

100+ strikes demand PPE before profits!

By Martha Grevatt

Since the beginning of March, workers have held over 100 walkouts, sick-outs, sit-ins, pickets and protests over their bosses' failure to protect them from the highly contagious coronavirus. Common demands include adequate personal protective equipment, modifications to the work environment, hazard pay, paid sick leave and the shutdown of nonessential jobs such as casino construction and vehicle assembly.

The most recent actions have hit fast

food restaurants, poultry and meatpacking plants, high-rise apartment buildings, assisted living housing, city sanitation departments, shipyards, bookstores, warehouses, hospitals, pizza parlors and supermarkets. The six weeks of workplace resistance have occurred in most of the 50 states and Washington, D.C. Strikes have been large and small — from a handful of workers at five New Jersey high-rises to 13,000 carpenters across Massachusetts.

From hospitals to grocery chains, food processing to mass transit, workers

deemed "essential" are in the forefront of this emerging class struggle. They are being asked repeatedly to choose between their livelihoods and their health, while they watch their coworkers die.

Fatality figures tell it all: Four workers dead at a Tyson chicken plant in Georgia, 68 New York City transit workers, 42 grocery workers and 46 health care workers around the country, and on and on. By the time this article is published those numbers — a small sample and likely a shocking undercount — will be out of date.

The meatpacking industry's disregard for workers, who are forced to toil in cramped conditions without protective equipment — as they did before the outbreak — has made these workers especially vulnerable to exposure. In southeastern Iowa, at least 186 workers have tested positive for COVID-19 at the Tyson Foods pork processing plant in Columbus Junction, resulting in two deaths. The Columbus Junction plant has been shut down, but the company does not plan to close the Tyson Fresh Meats plant in Waterloo, showing Tyson's policy of putting profits over workers' safety.



Health care workers, supporters protest at University of Michigan's Rogel Hospital, Ann Arbor, April 15.

As reported by The Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier April 16, "Hundreds of Tyson employees in Waterloo have refused to work in recent days," as "the company is not protecting workers from coronavirus spread." Calls for Tyson worker walkouts and consumer boycotts are growing louder as the number of COVID-19 cases continues to escalate statewide and around the country.

Racism killing workers

Essential workers are disproportionately workers of color. The huge processing plants of Smithfield, Tyson, JBS and other food corporations employ large numbers

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CO-MORBIDITIES OF CAPITALISM

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
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Big \$ and the ultra right 9

22 million new jobless 9

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The real criminals are not in prison

By Gloria Rubac

The following excerpted remarks were made by Gloria Rubac, a longtime Texas anti-death penalty activist, on an April 9 Workers World Party webinar entitled "Free them all." Go to tinyurl.com/y993k6rj to hear all the talks.

Why do we say FREE THEM ALL!
Who's in prison and where do these prisons come from? Prisons came about after the Civil War, after the end of slavery.
Here in a Houston suburb called Sugar Land, 95 graves were found last year as a new school was being built. This city had been home to large sugar plantations during slavery. Some of the remains still had chains on them of people who had been leased convicts.
So we say FREE THEM ALL, because every single person who is in prison is a political prisoner. Why? They are victims of this political and economic system.
Who should be in prison? The head of Tyson Foods should be in prison. He told an older Black woman worker at one of their chicken-processing businesses who was

very sick, to come back to work. She is now dead, as are two of her coworkers.
The Tyson Foods executives should be in prison for murder.
The head of Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center in Houston should be in prison. My daughter, a registered nurse, is working there in the ICU, but she doesn't have an N95 mask and has worn the same cotton mask for two days. I can go on Amazon to buy a mask. Why in the hell can't this major hospital get proper masks?
The executives of McDonald's or Kroger grocery stores should be in prison. They don't supply personal protection equipment for their workers — essential workers.
The military generals and the warmongers should be in prison. They are responsible for mass murder all over



Gloria Rubac

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MUNDO OBRERO WORKERS WORLD

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COVID-19 has exposed everything wrong with capitalism:
• No national planning for universal free, quality health care.
• No provisions to support families from cradle to grave.
• No guaranteed high standard of living for all people.
• Institutionalized racism, sexism, LGBTQ2+ bigotry.
• Class system rigged in favor of profits for the 1%.
• Billions for the Pentagon, cutbacks for people's welfare, including food and housing.
Workers World provides the theoretical and organizational ammunition needed to crush this inhumane system and create one that supports the working class and all oppressed people — revolutionary socialism. If the need for that becomes clearer every day during this devastating pandemic — where everyone is being called upon to show solidarity and form a united front — then

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

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.
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Prison hoax sparks response from Mumia Abu-Jamal supporters

By Betsey Piette

When a Pennsylvania Department of Corrections spokesperson callously claimed that Mumia Abu-Jamal was being hospitalized with COVID-19 at 5 p.m. on April 15, the news was shared worldwide in minutes. Supporters, who have been misled by DOC statements in the past, immediately flooded the institution with calls demanding confirmation from Abu-Jamal himself.

By 8:45 p.m., bowing to pressure, the DOC allowed Mumia to call supporters. He confirmed that the official report was false. “I am fine, I am not hospitalized,” he reported. “What I need is freedom.”

This racist and cruel hoax appears to be the prison’s response to a day-long twitter storm and phone call blast to Pennsylvania state and prison officials demanding the release of Abu-Jamal and all state prisoners. The COVID-19 pandemic imposes a death sentence on the incarcerated, including 66-year-old Mumia, who already suffers from cirrhosis of the liver.

As of April 15, a total of 53 prisoners had been tested out of 45,000 inmates, with a 17 percent positivity rate; one death had been reported on April 8. In the last month there has only been a reduction of 474 out of 45,000 state prisoners.

Virtual press conference exposes DOC lies

On the morning of April 16, Abu-Jamal supporters held a virtual press conference where they went into detail on the actions of the DOC spokesperson and its impact on family, friends and supporters of Abu-Jamal.

Santiago Alvarez, a University of California Santa Cruz student who called the prison, described the recorded conversation he had with the DOC spokesperson and played a portion of it. The person clearly told Alvarez: “Mumia was taken to the hospital 30 minutes ago ... suffering from headaches and breathing problems ... to be

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Fred Hampton, Jr
Nancy Mansour
Gloria Rubac
MYia X

tested for COVID-19 as a precaution.” The speaker identified himself as “Philip Howard.”

On Alvarez’s second call to the prison, the person who answered the phone said, “No one has left here today” and “Abu-Jamal was still in his cell.” From the recordings it seemed clear that the same individual answered both calls despite giving a different name when prompted and claiming that he had no idea “who the hell Philip Howard is.”

Johanna Fernandez, with the Campaign to Bring Mumia Home, stated, “It is time to release the people

who sit at ground zero for COVID-19. Release all prisoners who are immunocompromised. There are over 700,000 prisoners across the U.S. suffering from hepatitis C. These people are being sentenced to death as we speak.” Fernandez stated that the prison official’s callous misinformation, which was recorded, should lead to disciplinary procedures and his firing.

Delbert Africa, recently released MOVE 9 member, recounted how these “racist, sadistic guards and staff did the same thing to me, denying I was sick, denying I was hospitalized,” misleading his friends and family when he was actually very ill in prison. Calling for the release of Mumia, Russell Maroon Shoatz, Mutulu Shakur, Jalil Muntaqim and other political prisoners, he complimented the solidarity movement for forcing the DOC to take Mumia from his cell to make the call confirming his condition — a very unusual step.

Temple professor and activist Marc Lamont Hill called the prison spokesperson’s actions “shocking — a stunning level of cruelty and indifference.” Hill reported that as of April 3, while the COVID-19 infection rate in New York City, the highest in the U.S., was 6.48 per thousand, the infection rate at Rikers Island prison was 54.05 per thousand. “Every incarcerated person is in danger. You can’t have social distancing in prisons.”

Megan Malachi, with Philly REAL (Racial, Economic and Legal) Justice, and longtime Abu-Jamal activist Dr. Suzanne Ross also spoke. Malachi stated: “The false statement issued by the prison in the middle of a global pandemic is yet another example of the inherent violence of mass incarceration.”

Ross recounted how the global movement forced the state DOC to make hepatitis C medication available to Mumia and other prisoners just a few years earlier.

Abu-Jamal supporters have planned a series of events marking his 66th birthday from April 23 to 26, including a virtual press conference on April 23; a Webinar/Teach-In on April 24; “Mumia Libre, an Instagram Live Dance Party” on April 25; and “Poetry in Motion, a noon-to-midnight reading of Abu-Jamal’s works” on April 26. For more information and details, visit mobilization4mumia.com/new-events or facebook.com/cbmhome/. □



The real criminals are not in prison

Continued from page 2

the world. Talk about serial killers! And if they do not kill our youth, who they send to fight their imperialist wars, these youth come back so mentally and physically damaged that it affects them for the rest of their lives.

The police who murder a Black or Brown youth — they are serial killers. Politicians refusing to shut down prisons are going to be serial killers.

And if Iran can release 45,000 prisoners, then so can every one of our 50 states.

And what about the border patrol, the ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) agents, those who separate parents from their children? That is child abuse raised to the extreme.

Right now in Texas, there are 15 to 20 prisons already on lockdown because guards and prisoners have COVID-19. These prisons are becoming death camps.

I want to read from a letter from comrade Nanon Williams, a man who was innocent yet sent to death row, after being arrested when he was only 17 years old. Nanon’s sentence was commuted to life.

‘They need to let us out’

“When we do get to go outside, we are being shook down by guards, meaning we are strip searched, and the guards are wearing the same gloves as they strip search each prisoner. We do not know what they are passing on to everybody. When we go to chow, they take an entire cell block, not small groups. The dishwasher machine is broken, and they only have a couple of hundred trays, so four

or five prisoners have already eaten off the same dirty tray that’s being refilled. There’s one pitcher of water or juice on each table for four that sits there for all the shifts of prisoners who come to that same table. When they’re patting us down going into the chow hall, guards are using the same gloves on each prisoner, and some are not even wearing gloves at all.

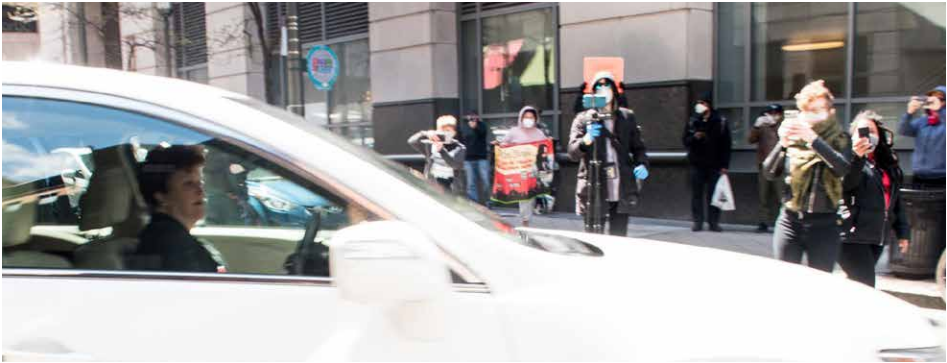
“When they take us to shower, there’s room for 80 men, but they’re taking at least a hundred at a time. Who knows what that water is spraying on us. And to answer your question: NO! We don’t have bleach. There’s nothing to clean our own living areas. And lastly, the stress and fear are causing severe problems, especially for the mentally ill who are locked down and hearing about this virus. They don’t understand what’s going on. They are getting into fights, and it is really bad.

“I think we need something revolutionary to happen, rather than keeping us locked up. They need to let us out! Put us on monitors if they want, but this virus is going to spread over every prison system.”

The real criminals are not in prison. Prisons are concentration camps for the poor and oppressed. In Houston’s county jail, there are 9,000 prisoners, the largest facility for the mentally ill in town. And most of those in the county jails have not even been convicted of any crime, haven’t gone to trial yet. They are locked up because they are too poor to get out on bail. This is criminal, and the people who are responsible for this are criminals.

