

Higher risk for infection

Black essential workers refuse to be invisible

By Monica Moorehead

April 12 — Just last week, U.S. bourgeois papers — the New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, Boston Globe and others — published major articles on the devastating numbers of confirmed infections and deaths of African Americans caused by COVID-19. The articles emphasized the numbers were disproportionate compared to the percentage of African-American people in the U.S. population.

And in this tragic way, the virus is helping to publicize on a wider basis the racial inequality that has been the foundation of capitalism in the U.S.

An April 6 WW article, “Racism, COVID-19 and Black people,” pointed to

the institutionalized racism — including after the Civil War and the era of “Jim Crow” laws — that has been the underlying cause of suffering by Black people as a nationally oppressed grouping in the U.S. This suffering has been magnified 10 times over by the spread of the coronavirus.

In a comparison of majority Black counties and majority white counties, the rates of infections and the rates of deaths were three and six times higher, respectively, for Black people than for white people, according to the April 10 Washington Post.

These numbers are not calculated to include rates of infection or death of incarcerated workers in jails and prisons, who are also disproportionately Black

and Brown people.

An important factor for the high rate of infections and deaths among Black people, as well as for undocumented migrants, is that so many are essential workers. Black and Brown people hold jobs in large numbers in restaurants, public transportation, hotels, health care, supermarkets, retail sales and custodial work. These are jobs where workers are in close contact with each other as a necessity. Social distancing becomes less and less an option.

According to Economic Policy Institute analysis, an estimated 84 percent of Latinx workers and 80 percent of Black workers could not afford to work from home even before the pandemic hit.

Elise Gould from EPI commented, “Workers on the front line are at risk of exposure, not just doctors and nurses, but grocery store workers, home care aides,

cooks and delivery drivers.” (Chicago Sun Times, April 9) These essential workers are forced to work for low pay without being provided with personal protective equipment like gloves, face masks and hand sanitizer.

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PHOTO: UE 150

Charlotte, N.C., sanitation workers, UE Local 150, at April 7 protest over lack of protective gear, after the COVID-19 death of sanitation worker Adrian Grubbs. Charlotte chapter president Dominic Harris speaks at press conference with Chief Steward Craig Brown and Recording Secretary Nichel Dunlap Thompson.



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

As the pandemic spreads, support grows to free all incarcerated people — at high danger from infection and death. Here a 150-car caravan wheels through Philadelphia, April 9.

Prisoners rebel during pandemic

By Mirinda Crissman
Houston

Prioritizing prisons, police and punitive responses to social issues is a public health crisis. These approaches are only aggravated by the global coronavirus pandemic. Incarcerated people, whether they are in jails, prisons or migrant detention centers, are facing down death sentences in overcrowded facilities with limited

access to sanitation as the virus spreads. Those who find themselves under these mutated forms of social and racial control stemming from white supremacy and colonialism are actively being put in harm’s way. In response, detainees across the globe are rightfully resisting in the face of deadly conditions.

Wherever you see incarcerated people lifting their voices and rising up for their

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Free Palestinian prisoners!

Caravans against incarceration

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SOCIALIST DEMANDS
FOR THE COVID-19 CRISIS

1. Free healthcare for all
2. Nationalize the healthcare system under community control. Build emergency hospitals
3. Full pay, benefits and guaranteed income for all
4. Food, housing, medical supplies, & utilities including internet for all
5. Suspend rent, evictions, mortgages, utility shutoffs & ALL debt
6. Prioritize resources for communities of color, migrants, LGBTQ+ people, seniors, youth, people with disabilities
7. Empty prisons & detention centers. Shut down ICE. End racist attacks
8. Community control. No cops, military
9. \$2 trillion to workers, not the banks
10. End U.S. wars, sanctions, and environmental destruction

WORKERS WORLD PARTY
Workers and oppressed of the world unite! workers.org

Capitalism kills Health workers lack protection

By Richard Kossally

Over the last three months, the U.S. government has proven its inability to protect and incompetence at caring for the population. A basic step to promote public health in the face of an epidemic — recommending that we wear protective face coverings when in public — was beyond the capitalist government.

We are now paying a terrible price for that inaction.

However, the federal government was not the only entity that failed miserably. The Trump administration did not appear out of thin air. They did not become horrible overnight.

There are many large and wealthy hospital systems and other institutions that also fell asleep at the wheel. Starting in late March — when shortages were becoming more acute — some hospital systems finally started to seek out supplies of more personal protective equipment (PPE) and ventilators on their own.

Why wait for shortages that they knew would come? They should have recognized that the government’s inaction would lead to the current problem, and they should have acted to prevent it, instead of wasting two months.

While the primary failure was that of the government, we are seeing the failure of capitalism. Most of the major hospitals in the U.S. are private, for-profit businesses. In this era, businesses generally operate on small margins and with small inventories.

Hospitals probably do not have internal structures that allow for the decisive measures that were necessary. There is no

mechanism under capitalism to build a temporary hospital in three days as China did, for example.

There are courageous health care workers who are risking their lives to care for others. Some of them have died; others will die. Their government and their employers have failed them.

This has been a major failure of the capitalist system. The big capitalist countries in Europe also responded poorly to the crisis. In recent days, the U.S. and at least a couple of European countries have pirated PPE destined for a supposed allied country. There are disputes between European Union countries and between Canada and the U.S. over PPE and medical equipment.

While these disputes are brewing, China is delivering material aid all over the world, including to these parasitic countries.

Capitalism has again proven to be inadequate to meet the needs of the working class on a world scale. Capitalism must be overthrown. Our livelihoods, our health, the health of the planet — our very lives depend on it. □



PHOTO: NATIONAL NURSES UNITED



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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, LGBTQ2+ 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

Join us in the fight for socialism!

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. □

If you are interested in joining Workers World Party contact: 212.627.2994

National Office

147 W. 24th St., 2nd floor
New York, NY 10011
212.627.2994
wwp@workers.org

Atlanta

PO Box 18123
Atlanta, GA 30316
404.627.0185
atlanta@workers.org

Austin

austin@workers.org

Bay Area

P.O. Box 22947
Oakland, CA 94609
510.394.2207
bayarea@workers.org

Boston

284 Amory St.
Boston, MA 02130
617.522.6626
boston@workers.org

Buffalo, N.Y.

335 Richmond Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14222
716.883.2534
buffalo@workers.org

Cleveland

216.738.0320
cleveland@workers.org

Dallas

dallas@workers.org

Durham, N.C.

804 Old Fayetteville St.
Durham, NC 27701
919.322.9 970
durham@workers.org

Houston

P.O. Box 3454
Houston, TX 77253-3454
713.503.2633
houston@workers.org

Pensacola, Fla.

pensacola@workers.org

Philadelphia

P.O. Box 34249
Philadelphia, PA 19101
610.931.2615
phila@workers.org

Portland, Ore.

portland@workers.org

Salt Lake City

801.750.0248
slc@workers.org

San Antonio

sanantonio@workers.org

West Virginia

WestVirginia@workers.org



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Workers World

147 W. 24th St., 2nd Fl.
New York, NY 10011
Phone: 212.627.2994
E-mail: ww@workers.org
Web: www.workers.org

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Editor: Deirdre Griswold

Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, Martha Grevatt,
Monica Moorehead, Betsey Piette, Minnie Bruce Pratt
Web Editors: ABear, Harvey Markowitz, Janet Mayes
Prisoners Page Editors: Mirinda Crissman, Ted Kelly
Production & Design Editors: Gery Armsby, Sasha
Mazumder, Scott Williams

Copyediting and Proofreading: Paddy Colligan,
Sue Davis, S. Hedgecoke

Contributing Editors: LeiLani Dowell, G. Dunkel,
K. Durkin, Teresa Gutierrez, Gloria Rubac

Mundo Obrero: Alberto García, Teresa Gutierrez,
Carlos Vargas

Supporter Program: Coordinator Sue Davis

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WW COMMENTARY

Build Workers Assemblies, build a workers' world!

By Makasi Motema

Burning through communities like a raging fire, COVID-19 takes from us those most vulnerable. Already poisoned by environmental racism, people of color are being consumed by the virus at wildly disproportionate rates. The poorest strata of the working class, now dubbed essential, are not permitted to distance themselves from the danger. And frontline health care workers —without fair wages, benefits and vital equipment — risk their lives in fighting to extinguish this plague.

This is the smoldering stage upon which those who struggle for justice find themselves. How can the struggle be won against such overwhelming odds? How will socialists cope with the next unpredictable but inevitable crisis? Only a united working class can withstand this capitalist epidemic.

The crisis of legitimacy

The response of capitalist policy makers to COVID-19 is an unmitigated disaster. In contrast to China, Vietnam or Cuba, the U.S. has failed to effectively quarantine the masses, mobilize health care workers, build emergency hospitals or requisition factories for the manufacture of ventilators and personal protective equipment.

Other capitalist governments like Italy and England have shown themselves to be similarly ill-equipped to protect their populations. The stumbling block is not a lack of forewarning or a lack of resources. The stumbling block is the profit motive.

Wall Street, in its insatiable greed, has hamstrung the U.S. government's attempts to effectively deal with COVID-19. Quarantining people means that workers cannot generate profits. Mobilizing health care workers requires hazard pay and benefits. Constructing medical facilities requires valuable real estate and diverts construction companies away from lucrative development projects already in progress. Finally, the manufacturing of vital equipment is constrained by price gouging as capitalists scramble to profit from a crisis.

Wall Street has a death grip on the government; elected officials answer to the financial industry, not the other way around. This capitalist control magnifies the impact of the crisis beyond the health care sector.



Unemployment is skyrocketing. In April so far, a third of tenants nationwide were unable to pay their rent. In a capitalist society, the solutions to these problems are as simple as they are infeasible. Any sensible government would freeze mortgage and rent payments and provide a livable income for the duration of the lockdown.

This is unthinkable for U.S. policy makers and their capitalist masters. It is unthinkable not because of the cost—the U.S. incinerated \$1.5 trillion trying to calm the stock market just a few weeks ago—but because it would undermine the legitimacy of the entire sociopolitical system.

If rent payments can simply be “turned off,” if a living income can be distributed with the stroke of a pen — then why has the working class been forced to struggle to make ends meet until now?

A common sense response to this crisis would show that all the pain and suffering hitherto endured by the working class has been intentionally inflicted by those in power. The system of inequality is not the result of the unpredictable, uncontrollable nature of the world, but of a conscious choice to deprive the working class of their

The only shelter available to the working class is in unity; the creation of true working-class power is our only countermeasure to disaster capitalism. The working class must be organized into Worker Assemblies ... in opposition to the capitalist system. What the ruling class fears most is working-class communities banding together to determine their own destiny.

health, safety and security in exchange for gargantuan profits to be enjoyed by a small few. No government could command the obedience of its residents after being

exposed as so callous.

Nevertheless, the legitimacy of this government is slipping through its fingers. The U.S. has been unable to stop COVID-19, and soon it will be unable to stop the economic recession. The economy was already teetering on an unstable foundation before the coronavirus.

The dual shocks of a collapsing health care system and exploding unemployment lead some economists to predict that the greatest economic recession in our lifetime is imminent.

When the next great depression arrives, who will place their faith in Washington, D.C.?

The needs of the people

The only shelter available to the working class is in unity: The creation of true working-class power is our only countermeasure to disaster capitalism. The working class must be organized into Worker Assemblies — highly structured political bodies that stand in opposition to the capitalist system. What the ruling class fears most is working-class communities banding together to determine their own destiny.

From Petrograd, Russia (1917), and Jiangxi, China (1931), to Caracas, Venezuela, and Chapare, Bolivia, today, the assemblies and councils of the working class have been the engines that drive socialist revolutions.

Given the obstacles we face, only Workers Assemblies can coordinate an effective response to COVID-19 that leaves no one behind. The only way to provide the health care needs of the people is for our medical resources to be publicly owned and administered—not by capitalist policymakers—but by Workers Assemblies.

