

# Acts of solidarity with migrants grow

By Mirinda Crissman  
Houston

The United States government is waging a white-supremacist, imperialist, neo-colonial war on multiple fronts. While this war on oppressed people rages on, people across the country and the world are taking a stand against state violence. Violence abroad can take many forms like resource extraction, economic sanctions and regime change.

These forms, including intensifying climate catastrophe, are forcing folks to flee their homelands from all over the planet and move toward increasingly militarized borders. Migration has been happening on this continent for thousands of years before it was colonized.

Militarized borders are an affront to humanity. The drowning deaths of the Salvadoran father, Óscar Alberto Martínez Ramírez, and his 23-month-old daughter, Valeria, attempting to cross the Rio Grande River are tragic examples of these heinous crimes against humanity. Yet even in the face of this violence we are seeing folks coming together against these atrocities.

A collective consciousness has surged around migrants in detention. While working to see that all oppressed peoples in cages swallowed by mass incarceration are included in this discussion, people are invigorated by those fighting for



July 4 protest, Philadelphia. Read more on pages 6-7.

im/migrants and refugees in this current period. There are reports about abhorrent sanitary conditions and overcrowding as well as reports of sexual abuse and even fatalities due to medical neglect.

All this consciousness raising has led to a promising anger. Last week, a wave of national demonstrations called for closing these camps. Organizers like MoveOn and immigrant rights groups

were able to draw outraged people to over 175 protests in 40 states. One demonstration in Elizabeth, N.J., on June 30 had 200 Jewish people blockading an Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention center. This protest was part of a larger Jewish group called Never Again Action. Their demands included defunding ICE and U.S. Customs Border Protection, closing border camps and

permanent protections for all undocumented immigrants. This act of solidarity in New Jersey resulted in 37 protesters arrested in support of those oppressed at the border.

Other expressions of solidarity have come from workers and folks abroad. Wayfair workers walked out of the job on June 26 in Boston to protest their CEO's refusal to stop furnishing detention centers with Wayfair products.

An Arizona teacher, Scott Warren, is facing 10 years in jail if convicted of two felonies for the so-called crime of leaving jugs of water and providing shelter for migrants in the desert.

On June 29, a German ship captain, Carola Rackete, after docking in the Italian island port of Lampedusa, was arrested for rescuing over two dozen Libyan migrants. Matteo Salvini, Deputy Prime Minister of Italy and member of the right-wing League Party, has moved to close off all Italian ports of entry to migrants.

Thirty thousand people came out in Berlin on July 6 to support the efforts of Sea Watch 3. Meanwhile, Rackete has been released from jail but is still held in Italy.

**Candidates ill-equipped to challenge the crisis**

Along with the public outcry, some so-called "democratic" U.S. institutions

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Thousands of Algerians demand sweeping reforms on July 5. Read more on page 11.



# ‘Decriminalize sex work now!’

*Sawyer Eason is an artist and organizer working with Peoples Power Assemblies NYC, Decrim NY and Brooklyn Transcore. She plays bass in the do-it-yourself sludge metal act, MANDY. This is a slightly edited version of Sawyer’s talk at the 2019 May Day rally on Wall Street in New York City.*

I’m Sawyer, and I am here with Peoples Power Assemblies. I’m very grateful to be speaking on May Day for the first time. I wanna take a moment and talk about sex workers and how we relate to the revolutionary movement.

We have been a part of the workers’ struggle for as long as there has been a workers’ struggle. Our work has dignity. We perform a service people want. We work just like everyone else does. But often times, on days like these, our labor isn’t praised. People’s discomfort with us keeps us out of the struggle.

Some people in the labor movement don’t wanna recognize the radical work we do. But sex workers are at the forefront of the movement now, and our history is strong. Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson are the mothers of Gay Pride. They were two trans women of color who survived off sex work. Marsha was believed to have thrown the first brick during the Stonewall Rebellion. Marsha and Sylvia created the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries — STAR — in the 1970s. They used sex work to pay for a building on the Lower East Side to house queer youth who were experiencing homelessness.

Sex workers are revolutionaries. Sex workers are people who live at a variety of intersections. Sex workers are often people of color and often lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people. Many sex workers are migrants. The people most affected by anti-sex worker legislation are the people who live at a variety of interesections. We have to defend Black and Brown and trans sex workers!

But anti-sex worker legislation has affected all sex workers. Safer avenues of work posted on the internet have disappeared throughout the last year. SESTA/FOSTA [Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act and Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act], a series of laws passed in the last year with the stated intention of protecting sex trafficking victims, have resulted in the closure of most of the online platform



Sawyer Eason.

providers used to work safely. These laws have not protected sex workers, and they’ve conflated sex work with human trafficking.

I wanna say that if you wanna protect sex workers, you need to listen to sex workers. We do not want SESTA. We do not need this law or any law that interferes with sex workers. We need full decriminalization now! Let us do what we do! Get the government out of our lives!

If we wanna say we care about human trafficking, then we should pay more attention to labor trafficking. Migrant labor is being exploited all over the world.

Trans women of color walking down the street in Queens are being profiled and arrested for wearing heels and carrying condoms. Our sisters are in jail and prison. Some of them are sex workers. Some were arrested for just walking while being trans. The only way forward is to defund the police who arrest us, fully decriminalize sex work, destigmatize the practice of sex work and decarcerate the people who are in prison due to bogus laws.

Decriminalize sex work now! □

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Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the neverending quest for ever-greater profits.

Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, attacks on im/migrants, misogyny, LGBTQ oppression and mistreatment of people with disabilities. It means joblessness, increasing homelessness and impoverishment and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism.

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

people are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis.

The ruthless ruling class today seeks to wipe out decades of gains and benefits won by hard-fought struggles by people’s movements. The super-rich and their political representatives have intensified their attacks on the multinational, multigender and multigenerational working class. It is time to point the blame at — and challenge — the capitalist system.

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

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

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Vol. 61, No. 28 • July 11, 2019  
Closing date: July 10, 2019

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Workers World (ISSN-1070-4205) is published weekly except the last week of December by WW Publishers, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl., New York, NY 10011. Phone: 212.627.2994. Subscriptions: One year: \$30; institutions: \$35. Letters to the editor may be condensed and edited. Articles can be freely reprinted, with credit to Workers World, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl., New York, NY 10011. Back issues and individual articles are available on microfilm and/or photocopy from NA Publishing, Inc, P.O. Box 998, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-0998. A searchable archive is available on the Web at www.workers.org.

A headline digest is available via e-mail subscription. Subscription information is at workers.org.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Workers World, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl. New York, N.Y. 10011.



## Pennsylvania

# Cops' racism exposes driving while Latinx

By **Betsey Piette**  
Philadelphia

On May 10, 2018, Rebecca Castro's car was stopped by a Pennsylvania State trooper who first inquired about her immigration status instead of asking for her license and registration. Castro is a U.S. citizen. The trooper then asked about the status of her two passengers; one was her fiancé Carlos Amaya-Castellanos. They were held for three hours until Immigration Custom and Enforcement agents arrived and placed Castro's passengers into deportation proceedings.

The American Civil Liberties Union filed a federal lawsuit this June 28 against the Pennsylvania State Police on behalf of 10 Latinx plaintiffs, who had been illegally stopped, including Castro. The suit challenges what the ACLU says is "a pattern of police misconduct that follows a common script. Latinx motorists were pulled over by troopers, who immediately sought to ascertain the immigration status of the car's occupants." (propublica.org, June 28)

Vanessa Stine, ACLU immigrants' rights legal fellow, explained in the article that the ACLU examined 30 incidents of traffic stops, involving 200 individuals, including Castro. Stone noted that some victims chose not to be part of the lawsuit out of fear "that asserting or exercising their rights might actually cause them more harm."

The lawsuit stemmed from a joint 2018 investigative series by the Philadelphia Inquirer and ProPublica, which questioned racial profiling and unlawful arrests of immigrants by state troopers,



Rebecca Castro and Carlos Amaya-Castellanos.

who were illegally acting as ICE agents.

The suit concluded: "Pennsylvania State troopers have routinely violated the law by stopping and holding people based solely on their Latino appearance, terrifying drivers and passengers while usurping federal authority to investigate supposed immigration violations." In some cases similar to Castro's, the trooper asked first if the driver was a U.S. citizen before even requesting their driver's license.

### Wrongful stops rise after Trump elected

Defendants in the suit include the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the State Police department and six individual troopers found complicit in the pattern of wrongful stops going back to early 2017 after Donald Trump became

president. The record of trooper Luke Macke, who stopped and subsequently detained Castro and her passengers, was particularly nefarious.

Three years of data obtained in the joint investigation showed that in each year between 2015 and 2017, Macke not only increased the number of tickets he wrote but also upped the percentage to Latinx drivers, issuing 33 citations to them in 2015. By 2017, that number had tripled to over 113. Macke turned over 19 undocumented immigrants to ICE officers in 2017 after interrogating them about their legal status and detaining them without warrants. (April 12, 2018)

"None of the migrants had criminal records. Macke encountered some of them not in cars on the roads he patrols,

but randomly — as they had a smoke before a night shift outside a shipping company warehouse or bought a soda inside his own police barracks in Carlisle." (Inquirer, June 27)

The Supreme Court ruled in *Rodriguez v. United States* April 21, 2015, that absent reasonable suspicion, unnecessarily prolonging a traffic stop beyond the time it takes to address the traffic violation can constitute unreasonable seizure. The high court had also written in another ruling that "detaining individuals solely to verify their immigration status would raise constitutional concerns," as noncitizens as well as citizens are protected from illegal search and seizure under the Fourth Amendment. (propublica.org, Feb. 5)

Plaintiffs in the ACLU suit are seeking both damages and vindication of their constitutional rights to be free from unlawful detention. They also hope their legal action will lead to improved training and supervision of state police. Whether that will happen remains in question. Although officers are now required to file a report when they call federal agencies, trooper Macke continues to detain and hold immigrants for ICE.

Castro and her now-spouse, Carlos Amaya-Castellanos, are both plaintiffs in the ACLU lawsuit. Although a U.S. citizen born and raised in Idaho, Castro questions her safety: "Right now, I'm scared to go out driving just because of my skin color. They think I'm from Mexico or another foreign country. It's harassment. We're not safe." (propublica.org, June 28) □

## Concentration camps for the poor in Pennsylvania

Part 2

By **Ted Kelly**  
Frackville, Pa.

The lockdown policy is just the latest in a string of abuses perpetrated against the inmates at SCI Frackville. There are still no educational programs specifically for inmates with long-term or life sentences like Bryant. There is still no ESL program, even after Arroyo successfully lobbied for an ESL program on behalf of his fellow Spanish-speaking inmate Rafael Rodriguez.

Staff agreed that in a facility with a sizeable Spanish-speaking population, they must have at least one ESL instructor on hand, but the facility has failed to hire anyone after the decision was made nearly a year ago.

During Ramadan, Muslim prisoners who were fasting and placed on lockdown had no rescheduled meal time and either had to break their own fast knowing they'd be restricted to their cells or wait until nightfall to eat an ice cold "iftar" meal [specially prepared meal to break a fast]. Months ago, many Muslim prisoners filed grievances because the visiting room vending machines were disproportionately stocked with pork products, and neither inmates nor their families were able to share a meal together on visits.

"White supremacy? That's policy," says Arroyo. "But the change here is inevitable. Because this is torture."

After a manufactured scare about prison staff being sickened after exposure to synthetic drugs, prisoners are now subjected to strip searches before and after visitation with families. Arroyo and other

prisoners say these aggressive and punitive searches constitute sexual harassment and sexual assault and are meant to keep prisoners isolated and discourage them from scheduling visits with loved ones. Staff euphemistically refer to this practice as "unclothed searches" and deny that making inmates take off all their clothes and submit to cavity searches is at all sexual or harassing.