Open up the jails, the prisons, the detention centers. Let’s lock up the real criminals! □

Philadelphia failure to empty jails causes COVID-19 death



Protesters yelled ‘Free our people’ as Judge Anne Marie Coyle drove out of the courthouse garage.

The first COVID-19 death in Philadelphia jails occurred on April 14. She was Yvonne Harris, a 48-year-old woman incarcerated at Riverside Correctional Facility. In the meantime, city judges have mocked the danger our incarcerated neighbors face and have only reduced the jail population by 13 percent in the past month — far below what other big cities are doing as well as what activists are demanding.

In response to Harris’ needless death, a quickly organized protest held on April 15 at the “Criminal Justice Center” included two life-size cardboard coffins representing two local incarcerated people who have died so far of COVID-19.

In addition to Harris, a Philadelphia state Department of Corrections prisoner, Rudolph Sutton, died of the virus on April 8. Innocence Project Legal Director Nilam Sanghvi said on April 15: “Mr. Sutton should never have been incarcerated in the first place. ... His tragic death

underscores the urgent need for the governor, the Department of Corrections, the legislature, and the courts to act quickly so that another factually innocent person does not risk death in prison due to COVID-19.” (Philadelphia Inquirer, April 15)

Live reports by cell phone from people inside Philly jails told the demonstrators how difficult it is to be locked up at a time of the deadly pandemic.

At one point, participants chased Judge Anne Marie Coyle to the parking ramp and yelled “Free our people” as she drove out. Judge Coyle has refused to let even one prisoner out of jail despite the pandemic’s danger.

The two cardboard coffins were left behind, leaning on the wall of the courthouse, the place responsible for both unnecessary deaths. Organizers with the #No215Jail Coalition pledged to hold more rallies whenever anyone dies in the city’s jails of COVID-19.

— Report and photo by Joe Piette

WW COMMENTARY

People die as capitalists profit from pandemic crisis

By Lucy Cruz

April 21 — Seven weeks after initial reports broke on the first confirmed COVID-19 case in New York City, we are in the midst of an unprecedented public health crisis. As of today, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports 776,093 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 41,758 total deaths in the U.S. Despite warnings from the global health community dating back to December and early January, the Trump administration’s response to the developing crisis has been lethargic and wholly inadequate, leaving the U.S as the country with the most confirmed cases worldwide at this writing. (tinyurl.com/qqt3aq6)

Many have assessed the current state of affairs, illuminating the failures of both state- and federal-level legislation and legislators alike to quell panic and to care for the growing afflicted population. These critiques offer an abundance of points on the limited capacity of our governing bodies to care for us, even in New York City, the financial heart of U.S imperialism.

I would go a step further and contend that the system isn’t failing at all, but is, rather, operating exactly as intended. Capitalism is concerned above all else with generating profits, and it does so at the expense of the lives of the workers who sustain it.

A brief overview of history from the last 50 years could provide numerous examples of entire foreign regimes toppled by the U.S. for barely better profit margins. The COVID-19 crisis is no different, as profiteers are quick to find new ways to make gains from human suffering. Today we see how one person’s affliction can be used as another’s stepping stone to pursue the elusive “American Dream.”

Welfare for the 1%

On March 12, the ruling class blatantly made its primary concern known by injecting \$1.5 trillion to support plummeting Wall Street markets without a second thought. COVID-19 was proving to be lethal to industries as well as human beings, bringing the mighty U.S economy to its knees.

Suddenly, the same federal government that couldn’t find funds for social programs and universal health care could pull billions out of thin air. The government of the ruling class has the money; they just don’t want to spend it on anyone aside from themselves.

A March 13 article in The Atlantic glossed over the incredible welfare received by the 1% and argued a “progressive case” in claiming the trillions were necessary for the greater good of the nation to prevent an economic collapse. Right-wing spectators and capitalist apologists were quick to note that the short-term loans offered to big-name firms wouldn’t “cost” the federal government anything — assuming they would be paid back in full with interest. (tinyurl.com/t9npntk)

In doing so, capitalists and apologists silently acknowledge their prioritization of a system more concerned with generating profits than saving thousands of human lives, willing to turn a blind eye to the suffering of the masses to preserve their standard of living.

Profits off pain and suffering

Furthermore, many U.S. capitalists had full knowledge of the crisis to come as the initial outbreak was occurring in Wuhan. These exploiters rushed to export personal protective equipment and supplies soon to be desperately needed in the U.S. Sellers were solely incentivized by the promise of profit, not by mitigating the spread of the disease. U.S. manufacturers exported more than \$17.5 million worth of face masks, more than \$13.6 million in surgical garments and more than \$27.2 million in ventilators to China during the first two months of the year. (USA Today, April 2)

Today, the outbreak in China is winding down, while it continues to ramp up in the U.S. Ventilators and PPE are in very short supply and demand gets higher every day as understaffed hospitals try to manage an ever-growing influx of patients. Equipment prices skyrocket when hospitals must buy on the “free market” which is perpetually profit-driven.

In the trading markets, masks are being aggressively peddled for exorbitant prices, incentivizing the hoarding of supplies by anyone who can afford to. According to Reuters, the federal reserve of supplies isn’t looking much better, with the U.S Strategic National Stockpile nearly depleted of masks, ventilators and other medical supplies. (March 31) The Federal Emergency Management Agency now presides over the stockpile, and has assured the public that it will replenish its stocks with the \$16 billion stimulus bill recently approved by Congress. Where’s a \$1.5 trillion bailout when you need one?

Recent controversy regarding White House advisor

(and Trump son-in-law) Jared Kushner shows how language can reveal much of the 1%’s priorities and intentions.

Politico reported that the online summary of the Department of Health and Human Services was changed following Kushner’s statement that the National Stockpile was the “property of the federal government, not the states.” Clearly differing with Kushner, the deleted definition described the stockpile as “the nation’s largest supply of life-saving pharmaceuticals and medical supplies for use in a public health emergency severe enough to cause local supplies to run out.” (April 4)

Although this may appear to be a simple difference in semantics, I believe that the new definition reveals the intention of the ruling class to hoard and hold the necessary supplies for itself, literally rewriting the role of the stockpile to better suit for-profit interests.

Heaviest burden on poor and oppressed people

The capitalist system in which we live allocates COVID-19 testing as a privilege, rather than a necessity and human right. Tests are currently in very short supply despite high demand and are provided mostly to people already experiencing severe symptoms in hospital emergency rooms throughout the country.

Most of our facts and figures concerning the crisis are good estimates at best, as local governing bodies simply don’t have the capacity to test everyone. Thousands of cases remain undocumented, and asymptomatic carriers — people who only express milder symptoms of COVID-19 — continue to fuel the spread of the disease. In a recent NPR interview, CDC Director Dr. Robert Redfield said: “One of the [pieces of] information that we have pretty much confirmed now is that a significant number of individuals that are infected actually remain asymptomatic. That may be as many as 25 percent.” (March 31)

Not so shockingly, the wealthy have increased access to testing and high quality medical care through private physicians. Sources such as Vulture have been keeping comprehensive track of stars who have tested positive for the virus, including A-listers such as Tom Hanks and Idris Elba. (April 2)

While I wouldn’t wish this affliction on anyone, I’m much more concerned with the uncontested spread of COVID-19 in places such as Rikers Island, New York City’s main jail complex. The Guardian reported Rikers’ top physician, Dr. Ross McDonald, described, the prison’s head doctor described its current state as a “public health disaster,” with cases growing from 1 to 200 within 12 days. (April 1) Thousands of incarcerated people currently endure inhumane conditions, all without PPE and comprehensive medical care, highlighting the cruelty of the U.S prison-industrial complex. As COVID-19 continues to spread, the call to “Free Them All” only grows louder.

Beginning of the end of empire?

The COVID-19 crisis may very well be the nail in the coffin for the already crumbling U.S empire. Cracks in the armor become ever more apparent as U.S citizens face the grim reality that its governing bodies place profits before their own lives.

But the flagship of Western imperialism continues to stubbornly maintain its course despite the icebergs floating precariously ahead, determined to make it through or sink trying, pulling down working and oppressed people in its wake.

Unfortunately for the ruling class, we’re not going down like Leonardo DiCaprio in the movie “Titanic.” There’s hope on the horizon, thanks to medical innovations such as the Interferon Alfa 2B drug, produced by the Changchun Heber Biological Technology joint venture, combining Cuba’s extraction technique with China’s manufacturing prowess.

According to Granma, this antiviral medication has been proven to be effective in treating COVID-19 as well other viral infections such as Hepatitis C, and has been cited by China’s National Health Commission as one of the most used drugs in combatting the pandemic in that country. (March 23) Due to the ongoing U.S. blockade on Cuba, thousands of people are missing out on potentially life-saving medication.

Something has to change. The “free market” will not save us. This crisis already has, and will continue to show us that capitalism is lying on its deathbed. It’s up to socialists to read its last rites. □

Tax Amazon for housing and COVID-19 relief

By Jim McMahan
Seattle

Seattle already had over 11,000 people affected by a dangerous hepatitis epidemic when the COVID-19 pandemic arrived. In the week of March 15-21, a total of 37,296 unemployment claims were filed in Seattle and King County, following the biggest stock market crash since the Great Depression. Many thousands of workers have since been evicted and forced to live in cars or tents, or to move to far away suburbs, due to big real estate landlords profiting from sky-high rents.

Meanwhile, the Amazon super-monopoly, a trillion-dollar company based in Seattle, continues its dominance of the city and the rest of the world. The Tax Amazon campaign seeks to tax the top 3 percent of Seattle’s businesses at 1.7 percent.

Tax Amazon has launched a ballot initiative campaign to collect 30,000 signatures to get the proposal on the ballot. City Councilmember Kshama Sawant has been holding mass meetings, City Hall hearings and lately webinar meetings to build this campaign. People like Sara Nelson, president of the Association of Flight Attendants, and representatives of the Amazon worker strike in New York have spoken out for the initiative.

Allied with Sawant are Councilwoman Tammy Morales and a coalition of labor unions, community organizations and socialist groups.

The legislation would raise \$300 million a year. In its first year it would provide cash assistance to help working people who lost income during the COVID-19



A sign left by protesters at Amazon's world headquarters in Seattle at the start of the city's Tax Amazon campaign in 2017.

economic crisis.

In the second year of the law with “no sunset provision,” the \$300 million would go to build affordable, nonprofit social housing for workers. The housing would be built under a Green New Deal to assist in the conversion of gas-heated homes to sustainable electric-heated housing.

Seattle, with 55,000 Amazon workers, has become a company town. The most visible opposition to CEO Jeff Bezos was a walkout and march of 1,500 workers during the Global Climate Strike in September 2019. Amazon Employees for Climate Justice has continued to protest Amazon’s polluting policies, despite its firing of two key leaders on April 10.

Amazon is resisting the Tax Amazon movement every step of the way. But the campaign has overcome many obstacles and is not turning back. □

Interview with antiwar Navy veteran Jon Hutto

‘The average sailor has been politicized’

Workers World Managing Editor John Catalinotto held the following interview with antiwar Navy veteran Jon Hutto to discuss the recent events on the USS Theodore Roosevelt where Hutto was assigned from 2004 to 2008.

John Catalinotto: Jon, we first met in Norfolk in 2007 at a news conference where you announced a petition sailors had signed protesting the Iraq war.

As I remember, you were assigned to the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt. That ship has been in the news again, as nearly 600 of its sailors tested positive for COVID-19. Tell our readers — few of whom have been on carriers — what it is like on that ship.

Jon Hutto: JCat, good to hear from you and respect your consistency over the years and decades. First, I spent more than four years within the United States Navy in one enlistment, a little over four years onboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71) known as the “TR” in the Navy, aka “The Big Stick,” from July 26, 2004, until Sept. 1, 2008.

I then spent the remainder of my time on shore duty as a mass community specialist for the Navy magazine, All Hands, from Nov. 1, 2008, until early May 2011. I separated honorably from the Navy on Aug. 16, 2011, after a total of 7 years, 7 months and 1 day.

