Prisoners resist execution by virus

By Gloria Rubac

On a good day, most of the 5,000 prisoners and jails in the U.S. are filthy hellholes. Medical care is seriously lacking and can be costly. Racism is ingrained in these institutions, and violence is often the order of the day.

Right now, prisoners are terrified that as the COVID-19 virus spreads, their sentences will turn into death sentences. The majority of those in jail have not even been tried or sentenced and by law are presumed innocent.

It is not a question of “if” but “when” the virus will spread through the 5,000 jails and prisons in the U.S. Dozens of prison workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite! workers.org Vol. 62, No. 15 April 9, 2020 $1
Amazon worker battles billionaire Bezos

Continued from page 1

a confirmed case, before I returned to work on March 24. I had to give my cowoker a week to pay my rent. I had already depleted all my options: unpaid time, paid time, vacation time. I took money out of my 401k as well. I had to go back to work. That Monday, I ran into a colleague. Her eyes were bloodshot; she was fatigued. She told me she was sick and that she went for testing. I told her, “Don’t even stay home.” She went home.

Two days later we had a managers’ meeting where I learned we had our first case from someone who had tested positive, but hadn’t been on the premises in some weeks. A week prior the Queens [Amazon] facility had closed down; they sanitized everything and gave everybody pay. I was expecting us to do the exact same thing. I was sadly mistaken.

It was business as usual: “Don’t tell the associates. We don’t want to cause a panic.” That was my last time working for Amazon.

[Demetra Valer – whom I ride to work with – and I] started working behind the scenes. I was sending out emails to the CDC, the Health Department, the State Department, the governor’s office. I contacted every media outlet; the media were just brushing me off. And I thought, I can’t just stay home again and let people get sick.

They say I violated multiple guidelines — no, they did! They say I was disabled. It allows people to come to work sick.

I thought, I can’t just stay home again and let people get sick. Black, Brown and Indigenous youth and trans people are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis; by state violence 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 education or anything else—unless they can pay for it. The working class is striking for safety.

Workers World Party is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a multinational, multigenerational and multimarginalized 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, 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.

WW: So they were coming up with their own narrative to tell the workers to limit their liability?

CS: Exactly. And they were already preparing for some kind of protest. I walked out and went back Saturday at 7 in the morning and went to the cafeteria. Same thing I’d been doing every day. That’s when they quarantined me.

As soon as my coworker texted me and said she tested positive, I ran to the office and told them: “I’ve been exposed and all my employees have been exposed as well. You need to close the building down. Immediately.”

They had a bunch of excuses — they’d talk to the regional managers. They had to review the videotape to see who she came in contact with. I thought: “Wow, you’re really gonna review tape right now when I’m telling you it’s been happening?” I kept at it, sending out emails, telling everyone I could, local police department, Occupational Safety and Health Administration. I did it all.

I learned people protested at a Kentucky building and the government shut them down until April 1 — with pay. I went back on Thursday. Management told me that I didn’t happen, that it was true. The employees didn’t actually protest; the government shut it down on its own.

I said, “This is your building! You’re the site leader. Close it down.” I brought 10 more associates in. Nothing was getting through to [management].

By Friday [March 27] I was done being nice. I had people wait in the cafeteria while I went into the office by myself, and I had a full-blown argument with the site leader and the head of Human Resources. They printed out the CDC guidelines and accused me of insubordination. They were just avoiding what the real issue was. I went onto my internal communications, Amazon Chime, where we text the operations managers. I see one of the ops managers is telling supervisors to lie to associ- ates and offer VTO [voluntary time off]. I said, “We’re an essential business on mandatory overtime. So what?” He said, “Tell them there’s a bottleneck downstream and we don’t have any trucks.”

They were trying to reduce the workforce just in case the CDC showed up, so they’d be in compliance with CDC guidelines.

WW: So they were coming up with their own narrative to tell the workers to limit their liability?

CS: Exactly. And they were already preparing for some kind of protest. I walked out and went back Saturday at 7 in the morning and went to the cafeteria. Same thing I’d been doing every day. That’s when they quarantined me.

Join us in the fight for socialism!

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. 15 • April 9, 2020
Closing date: April 8, 2020
Editor: Deirdre Griswold
Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, Martha Grevatt, Monica Moorehead, Betsey Piette, Minnie Bruce Pratt
Web Editors: Albear, Harvey Markowitz, Janet Meyes Production & Design Editors: Gery Armsby, Sashy Mazumder, Scott Williams Copyediting and Proofreading: Paddy Colligan, Sue Davis, S. Hodgson
Contributing Editors: Leal-Danielle, Goossen, D. Kendell, K. Durkin, Teresa Gutierrez, Gloria Rubac
Mundo Obrero: Alberto García, Teresa Gutierrez, Carlos Vargas
Supporter Program: Coordinator Sue Davis

Amazon worker battles billionaire Bezos

Continued on page 3
The working class is striking for safety

By Martha Grevatt

Whether they are organizing walkouts, striking, or even just walking every single day, it’s been in their office all week— they didn’t quarantine themselves! Or the other employees I’d been dealing with, just me alone.

WW: That’s such an obvious set up.

CS: Blatant. So Derek and I went home. We had to do something drastic. I knew about all the media, and the New York Post finally answered. I told them we were having a walking on Monday [March 30]. I had 24 hours to put that together. I was going to get all the media outlets that had been ignoring me, they’re calling my phone. I put the word out now to come to JP organise on Monday.

Everything from the timing to the weather was planned out. I saw the temperature was going to be 65 degrees. I said, “Let’s do this at lunchtime.” I was gonna give the world a walkout and that’s exactly what happened.

WW: That’s brilliant.

CS: But I’m not “smart” or “articulate” though. [Laughs]

WW: Let’s talk about that leaked memo from Amazon executives where they said they were not “smart” or “articulate.” Do you think racism played a role in your being targeted?

CS: I definitely ran into racial profiling with little or no sanitation, few breaks to wash hands and people working elbow-to-elbow.

These conditions prompted a walk-out on April 3 at the Pilgrim Pride poultry plant in Timberville, Va., after workers learned an employee there tested positive. Workers want the plant shut down for two weeks to allow the worker and anyone who had contact with them to self-quarantine. They want PPE, which the company has refused to provide.

The same day another walkout took place in Chicago at the Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) and are now also demanding paid time off and a safe, fully disinfected workplace to come back to.

Earlier on March 31, some 1,100 meatpackers walked off the job in Greeley, Colo., for similar demands. While this last large workforce speaks 27 different languages, the members of UFW Local 7 came together in unity.

“If GE trusts us to build, maintain and test engines, which go on a variety of aircraft where millions of lives are at stake, why wouldn’t they trust us to build ventilators?” — Jake Aguana, President, IUE-CWA Local 86004

In the powerful open letter you wrote, you said, “Amazon thinks we are expendible. [Could you explain what you meant by that?]

CS: They fired me during a pandemic. They had no face. I really didn’t understand what was going on, the face. I really didn’t understand why they fired me: Keep that shit. I don’t ever want to work for a company that has three small children and a wife. Why wouldn’t they trust us to build ventilators?”

“There’s an Amazon building in the house because he has three small children and a wife. Why wouldn’t they trust us to build ventilators?”

In the house because he has three small children and a wife. Why wouldn’t they trust us to build ventilators?”

Chris Smalls with his children.

Amazon worker battles billionnaire Bezos

Continued from page 2

In the powerful open letter you wrote, you said, “Amazon thinks we are expendible. [Could you explain what you meant by that?]

