Global event honors political prisoners

By Mirinda Crissman and Judy Greenspan

From behind prison walls nearly 39 years, Mumia Abu-Jamal continues to educate, energize and unite prison abolitionists, former and current political prisoners, and the global activist community. On April 24, his 66th birthday, Abu-Jamal’s story and legacy brought together a virtual gathering "U.S. Empire vs. Political Prisoners," committed to broadening this movement, not only to free Mumia and all political prisoners but to free us all.

An amazing array of speakers sent warm birthday greetings and spoke eloquently about their individual cases, community campaigns and the uphill battle to win justice for prisoners. Hosted on Commonmotions.org, the webinar was organized by Mobilization4Mumia, the Campaign to Bring Mumia Home, the Free Mumia Coalition (NYC) and a broad array of organizations.

Moderator Johanna Fernandez, Baruch College (CUNY) professor and a coordinator of the Campaign to Bring Mumia Home, opened the program with the question, “What is a political prisoner?” This question and responses by the more than 30 speakers, cracked open a long-held secret of U.S. capitalist domination. Yes, there are political prisoners in the United States.

Other moderators included Betsey Piette, a managing editor of Workers World newspaper; Santiago Alvarez, a University of California, Santa Cruz student activist; and Mike Africa, Jr. from the MOVE organization.

Megan Malachi of Philly REAL (Racial, Economic and Legal) Justice talked about being born in 1981, the year Abu-Jamal was arrested and incarcerated. However, it was not until she was in high school that she attended a rally and found out the truth about who Mumia was.

Kathy Boudin, a former political prisoner who is now a professor of social work at Columbia University in New York City, talked about the blank look in her students’ faces when she asked if there were political prisoners in the U.S. She realized that she had a lot of educating to do.

This extraordinary webinar exposed the serious situation faced by many political prisoners in the U.S. after decades of incarceration. Currently at least two political prisoners have stage 4 cancer and are fighting for medical care and compassionate release.

Russell Shoatz III spoke about his father’s condition. Russell Maroon Shoatz, a founding member of the Black Unity Council and a former member of the Philadelphia Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army, is serving multiple life sentences. Incarcerated since 1970, he has recently undergone cancer surgery.

Former political prisoner and author Susan Rosenberg highlighted the case of Dr. Mutulu Shakur, a political prisoner who was just diagnosed with life-threatening bone marrow cancer and has launched a campaign for compassionate release. Shakur is a founder of the Republic of New Africa and a respected, well-known “people’s” acupuncturist.

Jihad Abdulmumit, a former political prisoner and chairperson of the Jericho Movement, stated that this celebration of Mumia’s birthday “should be a call to action.” He reminded listeners that political prisoners are part of the history of our movement for freedom and liberation.

Today, in 66 countries around the world, May Day — International Workers’ Day — is an official paid holiday commemorated on May 1. But not in the United States.

While May Day originated here, the ruling class has done everything it can to eradicate any memory of this working-class holiday. As a result, International Workers’ Day is officially ignored in the country where it was born. However, it is commemorated around the world as an important anniversary for the working-class movement. Socialists and communists struggled the hardest to have it made an official holiday in many countries. What are the origins of May Day, and why is it important to workers in this country?

The roots of May Day as a time to honor the struggles of the working class began on May 1, 1886. Some 300,000 workers

Continued on page 7

COVID-19: Fighting for our lives

Battling virus and depression 3
Reproductive justice under siege 3
Health workers protest for safety 4
Don’t privatize the post office 5
Marxism and the economic fallout 8
Indigenous communities devastated 9
Pandemic and the jobless crisis 10

Ohio car protest 2
Prisoner house of the oppressed 5
Prisoner demands PPE 6
Punished for dreadlocks 7

Venezuela 9 Laos 11 Greenland 11
Car protest demands prisoner release

By Martha Grevatt
Columbus, Ohio

Over 100 cars, driven by people from all over Ohio, circled the state’s Department of Rehabilitation and Correction in Columbus, the capital, on April 24. From there, the car caravan went to the Statehouse to protest the dangerous conditions in state prisons. Marion and Pickaway correctional institutions have made national news as the country’s top two "hotspots." Each has a COVID-19 infection rate of 80 percent among prisoners. That’s over 3,500 cases between the two prisons!

The Ohio Prisoners Justice League and Ohio Organizing Collaborative, caravan organizers, are demanding that Gov. Mike DeWine release 20,000 prisoners — 40 percent of those in state custody — before May 1. That number would encompass those whose sentences are almost over, those imprisoned for "nonviolent" offenses, elderly inmates and those with health conditions that make them more vulnerable to infection.

After reaching the Statehouse, a group of about 50 people staged a socially distant die-out on the lawn. A family with children held signs pleading for their father’s life. The slogan "20K by May" was chanted, written on signs and car windows, and worn on T-shirts and cloth face masks. Some signs read: "Prisoners’ Lives Matter!" Extremely popular was the slogan, which is the running theme of many prison protests: "Free them all!"

Seventeen prisoners have died from the virus in Ohio’s state prison system, which has an overcapacitizing rate of 130 percent. Another six prisoners died in the state’s only federal prison in Elkhart. Without a massive and immediate prisoner release, the death toll will rise exponentially — imposing a death sentence on an untold number of prisoners.

Ohio has the sixth-largest prison system in the U.S., with 28 adult and three juvenile institutions holding about 50,000 prisoners. African Americans, only 13 percent of the state population, comprise 45 percent of the prison population. Mass incarceration is indeed "the new Jim Crow."

Gov. DeWine has proposed to release a mere 100 prisoners, including rich white-collar criminals: such as Thomas Noe, convicted of laundering $70 million of loot from the University of Dayton and $40 million from a federal prison in Elkton. Without a massive and immediate release, the death toll will rise exponentially — imposing a death sentence on an untold number of prisoners.

Ohio aims at Greenland, targets the Arctic

Workers World (ISSN-1070-4205) is published weekly except the last week of December by WW Publishers, 147 W. 24th St., 2nd Fl., New York, NY 10011. Phone: 212.627.2994. Copyright © 2020 Workers World. Verbatim copying and distribution of articles is permitted in any medium without royalty provided this notice is preserved. Workers World (ISSN-1070-4205) is published weekly except the last week of December by WW Publishers, 147 W. 24th St., 2nd Fl., New York, NY 10011. Phone: 212.627.2994. Copyright © 2020 Workers World. Verbatim copying and distribution of articles is permitted in any medium without royalty provided this notice is preserved. Workers World is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a multiracial, multigenerational and multigendered organization that not only aims to abolish capitalism, but to build a socialist society because it’s the only way forward! Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the never-ending quest for ever-greater profits.

Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, attacks on immigrants, misogyny, LGBTQ oppression and mistreatment of people with disabilities. It means joblessness, increasing homelessness and impoverishment and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism. The U.S. is the richest country in the world, yet no one has a guaranteed right to shelter, food, water, health care, education or anything else — unless they can pay for it. Wages are lower than ever, and youth are saddled with seemingly insurmountable student debt, if they even get to college. Black, Brown and Indigenous youth and trans people are ginned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis.

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

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

Since 1939, Workers World Party has been out in the streets defending the workers and oppressed here and worldwide. If you’re interested in Marxism, socialism and fighting for a socialist future, please contact a WWP branch near you.

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

Workers World
147 W. 24th St., 2nd Fl.
New York, NY 10011
Phone: 212.627.2994
E-mail: ww@workers.org
Web: www.workers.org
Vol. 62, No. 18 • April 30, 2020
Closing date: April 29, 2020
Editor: Déocrine Griswold
Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, Martha Grevatt, Monica Morehead, Betsey Piette, Minnie Bruce Pratt
Web Editors: ABeer, Harvey Markowitz, Janet Meyes
Prisoners Page Editors: Mirinda Crissman, Ted Kelly
Contributing Editors: LeiLani Dowell, G. Dunkel, K. Durkin, Sara Flounders, Teresa Gutierrez, Joshua Hanks, Makasi Motema, Gloria Rubac
Mundo Obrero: Teresa Gutierrez, Carlos Vargas
Supporter Program: Coordinator Sue Davis

© 2020 Workers World. Verbatim copying and distribution of articles is permitted in any medium without royalty provided this notice is preserved.

Mundo Obrero
Workers World
147 W. 24th St., 2nd Fl.
New York, NY 10011
Phone: 212.627.2994
E-mail: ww@workers.org
Web: www.workers.org
Vol. 62, No. 18 • April 30, 2020
Closing date: April 29, 2020
Editor: Déocrine Griswold
Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, Martha Grevatt, Monica Morehead, Betsey Piette, Minnie Bruce Pratt
Web Editors: ABeer, Harvey Markowitz, Janet Meyes
Prisoners Page Editors: Mirinda Crissman, Ted Kelly
Contributing Editors: LeiLani Dowell, G. Dunkel, K. Durkin, Sara Flounders, Teresa Gutierrez, Joshua Hanks, Makasi Motema, Gloria Rubac
Mundo Obrero: Teresa Gutierrez, Carlos Vargas
Supporter Program: Coordinator Sue Davis

© 2020 Workers World. Verbatim copying and distribution of articles is permitted in any medium without royalty provided this notice is preserved.
By Edward Yudelovich

“When the able-bodied community gets the sniffles, we get pneumonia. ... The difficulties are multiplied ten-fold,” said Damien Gregory, an African-American wheelchair user with cerebral palsy. (“Coronavirus Strains Safety Net for People with Disabilities,” Wall Street Journal, April 19)

When asked about the numbers and statistics on how the COVID-19 coronavirus has affected people with disabilities, Susan Dohia, executive director of the Center for Independence of the Disabled New York (CIDNY), told the interviewer: “People with disabilities are not being counted!” (MetroFocus, PBS, April 16)

Dohia warned that people with disabilities are at higher risk for this pandemic due to the chronic conditions they face, the disparately more overcrowded facilities in which they live, their ages and the prevalence of living in poverty—all of which are dramatically increased for disabled people of color.