Life aboard a carrier-in-port depending on your rate (your job) can be smooth sailing (not overly time-consuming) especially in my rate (mass communications). Our job was telling the ship story through print, video, still photography, etc.

In port, we tended to get off somewhat early unless you have maintenance, extra duties, etc., if the carrier is not in workups-operational training mode for deployment or still in deployment mode. (There is a 11-month yard period for a carrier to build back up for deployment.)

However, once in deployment mode or fully deployed, it’s a full 24-hour operation out to sea. With the ship company plus air wing aboard, you’re talking roughly 5,000 sailors on ship. The aircraft carrier is the biggest ship in the Navy fleet.

JC: Is it possible to do “social distancing” aboard ship?

JH: Social distancing is beyond comprehension and not doable especially for the blue shirt enlisted sailor (rank E6 and below).

Enlisted sailors sleep in what’s known as racks, which are pretty much the average size of the human body. Berthing (sleeping space) is quite tight. Everything is tight on a ship all the way down to P-ways (passage ways), ladder-wells, workspaces.

Out to sea, with the air wing aboard coming through that hangar-bay you’re literally walking with your head and full body on a swivel to avoid bumping into a jet plane and/or tripping over the chains that locked the jets in place.

I had a shipmate, Javier, who was taking pictures one time in the hanger. He came back to the shop with a black eye from having walked slap into a jet. The mess hall is tight, the heads (bathrooms), everything. It’s beyond tight on a carrier and remember — this is the biggest ship in the Navy.

JC: When we met at that 2007 press conference in Norfolk, Va., you were publicizing one of the best organized petition protests within the military during the U.S. war on Iraq. What was the attitude of the rank-and-file sailors at that time toward the war and the command?

JH: From those sailors within my direct sphere, their disposition was either one of support or wishing us well on the endeavor. A few sailors were somewhat agnostic; some worried that there may be retaliation against me and others despite our knowledge of military regulations and support from civilian organizations such as Veterans For Peace and the Center for Conscience and War.

I only remember barely a handful being “Joe Navy” about the war. Reason being is probably more practical and less an extension of ideology.

The average young sailor has a spouse; many have young children. One of the most heart-wrenching scenes

I’ve ever witnessed was those families in front of the ship before the sailors (mostly male) board for deployment (now nine months I understand; six and a half during my time). Their commitment to the Navy is mostly economic and very much connected to supporting their loved ones.

As for the Command of the ship, during my time I had three captains, deployed under one of them. The first was a gristly commander who came up through the ranks. The second an Academy graduate. Both were loved by the crew for different reasons. We heard the third was responsible for an error that killed a sailor. It was the summer of 2008. The carrier can be very dangerous, especially for the enlisted sailor.

JC: And how did this compare with Capt. Brett Crozier, who was just cheered by the crew after being fired, and then the Acting Secretary of the Navy who fired Crozier in turn had to resign.

JH: A number of emotions and thoughts, John. First, I believe and know that the actions of Crozier are unprecedented based on my experiences as an enlisted sailor. It is commonly known that every CO of an aircraft carrier strike group wants to make admiral. His job is to operate the carrier, maintaining a disciplined, obedient and well-trained fleet of sailors.

And if the CO is obedient to Navy top brass and executive leadership of the country, it almost guarantees them that career advancement. I was shocked to learn of an open letter that had gotten to the mass corporate media.

I was not shocked to learn that Crozier had been relieved from duty, nor was I shocked to see the mass of sailors supporting him as he departed the ship. If they were deeply forward deployed (I don’t know what stage they were in) — on average sailors can be out to sea 25-plus days without a port visit — working an average 16-hour day — not including “man overboard” and fire drills — in the midst of a very tough work schedule, coupled with COVID-19 hitting the ship, Crozier standing up for them is huge for ship morale.

Most important, however, is that Crozier’s action sharpened the contradiction inherent in military service, especially for the enlisted corps, who are by and large cannon fodder for the country’s imperialist missions abroad.

I would have to believe, based on the mass cheering for Crozier as he was departing, that the average deck plate sailor has been politicized by what has taken place, especially with the now former secretary of the Navy having attacked the CO on the 1MC to all the sailors on board.

The environment is beyond ripe for some organizing to take place within that ship with a strong focus on the E5 and below, reminiscent of the GI-movement era along with our work 10-plus years ago.

The E5 and below are the foundation of the ship’s operation. Absent the obedience and compliance of the deck plate sailor, no ship can operate. The true power of the ship does not reside in the Captain, the Navy Secretary or the Joint Chiefs, but directly within the enlisted sailors below deck. As an organizer, I salivate thinking of the opportunity present here to build a movement.

JC: If you had an opportunity to talk to the crew of the Roosevelt, what would you say?

JH: In the spirit of the late Kwame Turé (formerly known as Stokely Carmichael) who supported the Fort Hood Three as chairman of SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) during the Vietnam Era, I would strongly urge and advocate for the E5 and below (for those would be our target base) to organize,



In the background of Jon Hutto speaking is 1969 New York Daily News headline about a company of infantry troops who refused orders to go into battle in Vietnam.

organize, organize!

I would begin to potentially expose and educate them on the historic movement struggle within the Navy they may not be aware of (the SOS movement of the early 1970s on the USS Constellation, dissenters such as Susan Schnall from the Vietnam Era, along with the antiwar/antiracism work we did 10-plus years ago on the TR).

This demonstrates the power of the working class within the military, connected to the struggle for the working class both domestic and global to bring the warmaking ruling class to its knees, serving as a spark and catalyst for our struggling class at this pivotal COVID-19 hour.

JC: If you had a chance to talk to people in the antiwar movement, those who oppose the U.S. military, what would you tell them about what their attitude should be toward the sailors?

JH: In my conversations and dialogues over the years with antiwar movement activists along with anti-oppression fighters overall, I remind those lacking a class analysis that the overwhelming majority of the military, enlisted in composition, come directly from the abandoned and marginalized working class of the United States.

These persons come largely from towns decimated by globalization, towns such as Steubenville, Ohio, and Flint, Mich. I remember in my shop on board, it felt like nearly a third of the sailors came from Ohio. They come from towns where the Military Recruitment Office is the major employer of young people.

At the end of the day, the greatest impulse of any person is to survive within the society. I would struggle with persons within the movement to make the distinction between those such as the Navy Secretary and the Joint Chiefs representing the ruling class, and those forced to carry out orders based on economic need and compulsion — the enlisted ranks comprising the working class.

Lastly, we must look at history, which the late Malcolm X taught us is best prepared to reward our research. Based on the history of enlisted personnel dating back to the Vietnam Era and beyond, their innate loyalty, as demonstrated in this crisis, is inherently with their families and their class.

The challenge is, whether we as organizers are prepared and trained enough, clearly understanding the timing of this present situation, to immerse ourselves deeply within that core, building the necessary relationships and solidarity to do as you have advocated over the years, John: Turn the guns, planes and bombs around and stand down. That is our challenge.

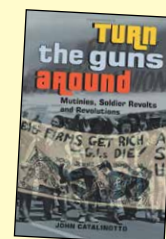
To contact Jon Hutto directly, email him at jonathan-hutto99@gmail.com. For his book, “Antiwar Soldier: How to Dissent Within the Ranks of the Military,” see online vendors, and click on tinyurl.com/y9v4unxs and tinyurl.com/y809n5f9 to follow his recorded statements. □

Turn the Guns Around: Mutinies, Soldier Revolts & Revolutions

by John Catalinotto

Draftees and enlistees thwart the Pentagon’s war machine, leading the antiwar movement and organizing a union in the conscript military to battle war, racism and their officers.

324 pp. workers.org/books



Vital health care workers face massive layoffs

By Sara Flounders

Health care workers are suddenly facing the largest layoffs and pay cuts in three decades.

These workers are being justifiably lauded as the frontline of defense in a global pandemic. But rather than thanks, health care workers face hardships as administrators, investors and stockholders look first at the bottom line of profit.

Altarum, which describes itself as a nonprofit research firm for vulnerable and publicly insured populations, provided a detailed study of the job loss and pay cuts. It reports that in past economic recessions, jobs in health care grew. Not this time.

More than 43,000 health care workers lost their jobs in March. More drastic cuts in hours and pay are expected in April and moving forward.

The Altarum report lists just how deep the cuts go: Mountain Health Network furloughed the majority of its 6,000 employees at hospitals throughout West Virginia. Cookeville Regional Medical Center in Tennessee cut 400 staff and cut hours for others. The Medical University of South Carolina cut 900 workers. Ohio’s largest health system, Mercy Health, cut 700 workers. Boston Medical Center cut 10 percent of staff, approximately 700 workers.

Trinity Health Mid-Atlantic, a Catholic nonprofit hospital chain which employs 125,000 workers in 92 hospitals and hundreds of continuing care centers in 22 states, is making drastic cuts in staff and shortening hours and pay. The pay cuts range from 20 percent to 70 percent.

The cancellation of all elective surgeries during the pandemic is what is impacting hospital bottom lines. Mary Dale Peterson, president of the American Society of Anesthesiologists, defined the problem: “Elective



PHOTO: CALIFORNIA NURSES ASSOCIATION

Health care workers protest April 13 after more than 200, including registered nurses and caregivers, were laid off by Palomar Medical Center Poway in Poway, Calif.

surgeries are the lifeblood of many hospitals, if not all hospitals. They account for 50 to 60 percent of profits for most.” (abcnews.go.com, April 12)

In a global health crisis, even in the hardest hit areas, medical centers are downsizing. Health care workers who are trained to fight COVID-19 are having trouble finding steady employment. Hundreds of hospitals are expected to close after the crisis.

Layoffs will increase

Even more serious layoffs are ahead. A report by HealthLandscape and the American Academy of Family Physicians estimated that 60,000 family practices will close or significantly scale back by June, and 800,000 of their employees will be laid off or have hours sharply reduced. The across-the-board cuts include nurses, doctors, medical assistants and janitors. (USA Today, April 2)

An April 6 New York Times article, “During a Pandemic,

an Unanticipated Problem: Out-of-Work Health Workers,” summarized the contradiction this way: “As hospitals across the country brace for an onslaught of coronavirus patients, doctors, nurses and other health care workers — even in emerging hot spots — are being furloughed, reasigned or told they must take pay cuts.

“The job cuts, which stretch from Massachusetts to Nevada, are a new and possibly urgent problem for a business-oriented health care system whose hospitals must earn revenue even in a national crisis.”

This crisis of vast layoffs and staff cuts in the time of greatest need is because medical care in the U.S. operates strictly within the framework of the capitalist system. Every institution, even so-called nonprofit institutions, operate on the basis of maximizing profits and ruthlessly cutting losses in order to survive.

The health care system of huge hospital conglomerates operates on tight margins, keeping the smallest possible inventories in stock. That meant hospital systems were incapable of ordering inexpensive personal protective equipment, supplies and essential medicines in advance to plan for the pandemic emergency.

The drive for profit underlying every supplier, every company involved in health care, means that the U.S. today has the most expensive and least accessible health services in the world.

Medical care faces the same insurmountable, artificial constraints as food production. There are giant surpluses of food in the U.S., including milk, grains, vegetables and fruit. But food is left to rot in fields, plowed up or poured down the drain when it can’t be sold at a profit. Yet 40 million people in this country are categorized as “food insecure,” and food banks face lines of desperate people.

A capitalist crisis brings every ugly contradiction in class society into stark view. □

A prescription for health care justice

After much discussion, the health care workers caucus — comprised of Workers World Party members working in various areas of medicine and patient care — has developed a 10-point program, or prescription, to address some of the ailments in the U.S. health care system. We intend to elaborate on each point in future articles and webinars.

1. Free health care for all. End profit-based medicine.

No one should ever go without health care or ration medicine. It is both counterproductive and immoral to charge for and profit from medicine. We need community and health care worker control over medicine.

