Boston school workers blast ‘reopening plans’

By Steve Gillis, Financial Secretary, USW Local 8751 and G. Lechat, Harvard TPS Coalition

Boston Public School nurses, teachers and bus drivers occupied City Hall Plaza on July 29, vowing to defend public safety by any means necessary.

The action was a response to the threatening, dangerous demands of the White House, Wall Street and Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker to “get back to school and work” in September.

School bus drivers whose 1,000-strong members of United Steelworkers Local 8751 work for private corporations Transdev and First Student — joined BPS nurses and teachers. With folding chairs, picket signs and loudspeakers in tow, the workers demanded no reopening of Boston public schools until they’re safe for students, workers and communities.

Nurses raised the cry of Shirley Chisholm — elected in 1968 as the first Black woman in Congress — who once said, “If they don’t give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair.” In 1972 Chisholm was the first Black woman to run for U.S. President, backed by Black Panther Party branches.

Chisholm’s legacy unified Boston’s majority-women teachers and nurses and the majority-Black bus drivers in their demand that BPS workers be decision-makers in any school reopening plan. “Our expertise and knowledge have been shut out of the assessment, planning and decision-making process,” charged Boston Teachers Union President Jessica Tang.

The crowd cheered USW Local 8751 President André François, who said that every bus driver “applauds the [BTU’s] … nonnegotiable demand for union nurses in every school. Because the school bus is the first daily contact for tens of thousands of Boston’s most precious cargo, Local 8751 also demands RTU nurses be stationed at the bus yards to enforce safety procedures at the frontline.”

François continued, “As the pandemic spread worldwide, our employer and responsible parties failed to act, and in April, Local 8751 suffered the deaths of four drivers to COVID-19. They were active in the city’s food home-delivery program to thousands of BPS children. Only the union’s forceful, on-site intervention and job actions to enforce Emergency COVID-19 Worksite Standard Operating Procedures stopped [additional] infections among our members. … Local 8751 pledges to our members and the children, families and communities we serve: Not One More Death!” (USW Local 8751 statement, July 29)

As the U.S. pandemic’s death toll nears 160,000, with nearly 5 million official infections, scientific evidence mounts — from summer camps and parties in states where governments have pushed for reopening — that children contract and transmit COVID-19 at high rates. (New York Times, July 31; YJ Park et al.)

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Jonathan Jackson
Essential workers protested July 30 in a flash-mob action in front of a newly remodeled Tops Market, a supermarket chain based in Western New York. The event was organized by the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Division 1342 and the Food and Commercial Workers (UCFW) Local 1.

Demands included hazard pay, sick leave and actual enforcement of the New York state mask mandate. Workers at Tops Market locations, as well as the Niagara Frontier Transit Authority, have caught COVID-19 on many separate occasions since March, leading to temporary store closures and route cancellations. Neither multimillion-dollar company offered masks or worker protections until mandated by the state. At the North Buffalo location, where the protest took place, renovations and cosmetic changes were ongoing throughout the pandemic. Social distancing was impossible with a narrow temporary entrance and large portions of the store closed off.

At their action, the workers promised that the fight was far from over. —Report and photo by Thomas Answerey

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Build Workers World!

The U.S. has the highest percentage of its population in city, county, state and federal prisons—more than any other country in the world—and disproportionately people of color. That’s not even counting detention centers for im/migrants who flee their homes to escape U.S. crimes of imperialist aggression. Here they are brutally mistreated, some even suffering cruel separation from their children.

Don’t let Fourth of July fireworks distract you from the streets and from formulating ways to dismantle the deadly, institutionalized, second-class system that oppresses Black, Brown and Indigenous people. That systemic inequality and injustice are responsible for the biggest proportion of those dying from the pandemic being people of color.

What would really show solidarity with the already vibrant Black Lives Matter movement here and abroad? Raising the struggle to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal so it becomes a worldwide cry. The very reasons why Mumia was arrested in the first place—capitalist system works how this racist, classist, capitalist system works to promote his message. Workers World was there, demanding his freedom from the get-go. Now WW’s Prisoners Solidarity Committee is promoting an international call to Free Mumia.

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John Lewis and the Edmund Pettus Bridge

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta

Many readers of Workers World newspaper may have watched on July 26 as a horse-drawn caisson carried John Lewis’ body over the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Ala. It was on March 7, 1965 — a Sunday — that this bridge and 25-year-old John Lewis were inextricably joined together in the long history of the Black struggle for liberation.

Since Lewis’ death on July 17, a black-and-white video of that day has been shown countless times in programs honoring the 17-term Georgia congressperson. The sight is chilling no matter how many times one views it: Scores of white Alabama state troopers — some armed with vicious batons, others on horseback — and a mob of rebel-yelling racists by their side, all waiting at the foot of the bridge to assault Black marchers for freedom and civil rights.

The 600 marchers, mostly Selma residents who had been engaged in multiple attempts to register to vote, were prepared to walk all the way to Montgomery, in the state capital. They were keenly aware of the assault on Rev. C.T. Vivian the month before, when Dallas County Sheriff Tom Clark struck him in the face and knocked him to the ground as Vivian waited on the courthouse steps to try to register.

Vivian famously and immediately got up to his feet, face bloodied and continued to demand the right to vote for the Black citizens of Selma. The esteemed Rev. Vivian died the same day as Lewis in the early morning hours of July 17.

John Lewis and Hosea Williams were at the head of the marchers that day on the bridge. The image is unforgettable as all of them walked face-to-face with the threatening state forces and were quickly beaten, teargassed and trampled by horses. Lewis, knocked unconscious after being hilly clubbed in the head by a state trooper, suffered a fractured skull.

The brutal assault on the Edmund Pettus Bridge galvanized the Voting Rights movement and was a key action in forcing President Lyndon Johnson to call for passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Bill, signed five months later.

In the decades since 1965, tens of thousands of people have joined John Lewis and the original marchers on the “Bloody Sunday” annual re-creation each March, including this writer. The experience is always quite emotional, even though the mood is now ceremonial and celebratory.