True democratic governance by the working class would put an end to corporate resource hoarding and ensure frontline workers are properly protected and compensated. Nor would a working-class administration, representing all oppressions, allow for the inequitable treatment currently given to people of color, women, people living with disabilities and LGBTQ2+ patients.

Control of housing must also fall under the sovereignty of the working class. It is not enough to say that no one should be forced from their home because they can not afford rent. Workers Assemblies must be formed to take control of real estate properties and finally end the scourge of homelessness.

There are also many businesses outside the medical industry which claim



Chinese Soviet Republic in Jiangxi, November 1931.



Soviet workers council, 1917.

their workers are essential. However, the pay, protection and benefits these workers receive do not match their newly elevated status. The creation of Workers Assemblies will put an end to this as well. If a business deems its workers essential, then Workers Assemblies must take control of that business.

Building Workers Assemblies

How can all this be achieved? Building a people's army requires an army of organizers. The single moral imperative of socialist cadre is to organize those around them. Through deep organizing, socialists must establish connections with workers in every sector. Non-union workers must be unionized, and unionized workers must be radicalized. Tenants, apartment blocks and entire neighborhoods must be brought together to fight landlords, developers, police and border patrol oppression. Socialists must seed ourselves throughout the working class to provide political agitation, education and organization.

The working class is in motion. Already people are organizing together to provide aid and support as COVID-19 ransacks communities. Wildcat strikes are on the rise, as is class consciousness. These are the incipient moves of a larger trend toward workers' power.

Socialists must not allow this growing movement to be crushed by inevitable capitalist counterreaction. It is our responsibility to see that workers are organized into Workers Assemblies that have the strength to withstand the oppressive tactics of the ruling class.

It is time to build Workers Assemblies. It is time to build a workers' world. □

Black essential workers refuse to be invisible

Continued from page 1

An estimated 3 million grocery workers are in greater demand now because so many people are stocking up with food as restaurants, cafes and delis are shut down. But as more and more of these workers become sick due to the virus, they either refuse to show up for work or walk off the job—like recently at Whole Food Markets—in order to survive, even at the risk of permanently losing their jobs.

Other debilitating factors

Racism has intensified preventable diseases that cause slow death throughout the Black community — asthma, hypertension, heart disease, diabetes and more.

People are not born with these diseases,

but are victimized by social environments undermined by racism, resulting in lack of healthy foods and health care, overcrowded living conditions, poverty and incarceration. And these toxic conditions are more often than not inherited by each generation.

Viruses like COVID-19 can become deadly because they feed off these pre-existing conditions that compromise immune systems, making recovery almost impossible.

Vedette Gavin, an investigator for the Conservation Law Foundation's Healthy Neighborhood Study, explained the relationship between people of color and the environment, especially the fact that children become more susceptible to asthma due to lack of decent housing.

She stated, “There are huge issues with housing that are at play. The poorer housing stock and code violations for asbestos, mold and cockroaches increase the risk and prevalence of respiratory and pulmonary diseases, which heighten the severity of symptoms for those who contract covid. Black and [Latinx] families in urban centers tend to double and triple up when rent is unaffordable, making distancing in the home impossible.” (Washington Post, April 9)

Hospitals in Black majority neighborhoods are twice as likely to close than hospitals in white majority neighborhoods, making it even more difficult for people to get care.

Essential workers from the most oppressed communities not only deserve



Workers strike Amazon, March 30, New York City.

to be tested immediately, but should be granted full unemployment benefits if forced out of work. They should also have their debt canceled and be granted a moratorium on rent, foreclosures and utility shut-offs. Fulfilling these demands would be another form of reparations to people who have been victimized for centuries by systemic policies of social apartheid. □

Dozens of strikes all say ‘No safety, no work!’

By Martha Grevatt

April 12 — About 40 workers at a New York City Chipotle store staged a walkout on March 6 after a worker was written up for calling in sick. The store was not providing the five paid sick days mandated by city law, forcing workers to come to work sick and potentially infect other workers with COVID-19.

As the death toll climbs, workers deemed “essential” have staged at least 75 separate job actions since the Chipotle walkout. Walkouts, sickouts, sit-ins and, most recently, car and social-distance pickets have involved people from a wide range of occupations. In addition to many fast food workers, those protesting include workers in health care, construction, manufacturing, meat and poultry processing, retail, warehouses, public transit, bars and restaurants, water and sewage, beverage bottling, nursing home care and more.

Common demands of the walkouts are for employer-provided personal protective equipment such as masks, gloves and hand sanitizer, social distancing, hazard pay and the right of sick workers to stay home with pay. Payday Report lists almost 30 work stoppages that have occurred since April 1.

McDonald’s has been hit multiple times. Police broke up a protest in Los Angeles April 7 after workers blocked the fast food drive-through with their cars. Strikers also hit the San Jose McDonald’s April 7, standing a distance apart and holding signs in English and Spanish demanding PPE. Fight for \$15 then brought out workers at McDonald’s, Burger King, Taco Bell, Domino’s and

other chains in a statewide strike of 50 fast food restaurants April 9. Bay Area McDonald’s workers protested in their cars, with taped-on signs reading, “No gloves, no masks, on strike now.”

The Monterey Park McDonald’s, near Los Angeles, was struck again April 10. The workers want to be able to quarantine with pay for two weeks while the stores are professionally cleaned. They charge store owners with not providing PPE and not informing workers immediately if they have been exposed.

Amazon, GE strikes continue

Despite the firing of Amazon worker Chris Smalls, who organized a walkout at the company’s Staten Island warehouse on March 30, the fight for safe working conditions at Amazon continues. Walkouts took place in Detroit April 1 and again at Smalls’ warehouse April 6, the latter protesting Smalls’ firing. A third Amazon strike hit a Pennsylvania facility.

On March 28 General Electric workers in Lynn, Mass., walked out to demand, along with a safe workplace, that their plant recall laid-off workers to make ventilators. Now their efforts have spread to other GE plants, with April 8 protests in Dallas, Salem, Va., and Schenectady, N.Y. Members of the Union of Electrical Workers-Communication Workers (IUE-CWA) held signs with the slogan, “Hey GE, we can make ventilators.” The Salem plant is now closed, and workers want their jobs back.

At a Palmyra, Pa., warehouse run by Hershey-owned XPO Logistics, dozens of workers walked out April 4 after learning that several workers tested positive.

They argued that the facility should be closed, as chocolate is not “essential.” On April 6, after learning a coworker had tested positive, 20 workers at auto parts company Mat Holdings in Romeoville, Ill., walked off the job and announced they were self-quarantining for two weeks — for which they demanded to be paid.

Meanwhile, Publix warehouse workers struck a warehouse in Lakeland, Fla. Target workers in California walked out while Target’s Shipt grocery deliverers took off work around the country April 7. Dockworkers shut down the Port of Seattle April 9.

Sheet Metal Workers Local 19 President Gary Masino announced April 6 that the union was pulling members off several Philadelphia construction sites because Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines were not being adhered to. The union questioned how projects such as new casinos were somehow “essential.”

Public sector, health care workers join the fight

Even the most essential workers, who are caring for the huge numbers of patients sick with COVID-19, have been forced to stop work to draw attention to the working conditions they face.

Night-shift emergency room nurses at Sinai Grace in Detroit staged a sit-in April 6 to protest understaffing. Management then sent them home. While walking out, nurse Sal Hadwan, speaking on a video on Facebook, said, “Tonight was the



Los Angeles McDonald’s workers strike in their cars, April 9.

breaking point. Because we cannot safely take care of your loved ones out here.” (Michigan Radio, April 6)

According to Detroit’s Metro Times on April 7, “Detroit has a higher coronavirus death rate than New York City.” Sinai Grace is the epicenter of that crisis, with patients dying every day and waiting in the emergency room on ventilators for days because the intensive care units are full.

Drivers who transport COVID-19 samples protested outside Hospital Couriers April 6, alleging they were being denied proper protection. Nurses called a sickout in Littleton, Mass., April 8.

Public sector workers are also walking out, including bus drivers and postal workers in Queens, N.Y., and transit workers in San Diego.

Workers everywhere, many who don’t have a union to defend them, are risking their jobs to protect their lives and their loved ones. Some have been fired. The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated the irreconcilable contradiction between labor and capital.

The scope of the struggle is beginning to resemble a rolling general strike.

Imagine if all these workers, whose lives have been threatened by capitalism, all struck at once! And what better day to strike in union than International Workers Day — May Day. □

Boston

Uber and Lyft drivers rally in cars

By Steve Gillis
Boston

Boston Uber/Lyft drivers occupied the Transportation Network Companies airport lot on April 6 and staged an in-car rally broadcast through Zoom.

The rally launched a miles-long caravan of drivers and supporters that encircled the Massachusetts State House. Organized by the Boston Independent Drivers Guild, the action demanded an immediate end to the misclassification by TNC of millions of workers as “independent contractors,” who would traditionally be ineligible for unemployment benefits.

While Uber and Lyft have continued to make billions off the labor of the frontline workers, these global capitalist high-tech corporations haven’t spent a dime on personal protective equipment, sick pay or hazard pay for the drivers, many of whom have become sick or are under quarantine.

Mutwaly Hamid, a Sudanese leader of BIDG, opened the rally by exposing the big lie of Uber’s claim to offer “flexibility” to “independent contractors.” He said, “Flexibility does not mean choosing between deadly working conditions and paying rent or cutting down the rates



Uber and Lyft drivers rally in Boston in cars for safe conditions, hazard pay, sick pay and reclassification as workers, April 6.

whenever the bosses want and — whatever they want to do to drivers. Drivers have control of our own destiny. The only way to win real flexibility for drivers is to come together and organize a powerful drivers’ union!”

Other union members joined the rally in solidarity. Merrie Najimy, president of the Massachusetts Teachers Association, addressed the rally, saying, “We have to be physically distancing but we have to be socially connected. We live in an economic system that is designed — it is built to prey on workers. It is built to use maximum extraction of our labor.” (tinyurl.com/uxrwf2k/)

Sign the BIDG petition to Massachusetts Government for Emergency COVID-19 Unemployment and other worker benefits at tinyurl.com/stt85ha/. □

Portland, Ore.

Queer bar workers crush boss, win sick pay

By Johnnie Lewis
Portland, Ore.

On March 16, after the Oregon state pandemic-related closure of businesses deemed nonessential, laid-off Crush Bar and adjacent Woody’s Coffee Tavern workers staged an occupation. The owner, John Clarke, had refused to pay the laid-off workers accrued sick leave as per Oregon state law.

The day before the LGBTQ2+ bar was occupied, Hannah Gioia, Crush worker and representative for the bar and cafe workers’ union, the Crush Bar Workers Collective, said, “Yesterday we all were informed via text or phone call or from the Crush Facebook page that the bar was shutting down and all employees would be laid off. When pressed for accrued sick time pay, half-time pay for our scheduled hours one week out, and guarantee rehires when the bar reopens, the owner said, ‘No, no and no.’”

“We do not predict that we can wait out a government agency’s abilities to process this charge. We need resources now. Getting laid off is already devastating, but during a public health crisis, it’s catastrophic. We are out of options, and we expect this owner to do what is legally required and what is right by us.” (tinyurl.com/sglefck)



Crush Bar Workers Collective after their March 17 victory in Portland.

The next day the workers demanded and got another meeting with Clarke. When their demands were refused, they sat down. Shortly, Clarke called the police.

Crush Bar worker and CBWC organizer, Emily Bennett, told Workers World, “John Clarke advertises these places as safe places for queer people. But when queer workers organize and make demands on him for what is rightfully due us, he calls the cops.”

But within 24 hours of the occupation, the union won sick leave pay for the workers.

According to Bennett, “The Portland queer community has been very supportive, offering the workers aid at Crush Bar Workers Collective Hardship Fund at gofundme.com.”

