

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 BTU 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



WW PHOTO: MAUREEN SKEHAN

Team Solidarity -Boston School Bus Drivers’ delegation in solidarity with nurses protest.

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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BLACK AUGUST

HOSTED BY THE PRISONERS SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE



THURSDAY
AUGUST 13
8PM ET/5PM PT

WWP @pscwwp



Jonathan Jackson

Prison uprising
ignites Black August

Roots of Prisoners
Solidarity
Committee 5

TEAR DOWN
THE WALLS

‘Hero pay, not zero pay!’



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 (UFCW) 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 Answeeney

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 is in jail are that he used his voice and his pen to expose racism, especially the role of police terror in Philadelphia. Then the system framed him, denied him a fair trial and attempted to kill him. Mumia’s case personifies everything



PHOTO: TAHIR ASAD, VIRTUOUS LION PRODUCTIONS

wrong with the world’s largest center of incarcerated workers: the U.S.

Those who understand how this racist, classist, capitalist system works were in the streets over the last four decades to save Mumia’s life and promote his message. Workers World was there, demanding his freedom from the get-go. Now WW’s Prisoners Solidarity Committee is promoting an internationalist 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, 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 the 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 billy 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



When marchers crossed Edmund Pettus Bridge on Bloody Sunday in 1965, John Lewis led at the front.

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 womxn, 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 5th anniversary of the death of Sandra Bland, an outspoken supporter of the Black Lives Matter movement, who was found hanging 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 murdered by the state and by extension

other agents of white supremacy.

Womxn, girls and femmes were memorialized in a ceremony featuring photographs and cards of some of the many killed. Their names were read aloud, and folks present murmured after each name "Ashe," a West African term defined as "the power to make things happen and produce change."

Rousing and uplifting speeches were then given by Iman of the December 12th Movement; Brenda Stokely from the International Working Women's Coalition; Monica Cruz from Party for Socialism and Liberation; Sista Shirley from Staten Island; and Alexandria James, Terrea Mitchell and Samaiyah Patrick from PPA/NYC. Elizabeth Bezile enraptured everyone with her beautiful spoken word pieces. Speakers from other endorsers included Workers World Party, NYC Shut It Down, Gabriela/NYC and many more.

The rally was preceded by a dynamic

and informative Zoom webinar titled "Black Womxn, Girls and Femmes: Intimate Violence and Community Accountability." The presentation discussed domestic and gender violence in the movement and what accountability could look like using transformative and restorative justice, after the U.S. criminal punishment system is abolished.

PPA/NYC demands

We will not be fooled or derailed by fake reforms like body cameras and so-called community policing, which further increase the budget and power of the racist and brutal New York Police Department!



New York City march honoring Sandra Bland, July 13. PHOTO: COLIN ASHBY

We call for abolition of the police, prisons and all carceral apparatus of the state that continues to murder, maim and disable Black womxn, 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. □

Disability movement: 'Part of the global working class'

The following slightly edited remarks were made by Kristen Turgeon from the Boston branch of Workers World Party on a July 30 webinar sponsored by WWP's Disability Rights Caucus and titled "Smash Ableism, Racism, All Bigotry & Oppression!"



Kristen Turgeon

WW PHOTO: STEVAN KIRSCHBAUM

It has been 30 years since passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act. I was born in 1996 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, but when I graduated 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, especially during this time period, I receive government benefits. It's not enough to live on and a little too much to die. It seems we have the right to accessibility, but not the access itself. If you have more than \$2,000 and are on Social Security, they can cut you off.

Yet things like accessible equipment, health care and paying for necessary services are expensive — not to mention rent, bills and food. Many disabled folks are trapped in this cycle of being consistently 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. But why are we stuck in this trap? The answer is capitalism. The system needs a reserve army of unemployed people so that when workers bring their complaints to the bosses, the bosses can say, there's a bunch of people who would take those jobs.

Some things have been won. Screen readers allow visually impaired folks like myself to access technology we wouldn't have been able to use 5 years ago. Buildings and train stations are slowly becoming accessible to everyone. While these rights are very important, they are not enough.

But how did we win this small amount of accessibility? We struggled, marched and fought. Real change only comes from below. We can see this in the history of every movement from the struggle to end racism and police brutality to the fight for im/migrants, to the struggle of

LGBTQ2S+ people.