2. Continue and expand reproductive and mental health services.

Reproductive health, which includes access to contraceptives and safe abortions, is essential to the health and welfare of the people. This is also true for mental health services, especially at a time when so many are isolated from their support networks.

3. Make health care accessible. Reopen and build more hospitals and clinics.

Making health care accessible means ending systemic racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia and transphobia in medicine, while reeducating providers. It also

means having a clinic in each community that’s large and staffed enough to meet the people’s needs. No one should be more than 15 minutes away from a doctor or a hospital.

4. Produce and issue personal protective equipment to all workers.

Millions of workers are needlessly exposed. Increase production of PPE and immediately issue it for free with training on how to use it.

5. Abolish pharmaceutical and medical technology patents.

Share and coordinate research efforts freely across borders. Patents individualize and slow down research efforts. Information should be shared freely, especially with countries that lack infrastructure to conduct research. The U.S. population should not be deprived of medicines that are developed elsewhere.

6. Free all prisoners and ICE detainees. Stop raids, deportations and policing.

Prisons are concentration camps for the poor; detention centers are concentration camps for immigrants and migrants. COVID-19 turns them into death camps. FREE THEM ALL.

7. Free and accessible COVID-19 testing.

This is a pandemic; we need to know who’s infected and who is not. We need

to conduct free, widespread testing for COVID-19 that people can obtain easily.

8. End racism, ableism, misogyny and anti-LGBTQ+ bigotry in the delivery of health care.

The virus is not particular about whom it attacks. It crosses all borders. Every human being is precious, and there can be no exceptions or sacrifices. Different standards of health care for different people must be abolished.

9. Retool industries to make medical equipment and supplies.

Companies continue to force workers to make bombs, vehicles, small commodities and other things that are useless in fighting a pandemic. Immediately halt production of nonessentials and retool more factories to make medical supplies and equipment.

10. End all U.S. wars and sanctions.

You can’t quarantine during an airstrike, and you can’t fight a virus without medical supplies and equipment. Drop all U.S. sanctions and end the wars both at home and abroad. End the blockade of Cuba and allow everyone access to Cuba’s lifesaving medicine.

This 10-point program is not a complete list of problems with and solutions to the capitalist health care system. We know that the capitalist system is incapable of

answering all our demands and that they can only be met through the process of socialist revolution. We fight for a better economic and health care system not only for ourselves and our children, but for future generations whom we will never meet. □

A Texas nurse comments

“We nurses are a peculiar bunch. We can all talk to one another, and we can all understand one another. Whether we work in different geographic areas, practice in different specialty settings or even have very different politics, we all speak ‘nurse.’ And we all have the same mindset: Our patients come first. We suit up and we show up. That’s what we signed up for, and that’s what we do. We’re not looking for your sympathy, but there are things you can do to help us.

“And please stay put, keep your distance, and wash your hands. That can help reduce the number of patients who need our care.”

Thank you,
Judy Lerma RN
San Antonio, Texas

Forty percent of COVID-19 deaths not in official count

By Sara Flounders

April 21 — How many people have actually died of the COVID-19 virus and related conditions?

Already more people have died of the coronavirus in the United States — 41,758 as of April 21 — than in any other country. New York City with 13,240 deaths is the epicenter. The U.S. has now more than 776,093 confirmed COVID-19 cases, the largest such number in the world.

But there may be an enormous undercount of those who have died, nationally and in NYC — as high as 40 percent.

The lack of ability to even arrive at consistent numbers exposes how fragmented and compartmentalized the U.S. for-profit health care system is today.

A partial picture

The New York Times, NBC News and other mainstream media agree that official statistics are only a partial picture and

may significantly understate the death toll. The figures do not include thousands of people who have died at home or died in nursing homes. The likelihood is great that Black and Brown people dying in oppressed communities, lacking access to health care, are being undercounted.

The death count includes only those who have tested positive for COVID-19 and have died in hospitals. But the U.S. is far behind most countries in testing. Less than 1 percent of the U.S. population has

been tested for the coronavirus.

If a family member dies at home in NYC from COVID-19 or any condition flowing from the virus, they probably won’t be included in the official death toll because of a discrepancy in the city’s reporting process.

If a family member dies in a nursing home anywhere in the U.S., they may not be included in the fatalities.

Continued on page 7

COVID-19 and the crisis of the elderly

By Teresa Gutierrez
San Antonio, Texas

This Texas city rarely makes national news. But since the outbreak of COVID-19, the so-called River City has made the national news twice.

The later one was the poignant scene on April 9 of 10,000 families lined up for a food bank distribution. The scene exposed the crisis of hunger in this country.

The first national news, however, was the case of a nursing home, the Southeast Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, in the predominantly Brown and Black southeast part of this city. News reports on April 1 stated that residents and staff at the facility had tested positive for COVID-19.

Since then, 17 of the elderly residents have died from the virus, and 28 of the staff have been infected or become sick.

Community leader Tommy Calvert called the nursing home “a house of horrors.” (Fox News, April 16)

KENS radio website noted that during the facility’s last government inspection in 2019, Medicare gave it “one out of five stars.” (April 15)

Many have written that “a country is judged by how it treats its frailest members.” How sad that after having the chance and privilege of living a long life, workers are considered dispensable and disposable, simply because they are no longer able to produce wealth for the bosses.

COVID-19 exposes conditions for the elderly

COVID-19 has laid bare for the world to see that the capitalist system is incapable and unwilling to take care of its sick or vulnerable, including the elderly. COVID-19 substantiates that a “for-profit” decentralized health care system must be abolished. And it must be abolished now.

Early on in the COVID outbreak, Seattle was hit, and it too had a nightmarish outbreak at a nursing home, where beginning Feb. 26 more than two dozen residents died. The New York Times said: “The outbreak ... exposed the great vulnerability of the nation’s nursing homes and assisted living facilities, and the 2.5 million people who live in them.” (March 4)

The article continued: “These institutions have been under increasing scrutiny ... for a unique role they play in inflaming epidemics. Research shows these homes can be poorly staffed and plagued by lax infection-control practices, and ... residents frequently cycle to and from hospitals, bringing germs back and forth.”

At the San Antonio facility where COVID-19 surfaced on April 1, workers were found to “work at 10 other nursing homes” at the same time, also showing the brutal schedule of low-wage caregivers. (KSAT News) More headlines continued to reveal the crisis.

On April 15, a New York Times article announced, “After Anonymous Tip, 17 Bodies Are Found at Nursing Home Hit by Virus.” It added, “There have been 68 recent deaths of residents and nurses from the facility in a small New Jersey town.”

The next day, the newspaper headlined: “29 Dead at One Nursing Home from the Virus. Or More. No One Will Say” about a nursing home in Queens, N.Y.

Imagine the pain, uncertainty and fear of the families of those elders. Imagine not being able to hold your mother or wife or partner, one last time. Imagine the horror of not knowing how your loved one spent their last moments on Earth, or the sadness of not being there to comfort your loved ones because (correctly so) nursing homes are suddenly on lockdown.



San Antonio health care workers take care of coronavirus patient.

Nursing homes in bad shape before COVID-19

In 2000 the Department of Health and Human Services stated: “People are dying ... because they don’t get enough water and nutrition into their system. ... A congressional report says 1,600 U.S. nursing homes — nearly one-third — have been cited for abuse.” (CBS News, July 20, 2001)

Nineteen years later on April 18, a Washington Post article wrote: “Forty percent of more than 650 nursing homes ... with publicly reported cases of the coronavirus have been cited more than once ... in recent years for violating federal standards meant to control the spread of infections.”

These violations included “unsafe conditions that can trigger the spread of flu, pneumonia, urinary tract infections and skin diseases. Dozens were flagged by inspectors only months before the coronavirus pandemic struck the United States.”

The facilities that had broken federal regulation standards for safe conditions and now had COVID-19 deaths included Pleasant View Nursing Home in Maryland where “24 people had died” of the virus; the Canterbury Rehabilitation and Healthcare Center near Richmond, Va., with 49 deaths; and a center in southwestern Pennsylvania where “officials have warned that all 750 residents and staff members could be infected.”

The staff at these institutions cannot be blamed for the problems, even if some have carried out antisocial behavior while performing health care duties. In reality, it is the capitalist system that is at fault, not the health care workers.

If these nursing homes had already been cited, where was the government follow-up to make sure corrections had been made?

Low pay, lack of training, difficult hours and demanding tasks make the care of our elderly challenging under capitalism. It is not easy to deal with diaper changes or bed sores for adults, especially if the patient has dementia.

Nonetheless, there are reports after reports that health care workers are going out of their way to tend to the needs of the elderly, despite low pay. Countless family members sing the praises of certified nurses assistants, nurses, receptionists, administrators and others who take time to FaceTime or Skype residents with their family members on the outside during this period. That is beyond the call of duty.

The care of the elderly is a very important job that requires skill and, one would dare say, tenderness. The job — really the career — should provide quality training and pay extremely well.

This is not likely to happen without a mass struggle.

COVID-19 must lay the basis for that struggle.

Under socialism the elderly would not be thrown out to pasture. Elders would be seen as a source of pride, wisdom and history; they would be treasured as they are, for example, in Indigenous communities.



A challenge for Marxists

Silvia Federici, professor emerita and a teaching fellow at Hofstra University, challenges the left to make the demand of care for our elders part of the struggle for socialism.

In “On Elder Care Work and the Limits of Marxism,” Federici writes: “Care work ... especially eldercare, has come in recent years to the center of public attention ... in response to a number of trends that have put many traditional forms of assistance into crisis. First among these trends has been the growth ... of the old-age population and the increase in life expectancy which has not been matched by a growth of services ... for the old.”

One key factor, she writes, is “gentrification ... that has destroyed the support networks and forms of mutual aid on which older people living alone could once rely, as neighbors would bring food, make beds, come for a chat.”

“As a result,” she continues, “... it is now recognized that for a large number of elderly, the positive effects of a longer life-span have been voided or clouded by the prospect of loneliness, social exclusion and increased vulnerability to physical and psychological abuse.”

She appeals to the left to make the question of elder care part and parcel of the work of Marxists and revolutionaries: “The struggle over elder care must be politicized and placed on the agenda of social justice movements. A cultural revolution is also necessary in the concept of old age, challenging its degradation as a fiscal burden on the state and the younger generations (on one side), and (on the other) its mystification as an ‘optional’ stage in life that we can ‘cure,’ ‘overcome,’ and even prevent.”

The road to socialism will be multigenerational

When one considers the shortened lifespan in the Global South or among prisoners, the homeless, in oppressed U.S. communities, it is right to conclude that growing old is now a privilege.

Young people today face one existential crisis after another. The climate crisis alone evokes the question: How long do even millennials have on this planet?

But in struggle after struggle — whether fighting against climate change or a lack of health care or fighting to raise the minimum wage — we see young and old hand in hand.

The generations may not always understand each other’s languages in entirety, but young revolutionaries understand that any benefit they have was built on the shoulders of their elders.

And elders — despite back pains and other tolls of aging — have all along fought to change society for future generations.

A better world is indeed in birth. Whether elders on the left live long enough to see that world, they will nonetheless go down fighting for socialism — until death.

Gutierrez’s 90-year-old mother lives in a San Antonio nursing home two blocks from the Southeast facility with the Covid-19 outbreak.

Forty percent of COVID-19 deaths not in official count

Continued from page 6

The New York Times reported April 10 that in the first eight days of April, 1,891 people died at home or on the streets of NYC. But paramedics are not performing COVID-19 tests on those they pronounce dead.

For all these reasons, New York City’s official death count is far lower than the real toll.

Counts can also vary between states and between state and city governments. New York state counts only those who have died in hospitals. New York City counts those who died in hospitals and at

home if they already tested positive. But most deaths at home are people who have not been tested.