Miscounting people with disabilities is nothing new in U.S. history!

2020, the year of the pandemic, is also a U.S. census year. However, racist, ableist and sexist methods of miscounting have also been used as weapons against the oppressed. The original Constitution of the U.S. counted enslaved African Americans as three-fifths of a person. In the 1840 censuses from 1840 through 1890, people considered “mentally ill” or “mentally re***ved” were counted in those categories.

These data were used to force institutionalization of people with emotional, mental, psychological and neurodiverse disabilities in prisons and asylums, as well as to perpetuate racist stereotypes with falsified statistics regarding African Americans and Indigenous peoples. (“A Disability History of the United States” by Kim E. Nielsen) It is significant that many of the people at the greatest risk for COVID-19 today in the U.S. are house in nursing homes, so-called mental institutions and prisons.

The U.S. Immigration Act of 1882 also “miscounted” people with disabilities. In 1924. All these draconian laws were also racist in excluding Asian, especially Chinese, and other peoples.

In Texas, the Trust. Respect. Access. coalition was formed last week. After legal skirmishes, most appeal courts put the law on indefinite hold by granting temporary restraining orders.

February 2000, California Network of Mental Health Clients protests outside State Capitol building against a bill to lengthen and expand criteria for involuntary psychiatric commitment—which would be a death sentence with today’s pandemic.

Regardless of financial hardships as robust predictors of depression, warning that loneliness breeds depression, “we have to worry financially because the unemployment rate is astronomical. It’s hit communities around us very hard.”

When asked how COVID-19 is affecting abortion services, Trust Women’s Burkhart answered, “We do not have enough staff, we do not have enough doctors. We do not have enough days in the week.” She noted that women traveled hundreds of miles from Texas to the Wichita clinic during the ban.

In May 2020, the Center for Reproductive Rights, along with the American Civil Liberties Union, the Planned Parenthood Federation and the Lawyering Project, filed a lawsuit challenging the ban. The Los Angeles Times interviewed Dr. Angela Marchin in Aurora, Colo., who said, “The pandemic is making these decisions even more complicated for people.” She cited a mother of two whose morning-after pill had failed; she was in quarantine. An 18-year-old in Arizona with medical insurance because she was in high school. She was concerned about the $8,000 to $10,000.

Limiting access to abortion is one of the many life-altering, life-threatening effects of COVID-19. As right-wing forces push their agenda while the pandemic rages, this is a powerful reminder that the demand for universal, comprehensive, free health care for all must always include the reproductive justice goal of accessible, safe abortion.
**Health care workers resist bigots and bosses**

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

Antiscientific and right-wing attacks have intensified in efforts to contain the COVID-19 pandemic in the U.S. — with the U.S. president recklessly recommending bogus “treatments” and fascists proselytizing social distancing.

During an April 23 press conference, President Trump actually suggested treating COVID-19 by injecting people with household disinfectants or giving them internally in some way. Such a “cure” would very likely be lethal.

In the 18 hours after Trump’s remark, calls to New York City Poison Control seeking help for exposure to such chemicals — like bleach and Lysol — had almost tripled compared to a year ago. (nbcnewyork.com, April 24)

The same week as these killer remarks, protests erupted across the country — some waving Confederate and Nazi flags — denounced measures to control the spread of the virus recommended by health experts. On the eve of funding for the protests came from white supremacist, neo-fascist and armed militia groups like the Proud Boys, religious fundamentalists and right-wing, billion-dollar think tanks such as the Koch and Coors Foundations.

On April 17, Trump encouraged the right-wing protests by tweeting: “Our friends on the left are calling for our police to stand down and let the Proud Boys fight the Nazis.”

In response, health care workers are fighting back — for themselves as workers and for their patients. Throughout March and April, there have been many militant health care worker protests throughout the U.S. for protective gear and safer working conditions.

**Frontline health workers confront the bigots …**

In multiple states within the last week, nurses and other health care workers have physically confronted antiscience right-wingers in the streets.

At the Denver, Colo., Capitol building on April 19, health care workers from local hospitals, wearing green scrubs and protective masks, stood in the streets to block motorists from the Capitol building. (Denver Post, April 23)

In Phoenix, a group of nurses and physicians presented in front of the Capitol building on April 24 to oppose a “Demand Our Rights” rally held by anti-vaccinationists. In Phoenix, “there is a virus, and the virus, I believe, is the anti-vaxxers themselves. It is a cross we must bear in the current situation.”

In Philadelphia, nearly 130 workers at St. Monica Center for Rehabilitation and Healthcare voted on April 24 to authorize strike action against understaffing and misuse of personal protective equipment (PPE). (Inquirer.com, April 25)

The study documents discrimination, sexual harassment, wage theft and health and safety violations by McDonald’s and its franchises, the parent company has always claimed are franchises, the company has always claimed is not responsible for labor violations in those stores.

Even though the Trump Department of Labor restored the anti-worker definition of “joint employers” on Jan. 12 (Workers World, Jan. 23), in Florida the company is solely responsible for working conditions in all its stores. Both women, who were trying to provide for their families while earning peanuts, were harassed by co-workers and clients alike. When both complained, managers retained by outside contractors — often white and frequently shot by black people — were fired. Allyn Umel, organizer for Fight For $15, commented: “The way McDonald’s handles sexual harassment at all of its 14,000 stores across the country. The suit, which specifically demands “effective worker-centered antidiscrimination policies and procedures” for both lower- and upper-level McDonald’s managers, is backed by Fight For $15 and the Time’s Up Legal Defense Fund. Even though all the stores in the state of Florida are owned by the company, this suit strips the global fast food giant of a legal shield that it has used to stop other suits in the past. Because 9 out of 10 McDonald’s are franchises, the parent company has always claimed is not responsible for labor violations in those stores.

**Ref orm needed for H-2A farm workers visa program**

A new report released April 9 by Centro de Derechos del Migrante (CDM), a migrant workers’ rights organization in the U.S. and Mexico, documents extensive labor abuses in the U.S. H-2A visa program. “Ripe for Reform: Abuse of Agricultural Workers in the U.S. H-2A Visa Program” is based on in-depth interviews with 100 farm workers across the U.S. for the past four years. The program was expanded in 2010 for a record 265,667 workers. All surveyed workers experienced at least one serious legal violation, and 94 percent reported at least one other violation.

The study documents discrimination, sexual harassment, wage theft and health and safety violations by employers with little or no way for workers to report violations and gain redress. The report exposes that the abuse of H-2A workers is not the product of a few “bad apple” employers. Rather, the program offers workers virtually no bargaining power, so they are vulnerable to abuse. The economically coercive practices inherent in the system make it difficult for workers to protect themselves. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the program’s systemic flaws exacerbate workers’ vulnerability to the virus.

Determined from early 20th century U.S. agricultural labor practices, the H-2A program’s shortcomings combine the historical exclusion of farmworkers from federal labor protections, rooted in racist Jim Crow policies, with the federal government’s default to overwork and worker coercion. The report argues that “without reform, the number of workers suffering abuse will only get larger, and already anemic government oversight will prove even less effective.” The report recommends legislative and regulatory changes to improve the program, as well as a truly revamped model to prioritize the human rights of H-2A workers and their families and elevate labor standards for all workers. (Workday Minnesota, April 10)

Wis. Carpenters strike against increased mandatory overtime

The 150 members of Carpenters Local 1733 went on strike after their contract at Masonite Architecture in Marshfield, Wis., expired March 31, because the company demanded a mandatory third weekend of overtime a week, compared to a federal holiday and worker exception. The report recommends legislative and regulatory changes to improve the program, as well as a truly revamped model to prioritize the human rights of H-2A workers and their families and elevate labor standards for all workers. (Workday Minnesota, April 10)

Wis. Carpenters strike against increased mandatory overtime

The 150 members of Carpenters Local 1733 went on strike after their contract at Masonite Architecture in Marshfield, Wis., expired March 31, because the company demanded a mandatory third weekend of overtime a week, compared to a federal holiday and worker exception. The report recommends legislative and regulatory changes to improve the program, as well as a truly revamped model to prioritize the human rights of H-2A workers and their families and elevate labor standards for all workers. (Workday Minnesota, April 10)
Prison house of oppressed genders

By Monica Moorehead

Based on a talk given during an April 9 Workers World Party national webinar: “Free them all! COVID-19 and racist mass incarceration.”

