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 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
Sawyer Eason is an artist and organizer working with Peoples Power Assemblies NYC, Decrim NY and Brooklyn Transcote. 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 struggles 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 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, trans, gender 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 intersections. 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 disappeared throughout the last year. SESTA/FOSTA. Safer avenues of work posted on the internet have ever-greater profits. The world and the planet itself in the neverending quest for greater profits.

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.

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Sawyer Eason.

Workers World Party is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a multinational, multigenerational and multigendered organization that not only aims to abolish capitalism, but to build a socialist society because it’s the only way forward! Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the neverending quest for ever-greater profits.

Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repres- sion, 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 seemingly insurmountable student debt, if they even make it to college. Black, Brown and Indigenous youth and trans 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.

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 to is to decriminalize 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!

Join us in the fight for socialism!

Workers World World
decriminalize sex work now

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Vol. 61, No. 28 • July 11, 2019
Closing date: July 10, 2019
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Supporter Program: Coordinator Sue Davis
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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: 212.627.2904. Subscription: One year: $35; institutions: $85. 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 996, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-0996. A searchable archive is available on the Web at www.workers.org. A deadline 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, NY 10011.

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Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Workers World, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl, New York, NY 10011.
**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. At first, inquired about her immigration status instead of asking for her license and registration. Castro is a U.S. citizen. The trooper asked about the status of her two passengers; one was her fiancé Carlos Amaya-Castellanos. They were held for three hours until Immigration 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 Latino 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 imme-

diately sought to ascertain the immi-

gration status of the car’s occupants.” (propublica.org, June 28)

Back in 2015, 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 law-

suit out of fear “that asserting or exercis-

ing their rights might actually cause them more harm.”

The lawsuit stems from a joint 2018 investigative series by the Philadelphia Inquirer and ProPublica, which question-

ed racial profiling and unlawful arrests of immigrants by state troopers, who were illegally acting as ICE agents.

The suit concluded: “Pennsylvania State Troopers have routinely violated the law by stopping and holding people solely based on their Latino appearance, terrify-

ing drivers and passengers while urging 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 indi-

vidual troopers found complicit in the pattern of wrongful stops going back to early 2017 after Donald Trump became

president. The record of trooper Luke Macle, 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, Macle 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 125. Macle 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. Macle encountered some of them not in cars on the roads he patrols, but randomly—as they had a smoke break, or stopped at a food service establishment while eating a hamburger on the side of the road.”

The ACLU lawsuit. Although a U.S. citizen born and raised in Idaho, Castro ques-

tions her safety: “Right now, I’m scared to go out driving just because of the color of my skin. They think I’m from Mexico or another foreign country. It’s harassment. We’re not safe.” (propublica.org, June 28)

Arroyo and Castro have been active for years in the American Civil Liberties Union and fighting on behalf of their fellow Spanish-speaking inmate Rafael Rodriguez.

Staff agreed that in a facility with a sizable 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 [specifically prepared meal to break a fast]. Months ago, many Muslim prisoners—some with accused of being on a room during the day—were found by UConn boarded up just outside their doors. They were found in the same cell.

“Why are we in the same cell?”

Arroyo concludes 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 poi-

sonous sites that are often built on land that has already been ravaged by capital-

ism. Arroyo led a campaign that success-

fully shut down a coal gasification 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 fed-

eral prisoners—a historic act of solidar-

ity 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

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 com-

mitted environmentalist. “Our oceans are filled with plastic. It’s an abomination.”

This is why a prison is “a sink 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?”

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 and political censorship in the outside world. “I don’t talk to a lot of my late inmates. In a nation where prisons are concentration camps for the poor, all prisoners are political prisoners. There is no way that prisoners struggle.

Tear them down!”

---

**Concentration camps for the poor in Pennsylvania**

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 sen-

tences 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.

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tor on hand, but the facility has failed to hire anyone after the decision was made nearly a year ago.

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**Shut down our hospital! Hell, No!**

_**By Joe Piette**
Philadelphia_

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

On June 28, the Pennsylvania Department of Health ordered Hahnemann owners to proffer a plan to the health department, Economic Development, and Tom Wolf offered $19 million in exemptions for taxes and fees. The hedge fund owner, 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 flier put out by the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals (PASNAP) revealed that Freedman’s hedge fund backers are Aperature Health (286 billion in assets) and Coller (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 already treats more than 100,000 underserved community, said PASNAP President Maureen May, RN. “We cannot allow predatory, for-profit companies to plunder our most vulnerable. 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.”

_Easy to see, easy to say._

**Fightback begins against “corporate capitalization”**

Significantly, the bankruptcy filing did not mention the real estate occupied by Hahnemann, which was founded in the city of the city in 1845. 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 playing to plan the replacement to 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 Pennsylvania Convention Center and near many popular cultural institutions.