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 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 us 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! □

#SEIUDropTheCops makes demands

By calvin deutschbein

Following weeks of intensive internal organizing, research and analysis, the (Service Employees) #SEIUDropTheCops campaign — a rank-and-file-led initiative with SEIU members in locals 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, #SEIUDropTheCops 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 to eliminate policing, both as 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

International 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 locals 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 enact the platform through its labor and political organizing.

For updates on the campaign, go to the Facebook page at tinyurl.com/y64qhglm/.



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.

Boston school workers blast ‘reopening plans’

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Emerging Infectious Disease 2020)

Dr. William Hanage of the Harvard School of Public Health condemned “the hybrid option” of alternating children from school to day care as “among the worst that we could be putting forward, if our goal is to stop the virus getting into schools” (WBGH.org, July 30)

Boston University epidemiologist Helen Jenkins told the Boston Globe that workers’ unity in not going back makes sense from a public health point of view: “I think their demands are totally reasonable,” she said. (July 29)

Warning of tragedy to come from rapid reopening, Massachusetts Nurses Association leaders showed up in solidarity with the BTU nurses. The MNA posted a Facebook statement that read in part: [The] “full and transparent collaboration BTU school nurses seek from your administration has

At the rally, nurses, teachers and a bus driver echoed many other demands for health and safety protocols that would take massive emergency funding to accomplish.

never been more necessary,” referring to the failure of Mayor Marty Walsh and BPS Superintendent Brenda Cassellius to involve worker experts. “We join you in your fight,” the statement concluded. (massnurses.org)

The American Federation of Teachers—the nearly 2-million-member teachers’ union not affiliated with the BTU—has also vowed to “fight on all fronts for the safety of our students and their educators,” said AFT President Randi Weingarten during the union’s annual convention, held online July 28-30. Weingarten added: “[I]f authorities don’t protect the safety and health of those we represent ... and serve ... nothing is off the table, including safety strikes.” (NPR, July 28)

The Boston bus drivers’ union joined the AFT’s resolve in its statement: “Local 8751 raises 1,000 fists of Solidarity with the American Federation of Teachers’ July 28 powerful commitment and warning to federal, state and local governments that ‘Safety Strikes’ will be the result if the workers’ health and safety demands remain unmet:

No Reopening Without Safety First!”

At the rally, nurses, teachers and a bus driver echoed many other demands for health and safety protocols that would take massive emergency funding to accomplish, including universal availability of personal protective equipment and safe distancing logistics, universal virus testing, in-school worker preparation time, proper ventilation and disinfecting of facilities and buses, and universal internet and computer access. All need to happen before children can safely and equitably return to school in person.

All the unions called for mass hiring of health care workers, bus drivers and monitors, teachers, custodians, HVAC and construction workers, and day care workers. For both public employees and

workers who are subjected to privatization at charter schools and transportation vendors, Local 8751’s statement demanded: “Full Hazard Pay and Benefits for All School Workers, Now!”

In the face of this growing outcry and scientific evidence, Boston’s Mayor Walsh announced July 31 that the city had cancelled plans for a full reopening of schools in September.

This is only the first of many concessions that the ruling class must make as the workers’ unions plan further actions in their newly formed and strengthened coalitions to put safety, health and the economic well-being of children, families, communities and workers first before the hell-bent surge of Wall Street profiteering. □



Education workers rally in front of Boston City Hall for school safety during pandemic.

In honor of her 73rd birthday A tribute to Assata Shakur

By Monica Moorehead

The great African American revolutionary, 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 May 2 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 join 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 slavocracy 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

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50 years of struggle

WW COMMENTARY

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 three Black revolutionaries from the clutches of the California state prison system. The fact that this bold attempt failed has no bearing on its historical and revolutionary significance to the movements for Black Liberation and prison abolition in this country and around the world.

Jonathan Jackson was only 17 years old when, armed with a rifle, he burst into a Marin County courtroom while a hearing was in session. There he demanded freedom for his brother and two other prisoners, Fleeta Drumgo and John Clutchette, who were known as the Soledad Brothers. The young revolutionary boldly declared, “We are revolutionaries. We want the Soledad Brothers free by 12:30.” (“The Heroes of San Rafael,” WW, Aug. 31, 1970)



Soledad Brothers, George Jackson, Fleeta Drumgo, and John Clutchette.