Mass incarceration is nothing new to the U.S. They were first used as a “punishment” and “menacing” tool to control workers—especially the white supremacist oppression of people of color—harkens back to the days following slavery, with the Black Codes in the Deep South before the radical Black Reconstruction era.

 Freed Black people, especially men designated as “dangerous” and “menacing,” were forced into semi-enslaved working conditions to be super-exploited by former white planters. 


That historic election did not change the twenty-first-century status of the Black population, U.S.-born or migrants. In fact, there were more im/migrants deported during the Obama administration than during the Bush Republican-led administration before he became the first Black president. 

Here is an excerpted description on page 28 of Alexander’s book: “Most white people believed African Americans lacked the proper motivation to work, prompting the provisional Southern legislatures to adopt the notorious black codes. 

As explained by historian William Cohen, ‘the main purpose of the codes was to control the freedmen, and the question of how to handle convicted black law breakers was very much at the center of the control issue. Nine southern states adopted vagrancy laws—which essentially made it a criminal offense not to work and were applied selectively to blacks—and eight of these black codes actually, were in fact, designed for the hiring out of county prisoners to plantation owners and private companies. The purpose of the black codes in general and the vagrancy laws in particular was to establish another system of forced labor. 

In W.E.B. Du Bois’ words: ‘The Codes spoke for themselves... No open-minded student can read them without being convinced they meant nothing more nor less than slavery in daily toll.’

Modern-day prison house of nations

Czarist Russia was once known as the prison house of nations due to the severe subjugation of at least 100 colonized nationalities. These nations won full political independence with the creation of the Soviet Union.

The U.S. has its own version of a prison house of nations. The legacy of the Black Codes is very much alive with 2.3 million people incarcerated. The U.S. still has the largest prison population globally. 

According to the American Civil Liberties Union, U.S. statistics reported that 35 percent of state prisoners were white, 38 percent were Black and 21 percent were Latinx. These are geno- cidal levels. Clearly—considering that only 12 percent of the general U.S. population then was Black. Four years later, these conditions have not changed much. The incarceration rate for Indigenous people, however, is the worst in the U.S. Indigenous women are incarcerated at a rate 38 percent higher than the national average, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Indigenous women were incarcerated at four times the rate of white men, and Indigenous women at six times the rate of white women, according to the Lakota People’s Law Project.

What makes these statistics even more devasting is that according to the 2010 U.S. Census, the number of indigenous people was estimated to be between 2.5 and 6 million—or less than 2 percent of the U.S. population.

Special oppression of women and transgender prisoners

The intersection of race and gender-oppressed people inside prison receives very little attention. Of the 2.3 million prisoners in the U.S., 200,000 are women who were incarcerated for violent and property offenses. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, Black women represent 30 percent of all incarcerated women in the U.S., while Latinx women represent 13 percent of the general population of women.

And Latinx women represent 16 percent of incarcerated women, but are 41 percent of all women in the U.S. Impoverished women are often coerced into having sex with guards—which is, in reality, rape—in order for basic necessities like toiletries and feminine hygiene products.

Over the past 40 years, the “female” prison population has increased by an astonishing 700 percent. Nearly 30 percent of incarcerated women globally are women with disabilities. 

All incarcerated transgender people are also multiply-oppressed. Women and oppressed gender prisoners face systemic violence based on who they are, especially if they are people of color. 

The coronavirus has pushed the cover of the scandalous, inhumane conditions that have existed in the prisons for decades. Prisoners cannot escape the threat of test- ing positive or even dying from the virus. 

While social distancing isn’t an option in small cells and since prisons provide very little privacy, the spread of COVID-19 cannot be stopped.

The demand to free all prisoners should be a priority, not only because of the corona- virus, but because the archaic capitalist system and its prisons are incapable of ful- filling people’s fundamental needs.

Women and oppressed gender prisoners...

in the U.S. (PBS, Nov. 28, 2018)

A February report from NBC News stated that, based on data from New York City and Washington, D.C., an estimated 5,000 transgender people are being held in state prisons. According to the ACLU, they confirmed that they house prisoners according to their gender identities. Being misgendered puts prisoners at a higher risk of being humiliated and sexually assaulted by brutal guards and other prisoners.

A 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey stated that imprisoned transgender people are 50 times as likely to be sexually assaulted by fellow inmates and five times as likely to be sexually assaulted by prison staff.

Similar to society as a whole, women and other gender-oppressed prisoners face systemic violence based on who they are, especially if they are people of color.

The coronavirus has pushed the cover of the scandalous, inhumane conditions that have existed in the prisons for decades.

Prisoners cannot escape the threat of test- ing positive or even dying from the virus. Since social distancing isn’t an option in small cells and since prisons provide very little privacy, the spread of COVID-19 cannot be stopped.

The demand to free all prisoners should be a priority, not only because of the corona- virus, but because the archaic capitalist system and its prisons are incapable of ful- filling people’s fundamental needs.

Pandemic used as proxy to privatize USPS

By Dave Welch

U.S. Postal Service workers, like health care workers, go to work every day risking their lives for the common good.

Over 900 USPS employees have tested positive for COVID-19, and over 40 have died. On Workers’ Memorial Day, April 28, postal workers in Des Moines, Iowa; Portland, Ore.; and Seattle plan vigils to highlight the dangers these frontline workers face.

Trillions of dollars have been announced to combat the pandemic, but the 600,000-vulnerable U.S. postal workers who sort and deliver the mail have been omitted—despite being the public’s number one worry.

“Most people don’t realize the Postal Service serves no taxpayer money. It supports itself on the sale of stamps and other services. The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated the economy and with it the income of the Postal Service.”

(Consortium News, April 23)

The American Postal Workers Union issued this statement on its website in April: “Postal workers are keeping our country moving, and we’re making working for us during this time of crisis— getting prescriptions delivered to people sheltering in place, making e-commerce possible and keeping commerce flowing.”

It is the emergency distribution system when our country is in crisis.

But at this unprecedented time, that work is under threat. The Coronavirus shutdown is plummeting postal revenues while increasing costs. The Postal Service could run out of money by the end of the summer, and the Trump administration is trying to leverage the crisis to sacrifice our public Postal Service at the altar of private profit.

Supporters of the USPS would shatter our response to the Coronavirus pandemic, hit already weakened businesses and ravage communities. Our public Postal Service needs all American leaders—Democrats and Republicans alike—to provide urgent and ongoing financial support from the federal government during this public health and economic crisis.

Supporters can sign a solidarity state- ment at awps.org.

Welch is a retired letter carrier and member of the National Association of Letter Carriers.

People with disabilities fight to be counted

Continued from page 3

sighed her into Hillside Psychiatric Hospital Strauss Cottage, where she was held for three weeks until she would agree to take her meds and comply with an Elder Placement Contract.

My mother was forced to wear an ankle monitor for which my father would have to pay. 

In 2019, when I first identified myself as a person with an emotional disabilit- y, I joined with comrades Betsy Gimbel in Workers World Party’s People with Disabilities Caucus at the All Peoples Congress in Detroit. The APC was the grandparent of today’s People Power Assemblies. Betsy had been secretary of the

Postmaster General Megan Brennan told the House Oversight and Reform Committee on April 9 that if the USPS didn’t get relief, it would run out of money by September. 

“Trump made it clear he would not approve the so-called stimulus package if it didn’t include funding for the Postal Service,” said Chuck Zlatkin, legislative director of New York Metro Postal Union. “Trump has no idea how many people depend upon the USPS to get medications that keep them alive or get prescriptions delivered to people sheltering in place, making e-commerce possible and keeping commerce flowing.”

Welsh is a retired letter carrier and member of the National Association of Letter Carriers.

All disabilities can be considered to constitute a rainbow in which the independent struggle of each disabled person for equal access, justice and health care enhances the overall struggles of all peoples with dis- abilities and of all the world’s workers and oppressed. Just as a pebble at the top of the ocean can cause ripples that make the sea a huge boulder, we can create a world where everyone is counted and can contribute to the overall struggles of all peoples with dis- abilities.

Edward Yudelovich, a Workers World Party People with Disabilities Caucus organizer with emotional and hearing loss disabilities, dedicates this article to the memory of Rosenay Ndengeybaye, whose encouragement helped fuel his activism for the past half century. □
A Delaware prisoner’s plea for PPE

This letter is from a prisoner at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center in New Castle County, Delaware. The prisoners have died from COVID-19 in the Vaughn facility, and a combined 30 more have tested positive for the virus there and at a neighboring Sussex prison. Thirty in the Vaughn facility, and a combined 29 in the Castle County, Delaware.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic virus, I am requesting facial masks and sanitizers he distributed out to the prisoner population. We can minimize and/or prevent the spread of the virus.

[Name hidden]
April 11, 2020
James T. Vaughn Correctional Center

Press Conference for Mumia Abu-Jamal on his 66th birthday

By Workers World Philadelphia bureau

A global audience was able to view a virtual press conference on April 23 focused on journalist and Pennsylvania political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal and why he should be immediately released from prison. Speakers from the U.S. and around the world participated.