Incidentally, despite these increased security measures, the trafficking of synthetic drugs inside prisons is reportedly at an all-time high. It is common knowledge that guards and prison staff, not inmates, are the ones who are smuggling the drugs into facilities to be sold. Addiction is wreaking havoc on the community. "Guys on synthetics — they're just getting high," Arroyo says. "It's like that's all they're looking forward to."

Inmates have also been denied the right to wear safety collars to prevent exposure to radiation when being made to go through full x-ray body-scanners before and after visits. There is still insufficient research regarding the safety of body scanners; the technology is similar to that employed at airport security checkpoints. But prisoners' concerns have been categorically dismissed.

### Environmental dangers in prison

Arroyo recently had to undergo surgery after suffering from precancerous polyps in his throat. Initially told by staff that he was just suffering from acid reflux, Arroyo fought for an examination by an otolaryngologist who immediately discovered the advanced state of his affliction. Arroyo is

certain the polyps arose from the toxic conditions in the prison, specifically the poisonous state of the drinking water.

In a recent broadcast for Prison Radio, political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal spoke of an article he had written for Workers World about Bryant Arroyo, whom he dubbed the world's first "jailhouse environmentalist." He describes the multiple battles now being waged by inmates against the environmental crimes of the mass incarceration industry.

Arroyo concluded his own Prison Radio talk by addressing environmental racism in prisons. "Class is the most important thing in society. But race is not any less important."

Prisons, like military bases, are poisonous sites that are often built on land that has already been ravaged by capitalism. Arroyo led a campaign that successfully shut down a coal gassification plant scheduled to be built near a Pennsylvania state correctional facility, a scheme that would have cost hundreds of millions of dollars.

Arroyo also helped organize his fellow state prisoners to lobby on behalf of federal prisoners — a historic act of solidarity across prison walls — to shut down the construction of a federal facility in Kentucky that would have been built next to an active coal mine. With this federal prison plan now shut down, over \$500 million set aside for its construction will now be reallocated.

Bryant brags that he's now taken over a billion dollars out of the pockets of the "corporate raiders" he has dedicated his life to fighting against. "I'm in the



Bryant Arroyo with WWP members Joe Piette (left) and Ted Kelly.

billionaire club! I just don't get to collect it myself. But I'll tell you, I feel like a very rich man. Donald Trump can't prove that he's a billionaire, but I can."

### Prisons: 'places of mass pollution'

"The globe is under constant assault," says Arroyo, a deeply faithful and committed environmentalist. "Our oceans are filled with plastic. It's an abomination."

Mumia asks, "What are prisons except sinks of negativity? What are they except places of mass pollution of the spirit, the mind, the psyche? The environment of prisons is one of oppression. We cannot ignore this truth. How can any good come from it?"

Bryant Arroyo and Mumia Abu-Jamal are two of Workers World's most tireless advocates on the inside, fighting against censorship of the paper within the prison system and fighting on behalf of their fellow inmates. In a nation where prisons are concentration camps for the poor, all prisoners are political prisoners.

There are no walls in the workers struggle! Tear them down! □



# Philly workers, community say ‘Shut down our hospital? Hell, No!’

By Joe Piette  
Philadelphia

In a classic case of capitalism not caring about the needs of the community, Hahnemann University Hospital’s hedge fund owners announced June 26 they would close down the historic Philadelphia medical facility on Sept. 6, eliminating up to 3,000 jobs.

On June 28, the Pennsylvania Department of Health ordered Hahnemann owners to “cease and desist” closure plans, and Gov. Tom Wolf offered \$19 million in exemptions for taxes and fees.

Two days later, investment banker Joel Freedman responded for the owners by filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy for both Hahnemann (496 beds) and the other Philadelphia medical facility the hedge fund owns, St. Christopher’s Hospital for Children (188 beds).

A July 2 flier issued by the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals (PASNAP) revealed that Freedman’s hedge fund backers are Apollo (\$32 billion in assets) and Colliers (\$26 billion in assets).

Hahnemann’s workers provide services for over 40,000 patients annually.

The workers are represented by PASNAP (Penn. Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals) and District 1199C of the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees provide services for over 40,000 patients annually.

“Hahnemann is a safety-net hospital that for decades has provided care to an underserved community,” said PASNAP President Maureen May, RN. “We cannot allow predatory, for-profit companies to plunder such a valuable public good. It is incumbent upon the state and city to step in and guarantee that the poor and working people who depend upon this hospital to continue to receive the care that they need.” (F3News, June 27)

## Fightback begins against ‘corporate capitalization’

Significantly, the bankruptcy filing did not include the real estate occupied by Hahnemann, which was founded in the center of the city in 1848. In 1995, Hahnemann merged with Woman’s Medical College of Pennsylvania, founded in 1850 and the first medical college to award women a medical degree. The hospital is now the main teaching facility of Drexel University College of Medicine.

Many critics charge the hedge fund with planning to replace the hospital’s seven medical buildings and its parking garage with more profitable commercial and residential structures. The six acres of prime Center City land is located along the Vine Street Expressway, adjacent to the busy Pennsylvania Convention Center and near many popular cultural institutions.

A protest on June 27, the day after the closing announcement, drew 200 hospital workers and community activists who listened to nurse, labor and political leaders outside City Hall asking for the state to intervene. Labor unions present included Electrical Union Local 98, the Philadelphia Council of the AFL-CIO, the News Guild, Communications Workers (CWA), the Service Employees, UNITE HERE, PASNAP and District 1199C.

On June 28, several dozen nurses gathered outside the Rittenhouse Square apartment of banker Freedman, chairman and CEO of Hahnemann’s parent company, American Academic Health System, to demand that he keep the hospital open.

Another 100 Hahnemann supporters

came out to a PASNAP rally on July 2. PASNAP President May announced the state would appoint a temporary hospital manager. May stated, “We now have to fight for a long-term solution that keeps Hahnemann and St. Chris open, and stops Joel Freedman from treating them as real estate commodities.”

At the rally, City Council member Helen Gym said this is a fight against “corporate capitalization.” Nicolas O’Rourke of POWER (Philadelphians Organized to Witness, Empower and Rebuild) said that fight is against the “sins and evils of capitalism.”

A vigil was held on July 9, and an informational picket line is planned for July 11 in front of the hospital.

## Capitalist closure means health crisis

Hahnemann University Hospital’s closure would result in a public health crisis in Philadelphia. The Vine Street hospital is the only location in the city that offers special nursing assistance for sexual assault victims. Hahnemann’s two-year old Transgender Fellowship Training Program provides training and education in major reconstructive cases, including pre- and post-operative care—the first of its kind in the city and the second in the nation.

After nurses at Hahnemann reported they lacked basic supplies necessary to provide quality patient care, hospital owners announced the end of emergency room trauma care, which was the city’s designated-Level I Trauma Center for adults. Studies have shown communities suffer an immediate 21 percent increase in trauma mortality when drive time to the nearest trauma center is increased immediately after a trauma center closes, with a 29 percent increase during the following two years. (tinyurl.com/y3whvdqv)

Every single Philadelphia hospital currently has emergency room wait times well above the national average. Without Hahnemann, which has more than 40,000 ER visits a year, the stress placed on other area hospitals serving low-income patients would be disastrous. Almost two-thirds of Hahnemann’s volume are Medicaid and Medicare patients.

In addition to the hospital’s workers and patients, the closure will also have a ripple effect on the surrounding economy, costing the jobs of hundreds of other workers in hospital supply and service businesses.

## ‘Blood, sweat and tears equity’

Of course capitalists believe they alone have the power to decide how property can be exploited for their profit — a belief Hahnemann’s workers and its surrounding communities are going up against.

An illogical capitalist system that rewards Wall Street profits before health care could put an end to 171 years of medical service to the ill and injured of this city. Thousands of workers would be put out of work. Community residents would lose a medical facility that provided them with critical health care.

In a humane society, Hahnemann’s workers and staff, alongside their neighbors who have depended on them for generations, would have more right to control the Hahnemann property than wealthy financiers who have never even stepped foot in the buildings.

The decades of blood, sweat and tears at Hahnemann should count for some equity in determining its future, even if it takes a worker/community occupation to prove that point.

Workers’ takeovers of workplaces have happened before, from the Republic

Windows and Doors factory occupation in Chicago in 2008 to the famous Flint Sit-Down Strike against General Motors in 1936.

A hospital is so much more obviously a community institution that deserves to be defended.

## ‘Health care is a right!’

The struggle to save Hahnemann should be seen as part of a broader campaign for universal health care, since closing Hahnemann only decreases access to medical care in the city.

From Canada to Cuba, nations around the world recognize that health care is a right. Getting rich off people’s injuries and illnesses, or by denying health care to people who cannot afford to pay, is considered inhumane everywhere but in the U.S. The right to profit off people’s misery is as wrong under capitalism as it was



June 27 protest.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

under slavery.

Hahnemann’s buildings do not exist in a virtual world. The hedge fund managers have no natural right to seize the brick-and-mortar structures for corporate gains to the disadvantage of thousands of lives. If eminent domain can be used by government bodies to put up skyscrapers and bridges, it should be possible to use eminent domain to prevent the destruction of critically necessary community assets.

“Health care before profits!” is a popular slogan. A new and imaginative labor/community fightback to the proposed shutdown can save Hahnemann. Workers and community must fight back for health care as a right for all! □

## WW Commentary

# Legislators attack treatment for opioid use disorder

By Princess Harmony  
Philadelphia

Buprenorphine, the main active ingredient in the products Suboxone, Subutex, Sublocade, Zubsolv and Bunavail, is considered one of the gold-standard methods of treatment of opioid-use disorder, commonly referred to as opioid addiction. Yet the Pennsylvania Senate is considering two bills that would act as barriers to that treatment.

Bill SB 675 would establish state-level certification for buprenorphine maintenance therapy providers requiring fees of up to \$500 per provider and between 8 and 24 hours of training on the medication and on opioid use disorder.

The fee would be paid for each provider that prescribes the medication. Because many clinics have multiple prescribers, these fees would stack up to create an insurmountable barrier for smaller clinics, especially those serving rural areas in the state where the opioid epidemic has largely burned communities in silence.

The proposed requirements are also redundant, as the Drug Addiction Treatment Act of 2000 already requires special registration and training for prescribers of buprenorphine products. DATA 2000 itself already creates barriers to care, as it limits the number of patients who providers are able to treat.

The second bill, still in committee in the House, would require 2.5 hours of therapy at a state-licensed treatment facility for a year. It would also require the prescribers and clinics to eventually wean people off the medication, with some patients being permitted to stay on longer if they obtain a waiver.

Using diversion — the illicit trade, sale or gifting to other people — of buprenorphine was their reasoning for the two bills. Meanwhile politicians have decided to ignore the overwhelming evidence that comes from the medical and scientific community. They argue that while they understand buprenorphine has positive medical uses and has positive use in addiction/substance use disorder

treatment, this diversion is so severe that they must put up these barriers.

## ‘Buprenorphine saved my life’

We have to examine why people divert buprenorphine to others because it isn’t a drug that can actually get an opioid-tolerant person high. As a partial opioid agonist, it imperfectly fits the opioid receptors in the brain and therefore does not provide the traditional opioid effects of euphoria.

Instead, it’s a drug that staves off the withdrawal and the cravings associated with long-term opioid use disorder. People are using it to keep themselves from having to go back to heroin, which has largely become tainted with the synthetic opioids fentanyl and carfentanil.

On this basis alone, diversion of buprenorphine serves a positive purpose. Even non-opioids now contain fentanyl and the highly deadly carfentanil, leading to more people becoming dependent on opioids than ever before.

We’re at a moment when so many die of overdoses every single day, yet the state wishes to make it harder for people to get on life-saving medications. We need more buprenorphine in the hands of people who need it.