Lewis is a retired food service worker and member of UFCW Local 400.

Grocery workers demand: More hazard pay, more protection on the job!

By Maureen Skehan

A grassroots coalition of grocery workers from Whole Foods Markets, Stop & Shop, Trader Joe's and Shaw's supermarkets held a well-organized "social distancing" protest and press conference April 7 in front of Whole Foods in Boston's gentrified South End. Their demands included "essential pay for essential work," paid sick leave and family leave, time and a half hazard pay, and immediate, on-the-job protections, including face masks and gloves for all workers, stringent disinfectant protocols and social distancing guidelines.

Calling out Amazon's owner Jeff Bezos, the world's richest billionaire, one worker said, "It's criminal that the richest corporation in the history of our planet is refusing to pay its workers more than \$2 dollars per hour for hazard pay and is not providing its employees with adequate protective equipment. This is not enough! Amazon can afford it!" (tinyurl.com/rpjijls/) Amazon owns Whole Foods.

Lisa Wilson, who works as a cashier at Shaw's in the working-class neighborhood of Hyde Park, shared using a bullhorn, "I feel scared. I feel like I'm going to get sick. I feel like it's inevitable. But at the same time, not working is not an option. With my insurance, if I get sick, it's going to be hard. The idea that I have to put my life on the line is crazy."

Demonstrations by grocery workers, fighting for their very lives, have begun to extract critical worker

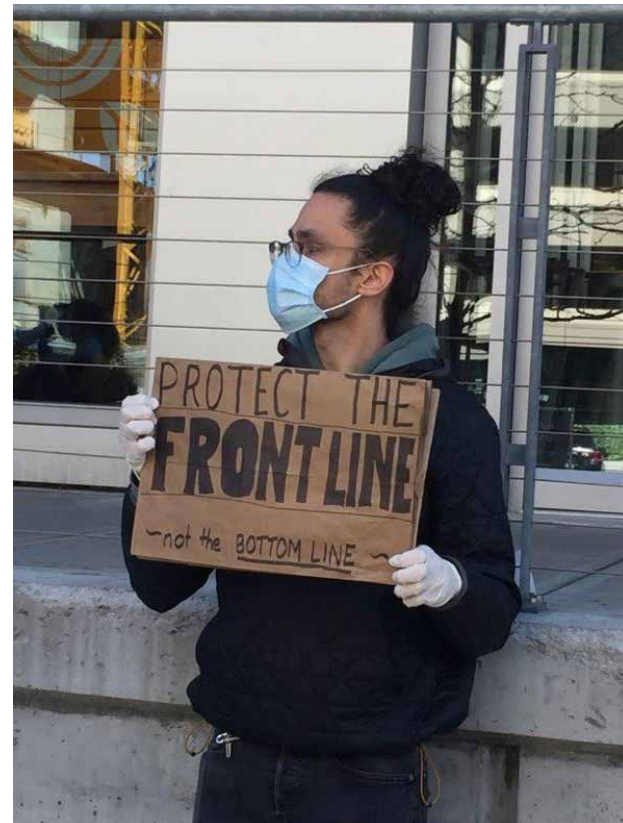
protections and compensation from the grocery bosses, including the right to employer-provided protective gear. A new statewide guideline in Massachusetts allows no more than 40 percent of maximum store occupancy and adds to earlier mandates for single-lane shopping and social distancing protocols in grocery stores at all times. Some grocers are also bending to demands for improved hazard pay, raising recent wage increases above the \$2 per hour pittance that Amazon's Whole Foods has insultingly offered.

Over 40 grocery workers have died from COVID-19. The first in Massachusetts was Vitalina Williams, who died April 4 at 59. She worked two part-time cashier jobs: at Market Basket in Salem and Walmart in Lynn. Williams migrated to the U.S. in the 1990s from a poor Mayan community in Tecpán, Guatemala, to support her mother and nine siblings back home and to better her own life economically.

Sadly, her brother noted, Vitalina's tragic and preventable death "shows that there are two hugely unequal worlds." Following her death, state elected officials applied pressure on Gov. Charlie Baker to declare grocery workers "emergency workers."

Williams is survived by her husband of 22 years, Dave Williams, who also worked at Market Basket. "She was not the love of my life. She was my life," he said.

Any gains won by grocery workers are gains for us all! □



WW PHOTO: MAUREEN SKEHAN

Boston grocery workers demonstrate outside Whole Foods, April 7.

Prisoners rebel during pandemic

Continued from page 1

survival, we see state repression. Prison officials are using force in response to work strikes, hunger strikes and other forms of protest. Prisons are deliberately not designed with health in mind, and we are seeing some facilities respond to virus symptoms by separating infected people from overcrowded general populations into "segregation" or solitary confinement. By United Nations standards prolonged solitary confinement is torture.

People need decarceration, health care and humane housing, not punishment. It is imperative we listen to those affected: "Jail and prison walls can't contain the spread of the virus. What is on the outside will be on the inside, and what happens to our communities on the inside will affect us all." (Free Them All Connecticut)

Rebellions break out

Prisoners in the large Yakima County (Washington state) jail righteously rose up on March 23 in rebellion over being huddled together during the COVID-19 epidemic. Fifteen prisoners escaped.

After 6 inmates tested positive for the COVID-19 virus at the Monroe Correctional Complex, Washington state facilities 30 miles northeast of Seattle, on April 9, 200 prisoners rebelled. Police, including state troopers, fired "blast balls" and pepper spray on the protesting prisoners. Eighteen prisoners were put in "segregation."

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee has done nothing to stop the strain of overcrowding in state prisons, despite warnings from health officials, including the World Health Organization.

After one inmate tested positive at the Women's Prison in Pierre, S.D., in late March, nine prisoners, including six who are Indigenous, successfully fled the fatal facility. The warden of the prison has resigned, and while seven prisoners have been apprehended, two remain at large. (U.S. News & World Report, April 3)



Prisoners protest ban on visitors at Poggioreale prison in Naples, Italy, March 8.

Lansing Correctional Facility in Kansas saw prisoners rebel after 12 of them and 16 guards tested positive for COVID-19. Prisoners swept through offices, broke windows and chairs, and set small fires in the facility before being corralled back under control. (Guardian, April 10)

In a video of the uprising taken on a contraband cell phone and circulated online, guards were shown locked out of a section of the prison, while prisoners voiced their fears of the virus and concerns over the lack of health care. Corizon Health and the state of Kansas have been locked in a battle over the prison's health care contract with the state. (KMBC News, April 10)

No human being is illegal on stolen land!

Migrants in detention in Immigration and Customs Enforcement processing facilities are facing the same fears about the virus as those in jails and prisons. At least four ICE processing facilities in the last week of March alone saw detainees peacefully protest against potentially lethal conditions with work and hunger strikes.

The ICE processing facilities include Aurora Contract Detention Center in Denver; the South Texas Processing Center in San Antonio; and Lasalle and Pine Prairie facilities in Louisiana. Those demanding humane conditions and/or their release were met with guards in riot gear, using pepper spray and rubber bullets to disperse protesters into separate facilities. (Buzzfeed News, March 24)

Over 350 people at Stewart Detention Center in Georgia went on a hunger strike on March 24. One Mexicana detainee, Ventura Quintanar-Rico, 32, said, "We're just waiting to get infected! They're not taking the most basic coronavirus precautions at this place. If one of us gets infected, all of us will, we are not able to stay 6 feet apart. We share space with 62 other people. We don't want to die. It usually takes three to four days to get medical attention here." (Mijente, March 27)

Under racial and social state control, like many incarcerated people in jails, most migrants have not been lawfully convicted of anything. People held in ICE processing facilities often have come through ports of entry and applied for asylum, currently considered a legal route. Though the law has been used to codify and uphold systems of white supremacy and colonialism, no human being is illegal on stolen land!

The U.S. has exported its punitive prison system to at

least 38 countries, according to the Alliance for Global Justice. Colombia saw at least 13 prison uprisings in the face of the coronavirus, leaving 23 dead. From inside La Picota, a Bogotá prison, inmate Oscar Sanchez, 42, called the clashes between prisoners and authorities "a massacre that until now has taken more lives than coronavirus in Colombia." Hundreds of prisoners escaped after uprisings in four São Paulo facilities after Brazilian state officials suspended temporary leave permits for 34,000 inmates. (New York Times, March 22)

Governors: Grant clemency from coast to coast!

The fears driving these righteous rebellions are grounded in heartbreaking reality. The rate of coronavirus infection at Rikers Island in New York City and Cook County Jail in Chicago are among the highest in the world, with nearly 300 confirmed cases at Rikers and 400 confirmed cases in Cook County. (tinyurl.com/s9q27g6) Advocates and abolitionists have been warning officials against this very outcome in the early stages of the pandemic, only to be met with inaction from officials.

From coast to coast, governors in the U.S. have the power to grant mass clemencies or reprieves. Instead New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo is banking that the masses of people do not care about those caged. New York continues to exploit prison labor to produce PPE and hand sanitizer. They are also paying prisoners less than the minimum wage to dig mass graves on Hart Island while continuing to incarcerate new people.

To avoid genocide we need mass releases without exceptions and without ankle monitors or fines. The people in cages staring down the barrel of execution by virus are waking to the reality that they have very little to lose in resisting their conditions. The prison industries that profit off these deplorable conditions are willing to kill while trying to squeeze every last dime out of caged labor.

The generative project of prison abolition that would transform social relations while meeting human needs is coming, whether the prison-industrial system is ready or not.

Jim McMahan contributed information about the rebellion at the Monroe Correctional Complex in Washington state.

Jail and prison walls can't contain the spread of the virus. What is on the outside will be on the inside, and what happens to our communities on the inside will affect us all.

TEAR DOWN THE WALLS!

Dire situation for Palestinian prisoners

By Susan Abulhawa

The following remarks were given by Palestinian author and activist Susan Abulhawa during a Workers World Party webinar, “Free Them All: COVID-19 and Racist Mass Incarceration,” on April 9. The videotaped webinar is available for viewing at workers.org/videos/.

Today is the anniversary of the Deir Yasin massacre, which took place on April 9, 1948, when Zionist gangs (the Irgun, Haganah and Stern Gang) went house-to-house in a small Palestinian village, lined people against the wall and sprayed them with bullets, gutted pregnant women and smashed the skulls of children. The Irgun and Haganah gangs were the precursors to Israel’s current state military. I want to acknowledge that moment in Palestinian history.

Today, there are roughly 5,500 Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails, approximately 200 are children and about 500 are held in something called administrative detention — arrested as a preventive measure and held indefinitely without even being charged with a crime. Many spend years languishing in detention because Israel can renew the orders indefinitely, without ever bringing evidence or charges against the detainee.

Conditions worsen for Palestinian prisoners

The situation for Palestinian political prisoners is quite dire in normal circumstances, but rights activists fear the worst now. So-called emergency regulations have banned Palestinians from meeting their lawyers or receiving family visitations. Prisoners, often denied the right to use phones in prison, can only consult with their attorneys over the phone in the event of an upcoming court hearing. However, court hearings have been canceled. In effect, Palestinian political prisoners are completely cut off from the outside world.

They are under a total blackout at the moment. They are being denied the basic needs to curb the spread of the virus. All



For if life had taught her anything, it was that healing and peace can begin only with acknowledgment of wrongs committed.

— Susan Abulhawa —

AZ QUOTES

they have are bars of soap. They’re being refused even basic food needs. Prisoners typically have to buy necessities, but now the amount of vegetables, as well as meat and fish they can buy, is cut. They are even banned from buying cleaning products to sanitize bathrooms and cells.

In response to prisoners’ demands for protective kits, including masks, gloves and disinfectant, Israel’s Prison Service told them to use their socks to make masks and soap to disinfect. Following that response, the prison authorities then banned soap and socks in a clear move to provoke the prisoners while the world is distracted by the coronavirus.