CS: They fired me during a pandemic. They had no face. I really didn’t understand what was going on, the face. I really didn’t understand why they fired me: Keep that shit. I don’t ever want to work for a company that has three small children and a wife. Why wouldn’t they trust us to build ventilators?”

“There’s an Amazon building in the house because he has three small children and a wife. Why wouldn’t they trust us to build ventilators?”

In the house because he has three small children and a wife. Why wouldn’t they trust us to build ventilators?”

Additionally, workers are demanding the plant shut down after 36 residents and six workers had tested positive. They had not been given N95 masks to wear. Their union, Service Employees Union (SEIU) Healthcare Pennsylvania, says the walkout will continue until its members are provided the necessary protection.

While health care workers risk their lives, the Trump administration, acting at the behest of the for-profit American Hospital Association, killed a provision in the recent stimulus bill to force the Office of Safety and Health Administration to create an emergency rule setting COVID-19 safety standards for health care workers.

But the workers aren’t backing down, as NNU began a strike April 6 at 13 hospitals in six states run by the international chain HCA Healthcare. The union is calling HCA out for its “lack of preparedness” in failing to provide PPE to frontline workers.

Others walking out include auto dealer-ship mechanics in New York City and Amazon workers in Detroit, Chicago and New York. (See related article this issue.) From health care workers to gig workers to warehouse workers, the working class is rising up in a fight for their lives. (1)
Workers World: The current crisis has made it clearer than ever how important health care workers, sanitation workers and food distribution workers are to the regular functioning of society. Grocery store workers like you are truly on the front lines of this pandemic now. When did you start to realize this yourself?

WF worker: It’s been two weeks since things have been “not normal” at the store. It’s eerie in retrospect, but on a Wednesday in early March, I noticed how long the checkout line was getting. It made me wonder if there had just been an announcement about COVID-19 spreading to the U.S.

Within the week we had lines wrapping around the store. They were some of the worst days I’ve worked. It gets bad on [Amazon] Prime Day, the Sunday before “Thanksgiving.” But everyone agreed it was leaps and bounds worse than the worst we’ve ever seen. I was bagging $800 orders. Prime shoppers were filling orders that required two big carts. Our job was assisting and watching people hoard food. Food that we now wouldn’t be able to access. It was an unexpectedly emotional moment to see the race to the bottom in real time.

At that point there had been no confirmed cases in Philadelphia so the fear of infection wasn’t there yet. I’m worried now, not necessarily for myself, but for the store becoming a locus of transmission in general. I come within 2 feet of customers every day. Just one employee being sick, one customer being sick could set off a ridiculous chain reaction. Not that I don’t want to protect my health. I’m being as careful as I can.

WW: What is the mood at the store now? How are you and your coworkers reacting to this?

WF worker: Nothing feels normal. Everyone is trying to cope with this at the same time we’re trying to work.

Meanwhile, we’re not getting paid sick time unless we’re diagnosed.

For Whole Foods workers, you have the choice to take leave to self-quarantine. But if you want to self-quarantine you’re not going to get paid. If you want to get paid, you’ve got to go to work. Some immuno-compromised coworkers have not been getting paid because they’re protecting their health. Not everyone has this choice. And there’s a kind of “invincibility factor” where some younger workers don’t think it will affect them. But you can have a severe case of this if you’re young.

WF: Millennials and Gen Z currently make up the largest group of confirmed cases in Philadelphia. (Philly Mag, March 25)

WW: Have you received any hazard pay from Bezos or Amazon?

WF: Amazon announced a $2 an hour raise for all of us through April. If you’re diagnosed with the coronavirus, you get two weeks paid sick leave. But without unlimited paid sick time, that just incentivizes going to work. Philadelphia has passed some legislation that will guarantee paid sick leave, but no other Whole Foods/Amazon workers have that. There shouldn’t be a cap on that anyway. (Philadelphia Inquirer, March 16)

WW: How has that affected the class consciousness of your coworkers?

WF: We know that we, the workers, are disposable. This is a common sentiment across everyone who works for Amazon. You’re just an arm in a massive machine. The depersonalization of it all. It boils down to: They don’t give a shit about us. It has nothing to do with wanting to alarm customers. It has to do with the costs in providing protective equipment. A $2 raise is a bare minimum for public relations reasons. Our store has broken sales records.

Our store made $1.5 million last week; we usually make under $1 million. Yet there is a reluctance to invest in any measures to keep us healthy. Before any of this happened, part-time Whole Foods employees got their direct employer, Amazon, a $2 an hour raise. The extension of the policies Amazon has been implementing since they bought Whole Foods.

They hired 100,000 new workers just to make up for the surge in orders. Even though we’re essential, the attitude is still there that we’re replaceable.

My co-workers are ready for full communism, let me tell you. I’ve been trying to organize my workplace off and on as these cuts have happened. I’ve worked there since the first Amazon Prime Day, right after Amazon bought Whole Foods. Every benefit that was advertised as a reason people like to work at Whole Foods is gone, eliminated by Amazon.

I’ve seen only mounting frustrations since then. Nothing has brought out the “we don’t have anything to lose here” attitude like this. People are afraid for their lives, for their health, for the health and lives of their loved ones. They’re saying this isn’t worth it. We deserve more. As important as we know our jobs are, we didn’t realize before all of this how essential the work we do is.

There is now near universal recognition of how important the work we do is— not just grocery store workers, but retail workers in general, sanitation workers, health care workers. It’s rubbing off on us. People for the first time are feeling that we have a chance to take what is actually ours. To use our position as the people who are actually holding this system together.

Imagine an overstuffed pillow. We’re the threads on those seams. Each thread is unraveling. So long as we continue to go to work, that pillow’s not gonna burst. But my coworkers are realizing we’re the ones keeping everything together.

We’re trying to focus on the silver lining. But we’re crying at work.

We’re anxious. People are feeling a lot of despair and hopelessness. Just feeling left in the dust—by the government, by our employer. It’s not just us, it’s everybody in our trade. It’s everybody who’s still working right now. We’re essential workers, but our pay reflects that. Even if we’re essential workers, they’re only willing to throw us pocket change.

None of those people are willing to go out there and risk their lives for $17 an hour. It’s always been the case that the people deciding our fate would never in a million years dream of doing the work we do. We’ve always known this.

Now that it’s coming out in such a violent, inhumane way, people are angry. My coworkers are angry. People are having a hard time staying calm during long shifts. Six days a week, 50 or more hours, with so many people working overtime. People are still picking up more hours.

And we know emotional and physical exhaustion will weaken our immune systems.

There is fear, sorrow, anguish. But a sense of hope for the first time. We are agents of history. We always are, but the vision of organizing, of truly gaining power as we’re essential workers. They’re only willing to throw us pocket change.

Continued on page 5

‘Everything is unraveling’

Whole Foods worker speaks out about dangerous conditions

By Ted Kelly
White House right-wing zealots
A way for the working class to intervene

By Teresa Gutierrez

If the Gallup poll is correct, according to the Wall Street Journal and CNN, President Trump currently has a 49 percent approval rating, as of this writing. This matches the highest approval rating he has ever had. Adapting or thinking person must be astounded by this fact.

Trump has not only misunderstood COVID-19, he has completely mishandled the coronavirus crisis. His failures in all areas of critical policy, from public health to rapidly get ventilators and PPE (personal protective equipment) to workers, and to stall on social distancing has resulted in not only lapsing working conditions, but the potential for the death of millions.

His latest call for people to return to work by mid-April was putting the lives of millions of workers in harm’s way. Fortunately, heads prevailed, and the stay-at-home policy stands in place.

What clearly guides Trump is not science or concern for the masses, but the bottom line for the capitalist class and his position in government.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed reality as we know it. Nothing will ever be the same.