In a workers’ world, buprenorphine (and methadone!) would be treated as another tool in the anti-addiction toolbox. It would be pushed as hard or harder than Vivitrol and ReVia (generic name: naltrexone); it would be seen as a life-saving medication like Narcan (generic name: naloxone); and, most importantly, its use would snowball and greatly undercut the opioid epidemic.

Some argue that buprenorphine maintenance treatment is an addiction in itself, despite all the evidence that shows otherwise. House Representative Kerry Benninghoff said, “All you’re doing is trading one drug for another.” This is a pervasive myth that has only served to scare people away from getting treatment that could very well save their lives.

Being dependent on a medication and being addicted to a drug are two very different things. We don’t say that a diabetic

Continued on page 10



# Capitalism means the working class is working poor

By Arielle Robinson

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics released its most recent jobs report July 5, citing 224,000 “new jobs” added, with “notable” gains in professional and business services, transportation and warehousing, and health care. ([tinyurl.com/yyy3bk5x](http://tinyurl.com/yyy3bk5x))

The New York Times touted the report as “good news for workers,” and the Boston Herald celebrated: “Trump economy continues to roll.” But those newspapers are mouthpieces for different currents of the capitalist owning class. Ironically, the BLS has recently stopped reporting printing production jobs, such as those in newspapers. ([tinyurl.com/y66nuowx](http://tinyurl.com/y66nuowx))

Other research—from the Urban Institute, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development and elsewhere—reveals the truly dire situation of the working class in the U.S., which capitalism is pushing deeper and deeper into economic crisis.

Despite an official economic expansion across the U.S. that surpassed the 1990s boom, 40 percent of U.S. working-class residents say they find it difficult to pay their bills. ([tinyurl.com/yxppvsfd](http://tinyurl.com/yxppvsfd))

Their costs for health care, education and housing are increasing, while their wages look to take a turn for the worst. Their debts have been increasing. Renting homes is now a more affordable option than owning a house — not only in urban areas.

Some, who make up this 40 percent, report barely being able to scrape by. When a tragedy hits, like the death of a loved one, daily life becomes unaffordable, and the working poor fall behind on their bills.

The present economic expansion in the U.S. has been weaker than previous ones, with its “benefits” distributed far more unevenly. Roughly half of gross domestic product growth from 2009 to 2015 went to the top 1 percent of households. (Emmanuel Saez, “Striking it Richer: The Evolution of Top Incomes in the United States”)

The Great Recession of 2008 is still impacting people. One reason many cannot pay their bills now is because they have never been able to recover from that economic crisis. Families of color and households that earn less than \$60,000 annually are the groups least likely



At the Days of Grace Mass March against racism and for economic justice in Charleston, S.C., Sept. 5, 2017.

to have recovered.

Furthermore, the BLS report shows that almost 6 million workers have either quit searching for a job, are unable to find one or cannot secure full-time work.

The unemployment rate, at about 3.6 percent, does not include people who have searched extensively for work and failed to find a job, or those who have quit searching altogether due to various factors. And the government’s rates do not include those who do not receive unemployment insurance or military enlistees.

The current “low” unemployment rate is not a true portrait of the crisis in the working class. For instance, unemployment rates for Black people are nearly double the rates for white people. In 2018, it was reported that the unemployment rate for disabled workers was more than twice that of nondisabled workers.

Workers who are part of the LGBTQ2S+ community do not have protection from discrimination in workplaces across 28 states. These workers, especially trans and gender-nonconforming people, are more likely to be unemployed than straight and/or cisgender people.

The number of working-class people living paycheck to paycheck, the number of workers who can’t find full-time work or any job at all, the super-high unemployment rates in communities of color — all expose the true state of working people in the U.S. far more reliably than the recent BLS report. □

## Union pickets ‘declare independence from poverty wages’

Service Employees Local 1199 (SEIU) picketed outside the Key Bank building July 3 in downtown Cleveland to “declare independence from poverty wages.” The 1199 district representing Ohio, Kentucky and West Virginia was “calling on Key Bank CEO and Chair of the Cleveland Clinic Board of Directors Beth Mooney to stand with workers at the clinic who struggle under the weight of poverty wages.” (SEIU release, July 2) Over 100 workers at the clinic were promised a pay increase, up from \$13.85 an hour, but were then denied it.

Cleveland Clinic, with over 32,000 workers, is the largest employer in Cuyahoga County, but remains nonunion. KeyCorp is the ninth largest employer, with net profits of \$1.8 billion in 2018. CEO Mooney earned over \$9 million in compensation last year from KeyCorp alone, not including what she was paid by Cleveland Clinic, AT&T



and other companies where she is on the board of directors.

SEIU Local 1 recently won wage increases to \$15 an hour in four years, along with health insurance, for 500 janitors who service downtown buildings, including Key Bank. The fight for \$15 and a union continues. As the workers chanted, “If we don’t get it, shut it down! All the way down! Way, way down!”

— Story and photo by Martha Grevatt

## On the picket line

By Alex Bolchi and Sue Davis

### Wabtec workers ratify hard-fought contract

About 1,700 workers, represented by Electrical Workers (UE) Locals 506 and 618, ratified a four-year contract with Wabtec (Westinghouse Airbrake Technologies) in Erie, Pa., on June 12. After a historic nine-day strike in March (WW, March 6 and 15), UE continued to rally solidarity in Erie and Pittsburgh communities while negotiating the agreement the membership approved.

When Wabtec took control of the GE Transportation division in February, it refused to honor 70-years of bargaining history with UE. The company stopped offering a pension and retiree health care to the highly skilled workforce and demanded mandatory overtime, including that 20 percent of the workforce be non-union temps and starting wages be \$16.75 for a permanent second tier with an 18-year progression before those workers could reach parity with current workers.

When the company threatened to move the work out of Erie if UE refused a two-tier workforce, UE threatened another strike. The workers won a modified victory: They agreed to a two-tier wage structure over 10 years before parity, with starting pay at \$20.47. (Existing workers in the lowest job classification currently earn \$31.49.) Not only does the agreement keep existing jobs, but Wabtec guarantees 100 new positions by the end of the contract. It also agreed to give preferential treatment (but at lower pay scale) to 460 previously laid-off GE workers when jobs open up.

“The 10-year progression is not something that people wanted to happen, but the company would not let that go,” UE General President Peter Knowlton told Labor Notes. (June 30) If the union had called another strike, he believes it would have been “self-defeating” with the loss of community support.

“We’ve managed to preserve a lot of what we had,” asserted UE Local 506 President Scott Slawson, “Not only did UE maintain the right to strike based on transfer, subcontracting resulting in permanent layoffs, or the company’s failure to resolve grievances in a timely manner,” but “there’s relief in the community.”

### 9-hour UAW strike leads to contract

After auto parts company Faurecia and the United Auto Workers failed to reach a new contract by midnight June 21, 1,900 workers went on strike in Saline, Mich.

Represented by UAW Local 892, the workers build instrument panels, center consoles and interior parts for Fiat, Ford, Chrysler and Lincoln vehicles; those plants depend on Faurecia parts. After Local 892 posted the strike on Facebook, UAW talks with company bigwigs in the Paris suburbs extended into the early hours of the morning. The strike ended nine hours later when the two sides reached a tentative agreement.

Less than a week later, the membership passed the four-year contract by 83 percent. The contract will raise pay each year and create a job for a union health and safety representative. (UAW.org, July 2) When management resists paying union scale wages and benefits, workers have to persuade them with the strike weapon!

### BoJack Horseman animators ‘draw’ union cards

After years of struggle, animation workers at the popular Netflix cartoon “BoJack Horseman” voted overwhelmingly June 21 to ratify their first union contract. The crew, including storyboard and background artists, designers, character and prop designers, composers and supervisors at Shadowmachine in Los Angeles, produces the show through Animal Head animation. (Cartoon Brew, June 21) The Animation Guild-International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees Local 839 (TAG-IATSE) represents the workers.

The crew, now in its sixth season, has struggled for a union since its first season. But the bosses ignored them, though Bojack writers and voice-actors had been unionized from the start. The separate tier made the workers feel the bosses valued some talents over others. After Shadowmachine refused to acknowledge that 75 percent of the crew had signed cards for representation by TAG-IATSE, the crew staged a 10-minute walkout on Friday, March 29. Studio owners began negotiations the following Monday.

Once the union fight reached social media — with photographs of the crew sporting TAG T-shirts — well-known voice actors, as well as the Screen Actors Guild and BoJack writers, posted support. The workers won wage minimums as well as employer-paid health and retirement benefits. They will proudly join workers at more than 50 Netflix animated series represented by Local 839. (Animation World Network, June 21) □



# ‘Policing the womb’ in Alabama

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

The intensified attack on women, the gender-oppressed and reproductive justice, denounced as “policing the womb” by reproductive rights advocate and activist Michelle Goodwin, has reached a new level of violence in Alabama.

On July 3, Marshae Jones, a young pregnant African-American woman, was arrested after being indicted by an Alabama grand jury for manslaughter — because she miscarried her fetus after being shot in the stomach by an attacker. The shooter, another woman known to Jones, was not indicted and was set free.

The indictment against Jones was based on the statement of the arresting Pleasant Grove, Ala., police, whose spokesperson said, “[T]he only true victim” was the fetus, dependent on its mother to keep it from any “harm.” (Washington Post, June 28)

The law firm representing Jones filed a motion to dismiss the charges, but their argument was based on legal grounds related to manslaughter, not a challenge to the concept of personhood assigned to a fetus that the grand jury had used to indict.

After an international and U.S. outcry, including a demonstration at the Bessemer Justice Center, as well as support from the Yellowhammer Fund, an Alabama abortion rights organization, the local district attorney announced on July 4 she had decided “not to prosecute” Jones.

## Criminalization of abortion/miscarriage

The original police statement reflects the anti-woman, anti-poor, racist wave of

laws now defining and attacking people who are pregnant as mere vessels or carriers of a fetus. In Alabama hundreds have been prosecuted with a state “chemical endangerment of a child” statute for supposedly exposing their embryo or fetus to controlled substances.

According to Lynn Paltrow, founder and executive director of National Advocates for Pregnant Women, Alabama leads the U.S. in charging women for crimes related to pregnancy. She also noted women across the country have been prosecuted for manslaughter or murder for having an abortion or experiencing a miscarriage.

On May 15, Alabama’s governor signed into law the most repressive anti-abortion law in recent U.S. history, which prohibited abortions in cases of rape or incest. Other states, including Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio, have passed legislation nearly as punitive in efforts to criminalize and police reproductive rights.

There has been a lot of focus on interpreting these reactionary laws as a right-wing attempt to get an argument before the Supreme Court that could enable the end of access to abortion in the U.S.

In fact, these laws are only the latest initiative developed and deployed against reproductive rights won over the last 46 years since the U.S. Supreme Court’s Roe v. Wade decision that legalized abortion.

There have been an unrelenting onslaught of “right-to-life” laws at the state level, based on religious and non-scientific beliefs. These disproportionately punish and attempt to control the

autonomy of poor women of color.

Those advocating the laws do not openly state or admit their prejudiced intent, instead camouflaging hateful racism under the pretext of defending the “right to life.”

## Aimed at poor women of color

The hypocrisy of that position was unmasked, once again, through information explored at length in a July 3 Birmingham News column, “The Reckon”: Black mothers are nearly four times more likely to die in childbirth and pregnancy than white mothers. This is the widest racial disparity in women’s health in the U.S.

The reasons range from structural racism to individual prejudice, from refusal of states to expand Medicaid coverage for poor people, to such unprovable but real medical racism as that experienced by Myra Powell in Montgomery, Ala. Miscarrying twin fetuses at 26 weeks, drenched in blood and in pain, she was taken to the hospital by ambulance drivers who never turned on the emergency siren or lights, sat at every stop sign and red light and never exceeded the speed limits.