As one looks through the railings at the Alabama River flowing so many feet below, it is easy to imagine the terrifying sounds of night sticks striking bodies, of the shouts and screams as tear gas enveloped the marchers, the panic of trying to escape off the bridge, the fear of being pushed into the river.

And yet, whether you are there surrounded by the throngs who come to honor those heroes of Selma or come with a group of family or friends, you sense the power of people who were united, determined to be free — and who just days later in 1965 marched across that bridge — this time in the thousands — on their way to Montgomery.

There is a national call to rename the Edmund Pettus Bridge as the John R. Lewis Bridge. Pettus was a general in the Confederate army and was a Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan. The bridge was built and named for him in 1940, during Jim Crow segregation when Black people were not allowed to vote.

New York City
6th annual Sandra Bland #SayHerName protest

Special to Workers World
New York City

A spirited group of about 100 protesters gathered July 13 in Union Square in New York City to demand justice for Black Lives Matter activist Sandra Bland and all Black women, girls and femmes. The People’s Power Assemblies/NYC was the main organizer of the 6th annual Sandra Bland #SayHerName rally and march. The day’s program was titled, “Black Womxn, Girls and Femmes Fight Back!”

July 13 marked the 38th anniversary of the death of Sandra Bland, an outspoken supporter of the Black Lives Matter movement, who was found hanged in a jail cell in Waller County, Texas, three days after being violently arrested for, supposedly, not using a turn signal on a highway.

Her death at the hands of the police state sparked a national outcry. The July 13 event uplifted those who have been poor, and if we want jobs, they are very hard to come by. How are you supposed to get hired when whoever is interviewing you judges that either you couldn’t do the work or that it would cost too much to hire you?

We aren’t even given the chance to sell our labor back from the bosses, we can create a society in which everyone has equal pay. For the union makes us strong!”

The disability movement is tied to all struggles across all struggles, must unite to take power down capitalism. We sell our labor to the bourgeoisie; therefore we have the power. This pandemic has exposed the ugly face of capitalism and its clear profit-over-people motives. More people worldwide are realizing that the only future is a socialist one.

If all workers organize, take our labor back from the bosses, we can create a society in which everyone has equal access to food, housing, health care, a job and education. That’s what all of our struggles are about. As it says in the labor song, “Solidarity Forever”: “We will bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old. For the union makes us strong!”

We will unite in solidarity and struggle for a world where people and the planet are considered over profit and corporate greed. Workers and oppressed of the world unite!”

Disability movement: ‘Part of the global working class’

The following slightly edited remarks were made by Kristen Turgeon from the Boston brunch of Workers World Party on a July 9 webinar sponsored by WWP’s Disability Rights Caucus and titled “Smash Ableism, Racism, All Bigotry & Oppression!”

It has been 30 years since passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act. I was born in 1990 so I grew up under it, and the word that comes first to mind when I think about the ADA is access. I was lucky to have a wonderful advocacy team in school that helped me get educated and moved into the wider world, having experiences and talking to other disabled folks, I discovered how rare that is. Like many disabled people I am unemployed.

The blind community alone faces a 75% unemployment rate. Like many folks across all struggles, my disability is not designed for any of us. We, as workers across all struggles, must unite to take power down capitalism.

There is a national call to rename the Edmund Pettus Bridge as the John R. Lewis Bridge. Pettus was a general in the Confederate army and was a Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan. The bridge was built and named for him in 1940, during Jim Crow segregation when Black people were not allowed to vote.

We call for abolition of the police, prisons and all carceral apparatus of the state that continues to murder, maim and disable Black women, girls and femmes. We must continue to highlight the many Black women — among them numerous transwomen — who are killed and brutalized by the police in the streets, in the jails, in the prisons.

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The disability movement is tied to all other movements because we are part of the global working class. This system was not designed for any of us. We, as workers across all struggles, must unite to take power down capitalism. We sell our labor to the bourgeoisie; therefore we have the power. This pandemic has exposed the ugly face of capitalism and its clear profit-over-people motives. More people worldwide are realizing that the only future is a socialist one.

If all workers organize, take our labor back from the bosses, we can create a society in which everyone has equal access to food, housing, health care, a job and education. That’s what all of our struggles are about. As it says in the labor song, “Solidarity Forever”: “We will bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old. For the union makes us strong!”

We will unite in solidarity and struggle for a world where people and the planet are considered over profit and corporate greed. Workers and oppressed of the world unite!”

When marchers crossed Edmund Pettus Bridge on Bloody Sunday in 1965, John Lewis led at the front.
Boston school workers blast ‘reopening plans’

Continued on page 1

#SEIUDropTheCops makes demands

By Calvin Deutschbein

Following weeks of intensive internal organizing, research and analysis, the (Service Employees) #SEIU Drop The Cops campaign – a rank-and-file-led initiative – is gaining momentum in local, state and national campaigns from coast to coast and across different sectors of the economy – has released detailed demands to their International. After wide-ranging discussions on solidarity, class, class character and the role of labor in the movement, #SEIU Drop The Cops sets forth actionable demands, which when met will immediately empower the working class and the oppressed, especially in the U.S., but around the world.

Demand 1: SEIU Drop the Cops

We demand SEIU drop cops from the union. We demand any job classification including law enforcement officers, jail and prison guards, probation officers, and armed security officers and their bargaining units, for example, in the International Brotherhood of Police Officers and the International Brotherhood of Corrections Officers, be expelled from SEIU.

Demand 2: SEIU Beyond Policing and Prisons

We demand an SEIU beyond policing and prisons. We demand SEIU divest from campaigns organizing law enforcement officers, jail and prison guards, probation officers, and armed security officers. We demand SEIU invest in union organizing campaigns to protect, empower and expand sectors where workers prevent violence or harm as their work, such as essential workers, educators, healthcare workers, social workers, and food service workers. We demand a strong, unionized movement, and a change in the role of the police, including both an action against the community and as a profession providing employment opportunities, to enact transformational social change beyond policing and prisons.

Demand 3: SEIU Labor Drop the Cops

We demand labor drop the cops. We demand that SEIU fight to expel the Brotherhood of Police Officers and other law enforcement officers, jail and prison guards, probation officers, and armed security officers bargaining units, such as the Fraternal Order of Police, Police Benevolent Association and International Union of Police Associations, from labor councils on which SEIU locals participate.