However, one revealing figure is that over the first five days of April, more than eight times the number of deaths were recorded in New York City than during the same period in 2019. (NY Times, April 10)

Nursing home deaths not counted

Nearly 2,500 long-term care facilities in 36 states are battling coronavirus cases, according to data gathered by NBC News from state agencies. (April 10) That’s an explosive increase of 522

percent compared to a federal tally just 10 days ago.

NBC News counted 2,246 deaths associated with long-term care facilities, based on responses from 24 states, and cautioned that the figures are an undercount. Key states with many nursing and long-term facilities, including Florida, did not provide any data. This was also true for California, Michigan and Pennsylvania, states with large outbreaks.

In fact, half of all states said they could not provide data on nursing home deaths or declined to do so. Lynn Sutfin, a spokeswoman for the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services admitted:

“We don’t currently have the infrastructure within that system to collect the information and report it out.”

Speaking to NBC News, David Grabowski, a professor of health care policy at Harvard Medical School, said: “It’s impossible to fight and contain this virus if we don’t know where it’s located.” (tinyurl.com/uo36tek)

That the U.S. cannot count, much less track, the human toll of this historic pandemic once again exposes a capitalist health care system that puts profits before people. □

Texas statewide protests demand ‘Shut down ICE detention centers!’

By Workers World Texas bureau

Across the state of Texas on April 19, social distancing protests in the form of car caravans circled detention centers and Immigration and Customs Enforcement offices demanding the release of all migrants in custody. The violent borders that allow for migrants and refugees to be detained in the first place was and is a crime against humanity. Additionally, in the face of a global pandemic, those kept in cages have a high risk of the coronavirus spreading quickly and are unable to take even the most basic measures to protect themselves.

Members of Never Again Action, along with RAICES, FIRE (Fight for Im/migrants and Refugees Everywhere), Rise Up, About Face, Grassroots Leadership, Workers World Party, Party for Socialism and Liberation, the Autonomous Brown Berets de San Antonio, Refuse Fascism and Democratic Socialists of America

attended in multiple cities. Protests took place across Texas in Austin, San Antonio, Dallas, Corpus Christi and Houston, with central demands of “Free them all” and “Close the camps.”

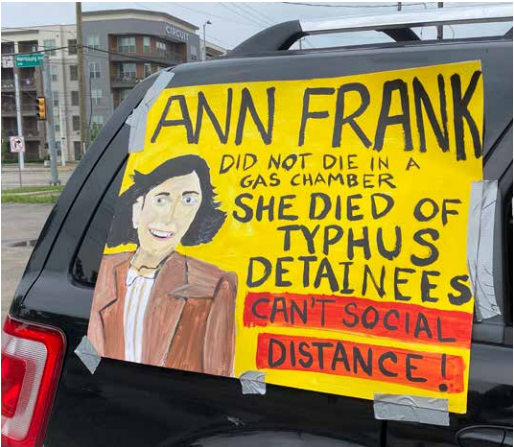
Demonstrators from the Austin area met at a location near the city center where they placed signs on vehicles while remaining socially distant. Then the caravan of 50 cars drove to the T. Don Hutto “Residential Center” in Taylor, Texas. This facility is owned and operated by the private company CoreCivic, formerly known as Corrections Corporation of America.

In San Antonio, “Chinga la Migra,” “Melt ICE” and “Set Them Free” were some of the slogans painted on windshields or taped to the sides of more than 40 cars participating in the action against migrant detentions. Honoring COVID-19 pandemic isolation guidelines, Workers World Party members from San Antonio and other cities stayed in their autos as they joined the caravan. They demanded



the release of ICE detainees, honking their horns and circling the San Antonio ICE office at 1777 NE Interstate 410 Loop.

Gloria Rubac, representing FIRE, set the scene in Houston at 419 Emancipation Ave., where the private company Southwest Key owns and operates a center for children separated from their families. “As a raucous car caravan circled around a downtown center for migrant children today,” she said, “I was excited to see around 20 cars with signs, flags and banners on them. This health crisis certainly affects migrants, either in detention or waiting on the border, more than most populations. Solidarity in any form we can initiate is important. Trump and the politicians who see migrants as expendable are racist and criminal. This support today is one small step in a struggle for im/migrants and refugees. We



WW PHOTO: MIRINDA CRISSMAN

must keep the heat on.” Whether owned and operated by private companies or run by ICE, these centers are making a few folks rich at the cost of many migrants’ misery. Those locked up face potential death sentences from the deadly virus, with little to no protections. This moment calls on everyone to ensure that mass extermination of vulnerable populations never happens again.

Contributing to this article were Mirinda Crissman, Luis de la Cruz, Eno and Gloria Rubac

N.J. car caravan raises demand #FreeThemAll, exposes detention center conditions

By Sara Flounders
Elizabeth, N.J.

Resistance continues, even in the lockdown conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite essential social distancing guidelines, social justice organizations have stepped forward to actively defend the most vulnerable.

Car caravans across the country have surrounded jails, detention centers and city halls with the resounding demand: Free them all! Mass petitions, intense phone banking and online forums have focused on breaking the deadly lockups.

Since social distancing orders were implemented in New Jersey on March 16, seven driving protests have been organized, calling for the immediate release of people held in Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention centers. Family members of immigrants held in detention are especially active in the #FreeThemAll NJ campaign.

A car caravan drove to the notorious Elizabeth Detention Center on April 17.

The action called once again on Gov. Phil Murphy and ICE Field Office Director John Tsoukaris to act immediately and release all people held in immigration detention. While the car caravan circled the center, other activists with ICE Free NJ who could not participate were busy making hundreds of calls to county officials and the Elizabeth Detention Center.

The cars met at a restaurant parking lot close by and drove with flashing lights and blaring horns three laps through the EDC parking lots and then back past the prison for another round.

This detention center has been a focus of protests, suits, reports and exposes for more than 20 years. The systematic abuse of migrants is well documented in reports by NJ Advocates for Immigrant Detainees, the NYU Law Immigrant Rights Clinic and the National Immigrant Justice Center. Previous reports documented lack of access to clean drinking water, spoiled food, denial of medical care and torturous solitary confinement.

Past civil disobedience actions, human

chains and blocked roads have challenged these abuses. In the face of a highly contagious, rapidly spreading coronavirus, such unsanitary conditions can be a death sentence for prisoners whose sole crime is the lack of a piece of paper.

‘If this were a kennel for dogs, it would have been shut down’

Alejandro Jaramillo, an organizer with Cosecha New Jersey, described the situation: “Today, people who have tested positive for COVID-19 are living in a small cramped room where they are placed for quarantine, with little medical care and a lack of soap. The rest of the people who are detained there live in open dorms. They sleep in beds 5 feet apart as they watch the people around them get sick and they are served spoiled food. If this were a kennel for dogs, it would have been shut down.” Amanda Rapace documented the history of this systematic abuse in NJ Today. (tinyurl.com/y96hcsto)

Over 3,000 medical professionals have signed petitions calling on ICE to release

detainees to stop the spread of COVID-19 in crowded, unsanitary prison conditions.

Based on campaigns and political pressure, several jails have reduced their crowded conditions. But the Elizabeth Detention Center has maintained its overcrowded, pre-pandemic number.

The broad-based effort for migrant justice in New Jersey includes Kathy O’Leary, coordinator for the New Jersey Region of Pax Christi, a consistent organizer of past solidarity actions that now have a new sense of urgency. Others involved include Action 21, Cosecha New Jersey, Central Jersey Coalition Against Endless War, Workers World Party, Green Party New Jersey, Jobs & Equal Rights for All Campaign, Never Again Action, Lazos America Unida and NJ5 Indivisible.

These new forms of struggle, which arise to confront rapidly deteriorating conditions, will be further developed in the immediate future for May Day actions all across the country. □

PPE before profits!

Continued from page 1

of migrant workers from Africa, Asia and Latin America. Compared with white workers, a larger percentage of Black workers — 50 percent — work in food service, retail, health care and other sectors of the service economy. (CNN, April 18)

These workers — mostly low-wage workers — have formed the vanguard of the “\$15 and a union” movement. Now they are on the frontlines in the life-and-death struggle for workplace safety.

They have millions of potential allies, from the 22 million newly laid-off workers to the 2.3 million workers behind bars — who are also rebelling — to the 1.3 million “workers in uniform” in the military.

PPE before profits!

Slogans such as the tried-and-true standard “People before profits” have reemerged along with a new modification: “PPE before profits.” The capitalist drive for profit is behind the widespread shortages of PPE and the failure of employers

throughout the capitalist economy to provide basic safety. The working class is revolting over the bosses’ insistence that they work unsafely.

The capitalists can’t tolerate these challenges to their authority and are firing workers and their leaders in retaliation. Amazon, whose CEO Jeff Bezos is the world’s richest person, fired leader Chris Smalls for organizing a walkout at the company’s Staten Island warehouse. When more walkouts followed, Amazon fired three more organizers.

A subcontractor operating in a Michigan General Motors plant fired Travis Watkins for warning workers on Facebook their jobs were unsafe. Nurses in Santa Monica, Calif., and Voorhees, N.J., have been disciplined for refusing to work without an N95 mask while taking care of COVID-19 patients. Nearly 10,000 health care workers across the country have tested positive, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

But as the 100-plus job actions demonstrate, workers will risk their jobs when

their lives are at stake.

Strike all at once!

The phrase “rolling general strike” was used to describe the situation in Detroit in February-March 1937 when there was not one big general strike, but multiple sit-downs every single day. Altogether there were 4,700 strikes in the U.S. that year.

The class struggle is not at that stage yet. But with over 100 strikes in six weeks and no sign of ebbing, it is starting to look like a rolling general strike. Imagine if all these courageous workers — and many more facing danger on the job — all walked out on the same day!

If Trump has his way, millions of workers will be forced back to work on May 1 while they are worried about still unsafe working conditions. May 1 — May Day — is also International Workers Day, traditionally a day of strikes around the world. In that spirit, a broad coalition of worker and community organizations has called for a general strike on May 1.

The call, posted April 1 by Cooperation

Jackson, reads in part:

“We should take inspiration in that we are not alone in calling for and acting upon a call for a general strike. Workers throughout the country and the world are spontaneously taking matters into their own hands. Autoworkers, chicken factory workers, nurses, drivers, grocery store workers and more are all taking independent action. Calls for a rent strike are going viral, as working poor and homeless workers are starting to occupy hundreds of vacant homes to meet their needs and practice the necessary social distancing to ensure their survival. Things are in motion and we need to build upon this momentum, quickly.

“This crisis changes everything.

“We have an opportunity to take control now, and we are ready to fight for a society in which all people can live with full autonomy without having to worry about survival.”

Mike Kühlenbeck contributed to this article.

Big money backs ultra-rightist protests

By Makasi Motema

Amidst the unending stream of grim news flowing from the COVID crisis, a new disturbing image has emerged over the past week: the sight of Trump supporters congregating in large, potentially infectious, groups to protest in states all over the nation. In flagrant contravention of stay-at-home orders, public safety, common sense and good taste, hundreds of protesters have flocked to state capitals decked in red, white, and blue to challenge government precautionary measures.

It’s difficult to understand why people would risk their lives—and the lives of their loved ones—to attend a demonstration like this. In order to provide clarity, we must look at the major capitalist backers behind this outbreak of right-wing dissent.

The protests are centered primarily in the Midwest, but they have spread throughout the country. There have been demonstrations in Lansing, Mich.; Cincinnati, Ohio; Austin, Texas; and Oklahoma City. These protests look much like Trump rallies: mostly white demonstrators waving U.S. and Confederate flags, wearing MAGA hats and cheering for Trump.

More threatening is the presence of armed right-wing militias, as well as contingents from the fascist Proud Boys. Just as with the 2016 election, and the Tea Party movement before that, there seems to be an outpouring of right-wing racist rage.

These rightists have assembled to demand the lifting of stay-at-home orders. Some claim that the COVID-19 crisis is exaggerated or even a total fabrication. Others simply want safety measures to be loosened. All the demonstrators have echoed the refrain that they want to “get the economy started.” They argue that preventing workers from engaging in wage labor is an infringement on individual freedom.