The press conference launched four days of virtual celebrations honoring Abu-Jamal’s 66th birthday, including a teach-in, “U.S. Empire v. Political Prisoners;” on April 24; a virtual dance party, “Mumia Libre;” on April 25; and a 24-hour, “Poetry in Motion,” reading from Abu-Jamal’s writings from noon on April 26-27. Links for all events can be found at Mobilization4Mumia.com.

Open all over the world, International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, began the 90-minute YouTube event (youtu.be/m4WzmXDvRiI) with an appreciation of the unwavering, almost four-decades-long movement to free Abu-Jamal, imprisoned when he was just 27 years old. Santiago Alvarez, University of California, Santa Cruz student calling in from San Francisco, recounted hearing the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections’ “sick and wicked” false claim on April 15 that Abu-Jamal was being hospitalized with COVID-19. Within minutes supporters from the international with calls, resulting in a call from Abu-Jamal himself that he was fine. Alvarez said, “While it was a big scare, it was also a reminder of the urgency of how vulnerable Mumia is and how we need to get him out immediately.”

Temple University professor and well-respected Philadelphia journalist, Janine Haines, Washington Jr., provided an overview of the police, prosecutorial and judicial biases that unjustly convicted Abu-Jamal and sentenced him to death.

Strong show of international solidarity

Michael Schifman, an investigative author joining from Germany, described how photos taken by freelance photographer Peter Polakoff at the 1981 crime scene as police arrived prove that prosecution witnesses lied about significant aspects of the case against Abu-Jamal. He also described some of the 30 years of solidarity work by German groups in support of Abu-Jamal.

Mireille Fanon-Mendes-France, via video from Paris, congratulated Abu-Jamal on his 66th birthday. The Fanon Foundation director condemned capitalism not only for mass incarceration of black and brown and poor people, but for its inability to prevent the thousands of deaths from the coronavirus. In capitalist countries, those most affected by COVID19 are poor people, migrants and incarcerated people. She ended her talk hoping that “Next year, we want to celebrate your birthday with you, freed from the colonial yoke of prisons.”

Dr. Suzanne Ross spoke on the long history of international support for Abu-Jamal “from Germany, France, Denmark, South Africa, Brazil and many other countries.”

Sharon Cabusao-Silva, from the Organization of Interconnections and Prisoners in the Philippines and a longtime member of Gabriela Women's Alliance, Philippines, called in to say: “We need to prioritize the release of political prisoners, especially the sick, elderly and pregnant women. We have a common struggle—here in the Philippines and with our friends there in the U.S. — to have our political prisoners freed at this time of the epidemic.”

Community activists demand: ‘Free Mumia’

Janine Africa spoke on the movement that brought her and six other MOVE 9 members home after four decades in prison. “Never give up. We were told for over 40 years that we would never get out. But we sit here today as proof of the power of the people.”

Razak Khan Shahed, from Nation Theatre Project spoke about organizing jailhouse lawyers like Abu-Jamal who work to get other prisoners out.

Gregory Muhammad, Nation of Islam student research coordinator, described meeting Abu-Jamal in the solitary confinement unit (B Block) at State Correctional Institution-Huntington in 1982. He also described the work that The Nation of Islam has done inside and outside of Pennsylvania, to free incarcerated people, including political prisoners.

Blak Rapp Madusa, international hip-hop “activist” out of Delaware, described working to bail out 97 people from jail, including nine black mothers and caregivers, and trying to free vulnerable populations, including mothers and children, from the dangers of COVID-19. Dignity Act Now Philadelphia is also providing resources — access to shelter, food, clothing and testing for COVID-19 — after people are released.

Charles Barron, New York State Assemblyman, gave an account of his own battle with COVID-19 and ended with his call for America to fight for our freedom and for the 1%.

While many speakers couldn’t attend in person due to the limiting nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, others have stepped in to continue the fight for justice.

To DoC Warden and Commissioner et al.

To: D.O.C. Warden and Commissioner et al.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic virus, I am requesting facial masks and sanitizers he distributed out to the prisoner population. We can minimize and/or prevent the spread of the virus. (Here in [redacted] building [minimum security] where I am housed, no masks exist, no hand sanitizers, other than our own soap which is not antibacterial. A small amount of bleach is given to the tier system, while workers to work in the showers, but that’s it. Not enough to clean the walls, floor, or the bathrooms.

This is a serious matter and needs to be addressed now before it gets out of control. Otherwise the quarantine area will overflow with countless patients or victims of the deadly disease.

This is a serious medical issue and social distancing in a prison setting is difficult to maintain, particularly for those in dormitories and solitary cells. So for others to get sick is inevitable. It’s important for you to issue a call for masks, sanitizing material, etc., for all buildings!

COVID-19 has exposed everything wrong with capitalism:

- No national planning for universal quality health care.
- No provisions to support families from cradle to grave.
- No guaranteed high standard of living for all people.
- Institutionalized racism, sexism, LGBTQ+ 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 please consider putting your money where it will really help achieve the change. We need your help.

We established the Workers World Support Program 43 years ago so readers could help promote working-class truth needed for revolutionary change. Members receive a year’s subscription to WW, a monthly letter about timely issues and free subscriptions to give others for a donation of $75, $100, $300 or much more if you can. If you prefer, donate monthly, just so it adds up to a minimum of $75 a year. Write checks to Workers World and mail them, with your name and address, to 447 W. 24th St., Floor 2, New York, NY 10011. Or donate online at workers.org/donate/. It’s easy to set up monthly deductions. We are grateful for your help in building Workers World—for today and for a socialist future!
PA prisoners tortured for protesting racist policies

By Ted Kelly

Eric McGill was locked up in Lebanon County Correctional Facility in Lebanon, Pa., on Jan. 19, 2019. For 15 months now he has been held there, not because he has been convicted of a crime, but because he cannot afford the preposterous $1 million bail the judge set.

And during his entire pre-trial incarceration, McGill, a 27-year-old Black man, has been held in solitary confinement (SHU) because he refuses to cut off his dreadlocks.

Lebanon County prison authorities deny that he is being held in solitary confinement, which is regarded as torture by the United Nations. They say he is simply placed in a “secure housing unit” that is different from the general population — despite the fact that they repeatedly put him in the SHU to punish him for refusing to submit to the racist demand that he get rid of his “locs,” a hairstyle worn by people of African and Indigenous nations across the world.

Matthew Feldman of the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project told Workers World that those held in Lebanon County SHU are let outside their cells for a maximum of one hour a day, between midnight and 2 a.m. That is also the only time McGill is allowed to use the phone.

Five days a week, McGill gets one hour outside in the dark of the dead night. On the other two days, he gets about five minutes outside. As long as it’s not raining or snowing, prisoners get the option of outdoor recreation or rec time for an hour. If they choose not to take it, they get 20 minutes of indoor time. If outdoor rec is cancelled completely, they get a full hour of indoor rec.

They’re allowed one half-hour visit per week. No books or photographs from the outside are permitted.

McGill has had a cellmate for most of the 15 months. They take all meals in their cell. Their toilet has no lid or cover, and if you flush the toilet twice within five minutes, it locks for an hour. The cell lights are kept on almost all day, sometimes 24 hours, with constant illumination even when prisoners are trying to sleep.

These are the conditions that Lebanon County authorities say are not “punishment” and do not constitute solitary confinement. The prison’s own handbook says typical punishment for engaging in a physical fight is 30 to 120 days in solitary.

These were the conditions McGill and others in the SHU faced even before the pandemic caused widespread death row-style lockdowns in prisons across the country.

Even in the racist bourgeois legal system, someone like McGill is supposed to be presumed innocent at this point, having not been convicted of a crime. “It is a legal fiction that people detained pretrial cannot be punished. I don’t know how you can claim what is happening to be punishment,” said Feldman.

Dreadlocks have a cultural and religiously significant meaning for the Rastafari movement to which McGill belongs. It is clear that he is being held for his religious and cultural beliefs.

McGill was told by multiple staff, including in writing, that the reason he is in solitary is because he refuses to cut his hair. Feldman says at least two other Black men are now being held in solitary because they too refuse to cut their dreadlocks.

Violation of civil rights

Eric McGill wrote to the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project, a nonprofit legal aid organization that represents people incarcerated in any institution — the only statewide legal aid organization doing this kind of work.

The PILP provides free legal services for civil matters, mostly civil rights violations. Two other men have since filed their own Pro Se lawsuits and are being represented by PILP.

These men are suing on the grounds that their detention is a violation of a federal law, the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA), which was supposed to ensure religious liberty rights to incarcer- ated people and to prevent jails and prisons from impos- ing arbitrary burdens on people.

They claim it is also a violation of the 14th Amendment, ratified in 1868, that defines national citizenship and for- bids states to restrict the basic rights of citizens or other people. Even Pennsylvania state prisoners and those in fed- eral detention are allowed dreadlocks. Lebanon County claims that contraband could be hidden in them and that “locs” are “unsanitary.” Long straight or curly hair is accepted, as long as it’s tied back.

Criminalizing wearing dreadlocks is a symptom of the racist, genocidal nature of mass incarceration. To destroy the ability of a person to practice and cultural beliefs is itself a form of genocide.