Demand 4: SEIU Drop Cop Candidates

We demand SEIU drop cop candidates. We demand SEIU provide no support to any political candidate who accepts donations from law enforcement officers, jail and prison guards, probation officers, and armed security officers, or who intends to act against defunding the police or the platform of the Movement for Black Lives while in office.

Demand 5: SEIU For Black Lives

We demand an SEIU for Black Lives. We demand SEIU acknowledge in word and action the centrality of being in solidarity with Black workers and communities to the labor movement. We demand SEIU adopt the Movement for Black Lives platform as an organizing goal and concretely effect the changes through its labor and political organizing.

For updates on the campaign, go to the Facebook page at tinyurl.com/36qphbn.

The great African American revolutionaries, Assata Shakur, turned 73 on July 16. The following slightly edited article first appeared online on May 7, 2013, with the original headline, “Assata Shakur is a modern-day Harriet Tubman.”

I had the distinct honor of meeting Assata Shakur in person at the 1997 World Youth Festival in Havana, Cuba. I was all the more surprised when she recognized me as the 1996 presidential candidate for Workers World Party. A year later, in 1998, during a New York City memorial for Workers World Party chairperson Sam Marcy, Assata sent a moving message of condolence to our organization. Assata has been living in political exile in Cuba since 1979.

So when the FBI posted a $2 million bounty for the return of Assata to the U.S., not only did it anger me and countless others, but it also reminded me of another bounty put on the head of another freedom fighter over 160 years ago — Harriet Tubman.

Both of these courageous women sacrificed much in their lives, including any kind of a normal family life, to join important movements to free humanity from oppression. Harriet was born into enslavement, only to escape to the Underground Railroad, where, as a conductor, she brought hundreds of enslaved people of African descent to freedom in the North, including to Canada. She was so hated by the slavocracy that a $50,000 bounty — big money in those days — was put on her head for capture, dead or alive.

During Tubman’s era, the slavery had at its disposal the federal government, with the Supreme Court refusing to recognize escaped formerly enslaved people as citizens based on the 1857 Dred Scott decision. The Constitution counted Black people as “three-fifths of a human being,” and the Dred Scott decision encouraged armed white vigilantes, who were paid to recapture those trying to escape the slave masters. This kind of terrorist atmosphere did not impede Harriet Tubman from her political activism until she died 107 years ago in 1913.

Assata’s political journey

Born in New York City in the late 1940s, Assata moved to Wilmington, N.C., to live with her grandmother when she was three years old until her teenage years. She eventually joined both the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army.

The Panthers were beloved and respected within numerous poor, Black urban communities where they provided

In honor of her 73rd birthday

A Tribute to Assata Shakur

By Monica Moorehead

For updates on the campaign, go to the Facebook page at tinyurl.com/36qphbn.

Body cam footage from June 12 in Atlanta shows Rayshard Brooks being interrogated by his soon-to-be Killer Garrett Rolfe, represented by police union affiliated with SEIU.
50 years of struggle
Black August to Black Lives Matter Movement

By Judy Greenspan

This Aug. 7 marks the 50th anniversary of the heroic attempt by Jonathan Jackson, younger brother of George Jackson, to free his brother and other prisoners. It was an attempt that dooms a young person to life behind bars.

Jonathan Jackson was only 17 years old when he was convicted of the murder of Richardutschke, a security guard at the Marin County courthouse in San Rafael, Calif. Richardutschke was killed during a prison escape led by George Jackson and his brother. Jonathan Jackson proceeded to gather four other brave prisoners in the courtroom — James McClain, William Christmas, Ruchell Magee and Khatari Gaulden — who heroically joined this action. The young Jackson and his group grabbed a judge, a prosecutor and a juror as hostages and attempted a daring escape from the courthouse. Police opened fire on the van as they were escaping, killing young Jackson, three of the prisoners (except Ruchell Magee) and the judge.

Magee remains in prison today as the longest held U.S. political prisoner. And this is a history lesson we need to relearn to understand what is happening today.

Prisons sow edews of insurrection

The Black Liberation movement of the 1960s and, in particular, the Black Panther Party, educated and inspired the movements for Black Liberation in many countries. In many prisons, Black Panther Party chapters were organized in prison cells. George Jackson, who was serving a 112-year term for the murder of the security guard, raised the consciousness of others for the need to act.

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Jonathan Jackson knew that the state wanted to execute his brother. One year later, prison guards assassinated George Jackson in San Quentin Prison on Aug. 21, 1971. This assassination set off a spark that was felt across the country, as prisoners in Attica State Prison in New York state rebelled shortly thereafter. When the siege by the brutal state was over, more than 40 unarmed Attica prisoners were murdered by guards and state police. Since the assassination of George Jackson, August has been called Black August in honor of Black freedom fighters who dared to rebel against the prison system. Black August started in California, but it is commemorated all over the country.

The movement inside the prisons has not been dormant these 50 years. What we are seeing today — fueled by the rebellion begun by the Black Lives Matter movement and by the inhumane treatment during COVID-19 — is a resurgence and reignition of the prisoner liberation movement. In every prison and jail, incarcerated activists are expressing their support for the movement against systemic racism and police brutality. People inside are using what little access they have to the phone system to call out and speak at demonstrations and to the media. “Black Lives Matter” are often the first words shouted by these prisoner activists.

Prisoner demands around COVID-19 echo the cries of health care workers, bus drivers and others for adequate personal protective equipment. Unfortunately, in prisons, jails and Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention centers, with no chance of social distancing or consistent PPE access, COVID-19 has spread like wildfire and deaths are spiking.

Breaking through the walls of isolation

What is the Prisoners Solidarity Committee?

This slightly edited statement first appeared in the Sept. 17, 1971, WW as part of a special eight-page Prisoners Solidarity Committee insert, “A Report from Inside Attica,” in tribute to the Attica Prison uprising that occurred Sept. 9-13. This justified rebellion resulted in the massacre of over 40 prisoners by the storm troopers made up of the National Guard and other state forces.