Where the working class goes from here and how they can organize to defend its interests under the cloud of this pandemic, however, remains as critical as ever.

That is why understanding the reactionary, white supremacist, and antigay, anti-abortion, misogynist white gentrifiers, antigay, anti-abortion, misogynist white supremacists (in the White House is critical.

It is important because this health crisis demands that those in power, including veering to fascism if needed in order to maintain their hold over the system.

Yet it is these elements who are steering the course of this pandemic, and are sending me good wishes and solidarity while those in power be mightily challenged on how they are handling this epic virus. It is important because workers must once again be reminded, like they were during the Great Depression, that it is we who have the real power in society, in the working class and the oppressed, and only us, who are the real agents of change.

And change is desperately needed because four more years of these zealots is an extreme danger not only to the here, but humanity itself.

If the predictions that 100,000 to 200,000 people could die from COVID-19 are right, the blood from the deaths of each of these people is on the hands of the zealots in the White House.

In short, President Trump is one of those who is part of the White House COVID-19 team.

Pence is against same sex marriage and a dangerous homophobe who has supported “conversion therapy.”

The right wing is that foolish. They would defy science; they would defy common sense in order to bolster the bottom line for the right-wing billionaires, the reactionary personalities in Louisiana, who called on their congregation to come out in defiance of social distancing, thoughtlessly put themselves and their milieu in danger.

Yet Fauci is now receiving death threats and is the victim of a hostile social media campaign for challenging and appearing to one-up Trump. (NY Times, March 28)

The COVID-19 team is a veritable who’s who of antiscience, HIV crisis.

Donald Trump Jr., who is Alex Jones’ son, is a homophobe who has supported “conversion therapy.”

The right wing is that foolish. They would defy science; they would defy common sense in order to bolster the bottom line for the White House COVID-19 team.

Science matters.

Vice President Pence is one of those who is part of the White House COVID-19 team.

White House COVID-19 team is a veritable who’s who of antisemites, gentrifiers, antigay, anti-abortion, misogynist white supremacists.

It is any wonder nurses are striking for PPE?

There is a great risk that these zealots will take advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to tighten their hold on the capitalist system, and policies that can turn back any progress the workers have made.

Already, when all attention should be placed on saving lives, the Trump administration had the top Iranian general killed when he was visiting Iraq and falsely accused the president of Venezuela Nicolás Maduro of drug running. Vox reported on March 29: “The Supreme Court handed down a unanimous decision that holds ill for the future of civil rights and they have rolled back any
gentinization car caravans to prisons to demand #FreeThemAll
rent strikers, the health care workers, the activists organizing car caravans to prisons to demand #FreeThemAll to let the zealots in the White House know that we will not go back. (NY Times, March 28)

In the meantime, workers do not have to depend on any politician to fight for their right to live. We can look to the Amazon and Whole Foods Market workers and the rent strikers, the health care workers, the activists organizing car caravans to prisons to demand #FreeThemAll. (NY Times, March 28)

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed reality as we know it. Nothing will ever be the same.

Workers who have been on strike for the RRIP, for the right to organize, for fair elections.

Who does New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo have to call for the opportunities I have to organize my class and be in the middle of this historic struggle. I think we will win.

We have to. But I think that we will.

Note: As of April 4 at least some Whole Foods stores have introduced “social distancing” protocols for shoppers. Full interview available at workers.org.
In the midst of crisis, sex workers need solidarity

By Doris Hiegl

The criminalization and stigmatization of sex work in the U.S. has always put sex workers at risk. Due to puritanical legislation such as FOSTA/SESTA and the new EARLY IT Act, sex workers — many of whom are Black, Brown and/or transgender — have fallen victim to housing instability, severe poverty, lack of access to health care, and violence. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these obstacles for sex workers nationwide. In an interview with Allison James, a non-binary sex worker, a Workers World correspondent with the Philadelphia branch, learned of the plight of sex workers in the U.S. during this pandemic and how the movement can help. Read the entire interview at workers.org.

WW: What is considered “full-service sex work”?

Allison James: Full-service sex work is considered any work that has sexual contact. There’s a lot of openness on the phrase. If you feel like you’re doing full-service sex work, then you’re probably doing full-service sex work. If you wanted a hard definition on that, it’s engaging in anything that would cause fluid emission.

WW: How has the pandemic specifically affected you as a sex worker?

AJ: I haven’t had any work since March 16. My work is all contact work. A pandemic with a transmittal virus means that all-contact sex work isn’t allowed, and so it’s moved completely online. If I wanted to still make money doing sex work, that would be how I would do it, which requires an insane level of resources to even start that career. On top of that, creating clientele [on that] platform is really difficult.

WW: The U.S. government is excluding sex workers from the small business bailout bill. How will this affect sex workers?

AJ: Most sex workers are our own business. Everything that I put and use to create my body the way that it is, my body is my job. Sex workers are a huge part of small businesses. Most sex workers are not just — not that it’s a bad thing to just be doing sex work — but a lot of them are using it as a jumping off place for their future careers. Excluding people for apparent sexual nature is puritanical and completely ridiculous. They’re also excluding people who sell sex toys — on the lowest level of what can be considered sexual labor. They’re doing this broad sweep based on what they think is allowed, not what the need is.

All work is part of capitalist exploitation. Sex work is no different. We’re not campaigning to be seen as better than other workers. We’re campaigning to just be seen as human and to be able to get workers’ rights and a union and some level of protection.

WW: What demands would you like to raise? What aid do sex workers need right now?

AJ: Give full-service street-level workers so much support right now. A lot of people are hurting, and it’s hard to pick who’s hurting the most, but it’s street-level workers. Give them help. They don’t have the ability to just take time off, and they just got hit by FOSTA/SESTA laws that shoved a lot of inside workers out of the market. A lot of full-service sex workers are homeless. [Many] are trans. They are very, very marginalized people that don’t have access to care and protection and to six feet of distance and non-fluid exchange. They were already hurting to begin with. We should be supporting hookers full-stop.

Sex Workers Outreach Project-USA ($dreadedjinx) is the easiest way to get in touch with sex workers in need. They’re giving cash directly to full-service sex workers right now. There’s a chapter in almost every major city, and there’s quite a few in minor cities. A lot of them also do harm reduction. You can also get in contact with sex workers or you can offer and donate supplies like food, baby wipes, shoes, clothing [and] condoms.

So, during a pandemic, the government is trying to push through a bill that would take away end-to-end encryption in text messages and emails, which means that they can read it. Go sign the petition against it (tinyurl.com/kphgft). The only people I see talking about it are sex workers, because sex workers are going to get thrown in jail the second that comes into order.

WW: Are there any other issues you would like to address in this interview?

AJ: I see a lot of people who tokenize sex workers. All work is part of capitalist exploitation. Sex work is no different. We’re not campaigning to be seen as better than other workers. We’re campaigning to just be seen as human and to be able to get workers’ rights and a union and some level of protection. It’s not that huge of a difference [from other workers]. If you’re going to lobby for McDonald’s workers, lobby for sex workers too. You can do both.

WW: James has also requested that funds be sent to their CashApp account ($lunchmunny) as well as to the CashApp of one of their sex worker members ($foodedjinx). They are distributing funds sent to these CashApp accounts to sex workers in need. Anyone who sends funds to these accounts must specify in a note whether it is for distribution or for the owner of the CashApp account. Please also be respectful and do not leave any sexual notes.

Prisoners rebel against viral execution

Continued from page 1

handling of the coronavirus pandemic. The lawsuit, filed March 9, argues that the Texas Department of Criminal Justice is failing to protect prisoners at the Pack Unit, a geriatric prison near College Station, from the potential insult of sexual assault.