A protest on June 27, the day after the announcement, drew 200 hospital workers and community activists who listened to nurse, labor and political leaders outside City Hall in the form of a workers’ action.、“Let our hospital be a positive medical uses and has positive medical care in the city. Those who understand buprenorphine has a right to life and household.”

In a workers’ world, buprenorphine (and methadone) would be treated as another tool in the anti-addiction tool box. It would be pushed as hard or harder than Vivitrol and ReVia (generic name: naltrexone); it would be seen as the better medicine than methadone (generic name: naloxone); and, most importantly, its use would be allowed under federal law.

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/yxy8b7k4)

The New York Times touted the report as “good news for workers,” and the Boston Herald celebrated: “Trump economy continues to roll.” But those news reports 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/y66m0uw)

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 poverty crisis.

Despite an official economic expansion across the U.S. that surpassed the 1990s boom, 40 percent of U.S. working-class residents live in poverty. And it is difficult to pay their bills. (tinyurl.com/yxpyy6fd)

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 different than previous ones, with its “benefits” distributed far more unequally. 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 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 2016, it was reported that the unemployment rate for disabled workers was more than twice that of nondisabled workers.

Workers who are part of the LGBTQ+ 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 rep workers.org    July 11, 2019    Page 5
downtown Cleveland to “declare independence from poverty wages.” The 1199 district rep services at the Key Bank building July 3 in downtown Cleveland to “declare independence from poverty wages.” The 1199 district rep

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

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 13), 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-year-old 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 wage, 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 preserve 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 450 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 UE 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 members ratified 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 overwhelming June 21 to ratify their first union contract. The crew, including storyboard and background artists, designers, character and prop designers, compositors and supervisors at Shadowmachine in Los Angeles, produce 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 unionizing many years 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, June 29, threatening to resign 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)
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 arrested 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 arguments were 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. These are issues of local and national importance, 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/mis miscarriage**

The original police statement reflects the anti-woman, anti-poor, racist wave of Islamophobia on the same social media platforms in segregated U.S. cities. This connection is critical for understanding the expressiveLicensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported License. of anti-war movement. There is a core tactic of colonial and capital-ism under the pretext of defending the status quo, education level or access to pri-vilege. Financially well-off black women die at higher rates than white women of their same class. The reasons range from structural rac-ism 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 driven at full speed on the emergency sirens or lights, sat at every stop sign and red light and never exceeded the speed limits.

Marshae Jones was freed only through 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 women was high, regardless of marital status, education level or access to pri-vate insurance. Financially well-off black women die at higher rates than white women of their same class. The reasons range from structural rac-ism 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 driven at full speed on the emergency sirens or lights, sat at every stop sign and red light and never exceeded the speed limits.

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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 Lich and Rodney Hensell, now a LGBTQ2S+ senior issues activist. Michael 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 the Sisters of Sappho, as well as the opening of what was previously a community to be so bold?" The answer was: “We were, as a 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, 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 movement of women’s liberation, 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 organizations are leading the charge to close migrant concentration camps and for an end of the anti-abortion forces.

Actions accelerate to close immigrant concentration camps

By Gloria Rubac

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-Fascist rally on July 2nd and a protest against the camps and rallied at a downtown federal detention center.

The July 2 protest at Cornyn’s office was part of a national day of action, as people across the country have organized protests in Houston to demand the immediate closure of migrant concentration camps.

Several hundred people mobilized for a demonstration linking arms, blocking the parade route while leading chants in solidarity with migrants.

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 LGBTQ2S+ 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 Third Amendment, concentration camps and trans women being murdered and brutalized? Be angry about this!”

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 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 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.”

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A rally on the steps of City Hall in Center City.

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

“Stone Butch Blues” is now available as a free download at lesliefierberg.net.
By Martha Grevatt

The U.S. Supreme Court handed down two important decisions in the past week, with major implications 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 districts in North Carolina and Maryland to remain in place.

Im/migrant rights and Latinos groups and their allies had filed lawsuits to block the citizenship question from appearing on the 2020 census. If Ross had won, the case would have encouraged im/migrants from participating in the census. Plaintiffs argued that adding this question would lead to an undercount, especially of the Latino population, due to fear that the 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. The 5-4 vote narrowly maintained 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 that adding the question would “uphold the Voting Rights Act rationale later in the process.” (New York Times, June 27)

Ross and his Republican cohorts have no intention of upholding voting rights. Plaintiffs’ attorneys discovered a document from Ross’s office that “a central portion of the Justice Department’s rationale for the question was apparently written by Thomas Hufoller, the GOP’s longtime gerrymandering mastermind.”