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Once a very great while, a rich man goes to prison. Maybe he is taking a six-month rap for a company that defrauded the people out of millions; when he gets out, he is back on the road to riches, he’s set for life. And even while he’s in, every little comfort is provided for him, so that the time he spends there is as comfortable as possible.

Most of all, he is never really isolated, but they are also something more.

The Prisoners Solidarity Committee is another absolutely indispensable product of this new spirit; it was formed less than a year ago [1970], when prisoners at Auburn, N.Y., wrote to organizations on their behalf. These letters from brothers, sisters, and siblings of incarcerated activists are expressing their demands of the oppressed. The state made no attempt to repress the movement.

Thus it was a small wonder that when the heroic Attica prisoners met with a small group of outside observers during the rebellion, it was the PSC delegate, Tom Soto, who most wanted to see. It was to him that they entrusted the greatest number of messages, for their loved ones and for the movement as a whole.

The PSC, on hearing of the rebellion, had immediately mobilized all its support: It sent a delegation of support to Attica, arranged transportation for relatives and organized many demonstrations throughout New York state and in several major cities elsewhere.

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The PSC, on hearing of the rebellion, had immediately mobilized all its support: It sent a delegation of support to Attica, arranged transportation for relatives and organized many demonstrations throughout New York state and in several major cities elsewhere. The prisoners knew that what they had to say would be heard on the outside. At the most difficult moment, when ruling-class fury against the prisoners reached its height, the PSC announced from inside Attica that it had ‘conditionally supported the prisoners’ demands. A further bond of love and trust was forged in those tense hours.

The isolation of the prisoners has been permanently changed. The new spirit is that a wall, a concrete wall, the darkest cell, the cruel- est solitary “hole” can no longer hold the terror it once had for, 5,400 men at Attica have looked the worst in the face.
**Pensacola protests federal war on the people**

By Shannon Dover

Workers World Party-Pensacola branch held a demonstration Aug. 1 in solidarity with Portland and Portland activists gathered on Palafox, a main section with Mitchell.  Upon seeing what was happening, he stepped in between the middle. The police turned their gun on the black woman, and her fiance of 10 years, Garret Foster, were there. They both consisted of Black Lives Matter demonstrations. Foster assisted Mitchell, and he armed himself to protect her and other demonstrators from potential fascist violence.

Based on the video recorded by local journalist Hiram Gilberto, the protagonists approached a blocked-off intersection when a blue sedan rushed through the barricades where people were still walking, with the intent of instilling fear in them. Demonstrators turned toward the vehicle and forced it to stop.

Meanwhile, Foster crossed the intersection with Mitchell. Upon seeing what was happening, he stepped in between the vehicle and made sure that she and others weren’t hit. Five shots came out of the vehicle, while three additional shots were fired by a random prospector toward the vehicle as it drove away. The initial five shots were aimed at Foster. Witnesses said Foster never aimed his "account" of the events that transpired. Police released the murderer from custody the same night, without naming him or charging him with a crime. Even though Foster’s blood was on the shooter’s hands, the police took his word for it. The calls to abolish the police are getting louder and more frequent.

**Vigil honors fighter for justice**

A day later, July 26, protesters, family members and mourners gathered at the intersection of Fourth Street and Congress Avenue in downtown Austin, the spot where Foster was murdered, and held a vigil in honor of his life. People of all ages, nationalities and genders came to pay their respects to Foster. Families, college students and even bystanders attended the vigil. The University of Texas police who prevented violence in the face of state and state-sanctioned violence are now looking at other tactics, as the fascist police and their collaborators violently attack them. Many activists who once called for defunding and reforming the police are now looking toward total abolition and liberation of the people.

Kirven set up a GoFundMe page for funeral, burial and other expenses, which raised over $107,000 within 24 hours. That highlighted the support the people will give to care for another during these difficult times. She wrote about Foster in a heartfelt way on the fundraising page.

Kirven described Foster as “a great person, taken away from his fiancee and loved ones,” and said he “always fought against injustice, served in the military and was fiercely protective of his fiancee.”

Mitchell and Foster have both been active in the community, feeding the houseless, protesting against evictions and demonstrating for Black lives. They are both shining examples of people who care about the people. They want people in jail to be low-cost laborers — specifically Black people to produce goods for companies like McDonald’s, Walmart, Victoria’s Secret, Sprint, Verizon and Starbucks.

The answer is not defending the police, and the answer definitely isn’t reforming the police. The only answer is to abolish the police and the prison-industrial complex. The police have always been here to protect white supremacy, to protect white elites and to defend capitalism. There is nothing, only dismantling.

We can build a better future. A future that protects that the most vulnerable, the poor, old, young, women and children. We can build this better future. We can have this better future when we work together as comrades to destroy capitalism and white supremacy. [1]
North Carolina comes together to ‘Smash the Police State’

By calvin deutschbein
Raleigh, N.C.

Hundreds gathered here in Nash Square, where demonstrations have been held daily since May 30, for a July 29 demonstration — “Smash the Police State: Portland, Gastonia, Roxboro” — highlighting the anti-racist struggle in those three cities.

People in Portland, Ore., are struggling to repel federal forces attacking the Black Lives Matter movement. In Gastonia, N.C., unidentified, camouflaged agents dragged Black demonstrators into unmarked cars on July 24 during a protest after a white racist drew a firearm on a Black woman wearing a #BlackLivesMatter button in a local ice cream parlor. In Roxboro, N.C., police pulled over and immediately shot to death a Black man on July 24, then later teargassed mourners who came to honor him.

Speakers from community and socialist organizations addressed the attacks, each linking the federal invasion of Portland to the ongoing violence of U.S. forces against communities, especially Black communities, in North Carolina and around the world. The rally, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist, lifted broad demands for revolutionary social change.

Voices of protest
Cameron of the Working-class Homeless Organizing Alliance pointed out, “A Black man [Marcus Smith] was lynched [in 2019 in North Carolina]. The pigs who did the lynching still walk the beat with a badge and a gun, and the chief pig who ran it walked negligently in a pension paid for by the community. How can we peacefully protest an occupying force that takes any expression of defiance as an act of aggression?”