She was accompanied by a paramedic who kept checking his phone during the excruciatingly slow trip and then refused to authorize her transfer to a hospital with a neonatal unit.

The state of Texas’ assessment of its maternal deaths showed the risk for Black mothers was high regardless of marital status, education level or access to private insurance. Financially well-off Black women die at higher rates than white



Marshae Jones

PHOTO: WHITE, ARNOLD AND DOWD

women of their same class.

Obviously, if proponents of the reactionary anti-abortion and anti-miscarriage laws currently being passed sincerely cared about mothers and children, they would be pressing above all for a more responsive, accessible and income-affordable maternal health care system. They would be facing and fighting the racism that causes disproportionate deaths in communities of color — from lack of health care to police brutality, to immigrant prison concentration camps.

With careful examination, the indictment of Marshae Jones shows instead that the pushers of reactionary laws tied to reproduction are seeking the criminalization of poor women, women of color, sexually independent people. They are seeking to continue the dominance of white supremacy and capitalist patriarchy.

Marshae Jones was freed only through local, national and international organizing. That is the response that will end the “policing of wombs” and assert reproductive justice instead. □

# Acts of solidarity with migrants grow

Continued from page 1

have responded to this border migrant crisis. A federal judge responded to a lawsuit regarding facilities in the Texas Rio Grande Valley, which includes a notorious El Paso concentration camp. The judge demanded that health experts be allowed to examine children and investigate the detention centers.

Democratic congressional members and even presidential candidates have been visiting some centers across the country. While there may be some genuine outrage from these representatives, many get the feeling that 2020 candidates in particular are using the trauma of refugee detention for personal and political gain. Presidential candidate “Beto” O’Rourke held a June 29 protest outside a Southwest Key facility near downtown Houston. His team reached out to a couple of local organizers prior to the event and ignored the women of the Carnalismo Brown Berets once the event began.

Conventional institutional interventions seem ill-equipped to face the scale of terror and violence of the border migrant crisis in an expedient manner. In many cases, such institutions only reinforce the violence

these colonial borders were devised to inflict in the first place. For example, look at law enforcement agencies.

## Racist, sexist arm of the state

Agents of law enforcement, from the federal CBP agency to local and state police officers, have been found to be exchanging actively harmful opinions in Facebook groups. ProPublica reported that nearly 9,500 current and former border patrol agents were sharing a myriad of abhorrent, xenophobic, sexist memes and conversations that often times called for credible threats of violence against migrants and sexual violence against public officials like New York Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

On June 14, Reveal News reported that hundreds of current and former police officers and sheriffs were sharing racist memes, conspiracy theories and Islamophobia on the same social media platform.

At home and on the border, people in positions of real power face no repercussions for actively producing and spreading hateful material online. The ideas and images expressed on social media no doubt inform the way these agents of state

violence interact on their jobs and with people they supposedly serve. Rather than trying to reform these institutions that are rooted in oppression, people must abolish them.

In discussions, folks often raise that for all these hateful law enforcement agents, there are also agents who are good. But community organizer Vienna Rye counters that by asking in her artist piece, “What does it mean to be good at your job, when your job is to enforce racist, sexist, unjust laws?”

Reporter Tanvi Misra pointed out how border militarization evolved hand-in-hand with the rise of military-style policing in segregated U.S. cities. This connection is crucial for our understanding of the repression we’re up against. Divide-and-conquer is a core tactic of colonial and capitalist oppression. So, at the same time, it is important to connect the border migrant crisis to prison abolition, the climate crisis and the anti-war movement. There are no borders in the workers’ struggle. (Citylab.com, Nov. 29, 2018)



WW PHOTO: MINNIE BRUCE PRATT

Over 100 people gathered in Syracuse, N.Y., on July 2 to demand “Close the Camps.”

One group looking to bridge these struggles is Fight for Im/migrants and Refugees Everywhere, or FIRE, which calls for no more concentration camps, immediate asylum for all refugees, ending mass incarceration and an end to U.S. imperialist intervention abroad.

If you agree with these demands, join FIRE for national demonstrations against war abroad and at home in cities throughout the country the week of July 12-16; Global Strike Against Climate Change at the U.N. in New York City the week of Sept 21-28; and a rally against colonialism in Puerto Rico at the U.N. on Sept. 22. You can find out more at [fightformigrants.org](http://fightformigrants.org). □

# Hundreds protest ICE in Philly



Just a few days after President Trump announced and then postponed his pledge to deport millions of immigrants, about 200 people protested at Philadelphia’s Immigration and Customs Enforcement center on June 24. “Show Up: When Trump Cracks Down, Community Fights Back!” was called by the New Sanctuary Movement/Nuevo Movimiento Santuario, Juntos, CAIR (Philadelphia Chapter), Philadelphia Immigration and Citizenship Coalition, and Make the Road Pennsylvania.

Miguel Andrade of Juntos explained, “This crowd is mostly white. That’s because Trump’s threats of mass deportations are creating terror in my community.” After hearing several other speakers, organizers led the participants in a march.

— Report and photos by Joe Piette

# Buffalo celebrates Stonewall and local LGBTQ2S+ movement turn 50

By Workers World Buffalo, N.Y., bureau

This year marks 50 years since the legendary Stonewall Rebellion and also 50 years since the birth of Buffalo’s organized LGBTQ2S+ movement.

In celebration, the Buffalo-Niagara Falls LGBTQ History Project sponsored a “Gay Liberation Reunion Panel” on June 27. Five of the many founders of the local Buffalo movement explained, to a standing-room-only crowd of over 100 people, what life was like for them in the city in the early 1970s.

Panelists included Bill Gardner, Greg Bodekor, Don Licht and Rodney Hensel, now a LGBTQ2S+ senior issues activist; Madeline D. Davis, co-author of the history of the Buffalo lesbian community, “Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold”; and Marge Maloney, an active member of Workers World Party since 1969.

The panel emphasized that the LGBTQ2S+ movement in Buffalo was different from those in bigger cities like Los Angeles and New York, primarily due to Buffalo being a midsize, working-class, blue-collar city, which had a closely linked, complex and thriving, if closeted, community.

The panelists recounted the founding in the late 1960s of the Mattachine Society of the Niagara Frontier and the Sisters of Sappho, as well as the opening of what was the third largest LGBTQ2S+ center in the country. This space provided a social area for people to meet and hang out, as well as providing a suicide hot line, counseling service and activities. The Fifth Freedom, an early LGBTQ2S+ newspaper, was published in Buffalo for the Western New York region from 1970 into the early 1980s.

Members of the audience asked: “What prompted this community to be so bold?” The answer was: “We were tired of being harassed, beat up and arrested by the cops and other anti-gay people.” In response to the repression,



PHOTO: LGBTQ COMMUNITY CENTER HISTORY ARCHIVE

Buffalo’s Mattachine Society at the Gay Liberation March in Albany, N.Y., in 1971.

the community fought back by founding its own organizations. That was a very brave thing to do at that time because if anyone was arrested, not only their names but their home addresses were published in local newspapers.

Panel members stressed that the struggles in Buffalo, as elsewhere, were linked to and inspired by the parallel women’s liberation movement, the Black and Latinx movements, and other struggles for liberation taking place during the same years, including the anti-war movement. In the discussion, it was mentioned that Workers World Party was the only left party to have an active lesbian and gay caucus.

There was so much more that needed to be said about the history of justice struggles in Buffalo, but the panel ran out of time. However, in a separate June 27 interview in the Qween City blog, WWP comrade Marge Maloney filled out some of the connections among struggles. Maloney, a lifelong workers’ and LGBTQ2S+ rights activist, was born in 1947 on the West Side of Buffalo to an Irish-Catholic working-class family.

She noted in the interview: “It was ‘69 when I joined the anti-war movement, and it just sort of flowed from my ideas about struggle and oppression. It was intersectionality before it had a word.

“I was beginning to have an inkling that I was destined to struggle, and so I joined Workers World Party, because they were, at the time, the only socialist party to have both a women’s caucus and a lesbian and gay caucus, both fully functional. I could be active in the gay community, and I could be active in the workers’ struggles. It just sort of worked beautifully.”

Maloney also gave more recent liberation history, recounting the joining of pro-choice and LGBTQ2S+ communities in the late 1990s to form Buffalo United for Choice, when anti-abortion forces descended on the city. She noted that the earlier gay liberation struggle built the foundation for community self-defense when anti-abortion forces came back to Buffalo in 2001 and targeted both women’s clinics and the LGBTQ2S+ community. Rainbow Peacekeepers, a group of about 100 people, came together to send groups of people out on the weekends to defend LGBTQ bars and clubs threatened by right-wing bigots.

In a video link at the Qween City blog, Mahoney recounts how participating in both those mobilizations was another LGBTQ2S+ activist and WWP comrade, Leslie Feinberg, who grew up and came out in Buffalo’s gay community, and whose now-classic trans novel “Stone Butch Blues” was set in the city. Feinberg’s ground-breaking Marxist history of transgender oppression and struggle, “Transgender Warriors” (1996), details Feinberg’s coming to political consciousness and activism within the dynamic movements in Buffalo.

*“Stone Butch Blues” is now available as a free download at [lesliefeinberg.net](http://lesliefeinberg.net).*

## Actions accelerate to close immigrant concentration camps

By Gloria Rubac  
Houston

Since im/migrant families began to be torn apart at the border in 2018, there have been dozens and dozens of Houston protests, marches and rallies against Trump’s racist border policies.

But now that brutal conditions within the immigrant concentration camps have finally been widely exposed to the world, people have become even more outraged. Events to shut down the detention centers are taking place at a rapid pace.

Houston FIRE (Fight for Im/migrants and Refugees Everywhere) has recently protested at the office of U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, participated in an anti-Fourth-of-July speakout against the camps and rallied at a downtown federal detention center.

The July 2 protest at Cornyn’s office was part of a national campaign to “Close the Camps” called by MoveOn.org at the home offices of congresspeople returning from Washington, D.C., for the July 4 holiday. Ten of thousands across the country came to these protests.

Some of the Democrats running for president have appeared in Houston to protest. On June 29, candidate “Beto” O’Rourke called a rally at detention center Casa Sunzul, which houses unaccompanied minors. Casa Sunzul is run by Southwest Key, a notorious nonprofit that received hundreds of violation notices from state regulators during inspections over the last three years.

But the palpable outrage of Houston demonstrators at the July 2 protest went far beyond Democratic politics. All four corners of a street intersection were filled with people chanting, “Close the camps down!” Hundreds came—families, veteran activists, religious groups, peace activists and many who had never protested before.

Then, on July 4, as some people were ready to barbecue or thinking about the later fireworks, the Carnalismo Brown Berets of Houston held “A Fourth of U Lie” event. As organizer Elizabeth Lozano said, “We have children in concentration camps. What is there to celebrate?”

One of the first speakers reminded people: “Central America has been colonized and pillaged by the U.S. Now people are fleeing the horrible conditions that have been created. They will slaughter these refugees in the concentration camps if we don’t fight for them.”

Instances cited of U.S. colonizing actions included its 2009 overthrow of the democratically elected president



July 2, Houston.

WW PHOTO: GLORIA RUBAC

of Honduras, putting in his place a vicious dictator who allowed protesting students to be gunned down and murders of Indigenous activists and organizers. Before that, in the 1980s, the Sandinista government in Nicaragua was attacked by U.S.-backed contras who committed horrific crimes — murders, rapes and terror. The number of U.S. military invasions and “interventions” in Central America is too long to list here.

Ed E.SomiSek, a member of the Esto’k Gna Indigenous

people who have lived in what is now Texas and Mexico for centuries, spoke: “Our people have historically lived on both sides of the river, moved around the area, and now they are making us aliens. They are building a wall on our ancestors’ graves.”