The virus crisis is also affecting those who work in prisons and jails. The Washington, D.C., chapter of the Fraternal Order of Police just announced that officers would no longer make security rounds, citing concerns about a lack of testing and personal protective equipment.

Kenneth Foster, a prisoner whose death sentence was commuted to life just hours before his scheduled execution in 2007, wrote, “What I’m shocked about is the fact TDC [Texas Department of Corrections] is doing chains. WTF? In the middle of a pandemic! And guess what? They’re taking no real precautions. They are not cleansing the cells or buses that transfer inmates are in. They’re acting like it’s not happening.” (Chains are the buses that transport prisoners.) Meanwhile, Texas prison officials say no prisoners are being put on buses and transferred anywhere.

Release prisoners now! Activists and even some public officials are proposing a different solution: large-scale releases. In Iran, officials approved the temporary release of more than 54,000 prisoners in an effort to contain the spread of the new virus crisis.

In Houston, County Judge Lina Hidalgo had approved the release just 1,000 of the county’s 9,000 prisoners when a judge ruled that it would be illegal. There are actions that can be taken to demand the release of prisoners, as exemplified by activists in Philadelphia. They organized a caravan of over 120 cars with signs and loudspeakers that drove around the city to demand that the release of all prisoners. (See “Caravan protests demand ‘Decarcerate now!’” in the April 1 Workers World.)

Prisons are concentration camps for the poor and oppressed. People who are so disempowered and beaten down by this system commit crimes, many of them horrible, due to racism, frustration, poverty — and being forced out of, or never allowed into, mainstream society. Children as young as eight and in third grade are already tagged to follow the school-to-prison pipeline.

It is up to all of us with a revolution- ary consciousness to tear down the prison walls and build a society that serves all the people with justice and dignity.

100 Years Later

Some Lessons of the Great Bolshevik Revolution

By Deirdre Griswold

Contents: From Marx’s view of social evolution to Lenin’s “Socialism” • Social gains in the early years of Soviet power • ‘Whose state? Our state’ — meaning all nationalities • External and internal problems, strengths and setbacks • To the Left — You are cheering too soon

Download it free from www.workers.org/books

Marxism, Reparations & the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper. Marxism, Reparations & the Black Freedom Struggle

Racism, National Oppression & Self-Determination • Black Labor from Chattel Slavery to Wage Slavery • Black Youth: Repression & Resistance • The Struggle for Socialism Is Key • Domestic Workers United Demand Passage of a Bill of Rights • Black & Brown Unity: A Pillar of Struggle for Human Rights & Global Justice • Harriet Tubman, Woman Warrior • Racism & Poverty in the Delta • Needs Reparations, Not Sanctions • Alabama’s Black Belt: Legacy of Slavery, Sharecropping & Segregation • Are Conditions Ripe Again Today? Anniversary of the 1965 Watts Rebellion

Available at major online bookstores.
April 4 marks the 52nd anniversary of the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the great Civil Rights leader, who died fighting to realize a dream for social equality. He was gunned down in cold blood while taking a stand in Memphis, Tenn., in 1968 to support Black sanitation workers on strike for dignity, safe working conditions and a living wage. This important struggle epitomized the merging of two sides of the class struggle for economic and political rights.

In a letter to his source, Coretta Scott King, in 1968, Dr. King wrote, “I imagine you already know that I am much more socialist in my economic theory than capitalistic … [Capitalism] started out with a noble and high motive but … like most human systems it failed to victimize the very thing it was revolting against. So today capitalism has lost its usefulness.”

The last sentence of this quote is certainly just as relevant now as when it was written, especially considering the stagnating crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on workers and oppressed peoples on a global scale.

The poorest are suffering

This global health care crisis has overaken so many sectors of society in the richly developed economies and poor, developing countries. Even inside the United States, the most powerful imperialist country, there has been an uphill battle to secure enough testing kits, surgical masks, hand sanitizer, ventilators and other essential health care goods and services to make sure millions of people stay as healthy and as safe as possible in order to contain the spread of the virus.

In this crisis, the most marginalized and the poorest of the poor are suffering in disproportionate numbers. Capitalism—a system that puts profits before people’s needs—is the root cause of the current crisis for millions in the U.S., but some have been suffering more than others for decades and for centuries—especially people of color. Their numbers include both those who identify as African American and also immigrants from South and Central America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and the Middle East—suffering from an upsurge in xenophobia.

In New York state and New York City—the epicenter of the COVID-19 virus in the U.S.—one out of four people testing positive are living in the borough of the Bronx. Half of the deaths so far from the virus have been African Americans, largely due to high numbers of people with pre-existing conditions like asthma and diabetes. (thecity.nyc, April 3)

The total population of all the New York City boroughs—and that is no accident. Of the overall population there, 35.94 percent are African American people, 48.38 percent are Latinx and 31.11 percent are Asian or Pacific Islanders. And these numbers do not reflect undocumented people, with many families forced to live in close quarters with little or no access to public assistance. This is a population at severe risk and in need of adequate health care.

A pandemic within a pandemic

There is an old African-American saying that goes, “When white folks catch a cold, Black folks get pneumonia.” That statement could be taken figuratively and literally. For African Americans, the pandemic health crisis has driven home the very hard reality that has existed for over two centuries, since the end of slavery: The U.S. has an anti-quated health care system riddled with white supremacy.

Even before this current health crisis hit, African Americans have suffered the highest mortality rates from the cradle to the grave compared to white people. Alarming statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) give an indication of this reality: 54 percent of Black males suffer from high blood pressure and Black people suffer the highest death rate from heart attacks of all populations.

In the Deep South—the poorest U.S. region and home to the largest concentration of Black people—the states of Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina and Texas all spend less than $25 per person a year on public health care compared to $64 per person in New York. (Mother Jones, April 2)

According to the 2015 National Medical Association Scientific Assembly, the risk of diabetes was 77 percent higher among Black people than for white people. Depending on where they live, Black women were twice and a half times more likely to die giving birth in 2018 compared with white women. (National Center for Health Statistics, Jan. 30)

In light of the generally poor health Black people suffer from, along with lack of health care in their communities—both urban and rural—there exists today a pandemic within a pandemic. The toll of the coronavirus is becoming a genocidal-like crisis within Black communities.

Workers World Party’s socialist demand of “Free health care for all” raises an answer to the massive, life-threatening situation for all workers and their families. “Black Lives Matter” should also be a main focus of this overall demand, and affirmative action must be implemented in health care to help unmask and remedy this horrific injustice.

Workers World Party’s socialist demand of “Free health care for all” raises an answer to the massive, life-threatening situation for all workers and their families. “Black Lives Matter” should also be a main focus of this overall demand, and affirmative action must be implemented in health care to help unmask and remedy this horrific injustice.
Rosemary Neidenberg: a long and valued life

By Deirdre Griswold

Rosemary Neidenberg had reached the age of 99 before she died on March 29. But losing her was still too soon and too sad for all her comrades, family and friends.

Rosemary was a treasure, a loving hug, an encyclopedia of past memories. She was beautiful in every way, her sweet face a true mirror of her generous and joyful personality. She was also as reliable as an atomic clock, still producing the mailing labels for bundles of Workers World newspapers each week. She had been doing it from her apartment in Brooklyn for many years, once she could no longer travel to the Manhattan office of Workers World Party.

Rosie was born in 1921 on March 8 – International Working Women’s Day – and raised in a conservative family in Buffalo, N.Y. Later in life she discovered a St. Christopher medal her mother had anxiously sewn into the lining of her jacket to protect her from evil influences.

