

Prisoners resist execution by virus

By Gloria Rubac

On a good day, most of the 5,000 prisons and jails in the U.S. are filthy hell-holes. 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 prisoners are already known to have the virus. Some prisoners have died, and the numbers are predicted to rise exponentially.

Prisoners are angry and are fighting for their very lives. Their families, supporters and activists are fighting for their release.

After reports that prisoners in Texas were going days in the dark with no electricity, one prisoner sent out a video of fires set to protest the lack of electricity. Prisoners often set fires or flood the runs to get the attention of officers. Flooding the runs means the sink in the cell is stopped up, causing a flood of water on the cell floor and out onto the walkway (the run).

The prisoner who narrated the video said, “It’s a nonviolent protest going on right now, because the officers, in the middle of the coronavirus, have refused us electricity — no showers or anything.” He texted the video to Keri Blakinger, a progressive reporter who used to

cover the prison beat for the Houston Chronicle and is now working with The Marshall Project, a nonprofit newsroom covering the U.S. criminal justice system. Blakinger tweeted, “This is Texas, and it’s hot, and the prisoners need their fans to be running.”

Texas death row has apparently made a few changes in the normal routine. A man on death row wrote to Blakinger saying that officials took away the basketballs. He said, “They still use the same cuffs on everyone without disinfecting them, but they took away the balls even though we could only play alone anyway.”

Blakinger tweeted, “It all feels somewhat apocalyptic, when even the guys living in solitary confinement, as they wait for the state to execute them, are scared of dying from this pandemic.”

The warden of the South Dakota Women’s Prison in Pierre resigned last week, a day after nine prisoners (including at least six Indigenous prisoners) walked away from the prison’s minimum-security unit, and the state announced a woman from that unit tested positive for COVID-19. (tinyurl.com/ttkyn6z)

In the Etowah County Jail in Alabama, men apparently threatened to kill themselves because they’d been housed with people they believed had the virus.

Prisoners sue state prison system

At the Wallace Pack, Texas prison, two older prisoners, 69-year-old Laddy Valentine and 73-year-old Richard King, are suing the state’s prison system for its

Continued on page 6

ESSENTIAL



HEALTHCARE WORKERS



FARMWORKERS



GROCERY STORE WORKERS



DELIVERY WORKERS



FULFILLMENT CENTER WORKERS

NON-ESSENTIAL



LANDLORD



BANKER



BEZOS



BOSS



TRUMP

MURPHY
WORKERS
WORLD
PARTY

Interview

Amazon worker battles billionaire Bezos

Chris Smalls is a former Amazon worker who was fired for organizing a March 30 walkout at the JFK8 Amazon facility in Staten Island, N.Y. Bosses refused to close the facility despite confirmed cases of COVID-19 among the workers. In the aftermath of Smalls’ wrongful termination, a leaked memo from Amazon executives revealed the billion-dollar company’s intent to launch a racist smear campaign against him. Smalls spoke to Workers World’s Ted Kelly by phone April 5.

Workers World: Can you tell us about the events leading up to the walkout?

Chris Smalls: Amazon wasn’t prepared for this pandemic—that’s the real issue. In the beginning of the month it started out as rumors: “Somebody’s out sick with it. Somebody tested positive.” But in every rumor there’s a little bit of a truth.

I don’t play when it comes to health and life and death. So I escalated it to Human Resources, and said, “I heard that you sent some managers to Seattle a couple of weeks ago. I heard that one of them came back and left early because they were sick. That’s a red flag for me.” Seattle was the epicenter at one point.

Now my senses are heightened. I’m seeing my associates get sick. I’m seeing my coworkers calling out more frequently. So I start taking days off.

I was watching this pandemic on TV and seeing the numbers going up every day. I was watching it get closer and closer to New York. I thought: “We work in a densely populated area; it’s possible that this virus is in my building. We have 5,000 employees who come in and out of this building weekly from all over the tri-state area.”

That’s what transpired before we had

Continued on page 2

SOCIALIST DEMANDS FOR THE COVID-19 CRISIS

1. Free healthcare for all
2. Nationalize the healthcare system under community control. Build emergency hospitals
3. Full pay, benefits and guaranteed income for all
4. Food, housing, medical supplies, & utilities including internet for all
5. Suspend rent, evictions, mortgages, utility shutoffs & ALL debt

6. Prioritize resources for communities of color, migrants, LGBTQ2+ people, seniors, youth, people with disabilities
7. Empty prisons & detention centers. Shut down ICE. End racist attacks
8. Community control. No cops, military
9. \$2 trillion to workers, not the banks
10. End U.S. wars, sanctions, and environmental destruction

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Rosie
Neidenberg
presents! 8

MORE ON THE PANDEMIC

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------|
| Class struggle in U.S. | 1-6, 9 |
| 'Black Lives Matter' | 7 |
| Vietnam’s approach | 9 |
| Editorial Solidarity vs. sanctions | 10 |

DPRK 10 Gaza 11 Haiti 11

Amazon worker battles billionaire Bezos

Continued from page 1

a confirmed case, before I returned to work on March 24. I had to have money by April 1 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 morning 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 here. Go home.” She went home.

Two hours 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. Just 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.

[Derek Palmer — 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! Their policy is flawed. It allows people to come to work sick because you don’t get confirmed quarantine pay until you get documents from a doctor.

My coworker tested positive on Wednesday [March 25]. Thank God I came in on Tuesday and sent her home. Imagine if I didn’t! She would have been around my associates for another 10 hours. She’d already been there all week, exposed to hundreds of people.

I came to the building every single day, off the clock, sat in the building for eight hours a day, spreading awareness. We walked 10 people into the [H.R.] office every day to raise their concerns.

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 I’ve been exposed?”

I kept at it, sending out more 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 in on Thursday. Management told me that didn’t happen, that’s not 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 associates and offer VTO [voluntary time off]. I said, “We’re an essential business on mandatory overtime. So why?” 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.

Continued on page 3

MUNDO OBRERO WORKERS WORLD

this week

♦ In the U.S.

Prisoners resist execution by virus	1
Amazon worker battles billionaire Bezos	1
The working class is striking for safety	3
Whole Food worker speaks out	4
White House right-wing zealots.	5
Sex workers need solidarity	6
Racism, COVID-19 and Black people	7
Migrants in detention in Texas.	7
Rosemary Neidenberg: a long and valued life.	8
COVID-19 exposes U.S. Armed Forces.	9

♦ Around the world

How Vietnam contained pandemic.	9
Venezuela’s president sends message.	10
Interview: A voice from Occupied Gaza	11
Haiti faces coronavirus catastrophe	11

♦ Editorial

Sanctions or solidarity	10
-----------------------------------	----

♦ Noticias en Español

Paquete de estímulo	12
Cuba en primera linea contra COVID-19	12



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

Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the neverending quest for ever-greater profits.

Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, attacks on im/migrants, misogyny, LGBTQ2+ oppression and mistreatment of people with disabilities. It means joblessness, increasing homelessness and impoverishment and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism.

The U.S. is the richest country in the world, yet no one has a guaranteed right to shelter, food, water, health care, education or anything else — unless they can pay for it. Wages are lower than ever, and youth are saddled with seemingly insurmountable student debt, if they even make it to college. Black, Brown and Indigenous youth and trans

Join us in the fight for socialism!

people are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis.

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

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

Since 1959, Workers World Party has been out in the streets defending the workers and oppressed here and worldwide. If you’re interested in Marxism, socialism and fighting for a socialist future, please contact a WWP branch near you. □

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The working class is striking for safety

By Martha Grevatt

Whether they are organizing walkouts, sick-outs or sit-ins, workers in a whole range of so-called “essential” occupations are in a life-and-death fight against dangerous working conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

From shopping to heavy industry

Actions include gig workers, like the Instacart “Shoppers” who walked out on March 30 all over the U.S. Their demands are basic: personal protective equipment, soap and sanitizers. They also want \$5 per order “hazard pay,” along with “income replacement” pay for anyone with a doctor’s note or a preexisting condition making them vulnerable to infection. Instacart has denied most of these demands made by Gig Workers United.

Shoppers, who customers pay to go to a supermarket and shop for them, are classified as “independent contractors” and not even covered under existing worker protection laws. In fact, they are super-exploited workers. They are angry at Instacart’s announcement it will hire 300,000 more shoppers in the midst of the pandemic while refusing the safety demands.

General Electric workers in Lynn, Mass., held work stoppages and protests outside the plant, calling on GE to hire laid-off workers to make much-needed ventilators. They are demanding safe working conditions and additional paid sick leave and have a petition for supporters to sign. In this time of mass unemployment, they are still working because military equipment produced in the plant is deemed “essential.” (Local201.org)

Their union, the Union of Electrical Workers-Communication Workers (IUE-CWA), held a solidarity action with the Lynn workers outside GE’s corporate headquarters in Boston. The company — which had \$95 billion in revenue in 2019 and is slated to get a slice of the fed’s multitrillion dollar bailout — can well afford to retool its plants to make more ventilators than GE currently manufactures.

“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?” asks IUE-CWA Local 86004 President Jake Aguanaga. His plant in Arkansas City, Kan., has more than half its workforce on indefinite layoff. (vice.com, March 30)

Often when workers demand safe conditions, bosses retaliate. After learning that a coworker had tested positive for COVID-19, Travis Watkins, who worked for a third-party contractor at a General Motors plant in Grand Rapids, Mich., warned workers their jobs were unsafe. For his stand — “A safe working environment is a basic human right” — he was fired on March 18. (tinyurl.com/sohcl4)

Food processors hit with walkouts

Food processing plants, which exploit many migrants and workers of color, were already notoriously dangerous before COVID-19. Now they are death traps with little or no sanitation, few breaks to allow hand-washing and people working elbow-to-elbow.

These conditions prompted a walkout 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 at Raymundo’s in Chicago where several hundred workers, mostly Latinx women, make flan and gelatin. They won union recognition last year with 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 1,000 meatpackers walked off the job in Greeley, Colo., for similar demands. While this largely immigrant workforce speaks 27 different languages, the members of

UFCW Local 7 came together in unity.

The push to close unsafe, nonessential construction sites is continuing, with 13,000 union carpenters in Massachusetts on strike. Construction workers everywhere are being told they have to keep

“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 Aguanaga, President, IUE-CWA Local 86004

working on a range of building projects exempted from governors’ stay-at-home orders. The director of Chicago Women in Trades: National Center for Women’s Equity in Apprenticeship and Employment, Lauren Sugerman, stated in a letter to Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker: “Building a casino, a luxury condo, a high-rise office building, a sports arena, school or commercial building is not essential during a pandemic such as COVID-19.” (coshnetwork.org)

On the frontline of the crisis — and the struggle for safety

Kroger pharmacy workers had a safety walkout in Morgantown, W.Va. They also hung plastic curtains to create a barrier between themselves and potentially infected customers, which the company ripped down. After the walkout, Kroger installed plexiglass sheets, but workers

still need gloves and social distancing and are demanding hazard pay.

Health care workers have been staging sit-downs at Chicago’s Cook County Hospital, the busiest in the state. They want PPE. Represented by National Nurses United, they serve the most underserved population — the poorest, who are often also people of color, and the most likely to not have health insurance. Chicago has one of the highest numbers of COVID-19 cases and deaths in the country.

Dozens of nurses walked off the job at Brighton Rehab and Wellness Center in western Pennsylvania’s Beaver County after learning that 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 15 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 dealership 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. □

Amazon worker battles billionaire Bezos

Continued from page 2

Now they didn’t quarantine the person I drive to work with every single day! I’d been in their offices 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 kept calling the media, and the New York Post finally answered. I told them we were having a walkout on Monday [March 30]. I had 24 hours to put that together. The Post published it, and now all the media outlets that had been ignoring me, they’re calling my phone. I put the world on notice to come to JFK8 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 it at lunchtime.” I was gonna give the world a walkout and that’s exactly what I did.

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 you were not “smart” or

“articulate.” Do you think racism played a role in your being targeted?

CS: I definitely ran into racial profiling working for Amazon. This was actually the second time I had been terminated. I’m somebody who has had to put up with a lot of bullshit over the last five years. Especially being an African-American supervisor.

[The first time they terminated me] I was hourly at that time. One day I was running late. Work started at 7:15 a.m. I got there two minutes late. 7:17 a.m. I clocked in. A group of managers had been stealing two or three hours a day. [Management used that] excuse for terminating me. For two minutes they terminated me!

There’s definitely some racism amongst the company.

WW: In the powerful open letter you wrote, you said, “Amazon thinks we are expendable.” Could you explain what you meant by that?