Political prisoners are held in crowded, unsanitary conditions, with a high level of contact among them and no real way to protect themselves from infection. On April 1, Israel released a Palestinian from prison who tested positive for COVID-19. It is clear that prisoners are indeed infected.

However, Israel has released its own criminals in order to reduce infections among Jewish prisoners. Human rights groups are calling on Israel to do the same for Palestinian political prisoners, particularly for vulnerable Palestinians who are older or have underlying medical conditions. Most of these are in administrative detention who have not even been charged with anything.

There are currently 180 Palestinian children in Israel’s prisons, some as young as 12 years old. None have been able to speak with their parents, advocates or lawyers. Under normal circumstances,

their conditions are dire, but the level of their bewilderment is surely intensified now that they are not allowed contact with the outside world.

The scale of the problem remains unknown as Israel has not tested any of the 5,500 Palestinians in its jails, even those who were known to be in contact with infected guards.

Weaponizing the virus

Additionally, Israel continues to raid Palestinian homes and conduct arbitrary arrests of Palestinians who are trying to self-isolate and protect their families. Israel also demolished a pop-up hospital set up to treat cases of the virus. Palestinian prisoner rights groups are appealing to international bodies, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, for help.

Israel is actually exacerbating the problem by weaponizing the virus. A case in point is Mahmoud Atta. He was arrested in his home on March 22 and sent to Megiddo prison — on suspicion that he had been in contact with someone who tested positive. Israel extended his detention twice and postponed a hearing for his appeal.

Right now there is a hunger strike among Palestinian prisoners demanding to be tested and given adequate protective gear. They are refusing to allow new detainees into their wing. They are also demanding that authorities conduct head counts through the camera system and that guards, who are the source of the infection being brought into isolated populations, also wear masks.

‘My dad going to prison every few months was our normal’

I want to close with a post from the daughter of Khalida Jarrar, a high-profile Palestinian political prisoner and an elected leader and member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a Palestinian Marxist-Leninist organization founded by George Habash in 1967. Jarrar is currently in administrative detention, languishing without charge or trial.

Here’s what her daughter Suha Ghassan wrote:

“We were raised with my dad getting locked up every few months. ... That means that we were raised with the military busting into our home every few months, destroying our belongings and taking our father away. I first met my father when I was 4 years old, and it took me a while to figure out this man suddenly living with us. I used to hold onto this picture, but when I met him, he looked nothing like that picture and I couldn’t understand that it was the same person.

“The years passed and we got used to our dad going to prison every few months. We thought it was just a normal thing. It was our normal. We understood that every Palestinian had to go to prison and had to get tortured. When I was 10 years old, I began to worry that I wouldn’t be able to withstand torture when my turn came.

“Today, I’m much older than 10 years, but when Israel took my mother away the first time, I was once again that terrified little girl. I didn’t want them to take her, to the point that I thought about throwing her from the balcony when they came to our home to arrest her in 2015. It has been five years, and we don’t know if she’s with us or not, when will they come back for her when she’s home, is she alive when she’s in prison?

“My mother is in prison now, and we don’t know how to reach her during this pandemic and we know nothing about her condition. We don’t know if she has the virus, if she’s able to breathe. She’s already sick and has a weakened immune system. This coronavirus has immense political dimensions.” □

Activists support Portland prison rebellion

By Anika Kear
Portland, Ore.

Honking horns, waving fists and flashing protest signs, activists drove to Portland’s Columbia River Correctional Institute to support prisoners who are frustrated, scared and concerned for their lives.

Just a day before, prisoners at this minimum-security facility staged a mass protest after a guard who was positive for COVID-19 was sent home. This prisoner protest was so forceful, guards locked themselves in their offices for several hours.

A contact on the inside said prisoners were excited and grateful for the support from the honking caravan. Prison guards immediately closed the doors and put the inmates on full lockdown.

Local television KOIN reported on the car caravan organized by Workers World Party-PDX, with help from the International League of Peoples’ Struggle

and Jobs with Justice. Founding WWP-PDX branch member Lyn Neeley told KOIN: “Prisoners should be provided with masks, gloves and testing kits.” (See full interview at tinyurl.com/s8ogc8u/.)

As prisoners across the country are starting to test positive for COVID-19, she added, “It’s like a powder keg, Prisoners will be living in a cesspool of coronavirus. They are furious because they are being sentenced to death.”

CRCI had not had a full lockdown for years, but has experienced three full security lockdowns in the last two weeks.

The prison has recently stopped its normal medical triage services for non-COVID-19 related issues. Prisoners have gone without soap for two days and been kept in crowded living conditions, putting them at high risk of contracting and spreading the virus. They are now pressuring the facility to meet their critical needs.

With support from community members, they recently established the Columbia River Inside Support Senate (CRISS) to communicate their reasonable demands to the guards. These include no limits on soap, paper towels, toilet paper and sanitizing spray; social distancing (6 feet between personal bunk areas); nonpunitive isolation; regular Medical Triage and testing for COVID-19; daily access to phones, mail and mental health services.

The current situation for prisoners nationwide is dire and immediate action is necessary. Portland’s Workers World Party branch demands that prisoners be supplied

with PPE immediately, that they have access to testing and treatment, and that social distancing protocols are implemented.

Most importantly, WWP demands the expeditious release of the incarcerated community. Free Them All! ! □



PHOTO: WOMEN ON THE RISE

Car caravan in Portland, Ore., April 9, demands PPE for prisoners.

FREE THEM ALL!



With some prisoners released, Atlanta activists protest to ‘Free Them All!’

By Arielle Robinson

Georgia activist groups Women on the Rise and Southerners on New Ground (SONG) hosted a car caravan protest outside the Fulton County Jail on April 7, calling on District Attorney Paul Howard to release all incarcerated people in the jail because of the risk posed by COVID-19.

After the protest, Howard announced that Fulton planned to stagger releases of up to 300 people, who will be given mandatory ankle monitors and curfews. The first groups of people to be released have been people over 60, who are some of the people most vulnerable to COVID-19.

According to WABE News (NPR Atlanta), Howard said that 47 inmates at Fulton Jail were released April 6, with about 50 more to be released April 9. Howard’s office is recommending that those serving time for ordinance violations and probation violations be released.

Sixteen incarcerated people in the jail have been diagnosed with COVID-19 — one has been hospitalized and another hospitalized and released, according to wabe.com.

On April 8, public defenders in Fulton County called on a judge to release 183 inmates because they could not afford to pay bail, according to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. In addition to those inmates, 279 more in Fulton Jail are there for misdemeanor offenses. Currently, there are 2,244 people incarcerated in that jail.

An expert on infectious diseases told the AJC on April 9 that many more inmates must be released. Robert Greifinger, a medical monitor during the federal government’s 11-year oversight of the Fulton County Jail



PHOTO: WOMEN ON THE RISE

An April 7 caravan protest in Atlanta demanded ‘Free Them All’ from the Fulton County Jail.

ending in 2015, said at least 700 inmates should be released, and the county should reduce its incarcerated population to 1,500 people. (tinyurl.com/w2lptsl)

“This is a preventable disaster that can be avoided, but only by acting with extreme speed,” Greifinger said. (ajc.com, April 1)

The action by Women on the Rise and SONG emphasized the danger of the virus to prisoners and demanded complete liberation, not half measures. The protesters circled the jail in cars, honking horns and waving signs that called on Howard to free all incarcerated in the jail.

Signs at the protest, some taped to cars, read: “Fulton County Jail’s Inaction = Death Sentence,” “#FreeThemAll,” “Fulton, Free Them All” and “Stop the Spread, Close the Jail,” among others.

Women on the Rise asks supporters to call the District Attorney’s office to “tell Paul Howard that inaction is murder” and emphasize the grave danger COVID-19 presents to prisoners. Free them all! □

Locked up and locked down

By Mumia Abu-Jamal

The following slightly edited April 10 commentary by political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal is available at prisonradio.org/media/audio/mumia.



For nearly a month now, all prisoners in Pennsylvania state prisons — over 40,000 men and women — have been locked down. What does “locked down” mean?

When I was on death row, all of us were locked down — as the saying went: “23 and 1.” Or for 23 hours a day, with 1 hour for out-of-cell exercise in a cage. After over a decade, it went to 22 and 2.

But this lockdown is occasioned by the coronavirus. Meals in the chow hall, visits with family and friends, religious services, classes, prison jobs — all are offline.

On the rare occasion a prisoner leaves the cell, he or she wears a paper or cloth face mask. Several states, like New Jersey, for example, have followed suit. And then there are county prisons where the sheer overcrowding leads to chaos.

In Philadelphia county prisons an estimated 18 people — prisoners — have the virus. Then comes Cook County, Ill., where over 400 men have tested positive for COVID-19. That’s a county joint.

For some men and women, being in prison in county jails isn’t just something

that resembles death row. For them it will be a new death row. For that jail cell will be the place they die.

Mass incarceration is so much a part of U.S. life that the opposite idea — decarceration — begins to sound crazy. But the truth is it wasn’t always this way.

This scourge is the product of neoliberal politics. And if neoliberalism caused this problem, how can it ever solve the problem?

From imprisoned nation, this is Mumia Abu-Jamal. □

Introducing the WW Prisoners Page

By Mirinda Crissman Houston

This article is based on remarks given by Crissman during a Workers World Party webinar on April 9: “Free Them All! COVID-19 and Racist Mass Incarceration.”

Workers World Party provides nearly 1,000 free newspaper subscriptions to incarcerated people. Readers interested in supporting this can donate at patreon.com/wwp.

We’re particularly excited about revitalizing a section of Workers World newspaper dedicated to covering prisoners and the prison-industrial complex. This prisoners page draws on a legacy of newsletters like “Through the Looking Glass: A Women and Childrens Prison Newsletter,” “The Bond,” the monthly newsletter of the American Servicemen’s Union, and a variety of written communications.

Comrade Leslie Feinberg, who began writing about prisoner issues for WW in 1975, became the editor of the first WW prisoners page. The page developed from the Prisoner Solidarity Committee’s dedicated support of the uprisings at Auburn Correctional Facility and Attica Correctional Facility in New York State in 1970 and 1971.

This new section of WW — Tear Down the Walls — has several aims, one being radical communication across the barriers put up to keep us in or out. We are committed to providing a space for incarcerated folks to communicate with each other and for them to put things out to those outside.

Another goal is to encourage broader analysis of different forms of incarceration. Michelle Alexander, scholar and author of “The New Jim Crow,” warns against e-carceration via ankle monitors as a reformist concession to abolitionist visions of decarceration.

In addition we will communicate ideas on how to improve conditions. Harm mitigation and reduction of suffering in the face of these deadly systems is no small thing, provided that reform is not the end of the fight against this modern mutation of slavery.

The prisoners page seeks to reduce our numbers in jails, prisons and detention centers. Another aim is to shorten sentences, while believing that society needs to be radically changed so prisons cease to exist. This necessitates guaranteeing human needs like food, health care and housing in a society

that disperses the abundance of those things in an oppressive manner that can only be called deliberate apartheid.

We understand that there are many kinds of prisoners — women, children, LGBTQ2+ folks; migrants and refugees in concentration camps; workers forced to wear ankle monitors under house arrest; those on parole, on probation, those who have been released from prison but face restrictions on their ability to work and vote because of prior convictions — and any combination of the above.

Tear Down the Walls dedicates itself to the project of prison abolition and against prison imperialism. Prison abolition is a necessary and long-standing battle. When we say “Free Them All” that means no exceptions. Racist and anti poor logic argues to put people there in the first place; we cannot and will not let it decide who is to be released.

We know prisons are monuments to white supremacy and colonialism. We see that particularly in the United States’ most influential exports — mass incarceration and militarized border violence. The U.S. government is involved in prison systems of at least 38 different countries.