When she was seven, she spent nine months in bed with polio, using the time to read all 24 volumes of the works of Mark Twain. She survived, but had difficulty walking, so from then on she went everywhere on a bicycle. Nothing could keep her down.

Later in life she told her friend and comrade Brenda Ryan of several events that had led her to become a Communist. She was first influenced by stories from her grandmother about how her grandfather had been electrified while working in a wheat processing plant. The company refused compensation to her grandmother and treated her with contempt.

She worked in the textile mills of Bethlehem Steel. This provoked a wildcat strike by workers, so from then on she went everywhere on a bicycle. Nothing could keep her down.

Over the years, she played a very active role in the movements against racism, sexism and the oppression of LGBTQ+ people. She also helped lighten the mood in early days of Cold War anti-communism, contributing her wit to skits and even operettas produced at the party headquarters that lampooned the blood-sucking ruling class.

Her apartment was a cozy and fun hangout, especially for anyone needing even temporary refuge. People confided in her about their personal problems, knowing she would never be judgmental.

She helped a number of women who needed to terminate unwanted pregnancies. At a time when abortion was illegal, that took both courage and medical know-how.

By the late 1940s, Sam Marcy and Dorothy Ballan had come from New York to Buffalo to be leaders of the branch there. Not long after, Dorothy’s cousin, Milt Neidenberg, arrived from Brooklyn to join them. Milt had been in the Navy during World War II. With his old peacoat, Brooklyn accent and intense gaze, he radiated charm as well as militancy in the class struggle.

Rosemary recalled the moment she knew she was in love with Milt: at a street meeting where he was handing out fliers. “There was something about the way he leaned forward to people as he gave them out,” Rosie said later. From then until Milt’s death in 2018, she and Rosie were inseparable.

A founding member of WWP

In 1959, Rosemary and Milt were among the founding members of Workers World Party. Led by Sam Marcy, members in three branches of the WWP – Buffalo, New York City and Youngstown, Ohio – had broken with that organization over its support for counterrevolutionary developments in Eastern Europe, as well as its reluctance to recognize the proletarian class character of the revolutions in China and Korea. They had carried out a long ideological struggle within the WWP before finally deciding it was time to leave and build a new organization.

Happily, that break and the founding of WWP coincided with the triumph of the Cuban Revolution and the opening of a new era of struggle for socialism.

Rosemary and Milt eventually moved from Buffalo to New York City in 1965 to help build the Workers World Party center there.

Rosemary brought with her the kind of personal warmth and interest in others that is harder to maintain in a big city like New York, with its five boroughs and the difficulty of getting around, especially for someone with limited mobility. But it didn’t slow her down. She maintained her level of work, her participation in party events and her keen interest in people that was part of her politics.

For many years, when the party headquarters was on the third floor of an old walkup building on West 21st Street in Manhattan, she climbed all those stairs to faithfully staff the office once a week.

Helping make history

This was a time when WWP was in the forefront of many historic struggles.

In 1962 Youth Against War & Fascism, WWP’s youth group, held the first U.S. demonstration against the war in Viet Nam. President Ho Chi Minh heard of it and publicly commended the action. WWP later aided in the formation of an antinuclear union within the armed services – the American Servicemen’s Union – that put out a regular newspaper and had members in U.S. bases all over the world.

The party also appealed to the antiwar movement to join forces with the Black struggle, raising the slogan “Stop the War against Black America.” It supported the Black Panther Party when it was under attack and in 1974 organized a march of 25,000 people in Boston to drive back a racist terror campaign gripping the city.

In June 1967 WWP held the first U.S. demonstration to defend the Palestinian struggle, during the Six-Day War.

In 1970 YAWF Women in New York revived International Working Women’s Day with a huge rally at the Women’s House of Detention, where both Ethel Rosenberg and Angela Davis had been incarcerated. The same year, the party joined the historic struggle against lesbian and gay oppression at the first Gay Pride march.

Rosemary was a great friend of Leslie Feinberg, a party member and leader in the LGBTQ+ movement. She was deeply saddened when Leslie died from tick-borne infections in 2014.

She supported all these struggles with her usual enthusiasm.

Warm, frank and honest

While Rosemary was enthusiastic and warm to her comrades, she was always frank and honest in giving her opinions. In fact, that was one of her most endearing qualities. Ask a question, get a straight answer.

Along with everything else they did, she and Milt found the time and energy to bring a new life into being — their adored daughter Nina. They were kind and loving parents, so proud of Nina and the grandchildren she brought them.

Rosemary Neidenberg was fortunate in understanding the world around her and making choices that put her on the right side of history. She led a long and valued life, making many contributions to WWP along the way, and is deeply missed.

There is much more about Rosemary that needs to be said. In these times of the COVID-19 epidemic, meetings and memorials are restricted. Hopefully, an online space will be made available soon for comments by all those who knew and loved her. Rosemary Neidenberg is missed.

Milt and Rosie enjoy the countryside near Buffalo, N.Y., sometime in the early 1960s.
COVID-19 exposes the U.S. Armed Forces

By John Catalinotto

April 5 — Reports in the media this week have revealed that the U.S. military forces — which are the core of the imperialist state power — are far from immune to the coronavirus. Both the U.S. Army and the Navy have been at the forefront of the COVID-19 pandemic. And the hit has political repercussions.

Not only has the pandemic affected the bodies of the troops, the reaction of the Pentagon to this threat has begun to affect their consciousness. It has exposed the limitations of the rank and file of the U.S. Armed Forces: On the one hand, obedient troops are the enforcers for the empire of capital on a global scale; on the other hand, troops who resist reveal they are workers in uniform.

On March 26 the Army Times reported: “The Army’s top leaders say they are ramping up to evacuate soldiers as coronavirus cases increase across the force and internal memos acknowledge that the Army’s stay-at-home policy so far have been ineffective in combating the pandemic. ... Across the force, soldiers told Army Times this week they were concerned by their commanders’ decisions to continue to train and hold formations.”

The Business Insider ran a more general article discussing the COVID-19 situation on bases around the world: “To summarize, few steps had been taken to provide ‘social distancing’ — soldiers and sailors live close and work close to each other — and the availability of tests was no better than for U.S. civilians. The Army pandemic response was rapid and the soldiers were worried. (For details, see tinyurl.com/avt2oa/)

In the Navy, the reaction of the sailors was more protracted. President Franklin Roosevelt was even more dramatic. The ship’s captain had written a four-page letter to Navy officials, where he asked for the crew of the aircraft carrier to be evacuated and for “decisive action” as the coronavirus spread onboard: “We are not permitting all caps at their stations, and they cannot allow a single sailor to perish as a result of this pandemic unnecessarily.” (USA Today, April 3)

When Acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly on April 2 fired Captain Brett Crozier after the letter he wrote wound up published in the San Francisco Chronicle — hundreds of sailors on board chanted “Captain Crozier! Captain Crozier!” and clapped as he left. A video on Facebook showed them cheering him...”

Sailors backed his demand

It is rare that a high-ranking officer stands up to challenge the military command structure. Nevertheless, even in this professional military, lower ranks of his command who this experience shows is that the situation must have been horrible for someone so high in the chain of command to dissent. And the Pentagon’s punishment of Capt. Crozier — who reportedly tested positive for COVID-19 on April 5 — pushed the sailors to take his side.

During the U.S. war against Vietnam, when there was a conscript military, the officers, from the generals to the privates, were despised by many of the troops. The heroic Vietnamese liberation struggle for over a decade pushed the U.S. military to the breaking point. The situation of the ranks and file U.S. troops at that time ran the gamut from demoralized to rebellious, which led them to disrupt the U.S. occupation.