CS: They fired me during a pandemic. They don’t give a damn about my livelihood, my three kids I have to feed. They’re probably gonna contest [my unemployment claim]. I have a friend who’s been sleeping in his car for five days because he’s sick, he can’t get a damn test, and he doesn’t want to bring it [the coronavirus]

in the house because he has three small children and a wife.

These billionaires should be ashamed of themselves. They’re not doing nothing to help people. You got three options: You can come to work and get the virus. Or stay home and not get paid. Or get the virus and get quarantined with pay. Those are your options.

God forbid 800,000 Amazon employees become carriers of this virus. If each of them spreads it to two or three people? Everyone is in six degrees of separation. There’s an Amazon building in every major city in every state. There are 5,000 of us in one building. We’re in the epicenter in New York. We’re coming from all five boroughs, taking the subway and bus. On top of that they’re hiring undiagnosed people!

You wanna flatten the curve? Shut it down. There’s your solution. You need hospitals? My building alone would fit 14 NFL football fields.

Raising the wages \$2? That’s a slap in



Chris Smalls with his children.

the face. I really didn’t understand what their mindset is, but I do now. Pure evil and pure greed. They’d rather see their whole workforce die.

WW: Is there a campaign to restore your job? Would you go back if you were offered a job?

CS: Hell no. I told them the same day they fired me: Keep that shit. I don’t ever want to work for a man who don’t care about people. Ever. □

‘Everything is unraveling’ Whole Foods worker speaks out about dangerous conditions

By Ted Kelly

The following are excerpts from a late March interview with a Workers World member who works in a Whole Foods grocery store. Workers held a nationwide sickout on March 31, to protest low pay and unsafe conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic. After this interview, a Wawa gas station attached to the same building as this workplace shut down because of a confirmed case of coronavirus.

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?

Whole Foods 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 get a severe case of this if you’re young.

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



WF worker: About 75 percent of my coworkers are in this age group. I’m also terrified for my older coworkers. A good amount of them are still going to work. One of my coworkers in her late 50s — I want to tell her to go home, but she has bills to pay, too. We have every incentive to risk getting infected with no protection. I’m sure that has something to do with the demographic spread.

WW: You say you have no protection. What measures has Whole Foods taken since the pandemic hit?

WF worker: In terms of policies, not much has changed. The most significant change has been our hours. They’ve shortened shifts. Normally the stores are open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. Now we’re opening for the first hours just for workers and people 60 or over — which I was happy to hear. There are no changes as to how many people are allowed in the store at a time. I’m worried about older customers, too.

There’s no staying 6 feet away from customers in the store. The vestibule is tiny. There are two elevators, but only one is working. There are no restrictions on elevator usage. We’re closing an hour early to “deep clean,” but they’re not paying anyone to do so specifically. They’re just paying front-end employees to stay until 9:30 p.m. to soak things with disinfectant. No professional sanitation team — just up to workers who were already scheduled to wipe and sanitize every hour.

Whole Foods has no policies or requirements on gloves. Though most of us are wearing them anyway, there’s no enforcement. Employees are not allowed to wear masks. We need approval to wear one on the clock, which is absolutely ridiculous.

At some grocery stores there is a physical barrier, a plastic screen between customers and cashiers. We have none of that. At express lanes in particular, the counter is only a foot and a half long. It still seems unclear how easily the COVID virus spreads from indirect contact. There’s still a lot of uncertainty about how much protective equipment is needed.

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

WF worker: 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 worker: 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 not 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 health coverage cut. This is an 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 paycheck doesn’t tell us 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 that.

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 our alienation tells us we aren’t and that we can’t write our future, that our future is given to us predisposed. That history has already happened. What’s keeping

Continued on page 5

‘Every benefit that was advertised as a reason people like to work at Whole Foods is gone, eliminated by Amazon.’

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.

Any decent or thinking person must be astounded by this fact.

Trump has not only misunderstood COVID-19, he has completely mishandled the coronavirus crisis. His failure to implement critical policies, to rapidly get ventilators and PPE (personal protective equipment) to workers, and to stall on social distancing has resulted in not only dangerous 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, other heads prevailed, and the stay-at-home policy stands in place.

What clearly guides Trump is not science or concern for the well-being of the masses. It is 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 it 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, right-wing character of the zealots at the helm in the White House is critical.

It is important because this health crisis demands that 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. It is 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 U.S. working class, 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 one of these people is on the hands of the zealots in the White House.

Inept Trump, sinister Jared, ominous Pence

From the beginning of the Trump administration, he has surrounded himself with the most reactionary bureaucrats and right-wing conservatives he could find. From Steve Bannon to Mike Pompeo, it is a veritable who's who of enemies of the workers and the oppressed.

They align with the politics of right-wing billionaires like the Koch brothers who have for a long time developed behind-the-scenes reactionary policies of every kind, including busting unions and public education. In politics, they have made it so that it is donors who have the real power, not elected officials.

All these vile creatures in and out of the White House have shared a worldview in common: white supremacy, xenophobia, imperialist domination and complete loyalty to capitalism. They will do anything to maintain their 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 on COVID-19.

The coronavirus crisis must be guided by science, not politics. It must be guided by compassion and concern for every individual, not capitalist greed. It must be willing to learn from the Chinese who were able to relatively quickly curtail the pandemic.

But that is the opposite of what is happening in Washington.

Who does New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo have to call about ventilators for the people of New York?

He has to call the "Slumlord Millionaire," Jared Kushner, the very one who greedily bought rent-stabilized buildings and then terrorized residents until they moved out. His company, Kushner Companies would then "flip" the buildings and sell them for a huge profit. (Mother Jones, March 27)

Gentrification of working-class neighborhoods has just about become an existential crisis. Entire communities around the world no longer have access to affordable housing. Jared Kushner is one of those to blame.

Does anyone really think he gives a damn about the thousands of Black and Brown people in Elmhurst

Hospital in Queens N.Y., who are suffering from the virus?

The right wing of this country is emboldened because they have a zealot in the White House. That is why almost 20,000 vigilantes marched in Virginia earlier this year under the pretext of gun rights. It was really an armed show against the left and the working class. It was a KKK rally in another form.

Science matters

Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, has become someone who is trusted when he speaks about the virus. He seems to know what he is doing and to have concern for human beings.

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 right wing is that foolish. They would defy science; they would defy common sense in order to bolster the zealot-in-chief. Many, such as the reactionary pastors in Louisiana, who called on their congregation to come out in defiance of social distancing, thoughtlessly put themselves and their milieu in danger.

But science matters. Facts matter. And for Trump to misinform, lie, deceive, inflame puts every single person in danger.

