin

A banner saying “Confront the Nazis” waved over a crowd of 65,000 people who gathered 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-immigrant mobilizations and violence 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 communicated a strong message of solidarity with immigrants. Many of the bands’ lyrics conveyed anti-xenophobic and anti-racist messages.

Organizers, among them members of anti-fascist groups, aimed to show that there was “no place for Nazis in Chemnitz.” They adamantly stated they didn’t want the activities to be called a “festival,” but an opportunity “to show solidarity with all those who have been attacked by neo-Nazis.” “Racism should not be left unchallenged on the street,” they stressed.

(cnn.com, Sept. 7)

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 social media and some press.

Ultra-right forces, supported by the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party and the xenophobic Pegida movement, tried to disrupt the event and lure Refugi-ees to aggressively hunt down and brutally attack anyone with a foreign or African appearance over several days.

In response, 5,000 anti-fascists, mobilized under the slogan of “Heart, not hate,” linked arms and chanted “Refugees are wanted here!” and other anti-fascist slogans. They militantly confronted the Nazis at several locations as they marched on Sept. 1 in Chemnitz.

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 German-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, Fran -ce, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Germany belong.

Once again [Lavrov] called on Berlin to cooperate in the reconstruction of Syria.

The German government makes participation in the financing of reconstruc tion dependent on a “political solution” in Syria, as Maas informed the dpa. According to Maas, the aim is to prevent a “new humanitarian catastrophe.” Russia would play a “key role” in this.

Maas did not express 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 preparing 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 Damascus has regularly been held responsible for such attacks, although there is no conclusive evidence to support it. Syria has repeatedly rejected the allegations. Russia, too, argues that the Western-backed combat units want to stage a poison gas attack in Idlib to provoke a Western military strike.

British Labor Member of Parliament [and shadow Foreign Secretary] Emily Thornberry called this week for an independent investigation of suspected chemical-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 ience” 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 offensive is “a risk for European security,” Le Drian told the French television station BFMT.

The offensive planned by Syria is directed against the Islamic State [group] and alliances created by 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 — Hais 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 Sunday in Syria. This will involve filling the local political offices that were introduced in 2011. Around 15,000 candidates compete on two lists. The “list of national unity” is drawn up by the ruling Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party, but may also include members of other parties. On the second list there are independent candidates.

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By Sara Flounders

“By revealing the underbelly of the empire, Flounders sheds insight on how to do away with the imperialist war machine and, in so doing, save ourselves and humanity.”— Miguel de EScoto Brockman

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As the current resident of the White House stakes 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 and Irma, organizing grows to put the U.S. on trial for this purpose convenes at Holyrood Church/Iglesia Santa Cruz in New York on Oct. 27. A national Decolonize Puerto Rico week of action supports the aims of the Tribunal through organizing solidarity with Puerto Rican events making up the 150th 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: @edcucacionPR, @SecEducationPR.

For those conveners are supported by a growing list of endorsers and supporters who are listed on the website PuertoRicoTribunal.org. A downloadable sticker for the Tribunal is also available there.

Puerto Rican peace and human rights educator, organizer and artist Esperanza Martell; Father Luis Barrios; Deborah 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; Comité de la Resistencia Boricua, Colectivo Se Acabaron las Promesas; Comité Boricua Filadelfia-Camden; and the International Action Center.

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By Cheryl LaBash
Carceleros encierran presos en EUA

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 una táctica represiva que los estados que ha recurrido en respuesta a la huelga. Fue proclamado en respuesta 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 medidas que se tomarían para impedir cualquier tipo de “libertad”. A excepción de su presencia en la instalación, no se ha introducido un nuevo método abierto para evitar esta protección.

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 relaciones por las que fueron entregadas a los destinatarios previos. Dado que, al menos, en teoría, los funcionarios de prisiones pueden abrir cualquier carta, esto plantea una profunda desconfianza hacia el concepto legal de correspondencia, es decir, que no se puede prohibir que los prisioneros tomen fotos de 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 relaciones por las que fueron entregadas a los destinatarios previos. Dado que, al menos, en teoría, los funcionarios de prisiones pueden abrir cualquier carta, esto plantea una profunda desconfianza hacia el concepto legal de correspondencia, es decir, que no se puede prohibir que los prisioneros tomen fotos de sus visitantes, también hay nuevas medidas que sistemáticamente niegan a los prisioneros su derecho a la privacidad con un abogado.

Para que los prisioneros puedan tener una copia de los documentos de las cartas, los funcionarios deben ahora llenar un formulario habilitado para imprimir el contenido de las cartas. Si el funcionario no firma el formulario, la carta no será enviada a los prisioneros.

Esta nueva política penitenciaria con respecto a la correspondencia se ha implementado en todos los lugares donde hay prisioneros confinados en EUA. En Pensilvania, donde más de 300 prisioneros son usuarios de correos electrónicos, esto plantea una seria amenaza a la libertad de expresión y de información en la prisión. En Pensilvania, donde más de 300 prisioneros son usuarios de correos electrónicos, esto plantea una seria amenaza a la libertad de expresión y de información en la prisión.

El privilegio de corresponder con el exterior, que es un derecho estipulado en la Carta Magna de 1677, se ha convertido en un privilegio que puede ser negado por el gobernador de Pensilvania. En Pensilvania, donde más de 300 prisioneros son usuarios de correos electrónicos, esto plantea una seria amenaza a la libertad de expresión y de información en la prisión.

La represión continua bajo los Demócratas

El gobierno de Wolf es un poco más débil que el gobierno de su predecesor, John Corbett, que gobernó el estado de Pensilvania durante más de 12 años. Corbett, que era miembro del Partido Demócrata, fue reelecto en las elecciones de 2011 con un amplio margen de victoria, pero en 2017 se retiró debido a la presión de los grupos de derechos humanos y la oposición de organizaciones de derechos humanos. Corbett fue reemplazado por Wolf, que es un miembro del Partido Republicano.

La represión continúa bajo los Demócratas

El gobierno de Wolf es uno de los gobernadores más duros de la historia de Pensilvania, y es conocido por su enfoque represivo en la política penitenciaria. En 2015, Wolf introdujo una serie de medidas represivas que afectan a los prisioneros de Pensilvania, incluyendo la prohibición de recibir correspondencia que contenga objetos de papel, la prohibición de recibir correspondencia que contenga objetos de papel, y la prohibición de recibir correspondencia que contenga objetos de papel.

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Un nuevo método absurdo para resistir

Los funcionarios de prisiones han desarrollado una serie de estrategias legales que planean usar para resistir esta nueva política. Uno de los objetivos es el uso de una técnica llamada “reconstrucción”, que consiste en abrir las cartas y eliminar cualquier contenido que pueda ser considerado como propaganda o militante.

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