Lydia McCaskill, the Black woman threatened in Gastonia, said defiantly, “I have 400 death threats right now; I have security right now, all because I say I was discriminated against. … They hate me, and I love it. Why? Because it means I’m doing something right.”

Dedan, a member of Black Workers for Socialism and Liberation-Central Oregon, called for a march to the nearby Terry Sanford Federal Building, homebase for Department of Homeland Security forces and U.S. marshals from the Department of Justice. It is also an environmental threat to nearby historically Black neighborhoods where it has spewed untreated sewage for decades.

The militant march went through gentrified downtown and nearby housing developments, which had displaced many of the marchers or their friends and families. The march continued to demand the names of some of those murdered in North Carolina by cops, including Keith Collins, Aikel Denkins, Kyron Hinton, Sobel Mojarrad, Marcus Smith and David Brooks Jr., who was killed only days earlier by the Roxboro Police Department.


The demonstration moved through Raleigh, leaving street art with the names of those killed by police and marking known lynching sites around the city, before coming up against a police line. Protesters formed up to hold a major intersection and shout down the cops. The police line, weakened as individual officers faltered, until the state — as always — turned to force, brought out riot control weapons, and made several arrests. The single arrest was met with jail support from Smash Racism Raleigh, the Working-class Homeless Organizing Alliance and the National Lawyers Guild.

The rally and march were safe, powerful and one of the largest and most militant actions this summer. Dedan, a member of Black Workers for Socialism and Liberation-Central Oregon, said, “Raleigh and North Carolina show no signs of backing down, and this powerful display of many organizations and people has to be recognized with going forward. Black Lives Matter!”

Portland, Ore.

Struggle makes headway, fight far from over

By Joshua Hanks
Portland, Ore.

When federal officers entered Portland, Ore., over the July 4 weekend and began to confront Black Lives Matter protesters, it quickly became clear that the protesters were not going to be driven out.

The presence of federal officers only galvanized protesters, who turned out by the thousands night after night. Militant demonstrations and broad support from the community were met with heavy clouds of tear gas and heavy-handed, repressive responses from federal officers. The kidnapping and arrest of unmarked vehicles by unidentified agents in Portland became a flashpoint for outrage against state repression throughout the U.S.

Tents were set up in Lownsdale Square, directly east of the federal courthouse where federal officers had centralized their operation. For weeks protesters at the square were selling free food, medical aid, water, clothing and other supplies donated by the community.

Finally, after massive demonstrations, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown announced on July 23 federal officers would begin withdrawing and would be replaced with Oregon state police. This represented a much needed victory qualified for the protesters.

Since the drawdown began, the area around the protests has been markedly more quiet, with no further use of tear gas reported. But the tents in Lownsdale Square were taken down by city authorities, and the square was cleared.

Protests have continued, as not all federal officers are believed to have left the city. The state police replacing the federal forces are similarly viewed more favorably by many of the protesters. The Portland Police Bureau—which deployed tear gas and arrested nearly 100 times during protests that began after the May 25 murder of George Floyd—is similarly held in contempt.

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler, who is also the city’s police commissioner, has now apologized for his authorization of the unrestrained use of tear gas against protesters. This came only after the mayor and other local officials were themselves teargassed by federal officers.

A broad coalition — made up of social justice organizations, radical activists, trade unionists, teachers, medical workers and concerned residents — continues to turn out and demand racial justice in support of Black Lives Matter. While there have been disagreements within the movement over tactics and other issues, the unity of this coalition has been the key to its success.

The overall political discussion has shifted as a result, with demands for defunding and even abolishing police becoming much more widespread and accepted. Many local officials have felt the pressure of hundreds of demonstrators in the streets and are realizing that business-as-usual cannot continue.

Thousands of people participated in a march over the August 1 weekend, making their way through the city’s east side into downtown. Large demonstrations were held at Portland’s waterfront park, with people later converging in front of the federal courthouse several blocks away. During the weekend, firefighters staged a demonstration in support of the movement.

Portland activists.
Republicans sabotage as
Negotiations delay pandemic relief package

By John Catalinotto

Aug. 3 – Talks between the Republican administration and its majority Republican Senate with the Democratic Party House and Senate leaders have failed so far to reach agreement. This impasse holds up the emergency relief, which Republicans call CARES-2, beyond the date when vital unemployment supplements expire and the rent and mortgage moratorium ends.

Months ago, the Democratic House passed a relief plan they called the Heroes Act, valued at about $3.4 trillion. The Republican side dragged their feet for two months and now has barely agreed on their own plan, whose meager total value of only $1.1 trillion itself shows its inadequacy.

People fear this pandemic, and with good reason. As August begins, COVID-19 cases are surging faster in most of the U.S. than they did last spring. Whatever state governments decide about opening or closing businesses, the virus will not respect their decisions or the borders they set.

This means the need for emergency relief is greater than in March for what are now tens of millions of unemployed workers, who, along with their families, face eviction and hunger.

Human solidarity impels a socialists’ society. The drive to maximize profits drives capitalism. The last five months have already shown that socialist societies are far more effective in confronting this pandemic than capital- ist societies.

Compare noncapitalist China, Cuba and Vietnam, for example, where in early August, COVID-19 is under control, with rampant unregulated capitalism in the United States, Brazil and most of India where its spread is unchecked.

While the need to fight for socialism provides a beacon revolutionaries can aim for, the immediate struggle over the relief package is taking place in the U.S. Congress between the two pro-imperialist, pro-capitalist parties that represent the U.S. ruling class.

Conflict in Congress

This conflict takes place in the midst of an election year battle where — if anything near a normal election takes place, something that seems unlikely — the Republicans face the potential loss of the White House and the Senate, along with the House of Representatives. That makes it even more significant and revealing that the Republican proposals provide so little.

The message is that the Republicans are willing to allow unemployed workers to sink into despair and chaos rather than aid them. They cater instead to the biggest capitalists and base their election drive on Trump’s racism, xenophobia and worldview.

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The Republicans say they don’t want to pay people who are staying unemployed than for working. Bull. If that were really their concern, they should pass laws to raise wages for all low-wage workers — many of them “essential workers” and all who contribute to society with their labor. Republican politicians speak the thoughts of capitalists, who grab the profits produced by workers, and the executives whose salaries skyrocket when the court workers wages.