A war within the ruling class

That section of the capitalist corporate media that opposes the president has portrayed these demonstrations as the irrational outbursts of rabid Trump supporters, fueled by the president’s incendiary rhetoric. But what is obscured by this star-spangled spectacle is that these protests are part of a larger proxy war between two factions of the capitalist ruling class.

On one end, there are the neoliberals — most associated with the Democratic Party — who would hide the iron fist of capitalism within the velvet glove of empty rhetoric. On the other, are the Randian free marketers — nihilists who understand that capitalism is destroying our society and our biosphere, or those who ignore those threats — and who seek to extract every last drop of profit they can before the inevitable collapse.

The neoliberal faction is best exemplified by New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo,

who has been lionized by liberals and the anti-Trump wing of the capitalist press for his supposed leadership in this time of crisis. What is less remarked upon is that Gov. Cuomo has frequently insinuated during his daily briefings that he too is anxious to restart the economy. These regular comments are trial balloons — albeit more subtle than Trump’s — meant to prepare the public for a re-opening of society before the recommendations of medical professionals.

Cuomo’s compassionate, often substance-free oratory also distracts from his ruthless policies. In spite of the massive health care crisis, Cuomo cut \$2.5 billion from the state’s Medicaid program. He likewise has expressed no interest in providing financial support to undocumented im/migrants affected by the crisis.

The working class has no refuge from neoliberal technocrats like Cuomo elsewhere. Just as the gazelle, fleeing from lions on the savannah, soon finds itself in crocodile-infested waters, so too is the working class faced with vicious right-wing ideologues like Trump and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. In callous indifference to public safety, DeSantis re-opened public beaches last week, causing a spike in crowds (and quite likely infections).

Neither ruling-class faction puts the interests of the working class first. Both serve their capitalist paymasters. These policymakers only reflect the interests of their respective capitalist backers, and some of those backers are becoming extremely anxious as the economy slowly grinds to a halt. This more desperate and ruthless wing of the capitalist class, dissatisfied with the slow progress of right-wing politicians, has opened the door to fascists gangs — as they historically always have — to advance their agenda.

Stephen Moore’s moneyed hand

There is no better example of the moneyed hand behind fascism than Trump’s informal economic advisor Stephen Moore. The obsequious, sycophantic

Moore has been behind some of the worst “free market” super pacs of the last 20 years, tirelessly working to dismantle environmental regulations, remove workers’ protections and cut taxes for the ultra wealthy.

Moore, a parasite’s parasite, has latched onto extreme fringe Republican campaigns in an effort to drag the party into the right-wing abyss. His comments comparing the recent pro-Trump protests to Rosa Parks (along with his decades-old comments denigrating women) show that he revels in revolting. He’s a perfect fellow traveler for the fascist goons whom he supports.

Moore, who recently promoted an upcoming Wisconsin protest on a Libertarian think tank’s YouTube video, serves on Trump’s council for restarting the economy. His desire to sacrifice workers and his connections to these demonstrations are apparent.

But Moore is no solitary puppet master. There is a veritable Legion of Doom providing organizational support for these right-wing protests. The Idaho Freedom Foundation, which has planned protests for Boise, was founded with grants from the ultraconservative heirs of the Coors brewing family as well as from Charles Koch. Another backer is the Michigan Freedom Fund, led by Greg McNeilly, a former advisor for the failed gubernatorial campaign of Dick DeVos, spouse of Trump’s Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos.

The image that begins to form is of a web of right-wing millionaires and billionaires who, as they did during Trump’s 2016 campaign and the Tea Party protests of 2009, are creating an astro-turfing movement of angry white small business owners fearful of falling back into the working class. This sector is now buttressed by a core of fully radicalized fascists — to create panic and push for an agenda that benefits the ultra-rich to the detriment of everyone else. □



A nurse bravely defies right-wing protester in Denver, April 19.

Unemployment explosion reveals class conflict

By John Catalinotto

April 19 — The explosion of unemployment applications during the COVID-19 crisis underscored the vicious class contradictions in the United States and showed that the billionaire ruling class has the upper hand in the government apparatus and in directing the economy.

Not even in the 1930s Great Depression did such a leap in the number and rate of jobless people occur. In the last four weeks, more than 22 million people, or nearly 13 percent of the total labor force, tried to file for unemployment insurance. By April’s end, the unemployment rate could top 20 percent.

Official unemployment figures omit the undocumented, those forced to work “off the books,” so-called “discouraged workers,” and those who, because of extra red tape based on their part-time or “independent contractor” gig worker status, gave up applying.

On March 27, Congress passed and Trump signed the so-called stimulus or CARES Act, allocating \$2.2 trillion to counter the effects of the coronavirus and the stock market collapse.

The wealthiest members of the ruling class and the biggest firms made sure

they got stimulated. Congress approved \$500 billion to bail out major U.S. corporations. The pro-business administration distributes this, keeping its friends and sponsors happy.

The act earmarked another \$350 billion for bank loans to help small and midsize businesses survive the crisis. Because most banks would only loan to businesses that had already borrowed from them, many firms which applied got nothing, especially “minority-owned businesses.” The \$350 billion ran out in two weeks, and most was eaten up by local affiliates of hotel chains.

And for the workers?

Unemployed workers were supposed to get their usual check plus \$600 a week for four months. Every adult would also receive a one-time payment of \$1,200, depending on income, with \$500 for dependent children under 16 years old.

Some of that money reached some workers. But the 22 million applying for state unemployment benefits during only four weeks overwhelmed understaffed bureaus, many with outdated computer technology. This is holding up both regular payments and the extra \$600. Part-time, gig and tipped workers are also covered under the CARES Act, but all who have applied have

faced additional bureaucratic hangups.

The \$1,200 is supposed to be distributed by the IRS to tax filers. But there were software glitches. If, like many people, you filed with TurboTax or H&R Block, such a glitch may have held up your money.

About half the workers in the U.S. live paycheck to paycheck with no savings. Having these payments delayed can force workers to miss rent or food or mortgage payments and create a personal disaster. To add insult to injury, payments made by check could take months — and, adding further delays, at his insistence Donald Trump’s name will be on the memo line. (Cash it anyway.)

What is less obvious is that the bosses also benefit from the promise of unemployment payments. They can lay off or furlough workers instead of keeping them on the payroll with full or partial paid sick leave, using the beefed-up unemployment payment as an excuse to send workers home while avoiding responsibility for their economic well-being.

Workers can fight, too

If anyone reading this has been unable to get the payments promised, they should know that this money belongs to them. No one should give any of it up. They should

keep trying to get it even if they have to survive by some other means in the short term.

The bosses got the most out of the CARES Act. But the workers can still fight back. The COVID-19 crisis has shown that workers are essential. Not only the medical, food, transit, delivery and maintenance workers who have been carrying the weight and who are essential to life. But all workers, who are essential because their labor produces all the wealth in society and the owners can’t get rich without them.

The Amazon workers, with their wild-cat strikes, showed the potential of workers’ power. Can these actions spark a reawakening of the working class, who are forced to fight these days just to survive? When work starts up again — and it should only be with protective equipment and every precaution — it will be with workers who know they are essential to the functioning of this society.

Among the 10 socialist demands Workers World Party raised to meet the COVID-19 crisis are the following three: “Full pay, benefits and guaranteed income for all; food, housing, medical supplies and utilities, including internet for all; suspend rent, evictions, mortgages, utility shutoffs and ALL debt.” And no bureaucratic glitches crap! □

Fighting for health, for us and the planet

Workers World celebrates the historic 50th anniversary of Earth Day. Launched by a mass outpouring of demonstrators in 1970, this day continues to mobilize scientific and coordinated efforts to defend the health of our planet and of us who live here.

Earth Day is still urgently needed as a call to conscience and action. Because at this moment, as the peoples of our globe reel from the viral pandemic of COVID-19, we continue to be battered by catastrophes of climate crisis.

Only a week ago, April 10-11, the U.S. South was hit by a total of 105 tornadoes that spread in a killing arc from Louisiana to North Carolina. Thirty-four people were left dead from a swarm that included Mississippi’s largest tornado on record and 30 others rated “significant,” with winds over 111 mph.

Meteorologists are still trying to determine, through scientific research, the exact relation between climate change and the growing clusters and intensity of tornadoes and the shift in the U.S. to a more southern corridor.

The key words here are “scientific research.” Because the capitalist drive for profit, combined with right-wing ideology, is riding roughshod over progressive scientific solutions — in both climate change and the COVID-19 crisis.

In the current tornado epidemics, people — mostly poor, rural and of color — are losing homes and all possessions at the same time they have lost their jobs due to the economic shut-down accelerated by the pandemic.

Roughly 55 percent of Black people in the U.S. live in the South, where most of the Black and Latinx people in the region exist in deep poverty. (world-populationreview.com) The South contains approximately 84 percent of persistently poor counties in the U.S. — counties that have had at least 20 percent of their population in poverty for over 30 years. (tinyurl.com/ycouhbxv)

And, as in other parts of the U.S., these people are also suffering disproportionately in the pandemic. In Mississippi, for instance, where African Americans comprise less than 40

percent of the population, they are 72 percent of the state's COVID-19 deaths.

As people suffer, reactionary U.S. forces stall, thwart or roll back efforts to promote good health, including some safeguards initiated in the earliest years of Earth Day organizing.

The Trump administration is pushing back air quality standards won by environmentalist efforts — in the middle of a health crisis that centers on respiratory failure. In addition to relaxing rules on car emissions, the federal Environmental Protection Agency is now refusing to tighten controls on other kinds of particle emissions.

This double whammy to the climate and to people’s health is happening even as people are dying from the coronavirus in the U.S. at a weekly rate surpassing deaths from cancer, influenza and car crashes, according to the Covid Tracking Project of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (AP, April 19)

At the same time, the right-wing clamors for factories and businesses to reopen, for health safeguards to be dropped — for “business as usual” at any cost, including that of workers’ deaths.

But this pandemic in an age of climate crisis should mark the end of “business as usual” for capitalism.

Any “re-opening of business” should be made contingent on people going back to work safely in ways that create a green and healthy planet. “Back to work” must happen with worker planning and control, living wages, free health care and environmentally healthy workplaces. “Re-opening the economy” should happen only if reparations for past environmental damages — especially those affecting people of color and poor populations — be made part of comprehensive and ongoing “disaster relief.”

These are just some of the transitional demands that can be made and fought for as we move toward a socialist future. We live in a unique historical moment where we can create health — both for people and for the planet. Let us seize the day! □

Pandemic & capitalism Behind the rise of hunger in the U.S.

Dairy farmers are dumping millions of gallons of milk into lagoons. Produce farmers are plowing fresh vegetables back into the soil. Billions of dollars worth of food is being destroyed.

This is happening while millions of people are lining up for miles to reach local food banks which cannot meet the enormous demand — made greater by coronavirus-related layoffs of 22 million workers.

Why is this? Food scarcity does not exist in the U.S. In fact, there is an abundance of food. But many farmers can’t sell to the usual purchasers, such as restaurants, hotels and schools, as many are closed due to the pandemic. The distribution network to those customers has been upended, and thousands of farmers can’t afford to transport food around the country.

If food isn’t purchased, if there aren’t markets, if sales can’t be made and profits realized, food is destroyed — rather than donated to the millions who need it.

Under capitalism, food is a commodity. Like all commodities from cell phones to cars, it is produced to be sold at a profit. If farmers can’t afford to ship food, it’s wasted. And if workers can’t afford to buy what sits on supermarket shelves, they go without unless a food bank, faith-based or community organization, or labor union provides it. This is how capitalism operates.

If stores are buying less food because their customers stay home due to pandemic cautions or can’t afford to buy it as is true of many newly jobless workers — farmers dispose of it. When restaurants, which routinely purchase half of farm produce, aren’t buying, it goes unharvested, unpackaged, untransported — and therefore, unsold.