A call to arms

Vice President Pence 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." (NY Times, November 2016) He is also a climate change denier. (Climatewire, July 2016)

According to the March 3 Guardian, while he was the governor of Indiana he "botched" the response to the biggest public health crisis the state had seen around the HIV crisis.

With the exception of Dr. Fauci, the White House COVID-19 team is a veritable who's who of antiscience, gentrifiers, antigay, anti-abortion, misogynist white supremacists.

Is it 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 impose policies that can turn back any progress the workers have made.

Already, when all attention should be placed on saving humanity, 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 25: "The Supreme Court handed down a unanimous decision that bodes ill for the future of civil rights and they have rolled back any

WW COMMENTARY



Amazon workers strike March 30 in Staten Island, N.Y.

slight gains that were made to curtail climate change and the list goes on and on."

It would be no surprise if the Trump administration used the pandemic as an excuse to cancel the presidential elections.

And while revolutionary communists rarely believe that the ballot box is a source of fundamental change, the question must be raised: Should the left go all out to get behind a Medicare-for-all president despite what the primaries or the Electoral College say?

Bernie Sanders is no Fidel Castro or Hugo Chávez.

Fidel and Chávez completely broke with the imperialist system. They were for revolutionary socialism where workers controlled the means of production. That's not Bernie. He is a soft socialist who still believes that capitalism can somehow be reformed.

During the vote for the historic \$2.2 trillion emergency relief act, to defend gig workers and other excluded workers, Sanders did threaten to hold up the bill. He called it what it is — a corporate bailout fund.

If COVID-19 has upended reality as we know it, then the masses of people can and must upend the political system as we know it and demand a government that will help solve the crisis, not exacerbate it. The pandemic has changed the rules, and it must be the working class who now makes the rules.

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 to let the zealots in the White House know that we will not take this crisis passively or apathetically.

In the seeds of this kind of resistance is the future where the coronavirus pandemic became the opening of not a dismal chapter for humanity, but one where the sun shone through to light the way to worldwide revolutionary socialism. □

Whole Foods worker speaks out

Continued from page 4

us going is the knowledge that we're in a really historically significant moment. Timing is everything. I keep repeating that Lenin quote: "There are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen."

So, yeah. Feeling overwhelmed? That's because decades are happening. Expressions of solidarity are more meaningful right now.

WW: Finally, can you tell me a little bit about your relationship with Workers World Party?

WF worker: I've been in the party for three years. I was initially brought into revolutionary politics and organizing by events of 2016, Trump's election, and feeling there's no hope in the system. During the summer of 2016 my partner at the time was a victim of police brutality and was disabled for life because of it. Those two events were the perfect storm for my radicalization.

I've been working in retail since I turned 16. In a certain sense it's hard for me not to be a communist. Every crisis that has befallen our class, I see Workers World analyzing and amplifying those struggles.

In particular during this time I'm immensely grateful to have the network of support and organization that WWP provides. It goes beyond the party, too, to

the organizations the party has relations with. It's been really crucial to feel that I have people who have my back and are sending me good wishes and solidarity while I'm working on the front lines of this pandemic. But I also know that in the struggles in my workplace, I have a whole network of seasoned and dedicated revolutionaries to help me push through with these struggles.

This is something none of us can handle on our own. I've stayed a communist because capitalism has remained the defining factor in my life. That's why I've stayed in the party all these years. But now WWP is providing the crucial analysis of this moment, and they have my back and the backs of my coworkers. When customers at work are making you cry and you're beaten down, to then go home and get on a call with the comrades who are grateful for the work you're doing — it's more important than I can even express.

I feel more dedicated to the work than ever. Grateful 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.

WW INTERVIEW

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 EARN 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 their 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. Get 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 outside too. It changed 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 (SWOP) is the easiest way to get in contact 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 them 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/tkp7b5t). 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 (\$dreadedjinx). 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 30, 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 potentially fatal virus.

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 combat the spread of the new virus.

In Houston, County Judge Lina Hidalgo had approved the release of 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 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 disenfranchised 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 revolutionary 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 ‘Imperialism’ ♦ 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 0.001 percent: You are cheering too soon

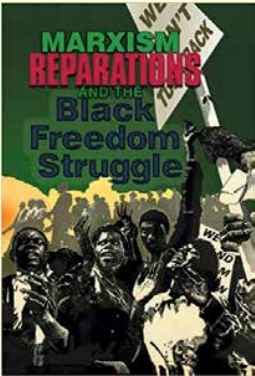
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COVER GRAPHIC: SAHU BARRON

WW COMMENTARY

Racism, COVID-19 and Black people

By Monica Moorehead

April 4 marks the 52nd anniversary of the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the great Civil Rights leader, who sacrificed his life to realize a dream for social equality.

He was gunned down in cold blood when he went to 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 spouse, Coretta Scott King, in 1952, Dr. King wrote, “I imagine you already know that I am much more socialistic in my economic theory than capitalistic. ... [Capitalism] started out with a noble and high motive ... but like most human systems it fell victim to the very thing it was revolting against. So today capitalism has out-lived its usefulness.”

The last sentence of this quote is certainly just as relevant now as when it was written, especially considering the staggering 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 overtaken so many sectors of society in the rich, developed countries and the 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 im/migrants from South and Central America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and the Middle East — all suffering now 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 also occurred there, primarily due to high numbers of people with pre-existing conditions like asthma and diabetes. (thecity.nyc, April 3)

The Bronx is the poorest of all the New York City boroughs — and that is no accident. Of the overall population there, 35.64 percent are Black or African-American people, 48.38 percent are Latinx and 3.11 percent are Asian or Pacific Islander. 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 antiquated 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, compared to \$84 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 two 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

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.

a pandemic within a pandemic.

The toll of the coronavirus is becoming a genocidal-like crisis within Black communities.



The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Double, triple death rates in Black communities

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services reported on April 2 that of the 11,000 confirmed cases in the state, 35 percent were Black people and 25 percent were white. The state’s death toll from the coronavirus was 40 percent Black people, 26 percent white and 30 percent unknown.

But Black people make up just 12 percent of the state’s population! A quarter of the deaths alone in Michigan have occurred in Detroit, which is 80 percent Black.

In Milwaukee, Wis., where Black life expectancy is 14 years shorter than that of whites, half of Milwaukee County’s 945 virus cases and 81 percent of its 27 deaths are Black people. The overall African-American state population is 26 percent.