On Mumia’s birthday

Global event honors political prisoners

Continued from page 1

whose daughter is serving a 10-year sentence in New York, said, “They have reduced the prisoners to little more than human meat for the eating coffins, and making hand sanitizer that they cannot even use.” RAPP organizer and former political prisoner Laura Whitehorn added, “We have to work to save the lives of aging prisoners and political prisoners during this virus.” RAPP, along with a broad coalition of groups, is conducting a campaign to free them all.

There was a sense of great urgency but also strong optimism throughout the program. Several former political prisoners recognized and thanked Abu- Jamaal for his early advocacy about their cases through his writing and radio podcasts. Everyone agreed that now was the moment to fight for Mumia’s freedom and for all of the long-held political prisoners.

Recently released MOVE member James Fortune told Workers World that he’s not getting out of jail, ever. We got out after 41 years. They’re saying Mumia is not getting out of jail. Use the example of MOVE. We got out because of the people, because of the support that people have behind them and have behind where we are now. We’re saying don’t stop that pressure. Don’t stop forcing these people to answer for everything they do.” Other MOVE family participants in the program included Mike Africa Jr. and Pam Africa.

Former political prisoner Sekou Odinga called on all groups supporting political prisoners to make it a priority that the prisoners behind one banner “Demanding the release of all political prisoners.”

Indian author and activist Vijay Prashad addressed the impact of COVID-19 in creating a “great lockdown, leaving 3 billion workers, 81 percent of the world’s population, without enough work to survive...while prisons are turned into death camps.” Prashad contrasted the failure of Trump and other bourgeois leaders who demonstrate “mass incompetence” with socialist leaders who have responded to COVID-19 with science and humanity. “A powerful line has been drawn between the bourgeoisie and socialists.”

Freedom for Palestinian prisoners

Nancy Mansour, founder of Existencelink.org, spoke on the plight of Israeli prisoners before and during the pandemic. She read a letter to Mumia from a family friend, who has been imprisoned by Israeli occupiers for 30 years. “We as Palestinian prisoners, share with you and all the political prisoners the same goals and aspirations which are freedom and our essential right to resist racism and oppression that we face as Indigenous people in Palestine and as oppressed people all over the world.”

Author and activist Susan Abuhalima, founder of Playgrounds for Palestine, spoke on the cruelty in providing time for the bourgeoisie and socialists.”

Criminalizing wearing dreadlocks is a symptom of the racist, genocidal nature of mass incarceration. To destroy the ability of a person to practice and cultural beliefs is itself a form of genocide.

On Mumia’s birthday

Global event honors political prisoners

Continued from page 1

whose daughter is serving a 10-year sentence in New York, said, “They have reduced the prisoners to little more than human meat for the eating coffins, and making hand sanitizer that they cannot even use.” RAPP organizer and former political prisoner Laura Whitehorn added, “We have to work to save the lives of aging prisoners and political prisoners during this virus.” RAPP, along with a broad coalition of groups, is conducting a campaign to free them all.

There was a sense of great urgency but also strong optimism throughout the program. Several former political prisoners recognized and thanked Abu- Jamaal for his early advocacy about their cases through his writing and radio podcasts. Everyone agreed that now was the moment to fight for Mumia’s freedom and for all of the long-held political prisoners.

Recently released MOVE member James Fortune told Workers World that he’s not getting out of jail, ever. We got out after 41 years. They’re saying Mumia is not getting out of jail. Use the example of MOVE. We got out because of the people, because of the support that people have behind them and have behind where we are now. We’re saying don’t stop that pressure. Don’t stop forcing these people to answer for everything they do.” Other MOVE family participants in the program included Mike Africa Jr. and Pam Africa.

Former political prisoner Sekou Odinga called on all groups supporting political prisoners to make it a priority that the prisoners behind one banner “Demanding the release of all political prisoners.”

Indian author and activist Vijay Prashad addressed the impact of COVID-19 in creating a “great lockdown, leaving 3 billion workers, 81 percent of the world’s population, without enough work to survive...while prisons are turned into death camps.” Prashad contrasted the failure of Trump and other bourgeois leaders who demonstrate “mass incompetence” with socialist leaders who have responded to COVID-19 with science and humanity. “A powerful line has been drawn between the bourgeoisie and socialists.”

Freedom for Palestinian prisoners

Nancy Mansour, founder of Existence As part of the 30-year anniversary of the migrant struggle and the U.S. imperialist war in Palestine and the U.S., it’s all part of the same imperial white supremacist fascist.”

Teresa Gutierrez, national coordinator of FIRE (Fight for Im/migrants and Refugees Everywhere) began with a special shout-out to all health care workers. She talked about the history of the im/migrant rights movement and the influence of the Black Liberation movement. Gutierrez said that with Mumia’s writings and the migrant struggle and U.S. imperialism in Latin America, it was very easy for migrants to understand the connections between this case and the broader struggle. What both the migrant struggle and the struggle of political prisoners have in common is “the tenacity and the determination that these sisters and brothers and family are giving us every single day.”

Marc Lamont Hill, author and activist, eloquently added, “Anyone who dares speak out against this empire ends up in a cage…. So we call for the release of all political prisoners right now, because it is the right thing to do. And we must make clear that their religious and cultural beliefs is itself a form of genocide. The district judge is currently slow-walking this case. Workers World demands the immediate release of Eric McGill and the other two detainees. During the pan- demic current crisis, we must fight especially hard to demand: Tear Down the Walls! Free Them All! ☐
COVID-19 and basic facts of Marxist economics

By Deirdre Griswold

The stock market crashed in March but partly recovered as President Trump's Federal Reserve Bank lowered the interest rate for bor-
rowing. Then it crashed again. Companies are laying off workers and the price of oil has dropped to its lowest level in decades. All are signs of drastically decreased economic activity right now. But what does that really mean? It isn’t just that people aren’t buy-
ing as much stuff when they’re forced to stay home in this pandemic. Much more importantly, it means that far fewer workers are produc-
ing new value.

what is happening to the capitalist econ-
omy now. When workers aren’t work-
ing, no new value is being created. The way the capitalist market system works, so that they antici-
pate more and more growth as workers go to work every day and create new value which is exploited by the bosses. When that’s not happening, there’s a big crisis.

Marxist economics is crucial to under-
standing what is behind the economic cata-
strophe accompanying the COVID-19 crisis. So here’s a very brief summary of some of the basics of Marxism.

Everything that is exchanged (usu-
ally for money), which we can’t just get for free, like plucking a dandelion, has to have two kinds of value. One is use value. The other is exchange value.

Use value vs. exchange value

The water we drink is probably one of the most valuable things we consume every day. Without it we wouldn’t die. So the use value of water is enormous.

But it is also very cheap, meaning it has a very low exchange value. As vital as water is for life, it will never cost as much as champagne, for example—which is nice, but we can survive without it.

So why is water cheap?

In simplified terms, its price is low in rela-
tion to how much a worker in our society, we buy (called com-
mmodities) because little labor is involved in making it available.

That’s why it has a low exchange value.

Way back when the reservoirs in this country were first built, along with the aqueducts leading from them, quite a bit of labor went into providing water. But now oceans of water are flowing to cities and towns in many sections of the country with little human labor expended in the process. So, in most areas, it is a minor expense.

What’s not so cheap, of course, are the bottles of specialty waters from Fiji or some other distant source that are sold in stores all over. This water costs money, not because it might be better, but because of the labor it takes to locate sources, transport the water, bottle and market it.

You can probably think of lots of other commodities that have a high use value but a low exchange value. Roof shingles you keep in your closet and barely use, but a much higher exchange value. They’re very costly com-
pared to what is exchange value and how it is measured.

Human labor is the key

Exchange value is how much a com-
mmodity costs in relation to other com-
mmodities. And that is the key to measuring it: The exchange value of a commodity comes from how much human labor is incorporated into it. Let’s say it again: It is human labor — workers working — that creates all exchange value.

This is basic to Marxism, but is either ignored or downsplayed by most bourgeois economists.

The more labor it takes to produce something, the more exchange value it will have. Exchange value isn’t the only factor determining price, of course. Prices can fluctuate according to supply and demand. But they fluctuate around a basic ingredient: how much labor it took to produce the commodity. No matter how much the market may be glutted with cars, for example, even an old, bat-
tered car will never sell for the same price as a new Ford.

Unemployment and the economic crisis

So, to come back to the current and growing economic crisis, Fortune mag-
zine wrote on April 16: “Another 5.2 million Americans filed initial unem-
ployment claims in the week ending April 11. That brings the total unemployment claims over the last four weeks to 22 mil-
 lion.” As of April 24, that figure has risen to 26 million.

These millions of workers have either lost their jobs or are housebound because of shelter-in-place orders and therefore are not creat-
ing new value.

It’s the obvious explanation for the growing crisis of the economy — but not one you’re likely to read about in the newspapers or hear about on radio and television. The corporate media will report on unemployment as the result of the economic crisis, not that it is putting the cart before the horse.

To repeat, human labor — workers working — is the creator of all exchange value.

And right now, tens of millions of work-
ers are quarantined or staying home under shelter-in-place orders. They are “essential workers” needed for the creation of new values, but are unable to do their jobs.

As a result, the capitalist economy is going into crisis mode.

By Betsy Piette

For the first time in history, on April 20 the price of U.S. oil fell to minus $38 per barrel. This was an almost $100 drop per barrel from January 2020 when oil was $60 per barrel.