Hunger in richest country

The pandemic has highlighted the precariousness of life for workers in capitalist U.S., and it has intensified the contradiction between food production and distribution. It has revealed the widespread hunger and malnutrition that existed in the world’s richest country even before COVID-19 arrived — because many people can’t afford food. It’s not grown or manufactured as a public service. Under capitalism, producing and selling this necessity is a means to an end: profits.

Before the pandemic 37 million people here were “food-insufficient,” a fancy term for hungry. About that number received inadequate Supplemental Nutritional

Assistance Program benefits. Last year, 40 million people had to rely on food banks and soup kitchens. Low-wage workers, seniors and people with disabilities depend on this assistance.

But then COVID-19 hit: 22 million people were laid off, furloughed or had wages cut. Some 59 percent of workers — disproportionately Black and Latinx — had been living from paycheck to paycheck. Now, many of the newly jobless can’t afford food for their families and have turned to food banks.

News footage showed 10,000 people lined up and waiting for hours at a San Antonio food distribution center. This shocking scene is being repeated throughout the country every day, as demand skyrockets, in some cities by 50 percent. Food bank operators are reluctantly turning away thousands of families in need.

Meanwhile, food banks now have to purchase much of what used to be donated — and at high prices. Some are spending millions of dollars to transport truckloads of it. Several have had to close just when their help is desperately needed.

However, the federal government should purchase fresh produce from farmers and pay to transport it to food pantries or set up distribution centers. It could hire unemployed workers to drive the trucks and hand out the food — but safely.

Since this is a capitalist country, the rich and their politicians will balk at this, as they prioritize profit-making, not human needs. Even now with the unemployment crisis, the U.S. Department of Agriculture refused to use disaster powers to expand eligibility for food stamps.

A people’s struggle won food stamp benefits in the first place. That is what it will take for people to get what they need, whether it’s food, housing, health care, jobs at a livable wage or safe working conditions.

The Food Is a Right Campaign, stemming from the All Peoples Congress, backed by Workers World Party, launched a struggle in 1982 to push the government to open its warehouses of “surplus” food. It sued the Reagan administration and organized many protests. Soon after the lawsuit was lost, this grassroots movement won the release of tons of food.

In socialist Cuba, food production and distribution are highly organized. Food is never wasted. The needs of the people always come first. □

The viral debt trap

The International Monetary Fund is giving itself a pat on the back for approving “immediate debt service relief” to 25 of the poorest countries in the world because of the coronavirus pandemic. It made the announcement on April 13.

But don’t cheer for the imperialist bankers. What these impoverished countries need is not “debt service relief,” but reparations for the centuries of outright robbery committed by the colonial and neocolonial powers that control the IMF.

First of all, these global bankers know that during this global health crisis they can’t squeeze any more wealth out of these 25 impoverished countries without totally destroying them. So they’ll temporarily stretch out the exorbitant interest they charge for “debt service,” rather than risk plunging these countries into economic collapse.

Just why are these countries so poor in the first place? The answer is that they have a long history of being robbed of their resources and labor — first by the colonial, and now neocolonial, capitalist powers of Europe and the U.S.

Take Kenya, for example. Not one of the 25 poorest, it is an African country with rich resources taken over officially by British imperialists 135 years ago in 1885. After a long struggle, Kenya gained independence from Britain in 1963, but its economy was still tied to imperialism

through “debts” incurred by colonial rulers.

Kenya’s 2005-06 budget for “debt payments” was as much as it spent on water, health, agriculture, roads, transport and finance combined! And these payments are never-ending. The debt trap is an endless cash cow for bankers in the oppressor countries.

The truth is that Kenya doesn’t “owe” Britain anything. It is the British ruling class that owes the people of Kenya for all the wealth extracted by that rich colonial power.

South Africa has a history of being colonized by both the Dutch and the British. Brutal racist rule under apartheid persisted until 1994. But when the African National Congress finally took over the South African government, it was stuck with “debt” of \$22 billion that had been loaned, not to the people of South Africa, but to the apartheid regime that oppressed them. The ANC-led government has been forced to pay on this “debt” ever since.

It is in the interests of workers everywhere to demand that these “debts” be canceled. Money stolen from poor countries only strengthens the class that exploits and oppresses us, too.

International working-class solidarity, not the International Monetary Fund’s “debt service relief,” is the only way to cancel the blood-sucking system that creates debt in the first place. □

Celebrating Vietnam’s victory over U.S. aggressors



Forty-five years ago on April 30, 1975, the United States was dealt a decisive, humiliating defeat in its imperialist intervention in the civil war in Vietnam. Millions of Vietnamese and tens of thousands of U.S. and allied forces died. The U.S. had brought its considerable military might to try to reverse the Vietnamese victories over French and Japanese colonialism. A fight between an economically weak but politically fierce Vietnam ended up defeating the forces arrayed against it. This was an enormously inspiring example of the power of people’s war.

— Report by Paddy Colligan

Africa’s response to COVID-19

By G. Dunkel

As of April 18, according to the Africa Centers for Disease Control, there were 21,990 cases of COVID-19 in Africa, with no country having more than 3,000 confirmed cases.

Africa is home to 1.3 billion people. Many of the 52 countries that make up the African Union are small, impoverished, economically underdeveloped, and they are still confronting the neocolonialism of their former colonial overlords and resisting the advances of U.S. imperialism, which seeks unfettered access to Africa’s vast riches.

Nigeria, with nearly 214 million people, and South Africa, with nearly 58 million, are its most developed countries. Sixty percent of the people living in Africa are under 25. About 70 percent of Africa’s working class are in the informal sector.

Infectious diseases like malaria, polio, Ebola, measles, AIDS and tuberculosis are episodically epidemic in Africa. There was an Ebola outbreak in West Africa during the years 2014-16 that infected over 28,000 people, of whom 11,000 died.

ACDC for disease prevention

Based on the need for coordinated public health measures required to mitigate, contain and then end the Ebola outbreak, the African Union established the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2017. The mandate given to the ACDC was to become a continental

entity for disease prevention, surveillance and response.

The first major step the ACDC took in 2017 was to establish a formal working relationship with the World Health Organization to coordinate their efforts. The director of the ACDC was designated as a WHO special envoy.

How they work together can be seen in the weekly webinars that the ACDC has been running. The webinars for doctors and nurses concentrate on how to diagnose, manage and treat COVID-19 patients, and they feature practical advice on how to overcome the problems produced by extreme poverty. WHO specialists point out that it is possible to contain and mitigate COVID-19.

For example, in Sudan, where many families can’t afford to buy the soap and water needed to wash your hands, 20 portable handwashing facilities are now accessible in seven locations in the Sudanese capital as part of the emergency response to COVID-19. Kigali, capital of Rwanda, has a similar program, and since the ACDC has promoted this idea, it is likely to spread further.

Along with the youthfulness of its population, Africa’s deep poverty is going to play a major role in its response to COVID-19.

There are approximately 2,000 ventilators in Africa for its 1.3 billion people. Somalia’s health ministry still doesn’t have a single one. The Central African Republic has three. South Sudan, four.

Liberia, five. Nigeria, with a population two-thirds that of the United States, has fewer than 100. Ten African countries have none. For comparison, the United States has 170,000 ventilators — and needs more — for 330 million people.

While ventilators can play a role in saving the sickest patients, supplies of oxygen, tubes and personal protective equipment are also essential.

U.S. withdrawal from WHO

Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, director for WHO’s Africa region, sees both a financial and political aspect to President Trump’s suspension of funds the United States gives to WHO, which amount to 15 percent of its budget.

Moeti spoke to a media conference on COVID-19 in Africa, which was covered by Reuters News on April 16. WHO in Africa, according to Moeti, is not only working to improve patient care and reduce fatalities for COVID-19 patients, it is also working on other killers like polio, AIDS and malaria. “The impact, potentially, of this decision will be quite significant on areas such as polio eradication,” she said, just when Africa was close to being declared polio-free.

China, in the midst of its hard but successful fight against the epidemic domestically, has sent planeloads of essential supplies to almost all the members of the AU, some being financed by China’s Jack Ma Foundation. Chinese Foreign Minister



Mural by youth artists on the risk of coronavirus in the Mathare slum of Nairobi, Kenya.

Wang Yi has promised to continue to provide materials that Africa needs, to share its antipandemic experience and to send medical experts.

Cuba, which has been under U.S. sanctions for over 60 years, recently sent a contingent of over 250 medical practitioners, mainly doctors, to Angola, a country whose connection to Cuba matured in their common armed struggle against the racist apartheid regime then ruling South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s.

WHO Director-General Tedros Ghebreyesus has organized solidarity flights from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to distribute essential medical supplies. The flights are a joint initiative of the AU, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization and WHO. The governments of the United Arab Emirates and Ethiopia finance the flights.

If the Trump administration had not cut funds to WHO in an attempt to find a scapegoat for his own disastrous errors, this international solidarity would be saving even more lives. □

had become infected there. The team will be sent to 164 cities and towns in order to prevent the epidemic from spreading to the poorest rural areas.

Angolan Health Minister Silvia Lutucuta said the Cuban delegation will train 1,800 health workers. The Inter-Ministerial Commission for Pandemic Response explained that Angolan physicians, along with the Cubans, will visit families around the country.

Potential 'wonder drug'

Despite a 60-year U.S. blockade against Cuba, causing shortages of necessities, the socialist country has an advanced health care system, with free medical care for all residents and advanced scientific and medical research. Cuba has developed life-saving medications that are not available in the U.S. because of the blockade.

The Cuban antiviral “wonder drug” Interferon Alfa-2B, Recombinant is being dispensed by its medical brigades to treat COVID-19. Cuba shared the technology to produce the drug, and a joint Chinese-Cuban facility makes it in China.

Helen Yaffe, author of “We are Cuba!” and a University of Glasgow lecturer, explains: “The Chinese National Health Commission listed this medication among the treatments it is using for COVID-19 patients. Effective and safe in the therapy of viral diseases including hepatitis B and C, shingles, HIV-Aids, and dengue, the Cuban antiviral drug has shown some promise in China and the island has now received requests for the product from 45 countries.” (tinyurl.com/tad7n48)

Cuba's medical internationalism, begun soon after the revolution, continues as strong as ever despite Washington's bellicose opposition. □

From Italy to Angola

Cuban solidarity combats the pandemic

By Kathy Durkin

What country can always be counted on to show international solidarity and provide concrete aid in a crisis? The people of the world know that it is socialist Cuba. It has shown the world what solidarity means, sending multiple medical teams around the globe to help in humanitarian crises. This is as true now, during the coronavirus pandemic, as ever. Cuban doctors are currently in 59 countries.

Italy's Communist Party expressed gratitude to First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba Raúl Castro and President of the Republic Miguel Díaz-Canel for sending a delegation of doctors to Lombardy which has been hit hard by COVID-19 and for cooperating with Italy's public health system. (Granma, April 6) According to Johns Hopkins University, 183,957 people in Italy have been stricken with the disease and 24,648 had died as of April 21.

Because of “years of cuts in public health allocation, [Italy's] health system is in great difficulty, despite the selflessness and relentless work of our doctors and health workers in the trenches, fighting the coronavirus today,” said the Italian CP’s message. It thanked Cuba, “a small island subjected for many years to a total economic blockade by the world's greatest power [while] providing a great lesson in solidarity and humanity.”

The letter continued: “Your doctors have cured the sick in 64 countries. Thanks to the teachings of Commandante Fidel, they testify to the value and superiority of socialist society.” It concluded: “For 60 years you have been an example and an invaluable resource for all peoples of the world.” Furthermore, Cuban doctors’

presence in Italy demonstrates that “capitalism provides what is superfluous, while socialism provides what is necessary.”

Some 52 Cuban doctors and nurses have been working collaboratively in Crema, Lombardy, “to expedite the recovery of COVID-19 patients with complications.” (Telesur, April 7)

Assistance closer to home

In a precedent-setting move, Cuba organized medical brigades within a week's time to travel to 14 countries to combat the virus. Cuba’s Vice Minister of Public Health for Collaboration, International Relations and Information Marcia Cobas, said April 3 that several delegations of the Henry Reeve International Medical Brigade had already left the country, with the first stop in Venezuela.