The leader of Black Lives Matter, Ashton Woods, got the crowd’s energy flowing as he led chants and spoke: “I stand here as a descendant of a slave, a LGBTQIA person with AIDS. People like me are in those concentration camps. These people are fleeing violence created by this government. What do we have to celebrate today? Mass incarceration, the Thirteenth Amendment, concentration camps and trans women being murdered and brutalized? Be angry about this!” [The Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution included legalization of slavery in prisons.]

Sema Hernandez, activist and challenger to Sen. Cornyn, told the crowd: “We need to dismantle this imperialist system based on capitalism and white supremacy. We have to ramp up our work to abolish ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] and shut down these concentration camps.”

Houston FIRE’s banner and bright yellow signs were very well received. Outcry about the concentration camps has reignited the outrage that began last summer when families were first separated. FIRE intends to keep that fire burning! □

## Solidarity with migrants in Philadelphia

Several hundred people mobilized for a demonstration at the office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Philadelphia July 4 to demand the immediate closure of migrant concentration camps and for an end of the U.S. war on migrant workers.

The action was part of the growing #NeverAgainMeansNow protests and direct actions being led by Jewish people, migrants, and workers and community members who have shut down ICE facilities over the past few weeks.

Following a rally outside ICE, the demonstration snaked through oncoming traffic and headed toward the July 4 parade outside Independence Hall in Center City. A line of cops prevented the march from reaching the parade, but a group of 33 activists was arrested as they sat down and

linked arms, blocking the parade route while leading chants in solidarity with migrants.

— Report by Ben Carroll



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE



# Gerrymandering, census and role of Supreme Court

By Martha Grevatt

The U.S. Supreme Court handed down two important decisions on June 27, with major ramifications for the working class, especially the most oppressed peoples. SCOTUS ruled 5-4 against Trump-appointed Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross, who sought a requirement that all residents who fill out the 2020 census state if they are U.S. citizens or not. In a separate decision, the justices voted 5-4 to allow gerrymandered congressional district maps in North Carolina and Maryland to remain in place.

Im/migrant rights and Latinx groups and their allies had filed lawsuits to block the citizenship question from appearing on the 2020 census form because it would discourage im/migrants from participating in the census. Plaintiffs argued that adding this question would lead to an undercount, especially of the Latinx population, due to the fear that if they answered these questions, the information could be used against them.

This would have negative consequences for African-American, Latinx and other oppressed communities. Federal grants for social services could be cut if reports falsely show declining populations. States could end up with fewer congressional districts. Underrepresented communities of color would have even less political clout in Washington.

The high court’s majority did not reject all of Ross’s arguments, but ruled 5-4 against his duplicitous pretext: that the citizenship question was needed to uphold the Voting Rights Act. In his decision, however, Chief Justice John Roberts did not challenge its fallacious content, writing only that Ross “adopted the Voting Rights Act rationale late in the process.” (New York Times, June 27)

Ross and his Republican cohorts have no intention of upholding voting rights. Plaintiffs’ attorneys discovered on May 30: “A central portion of the Justice Department’s rationale for the question was apparently

written by Thomas Hofeller, the GOP’s longtime gerrymandering mastermind.

“In a 2015 study, Hofeller wrote that adding a citizenship question to the 2020 census would be ‘advantageous to Republicans and non-Hispanic whites’ and ‘a disadvantage to the Democrats.’” The late Hofeller’s estranged daughter revealed emails on June 14 between him and census official Christa Jones which explained “how the question would benefit white voters and disadvantage non-white ones” and discussed collusion with the racist, xenophobic Center of Immigration Studies. (Slate, June 15)

Roberts sent this matter back to the Commerce Department, but the top court may rehear the case if Ross and Trump come up with a new pretext for the citizenship question.

The reason Trump rushed the case to the high court, bypassing federal circuit courts, was purportedly that it had to be decided before the census forms went to print June 30. Now he is seeking to delay the start of the census to allow a new, still undisclosed pretext to be considered. Trump may also attempt to force the racist question onto the form via executive order.

For now, census forms are being printed without the citizenship question, a relief to im/migrant communities. That this court, with its conservative majority, unexpectedly ruled as it did is a testament to the strength of the im/migrant rights movement. This movement has demonstrated its strength with massive numbers of people countrywide demanding: “Close the camps!”

### Right-wing court upholds gerrymandering

The Supreme Court also decided two lawsuits based on “partisan gerrymandering” in North Carolina and Maryland. Gerrymandering occurs when a state legislature draws voting district maps to benefit the state’s majority party. Lower courts ruled that such maps were unconstitutional.

Voters sued, charging their legislators with “packing and cracking.” Under this scheme, voters for the opposition party are “packed” into a small number of districts that the majority party—Republicans in North Carolina, Democrats in Maryland—is unlikely to win. The rest are “cracked” into districts where they are decidedly a minority.

The court did not determine if the state legislatures were guilty or not. Their 5-4 decision, addressing both cases, was based on the premise that drawing district maps was up to states and therefore outside its jurisdiction.

Thus five conservative justices who are appointed for life, two by Trump, invoked the old segregationist fallback position of “states’ rights.”

While the cases heard involve both Democrats and Republicans, the ruling is a gift to the GOP, which controls a majority of state legislatures. It immediately impacts Wisconsin, Ohio and Michigan, whose cases the Supreme Court put on hold pending the outcome of the North Carolina and Maryland lawsuits. The gerrymandered district maps there will remain in place, and won’t be redrawn until after the 2020 election.

As Michigan’s grassroots organization Voters Not Politicians explained after the decision came down: “This ruling will allow politicians across the country to continue gerrymandering our election district maps for their own personal and political gain.” Voters in Michigan overwhelmingly passed ballot measures in 2018 creating independent commissions to redraw district maps, but not until 2021.

### Tools of racist voter suppression

While SCOTUS distinguished between “partisan” and “racial” gerrymandering — the latter being within its jurisdiction — boosting white voting strength is a key component of both. Called “Ohio’s poll tax,” political gerrymandering is used to disenfranchise African-American and Latinx communities.

*Continued on page 11*

## Philly refinery fire and closure Workers, community activists demand reparations

By Betsey Piette

Less than a week after devastating explosions caused a major fire on June 21, injuring five workers at the Philadelphia Energy Solutions refinery in South Philadelphia, the company announced June 27 that it was closing the plant, impacting over 1,000 workers.

Residents in neighboring communities, whose health and safety have been threatened for generations by the 150-year-old industrial facility, welcomed the news. “This has been genocide,” said Rodney Everett, South Philadelphia resident and a member of the environmental group Philly Thrive, which has been campaigning to close the refinery. “They’ve been killing people, and we’ve been paying for it.”

The community group also made it clear they stand with the workers, noting: “The June 21 explosion was a direct result of longtime corporate mismanagement, and we continue to applaud the workers for ensuring the accident was not the catastrophe it could have been.”

The 335,000-barrel-a-day refinery is the largest on the East Coast. Situated along the eastern bank of the Schuylkill River, adjacent to I-76, the complex borders the Point Breeze neighborhood, heavily targeted for gentrification, and the Navy Yard, a former military base that has been converted into an office complex and industrial park. Of the 45,000 residents living within a mile of the refinery, 71 percent are people of color and 32 percent live below the poverty level.

Meanwhile, workers at the plant who were terminated because of the closure filed a class action lawsuit against the company on June 28. They say PES violated the federal Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act of 1988 by not providing them with a 60-day advance notice. The United Steelworkers Local 10-1 contract also requires a 60-day notice of layoffs.

Around 100 non-union employees were dismissed within hours of the closure announcement with no severance pay. Local 10-1, which represents 614 refinery workers, were told they would remain on payroll until July 12.

Earlier this year the company shuffled its management team, froze employee bonuses, and told employees it was deferring matching payments to their retirement accounts until 2020. Nearly half of the union workers are older than 50. PES also tried to reopen contract

negotiations, seeking concessions ahead of the expiration of the current contract in September.

Union President Ryan O’Callaghan said USW is investigating whether the company’s insurance covered the destroyed alkylation unit and resulting business losses, estimated by industry experts at over \$100 million. “It appears they’re cashing the check and heading for the doors,” he said. (post-gazette.com, June 26)

O’Callaghan stressed that the company had not notified him of plans for closure or layoffs before leaking the news to the media. “This is what they do to us after we safely shut down the plant while fighting a fire,” O’Callaghan pointed out.

Because of the nature of the blaze, Philadelphia firefighters were not allowed onto the refinery to directly combat the fire. USW workers, all skilled refinery emergency workers and operators now facing job and possibly pension losses, worked through the blasts on June 21, got the fire under control and kept the city from a major catastrophe.

### Management at fault for maintenance problems

As of June 28, the cause of the fire has yet to be determined, as federal emergency investigators found the site too risky to enter. However, workers point out that PES, which is supposed to be responsible for safety management systems in the refinery, had scaled back a test of the maintenance system scheduled for January.

Over the last five years, PES has been fined \$649,417 for violations of air and water protections. (Philly.com, June 22)

In 2018 PES declared bankruptcy, and Wall Street hedge fund investors, Bardin Hill Investment Partners, took control of the refinery’s debt, estimated at \$755 million, and assumed ownership.

A 25 percent share of the ownership, derived through the previous owner, Sunoco, is retained by its parent company, Carlyle Group LP and Energy Transfer Partners LP. Sunoco still has responsibility for pre-2012 environmental liabilities estimated at \$207 million through its subsidiary Evergreen Resources Management Operations. (Philly.com, June 27)

In 2012 Sunoco received \$25 million in public funds, tax breaks and environmental liability waivers in exchange for keeping the refinery open and agreeing to

clean up decades of soil and water contamination.

In announcing plans to close, PES officials say they plan to sell the complex for continued use as a petrochemical plant. Some city officials and developers see it as a potential site for expanding the marine terminal in South Philadelphia. But area residents and environmental activists have different ideas.

### Hold owners responsible

Neighborhood residents want the site repurposed as a park. Some environmentalists have suggested the site could become a giant wind or solar facility, which would still provide jobs and energy.

But it remains uncertain if PES or Sunoco will assume responsibility for cleanup of the massive 1,400-acre plant, which is responsible for over 72 percent of toxic air emissions and pollution in Philadelphia. There are also issues of heavy groundwater and land contamination. (tinyurl.com/y3vqu4bg)

Toxins released by the refinery include ammonia, hydrogen cyanide, benzene and sulfuric acid, which cause everything from headaches to cancers. Other contaminants on the site and in groundwater include petroleum hydrocarbons, toluene, ethyl benzene and xylene.

A major danger exposed as a result of the June 21 fire was the presence of tanks of hydrofluoric acid (HF) at the refinery. HF is capable of killing millions of people if accidentally released. An HF cloud can travel 7 miles within 10 minutes. At room temperature it can form a toxic cloud, and exposure can lead to severe health problems and even death. Since it destroys nerve tissue, burns may initially be painless; in higher concentrations, HF causes cardiac arrest.

The union credits a female employee with averting a catastrophe by quickly removing an HF tank when the explosions took place.

Philly Thrive is calling on the city of Philadelphia and the state of Pennsylvania to hold present owners Bardin Hill, and past owners Sunoco and its parent company the Carlyle Group and Energy Transfer Partners, responsible for the cleanup. They note that Carlyle took more than \$500 million out of PES when it owned the company.

Thrive wants this money returned to pay for workers’ pensions and health care, severance pay and retraining assistance and for the complete remediation of the site. □



# Growing signs of deepening global capitalist crisis Part 1

By Ben Carroll

The capitalist media have recently been filled with competing headlines — some issuing stark warnings of an impending economic slowdown, others dismissing this prediction outright. But a look past the blaring headlines reveals growing signs that a worldwide contraction of the capitalist economy could soon tip the U.S. and other major economies into recession.

This is in spite of the fact that the super-casino for the rich known as the stock market has once again reached record highs. The time since the last major financial collapse is nearing the longest in recent history. These two things, of course, do not reflect the reality of the lives of the vast majority of society — the workers and the oppressed.