On April 21, oil prices fell even further, sinking U.S. stocks to their worst loss since April 1. Treasury yields also fell, further increasing market concerns. The negative threats against Iran on April 22, the futures price jumped to $13.78.

With very few people driving or flying, and with factories shut down, it is anticipated that the global demand for oil will fall to levels last seen in the mid-1990s. Currently the anticipated price of U.S. oil to be delivered in May and July fell to $11.57 per barrel.

The glut, particularly in crude oil, is ex-
pected to carry the burden of U.S. energy debt. The U.S. also uses sanctions against major oil exporters like Venezuela, Iran and Russia to boost its market advantage.

With an uncertain future for global pro-
duction in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, this transfer of wealth from oil-producing countries to oil-consuming countries could be an economic and political factor for some time to come.

Why the drop in oil price?

Much of the blame for this crisis has been placed on the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet the impact of overproduction of natural gas and oil from hydraulic fracturing (fracking) was felt long before the pandemic hit. Even before the coronavirus struck, a global oil glut, due to overproduction, was impacting investment in the oil market.

In early March, OPEC and Russia agreed to lower the oil price per barrel. Both entities enjoy low production costs that make this possible. OPEC announced it would also reduce production. OPEC member Saudi Arabia saw a possible advantage as lower prices were likely to hurt shale oil production in the U.S., now a major oil-export competitor.

Russia, already hard hit by U.S. sanc-
tions, announced it would keep produc-
tion at current levels because it needs the revenue. With production impacted by U.S. sanctions, Russia had no incentive to carry the burden of U.S. energy debt.

Recently over 12 of the top oil-produc-
ing countries have agreed to limit produc-
tion by 9 million barrels per day, beginning in May. Yet even that was not enough to stop the his-
toric price plunge.

Oil glut and cheap prices

Oil prices have been artificially kept low over production by OPEC and Russia to boost their market advantage. But what does that really mean? It’s the obvious explanation for the growing crisis of the economy — but not one you’re likely to read about in the newspapers or hear about on radio and television. The corporate media will report on unemployment as the result of the economic crisis, not that it is putting the cart before the horse.

To repeat, human labor — workers working — is the creator of all exchange value.

And right now, tens of millions of work-
ers are quarantined or staying home under shelter-in-place orders. They are “essential workers” needed for the creation of new values, but are unable to do their jobs.

As a result, the capitalist economy is going into crisis mode.

Longterm impact of historic oil price plunge

With an uncertain future for global pro-
duction in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, this transfer of wealth from oil-producing countries to oil-consuming countries could be an economic and political factor for some time to come.

With very few people driving or flying, and with factories shut down, it is anticipated that the global demand for oil will fall to levels last seen in the mid-1990s. Currently the anticipated price of U.S. oil to be delivered in June and July fell to $11.57 per barrel. After President Trump made new war
COVID-19 devastates Indigenous communities

By Eno Flurry

This article is written in the colonized lands of the Comanche, as well as the Tonkawa Nations — now the state of Texas. Workers World supports the right to self-determination of, and promotes full solidarity with, Indigenous struggles. While Black and Latinx households are twice as likely as white households to lack indoor plumbing, Indigenous households are 19 times more likely than white people to not have indoor plumbing or access to clean water at their residence, especially in the Four Corners of the Southwest. (tinyurl.com/yao3b9jh) For the Diné or Navajo Nation which covers parts of New Mexico, Colorado, Utah and Arizona, much of the groundwater has been contaminated by gas abandoned uranium mines and is undrinkable. For many in the Navajo Nation, it is the closest, most available water and is given to the animals to drink — the same animals that they will one day eat. (tinyurl.com/reqq67)

Just this alone — the lack of access to clean water on a daily basis — is enough to exacerbate other issues, such as illnesses including cancer. Four Indigenous researchers found in a new study that the rate of COVID-19 cases per 1,000 people on a reservation is more than four times higher than in the United States as a whole. (Indian Country Today, April 23) And many Diné households also lack electricity.

While the Native population only comprises 6 percent of the total population of New Mexico, Gov. Michelle Grisham reported April 12 that 25 percent of the state’s COVID-19 cases were Indigenous people, including the Diné and several Puebloan nations. While some of the discrepancy is due to higher rates of testing by the Diné/Navajo Nation compared to that in neighboring states, that alone cannot explain the fact that the rate of infection on the Navajo reservation is 19 times that in the state of Arizona. As of April 26, the number of cases in the Navajo Nation had reached 1,716, with 59 deaths. (Navajo Times, April 27)

Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer self-isolated after exposure to a COVID-19 testing technician who tested positive. Other Diné political leaders have closed their borders to tourists and other non-Indigenous people to protect the Navajo Nation from the COVID-19 that has taken the Navajo Nation by surprise.

COVID-19 took the mask off the United States and laid bare the reasons for the high COVID death rate in the Navajo Nation. While the Native population only comprises 6 percent of the total population of New Mexico, Gov. Michelle Grisham reported April 12 that 25 percent of the state’s COVID-19 cases were Indigenous people, including the Diné and several Puebloan nations. While some of the discrepancy is due to higher rates of testing by the Diné/Navajo Nation compared to that in neighboring states, that alone cannot explain the fact that the rate of infection on the Navajo reservation is 19 times that in the state of Arizona. As of April 26, the number of cases in the Navajo Nation had reached 1,716, with 59 deaths. (Navajo Times, April 27)

To understand why the rate is so high, you only need to look at the wealth and the resources that are so disproportionately drained to the protection of capital. The COVID-19 battle played small part to the protection of capital.

The United States may be the wealthiest nation in history, but the wealth that it extracts from U.S. workers is only a portion of the wealth and the corporate profits come through the extraction of resources and labor from other parts of the world. The extraction of these resources is nonconsensual. Large portions of Latin America, Africa, Asia and even Europe have U.S. troops present nearby because they have to bow to U.S. economic power because of military and economic coercion. Nations that don’t submit to the financial and military coercion of the Bolivarian Revolution are cut off from the world economy and trade via U.S. sanctions and attempted military coups.

Countries under U.S. attack

Countries that are working to build socialism and separate themselves from the international capitalist system are under constant attack. Sanctions prevent these countries from getting medical supplies and equipment as well as other necessities, and they sabotage the countries’ economic development and manufacture discontent. The current attack is focused against Venezuela.

Right now, when the United States can’t provide adequate health care for its population, Washington gave Guaidó $880 million in “liberation dollars” that were distributed to Venezuelan health care workers. However, 17 percent of that money is to go to something called “the defense and strengthening of the national legislative power and the social protection of its members” — a program that seeks to overthrow the democratically elected gov- ernment of Venezuela.

Venezuela, which the United States has seized frozen assets of Venezuela and given them to Juan Guaidó. (venezuelanalysis.com, April 23) Despite the money pumped into Venezuela, the Bolivarian Revolution, starting in January 2019, the majority of Venezuela’s population still supports Maduro and the Bolivarian Revolution. The hypocrisy that these U.S.-backed Navajo ships, the seizure of Venezuela’s frozen assets and the program to give some of that money to health care workers in Venezuela are all attempts by Washington to seize Venezuela’s oil deposits. Venezuela’s Bolivarian Revolution had used the money from oil profits to build hospitals, schools and uplift the overall living standard of working and poor people.

Acquiring Venezuelan oil would be a victory for the United States, but there are all attempts by Washington to seize Venezuela’s oil deposits. Venezuela’s Bolivarian Revolution had used the money from oil profits to build hospitals, schools and uplift the overall living standard of working and poor people.

By Raymond Tyler

During a time when thousands are dying every day in the United States of COVID-19 and resources are dwindling, the United States has found the drug lies to menace Venezuela.

This is in contradiction to the United States, which has used the money it has seized from Venezuela’s frozen assets and given them to Juan Guaidó. (venezuelanalysis.com, April 23) Despite the money pumped into Venezuela, the Bolivarian Revolution, starting in January 2019, the majority of Venezuela’s population still supports Maduro and the Bolivarian Revolution. The hypocrisy that these U.S.-backed Navajo ships, the seizure of Venezuela’s frozen assets and the program to give some of that money to health care workers in Venezuela are all attempts by Washington to seize Venezuela’s oil deposits. Venezuela’s Bolivarian Revolution had used the money from oil profits to build hospitals, schools and uplift the overall living standard of working and poor people.

Acquiring Venezuelan oil would be a victory for the United States, but there are all attempts by Washington to seize Venezuela’s oil deposits. Venezuela’s Bolivarian Revolution had used the money from oil profits to build hospitals, schools and uplift the overall living standard of working and poor people.

U.S. uses ‘drug’ lies to menace Venezuela

leaders are involved in drug trafficking come with no evidence and are blatant hypocrisy. Colombia, a subservient ally of the United States and a neighboring country of Venezuela, produces and ships the largest supply of cocaine around the world. (tinyurl.com/wzkec6g) The amount of drugs allegedly shipped in the program to give some of that money to health care workers in Venezuela are all attempts by Washington to seize Venezuela’s oil deposits. Venezuela’s Bolivarian Revolution had used the money from oil profits to build hospitals, schools and uplift the overall living standard of working and poor people.