Jackson proceeded to gather four other brave prisoners in the courtroom — James McClain, William Christmas, Ruchell Magee and Khatori Gauden

— 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 that we need to revisit to understand what is happening today.

Prisons sowed seeds of insurrection

The Black Liberation movement of the 1960s and, in particular, the Black Panther Party, educated and inspired thousands of Black prisoners in this country. In many prisons, Black Panther Party chapters were organized in prison cells. George Jackson, who was serving an indeterminate (1 year to life) sentence for stealing \$70, was one such Black revolutionary.

While incarcerated at Soledad State Prison, Jackson emerged as a leader in the Black Freedom movement. His writings and teaching inspired prisoners all over the state prison system. Needless to say, the criminal (in)justice system from the cops to the judges to the prison guards hated him.

Jonathan Jackson’s bold attempt to free his brother was a dramatic expression of revolutionary anger and outrage against a state system that continues to this day to oppress Black, Latinx and other prisoners of color — a prison system with its roots in enslavement. It was an uprising to free Black revolutionaries, as well as part of the insurrections that were taking place at that time in cities across the country against racism and police terror.

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 which 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 against police terror led 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.

Role of repressive state exposed

The movement outside supporting the Black Lives Matter movement is waking up to the understanding that the repressive organs of the state — the courts, the prisons, the police, the prison guards and the ICE detention centers — cannot be reformed. They cannot be legislatively altered or changed in a meaningful way. They must be abolished.

Jonathan Jackson understood that when he attempted the bold rescue of the Soledad Brothers. He exposed the barbaric nature of the capitalist state that would rather shoot its own foot soldiers, a judge and a prosecutor, than give in to the just demands of the oppressed. The state made an example of Jonathan and the other brave prisoners who joined with him in that Marin County courtroom. But rather than strike fear into the prisoner movement at the time, it helped fuel a resistance movement that continues today.

The California state prison system and its shock troops are still terrified of the defiant legacies of both Jonathan and George Jackson. The recent brutal and racist cell extraction of 200 Black prisoners at Soledad Prison, where guards confiscated the revolutionary writings of George Jackson and other prisoner leaders, demonstrates that. Even the taunts of the racist guards that “Black Lives Don’t Matter” won’t turn back the movement behind the walls.

On this 50th anniversary of the Marin County Courthouse uprising, let us redouble our efforts to tear down the prison walls and abolish the prisons and the police once and for all. Long live the heroes of San Rafael! Long live the spirit of George and Jonathan Jackson! □

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 state police of billionaire New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller. Some terms have been updated.

Once in 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 after his brief stretch, he’s set for life. And even while he’s in, every little comfort is provided for him, so that the time passes as pleasantly as possible.

Most of all, he is never really isolated, never forgotten. His lawyers visit him constantly, the guards treat him like a “gentleman,” and he is able to conduct his business affairs from prison.

Prisons weren’t made for people like this. The fact that a handful of them may be in a few federal institutions is largely an accident.

But the prisons are full, overflowing, exploding with poor, oppressed men, women and gender-oppressed people for whom prisons have meant the end — of life, of happiness, of friends and family. The first stretch becomes a stigma that dooms a young person to life behind bars.

The prisoner never sees a lawyer, is prevented from defending himself, herself and themselves, is estranged from his, her or their family just out of the sheer impossibility of visits to isolated prisons, and can look forward to desperation and disappointment when and if he, her or they ever hits the streets again.

For thousands of prisoners, especially the large percentage of Black, Brown, Indigenous and other oppressed people routed into the prisons from birth, these conditions have become unbearable. The terrible isolation imposed by the racist authorities has been broken again and again in the only way left to human beings who have been literally sealed in their own tombs: by open rebellion. These rebellions are specifically directed at the numberless injustices that read like a description of the Chamber of Horrors; 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 the outside for help. Youth Against War Fascism responded, and soon helped form the Prisoners Solidarity Committee. The committee has expanded to many cities since then and includes relatives of prisoners and released prisoners themselves.

When the news of the PSC reached the jails, it released a dammed-up flood of letters from brothers, sisters, and siblings telling of the indignities, the brutality, the

pain that is a daily part of prison life. But these letters all told something else. They were not pathetic appeals from beaten people; they rang with hope and strength and willingness to struggle. Moreover, the writers were thrilled that they were finally breaking out of their isolation, that people outside were listening and working with them.