These U.S. programs involve construction of new prisons as well as prison guard training, accreditation, data management and overall design. The maximum-security prison La Tramacúa in Valledupar, Colombia, is modeled exactly after the maximum-security Coleman Prison in Florida.

Common features of prisons structured on the U.S. model include overcrowding, neglect of health care, use of torture and extreme/punitive isolation, transfer of prisoners far away from families and communities, severe restrictions on visits including legal defenders and prison militarization. (Alliance for Global Justice, 2018)

In the face of the coronavirus pandemic, we’ve seen those in power retaliate against unarmed people in detention for going on hunger and work strikes by using pepper spray, rubber bullets and other punitive measures.

These actions only strengthen our resolve to change the conditions necessary to make the generative project of abolition possible. We say no to prison imperialism, no New Jim Crows, free them all and tear down the walls! □

Caravan targets Philadelphia City Hall and jail

Traffic around Philadelphia City Hall came to a standstill for over an hour April 9 as hundreds of protesters, from social distance in their cars, demanded Mayor Jim Kenney and First Judicial District Judges Patrick Dugan, Leon Tucker and Idee Fox decrease the number of incarcerated people in the city’s jails.

Just days after being bailed out by the Philadelphia Community Bail Fund, Luz Acevedo said over a sound system: “I don’t think we should die in jail like animals die in cages,” referring to prisoners’ high risk of death from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over 75 drivers then moved to the city’s jail complex several miles away where a delegation of religious leaders held signs outside the stony and rusted barriers, giving speeches and saying prayers. Protesters

applauded by sounding their horns, hoping the more than 4,200 prisoners on the other side of the walls could hear them.

The #No215Jail Coalition is demanding the city release the vast majority of people jailed by granting parole, lifting detainers, ending cash bail, reviewing everyone in detention for possible release, and prioritizing release for youth, elderly people and people who are medically vulnerable.

The coalition includes the ACLU-PA, Decarcerate PA, Frontline Dads, Movement Alliance Project (formerly Media Mobilizing Project), Philadelphia Bail Fund, Philadelphia Community Bail Fund, the

Youth Art & Self-Empowerment Project, Vietlead, Philadelphia Domestic Workers Alliance, Juntos, Disabled in Action of PA, Philly ADAPT, PA ADAPT and Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies.

— Story and photo by Joe Piette



Earth Day 2020: Climate change and COVID-19

By Betsey Piette

If there is a silver lining to be found in the horrific coronavirus pandemic, it may be that major industrial countries are reporting unprecedented drops in air pollution levels. This is due to measures taken to stem the spread of COVID-19, including widespread factory shutdowns and radically reduced vehicular and airplane traffic.

With lockdowns in force, NASA satellite data show a 30 percent decrease in pollution across the northeastern U.S. in major population centers from Boston to Washington, D.C. In India, 90 major cities reported significant air quality improvements; in the state of Punjab, for the first time in three decades, residents can see the Himalayan mountains 100 miles away. In Mumbai, particulate pollution levels dropped by 50 percent.

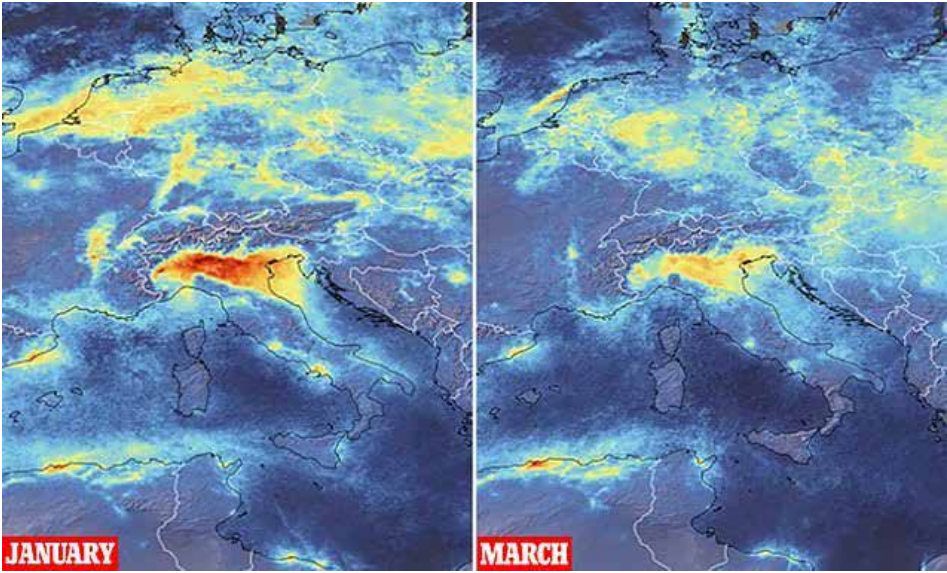
According to the World Health Organization, global deaths from exposure to air pollution have reached pandemic proportions—7 million deaths every year. The WHO notes that individuals living in highly polluted areas are more vulnerable to the coronavirus because air pollution can damage respiratory systems.

April 22 marks the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, first observed in the U.S. in 1970 when 20 million people, protesting in hundreds of cities, launched the modern environmental movement.

Now a virus, wreaking havoc across the globe, is validating climate science facts — that overreliance on fossil fuels is detrimental to the planet.

Climate change deniers now deny COVID-19 danger

Even though the Trump administration was aware of the potential coronavirus pandemic in January, his message in March, on behalf of Wall Street bankers



and global capitalists, was that “this will all be over soon, and we can get back to business as usual.”

Even now, as COVID-19 deaths in the U.S. surpass 22,000, Trump continues to push for a return to “normalcy” as soon as possible. His message: Yes, some people will die as a result, but it’s all good for the economy. Trump taps his head and says, “This is my plan.” But where do his outlandish ideas come from?

On Jan. 30, the WHO declared that the coronavirus constituted an international health emergency. The next day, the totally misnamed “American Council on Science and Health” dismissed the potential danger. Denying that the coronavirus is even close to being worse than the flu, ACSH wrote: “It already has spread from person-to-person in the U.S., but it probably won’t go far. ... And the American healthcare system is excellent at dealing with this sort of problem.”

ACSH receives funding from energy, agribusiness, chemical and tobacco industries and is known for defending

companies like Monsanto and attacking climate change activists like Greta Thunberg.

Other think tanks that made light of COVID-19 include the American Enterprise Institute, the Cato Institute and Americans for Prosperity—founded and funded by far-right billionaire Charles Koch.

After first suggesting that the coronavirus was a bioweapon developed by China to undermine the U.S. economy, AEI later claimed that the media were overreacting to COVID-19, calling it “fake news.” In March, the Cato Institute called WHO estimates of COVID-19 deaths “sensationalist nonsense.”

In late March, AFP CEO Emily Seidel issued a press release opposing shutdowns of nonessential businesses. The group, which supported Trump’s \$1.5 trillion business tax cut in 2017, had pushed for the U.S. to reject the Paris Climate Accord. In 2018, AFP lobbied to cut \$1 billion from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Cato, ACSH and AEI stand out among

climate science deniers. Now they are behind Trump’s push to restart business as quickly as possible.

What is the future ‘normal’?

The unprecedented economic and health crisis resulting from the pandemic has laid bare the inability of capitalism to meet basic human needs. The system of profits before people has already resulted in unnecessary death and suffering, with no end in sight. Can we use our collective experience to advocate for a better system and a more humane future?

If just one month of slowdown brought major drops in air pollution, should we rush to return to the fossil fuel usage that created global warming and facilitated the rapid spread of a deadly virus? Is there another option?

What if our economic recovery mandated massive funding to expand public transportation using green energy? What if unemployed workers were hired to develop, manufacture and install wind, solar and other alternative energy systems? If closed plants can be reopened to make ventilators, can’t they make green energy products?

Plastic bags retain COVID-19 virus for two days, yet some supermarket chains are using the virus crisis to force customers to use disposable plastic bags. What if they were banned?

What if a return to factory production was superseded by a major conversion from fossil fuels to renewable energy? What if the massive multibillion-dollar budget of the Pentagon, the world’s largest single polluter, was repurposed to fund these critical changes?

For these things to happen we need a whole new system of production — one based on human needs and not corporate greed — in other words, socialism. □

Texas ban seeks to overturn legal abortion

By Sue Davis

Bulletin: A Texas appeals court ruled April 13 to accept an emergency application asking the U.S. Supreme Court to restore a district court’s temporary restraining order that would allow patients access to medication abortions during the pandemic. The appeals court asked if a medication abortion was a “procedure.” Plaintiffs explained medication abortion consists of two pills administered without personal protective equipment and is not a procedure. Medication abortions and surgical procedures are now available before the gestational age of a pregnancy exceeds the state’s legal limit of April 22, the day after Gov. Abbott’s COVID-19 order expires. Litigation against ban continues.

April 7 — The overwhelming majority of people in the U.S. are doing everything in their power to survive the COVID-19 pandemic, which is both a public health crisis and an economic disaster of world-wide proportions.

But women of childbearing age, 15 to 44, in six conservative states led by politically ambitious, anti-abortion officials — Indiana, Iowa, Mississippi, Ohio, Oklahoma and Texas — face an additional threat. Those states are intent on banning all abortions for the duration of the pandemic.

At present only the Texas ban has gone into effect due to a ruling by the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on March 31. There is a proposed end date of April 21,

but it can be extended at the governor’s whim.

Judges in other states have issued restraining orders on the ban, thanks to such reproductive rights legal defenders as the Center for Reproductive Rights, the American Civil Liberties Union and the Planned Parenthood Federation.

On April 6, Oklahoma District Judge Charles Goodwin wrote that Oklahoma “acted in an ‘unreasonable,’ ‘arbitrary,’ and ‘oppressive’ way — and imposed an ‘undue burden’ on abortion access — by imposing requirements that effectively deny a right of access to abortion.” (CNN)

What is the pressing argument for such bans? That the use of personal protective equipment for abortions takes valuable resources away from frontline health care providers during the epidemic. And that, since abortions are considered “elective” procedures, they belong in the category of “nonessential” surgery.

Not only is that reasoning false, but the Texas ban includes medical abortions, which do not require any surgical intervention. Rather the patient is instructed to take two well-spaced pills in the privacy of their home. This restriction exposes the ban as obviously deceptive, malicious and criminal. (See “For gender-oppressed people: COVID-19 complicates health care” in April 2 WW, which discusses telemedicine during the pandemic.)

Exposing blatant bias of Texas ban

A March 18 joint statement by major national medical organizations, including the American College of Obstetricians

and Gynecologists and the American Board of Obstetrics & Gynecology, asserted: “Abortion is an essential component of comprehensive health care.” Stressing that it is a time-sensitive service, the statement concluded: “The consequences of being unable to obtain an abortion profoundly impact a person’s life, health, and well-being.”

“Anyone who believes in facts and evidence-based public health will witness the absurdity and cynicism of these arguments with alarm because all pregnancy-related health care — whether it’s ensuring healthy pregnancies and safe births, preventing pregnancies, or ending pregnancies — is by its very nature time-sensitive and essential care.” wrote Dr. Herminia Palacio, president and CEO of the Guttmacher Institute, a primary resource of reproductive science, on March 30.

She concluded: “In recent years, we have witnessed a renewed, systematic, and coordinated effort by anti-abortion advocates to dismantle abortion access and otherwise undermine reproductive health and rights. These ideologues have found strong allies in the White House, many state governments, and an increasingly conservative judiciary.”



The battle for the reproductive rights in Texas has raged for decades, here at a 2016 protest.

Multiplying the stressful effects of the ban in Texas is mass unemployment. Women may try risky measures by taking matters in their own hands if they do not have the cash to travel hundreds of miles out of state to get a legal abortion. These can cost hundred of dollars, in addition to other related expenses. Statistics show that women in Texas already have a higher rate of attempted self-abortions than the national average.