Acquiring Venezuelan oil would be a victory for the United States, but there are all attempts by Washington to seize Venezuela’s oil deposits. Venezuela’s Bolivarian Revolution had used the money from oil profits to build hospitals, schools and uplift the overall living standard of working and poor people.

U.S. accusations that Venezuelan leaders are involved in drug trafficking come with no evidence and are blatant hypocrisy.

U.S. uses ‘drug’ lies to menace Venezuela

leaders are involved in drug trafficking come with no evidence and are blatant hypocrisy. Colombia, a subservient ally of the United States and a neighboring country of Venezuela, produces and ships the largest supply of cocaine around the world. (tinyurl.com/wzkec6g) The amount of drugs allegedly shipped in the program to give some of that money to health care workers in Venezuela are all attempts by Washington to seize Venezuela’s oil deposits. Venezuela’s Bolivarian Revolution had used the money from oil profits to build hospitals, schools and uplift the overall living standard of working and poor people.

Acquiring Venezuelan oil would be a victory for the United States, but there are all attempts by Washington to seize Venezuela’s oil deposits. Venezuela’s Bolivarian Revolution had used the money from oil profits to build hospitals, schools and uplift the overall living standard of working and poor people.
May Day = Worker Power

Continued from page 1

across the United States walked off their jobs demanding an eight-hour day. In that era, a “normal” workday could be 10 or even 12 hours long, with no overtime pay. Within days of these walkouts, police killed several workers on strike at the McCormick Reaper Works in Chicago. That led to a huge protest rally in Haymarket Square on May 4.

In the middle of the rally, a bomb was thrown into the crowd, killing several workers and injuring 68 police. Police then broke up the rally and arrested many of the workers.

It was clearly a frame-up. Why would these workers bomb their own rally? One of those arrested for the bombing and later hanged, August Spies, was a rally speaker who was actually sitting on the platform at the time the bomb was thrown.

Nevertheless, eight workers were convicted of the crime and five sentenced to death: August Spies, George Engel, Adolph Fisher, Albert Parsons and Louis Lingg. Four were hanged on Nov. 11, 1887; Lingg died in jail the night before. Mass pressure finally won the exonerations of the other three. Those arrested executions took place during a time of heavy repression against immigrants. Four of the five sentenced to death had come from Germany. Politically, the eight were anarchists.

This terrible injustice perpetrated against the rising labor movement in the U.S. led activists at a meeting in 1889, when there were widespread socialist movements around the world, to designate May 1 as International Workers’ Day. That outraged the ruling class in this country. So in place of May Day, the U.S. government in 1894 set up Labor Day as a holiday in September. While people of course enjoy getting this paid day off, Labor Day has none of the historical significance that is incorporated in May Day.

May Day was reignedited in the U.S. 120 years later in 2006, when millions of immigrants, the vast majority from Latin America, carried out a countrywide general strike. They were protesting the xenist, anti-immigrant Sensenbrenner bill that intensified anti-immigrant repression, including the expulsion of 2 and 3 million immigrants during the subsequent Barack Obama administration. Of course, no holiday can make up for the terrible committee against workers every day of the year. Now, in the midst of the coronavirus epidemic, when so many millions are unable to work as the economy shuts down, it is imperative to demand that every person receive financial support from the government, along with health care, food, housing, and more, sufficient to meet their needs.

We can’t gather in huge demonstrations to broadcast these demands. But we can, for example, use every modern tool of communication to demand that Immigration and Customs Enforcement and migrant detention centers be shut down now—and stay closed beyond the pandemic. Activists in many cities are protest- ing from their cars around a range of key working-class issues, including health and safety in the context of COVID-19. Others are holding “virtual” protests. Solidarity with prisoners and migrants, among the most oppressed and exploited sectors of the working class, is a strong theme.

Show your solidarity for workers’ struggles on International Workers’ Day. Join a caravan or action near you or virtually join with others to plan for working-class struggle.

Visit peoplespowerassemblies.org to find an action near you. To register for Workers World Party’s Workers Assembly webinar: tinyurl.com/ynynccg6.

Leonin: Thinker and Fighter

April 22, 2020, marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of Vladimir Lenin, leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution. This successful socialist revolution was led by Vladimir Lenin, who was born in April 22, 1870, marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of Vladimir Lenin, leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution. This successful socialist revolution was led by Vladimir Lenin, who was born in 1870, and ended the feudal property relations of the Russian tsarist regime.

Lenin was a brilliant political strategist who understood the importance of unity among workers and farmers in the struggle against capitalism. He believed that socialism could only come about through the mass movement of workers and peasants, not through a small elite. He also understood the importance of international solidarity among workers and farmers around the world.

Lenin was a strong advocate of the revolutionary tradition that began with the French Revolution and carried on through the Russian Revolution.

Lenin was a tireless worker who wrote tirelessly about the importance of the working class in the struggle against capitalism. He wrote many important works, including “The State and Revolution,” which is a key document for understanding the nature of the state.

Lenin was a strong advocate of the revolutionary tradition that began with the French Revolution and carried on through the Russian Revolution.

Lenin was a tireless worker who wrote tirelessly about the importance of the working class in the struggle against capitalism. He wrote many important works, including “The State and Revolution,” which is a key document for understanding the nature of the state. Lenin believed that the working class had to take power in order to establish a true socialist society.
Laos keeps coronavirus under control

By Joshua Hanks

The Lao People’s Democratic Republic, referred to as the Lao PDR or Laos, has not recorded an increase in COVID-19 cases in 13 consecutive days as of April 25. The number of confirmed cases in the southeast Asian country is holding steady at just 19. Sixteen cases were confirmed in the capital Vientiane, while three were found in Luang Prabang. Seven people have recovered, reports Khaosan Pathet Lao (KPL), the news agency of the gov- erning Lao People’s Revolutionary Party. A professor at the Faculty of Health, Mitthapath Hospital (Hospital 150), has treated all cases in the capital city, reducing the threat of infections in the hospital system.

Laos announced its first cases on March 12, 2020. Within weeks the govern- ment introduced such social dis- tancing measures as closing all schools and many shops, closing all border checkpoints, and suspending the issuance of tourist visas for at least 30 days.

Immunizations for children are still being carried out, as disrupting them could cause outbreaks of other diseases such as highly contagious measles. Dr. Panom Sayamoungkhoun, director of the Ministry of Health’s National Immunization Programme, stated: “Every infant and every child in the Lao PDR should continue to eat two spoonful of vaccines that bring health. Even though COVID-19 has arrived in our country, diseases such as measles, pertussis, diphtheria and many other vaccine-preventable dis- eases have not gone away. These diseases can still damage or even kill our children unless they receive vaccines.”

Dr. Howard Sobel, the acting World Health Organization representative to the Lao PDR, said, “I’d like to commend the Lao Ministry of Health, the National Immunization Programme, and frontline health workers for continuing to pro- vide lifesaving vaccines in these difficult circumstances.”

Extra care is being taken to ensure the safety of health care workers and communities from COVID-19 infec- tions. In line to safeguard this social distancing, hand hygiene and utilization of protective equipment has been followed strictly,” said an April 23 article from KPL.

Despite a legacy of a vicious imperialist war, Laos today has managed to score an important public health victory, while the country that sought to totally destroy it, the U.S., has more total COVID-19 cases and deaths than any other country in the world.

Socialist priority: Health of the people

The success of the Lao PDR in contain- ing the disease draws in part from the experiences of its neighbors and fel- low communist-led countries, Vietnam and China. Vietnam, with a population of nearly 95 million, has had no confirmed deaths from the virus and only 179 cases. China, where the initial outbreak was first detected, has successfully halted the spread of the virus.

Immunizations for children are still being carried out, as disrupting them could cause outbreaks of other diseases such as highly contagious measles. Dr. Panom Sayamoungkhoun, director of the Ministry of Health’s National Immunization Programme, stated: “Every infant and every child in the Lao PDR should continue to eat two spoonful of vaccines that bring health. Even though COVID-19 has arrived in our country, diseases such as measles, pertussis, diphtheria and many other vaccine-preventable diseases have not gone away. These diseases can still damage or even kill our children unless they receive vaccines.”

Dr. Howard Sobel, the acting World Health Organization representative to the Lao PDR, said, “I’d like to commend the Lao Ministry of Health, the National Immunization Programme, and frontline health workers for continuing to provide lifesaving vaccines in these difficult circumstances.”

Extra care is being taken to ensure the safety of health care workers and communities from COVID-19 infections. In line to safeguard this social distancing, hand hygiene and utilization of protective equipment has been followed strictly,” said an April 23 article from KPL.

Despite a legacy of a vicious imperialist war, Laos today has managed to score an important public health victory, while the country that sought to totally destroy it, the U.S., has more total COVID-19 cases and deaths than any other country in the world.

Socialist priority: Health of the people

The success of the Lao PDR in containing the disease draws in part from the experiences of its neighbors and fellow communist-led countries, Vietnam and China. Vietnam, with a population of nearly 95 million, has had no confirmed deaths from the virus and only 179 cases. China, where the initial outbreak was first detected, has successfully halted the spread of the virus.