The PSC published some of these letters in the pamphlet, “Prisoners Call Out: Freedom!”

The PSC raised some money with this pamphlet and social affairs, and rented a bus so that prisoners’ relatives could get to Auburn and visit them. For many of them, it was the first visit in years.

Building outside support

When the Auburn Six had several court hearings, the PSC got sizable demonstrations of support, even in blizzard conditions. More and more, the PSC became a vehicle whereby the prisoners themselves could speak to the people outside, could generalize their struggle, fuse their grievances and their hopes in the main current of rebellion that is rising in the country as a whole.

Thus it was a small wonder that when the heroic Attica prisoners met with a small group of observers during the rebellion, it was the PSC delegate, Tom Soto, who they 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 strength: It sent a delegation 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 unconditionally 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 shattered. Even the highest concrete wall, the darkest cell, the cruellest solitary “hole” can no longer hold the terror it once had, for 1,500 men at Attica have looked the worst in the face. □



Remembering Garrett Foster, slain anti-racist fighter

By **Viktoriya P. Austin, Texas**

On July 25, groups of protesters marched in Austin, Texas, for Black lives and in solidarity with Portland activists who are facing repression by Trump’s secret police. It was nearly the 50th day that Whitney Mitchell, a disabled Black woman, and her fiancé of 10 years, Garrett Foster, were there. They both consistently marched at 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 protesters 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 her and the vehicle to make sure that she and others weren’t hit. Five shots rang out from the vehicle, while three additional shots were fired by a random protester toward the vehicle as it drove away. The initial five shots were aimed at Foster. Witnesses said Foster never aimed his rifle at the driver. (Dallas Morning News, July 27) Foster was pronounced dead an hour and a half later.

The gunman turned himself in to the police, cooperated with officials and gave 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 what happened. Officials said criminal

charges depend on findings from a further investigation.

The bourgeois media and Austin Police Department representatives wasted no time reprimanding and victim-blaming Foster. Both “liberal” and “conservative” news outlets have written their so-called “accounts” of events based on information that has come directly from the perpetrator’s report to the police.

On the one hand, there are the anti-gun liberals blaming Foster for carrying a legally permitted firearm to protect his disabled fiancée. On the other hand, there are the reactionary, neo-fascist pundits who are celebrating his death, while praising the rich white lawyers in St. Louis, Mo., who pointed their guns at peaceful protesters on June 28.

Austin Police Chief Brian Manley took the opportunity to reiterate the need for full police funding, citing a rise in vehicular crimes, even though Foster’s murderer was released! These pigs haven’t done anything at all about the vigilantes because they are too busy policing Black and Brown communities. 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. Barricades with armed volunteer defenders were stationed around the perimeter to make sure every attendee was safe.

Candles were lit throughout the blocked-off intersection as people spoke

about Foster’s life, his commitment to Mitchell and his commitment to Black Lives. Many people and members of groups spoke, including Patricia Kirven, Mitchell’s mother, and some of Foster’s friends and relatives. Also speaking were some coordinators of the previous night’s march, who also helped to organize the vigil. Toward the end, there was a prolonged moment of silence for Foster and his family. Bringing the vigil to a close, attendees knelt with their fists up.

Once the vigil concluded, the leaders led an impromptu march that took the same path from the intersection all the way to police headquarters and back. The march was tight and well-organized. It moved continuously to ensure every person’s safety. Armed vigil attendees and volunteer medics rushed to each intersection as marchers passed. They created makeshift barricades with bikes, scooters, traffic cones and their bodies to make sure no other vehicles tried to recreate the horror of the night before.

One vehicle drove through the bike and traffic cone barricades as the marchers passed. No one was in that area at the time, so no one was hurt. Toward the end of the march, participants placed their candles at the site of the murder, along with signs, flags and flowers to create a memorial for Foster.

Militance projected amid grief

Revolutionary chants resounded throughout the evening. They included: “F--k the police!” “One solution, Revolution!” and “Stand Up! Fight Back!” Through the chants, the pain and anger in people’s voices could be heard.

Those who preached nonviolence 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



Garrett Foster and Whitney Mitchell at Black Lives Matter protest, June 28, Austin.