Republicans also refuse to extend the moratorium on rents and mortgages that ended on July 25, after 120 days in force. If Congress fails to extend this moratorium and fails to extend the unemployment supplement, the likely result “will be a staggering surge in homelessness unlike anything we have seen,” said John Pollock, a Public Justice Center attorney and coordinator of the National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel. (New York Times, July 29)

The Democratic Heroes Act also provides much-needed funding for state and local governments to deliver needed services, for public health measures to combat the pandemic, and for increased funding for Medicaid, as well as for subsidizing public education at all levels.

Need for ‘Heroes Act’ and much more

The Democratic Party plans fall short by omitting undocumented workers from any relief — though they do much of the essential labor on farms and in construction and retail services. They must be included. As must gig workers and any of the working population who labor beyond the bookkeeping of official capitalism. These workers are all members of the modern proletariat.

The Democratic Party, despite its Heroes Act, remains a pro-imperialist party. Along with Republicans, its majority supported next year’s $741 billion Pentagon budget, which pays the armed forces that police the world for U.S. imperialism. The Democrats backed U.S. aggressive sanctions against China, Russia and Iran and joined the conspiracy against Venezuela. No one should forget this.

Regarding this week’s negotiations, there is a risk the Democrats will agree to a bad compromise for the U.S. working class. That may avoid complete disaster and chaos, but still throw millions more into poverty, hunger and homelessness.

Send Assata’s open letter published May 3, 2013: revolutionarystandpoints.org

A tribute to Assata Shakur

Continued from page 4

the triple crisis of pandemic, economic collapse and racist police repression, workers must unite to demand a program for which the Heroes Act is only a minimum.

Extend the Heroes Act to all workers, including undocumented workers. Make the corporations pay. Show solidarity with Black Lives Matter.

Easier said than done. But the Black Lives Matter movement has inspired the movement of workers and oppressed peoples through the whole world by showing what is possible, even during a pandemic. The failure of Congress to provide even the bare minimum of emergency relief may be forcing the entire working class to respond with the same energy against the same enemy — capitalism and the repressive state apparatus.

This precarious situation undoubtedly gives new meaning to the Black Panther Party slogan: “Repression breeds resistance.”

The message is that the Republicans are willing to allow unemployed workers to sink into despair and chaos rather than aid them. They cater instead to the biggest capitalists and base their election drive on Trump’s racism, misogyny and xenophobia.

To survive and prevail in the triple crisis of pandemic, economic collapse and racist police repression, workers must unite to demand a program for which the Heroes Act is only a minimum.

The bounty on Assata will boomerang and eventually end the terrorist war against Cuba. This is the best outcome of the collaboration that more than 20 years ago united the women of Africa and Latin America to defend the family of Assata Shakur and Cuba.

That’s why we must continue to defend this mother of revolution — and Cuba. To help defend Cuba, contribute to the Network for Peace and Freedom. To send a copy to the assata shakur project, send $200 to the Network for Peace and Freedom, P.O. Box 897, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02141.
Who created the Saharan dust cloud?

By calvin deutschbein

Each year, massive dust plumes rise from the Sahara, lifted by local winds after being unmoored by desert conditions. However, over the past four decades, the plumes have been getting larger, and this year marks the largest soil displacement on record. The plume reaches from North Africa across the North Atlantic to the Caribbean, making landfall across the eastern shore of the Americas from Guyana and Venezuela to the U.S. South.

The cloud contains approximately 180 million tons of dust, begins approximately a mile above the surface, is about two miles thick and extends over 5,000 miles as seen from space. It is the thickest, densest and largest since at least 1979 when satellite monitoring began. (National Geographic, June 2020)

As with any natural phenomena, the dust plume itself and its historic size arise from a number of factors. The Saharan cycles between saavana grasslands and desert roughly every 10,000 years, and is about halfway through a desert cycle. But the year-to-year increases in size seem well beyond the natural cyclical process.

“It does look like there’s been an increase in dustiness over the 20th century,” according to Natalie Mahowald, a climate scientist at Cornell University. Mahowald says the size of this year’s cloud and the extent of increasing size are attributable in roughly equal parts to land degradation in North Africa and to human-caused climate change. (National Geographic, June 2020)

Just as the Saharan dust plume takes local conditions and globalizes them, the plume itself becomes a larger global conditions, created primarily by imperialism. At least two of the factors involved—land degradation and climate change—point to the U.S. empire’s role in the globalizing of the context of the global history of colonialism.

Climate crisis

Capitalist production has relied on extreme consumption of nonrenewable coal and oil for everything from heating homes to powering industry to operating the machinery of war. By 1994 the U.S. and the European Union (including Britain) had produced 27% of the world’s greenhouse gases according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. (IPCC, 2014)

Rising global temperatures are felt sharply in the Sahara as drought conditions. Since 1930, average temperatures in the Sahara have risen about 3°F, evaporating more of the limited moisture, while the temperature extremes, both hot and cold, have spread further from the average, severely taxing the vegetation that holds the soil in place and prevent erosion. Rainfall has also declined across the region. While it is difficult to measure rainfall in the Sahara, parts of which may go over a year without rain, since 1990 the contiguous area receiving fewer than 4 inches of precipitation annually has expanded by 10%.

Land degradation, colonialism and war

Land degradation is of prime concern in the Sahel, the semi-arid transition zone on the south of the Sahara. A beautiful and biodiverse annually forming grassland stretching across the African continent and nine countries—the Sahel is under continuous strain to provide for a growing population. Over the past few decades more of the Sahel has been used for agriculture, and agriculture in some areas has been industrialized, causing greater impact.

Another aspect of unsustainable agriculture is labor intensification—increasing the number of worker hours per unit of land—usually by letting land lie fallow for a shorter period of time and doing more work on the land between plantings. This is resulting in longer and harsher hours for workers and more profits for the owners.

In the Sahel, 80% to 90% of the economy is agricultural and the population is growing rapidly. As many as 80% of people in the Sahel live by subsistence farming, herding and fishing, with relatively few cash crops, like cotton and peanuts. In some countries pre-COVID-19, other industries contribute to the economy, like mining and tourism. The subsistence economy, even with growing populations, probably would be sustainable.