Dr. Camara Jones, a family physician and epidemiologist at Harvard University, who spent 13 years at the CDC identifying, measuring and addressing racial bias within the medical system, stated: “COVID is just unmasking the deep disinvestment in our communities, the historical injustices and the impact of residential segregation. This is the time to name racism as the cause of all of those things. The overrepresentation of people of color in poverty and white people in wealth is not just a happenstance. ... It’s because we’re not valued.” (propublica.org, April 3)

According to Dr. Ngozi Ezike, the director of the Illinois Department of Public Health, Black people make up 30 percent of all coronavirus cases reported in the state — more than double the state’s Black population of 14.6 percent. Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker commented on these numbers in the area of health care: “It’s hard to make up for decades — frankly maybe centuries — of inequality.” (CNN, April 5)

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. □

Migrants in detention in Texas face COVID-19

By Mirinda Crissman
Austin, Texas

Migrants being held in detention in Texas have been facing abhorrent sanitary conditions in the detention facilities long before the coronavirus pandemic began. Now that the virus is here, and threatens to infect such a vulnerable and captive population at higher rates than the general population, many migrants in detention in Texas have begun to resist. Officials in charge of these facilities are more afraid of protests spreading than they are of the deadly virus.

On Feb. 24, “a group of [more than 40] Cameroonian women held by Immigration and Customs Enforcement at the T. Don Hutto Residential Facility, a women’s center in Texas run by private prison company CoreCivic, staged

a sit-in in front of the facility’s clinic to protest their prolonged detention and lack of medical care.” Since the sit-in, more than 160 Cameroonian women have been scattered and transferred to other facilities across the state. (The Intercept, March 30)

Migrants in various South Texas detention centers have been denied parole as a result of a new federal “transit bar” policy, which says migrants cannot access asylum if they did not first try to seek it in any of the countries they passed through on their way to the U.S.

This “transit bar” forces many affected to seek lesser forms of protection. It has led to the logic that since they are no longer asylum seekers, the migrants are not eligible for humanitarian release in the face of a crisis. Immigration lawyers have argued that these blanket denials of

parole are illegal, but the courts are moving too slowly to protect migrants in grave danger.

On March 20, about 60 detainees at an ICE South Texas Processing Center in Pearsall took part in a work strike. Many of the striking detainees work as janitors or cafeteria personnel. They cited overcrowding, lack of sanitation equipment and fear of infection — in a system that does not screen anyone coming into the facility for the virus — as the catalyst for protest.

Staff ordered the strikers to return to their beds. When they refused, nine protesters were pepper sprayed. ICE officials denied that the strike took place at first, but later confirmed a disturbance. (Texas Tribune, March 25)

Many migrants have begun trying to opt for voluntary deportation to escape

crisis conditions that were already abysmal under the Obama administration. It is a death sentence to keep them caged, whether in detention facilities or in packed migrant camps along borders.

The physical facilities had already been highly criticized for overcrowding, lack of sanitary conditions, sexual misconduct, and other abuses of power coming from staff. These conditions, in the time of global pandemic, are setting the stage for mass killings.

Clearly, stopping the spread of uprisings is a higher priority to those in power than it is to stop the spread of the coronavirus among a large population the United States has deemed a racial other. These brave migrants, who have begun to fight back, already recognize the power they possess by acting in unison. We must tear down the walls and free them all. □

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 then was still too soon and too sad for all her comrades, family and friends.

Rosie 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 electrocuted while working in a wheat processing plant. The company refused compensation to her grandmother and their four children, claiming he died of a heart attack.

Inspired by militant struggles in the 1940s

Rosie was in her twenties and working in Buffalo’s main downtown library when she first met Vince and

Libby Copeland in the 1940s. At the time, they were in the Socialist Workers Party. Libby became Rosie’s best friend and comrade.

Vince was a steelworker and union militant. In 1950, during the repressive days of the Cold War, he was fired from Bethlehem Steel. This provoked a wildcat strike by thousands of his fellow workers and a frenzy of redbaiting in the local press.

Rosie was not intimidated by any of this. She embraced the struggle for socialism and against every form of bigotry that pollutes human relations under capitalism.

Over the years, she played a very active role in the movements against racism, sexism and the oppression of LGBTQ2+ people. She also helped lighten the mood in those early days of virulent anticommunism, 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, he 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 SWP — 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 SWP 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.

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

Rosie 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 antiwar 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.



Milt and Rosie enjoy the countryside near Buffalo, N.Y., sometime in the early 1960s.



Minnie Bruce Pratt, Rosie, Milt and Leslie Feinberg in 2008.

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 LGBTQ2+ 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.

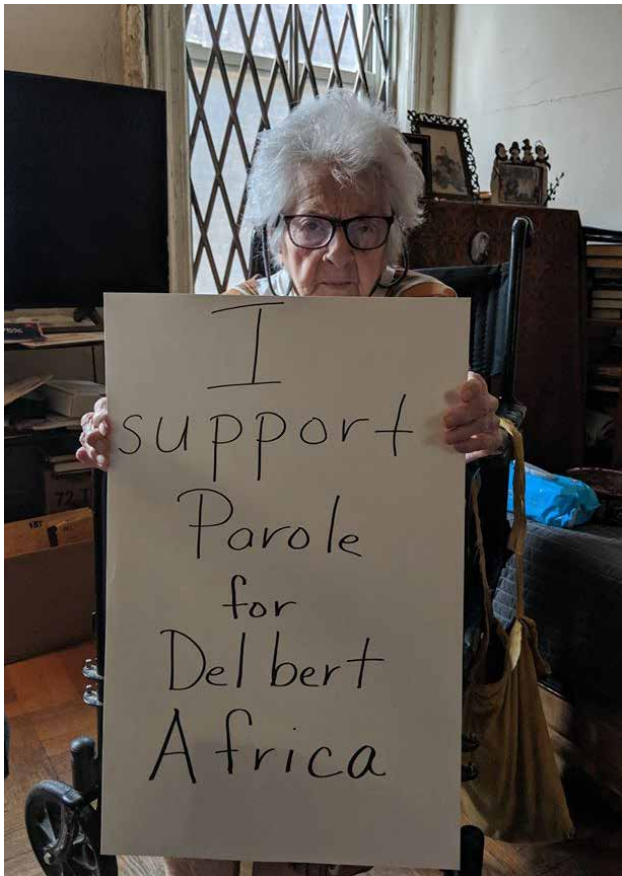
Along with everything else they did, she and Milt found the time and energy to bring a new life into being — their adored daughter Nina. They were kind and loving parents, so proud of Nina and the grandchildren she brought them.