A survey released June 14 by Bankrate.com found that nearly a quarter of U.S. workers reported they were worse off since the 2007 economic crash. Surely, this tells only part of the story of the profound ways in which the lives of many workers across the globe were impacted by the capitalist financial crisis of 2007, which wiped out workers' savings and pensions, led to a massive wave of foreclosures and layoffs, introduced punishing austerity, invigorated attacks on workers' ability to organize and fight and gave rise to the gig economy and greater insecurity for wider sections of the working class.

The same survey found that the median family income in 2016 was nearly the same as in 2000. The price of a gallon of

gas, a carton of milk, a college degree, a visit to the doctor and nearly every other good or service has risen substantially since that time, leading many to take on increasing amounts of debt. Many workers, particularly the most oppressed, live paycheck to paycheck.

## Signs point to impending downturn

The bankers' bank — the U.S. Federal Reserve — has pumped trillions upon trillions of dollars into the economy to keep it afloat, from direct handovers to the banks during the bailouts in 2008, to interest rate cuts that make it easier for bankers and other large capitalist corporations to borrow money. The central banks of many of the major capitalist powers across the world have taken similar interventions to prevent their economies from contracting and entering a recession. This is on top of the massive handouts to the super-rich via Trump's tax cuts in 2017.

The effectiveness of this strategy to resuscitate the capitalist economy by the cabal of central bankers who exercise a considerable amount of control over the global economy appears to be reaching its conclusion.

On June 13, Morgan Stanley reported that its Business Conditions Index, which reflects sentiment about economic conditions, fell by 32 points — a record decline month to month — reaching its lowest level since December 2008.

The May report by the Bureau of Labor Statistics showed that the U.S. economy added only 75,000 jobs that month, far

below expectations. Unemployment claims in May also spiked. Although the official U.S. employment rate remains below 4 percent, the unemployment rate for Black and Latinx workers, as well as women workers, is nearly double that — by official counts. These official statistics artificially conceal the reality for many U.S. workers, who have been forced to take on two or three low-wage, part-time or gig jobs or work in informal sectors of the economy just to make ends meet — or have given up looking for work altogether.

The first quarter of the 2019 gross domestic product was officially reported as having grown by 3.2 percent. However, a deeper look reveals that the core metrics of the economy — spending and investment — grew only 1.1 percent. (Forbes, April 30)

Several indicators, considered benchmarks showing the direction that the economy is heading, also revealed an impending financial crisis. The Cass Freight Index, which measures the volume of movement of commodities, showed negative growth year over year for the past five months. This echoes similar statistics showing that air freight at many of the global capitalist economies' most important ports — from London to Singapore, Memphis to Frankfurt — were all flat or in negative territory compared with this time in 2018, some by significant margins. Orders for new aircraft also declined.

A topic of much discussion in the capitalist media has been the inverted yield curve on government bonds, or debt. This refers to the fact that interest rates paid

on government short-term bonds are now greater than those on longer-term bonds. This has happened before, when there was pessimism about the longer-term prospects for the economy. And it has preceded every U.S. economic crisis. Banks and major corporations are the primary purchasers of U.S. Treasury bonds. The curve inverted briefly in March and has once again been inverted since late May.

Newly released data also show that consumer debt in the U.S. — on things like student loans, credit cards, car loans, etc. — has ballooned to over \$14 trillion, surpassing levels that preceded the 2008 financial collapse. Student debt alone has risen to nearly \$1.5 trillion, compared to \$611 billion in 2008.

Manufacturing data in the U.S. have shown a steep decline in recent months. The Empire State Manufacturing Index in June registered its largest one-month decline in its 18-year history. A similar index measured by the Philadelphia Federal Reserve also reflected a steep decline. Meanwhile, as jobs are being cut and production slows in manufacturing, the trucking industry is reporting a pronounced slowdown, and there have also been a series of bankruptcies of shipping companies.

We have no crystal ball, but these are just a few of the many signs that point to an impending contraction of the capitalist economy, not just in the U.S., but on a worldwide basis. □

*Next: Global developments*

## Solidarity in the fight against white supremacy

*The Sixth International Assembly of the International League of Peoples' Struggles took place in Hong Kong June 23-26. Founded in 2001, ILPS is a coalition of more than 200 anti-imperialist mass organizations from around the world that "promotes, supports and develops the struggles of the peoples of the world, including the workers, peasants, women, youth, professionals and other sectors of society against the ideological, political, military, economic, social and cultural domination and attacks of imperialism and reaction." Loan Tran, who attended as a representative of the International Action Center, spoke at the assembly. Part 1 of Tran's remarks, slightly edited, are presented below. Read the entire talk at workers.org. For more information about ILPS, see ilps.info.*

### Part 1: The U.S. South

I would like to focus specifically on the context of the U.S. South, with the understanding that the United States of AmeriKKKa is a prison house of nations. The whole of the U.S. is stolen and colonized Indigenous land. The South in particular was where the land was then toiled and developed for ruling-class profit by stolen, enslaved Africans at the start of the 17th century and Black sharecroppers by the mid-19th century.

Today, Black workers, along with more and more migrant workers from Latin America and the Caribbean, make up a significant portion of the labor force in the South as low-wage farm workers, fast food workers, domestic workers, city workers and incarcerated workers — whom we can also consider as part of what has developed as "surplus labor."

It should come as no surprise that the



Loan Tran WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

South is the least unionized region of the country, where most states have made unionizing illegal. Still, many workers are able to organize through workers' assemblies — such as the Southern

Workers Assembly — and "social unions" in order to lift up demands for workers and oppressed people.

The South is also home to at least one-third of the population of LGBTQ people in the country, a majority of whom are also Black, Brown and Indigenous. LGBTQ people of color and LGBTQ workers face additional layers of challenges, not just in the workplace — if we are able to find work — but also within the movement, where marginalization of LGBTQ people often continues. That indicates the continued need to update whom we see as the "working class."

In 2016, in North Carolina, a state law was passed criminalizing transgender people's ability to access public facilities. The law also included preemptive measures preventing local city governments from setting minimum wage standards for contract workers; the law also made the process more difficult for workers to file lawsuits charging discrimination, without having to take it to the state level. The marrying of transphobia and homophobia to the attacks on labor and workers' rights is a classic divide-and-conquer strategy. We saw this strategy duplicated in states across the South in

the months that followed.

We often find the South characterized as inherently backward, but on a very subjective basis. The material reality facing workers and oppressed people in the South includes public institutions that have been severely disinvested in, leaving working-class communities with little or no access to education, job programs, health care and more.

Racism and reactionary movements didn't originate in the South because workers and oppressed people are less educated or inherently bigots; racism and reactionary movements get seeded in the South because it is an effective staging and containment ground for the ruling class in the U.S. and around the globe.

North Carolina, for example, is home to Fort Bragg, one of the largest military bases in the world. All along the southern coast, working people live with military bases right in their backyards and are surrounded by military propaganda and recruitment efforts that largely target poor, working-class Black and Brown people.

The military is presented as a viable option for economic security when the reality is that we have young people — new workers — who are left with very few options. The capitalist ruling class is then

either building an army of surplus labor by holding oppressed people in cages or is building a literal army of surplus labor tasked with bombing and killing people in the Global South. It is often both.

It would be remiss of me not to speak briefly to the questions surrounding white workers and the growing debate within the revolutionary movement regarding whether or not any revolutionary potential exists in the U.S. The argument is often made that, no, this is not possible because all workers in the U.S. are settlers. At a very preliminary starting point, I want to argue that we must question this, considering Indigenous people are still fighting for their land, more and more people from the Global South are being forced north by U.S. imperialism, and Black people continue to be subject to slave-like conditions in the U.S.

This is just one of many contradictions that exist for the working-class movement in the U.S., and we must continue to seek out the best line that allows more class solidarity within the U.S. and with anti-imperialist struggles across the globe.

As materialists, we are tasked with organizing within the conditions as they exist. A key feature of the struggle in the U.S. is that we are contending

with a multinational working class whose histories have developed side by side and often been a target of divide-and-conquer strategies — separating white workers from Black and migrant workers, and so on. There is much work to be done to clarify the common enemy and to build the organizing skills of the oppressed masses in order for there to be a movement capable of defeating racism and winning socialism. □



ILPS delegates in Hong Kong.

PHOTO: REDLAMP.NET



Im/migrants and the repressive state

A grassroots movement has been growing across the U.S. to counter the government’s brutal campaign targeting im/migrants. As more people of all ages die horrible deaths in the desert north of the border, in the border rivers and in detention camps — including the hellholes set up to warehouse small children and even babies cruelly separated from their parents — protests are continuing, as well as solidarity actions to provide asylum for those who cross the border to escape repression and hunger.

At the same time, the racists and neo-fascists who applaud the Trump administration’s “America first” brand of vicious nationalism are pushing back against this progressive movement. Not able to summon sufficient forces in the streets to do so openly, they resort to vigilante attacks on migrants and online posts that reveal their racist and misogynist nature, like those calling for sexual assault against Congressmember Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a progressive Puerto Rican woman from the Bronx, N.Y.

“America first” conceals the class character of U.S. foreign policy. The U.S. ruling class is thoroughly internationalist when it comes to how they have made their vast fortunes.

They have been global exploiters since the late 1800s, when U.S. gunboats violently broke down the resistance of countries around the world. From Korea and the Philippines to Cuba and Puerto Rico, U.S. bankers and industrialists expanded their area of exploitation through war and conquest.

It is the imperialists’ success in sucking out the wealth of the countries of Central America, pauperizing the population and backing brutally repressive regimes, that

has driven so many families to risk their lives and leave their poverty-stricken lands in hope of finding work in the U.S.

This “internationalist” ruling class at the same time promotes reactionary nationalism to the masses of people here, particularly to those whose ancestors emigrated from Europe.

Racist white nationalism is the essence of Trumpism, even as it is a cover for a ruling class that respects no national boundaries in its drive for profits.

The border crisis is now so severe that even some employees of the state have begun to complain about the conditions they are working under. Whether this comes from genuine empathy with the suffering migrants of all ages, or exasperation at being tasked with handling an impossible situation, it should not cloud an understanding of their role.

Whether they are border police or jailers at the concentration camps set up to warehouse migrants, they are part of the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state.

The organizations that represent police and jailers may be called unions, but they do not function as defenders of the working class against the bosses. In fact, these employees of the state will break strikes and lock up workers if they are ordered to do so.

Those whose function it is to jail and warehouse immigrants don’t belong in the union movement. Border guards and Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents are members of the American Federation of Government Employees, the largest federal workers union. For AFGE to kick them out would be a great act of solidarity with im/migrant workers and would strengthen the international working class as a whole. □

Down with imperialism! Up with Workers World!

The U.S. has been the world’s No. 1 imperialist bully for years. That fact has been carefully covered up with self-righteous bourgeois language by the corporate media. Now, led by emperor-wannabe Trump, the soft-sell bullying has become in-your-face ultimatums, with Venezuela, Cuba and Iran the latest targets.

The New York Times and other big business media are not reporting on criminal U.S. sanctions as outright attempts at regime change via a ruling-class imposter in Venezuela. Rather, they are cheering U.S. plots to take over Venezuela’s oil deposits, valued as the world’s largest.

Trump is using his bully pulpit against Cuba, this year celebrating 60 years of socialist power. Not only has Trump set up tough restrictions on U.S. visits to Cuba, he has authorized U.S. companies, whose imperialist holdings were nationalized after the revolution, to sue Cuba for “reparations.” There’s no corporate media coverage of what socialist Cuba has accomplished to uplift its people in 60 years.