According to Alwa Marwadi writing April 4 in the Guardian, “There is nothing pro-life about exploiting an emergency to further a political agenda. There’s nothing pro-life about forcing women to give birth during a pandemic. There’s nothing pro-life [about] women having to put themselves in danger to get the help they need, and the services the Constitution is

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Bernie Sanders and voting in a pandemic

By Teresa Gutierrez

This article is for the thousands of young people who supported Bernie Sanders and for the social organizations that came out for Sanders, some endorsing a presidential candidate for the first time. It is for the thousands of nurses leading the way in the fight for Medicare for All and for all those seeking a more progressive agenda for this country.



and oppressed.

Countless imperialist wars prove their allegiance to the capitalist class. Just ask the Iraqis if a Democrat in office made a difference.

Capitalism at a dead end: A democratic socialist arises

In both 2016 and 2020, running as a democratic socialist, Sanders got attention and rose not only in popularity but in fact got airtime. Though never as much as Trump did in 2016 when CNN covered Trump rally after rally.

Sanders gained momentum without having to tap into corporate money, a monumental feat considering the millions spent to buy the elections. It was understandable that democratic socialists by the thousandfold, as well as others, supported or gave critical support to his campaign.

Why did Bernie rise? More than any other reason, it was the material conditions of capitalism that propelled him to come forward. The economic crisis — which is in an acute freefall today — meant more unemployment and underemployment, no affordable education, foreclosures and skyrocketing health care costs.

Which way then towards socialism? In the context of what could be an economic crisis worse than the Great Depression, socialism must be desperately fought for if humanity is to survive.

The war on migrants took one ominous turn after another as racism toward Black and Brown people continued unabated. In fact, racism intensified, and white supremacy acquired a supreme place in society as the Trump administration right-wing zealots enveloped the White House.

These conditions gave room for a democratic socialist to become popular. Excitingly, socialism became more accepted than capitalism, especially among younger people.

So why did the most progressive



Wisconsin voters stand in line during April 7 presidential primary.

candidate — the one calling for Medicare for All, for cancelling student debt, and the one who believes in climate change — get defeated?

The answer lies in the Democratic Party itself — and in Wall Street.

On April 9, USA Today wrote: “[S]tocks rose Wednesday after ... Sanders dropped out of the Presidential race. Many investors feared a Sanders nomination ... because of his policy proposals on health care and the economy, which analysts warned could crimp profits at insurers and other companies.”

Young people hung their heads, Wall Street cheered.

Wisconsin: ‘A day that will live in infamy’

“It’s not going to be a safe election. People are going to get sick from this,” said Brook Soltvedt, a 60-year-old in charge of running a polling place in the April 7 primary in Madison, Wis. (Portside, April 7)

Wisconsin has been ground zero for many reactionary policies, including union busting and so-called welfare reform. But it was also the scene of a heroic battle in 2011 when people occupied the State Capitol for several days. Even as progressive forces mobilized for the April 7 election and even though public health officials called for a postponement because of the pandemic, the right-wing State Supreme Court ordered that the election proceed.

The Portside article stated: “The U.S. Supreme Court added insult to injury ... overturning a lower court ruling that extended the deadline for absentee voting.”

Absentee ballots had to be postmarked Tuesday or returned by 8 p.m.

On April 9, the Wisconsin State Journal reported: “[A] postal worker had discovered ‘three large tubs’ of absentee ballots ... that never reached voters.”

Wisconsin is another sign that the reactionary right wing of the bourgeoisie, manifested currently through the Republican Party, has moved more and more to position itself to deny even the most basic rights to the masses. The movement must be on guard: The chicanery in Wisconsin may foreshadow events in November. Trump is openly stating he opposes mail-in voting because it benefits his opponents.

Black people and women fought like hell for the right to vote. Black people in particular died for that basic democratic right. History has shown that it is mass struggle that creates real change, not elections. But every basic right that workers have won must be defended.

Rights are being hammered, from the right to vote in a pandemic to the right to an abortion, education, a home, a job — and especially the right to live, as COVID-19 destroys communities, particularly communities of color.

And now Sanders, at a high level in the government, with a social movement behind him that could have helped to delay these attacks, has withdrawn.

Class struggle: Ballots or bullets?

On April 12, 1964, exactly 56 years ago in Detroit, Malcolm X gave one of his most inspiring speeches ever: “The Ballot or the Bullet.” He asserted that liberation cannot be won through the ballot box; it can only be won through our struggle.

A lot has happened since then, including Malcolm’s assassination. What has not happened is revolutionary fundamental change that makes the ballot box as irrelevant as an 8-track cassette player.

But what has happened is anti-capitalist sentiment has become more mainstream, something the Democratic Party machine is completely threatened by.

This wing of the Democrats sold out the Sanders’ movement. Nancy Pelosi, Chuck Schumer and all those comfortable, wealthy fat cats were determined to undermine the Sanders’ campaign — and Sanders ultimately allowed it. This is what is so tragic about the Sanders’ movement and momentum.

At the very moment that the Trump administration criminally mishandles the COVID-19 crisis to the detriment of the masses, the Democrats prefer to put forward a pathetic candidate. Joe Biden’s record on racism, sexism and imperialist wars is despicable. The line of least resistance — Biden’s electability — was preferred over the life-and-death issues that the Sanders’ movement was fighting for.

The Democratic Party is incapable and unwilling to fight the fight.

Fighting for socialism

Which way then towards socialism? In the context of what could be an economic crisis worse than the Great Depression, socialism must be desperately fought for if humanity is to survive.

The only way to defeat white supremacy, COVID-19 and all the reactionary rest is to remember Malcolm’s words and put them into today’s context: people power, mass resistance, general strikes, occupations, door-to-door organizing when that is safe — these are what make real change. When the workers are struggling and developing class consciousness, this is what will stop the zealots in the White House and the financiers on Wall Street.

In 2016, a Chicana actor took the stage during the Democratic Party Convention and said, “We did not cross the border, the border crossed us.” This year at a Sanders event in San Antonio, Texas, a Black actor closed his speech with the Assata chant spoken at many Black Lives Matter and other revolutionary events.

While deeply moving, it is tiring to have these slogans — developed in the streets — co-opted by the very party machine that is not only complicit in, but completely loyal to the capitalist system.

The revolutionary socialist movement should embrace the young people and others who wanted to see “Tio Bernie” win. We should hold them close because, together, we can create a new future: Real socialism will be just around the corner. □

Texas ban seeks to overturn legal abortion

Continued from page 8

supposed to protect. But, as has always been clear, anti-abortion fanatics don’t care about ‘life,’ they care about control.”

While noting that the Texas ban is temporary, Marwadi warned: “But our civil liberties are most fragile during times of fear and crisis; rights that are lost are not easily won back. It’s not just our physical health that we need to worry about during this pandemic. ... A small minority of zealots will do everything they can to use this crisis to eradicate the right to an abortion in America.”

A legal eagle at Slate, Mark Joseph Stern, pointed out in a March 31 article: “For several years, the 5th Circuit has been pioneering the jurisprudence of Trumpism, which includes a fervent

desire to end abortion. ... The court has already defied Supreme Court precedent to uphold one blatantly unconstitutional abortion restriction.” [Louisiana law now before the court. See Feb. 26 WW article.] But Stern cautions, “Only the Supreme Court may restrict the breadth of its rulings. ... COVID-19 gives them a perfect pretense to erode [legal abortion].”

Longtime prisoner activist in Texas, Gloria Rubac told Workers World about Texas Gov. Greg Abbott: “Denial of abortions is so wrong. Abortions are an essential healthcare procedure. Delaying an abortion is denying a woman the decision to control her own body. I really take exception to the Texas governor saying religious services are an essential business but abortions are not. What a piece of misogynist crap!” □

Why we say ‘free them all’

There were 27 progressive demands made by a united front of Black, Latinx and anti-racist white incarcerated men who carried out the historic Attica Prison rebellion in September 1971.

This was point 8: “We Demand that inmates be granted the right to join or form labour unions.” Point 7 read in part: “We Demand that industries be allowed to enter the institutions and employ inmates to work eight hours a day and fit into the category of workers for scale wages.” The prisoners also demanded adequate health care, such as any worker has as a human right, in or out of prison.

Many of these heroic prisoners were eventually slaughtered by the state troopers of Nelson Rockefeller, then New York’s billionaire governor. These demands could still be made today by the over 2 million prisoners languishing in local, state and federal jails and prisons in the U.S.

For aren’t these prisoners like other workers who are super-exploited for their labor? Are they not workers who come from poor and working-class

communities, whether urban or rural? And aren’t these workers being deeply impacted by the coronavirus in hugely disproportionate numbers because they are Black, Brown and Indigenous?

As in so many instances, this pandemic is helping to shine a bright light on the class character of prisons under capitalism. And what is revealed is ugly injustice that has existed for over two centuries.

Prisons do not exist for rehabilitation of those convicted, whether innocent or not. Prisons are not set up to guide people to a productive life beyond antisocial behavior such as theft, robbery, domestic violence, drug possession or killings.

Capitalist laws and courts exist to punish people through extreme brutal force, and not to resolve the root cause of their behavior with knowledge, patience and compassion.

One’s being determines consciousness. If a person grows up in an environment of poverty, unemployment and police occupation, they will have near to little chance to make a better life for themselves.

That is a life under capitalism — that

puts the profits of the super-rich before the needs of the people.

And even if there wasn’t a pandemic of COVID-19 now, there should still be a demand to free all prisoners. Because no human being can be expected to survive in small cells under lock and key for 23 hours a day, given rotten food and no showers, sanitation, light or health care, assaulted by guards and more.

But now the pandemic has accelerated the prisons into a full-scale crisis. The inhumane conditions, especially cramped cell blocks where social distancing can never happen, have become a breeding ground for infections and deaths.

It is no wonder that prisoners are fighting for their voices to be heard through their own protests, which have led to the release of prisoners in Chicago, Atlanta and elsewhere.

And people ask, Well, where will these prisoners go once they are released? Isn’t it too dangerous to release them? Aren’t they a “threat” to society?

Released prisoners should be treated like the millions of other people being

impacted by the pandemic. Their health should be cared for. Community groups should be funded by local and state governments to organize housing for prisoners in empty hotels and abandoned housing. Food should be distributed to them instead of sitting on grocery shelves and rotting. These prison workers should be eligible for unemployment benefits!

There are health care workers, many of whom have been laid off, who could provide vital counseling for prisoners who will need therapeutic treatment and even some social isolation — just not behind bars.

All of this and more could be done with organization on a mass scale even under capitalism. Where there is a will, there is a way.

If ruling-class criminals like those in the Trump administration can run free, don’t we owe it to our class — the working class who control nothing, not even their own lives — to free these members of our human family from the death traps called prisons?

That’s why we say: Don’t wait a moment longer. Free them all NOW! □

Virus statistics reveal class truth

By Deirdre Griswold

Because China is the most populous country in the world, and also the first to become infected with the COVID-19 virus, it is revealing to revisit from time to time the statistics on the epidemic’s progress there, compared to what is happening in the U.S.

What can we learn from the way the People’s Republic of China has handled this virulent disease?

As of April 13, the U.S. has reported a total of 561,159 cases of the coronavirus, with 22,133 deaths. China has reported 82,160 cases, with 3,341 deaths. In both categories, number of cases and number of deaths, the U.S. count exceeds China’s by about 7 to 1.

This huge disparity becomes even more startling when seen as a proportion of the overall population. Per million people, the U.S. has had 67 deaths. China has had 2.

While it is possible there could be a resurgence of the epidemic, China’s success until now in handling this extremely dangerous, and now worldwide, outbreak should be studied and give inspiration

to all those fighting the disease. In this country, however, it is totally ignored. China is mentioned only as the source of the problem, never as an example of how to confront it.

The big difference comes from the way the economies of these two countries work. Profits for capitalist owners are the driving force of the U.S. economy. What happens to workers who lose their jobs becomes a problem for local and state governments, but mainly for the workers themselves.