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 ipresente! □



Singing the Internationale at Milt Neidenberg’s memorial.



WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

Rosie in her Brooklyn apartment in 2019. Delbert Africa of the MOVE 9 was finally released from prison this January.



WW PHOTO: STEVAN KIRSCHBAUM

WW Managing Editor Monica Moorehead and Rosemary Neidenberg in 2018.

COVID-19 exposes the U.S. Armed Forces

By John Catalinotto

April 5 — Reports in the media this week have shown that the U.S. Armed Forces—which are the core of the imperialist state power—are far from immune to the coronavirus. Both the U.S. Army and the U.S. Navy have been hit by 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 dual character 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 restrictions on soldiers as coronavirus cases increase across the force and internal memos acknowledge that Army policies 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. Thus the pandemic was spreading rapidly and the soldiers were worried. (For details, see tinyurl.com/uvct2ca/.)

In the Navy, the reaction of the sailors on the aircraft carrier USS Theodore 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 at war,” he wrote, “and therefore 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 the Pentagon to defend the lower ranks of his command. What 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 lieutenants to generals, 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 attitude of the rank-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 and operated with fewer, more highly trained troops, until there are now only half as many as in 1973, operating high-tech heavy weapons and outsourcing logistics.

Nevertheless, even in this professional military, low-ranking troops are still workers in uniform. Their daily pressures are not that much different from the “essential workers”—packers at Amazon, super-market clerks, truck drivers and post office

workers. The troops come from the working class and 30 to 40 percent are from oppressed nationalities, concentrated in the lower ranks.

If the Army is called upon, along with the National Guard, to operate within the United States during the COVID-19 crisis, the troops will face two challenges: their own susceptibility to the virus and, should they be used not to assist the masses but for repression, their revulsion at following orders from a reactionary and unpopular national government.

It would be an error to assume that this week’s reports show that a major rebellion is imminent. It would also be an error to assume that it is impossible

for workers’ organizations to appeal to the class interests of the rank and file in this military. A simple first step would be to support the demand for the sailors to leave their ships and for the soldiers to have all military exercises and training postponed.

Catalinotto is author of “Turn the Guns Around: Mutinies, Soldier Revolts and Revolutions,” World View Forum, New York, 2017.

A simple first step: Support the demand for the sailors to leave their ships and for the soldiers to postpone all military exercises and training.

How Vietnam contained the pandemic

By Joshua Hanks

The coronavirus pandemic has started to reveal stark differences in the emergency responses of countries all over the globe. The U.S. now has the most COVID-19 cases in the world after a slow and uncoordinated response by federal and state governments.

Shortages of ventilators, ICU beds and personal protective equipment have put pressure on a medical system that was already struggling to meet basic needs. Especially in rural areas and communities of color, hospital closings and shortages of staff and funding have put many at an elevated risk for the ravages of COVID-19.

In Chicago, while about 32 percent of the city’s residents are Black, over 70 percent of those who have died from the virus are Black.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents are reportedly impersonating medical staff in order to detain undocumented workers, increasing the terror in im/migrant communities and further discouraging migrants from seeking out testing and medical care.

Nevertheless, despite the vast wealth and resources at the disposal of super-powers like the U.S., some less developed countries are faring better, including ones under onerous U.S. sanctions.

Cuba, China and India’s Kerala state, all led by communist parties that attach great importance to public health and the needs of the people, have much lower rates of infection than the U.S.

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam has also mounted a highly successful response, perhaps more so than anywhere else in the world. By April 6,

Vietnam, with a population of nearly 100 million people, had just 245 confirmed cases and zero deaths. (worldometers.info/coronavirus/)

New York City, the global capital of high finance, has nearly 72,000 confirmed cases and over 3,200 deaths out of a population of 8.6 million. What could Vietnam, a country the U.S. tried to wipe off the map 50 years ago, be doing that the wealthiest city in the world’s wealthiest country is not doing?

An article published on March 30 by the World Economic Forum, by no means a left-wing group, reveals some answers.

Vietnam sets an example for both developing and wealthy countries fighting COVID-19.

Vietnam’s University of Science and Technology 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 on effective, nonpharmaceutical methods to contain the virus. On Feb. 1, it suspended flights to China and decided to keep schools closed after the Lunar New Year break. It then instituted a 21-day quarantine of Vinh Phuc province north of Hanoi, where a large number of residents had worked in Wuhan, China, the initial epicenter of the outbreak.

It has since mandated 14-day quarantines for everyone arriving in the country and cancelled all foreign flights. Quarantine centers have been set up on the edges of cities providing 100 percent of the medical care, food and shelter for those in quarantine, including foreign visitors.

A British citizen staying at a quarantine center in Son Tay said about the experience: “Suddenly it all becomes very human, we’re guests in a country doing

their best to protect themselves and are extending us that courtesy. Such is the good nature of Vietnam. Outside, everything is peaceful. The location is quiet, the soldiers work tirelessly to sterilize the rooms daily, log our temperature and clear out our bins. ... So far, this feels more like a holiday camp than a quarantine. In our room, we share snacks, fruit, and start getting deliveries from loved ones.” (VNExpress International, March 17)

These quarantine centers are also available to people who have not traveled abroad. When cases appear in a neighborhood, the entire street is sanitized and the residents put under a two-week quarantine, with the government providing free, fresh food and medical care.

Susan Schnur, a member of Workers World Party who traveled in Vietnam from March 5 to 17, reported that screenings in the airports were much more thorough and stringent than in 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.

Vietnam 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 potential 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, screaming all caps in Twitter doesn’t count,” wrote Linh Dao Smooke of the website hackernoon.com.

Between 2002 and 2018, 45 million Vietnamese people were lifted out of poverty. From 1990 to 2015, life expectancy rose from 71 to 76 years. Vietnam now has a higher vaccination rate than the U.S. Medical care is inexpensive, with the government paying 100 percent for poor people and ethnic minorities in disadvantaged areas.

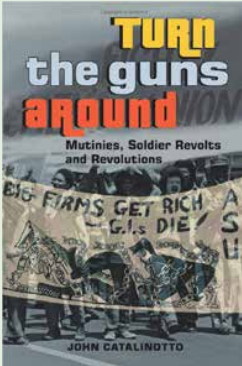
Vietnam sets an example for both developing and wealthy countries fighting COVID-19. □

TURN THE GUNS AROUND

by John Catalinotto

“If schools in the United States really wanted to impart historical truth, John Catalinotto’s ‘Turn The Guns Around’ would be required reading. He tells the true story of this epoch. Few participants know more about the massive GI rebellion against the Vietnam War, the anti-war veterans’ movement or the history of soldier revolts from the Paris Commune to the Portuguese coup.”