Trump ordered this year’s super-militarized July 4th celebration of the



WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

Reclaim Pride march, June 30, NYC.

origins of the genocidal, enslaving, white-supremacist capitalist U.S., while at the same time using the U.S. Armed Forces to threaten Iran striving to maintain its independence surrounded by global capitalism. The corporate media are willing co-conspirators in covering up the real threat — U.S. imperialism.

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WW Commentary

How real reparations can be won

By Makasi Motema

“If you stick a knife in my back nine inches and pull it out six inches, there’s no progress. If you pull it all the way out that’s not progress. Progress is healing the wound that the blow made. And they haven’t even pulled the knife out much less healed the wound. They won’t even admit the knife is there.” — Malcolm X

The topic of reparations has entered the public discourse and made it all the way to a hearing before the U.S. House of Representatives. But a conversation on reparations cannot be limited to the issue of chattel slavery in the 19th century. To do so would be to promote the lie that slavery was abolished. Slavery did not end. It was dealt a severe blow with the capitulation of the Confederacy, but the white-supremacist system, which created slavery and used it to siphon labor power from the masses of Black Americans, remained and it adapted. Chameleonlike, it shifted into Jim Crow, and Jim Crow shed its skin to reveal mass incarceration. Over and over, the outer form changed, but the repression remains. The knife remains.

Like 16th-century European imperialists did in Africa, modern-day prosecutors have sent armed troops into the Black community to steal people from their homes and sell them into bondage, leaving extraordinary violence, poverty and suffering in their wake. And just like the slavers of the early modern period, these prosecutors do this to feed an ever-expanding slavemarket driven by profit-hungry capitalist speculation. This is the context of modern-day slavery. A world where corporations profit from the building of prisons and the warehousing of human beings. Mass incarceration and its associated police state represent white-supremacist violence and economic exploitation in its 21st-century form. In order to bring reparations to people of African descent in the U.S., this system must be abolished.

If we’re going to have reparations, the knife of racial oppression must be fully removed. There must be a full accounting of white-supremacist crimes — an accounting that is not cut abruptly short

at the year 1865. Give us reparations for Eric Garner. Give us reparations for the Central Park 5. Give us reparations for Stop-and-Frisk survivors and Freddie Gray and Sandra Bland. Give us reparations for no-knock warrants, solitary confinement and Amadou Diallo.

Justice is another key element of this discussion that is often ignored. True reparations are not just a payment for wages stolen in 1860 or a settlement for a family who lost a loved one to police terror in 2010. It is not enough. Reparation means justice. It means treating the perpetrators of white-supremacist violence as the criminals they are. To do anything less is to deny the humanity of their victims.

Why is it that when a police officer kills an unarmed Black person, it is almost impossible to secure a criminal conviction, but almost inevitable that a civil settlement will be won? Why are U.S. municipalities so willing to pay millions to victims’ families but so unwilling to punish the police? Part of this comes from the legacy of treating Black people as property — and by extension — treating violence against Black people as mere property destruction.

The necessary process of shifting away from this mentality — of Black people reclaiming our humanity — is the demand that crimes against Black people be met with real punishment. Without this shift, Black people may be free in name, but they will remain slaves in fact.

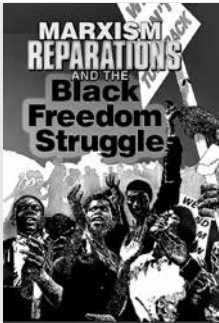
Finally, if we truly want reparations — to undo the destruction of white supremacy and repair the damage — we first have to identify the source of that destruction and dismantle it. Slavery came about because the wealthy sought to increase their fortunes by plundering the resources of others. The fastest way to do this was to steal the labor of a group of people who were seen as different and disposable. It is this system, where the rich loot from the poor, where the bosses feed off the workers, which drives white-supremacist violence. Everything else — prisons, detention centers, cops, judges and more — all flow from that original sin. True reparations would mean an end to capitalism itself. □

Marxism, Reparations & the Black Freedom Struggle

Edited by Monica Moorehead

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper.

Available at major online booksellers. Free PDF download at [www.workers.org/books](http://www.workers.org/books)



Treatment for opioid use disorder

Continued from page 4

who needs insulin is “addicted” to insulin. Patients in buprenorphine maintenance therapy are kept on a stable dose that does not impair them or get them high; they aren’t engaging in the behaviors typically associated with “addiction.”

The opposite is true. In many cases, patients on buprenorphine are not only recovering from opioid use disorder, but are leaving the addiction lifestyle behind as well. No longer do they engage in the destructive behaviors associated with opioid use disorder. Multiple studies have shown that the quality of life of patients improved on buprenorphine and that the treatment helped subjects decrease all drug use, except for tobacco.

As socialists, as people looking to create a better world, we must be on the lookout

for things which harm the most marginalized. And make no mistake, people with opioid use disorder are among the most marginalized, experiencing alienation, isolation and poverty.

I’m a person who struggles with addiction, and I’m on buprenorphine and I know it saved my life. I know that the hundreds of thousands of others who use or have used it probably don’t wish to be forced off of it by paternalistic, so-called public servants who have outdated ideas on substance abuse and recovery.

So what can we do? We can call attention to the issue by sharing stories and elevating the voices of people in recovery on this subject. We can also sign onto Pennsylvania Harm Reduction Coalition’s letter to the Pennsylvania Senate against SB 675, at [paharmreduction.org/oppose\\_sb675](http://paharmreduction.org/oppose_sb675). Lives depend on it. □



# Venezuela slams U.N. over human rights report

By Marco Teruggi  
Caracas

*Published in pagina12.org.ar July 6. Translation by Michael Otto. On June 28, President Nicolás Maduro awarded Marco Teruggi the Simón Bolívar National Prize for Journalism, with special mention for defending Venezuela abroad. In addition to printing his articles in Mundo Obrero, Workers World has been translating Teruggi’s coverage since January for U.S. readers.*

The existence of two governments in Venezuela is a fiction that has evaporated internationally. It is only maintained by the Donald Trump administration and some right-wing Latin American governments.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, visiting the Vatican, recalled that Juan Guaidó had proclaimed himself “president in charge” before God. Putin added, “But God did not tell us what his reaction to this message was; he did not give us any sign; that’s why I believe we should return to sinful earth and abide by democratic procedures.” Guaidó is no longer what he never was.

In national terms, his theatrics never reached a level needed to even look like he ran the government — in almost six months, Guaidó has failed to gain authority, command or territory.

That doesn’t mean the final curtain has fallen on his play: On July 5, the anniversary of the day the Declaration of Venezuelan Independence was signed, Guaidó fronted an event in the National Assembly, as if it were a government, and then a demonstration near the General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence (DGCIM).

At dawn that same day in Geneva, Switzerland, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet read her report on the situation in Venezuela. Bachelet’s report concluded that Venezuela is ruled by a single government, which, among other things, is responsible for a crisis in health, food and migration, with serious shortcomings in access to justice and the guarantee of human rights.

In Geneva, Venezuelan Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs William Castillo responded: “The content of this

report is incomprehensible, dominated by a selective and biased vision. It’s a text lacking in scientific rigor, with serious errors in methodology, and seems like a carbon copy of previous reports. It ignores almost all the information provided by the state; it only takes into account information obtained from opposition spokespeople and press sources. Suffice it to say that out of 558 interviews conducted, 460 were conducted outside Venezuela, which represents 82 percent of the opinions expressed in the report.” (La Nación Dominicana, July 6)

## Bachelet’s U.N. report ignores causes

Castillo also highlighted the report’s omission of the causes of the economic situation: “It ignores the serious impacts that the illegal, criminal and immoral economic blockade is having on the lives of our people. Venezuela does not deny its problems, but any serious effort to address them must consider the structural causes.”

The celebration of the 208th anniversary of Independence Day was marked by an event in the National Constituent Assembly, with a speech by the commander of strategic operations of the Bolivarian National Armed Forces (FANB), Admiral in Chief Remigio Ceballos, who explained the character of the “multiform (war of) aggression” to which Venezuela is subjected and recognized Nicolás Maduro’s leadership as Commander in Chief of the FANB.

President Maduro, in turn, led the military parade in Caracas, where he reaffirmed the call for dialogue and peace: “With goodwill, we can achieve the political ability to negotiate. We all have to cede something in order to reach agreements, and I call for dialogue because I believe in and love Venezuela.”

The president’s new call for dialogue took place in a scenario where, publicly, the most visible factions of the Venezuelan rightists have announced that they will not resume any kind of contact with the government. Guaidó stated that at the end of Friday’s protest in front of the DGCIM: “The debate is over, Bachelet’s report confirms that this is a dictatorship.”

The self-appointed “president” gave no details about what an exit without dialogue would look like. Nor did

he mention the mobilizations that he claimed would be forthcoming.

Guaidó has demonstrated the paths for the plan without negotiations in recent weeks and months — the attempted military action at dawn on April 30 and the plots involving former soldiers, commissioners and mercenaries that the government uncovered.

Video footage recorded by intelligence service infiltrators revealed the very agents of the conspiracy as they were brainstorming how to assassinate the president and the governing circle and carry out military assaults at strategic military and political points. This is no new thing in a conflict where, less than a year ago, opposition sectors tried to assassinate the president at a military parade in Caracas using drones loaded with explosives.

## Conflict intensifies

The fiction of two presidents no longer exists internationally. The conflict, however, intensifies with right-wing preparations for new assaults. The right announced that Bachelet’s report — which ignores any dimension of opposition violence, although they produced victims, like the mother of a young man accused of being a Chavista who was burned alive — validates breaking the dialogue and is a springboard for seeking new actions involving force.

As for the blockade, which the report overlooks, the U.S. has announced that it will continue to increase its attacks on both Venezuela and its allies. The latest unilateral measure of force took place July 3 with the sanction of the Cuban company Cubametales by the Office of Foreign Assets Control for trading for oil with Venezuela.

This measure is added to the long list of theft of assets, blockades of accounts, sanctions against companies, etc., which began years ago and during 2019 increased month-by-month, meeting only the silence of governments and international organizations.

The political climate in Venezuela is complex. Possible types of resolution are not yet on the table, and this week’s events have once again set back what had been publicly achieved between the parties. □

## Algeria

# Massive protests demand sweeping reforms

By G. Dunkel

July 5, 1830, was the day the Turkish-appointed ruler of Algiers surrendered to the invading French army. July 5, 1962, was the day Algeria declared independence from French imperialism.

July 5, 2019, was the day that many hundreds of thousands of Algerians came out in the streets in Algiers, as well as in other cities — Constantine, Bouira, Annaba, Chlef, Oran, Mostaganem, Béjaïa, Tizi-Ouzou, Bordj Bou Arreridj, M’Sila, Batna, Djelfa and El Tarf — to demand an end to the corrupt system running Algeria with the strong support of the army.

What made the turnout more impressive was that July 5 was one of the hottest days in Africa’s history, hitting 124°F.

This was the 20th successive Friday since February when there were protest demonstrations in Algeria.

They were sparked by then President Abdelaziz Bouteflika announcing he intended to seek a fifth term. Even after Bouteflika resigned April 2, protests continued, fueled by blatant corruption of Algeria’s ruling elite and the dilapidation and mismanagement of its economy, which is completely tied to the production of oil and natural gas.

The unemployment of youth, officially at 26.4 percent, was another burning issue.

Given that July 5 was a national holiday, many protesters carried pictures and mementos of the martyrs of the Revolution and sang patriotic songs. A particular target of the protesters was General Ahmed Gaïd Salah, head of the armed forces and considered to be the real power in the Algerian government. Chants about him ranged from “Gaïd Salah buzz off” to “The people and the army are brothers, but Gaïd Salah is with the traitors.”

Basically the people demonstrating want the whole coterie of officials connected with Bouteflika gone before elections for president take place.



Algerian women protest, July 5, 2019.

The protests at times grew very militant and forced cops to retreat when they tried to block marchers’ access to squares and streets. When the police used tear gas, people responded with empty glass water bottles.