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 people will give to care for one 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 fiancée and loved ones,” and said he “always fought against injustice, served in the military and was fiercely protective of his fiancée.”

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 have given their lives and bodies to the fight for justice. Garrett Foster ipresenté!

The writer attended the July 26 vigil.

Pensacola protests federal war on the people

By **Shannon Dover**

Workers World Party-Pensacola branch held a demonstration Aug. 1 in solidarity with Portland’s resistance to federal forces that have assaulted and kidnapped Black Lives Matter protesters in Oregon. Joining in the protest were members of Strive (Socialist Trans Initiative) and the local branch of the Party for Socialism and Liberation. About 20 demonstrators gathered on Palafox, a main thoroughfare at Florida Square. Its name was recently changed, after pressure from these and other progressive forces, by the Pensacola City Council from the previous white supremacist designation as Lee Square. The council also voted to remove the Confederate soldier statue there. The following is a slightly edited speech given by Shannon Dover at the rally.

The police were not created to protect the innocent. They were not made to prevent crime. They have always been a tool of



Pensacola, Fla., Aug. 1.

PHOTO: T. BAIN

the state for power and control, especially Black people who live in the U.S.

When laws were passed restricting the activities of enslaved people, when those laws didn’t work as intended, then any adult white man was allowed to enforce those laws. And when individual action was insufficient, slave patrols were formed that were an offshoot of the militia. With the slave patrols, participation was mandatory, and so that made the entire white male population directly involved in maintaining slave society.

As the Industrial Revolution developed, slave patrols moved into the city and became professionalized, becoming what we would call today the modern police force. Today the role of police is basically the same: to maintain the hierarchical nature of society, especially in terms of class and race.

The Ku Klux Klan, the oldest terrorist organization in the U.S., worked alongside police to suppress the Black Civil Rights Movement. The police worked with the KKK to fight for white supremacy and unite against those fighting for oppressed people to have equal rights.

For almost two months, the people of Portland, Ore., have been protesting against police brutality in the wake of George Floyd’s death. These protests have been nonviolent. In late June, President Trump signed an executive order sending federal officers to Portland to “protect” federal property from destruction when protest in Portland became centered around a U.S. District Courthouse and a building housing federal agencies.

Eventually, there were officers from the Federal Protective Service of Homeland Security, ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement), BORTAC (Border Patrol Tactical Unit), and U.S. Marshals on the ground in Portland. Federal officers are not trained for “crowd control” but that didn’t stop them. They attack unprovoked. Night after night, they have blanketed the streets with tear gas, struck protesters with batons, used flash bangs, pepper balls and “less lethal” munitions to “control” the crowd. They struck a protester with a “non-lethal” rubber bullet in the head causing a skull fracture that needed surgery. They attacked members of the press. They detained protesters and pulled them into unmarked cars.

This is urban warfare. When protesters try to protect themselves with gas masks or duct tape shields, they are called “aggressors.” This U.S. president is doubling down and ignoring demands from local government to leave Portland alone.

This is warfare! This is a racist, white supremacist government fighting for white supremacy. The protesters are calling for an end to police brutality, for defunding the police, and are saying Black Lives Matter because Black people are the ones most affected by police brutality and the high rate of incarceration. The only response protesters are getting from the government is more and more police violence.

At present 40% of murders, 70% of sexual assaults and 90% of burglaries in the U.S. go unsolved. This begs the question: Why do we even have police? Why spend

so much money on police militarization? Why spend most of the budget of a county or city on police?

The answer is because the only way slavery is still legal nowadays is through incarceration to punish for a crime. The U.S. has the largest prison population [in the world]. Three million people are in prison in the U.S., and 56% of the prison population is Black or Latinx, when together they make about 30% of the total U.S. population. Black people are 5 times more likely to be arrested than white people.

Spending more money on mental health services, social services and education would actually prevent crime. But capitalists don’t want to prevent crime. 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 no fixing, only dismantling.

We can build a better future. A future that protects that protects the most vulnerable — that protects Black men, 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. □

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.

Protesters 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 himself got to retire with dignity 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



‘Stop the war on Black America,’ Raleigh, July 29.