This attitude forced the Pentagon to end the draft in 1973 and orient toward a professional military. Military service became more like a career associated with more money and training to make even the lowest ranks of the military, Vietnam's University of Medicine and Public Health, has developed a fast and affordable test kit that costs about $15 and returns results within an hour. Now 20 countries around the world are seeking to order tens of thousands of them. Vietnam has also focused efforts on public health campaigns to convince the public to new cases and areas with transmission. The government uses an app and other channels to swiftly alert the public to new cases and areas with transmission, to help people get tested and to provide scientifically accurate, up-to-date information on best practices to reduce exposure.

“The Vietnamese Ministry of Health produced a catchy music video to inform people of proper handwashing techniques and other measures to reduce transmission,” according to the same article.

“Imagine a government that’s actually good on social media and inspires a TikTok movement. And, no, screams about the troops don’t count,” wrote Linh Dao Swoke of the website hackernoon.com.

Between 2002 and 2018, 45 million Vietnamese people were lifted out of povverty. From 1990 to 2015, life expectancy rose from 71 to 76 years. Vietnam now has a higher vaccination rate than the U.S. Hand sanitizer was almost everywhere, even in rural areas. People were “chipper” about following the measures set out by the government to contain the virus. One Vietnamese worker in the U.S. has also used social media and information technology to combat the spread of the virus. Almost 90 percent of the people have either a smartphone or a mobile phone. The government uses an app and other channels to swiftly alert the public to new cases and areas with transmission, to help people get tested and to provide scientifically accurate, up-to-date information on best practices to reduce exposure.

The Vietnamese Ministry of Health produced a catchy music video to inform people of proper handwashing techniques and other measures to reduce transmission.

“Imagine a government that’s actually good on social media and inspires a TikTok movement. And, no, screams about the troops don’t count,” wrote Linh Dao Swoke of the website hackernoon.com.

Between 2002 and 2018, 45 million Vietnamese people were lifted out of povverty. From 1990 to 2015, life expectancy rose from 71 to 76 years. Vietnam now has a higher vaccination rate than the U.S. Hand sanitizer was almost everywhere, even in rural areas. People were “chipper” about following the measures set out by the government to contain the virus. One Vietnamese worker in the U.S. has also used social media and information technology to combat the spread of the virus. Almost 90 percent of the people have either a smartphone or a mobile phone. The government uses an app and other channels to swiftly alert the public to new cases and areas with transmission, to help people get tested and to provide scientifically accurate, up-to-date information on best practices to reduce exposure.

“Imagine a government that’s actually good on social media and inspires a TikTok movement. And, no, screams about the troops don’t count,” wrote Linh Dao Swoke of the website hackernoon.com.

Between 2002 and 2018, 45 million Vietnamese people were lifted out of povverty. From 1990 to 2015, life expectancy rose from 71 to 76 years. Vietnam now has a higher vaccination rate than the U.S. Hand sanitizer was almost everywhere, even in rural areas. People were “chipper” about following the measures set out by the government to contain the virus. One Vietnamese worker in the U.S. has also used social media and information technology to combat the spread of the virus. Almost 90 percent of the people have either a smartphone or a mobile phone. The government uses an app and other channels to swiftly alert the public to new cases and areas with transmission, to help people get tested and to provide scientifically accurate, up-to-date information on best practices to reduce exposure.
Sanctions or solidarity

A pandemic by its very nature needs a global response. It can only be addressed with cooperation across political, national, and social mobilization. Every form of scientific and technological cooperation is urgently needed.

The U.S. is at the center of an empire built on and dominated by capitalist exploitation and a world order. Washington’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been to increase ruthless competition, economic sanctions and war threats.

A handful of banks and industries that operate on a for-profit basis privately expropriate goods that are socially produced by millions of workers connected to each other in global supply chains in 200 different countries. Only goods that are immediately profitable are produced, in a competitive and chaotic manner. Any other form of distribution and exchange—even in the face of a pandemic—is deeply threatening to U.S. economic domination of world markets.

While the pandemic hit, the U.S. government had accelerated—through economic sanctions—the denial of medicines and food to one-third of the world’s population. During a global crisis, sanctions have put the entire world at risk. What is increasingly obvious to millions of workers and people in countries with different economic systems respond differently in a public health crisis.

In keeping with its principle of international solidarity, Cuba sent brigades of medical staff to hard-hit Italy, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Jamaica, Suriname and Grenada. Cuba has also developed and freely shared with the world Interferon Alpha-2b to treat COVID-19 patients. This socialist country has sent 400,000 medical professionals to 164 countries, and provided vital aid since 1963 in the most serious health crises.

China is sending medical equipment to every country in Africa, every country facing U.S. sanctions, and economically developed countries in the European Union. Despite the paralysis of global supply chains, China is transporting tons of test kits, personal protective equipment (PPE) and ventilators around the world. Flights from China arrive daily in the U.S. In contrast, Washington blocked a shipment to Cuba of test kits, PPE and other aid from the Chinese electronic giant Alibaba and the Jack Ma Foundation. The U.S. confiscated 200,000 masks en route from China to Germany, which drew Berlin’s condemnation, and took ventilators bound for Barbados. The U.S. ordered the 3M company not to export essential N95 medical face masks to Canada and Latin America, and ruthlessly outbid allies’ contracts for medical supplies.

U.S. threats are so ruthless they can generate the opposite response, even among its capitalist competitors. Germany, France and Britain sent medical goods to Iran through INSTEX, a vehicle enabling them to circumvent U.S. sanctions on Iran. European members of the U.S.-commanded NATO military alliance backed out of scheduled “war games,” including a nuclear test attack on Russia.

Unity needed in war on virus

President Hassan Rouhani of Iran addressed the people of the U.S., saying, “The war on this virus can only be successful if all nations can win this war together, and no affected nation is left behind.”

And Venezuela, facing the harshest U.S. sanctions in history, a naval blockade, and increasing bellicosity, responded by sending aid to its neighbors, including Ecuador and Colombia.

Imperialist policies will grow more ruthless as the pandemic spreads, and in its aftermath. The economic survival of capitalists and their corporate stockholders is based on beating out their competition in a crisis. Each growth spurt in the capitalist system involves the downfall of capitalist competitors.

Despite years of warnings of the danger of a global pandemic, even by the National Security Council, the Pentagon neglected to stockpile sufficient emergency medical supplies, while it stockpiled weapons worth trillions of dollars.

Socialist planning and large-scale collective ownership of major industries, including the medical industry, have been decisive in China and Cuba. Even in Venezuela, Vietnam and Nicaragua, the socialist mobilization of the people in health and social distancing measures has dramatically helped control the outbreak.

The stark choices in an ever sharper global struggle are clear. The relentless drive to reap a profit from every type of human interaction has been exposed as the greatest danger to the people of the planet.

---

Exchange of solidarity messages with Korea

The Workers’ Party of Korea is the guiding political body of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. From 1950 to 1993, the DPRK was the target of a horrendous U.S.-led war that cost millions of lives. That war ended in a ceasefire, not a peace treaty. Ever since, the U.S. military has been a threat to peace and democratic rights on the Korean Peninsula and in the rest of Korea. The Workers’ Party of Korea and the Workers World Party of the United States of America:

To: National Committee Workers World Party of the United States New York, N.Y.

The Department of International Affairs of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea extends militant greetings to the National Committee of the Workers World Party of the United States of America regarding the global coronavirus epidemic.