The coronavirus in the U.S. has upended everything from the stock market to local businesses to employment. No one knows how long it will take for life to return to any degree of normalcy.

On March 27, Congress passed a \$2.2 trillion “economic stabilization package.” Some \$877 billion was set aside for loans to businesses. Of the rest, direct payments of \$1,200 would supposedly go to millions of people earning up to \$75,000, with an additional \$500 per child under 16.

Many, many people are out of work. They need money now to buy food, pay rent and utilities.



Passengers in protective wear arrive at Tianhe Airport after it was reopened in Wuhan in China’s Hubei province on April 8.

Have you seen any of that money yet? But the Chinese city of Wuhan, the epicenter of the disease, has been reopened, as of April 8. Foreign Policy magazine wrote on March 25: “After two months of a near-total lockdown in many parts of the country, China seems to be getting back to business, with important indicators like electricity and steel demand and

auto manufacturing returning to levels not far from normal.”

China has allowed some capitalist ownership, but its foundation remains a planned economy that is controlled by the Communist Party based in the working class. That’s the big difference underlying China’s achievements in dealing with this dreadful disease. □

Trabajador de Amazon lucha contra el multimillonario Bezos

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No puedo obtener el desempleo en este momento porque [el proceso de solicitud es] muy loco, y [Amazon] probablemente lo disputará de todos modos. Tengo un amigo que ha estado durmiendo en su automóvil durante cinco días porque está enfermo, no puede hacerse una maldita prueba y no quiere traer [el coronavirus] a la casa porque tiene tres hijos pequeños y una esposa.

Estos multimillonarios deberían avergonzarse de sí mismos. No están haciendo nada para ayudar a las personas. Tienes tres opciones: puedes venir a trabajar y contraer el virus. O quedarse en casa y no le paguen. O contraer el virus y ponerse en cuarentena con paga. Esas son sus opciones: obtener el virus y cobrar. Obtener el virus y poner en cuarentena. O quedarse

en casa y quedar en la ruina, y sin hogar, posiblemente.

Aumento de salarios \$2? Eso es una bofetada. Realmente no entendía cuál era su mentalidad, pero lo entiendo ahora. Es pura maldad y pura codicia. Realmente no les importan las personas. Prefieren ver morir a toda su fuerza laboral.

Dios no permita que 800.000 empleados de Amazon se conviertan en portadores de este virus. ¿Si cada uno de ellos lo extiende a dos o tres personas? Todos están ahora en seis grados de separación. Hay un edificio de Amazon en cada ciudad importante en cada estado. Hay 5.000 de nosotros en un edificio. Somos el epicentro en la ciudad de Nueva York.

Venimos de los cinco distritos, tomamos el metro y el autobús todos los días. ¡Y están contratando a las personas que no están diagnosticadas!

¿Quieres aplanar la curva? Entonces cierra. Ahí está tu solución. ¿Necesitas hospitales? Mi edificio de Amazon en sí, cubre 14 campos de fútbol de la NFL.

WW: Y sin embargo, están construyendo hospitales de campaña en Central Park.

CS: Exactamente. Tienes a estos médicos y enfermeras trabajando en carpas. Estos multimillonarios deben avergonzarse de sí mismos. Apague su red durante tres meses. Paga a tus empleados. Envía tu dinero al campo médico. ¿Qué tan difícil es eso?

WW: No están dispuestos a sacrificar sus ganancias.

CS: Prefieren ver morir a las personas, ver cómo se acumula su dinero y construir una nave espacial.

WW: Terminaste tu carta con las palabras: “Estamos comenzando una

revolución y la gente de todo el país nos apoya”. ¿Qué significa esta revolución para ti y cómo puede la gente apoyarla?

¿Quieres ayudarnos a practicar el distanciamiento social real? Deja de hacer clic en “One Click Buy”. Simple. ¿Por qué no cerrar esta red de Amazon y dejar que nuestra gente se ofrezca voluntariamente para ayudar a las tiendas de comestibles con paga? ¿Por qué no? ¡Podemos hacerlo!

WW: ¿Hay una campaña para restaurar su trabajo? ¿Volverías si te ofrecieran un trabajo?

CS: Por supuesto que no. Les dije el mismo día que me despidieron: Quedate con tu mierda. Nunca quiero trabajar para un hombre que no se preocupa por las personas. Nunca. □

Infection of carrier crew blows up into Trump regime battle

By John Catalinotto

April 13 — Some 580 of the 4,800 sailors in the crew of the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt have tested positive for COVID-19 as of today. One sailor has already died. The rapid spread of the coronavirus has revealed and exacerbated a bitter conflict within the Navy command and between that command and the Trump administration.

What is still to be seen is will this serious conflict among those who give the orders to maintain U.S. worldwide economic and military domination alter how rank-and-file sailors in a professional military understand their role as cannon fodder? How much does this rift at the top reflect turmoil in the ranks?

The conflict broke into the open when the Roosevelt's commander, Capt. Brett Crozier, emailed a letter to 20 officers in the naval command arguing for him to allow his crew to leave the ship in Guam, be tested for the virus and enter quarantine if necessary. This letter, published in the San Francisco Chronicle on March 31, contained the sentences, "There will be losses" and "Sailors don't need to die." (tinyurl.com/qkqua59)

According to a lengthy article on April 12 by the New York Times' top military analysts, Acting Secretary of the Navy Thomas Modly was worried that Capt. Crozier's letter, written after four days of rebuffs from superior officers, would anger President Trump. He wanted to take action before Trump did, so he called colleagues asking for advice on firing Crozier. (tinyurl.com/wgx9trd)

"Most of them, including Adm. Michael M. Gilday, the chief of naval operations, and Gen. Mark A. Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told Modly he should order an investigation into the incident, and wait and see the outcome" rather than firing him, said the Times article.

But on April 2, Modly fired Crozier, relieving him of command of the aircraft

carrier. The same day, as the captain said farewell to his crew and left the ship, hundreds of sailors cheered him and chanted, "Captain Crozier, Captain Crozier."

Apparently, the sailors also believed they didn't need to die. The YouTube video of their cheering was seen around the world. Soon after that, Crozier tested positive for COVID-19.

In a vain attempt to scold the sailors for their support of Crozier and whip them back into line, Modly flew to Guam and addressed the crew over the ship's loud-speaker on April 6. He insulted Crozier, calling him either "too naive or too stupid to be the commanding officer of an aircraft carrier if Crozier didn't realize his letter would leak." He also openly scolded the crew for cheering Crozier and for being overly afraid of the virus.

Modly apparently failed to anticipate that his insulting speech would also leak. The recording of his epithet-laden comments got as much publicity as the cheers for Crozier had the day before.

A storm of criticism

Modly's comments unleashed a boomerang of criticism. Current and former top officers of the Navy criticized Modly for firing Crozier. Democrats in Congress demanded Crozier's reinstatement. A Change.org petition demanding that had gathered 350,000 signatures by April 12.

House Armed Services Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee Chairman Rep. Joe Courtney, D-Conn., called for Modly's removal on April 6. Courtney's statement indicated that he anticipated a negative reaction from the rank-and-file troops to Modly's criticism of their captain: "At this critical time, the men and women of our Navy need to know their leadership is laser-focused on ensuring their well-being and giving them the support they need to accomplish their mission."

Before another day was up, Modly was forced to offer his resignation. Mimicking



Sailors from the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt in Guam.

Trump's usual behavior, the former Acting Navy Secretary said the opposite of what he had said the day before. He apologized to the crew and said that he didn't think Crozier was stupid.

The president too had first attacked Crozier, but Defense Secretary Mark Esper immediately accepted Modly's resignation. He and Trump apparently were ready to let Modly take the blame and be fired.

Lawrence J. Korb, a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress and an assistant secretary of defense from 1981 through 1985, wrote in The National Interest on April 9 of the ongoing tension between the Trump administration and the Navy command. The "recently retired admirals Mike Mullen, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and James Stravridis, former NATO commander, both have publicly supported Crozier's actions." (tinyurl.com/tyal3yt)

Also irritating the top admirals was the president's previous decision to override the Naval justice system and pardon the Navy Seal commando serial killer, Edward Gallagher.

If Crozier is reinstated — a decision could happen soon — it may temporarily

quiet the rank-and-file protest shown when the crew cheered their fired captain.

The dilemma Trump and the admirals share, however, is that they need the loyalty or at least the obedience of the sailors to carry out wars of aggression — with or without COVID-19. The enclosed nature of an aircraft carrier, with sailors sleeping three deep in "open, shared berthing," then working and eating together, makes this ship a likely focus of the epidemic. The infection is also breaking out in the other military branches, where troops are asking that training and exercises be put on hold.

This incident has shown the sailors that the administration is indifferent to their well-being. Will it help show these workers in uniform — even though they are professional troops — that their true interests lie not in serving the interests of the super-rich as world cops, but in joining with the rest of the working class?

Catalinotto is author of "Turn the Guns Around: Mutinies, Soldier Revolts and Revolutions," which covers extensively the history of the American Servicemen's Union during the U.S. war against Vietnam.

U.S. economy crumbles as millions of workers lose jobs

By G. Dunkel

At least 17 million workers in the United States lost their jobs from the second week of March to the second week of April. That's 10 percent of the total workforce. The real number of workers without a job is higher, since the computer systems used to enroll workers in unemployment insurance failed under the load in many states.

Losing your job — which in the United States is often the source of health insurance — is perilous when a pandemic is raging.

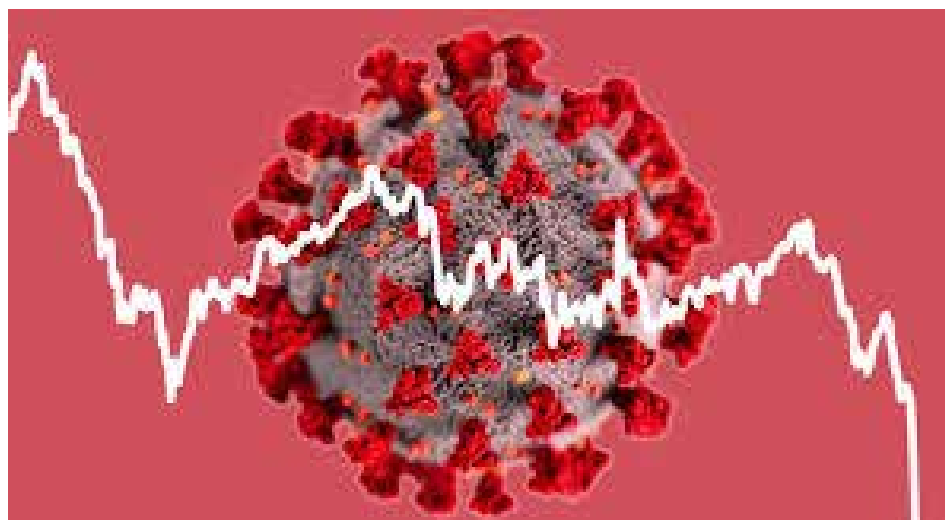
According to the U.N.'s International Labour Organization, the COVID-19 crisis is expected to wipe out 6.7 percent of working hours globally in the second quarter of 2020 — equivalent to 195 million full-time workers. More than four out of five people (81 percent) in the global workforce of 3.3 billion are currently affected by full or partial workplace closures.

In the Middle East the reduction will be equivalent to 5 million full-time jobs, in Europe 12 million and in Asia 125 million. The African Union estimates 20 million workers in Africa will be out of work.

Florida shows the problem

Florida shows the problems U.S. workers face in receiving UI payments.

Florida offers UI for only 12 weeks. Its application process was so overwhelmed



that its Office of Reemployment Assistance agents had to hand out printed application forms to people lined up in their cars. Filling these forms out and mailing them in adds further time-consuming steps to tunneling through the bureaucracy that blocks workers from getting the aid to which they are legally entitled.