Elections had been scheduled for July 4, but had to be postponed when only two relatively unknown candidates indicated they wanted to run. The political situation in Algeria is still murky.

Salah has decreed it illegal to carry an Amazigh (Berber) flag in demonstrations, claiming that promoting the flag is an attempt to break the unity of the Algerian state. The Amazighen are the original Indigenous inhabitants of Algeria and all of North Africa west of the Nile. In 2016, an overwhelming vote in a referendum gave their language constitutional protection.

Salah obviously wants to sow division and confusion in the protest movement that has remained strong.

Another obvious maneuver by Salah was having Lakhdar Bouregaa, a revered veteran of Algeria’s 1954-62 War of Independence from France, arrested for criticizing him. He claimed such criticism “undermined the morale of the army,” especially since Bouregaa is a leader of the Front des Forces Socialistes (Front of Socialist Forces), the oldest opposition party in Algeria, which is affiliated with the Socialist International. □

# Gerrymandering

*Continued from page 8*

The many forms of voter suppression are well-documented. Polls in oppressed communities run out of voting forms or the voting machines are broken. Officials at polling places turn away some voters, allegedly due to long lines, while others cannot wait in line because of work, family and other obligations. Names are missing from lists of registered voters. Many states bar former prisoners from voting.

This has resulted in a disproportionate lack of representation for oppressed communities. Ohio has only two Black congressional representatives, while Michigan and Wisconsin each have only one.

The high court has once again upheld a centuries-old, often-bloody tradition of racism at the polls.

## Supreme Court: an anti-democratic body

The court has remained almost all white and male since its founding in 1789, with only two African-American justices, one Latinx woman and three white women for 230 years.

This is not accidental. Sam Marcy, the late Workers World Party chairperson and founder, explained the undemocratic character of the Supreme Court when it upheld a Missouri law restricting reproductive rights in 1989: “Over years of struggle the franchise has been won” by oppressed nationalities and women. “However, alongside this bourgeois democratization of the political process, there has been a simultaneous social and economic process which is superior in strength. That is the process of the concentration of power in undemocratic bodies.

“It comes from the concentration of the means of production in the hands of a ruling class which holds the power and distributes it in areas most conducive to them,” says Marcy. “So it’s not an accident that power should ultimately be exercised by the Supreme Court. That’s most reliable to them, most conservative, responsive only to those who have appointed them.”

Behind the erosion of voting rights lies the “concentration of power in undemocratic bodies,” as Marcy explains. This exposes the lie that the capitalist U.S. is a model of democracy. □





## El capitalismo en un callejón sin salida

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

Para mas informacion ... [LowWageCapitalism.com](http://LowWageCapitalism.com)

## Elecciones en Guatemala

# Movimiento campesino se consolida

Por Sam Ordóñez

Junio 19 - El día 16 de junio se celebraron elecciones generales en Guatemala con algunos resultados sorprendentes. Además de ser la primera vuelta de elecciones presidenciales, se eligieron también diputados congresionales y alcaldes.

Irán a la segunda vuelta de las elecciones presidenciales los dos candidatos que más votos recibieron, en este caso Sandra Torres (Unidad Nacional de Esperanza) con 25.74 por ciento del voto y Alejandro Giammattei (Vamos) con 13.89 por ciento. En tercer lugar quedó Edmond Mulet del partido Humanista con 11.14 por ciento, candidato vinculado tanto a la política tradicional como a la ONU (cosas que no siempre coinciden).

Thelma Cabrera (Movimiento para la Liberación de los Pueblos) quedó cuarta con 10.42 por ciento del voto, superando las expectativas. El resultado obtenido es un golpe fuerte al poder de la oligarquía que hasta ahora aseguraba que una mujer Maya Mam proveniente de la lucha campesina no podía ser una fuerza política.

De los otros 15 candidatos, cinco lograron entre 4 por ciento y 6 por ciento de los votos, y los diez candidatos con menos votos sumaron un total de 14 por ciento.

En un sistema político dominado por la oligarquía hay pocas posibilidades de generar cambio sistémico por la vía electoral. En un país como Guatemala, con altos niveles de corrupción, las posibilidades son aún menos.

Sin embargo, analizar los resultados puede dar una vista importante del nivel de conciencia política de los pueblos. La conclusión más importante es que, aunque no llegaron a la segunda vuelta, el movimiento campesino e indígena (representado por Thelma Cabrera y el MLP) se ha consolidado como una fuerza política que ya no se puede descontar.

### Resultados congresionales

En las elecciones congresionales la UNE “ganó” con 44 diputados, que lo sitúa como el partido más grande de la legislatura pero muy lejos de tener una mayoría (para eso se necesita como mínimo 81 diputados). El segundo partido, consistente con los resultados presidenciales, fue Vamos que ganó 17 diputados.

Ningún otro partido logró más de diez diputados, y por lo tanto para gobernar probablemente será necesario formar coalición con partidos de centro derecha y derecha. Por lo tanto las políticas socialdemócratas de Torres y la UNE podrían verse debilitados.

Entre los varios partidos progresistas y anticorrupción se lograron un total de 15 diputados, seis de las cuales representan el Movimiento Semilla, un partido con plataforma anticorrupción cuya base social son los elementos relativamente progresistas de la clase profesional urbana.

En total los resultados significan que los políticos tradicionales siguen con el control del estado y seguirá intacto el

“Pacto de Corruptos,” pero ahora encabezada por el bloque socialdemócrata.

Tanto la UNE como Vamos han expresado que no van a renovar el mandato de la CICIG, que hasta ahora había encabezado la lucha anticorrupción con el apoyo de las organizaciones internacionales. Entonces, por ahora la lucha progresista contra la corrupción tendrá que librarse en las calles y en oposición a los poderes estatales.

### Falta de participación y acusaciones de fraude

El lunes 17, alrededor de medio día, Thelma Cabrera desconoció públicamente los resultados de las elecciones, alegando un fraude que provenía del Tribunal Supremo Electoral (TSE). Llamó a la movilización popular y a las autoridades electorales a hacer un conteo transparente de los votos, y que se entregarán pruebas del conteo a nivel nacional.

El comunicado del MLP afirma que “A nivel nacional, hay evidencia de compra de votos de partidos tradicionales, los cuales fueron oportunamente denunciados ante el TSE, sin que hasta el momento se haya tenido una respuesta.”

En varios municipios hubieron disturbios violentos relacionados con el transporte de las boletas, el acarreo de votantes por parte de los partidos tradicionales, y el conteo de votos. Por ejemplo, en Panzós, Alta Verapaz, fue asesinado Alejandro Coc Poo de varios impactos de bala cuando él y otras personas fueron atacados el lunes por partidarios de la UNE mientras esperaban los resultados del conteo de votos. ([tinyurl.com/y23np6p5/](http://tinyurl.com/y23np6p5/)) La mayoría de estos incidentes estaban relacionados con candidatos municipales.

Si el TSE no cumple con la demanda del MLP será difícil saber si en realidad hubo fraude o no. Pero lo que sí se puede comprobar es un bajo nivel de participación. La participación en estas elecciones fue de 60 por ciento, bastante menos que la participación de 70 por ciento en 2015.

Según un análisis elaborado con el 94 por ciento de las mesas electorales escrutadas, el 9 por ciento de los votos fueron en blanco, y otros 4 por ciento fueron votos nulos. Si el voto blanco fuera candidato, hubiera quedado quinto.

Los conflictos entre ciudadanos y policía, las irregularidades denunciadas, y el abstencionismo evidencian la falta de confianza que tiene el pueblo en los procesos electorales.

A la hora de escribir, se reportan manifestaciones y bloqueos de carreteras en varios departamentos y municipios, incluyendo la ciudad capital, en rechazo a los resultados de las elecciones. El TSE mantiene que no hubo fraude, y se niega a entregar las actas electorales.

### Qué significan los resultados para la lucha popular?

Lo primero que hay que notar es que el apoyo a la extrema derecha, que ha gobernado los últimos años, parece haberse

colapsado. FCN-Nación, partido del actual presidente que está formado por ex militares y empresarios, no pudo alcanzar siquiera el 5 por ciento del voto, y fue reducido a tres diputados. PAN-Podemos, el otro partido de extrema derecha, creía que iría a la segunda vuelta pero quedó en quinto lugar y con solamente dos diputados.

Por otro lado el centro-derecha, principalmente representados por Vamos y UCN que ahora son segunda y tercera fuerza congresional, ganó bastante. Esto a pesar de que Mario Estrada, líder del UCN fue descalificado después de que fue detenido en Miami por cargos de narcotráfico.

Sin tomar en cuenta la posibilidad de fraude por parte de los partidos oligarcas, el hecho de que en tres departamentos gano una mujer Maya Mam, que además venía de la lucha campesina, y que en otros siete quedó segunda, es quizás el resultado más importante.

Detrás de esta victoria simbólica está el movimiento campesino e indígena que se niega a entrar en acuerdos corruptos entre políticos tradicionales y que responde al fraude con movilizaciones populares.

El MLP no era el único partido de

carácter progresista, solo el que más votos presidenciales recibió. Sumando los resultados de los cinco partidos que se podrían caracterizar como progresivos, que serían MLP, Winaq, URNG Maiz, Libre, y Convergencia, da 19.56 por ciento del voto presidencial a los partidos progresistas, que lo hubiera puesto en segundo lugar y habría avanzado a la segunda vuelta.

Hay dos conclusiones importantes de estos datos. La primera es que el movimiento social y progresista está en crecimiento, y se presenta la oportunidad de abrir una etapa de lucha. La segunda es que para ganar, estos partidos y los movimientos sociales que representan tienen que unirse y poder presentar una sola frente ante el conservadurismo y el neoliberalismo.

La oligarquía tiembla ante el ascenso de Thelma Cabrera y el movimiento que ella encabeza, pero la lucha para terminar con la corrupción y la política tradicional sólo ha empezado. La transformación de la sociedad guatemalteca no vendrá del Congreso o la presidencia, sino de la organización popular, que con estos resultados se ha consolidado como una amenaza real al poder tradicional. □

# ‘Recontratar a las trabajadoras ahora’

Por Siddika Degia  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

El Centro de Lavanderías de los Obreros, (Laundry Workers Center), junto a grupos como People's Power Assemblies, (Asamblea del Poder Popular), celebraron una línea de piquete el 22 de junio frente al Sunshine Shirt Laundry Center en Bay Ridge, Brooklyn en Nueva York. Esta manifestación de emergencia fue convocada después de que la lavandería decidió despedir a los trabajadores luego de informarles estaban cerrando la tienda. Pero la lavandería, de hecho, no estaba cerrando y todavía está recibiendo clientes.

A las dos trabajadoras, Ricarda y Maria, se les deben \$200.000 en pagos atrasados por quemaduras químicas, abuso físico y robo de salarios. Los despidos son una forma obvia de represalias contra los trabajadores que hablaron y exigieron salarios justos y condiciones de trabajo seguras, y porque los trabajadores y la comunidad han estado presionando a la lavandería todas las semanas con demandas por el pago retroactivo.

La gerencia definitivamente ha estado sintiendo la presión. Eso es lo que llevó a uno de los trabajadores, Ricarda, a ser agredido físicamente por el propietario de la lavandería mientras pasaba volantes en la comunidad.

Sin embargo, la comunidad y los trabajadores no guardan silencio sobre la lavandería que despide a los trabajadores injustamente. Como dijo un portavoz de las Asambleas del Poder Popular en el mitin: "Recontrata a los trabajadores, recontratalos ya o la comunidad te perseguirá". "Iremos a su casa, a cualquier nueva lavandería que abra en el vecindario, y continuaremos presionando hasta que vuelva a contratar a los trabajadores y les dé lo que se les debe". □



WW FOTO: TONI ARENSTEIN

22 de junio, Brooklyn, N.Y.