Socialist collaboration and cooperation enabled the quick mobilization of the teams. Cobas said Cuba, with 89,000 doctors and 84,000 nurses, has the highest ratio of doctors in the world — 9 per 1,000 residents — which is three times the U.S. rate! That is why the island can send health workers abroad. It has also sent materials and treatments.

Many Caribbean countries have expressed gratitude to Cuba's health workers for aiding them in the war against this rampaging pandemic. When a medical delegation arrived in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Premier Ralph Gonsalves, supporter of the Cuban Revolution, expressed gratitude to “the Cuba of Raúl and Fidel” and President Díaz-Canel. The teams were also warmly greeted in Antigua, Barbuda and Jamaica. Others went to St. Lucia and throughout Latin America.

Cuban doctors already stationed in Haiti on other assignments, who had

been ready to return home, stayed to help a newly arriving delegation of 348 doctors and other health workers. Minister of Health Marie Greta Roy Clement welcomed the “Cuban friends,” recalling their critical assistance after a massive earthquake in 2010, during a cholera epidemic brought by U.N. “peacekeepers” in October of that year, and after the deadly Hurricane Matthew in 2016.

Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, has endured the horrific oppressions of slavery, colonialism and imperialism. The country “now faces a looming pandemic, with an almost nonexistent public health care system and a dysfunctional political system rooted in neocolonial intervention.” (Haiti Liberté, March 30)

For the first time, a Cuban medical brigade of 101 nurses, most of them women led by Dr. Daimarelis Ortega Rodríguez, went to Barbados.

Solidarity with African peoples

Socialist Cuba has had a special relationship with several African countries. From the 1960s through the 1980s, thousands of its soldiers fought alongside anticolonial liberation movements in southern Africa.

Cuba was the first country to heed the urgent calls of West African governments during the Ebola epidemic in 2014, sending 461 doctors and nurses to help their health care workers. The wealthy imperialist U.S. and Western European countries sat on the fence, hesitant and unwilling to get involved.

Some 256 Cuban health workers, including 188 physicians and 24 nurses, arrived in Angola on April 10 to aid in the fight against COVID-19, after 19 people



Consejo de trabajadores soviéticos, 1917.

COMENTARIO DE WW/MO

Organizar asambleas obreras, ¡construir un mundo obrero!

Por Makasi Motema

Quemando las comunidades como un fuego furioso, el COVID-19 nos quita a los más vulnerables. Ya envenenado por el racismo ambiental, las personas de color están siendo consumidas por el virus a tasas extremadamente desproporcionadas. A los estratos más pobres de la clase trabajadora, ahora denominados esenciales, no se les permite distanciarse del peligro. Y los trabajadores de atención médica de primera línea, sin salarios justos, beneficios y equipo vital, arriesgan sus vidas en la lucha para extinguir esta plaga.

Esta es la etapa ardiente en la que se encuentran aquellos que luchan por la justicia. ¿Cómo se puede ganar la lucha contra tan abrumadoras probabilidades? ¿Cómo enfrentarán los socialistas la próxima crisis impredecible pero inevitable? Solo una clase obrera unida puede resistir esta epidemia capitalista.

La crisis de la legitimidad

La respuesta de los legisladores capitalistas al COVID-19 es un desastre no mitigado. A diferencia de China, Vietnam o Cuba, Estados Unidos no ha logrado poner en cuarentena a las masas, movilizar a los trabajadores de la salud, construir hospitales de emergencia o requisiciones de las fábricas para la fabricación de ventiladores y equipos de protección personal.

Otros gobiernos capitalistas como Italia e Inglaterra se han mostrado igualmente mal equipados para proteger a sus poblaciones. El obstáculo no es la falta de advertencia o la falta de recursos. El lucro es la razón del obstáculo.

Wall Street, en su avaricia insaciable, ha obstaculizado los intentos del gobierno de EE.UU. para lidiar efectivamente con el COVID-19. Poner en cuarentena a las personas significa que los trabajadores no pueden generar ganancias. La

movilización de los trabajadores de la salud requiere pago de riesgos y beneficios. La construcción de instalaciones médicas requiere bienes inmuebles valiosos y desvía a las empresas constructoras de proyectos lucrativos de desarrollo que ya están en progreso. Finalmente, la fabricación de equipos vitales se ve limitada por el aumento de precios a medida que los capitalistas luchan por sacar provecho de una crisis.

Wall Street tiene un control mortal sobre el gobierno; Los funcionarios electos responden a la industria financiera, no al revés. Este control capitalista magnifica el impacto de la crisis más allá del sector de la salud.

El desempleo se está disparando. Hasta el momento, en abril, un tercio de los inquilinos de todo el país no podían pagar el alquiler. En una sociedad capitalista, las soluciones a estos problemas son tan simples como lo son irrealizables. Cualquier gobierno sensato congelaría los pagos de la hipoteca y el alquiler y proporcionaría un ingreso habitable durante la duración del cierre.

Esto es impensable para los formuladores de políticas estadounidenses y sus amos capitalistas. Es impensable no por el costo, (Estados Unidos incineró 1,5 billones de dólares tratando de calmar el mercado de valores hace solo unas semanas), sino porque socavaría la legitimidad de todo el sistema sociopolítico.

Si los pagos de la renta pueden simplemente "desactivarse", si un ingreso vital se puede distribuir con el golpe de un bolígrafo, entonces ¿por qué la clase trabajadora se ha visto obligada a luchar para llegar a fin de mes?

Una respuesta de sentido común a esta crisis demostraría que todo el dolor y sufrimiento sentido hasta ahora por la clase trabajadora ha sido infligido intencionalmente por quienes están en el poder. El

sistema de desigualdad no es el resultado de la naturaleza impredecible e incontrolable del mundo, sino de una elección consciente de privar a la clase trabajadora de su salud y seguridad a cambio de que unos pocos disfruten de enormes ganancias. Ningún gobierno podría controlar la obediencia de sus residentes después de ser expuesto como tan insensible.

Sin embargo, la legitimidad de este gobierno se le escapa de las manos. Estados Unidos no ha podido detener el COVID-19, y pronto será incapaz de detener la recesión económica. La economía ya se tambaleaba sobre una base inestable antes del coronavirus.

Los choques duales de un colapso del sistema de salud y la explosión del desempleo llevan a algunos economistas a predecir que la mayor recesión económica en nuestra vida es inminente.

Cuando llegue la próxima gran depresión, ¿quién pondrá su fe en Washington, D.C.?

Las necesidades de la gente

El único refugio disponible para la clase trabajadora es la unidad: la creación del verdadero poder de la clase trabajadora es nuestra única contramedida al capitalismo de desastre. La clase obrera debe organizarse en Asambleas de Trabajadores, cuerpos políticos altamente estructurados que se oponen al sistema capitalista. Lo que más teme la clase dominante son las comunidades de clase trabajadora que se unan para determinar su propio destino.

Desde Petrogrado, Rusia (1917) y Jiangxi, China (1931), hasta Caracas, Venezuela y Chapare, Bolivia, hoy, las asambleas y los consejos de la clase trabajadora han sido los motores que impulsaron las revoluciones socialistas.

Dados los obstáculos que enfrentamos, solo las Asambleas de Trabajadores son las que pueden coordinar una respuesta efectiva al COVID-19 y que no deje a nadie atrás. La única forma de satisfacer las necesidades de atención médica de las personas es que nuestros recursos médicos sean de propiedad y administración pública, no por los encargados de formular políticas capitalistas, sino por las Asambleas de Trabajadores.

La verdadera gobernación democrática por parte de la clase trabajadora pondría fin a la acumulación de recursos corporativos y garantizaría que los trabajadores de primera línea estén debidamente protegidos y compensados. Una administración de la clase trabajadora, que representa todas las opresiones, tampoco permitiría el tratamiento desigual actualmente dado a personas de color, mujeres, personas con discapacidades y pacientes LGBTQ2S +.

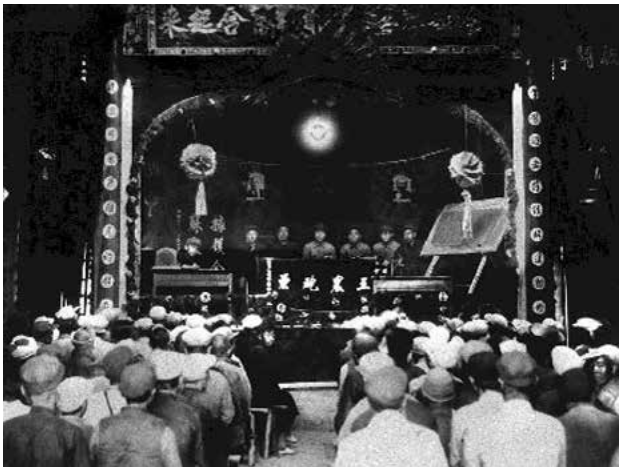
El control de la vivienda también debe caer bajo la soberanía de la clase trabajadora. No es suficiente decir que nadie debe ser obligado a abandonar su hogar

porque no puede pagar el alquiler. Se deben formar Asambleas de Trabajadores para tomar el control de las propiedades inmobiliarias y finalmente poner fin al flagelo de la falta de vivienda.

También hay muchas empresas fuera de la industria médica que afirman que sus trabajadores son esenciales. Sin embargo, el pago, la protección y los beneficios que reciben estos trabajadores no coinciden con su nuevo estatus elevado. La creación de Asambleas de Trabajadores también pondrá fin a esto. Si una empresa considera que sus trabajadores son esenciales, las Asambleas de Trabajadores deben tomar el control de esa empresa.

Forjando Asambleas Obreras

¿Cómo se puede lograr todo esto? La construcción de un ejército popular requiere un ejército de organizadores. El único imperativo moral del cuadro socialista es organizar a los que los rodean. Mediante una organización profunda, los socialistas deben establecer conexiones con los trabajadores en todos los sectores. Los trabajadores no sindicalizados deben ser sindicalizados, y los trabajadores sindicalizados deben ser radicalizados. Los inquilinos, los bloques de apartamentos y los vecindarios enteros deben reunirse para luchar contra los propietarios, urba-



República Soviética China en Jiangxi, noviembre de 1931.

A medida que la pandemia de COVID-19 continúa extendiéndose, la respuesta del gobierno a la crisis ha sido criminalmente negligente, mientras que los capitalistas prefieren arriesgar la salud de los trabajadores que detener la producción con fines de lucro.

A medida que la clase dominante se muestra incapaz de abordar la crisis, ¿cómo podemos nosotros, como clase trabajadora y personas oprimidas, organizarnos para satisfacer nuestras necesidades? ¿Qué demandas podemos presentar en respuesta?

Workers World Party propone las siguientes 10 demandas, que son un trabajo en progreso basado en la fluidez de la crisis, como una respuesta socialista inicial a COVID-19:

EXIGENCIAS SOCIALISTAS

PARA LA CRISIS DEL COVID-19

1. Asistencia sanitaria gratuita para todos.

2. Nacionalizar el sistema de salud bajo control comunitario. Construir hospitales de emergencia.

3. Pago completo, beneficios e ingresos garantizados para todos.

4. Alimentos, vivienda, suministros médicos y servicios públicos, incluido internet para todos.

5. Suspender alquileres, desalojos, hipotecas, cortes de servicios públicos y TODAS las deudas.

6. Priorizar recursos para comunidades de color, migrantes, personas LGBTQ2+, personas mayores, jóvenes, personas con discapacidades.

7. Vaciar prisiones y centros de detención. Cierra ICE. Poner fin a los ataques racistas.

8. Control comunitario. Sin policías. No militar.

9. \$2 billones para los trabajadores, no para los bancos.

10. Poner fin a las guerras, las sanciones y la destrucción del medio ambiente de EE. UU.

MUNDO OBRERO