In a 2013 study, Hufoller wrote that adding a citizenship question on future censuses would be “advantageous to Republicans and non-Hispanic whites and a disadvantage to the Democrats.” The late Hufoller’s estranged daughter revealed emails on June 14 between him and USW bargaining committee chair which explained how “the question would benefit white voters and disadvantaged non-whites” and discussed collusion with the White House to defund the Neighborhood 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 reportedly 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, who had feared that an additional question would unconstitutionally target a majority of minority members.

The court has repeatedly ruled as it did as a testament to the strength of the im/migrant rights movement. This movement has demonstrated moral and forceful strength with mass resistance of millions 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. G errymandering occurs when a state legislature draws voting district maps to benefit the state’s predominant political party or to punish the other.

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 “one of the ways the states can be held accountable for and assist and for the complete remediation of the site.

Philly refinery fire and closure

Workers, community activists demand reparations

By Betsy 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 shutting down the plant, impacting over 1,000 workers.

Residents in neighboring communities, whose health and safety have been threatened for generations by the refinery, 71 percent are people of color and many are residing in asthma and cancer susceptible industrial parks. Of the 45,000 residents living within a mile of the refinery, 71 percent are people of color and many are residing in asthma and cancer susceptible industrial parks.

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 WARN Act, signed in 2008 by not providing them with a 60-day advance notice. The United Steelworkers Local 10-13 contract also required at least 90 days notice.

Around 100 non-union employees were dismissed within hours of the closure announcement with no severance pay. Local 11-7, which represents 645 refinery workers, included the plant in their union contract until 2022.

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.

Unions President Ryan O’Callaghan said USW is investiga-
ing whether the company’s insurance covered the destroyed alkylation unit and resulting business losses, estimated by industry experts at over $160 million. “It’s not like they’re just sitting there—closing the doors,” he said. (post-gazette.com, June 26)

O’Callaghan stressed that the company had not noti-
ed 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 remains of the blaze, Philadelphia fire fighters 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 23, 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 deter-
dined, 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 manage-
ment systems in the refinery, had scaled back a test of the maintenance system scheduled for January.

As the high court banned the against $469,417 for violations of air and water protections. (Philly.com, June 27)

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 mil-
ion, and assumed ownership.

25 percent share of the ownership, derived through the prior owner, Sunoco, is retained by its par-
tent company, Carlyle Group LP and Energy Transfer Partners LP. Sunoco still has responsibility for pre-
vious environmental liabilities estimated at $2.3 billion for cleanup of the massive 1,400-acre site.

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 petro-
chemical plant. Some officials and developers see it as a potential site for expanding the marine terminal in South Philadelphia. But area residents and environmen-
tal activists have different ideas.

Hold owners responsible

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

“Since the state successfully sued PES or Sunoco will assume responsibility for the 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 contamina-
tion. (tinyurl.com/yzwqzg4b)

Toxins released by the refinery include ammonia, hydrogen cyanide, benzene and sulfuric acid, which cause serious health issues and are highly toxic. Contaminants on the site and in groundwater include petro-
leum hydrocarbons, toluene, ethyl benzene and xylene. A major danger posed 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 if accidentally released. 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 respiratory failure.

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

The capitalist media have recently been filled with competing headlines—some insisting that the long-term growth of both the capitalist economy and the labor force in the South as low-wage farm workers, up a significant portion of the labor force in Latin America and the Caribbean, make more and more migrant workers from the 17th century and Black sharecroppers under understanding that the United States of about ILPS, see ilps.info.

Part 1: The U.S. South

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 organizations from around the world that “promotes, supports and vice versa.” Such assemblies—such as the Southern Workers Assembly and “social unions” in order to lift up demands for workers and oppressed people.

The South is 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 into 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 made the process more difficult for workers to file lawsuits charging discrimination without having to take it to the state level. The mar- rying of transphobia and homophobia to targeting Black and Latinx workers, as well as in the months that followed. We often find the South characterized as inherently backward, but on a very subjective basis. The material reality fac- ing workers and oppressed people in the South includes public institutions that have been severely disinvested in, leaving many in this region with no access to education, job programs, health care and more. This is just one of many contradictions that exist for the working-class movement in the United States. And it has pre- pared the way for a literal army of surplus labor to be built up in the U.S. and around the globe.

As materialists, we are tasked with organizing within the conditions as they exist. This includes the understanding of the oppression that already exists. A key feature of the struggle organizing within the conditions as they exist for the working-class movement in the U.S. and around the globe.

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
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-selling bullying has become in-your-face, with the latest targets.

The New York Times and other big business media are not reporting on criminal U.S. sanctions, or theexperiment with racist violence and economic exploitation that drives white-supremacist violence. The corporate media are willing co-conspirators in covering up these facts.