To: The Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea, Pyongyang, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

April 1, 2020

Dear Comrades,

Thank you for your kind and thoughtful message of solidarity for people all over the world confronting the dangerous new coronavirus. We are proud of our strong bonds with your revolutionary party, which has for so long successfully resisted many attempts of U.S. imperialism to return Korea to neocolonial bondage.

Yes, we agree that the rapid spread of this disease in these two countries has tragically made apparent the inability and unwillingness of the capitalist rulers to organize any effective defense of the people in a crisis. Because the profit motive governs every aspect of life here, there is no overall planning based on people’s needs. The result is an incapable state. The U.S. now has more cases of people infected with COVID-19 than any other country in the world. And the number of cases is increasing rapidly, as the for-profit health care system here becomes overwhelmed. At the same time, the economy is in a tailspin, even after the government poured hundreds of billions of dollars into the stock market to protect the interests of big corporations and banks.

While this epidemic is a great challenge for the leaders of any country, we are confident that our party, based in the working class and dedicated to building socialism, is doing everything it can to safeguard the lives and health of the people of the DPRK.

Deirdre Griswold, editor Workers World newspaper

On behalf of the International Central Committee of Workers World Party of Korea, New York, N.Y., U.S.A.

---

Venezuela’s president sends message to U.S. population

Excerpts from a letter from President Nicolás Maduro

Caracas, April 3, 2020

To the People of the United States of America:

For weeks now, the world stands still, trying to control a pandemic that, without any doubt, is the greatest challenge we have faced together as a society and as international community. Our priority is confronting it, as it is the priority of the people of the United States.

Fortunately, in Venezuela, we have been able to count on some advantages. We took very early measures of social distancing and amplifying testing, relying on our free and public health care system that [assigns] doctors throughout the country with what we call family. We also rely on the invaluable community-based organizations to help raise social awareness and support the most vulnerable sectors. The solidarity of Cuba, China and Russia, and the support of the World Health Organization has likewise allowed us to obtain necessary medical supplies, despite Donald Trump’s illegal sanctions.

I have the obligation to make you aware that, as the world focuses on dealing with the COVID-19 emergency, the Trump Administration, once again instrumentalizing institutions in order to fulfill electoral objectives, and based on unfounded accusations of drug trafficking toward the United States and against myself and against senior Venezuelan state officials, even though data from the U.S. Department of Defense itself show that, unlike Colombia and Honduras, two of Washington’s allied

---

Continued on page 11
The U.S.-backed Zionist siege of Gaza has been in place for almost 13 years. Pippa Bartolotti, former leader of the Green Party of Wales, stated in a Feb. 9 article about the Israeli blockade on Gaza:

“Three out of four people in Gaza are refugees. Unsafe drinking water has led to a worsening health crisis. Gazan children suffer from diarrhea, kidney disease, stunted growth and impaired IQ. Twenty years ago, 85 percent of Gaza’s drinking wells were too contaminated for human consumption. Today, that figure is 97 percent.” Read the entire article at tinyurl.com/tyzxy3a.

The Chinese government delivered 10,000 coronavirus testing kits and ventilators to Palestine on March 31. The following WW interview was conducted by WW Managing Editor Monica Moorehead via Facebook Messenger on April 2 with a Palestinian activist in Gaza, Muhammad Khalid Qudaih.

**Workers World: What is your name and where do you live?**

**Muhammad Khalid Qudaih:** My name is Mohammad Khalid Qudaih. I am 23 years old. I was born in Gaza and live in Gaza. I have a diploma in engineering which is in design. My full-time work now is as an advocate in an Al-Awda camp for the poor and children. It is also a camp where many poor people live who lost and had their homes destroyed in the wars in Gaza by the Israeli military. Everyone knows that the Gaza Strip suffers from a comprehensive blockade by Israel.

**WW:** Gaza is considered to be the world’s largest open-air prison due to the Israeli settler occupation. Can you describe what conditions Palestinians face like yourself living under the Israeli blockade?

**MKQ:** This blockade made living in the Gaza Strip like living in a large prison. It is forbidden to enter with food aid, but Israel is allowed to bombard homes, kill children and youth, wound many, cut off electricity and have a shortage of clean water. The unemployment rate is 90 percent in Gaza.

**WW:** Can you talk about the goals of the Land Day protests that took place on Fridays from March 2018 until March 2019 and their significance?

**MKQ:** The goals of the march were the return of the Palestinian cause and the right of return to the Palestinians, to cause an embarrassment to Israel in the international arena because the Palestinians succeeded in photographing its army firing to kill and wound Palestinians. Actually, the occupation forces killed 22 civilians in one week and wounded about 1,500 overall in crimes described as excessive force. [The goals are] to make again the issue of the blockade of Gaza and the humanitarian crisis there the forefront of global attention; to put more obstacles in the way of the so-called “ceasefire deal” for President Donald Trump; to convert the southern and northern borders of Gaza into new centers of friction between the Palestinians and the Israeli army; and to restore the popular character of the conflict that the Palestinians are waging.

**WW:** What is the return camp?**

**MKQ:** The return camp is where many poor people live who lost or [had homes] destroyed in the wars in Gaza. A return march on Earth Day (April 22) will be the largest witness and a reminder to the world of the size of the Palestinian catastrophe and the extent of the sufferer’s needs, of those who have lived under siege for over ten years. From their villages and homes, they can see their homeland with their eyes, but they cannot return to it. This camp remains open to anyone who needs help.

**WW:** What impact has the COVID-19 virus had on the Gaza population which already suffers from an inefficient health care system and other severe lack of infrastructure due to the occupation and military attacks?

**MKQ:** COVID-19 has hit Gaza, so Gaza has started building 500 quarantine rooms in preparation for resisting the COVID-19 cases. I know it’s not quite suitable for coronavirus issues, but these are Gaza’s only capabilities! These rooms will still need beds and medical supplies.

**WW:** The U.S. government gave Israel close to $4 billion in foreign aid alone in 2019. That amounted to $10.1 million a day from U.S. taxpayers to maintain Israel’s racist domination against not only Palestine but the entire oil-rich region known as the Middle East. What message do you have for the people of the U.S. who want to oppose this U.S. support and show solidarity with Palestinians’ right to reclaim their homeland?

**MKQ:** Thank you to whoever has a feeling for the oppressed people, and thank you for your interest in Gaza. Thank you to the world.

---

**Venezuela’s message to U.S. population**

Continued from page 10

countries, Venezuela is not a primary transit country toward the United States. It is clear that the Trump Administration is creating a smokescreen to cloud the improvised and erratic handling of the pandemic in the United States. We in Venezuela do not want an armed conflict in our region. We want brotherly relations of cooperation, exchange and respect.

We cannot accept war threats nor blockades, nor can we accept the intention of [the U.S.] installing an inter-national tutelage that violates our sovereignty and dis-avows the progress made in the last year in the sincere political dialogue between the government and a large part of the Venezuelan opposition that wants political solutions and not oil wars.

Based on the foregoing, I call upon the people of the United States to [put a] stop to this madness, to hold your officials accountable and to force them to focus their attention and their resources on urgently addressing the pandemic.

I also ask, together with the end to [U.S.] military threats, the end to the illegal sanctions and blockade that restrict the access of humanitarian goods that are so necessary for our country today.

I wholeheartedly ask you not to allow your country to be dragged once again into another unending conflict – another Viet Nam, another Iraq – but this time, closer to home…

No to a United States war against Venezuela.

No more criminal sanctions.

No to a United States war against Venezuela.