— Pvt Larry Holmes, GI resister and organizer for the American Servicemen’s Union 1972-74.



Available at online booksellers.

Sanctions or solidarity

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

The U.S. is the center of an empire built on and dominated by capitalist expropriation on a world scale. 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.

Even before 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 people worldwide is that 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 Alfa-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 of PPE 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 practice nuclear 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 social 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 1953, 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 used this as an excuse to occupy the southern half of Korea, constantly threatening the efforts of the DPRK in the north to build a socialist country. The following is a recent exchange of messages between the Workers' Party of Korea and Workers World Party of the United States regarding the global coronavirus epidemic.

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.

COVID-19 is rapidly spreading over many regions and countries across the world at the moment, turning up as a malicious pandemic which may cause worldwide disaster.

We have been watching the situation of the United States where COVID-19 is spreading on a large scale, and the number of the infected persons and the dead is increasing, with deep concern.

The current COVID-19 crisis fully exposes the corruptibility and weakness of the capitalism which prioritizes the interests of conglomerates over the health and life of the masses of working people, while further strengthening the conviction of the justice of the cause of our two parties.

Reaffirming the invariable and firm solidarity of our party to the Workers World Party, we sincerely wish leaders and all members of your party, as well as their families, good health and happiness without getting hurt from such a fatal pandemic.

Department of International Affairs
Central Committee, Workers' Party of Korea
Pyongyang, March 29, Juche 109 (2020)

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 as people all over the world confront the dangerous new coronavirus. We are proud of our strong bonds with your revolutionary party, which has for so long successfully resisted the criminal efforts of U.S. imperialism to return all Korea to neocolonial bondage.

Yes, we agree. The rapid spread of this disease in the United States 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 already documented: 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 your 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 of Workers World newspaper
On behalf of the Interim Central Committee of Workers World Party
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 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 amplified 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 also 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 infamies under the pretext of the War on Drugs, has ordered the largest U.S. military deployment in our region in the last 30 years, with the purpose of threatening Venezuela and bringing to our region a costly, bloody, military conflict of indefinite duration.

William Barr, a [U.S.] Attorney General of questionable independence (who recommended the 1989 invasion of Panama against Noriega and helped cover up the irregularities of the Iran-Contra scandal) filed, without showing any evidence whatsoever, accusations of drug trafficking toward the United States 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



Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro



President Kim Il Sung of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea greets Workers World Chairperson Sam Marcy, along with Workers World/Mundo Obrero Editor Deirdre Griswold and WWP comrade Sharon Eolis, in Pyongyang, 1990.

WW interview: A voice from Occupied Gaza

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: “The World Bank estimated in 2015 that [Gaza’s gross domestic product] losses caused by the blockade since 2007 were above 50 percent and entailed large welfare losses. Gaza’s manufacturing sector, once significant, shrunk by as much as 60 percent in real terms due to the wars in the past 20 years and the blockade.

“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



PHOTO: MUHAMMAD KHALID QUDAIH
Muhammad Khalid Qudaih

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 Muhammad 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 interior 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



Al-Awda camp in Gaza. PHOTO: MUHAMMAD KHALID QUDAIH

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 “century deal” for President Donald Trump; to convert the eastern, 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 suffering 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 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 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 international tutelage that violates our sovereignty and disavows 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.

We want Peace.

Nicolás Maduro Moros
President of the Bolivarian Republic of 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. (worldometers.info/coronavirus/)

Haiti has only 130 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 911. 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.



Woman at market wearing banana-leaf mask to protect herself from COVID-19.

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 on 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/rybspdl)

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 Bald-Headed Haitian Party, bringing at times hundreds of thousands of people into the streets. They see their struggles, on one hand, as 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. □



La representante Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.) Pide una devolución de \$30.000 en deuda estudiantil, sin éxito en esta ronda.

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 condiciones de los trabajadores. La mayor cantidad, al menos \$500 mil millones, está destinada a rescatar a las principales corporaciones de EE. UU. y se distribuirá a discreción de la administración Trump pro-negocios. Se supone que otros \$350 mil millones rescatarán a las pequeñas empresas de la bancarrota.

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 aprovechando una crisis para obtener una mayor porción de la riqueza.

Los lectores deben tener en cuenta que toda la riqueza es creada por la clase trabajadora y que es el trabajo de los trabajadores, de todas las nacionalidades y grupos étnicos, todos los géneros y sexualidades, e incluso millones de inmigrantes, lo que produce valor.

Los capitalistas ricos saben que pueden confiar en los republicanos para defender y proteger sus intereses de clase. También pueden confiar en el liderazgo demócrata. Ambos partidos representaron a los capitalistas 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, fuerzas principalmente representadas 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 a la ruina económica.

Por ejemplo, aumentaron la cantidad y la amplitud de la cobertura de desempleo durante un período temporal y que debes haber perdido tu trabajo debido a COVID-19. No te pagan si tú mismo determinas que el trabajo es peligroso. Se agregarán \$600 por semana al máximo de desempleo regular. También habrá un pago de \$1200 para la mayoría de los adultos y \$500 por cada niño. Sanders pidió \$2000 por mes durante la crisis.

Las últimas estadísticas muestran que un número cada vez mayor de trabajadores están desempleados, con 3,3 millones tratando de solicitar un seguro de desempleo en la última semana. Es perfectamente razonable que los trabajadores desempleados reciban un ingreso estable durante la duración de su desempleo.

También se supone que el seguro de desempleo, y esto fue una verdadera concesión a la clase trabajadora, debe pagarse a los trabajadores por turnos, los trabajadores a tiempo parcial, los trabajadores que reciben propinas, aquellos que han sido excluidos de la compensación tradicional por desempleo. Si bien esto solo durará durante la pandemia, y existen obstáculos para obtener estos pagos, plantea la pregunta: ¿por qué no hacer esto todo el tiempo?

En la mayoría de los casos, la deuda estudiantil se pospondrá mientras dure

la crisis. El representante Ilhan Omar y otros miembros del Escuadrón propusieron perdonar los primeros \$30.000 de deuda estudiantil.