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Venezuela slams U.N. over human rights report

By Marco Teruggi

Caracas

Published in pagina23.org.ar July 6, 2016 by Michael Otto. On June 28, President Nicolás Maduro awarded Marco Teruggi the Simón Bolívar National Prize for Journalism, as a 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 Guaído 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 signs; that’s why I believe we should return to sinful earth and abide by democratic procedures. ‘Guaído 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, Guaído 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 (DGCEM).

At that same day in Geneva, Switzerland, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet read her report on the situation in Venezuela. Based on that report, we are convinced 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 individual 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 spokes-people and press sources. Suffice it to say that out of 538 interviews conducted, 450 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 and criminal 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 using drones loaded with explosives.

The president’s new call for dialogue took place in a scenario where, publicly, the most visible factions of the Venezuelan right 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 DGCEM: “The debate is over, Bachelet’s report confirms 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 merchants that the opposition failed to mobilize.

Video footage recorded by intelligence service informa- tors 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 inter-nationally. The conflict, however, intensifies with right-wing preparations for new assessments. The right announced that Bachelet’s report — which ignores any dimension of opposition violence, although they produced vic-tims, 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 actions against both Venezuela and its allies. The latest unilaterial measure of force took place July 5 with the sanc-tion of the Cuban company Cubametales by the Office of Foreign Assets Control for trading with oil Venezuela.

In national terms, there has been an increase in the stacking of theft of assets, blockades of accounts, sanctions against companies, etc., which began years ago and during 2019 increased merely in the month of July. The unrelenting silence of govern-ments and international organizations.

The political climate in Venezuela is complex. Possible types of resolution are not yet on the table, and this scenario has not been solved. Many currents have not been publicly achieved between the parties. [7]

Gerrymandering

Continued from page 8

The many forms of voter suppression are well-docu-mented. Polls in oppressed communities run out of vot-ing 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 roll books of registered voters. Many states bar former prisoners from voting.

This has resulted in a disproportionate lack of repre-sentation 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 1809, with only two African-American justices, one Latina 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 1960: “Years of struggle the franchise has been won” by oppressed nationalities and women. “However, along-side this bourgeois democratization of the political process, there has been a simultaneous social and economic process, which is shown in the growing concentration of the power of undemocratic bodies.”

“It comes from the concentration of the means of production in the hands of a ruling class which holds power and dominates, and it is in areas most conducive to them," says Marcy. “So it’s not an accident that power should ultimately be exercised by the Supreme Court. This exposes the lie that the capitalist U.S. is a model of democracy. [8]
Elecciones en Guatemala

Movimiento campesino se consolida

Por Sam Ordóñez

Junio 19 - El día 16 de junio se celebraron elecciones en Guatemala con algunos resultados sorprendentes. Además de ser la primera vuelta de elecciones presidenciales, se eligieron también diputados 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% y Alejandro Giammattei (Vamos) con 20.80 por ciento. En tercer lugar quedó Edmond Mulet del partido Humanista con 11.44 por ciento, cuya caída es mucho mayor que en la coalición con partidos de centro derecha (para eso se necesita como mínimo 81 votos nulos. Si el voto blanco fuera cancelado, el total de los votos fueron 4 por ciento y 6 por ciento de los votos, y los diez candidatos con menos votos se quedaron con 14 por ciento. En un sistema político dominado por la oligarquía hay pocas posibilidades de generar cambio sistemático por la vía electoral. En un país como Guatemala, con altos niveles de corrupción, las posibilidades son aún menores.

Según la prensa, analizando 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 desestimar.

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, consiste 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 coaliciones con el Frente Amplio y el Partido de la Libertad y la Democracia. Por lo tanto las políticas sociales-demócratas de Torre y la UNE podrían verse debilitadas.

Entre los partidos progresistas y anticorrupción se lograron un total de 15 diputados, seis de las cuales representan el Movimiento Solidaridad, un partido con plataforma anticorrupción cuya base social son los elementos de manera o bien presidencia, sino de la organización popular, que con estos resultados se ha consolidado como una amenaza real al poder tradicional.}

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El Centro de Lavanderías de los Obreos, (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 decidiera despedir a los trabajadores luego de informarles esta- ban cerrando la tienda. Pero la lavan- dería, de hecho, no estaba cerrando y todavía está recibiendo clientes.

A las dos trabajadoras, Ricardo y María, se les deben $200,000 en pagos atrasa- dos por quemaudas 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 deman- das por el pago retroactivo. La gerencia definitivamente ha estado sintonizando la presión. Esa es lo que llevó a uno de los trabajadores, Ricardo, a ser agredido físicamente por el propietario de la lavandería mientras pasaba volantes en la comunidad.

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 que el capitalismo global ha llegado finalmente a un punto de reflexión.

El 16 de junio se celebra...