In addition, unemployed workers told the Miami Herald that they made hundreds of unanswered telephone calls to the ORA. Before receiving a check, you have to complete a call.

The \$2 trillion CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act should provide an additional \$600 a week per unemployed applicant through July and an extension of the total benefit

to 39 weeks. But these funds must be funneled through individual states' UI.

Florida, whose website can't accept applications, still hasn't developed procedures and forms for unemployed workers to get funds due them.

Some workers in New York state with already existing UI claims have gotten the supplemental payment, but they report it is far from automatic.

Workers need these payments to pay their bills, buy food, pay the rent or mortgage. Many lower-paid workers live paycheck to paycheck. Missing one payment creates big problems.

Payments to workers, even if they are not working, also prop up the economy, which is one of the reasons the capitalists

tolerate UI. Another is to avoid provoking workers, who could get angry and take action.

The CARES Act also specifies that every U.S. taxpayer with a Social Security number, even those who make too little income to file for taxes, gets a payment from the IRS of \$1,200, with \$500 for dependent children 16 and under on a sliding scale. Workers who have bank accounts that accept direct deposits should get these payments automatically.

However, the 30 percent of U.S. workers without a bank account, who are considered "underbanked," will have to get a check in the mail. This is scheduled to take up to 20 weeks, into mid-September.

That the surge in unemployment is so rapid makes normal estimates of how this crisis is affecting economic activity totally unreliable. Some economists guess U.S. economic output could fall by 4 percent in the second quarter of 2020 — others guess 30 percent. What happens to the pandemic and policy choices by the governors and the White House will play a big role in what happens with unemployment.

Paradoxically, the stock market is going great guns. After April 9, the S&P 500 was up 25 percent from its recent low on March 23 and down only about 14 percent for the year. Investors appear satisfied that the stimulus package from Congress and the actions of the Federal Reserve will boost the shares of big corporations. □



FOTO: TELESUR

MO ENTREVISTA

Trabajador de Amazon lucha contra el multimillonario Bezos

Por Ted Kelly

Chris Smalls es un ex trabajador de Amazon que fue despedido por organizar una huelga el 30 de marzo en las instalaciones de JFK8 Amazon en Staten Island, Nueva York. Los jefes se negaron a cerrar la instalación a pesar de los casos confirmados de COVID-19 entre los trabajadores. A raíz de la terminación injusta de Smalls, un memorando filtrado de los ejecutivos de Amazon reveló la intención de la compañía de mil millones de dólares de lanzar una campaña de difamación racista contra él. Smalls habló por teléfono con Ted Kelly de Workers World el 5 de abril.

Workers World: ¿Puede contarnos sobre los eventos previos a la huelga del 30 de marzo?

Chris Smalls: Amazon no estaba preparado para esta pandemia y ese es el verdadero problema.

A principios de mes comenzó como rumores: “Alguien está enfermo con eso”. “Alguien dio positivo”. Siempre fueron rumores, rumores, rumores. Pero en cada rumor hay un poco de verdad. No juego cuando se trata de salud, vida y muerte. Entonces lo escalé a Recursos Humanos y dije: “Escuché que enviaste algunos gerentes a Seattle hace un par de semanas. Escuché que uno de ellos regresó y se fue temprano porque estaban enfermos. Esa es una alerta para mí”.

Seattle fue el epicentro en un momento dado. No estoy tratando de decir que trajeron el virus y fueron el Paciente Cero aquí, pero quieres adelantarte al juego.

Mis sentidos se agudizan ahora. Estoy viendo a mis asociados enfermarse. Veo a mis compañeros de trabajo llamando con más frecuencia. Eso es aterrador para mí. Entonces comencé a tomarme días libres.

Estaba tomando tantos días que no tenía nada que hacer más que mirar las noticias. Me convertí en estudiante [de la situación]. Estaba viendo esta pandemia en la televisión y viendo los números subiendo todos los días. Lo estaba viendo acercarse más y más a Nueva York. Pensé: “Trabajamos en un área poblada de alta densidad; Es posible que este virus esté en mi edificio. Tenemos 5.000 empleados que entran y salen de este edificio semanalmente de todo el área tri-estatal.

Eso fue lo que ocurrió antes de que tuviéramos un caso confirmado, antes de que volviera a trabajar el martes [24 de marzo]. Tenía que tener dinero para pagar mi renta el 1 de abril. Ya había agotado todas mis opciones: tiempo no pagado, tiempo pagado, tiempo de vacaciones, lo usé todo. También saqué dinero de mi 401k. Tuve que volver a trabajar.

Esa mañana me encontré con un colega. Ella se veía extremadamente enferma. Sus ojos estaban inyectados en sangre; ella estaba fatigada. Ella me dijo que estaba enferma y que fue a la prueba. Le dije: “Tienes que irte a casa. Ni siquiera te quedes aquí. Vete a casa.” Ella se fue a casa.

Dos horas después tuvimos una reunión de gerentes donde supe que teníamos nuestro primer caso de alguien que había dado positivo, pero que no había estado en las instalaciones en algunas semanas. Las instalaciones de Queens [Amazon] cerraron, desinfectaron todo y les pagaron a todos solo una semana antes. Esperaba que hiciéramos exactamente lo mismo. Yo estaba tristemente equivocado.

Todo seguía como siempre. Dijeron: “No se lo digas a los asociados. No queremos causar pánico”. Esa fue la última vez que trabajé para Amazon.

[Derek Palmer, con quien viajó para trabajar, y yo] comencé a trabajar detrás de escena. Estaba enviando correos electrónicos al CDC, (Centro para el Control de las Enfermedades), al Departamento de Salud, al Departamento de Estado, a la oficina del gobernador. Lo que sea, lo hice. Me puse en contacto con todos los medios de comunicación. Los medios solo me estaban ignorando. Y pensé: “No puedo quedarme en casa de nuevo por cualquier número de días y dejar que la gente se enferme”.

Dicen que violé varias pautas, ino, ellos lo hicieron! Su política es deficiente. Permite que las personas vengán a trabajar enfermas porque no se le confirma el pago de cuarentena hasta que obtenga los documentos del médico. Mi compañero de trabajo dio positivo al día siguiente el miércoles [25 de marzo]. Gracias a Dios que vine el martes y la envié a casa. ¡Imagínese si no lo hiciera! Ella habría estado cerca de mis asociados por otras diez horas. Había estado allí toda la semana, ya expuesta a cientos de personas.

Llegué al edificio todos los días, fuera de mis horas de trabajo, me senté en el edificio durante ocho horas al día. Llevamos a diez personas a la oficina de recursos humanos todos los días para plantear sus preocupaciones.

Tan pronto como mi compañero de trabajo me envió un mensaje de texto y dijo que dio positivo, corrí a la oficina y les dije “He estado expuesto y todos mis empleados también lo han estado. Tienes un departamento enorme que ha sido expuesto. Necesitas cerrar el edificio. Inmediatamente.”

Tenían un montón de excusas. Dijeron que hablarían con los gerentes regionales. Dijeron que tenían que revisar el video para ver con quién se puso en contacto. Pensé: “Vaya, ¿realmente vas a revisar la cinta ahora mismo cuando te digo que he estado expuesto?” Fui a casa y seguí en eso. Estaba enviando más correos electrónicos, diciéndole a todos los que podía: el departamento de policía local, OSHA. Lo hice todo.

Supe que la gente protestó en un edificio de Kentucky y el gobierno los cerró hasta el 1 de abril, con sueldo. Regresé el jueves [26 de marzo]. La gerencia me dijo que eso no sucedió, eso no es cierto. Los empleados en realidad no protestaron; el gobierno lo cerró. Le dije: “¡Este

es tu edificio! Eres el líder del sitio. Ciérralo”. Traje a 10 asociados más. Nada entendían. Otro día perdido.

Para el viernes [27 de marzo] había terminado de ser amable. Hice que la gente esperara en la cafetería mientras entraba solo a la oficina, y tuve una discusión con el líder del sitio y el jefe de Recursos Humanos. Imprimieron las pautas de los CDC. Me acusaron de insubordinación. Simplemente estaban evitando cuál era el verdadero problema.

Luego fui a mis comunicaciones internas, Amazon Chime, donde enviamos mensajes de texto a los gerentes de operaciones. Veo que uno de los gerentes de operaciones les dice a los supervisores que mientan a los asociados y ofrezcan VTO [tiempo libre voluntario]. Le dije: “Espera un minuto, somos un negocio esencial; estamos en horas extras obligatorias.

¿Vas a enviar gente voluntariamente a casa? ¿Por qué?” Él dijo: “Dígan una obstrucción y que no tenemos camiones”. Intentaban reducir la fuerza laboral en caso de que aparecieran los CDC, por lo que estarían cumpliendo con las sugerencias del CDC.

WW: ¿Entonces salieron con su propia narrativa para proteger su responsabilidad?

CS: Exactamente. Y ya se estaban preparando para algún tipo de protesta. Entonces me fui.

Regresé el sábado [28 de marzo] a las 7 de la mañana y fui a la cafetería. Lo mismo que había estado haciendo todos los días. Fue entonces cuando me pusieron en cuarentena. ¡Ahora ni siquiera pusieron en cuarentena a la persona con la que conduzco para trabajar todos los días! Estuve en sus oficinas toda la semana, ino se pusieron en cuarentena! Ni los otros empleados con los que había estado tratando durante horas. Ninguno de ellos. Solo yo.

WW: Eso es algo tan obvio.

CS: Descarado. Entonces Derek y yo nos fuimos a casa. Teníamos que hacer algo drástico. Seguí llamando a los medios y el New York Post finalmente contestó el teléfono. Les dije que íbamos a salir a protestar el lunes [30 de marzo]. Tenía 24 horas para armar eso. El Post lo publicó, y ahora todos los medios de comunicación que me habían estado ignorando están llamando a mi teléfono. Puse al mundo en aviso para venir a JFK8 el lunes.

Todo, desde la hora hasta el clima, fue planeado. Vi que la temperatura iba



Chris Smalls con sus tres hijos.

a ser de 65 grados; iba a estar agradable afuera. Le dije: “Hagámoslo a la hora del almuerzo”. Iba a darle una huelga al mundo y eso es exactamente lo que hice.

WW: Eso es genial.

Pero no soy “inteligente” o “elocuente”. [Risas]

Los trabajadores de Amazon salieron de las instalaciones de JFK8 en Queens, Nueva York, el 30 de marzo.

WW: Hablemos de ese memorando filtrado de los ejecutivos de Amazon, donde dijeron que no eras “inteligente” o “elocuente”. ¿Crees que el racismo jugó un papel en que te atacaran?

CS: Definitivamente me encontré con perfiles raciales trabajando para Amazon. Esta fue en realidad la segunda vez que me dieron de baja. Soy alguien que ha aguantado muchas tonterías en los últimos cinco años. Especialmente siendo un supervisor africano-americano.

Cuando estaba en Amazon en Connecticut, estaban tomando medidas energéticas contra los gerentes que robaban el tiempo de la compañía. Ni siquiera era asalariado en esos momento, estaba por hora, así que tenía que “rastrear” cada uno de mis movimientos. Los gerentes no tienen que hacer eso.

[Para la primera terminación] Llegué tarde. El trabajo comenzó a las 7:15 a.m. y llegué allí dos minutos tarde. Literalmente dos minutos tarde. 7:17 a.m. Entré. Y [la gerencia] me dio de baja. Por dos minutos [Su excusa era] el grupo de gerentes que robaban dos o tres horas al día. Pero por dos minutos me terminaron.

Definitivamente hay algo de racismo entre la empresa. Fui atacado por esta compañía mucho antes de esta situación.

WW: En la poderosa carta abierta que escribiste, dijiste: “Amazon cree que somos imprescindibles”. ¿Podrías explicar a qué te referías con eso?

CS: Me despidieron durante una pandemia. Les importan un bledo mi vida, mis tres hijos que tengo que alimentar.

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