El 26 de marzo, el New York Times intentó un sección de Preguntas & Respuestas sobre los puntos en el proyecto de ley, sin comentar sobre cómo una administración hostil a la clase obrera tomaría decisiones. (tinyurl.com/t5cucqc – en inglés)

Un gigante despertado por el peligro

Si bien la clase trabajadora solo tiene una representación indirecta en el Congreso, y eso por una pequeña minoría, esta pandemia muestra un lado diferente de los trabajadores y provoca ira contra los capitalistas y su sistema.

Algunos empleados pueden trabajar desde casa y mantener sus trabajos. La mayoría no puede. Y aquellos que realmente fabrican o entregan bienes o servicios necesarios ahora pueden verse como esenciales para el funcionamiento de la sociedad moderna. Hoy incluso tienen que hacer su trabajo mientras corren el riesgo adicional de contraer COVID-19.

En la línea del frente están los trabajadores de salud de todo tipo que están en contacto directo y cercano con aquellos enfermos por el virus.

Hay trabajadores de venta minorista de alimentos en contacto directo con el público en general. Al menos en Nueva York, hay trabajadores, a menudo inmigrantes recientes, en bicicletas que entregan alimentos a los hogares.

Están los agricultores y los trabajadores agrícolas que aseguran el suministro de alimentos y todos los de las corporaciones privadas de reparto a la Oficina de Correos

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 trabajadores de 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.

Cuando el presidente amenazó la vida de todos al establecer una fecha arbitraria, el 13 de abril, para “volver al trabajo” de modo que “la cura no sea peor que la enfermedad”, la clase trabajadora sabía que los capitalistas que Trump representa no se preocupan por su salud y seguridad: solo se preocupan por las ganancias que producen los trabajadores.

Trump mostró por primera vez su indiferencia a la gente común el 26 de marzo al negarse a completar un contrato con General Motors y Ventec Life Systems para producir 80.000 ventiladores cuando escuchó que costarían \$1 mil millones. Mientras tanto, los hospitales de la ciudad de Nueva York están duplicando el uso de ventiladores al conectarlos a dos personas a la vez.

Hasta ahora, la lucha de clases ha estado contenida en los acuerdos realizados en el Congreso sin intervención directa de los trabajadores. Los capitalistas tienen la ventaja en el Congreso.

Pero hay agitaciones en todo el país: acciones laborales de aquellos que aún trabajan y conversaciones sobre negarse a volver a trabajar cuando se les ordena. Esto es especialmente si ese retorno se basa en los caprichos del presidente y las necesidades de los capitalistas para reanudar sus ganancias. □

Cuba en primera línea de lucha contra COVID-19

Por Mirinda Crissman

Cuba continúa ilustrando la solidaridad internacional de la atención médica 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. (telesurenglish.net) Mientras tanto, Estados Unidos ha sido criminalmente negligente al detener la propagación de COVID-19 y al probar y tratar a su propia gente.

Cuba tiene 28.268 miembros de brigadas médicas que trabajan en 61 países de todo el mundo, según el Dr. Jorge Hidalgo Bustillo, director de la Unidad Central de Colaboración Médica. Todos ellos son negativos para COVID-19 y están siendo monitoreados diariamente.

A través de una empresa conjunta con China, Cuba está produciendo grandes cantidades de un medicamento antiviral llamado interferón alfa 2b. Este medicamento vital es “reconocido como uno de los medicamentos más efectivos para tratar este virus. Se le atribuye salvar a 1.500 personas de [morir] del virus solo en China ... y el productor cubano de medicamentos, BioCubaFarma, está produciendo otros 21 medicamentos compatibles para el tratamiento de complicaciones que pueden surgir en pacientes con COVID-19”. (dissidentvoice.org)

Los cubanos dieron permiso para que el crucero británico, el MS Braemar con cinco casos confirmados de COVID-19 y docenas de viajeros sintomáticos a bordo, atracara en el puerto de Mariel, al oeste de La Habana, el 18 de marzo. Cuba luego trató a los afectados por el virus y organizó el paso a sus países para el resto de los pasajeros.

Al explicar el gesto, el Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Cuba emitió una declaración el 18 de marzo en Twitter, diciendo: “Estos tiempos exigen solidaridad,



Médicos y enfermeras cubanos se dirigen a Italia para ayudar en la lucha contra COVID-19: ‘No somos superhéroes. Somos doctores revolucionarios.’

entender la salud como un derecho humano y fortalecer la cooperación internacional para abordar nuestros desafíos comunes; valores inherentes a la práctica humanista de la Revolución cubana y el pueblo”.

Para Cuba: la atención médica global es un derecho

Cuba ha demostrado su capacidad para mantenerse a la vanguardia de la medicina en áreas como la atención del cáncer y poner fin a la transmisión del VIH de madre a hijo. Cuba vive constantemente sus valores al brindar atención médica gratuita en todo el mundo.

En 1965, Cuba estableció el Centro Nacional de Investigación Científica con el objetivo de utilizar métodos científicos para resolver problemas biomédicos y desarrollar productos sofisticados.

Cuba también estableció la Escuela Latinoamericana de Medicina en marzo de 1999. Desde entonces, 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 indigentes.

Debido a su sistema nacional de atención médica de primer 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, la tos ferina y el sarampión.

Cuba ha estado al frente de muchas luchas mundiales, brindando ayuda a quienes la necesitan. Los médicos cubanos fueron los primeros en llegar después de terremotos calamitosos en Pakistán en 2005 y Haití en 2010 para combatir un brote de cólera. Los médicos revolucionarios de Cuba atendieron a 20.000 víctimas de cáncer después del desastre nuclear de Chernobyl en Ucrania de 1989 a 2011, todo de forma gratuita. Los médicos cubanos también ayudaron a tratar a los afectados por el ébola en África occidental en 2014.

En febrero de 2020, desatendidos y descuidados por el gobierno colonial de Canadá, los líderes de las Primeras Naciones de Manitoba se reunieron en La Habana para discutir una posible asociación de atención médica. (cbc.ca)

Para poner esta reunión en contexto, una persona de Ojibway-Cree explicó en un tuit del 11 de marzo: “Durante la crisis de H1N1 en la reserva de mi casa hace unos años, el gobierno envió bolsas para cadáveres cuando pedimos ayuda”.

Toda esta ayuda se proporciona mientras Cuba ha estado bajo un bloqueo unilateral por parte de los EE. UU. durante más de 60 años, con nuevas sanciones impuestas regularmente. □