But profit-motivated practices, tied to the export market, push the Sahel into unsustainably high usage and degrade the soil, making it more vulnerable to being swept away. It is a blend of the Transafrican Journal of History, the World Bank and EU (including British) investment into the region is oriented toward commodifying vital resources as cash crops for export like oil and crops by financiers. (National Geographic, June 2020)

The Sahel is “the world’s largest irrigation project, with a network of underground pipes bringing water from an underground aquifer. It also provided a regional jobs program in North Africa.

The U.S.-backed destabilization of Libya ended the de-desertification effort and flooded the Sahel with refugees fleeing U.S. aggression. Most refugees were from the Sahel originally, and had gone to Libya for jobs and as a way station on the route to Mecca. Their return further strained the scarce soil and water resources of the Sahel.

From the debt imposed by global financial capital to military intervention, U.S. imperialism has created unjust and unsustainable conditions in pursuit of wealth and power.

Record-breaking heat waves: Urgent alert to need for socialism

By Quell Nessuno

As Muslim worshippers prepared for the holiday of Eid al-Adha during the last days of July, the Middle East was rocked by record-breaking heat waves. In Baghdad, the mercury rose to over 119°F, the highest temperature ever measured in the Iraqi capital. These heat waves are not an isolated event, but rather are a symptom of the global climate crisis, a crisis that is being unmoored by desert conditions.

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The Sahel Dust Plume over Oakwood Cemetery in Raleigh, N.C., at sunrise, June 28.

The Sahel Dust Plume over Oakwood Cemetery in Raleigh, N.C., at sunrise, June 28.

Wildfire at Tambo Complex near Victoria, Australia, Jan. 18, 2020.

The Working class must push for social-ism and work to undo the deep scars of capitalism, for the good of all life on this planet.
**Workers World editorial**

“The coronavirus pandemic’s toll on the nation’s economy became emphati-
ically clearer Thursday,” the New York Times wrote July 30, “as the government
detailed the most devastating three-
month collapse on record, which wiped
away 15 years of growth.”

Specifically, the gross domestic prod-
uct, “the broadest measure of goods and
services produced within a country,” was
second quarter of 2020, according to the
U.S. Department of Commerce’s Bureau of
Economic Analysis. This translates to an
annual rate of decline of 32.9%— the
biggest since the bureau began tracking the
GDP. In the first quarter of this year the
GDP dropped 5%, breaking a five-year
growth spurt.

Other capitalist economies, including
France and Germany, experienced a simi-
lar collapse.

The Times would have us believe the
downward was entirely due to the coro-
navirus—who is an independent organi-
ization of the world economy. However,
international China, who was the virus
first discovered, is experiencing a
strong economic recovery, after a smaller
drop— 6.8%— in the GDP during the
country’s lockdown in the first quarter.

This raises questions the Times is
clearly avoiding. For one, why are capi-
talist economies so much more vulnerable
to the coronavirus than non-capitalist
ones? Is the economic crisis caused entirely by the
pandemic? Or is capitalist overproduction
playing a role here?

There were signs of a recession in early
2020 even before the coronavirus had
an impact on the U.S. economy. These
crises are often decoupled from manu-
facturing activity and a slump in retail
sales. General Motors had closed plants in
Michigan and Ohio as well as in Ontario,
Ontario.

What the Times won’t say

When workers receive wages, they are
only partially compensated for the value
they produce. What Karl Marx called
“surplus value” is pocketed by the boss in
the form of profit. Crises of overproduction— recessions, which often become depressions—are an inevitable, cyclical
feature of capitalism. They occur when the
working class produces more goods and
services than the capitalist class is able to
sell for profit.

Crises of overproduction have caused
tremendous suffering for the working
class, and created only downward “surplus
value”— and especially for the most oppressed.
Now capitalism is at a dead end; the nor-
mal cycles of “boom and bust” are operat-
ing in the context of a permanent systemic
crisis. We have seen the phenomenon of the
“jobless recovery” as technology is used to generate more value with fewer
and fewer workers.

Under capitalism, profits come before
human needs. Even health care, a basic right,
that is dominated by profit in manufactur-
ing, more than 8,000 Indigenous people
have contracted the coronavirus in Brazil.
Their death rate is 9.1% in contrast to
5.2% of people in the general population.

To make matters worse, government
health care workers dispatched to pro-
vide medical care in Indigenous territory
were accused by Brazil’s attorney general
of “flagrant negligence” of safety precau-
tions. The magazine reported that four
government workers who traveled to an
Indigenous village tested positive.

The continued encroachment of
Indian land by loggers, gold pro-
spectors and miners is a long-standing dis-
ease vector. Since he took office, President
Bolsonaro has prioritized dismantling
environmental regulations to benefit land
developers. It is feared that the weakened mon-
toring of Indigenous borders will lead to
more land theft— and more deaths.

The longstanding contradictions within
Brazil with regard to race, Indigenous sov-
eignty and class have been sharpened by
the COVID-19 crisis and Jair Bolsonaro’s
hateful right-wing policies. Bolsonaro’s
cruelty is the only newest phase in a long
history of racism and genocide.

However, Indigenous people have suffered from the spread of disease by
Europeans for centuries. When the pan-
demic began, Indigenous communities
responded quickly. Many territories have set up roadblocks, encouraged
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China pushes back U.S. empire of lies

By calvin deutschein

The U.S. ruling class has increasingly turned to misinformation and propaganda to maintain control during the COVID-19 epidemic. This includes concocting lies about the origins of the coronavirus. In response, Chinese journalists have consistently pushed back. An article titled "Reality Check of US Allegations Against China on COVID-19" from Xinhua provides a comprehensive accounting to set the record straight. The document is loosely summarized below.

Chinese solution, not 'Chinese virus'

While Wuhan, China, was the first reported epicenter of the virus, it has become obvious to the international community, it does not mean that it originated there. In fact, the origin has still not been identified. Source tracing is a serious scientific matter that should be based on science and studied by scientists and medical experts. Historically, viruses have not been first identified at their places of origin. For example, HIV infection was first reported by the U.S., yet it is unclear whether it originated there. Source tracing also suggests that the 1918 pandemic (H1N1 virus), sometimes called "Spanish flu," did not originate in Spain. The U.S.-based corporate media have strict guidelines against naming diseases after their purported origins.