---

**Haiti faces a coronavirus catastrophe**

By G. Dunkel

The predictions are grim, and the figures are totally misleading: As of April 5, 6 p.m., Haiti reported only 21 COVID-19 cases and one death. The Dominican Republic, which shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti, reported 1,745 cases and 52 deaths. (worldmetros.info/coronavirus/)

Haiti has only 190 ICU beds. Dr. Paul Farmer, head of Partners in Health, a nongovernmental organization, believes that only 30 of them are fully functional and there are at most 64 ventilators in the country.

Both Haiti and the Dominican Republic have about the same population — 10 million. According to the World Bank, the Dominican Republic has nearly 20,000 physicians; according to Haiti’s National Institute of Statistics, Haiti has only 921. A significant number of Haitians go back and forth between Haiti and the Dominican Republic every day, as workers or traders, which makes it even harder to trust the official COVID-19 numbers for Haiti.

What the numbers really signify is that Haiti only tests the elite or foreigners, who manage to get treated by one of its rare doctors in a hospital, while testing in the Dominican Republic is broader. But it’s also an admission that COVID-19 does exist in Haiti.

Almost 6 million people in Haiti live less than $2.41 a day, the poverty line, according to the World Bank. The government of President Moïse Jovenel has called for people to isolate themselves, stay home, frequently wash their hands and engage in social distancing. And the U.S. government has given Haiti, through the U.S. Agency for International Development, $2.2 million to help it clean up its water supply and provide aid to the laboratories doing the testing.

But on $2.41 a day or less, it is hard to feed yourself and your family and buy the soap, and in many instances the water, needed to wash your hands. Most poor Haitian families live in a single room, which makes social distancing impractical, especially since their neighbors are just a wall away.

If people don’t go out to work, they starve.

Dr. Ernst Noël, of the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy, in Port-au-Prince, believes that a projection of 800,000 deaths from COVID-19 is not an exaggeration. (tinyurl.com/rhybsdll)

Cuba, which has been the object of a U.S. boycott for the past 60 years, sent a team of 345 doctors and medical workers to Haiti last week. That was their concrete international solidarity with Haiti.

Progressive Haitian organizations have been struggling for much of 2019 and the early part of 2020 against the corrupt, U.S.-imposed regime of Jovenel and his Half-Headed Haitian Party, bringing at times hundreds of thousands of people into the streets. They see their struggles, on one hand, as a part of the four centuries of struggles against slavery, colonialism and neocolonialism in the Caribbean, whose main instigator is currently the United States, and on the other hand, as part of their international solidarity in defense of Cuba and Venezuela.
Los jefes obtienen la mayor parte del paquete de estímulo

Por John Catalinotto

27 de marzo – El llamado proyecto de ley de estímulo, que proporciona $2 billones como respuesta al colapso económico capitalista provocado por la pandemia del coronavirus-COVID-19, pasó hoy a la Cámara de Representantes y fue al presidente para su firma.

El proyecto de ley final, en comparación con el propuesto a principios de semana y respaldado por todos los republicanos, hizo algunos pequeños aumentos en las cantidades asignadas para aliviar las con-diciones de los trabajadores, aunque la mayor cantidad, al menos $900 mil millones, está destinada a rescatar a las principales corporaciones de EE. UU. y se distribuirá a distintas cajas de seguros de empleados y depositarios.

Al igual que el rescate financiero de los grandes bancos en 2008-09, este proyecto de ley es otro ejemplo de la clase dominante capitalista donando un regalo a la clase trabajadora, por lo que se dice, una vez más, es el trabajo de los trabajadores el que paga por este regalo.

El proyecto de ley contiene una cantidad de provisio-
es y elecciones, y sus intereses se verán reflejados en el Congreso, donde solo una pequeña fracción de los trabajadores y sus sindicatos tienen una representación indirecta en el Congreso sin intervención directa de los trabajadores. Los capitalistas ricos saben que pueden confiar en el liderazgo demócrata de los dos partidos para mantener su riqueza.

Ambos partidos representan a los capita-
listas en la lucha de clases que tuvo lugar sobre este proyecto de ley, que continuará con paquetes similares en el futuro.

Cuba continúa siendo al ejemplo de la solidaridad internacional, donde la medicina en su respuesta a la crisis de COVID-19. La nación isleña ha enviado brigadas de médicos y suministros a Italia, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Jamaica, Surinam y Granada. (teleesrenglish.net) Miembro de la comunidad Sindical Internacional de Trabajadores de los Estados Unidos, que traen bienes a los hogares donde la población se refugia en sus viviendas. Hay trabajadores de saneamiento, bomberos, trabajadores de mantenimiento y el personal que mantiene el transporte público que brindan otros servicios absolutamente necesarios, y los maestros que han adaptado sus habilidades al aprendizaje por Internet y todos los demás que son los héroes actuales de nuestra clase.

Por Mirinda Crissman

Cuba continúa ilustrando la solidaridad internacio-
nal, en donde la medicina en su respuesta a la crisis de COVID-19. La nación isleña ha enviado brigadas de médicos y suministros a Italia, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Jamaica, Surinam y Granada. (teleesrenglish.net) Miembro de la comunidad Sindical Internacional de Trabajadores de los Estados Unidos, que traen bienes a los hogares donde la población se refugia en sus viviendas. Hay trabajadores de saneamiento, bomberos, trabajadores de mantenimiento y el personal que mantiene el transporte público que brindan otros servicios absolutamente necesarios, y los maestros que han adaptado sus habilidades al aprendizaje por Internet y todos los demás que son los héroes actuales de nuestra clase.

Durante la crisis de la pandemia, el país ha capacitado a miles de estudiantes de medicina de más de 124 países, sin costo alguno, que se comprometen a regresar a sus hogares para brindar atención médica a los demás.

Debido a su sistema nacional de atención médica de pri-
mer nivel, la nación isleña tiene una de las expectativas de vida más altas y las tasas de mortalidad infantil más bajas del mundo, según la Organización Mundial de la Salud. Los avances en la atención médica de Cuba han visto la desaparición de la malaria, la poliomielitis, la difteria, el tétanos, el sarampión, la fiebre tifoidea y la tuberculosis.

El doctor de Cuba, el Médico de Cuba, es un símbolo de los avances en la atención médica de Cuba. En el Congreso, solo una pequeña fracción de los trabajadores y sus sindicatos tienen una representación indirecta en el Congreso sin intervención directa de los trabajadores. Los capitalistas ricos saben que pueden confiar en el liderazgo demócrata de los dos partidos para mantener su riqueza. Ambos partidos representan a los capita-
listas en la lucha de clases que tuvo lugar sobre este proyecto de ley, que continuará con paquetes similares en el futuro.

En el Congreso, solo una pequeña sección del ala izquierda del Partido Demócrata, fuerza principalmente representada por la candidatura de Bernie Sanders, el “Escuadrón”, en la Cámara y sus aliados, planteó demandas que representaban las necesidades de la clase trabajadora para sobrevivir no solo la pandemia sino la crisis económica.

Por ejemplo, aumentaron la cantidad y la amplitud de la cobertura de desem-
ples durante un periodo temporal que y el que debes haber perdido tu trabajo debido a la pandemia. Sin pagar tareas similares en el futuro.

Los trabajadores que reciben propinas, aquellos que trabajan de manera remota o fabrican o entregan bienes o servicios necesarios ahora pueden verse como excepciones para el funcionamiento de la sociedad moderna. Hasta incluso beneficiar el escaso trabajo de entre-
rar en los hogares de todo tipo y están en el trabajo de la con
dicación o en el trabajo de los trabajadores que trabajan en el área de la comida, como los trabajadores de los hospitales. Mientras tanto, los hospitales de Cuba en primera línea de lucha contra COVID-19.