Immunizations for children are still being carried out, as disrupting them could cause outbreaks of other diseases such as highly contagious measles. Dr. Panom Sayamoungkhoun, director of the Ministry of Health’s National Immunization Programme, stated: “Every infant and every child in the Lao PDR should continue to eat two spoonful of vaccines that bring health. Even though COVID-19 has arrived in our country, diseases such as measles, pertussis, diphtheria and many other vaccine-preventable diseases have not gone away. These diseases can still damage or even kill our children unless they receive vaccines.”

Dr. Howard Sobel, the acting World Health Organization representative to the Lao PDR, said, “I’d like to commend the Lao Ministry of Health, the National Immunization Programme, and frontline health workers for continuing to provide lifesaving vaccines in these difficult circumstances.”

Extra care is being taken to ensure the safety of health care workers and communities from COVID-19 infections. In line to safeguard this social distancing, hand hygiene and utilization of protective equipment has been followed strictly,” said an April 23 article from KPL.

Despite a legacy of a vicious imperialist war, Laos today has managed to score an important public health victory, while the country that sought to totally destroy it, the U.S., has more total COVID-19 cases and deaths than any other country in the world.

Socialist priority: Health of the people

The success of the Lao PDR in containing the disease draws in part from the experiences of its neighbors and fellow communist-led countries, Vietnam and China. Vietnam, with a population of nearly 95 million, has had no confirmed deaths from the virus and only 179 cases. China, where the initial outbreak was first detected, has successfully halted the spread of the virus.

Immunizations for children are still being carried out, as disrupting them could cause outbreaks of other diseases such as highly contagious measles. Dr. Panom Sayamoungkhoun, director of the Ministry of Health’s National Immunization Programme, stated: “Every infant and every child in the Lao PDR should continue to eat two spoonful of vaccines that bring health. Even though COVID-19 has arrived in our country, diseases such as measles, pertussis, diphtheria and many other vaccine-preventable diseases have not gone away. These diseases can still damage or even kill our children unless they receive vaccines.”

Dr. Howard Sobel, the acting World Health Organization representative to the Lao PDR, said, “I’d like to commend the Lao Ministry of Health, the National Immunization Programme, and frontline health workers for continuing to provide lifesaving vaccines in these difficult circumstances.”

Extra care is being taken to ensure the safety of health care workers and communities from COVID-19 infections. In line to safeguard this social distancing, hand hygiene and utilization of protective equipment has been followed strictly,” said an April 23 article from KPL.
COVID-19 y hechos básicos de la economía marxista

Por Deirdre Griswold

El mercado de valores se desplomó en marzo, pero se recuperó en parte después de que el Banco de la Reserva Federal bajó la tasa de interés para los préstamos. Luego se estrelló de nuevo. Las empresas se están yendo a la quiebra. El precio del petróleo ha caído a su nivel más bajo en décadas.

En estos signos de una drástica disminución de la actividad económica en este momento, ¿qué significa esto realmente? No es solo que las personas no compran tantas cosas cuando se ven obligadas a quedarse en casa en esta pandemia. Mucho más importante, significa que muchos menos trabajadores están produciendo un nuevo valor.

Y esa es la clave de lo que le está sucediendo a la economía capitalista ahora. Cuando los trabajadores no trabajan, no se crea ningún valor nuevo. Sin embargo, la forma en que funcionan los mercados capitales es que los principiantes más y más crecimiento a medida que los trabajadores van a trabajar todos los días y crean un nuevo valor mientras son explotados por los patrones. Cuando eso no sucede, hay una gran crisis.

La economía marxista es crucial para comprender qué hay detrás de la catástrofe económica que ahora está llegando a la economía capitalista ahora. La economía capitalista produce y distribuye normalmente un nuevo valor. Pero también es muy barato, lo que significa que tiene un valor de cambio muy bajo. Por vital que sea el agua para la vida, no es tan importante como el champán, por ejemplo — lo cual es bueno, pero podríamos sobrevivir sin él.

Entonces, ¿por qué el agua es barata?

En términos simplificados, su precio es bajo en relación con otras cosas que compramos (llamadas productos básicos) porque se requiere poca mano de obra para que esté disponible. Por eso tiene un bajo valor de cambio.

Hace mucho tiempo, cuando se construyeron las redes de agua en el país, junto con los acueductos y canales en muchos pueblos del país con poco trabajo humano gastado en el proceso. Entonces, el agua, en la mayoría de las áreas, es un gasto menor.

Lo que no es tan barato, por supuesto, son las habitaciones de agua especiales de Fiji o alguna otra fuente distante que se venden en tiendas de todo el mundo. Esta agua cuesta dinero, no porque sea mejor, sino por la mano de obra necesaria para localizar fuentes, transportar el agua, embalaje y comercializarla.

Probablemente pueda pensar en muchos otros productos que tienen un alto valor de uso pero un bajo valor de cambio. La remesa, por ejemplo, es un industria y empleo del pan, se llama personal de la vida. Lápices y papel para escribir.

Otro producto puede tener un valor de uso limitado, como los binoculares que guardan en su armario y apenas usa, pero un valor de cambio muy bajo. Son muy costosos en comparación con el agua.

Entonces, ¿cuál es el valor de cambio y cómo se mide?

El trabajo humano es la clave

El valor de cambio es cuánto cuesta un producto en relación con otros productos. Y esa es la clave para medirlo: el valor de cambio de una mercancía proviene de la cantidad de trabajo humano que se incorpore a ella. Digámoslo de nuevo: el trabajo humano, lo que se produce para vender, es lo que crea el valor de cambio. Con el trabajo humano, y por lo tanto, el capital, es que se crea el valor de cambio. Pero, ¿qué significa esto realmente?

Todos son signos de una drástica disminución de la actividad económica en este momento. Sin embargo, esa es la clave. La economía capitalista está entrando en crisis.

Para repetir, el trabajo humano — los trabajadores que trabajan — es el creador de valor. Y ese valor de cambio es lo que determina el valor.

En términos simplificados, su precio es bajo en relación con otras cosas que compramos (llamadas productos básicos) porque se requiere poca mano de obra para que esté disponible. Por eso tiene un bajo valor de cambio.

El agua que bebemos es probablemente una de las cosas más valiosas que consumimos todos los días. Sin ella moriría. Por eso tiene un bajo valor de cambio.

Hace mucho tiempo, cuando se construyeron los embalses en este país, junto con los acueductos que conducían desde allí a los clientes. Con el trabajo humano, y por lo tanto, el capital, es que se crea el valor de cambio. La economía capitalista se está entrando en crisis.

La economía capitalista produce y distribuye normalmente un nuevo valor. Pero también es muy barato, lo que significa que tiene un valor de cambio muy bajo. Por vital que sea el agua para la vida, no es tan importante como el champán, por ejemplo — lo cual es bueno, pero podríamos sobrevivir sin él.

Entonces, ¿por qué el agua es barata?

En términos simplificados, su precio es bajo en relación con otras cosas que compramos (llamadas productos básicos) porque se requiere poca mano de obra para que esté disponible. Por eso tiene un bajo valor de cambio.

Hace mucho tiempo, cuando se construyeron los embalses en este país, junto con los acueductos que conducían desde allí a los clientes. Con el trabajo humano, y por lo tanto, el capital, es que se crea el valor de cambio. La economía capitalista se está entrando en crisis.

Para repetir, el trabajo humano — los trabajadores que trabajan — es el creador de valor. Y ese valor de cambio es lo que determina el valor.

En términos simplificados, su precio es bajo en relación con otras cosas que compramos (llamadas productos básicos) porque se requiere poca mano de obra para que esté disponible. Por eso tiene un bajo valor de cambio.

Hace mucho tiempo, cuando se construyeron los embalses en este país, junto con los acueductos que conducían desde allí a los clientes. Con el trabajo humano, y por lo tanto, el capital, es que se crea el valor de cambio. La economía capitalista se está entrando en crisis.

Para repetir, el trabajo humano — los trabajadores que trabajan — es el creador de valor. Y ese valor de cambio es lo que determina el valor.

En términos simplificados, su precio es bajo en relación con otras cosas que compramos (llamadas productos básicos) porque se requiere poca mano de obra para que esté disponible. Por eso tiene un bajo valor de cambio.

Hace mucho tiempo, cuando se construyeron los embalses en este país, junto con los acueductos que conducían desde allí a los clientes. Con el trabajo humano, y por lo tanto, el capital, es que se crea el valor de cambio. La economía capitalista se está entrando en crisis.

Para repetir, el trabajo humano — los trabajadores que trabajan — es el creador de valor. Y ese valor de cambio es lo que determina el valor.

En términos simplificados, su precio es bajo en relación con otras cosas que compramos (llamadas productos básicos) porque se requiere poca mano de obra para que esté disponible. Por eso tiene un bajo valor de cambio.

Hace mucho tiempo, cuando se construyeron los embalses en este país, junto con los acueductos que conducían desde allí a los clientes. Con el trabajo humano, y por lo tanto, el capital, es que se crea el valor de cambio. La economía capitalista se está entrando en crisis.

Para repetir, el trabajo humano — los trabajadores que trabajan — es el creador de valor. Y ese valor de cambio es lo que determina el valor.