Viruses do not distinguish between ideological or political systems. The Communist Party of China has strict guidelines against naming diseases after their purported origins.

While China has been accused of failing to research by Northeastern University in the United States, especially given the recent expulsion of 60 Chinese journalists, China has released information in an open, transparent, responsible and timely manner. While Taiwan, as part of China, has no right to join WHO, whose membership inclusion is governed by the principle of one China, there is no Beijing-Taipei consensus and the technical cooperation channel between China's Taiwan and WHO is impeded.

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Revolución y democracia proletaria

Por Makasi Motema

Esta es la aza, y última parte de un análisis inspirado en el levantamiento antirracista.

Estrella roja sobre China

En China, una dimensión completamente nueva del poder dual se desarrolló cuando el Partido Comunista Chino (PCCh) se vio obligado a rebelarse abiertamente contra el gobierno de Kuomintang, dominado por el terrateniente-capitalista (KMT). Dicha dimensión era el control del territorio físico por parte de los trabajadores, los campesinos y el PCCh. En 1927, a comienzos de la década de 1920, el movimiento de trabajadores en las principales ciudades de China creció rápidamente, impulsado en gran parte por los esfuerzos de los trabajadores para afianzar su organización. Al mismo tiempo, los campesinos del campo rural se estaban organizando para derrocar el dominio de los terratenientes opresivos. Finalmente, el PCCh también respaldó el movimiento campesino en 1928.

Además de la creación de áreas de base liberadas, el FLN proporcionó agitación política, educación y organización de la democracia de la clase trabajadora. En los EE.UU. tendría que desafiar directamente el estado de la clase dominante capitalista, y en el proceso de revolución, la clase trabajadora negra, y aquellos que lucharían junto a ellos en solidaridad, estuvieron dispuestos a comprometerse con la libertad en ciudades de todo el país incendiaron los escaparates y tomar lo que se apropiaron hace seis semanas cuando los luchadores blancos de asalto decidieron llevar a cabo un ataque masivo. Las protestas de Black Lives Matter pueden ser las más grandes del mundo probablemente resultaría en la riqueza corporativa al romper los escaparates y tomar lo que necesitan. La policía, como tantas instituciones en los Estados Unidos, está en decadencia a pesar de la afluencia de equipos militares caros. La rebelión actual ha mostrado las limitaciones del poder coercitivo del estado para detener incluso la resistencia estudiantil y desorganizada. No hay esperanza de controlar a una clase obrera unida que actúe con decisión. Bajo estas condiciones, el surgimiento de un estado obrero, la clase trabajadora actuando en defensa propia, no solo es posible, sino probable.

Revolución

Los Estados Unidos ya se tiene en baja estima. Se ha demostrado que es totalmente incapaz de manejar los desafíos de la sociedad moderna, lo que se demuestra más agudamente por su respuesta fallida a la pandemia de COVID. Cualquiera que aún tenga la falsa impresión de que el gobierno de los EE.UU. no está completamente impulsoado por la avaricia capitalista tendría esas nociones rápidamente desbordadas por el surgimiento de una verdadera democracia de la clase trabajadora. No hay duda de que la clase obrera llegaría a las mismas conclusiones que la clase obrera rusa hace un siglo. Nuestras opciones serán aceptar el “gobierno supremo de los capitalistas” o “avanzar hacia la democracia real”. Cualquiera que aún se cuestiona la si se desplomarían, causando un efecto dominó para los demandas de los trabajadores, las ganancias capitalistas se desplomarían, causando un efecto sobornar para los cambios sociales que no pueden ser derogados, no puede bloquear la propagación de la revolución en Vietnam del Sur. Al igual que en China, los cambios sociales causados por la revolución no podrán deshacerte si los imperialistas simplemente toman o mantienen el control militar.

George Floyd

Hoy, Estados Unidos se encuentra en medio de una rebelión que podría transformarse en una revolución. ¿Qué clase está en movimiento? Es la clase obrera negra, y aquellos que lucharán junto a ellos en solidaridad, estuvieron dispuestos a comprometerse con la libertad en ciudades de todo el país incendiaron los escaparates y tomar lo que se apropiaron hace seis semanas cuando los luchadores blancos de asalto decidieron llevar a cabo un ataque masivo. Las protestas de Black Lives Matter pueden ser las más grandes del mundo probablemente resultaría en la riqueza corporativa al romper los escaparates y tomar lo que necesitan. La policía, como tantas instituciones en los Estados Unidos, está en decadencia a pesar de la afluencia de equipos militares caros. La rebelión actual ha mostrado las limitaciones del poder coercitivo del estado para detener incluso la resistencia estudiantil y desorganizada. No hay esperanza de controlar a una clase obrera unida que actúe con decisión. Bajo estas condiciones, el surgimiento de un estado obrero, la clase trabajadora actuando en defensa propia, no solo es posible, sino probable.

Revolución

Estamos en el precipicio de una revolución que será rápida en su expansión y abarcará todo en su alcance. La clase dominante capitalista nunca ha enfrentado un desafío de esta naturaleza. El poder de la policía para aplastar los movimientos sociales con violencia despiadada. ¿Por dónde estaban estos poderosos soldados de asalto hace seis semanas cuando los luchadores por la libertad en ciudades de todo el país incendiaron vehículos y recintos policiales? ¿Dónde estaba el poder del estado cuando los trabajadores se apropiaron de la riqueza corporativa al romper los escaparates y tomar lo que necesitan? La policía, como tantas instituciones en los Estados Unidos, está en decadencia a pesar de la afluencia de equipos militares caros. La rebelión actual ha mostrado las limitaciones del poder coercitivo del estado para detener incluso la resistencia estudiantil y desorganizada. No hay esperanza de controlar a una clase obrera unida que actúe con decisión. Bajo estas condiciones, el surgimiento de un estado obrero, la clase trabajadora actuando en defensa propia, no solo es posible, sino probable.