WW PHOTO: CALVIN DEUTSCHBEIN

doing something right.”
Dedan, a member of Black Workers for Justice, representing the Greenville-based revolutionary Black formation “Mapinduzi,” said, “We have to understand as Black, Brown and other colonized people, we have a relationship with domestic colonialism, and it has always been that way. We know that talking about smashing the police state goes far beyond these lapdogs who are riding around in our community. We gotta talk about the police of the world as well. We gotta talk about the military that spends an obscene amount to perpetuate war all over the world, while people right here in the home country ain’t even got decent health care. No matter who you put in that seat, Democrat or Republican, you gotta understand their interest is always in the imperialist agenda.”

Dedan continued, “The only way this country is able to maintain its power is that people, places and resources have to be continually exploited. From South America, from Africa, AFRICOM [U.S. Africa Command] can steal resources. ... If we want to make sure our children have a better world, free from occupation or policing and all types of environmental injustices, then we have to uproot capitalism.”

The Wake County Black Student Coalition was represented by Sanga: “Police can’t be reformed. The federal agents and the police actions in Portland, North Carolina and all around this nation

are a violation of our constitutional rights. We need to abolish [Immigration and Customs Enforcement], get the feds out of Portland, defund, demilitarize and abolish the police. I don’t know about y’all, but I remember the words of Malcolm X — cuz I’m feeling like X these days: “By any means necessary.”

James, with the Democratic Socialists [DSA]-Durham branch, said, “As abolitionists, we believe in the fight to abolish the police. The fight to abolish capitalism is not just a fight to change how we manage public safety or manage the means of production, it is a fight to restore our humanity. It is a fight to reclaim the principle that every human being, regardless of their citizenship, regardless of their race, regardless of their gender, regardless of their class deserves to live a life of human dignity — free from hunger, free from homelessness and free from state violence. From Portland to Bolivia, from Gastonia to the Philippines, from Roxboro to Palestine, we are not free until everyone is free.”

A statement was also read from the Party for Socialism and Liberation-Central North Carolina branch, emphasizing links between U.S. police violence, imperialist militarism and capitalist oppression of the working class.

Marching on Homeland Security

After the speeches, Victoria and Micah, organizers with Smash Racism Raleigh, 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 continually raised the names of some of those murdered in North Carolina by cops, including Keith Collins, Akiel Denkins, Kyron Hinton, Soheil Mojarra, Marcus Smith and David Brooks Jr., who was killed only days earlier by the Roxboro Police Department.

Chanting along with drums, marchers shouted “Black Lives Matter,” “Fire, Fire Gentrifier” and anti-police slogans. Signs read, “Stop Killing Us,” “Abolish the Pol[ice]” and “Stop the War on Black America.” Above the crowd flew Pan-African flags and U.S. flags turned upside down, a traditional signal of distress.

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 a false arrest. 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 of the recent uprising here. Raleigh and North Carolina show no signs of backing down, and this powerful display of many organizations and people will be a force to be reckoned 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 of protesters into unmarked vehicles by unidentified agents in Portland became a flashpoint for outrage against state repression throughout the U.S.



Portland activists.

WW PHOTO: JOSHUA HANKS

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 continued to offer free food, medical aid, water, clothing and other supplies donated by the community.

Finally, after massive demonstrations, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown announced that on July 23 federal officers would begin withdrawing and would be replaced with Oregon state police. This represented a clear, but qualified victory 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 them aren’t necessarily viewed more favorably by many of the protesters. The Portland Police Bureau—which deployed tear gas 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 thousands of demonstrators in the streets and are realizing that business-as-usual cannot continue.

Thousands of people participated in a march over the Aug. 1 weekend, making their way for miles 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 also staged a demonstration in support of the movement.

Federal and local officials seem to have come to terms with the fact that the protests cannot be quelled through repressive violence alone and that attempts to do so will only embolden the movement, now well over two months old.

The only path forward for the movement is to increase unity and draw in more and more segments of society. It must continue its momentum and consolidate its gains, while pushing the struggle further and further forward.

Many speakers at the protests have connected the Black Lives Matter movement to an anti-capitalist political stance that advocates for demands like universal health care and housing for all. Until the basic necessities of life are guaranteed for all, all lives will not matter, especially Black, Brown and Indigenous lives.

This becomes even clearer in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, which disproportionately impacts Black, Brown and Indigenous communities and underscores the need for universal, not-for-profit health care. The mounting eviction crisis will also make this point clearer: The system of capitalism will not and cannot meet even the most basic needs of the people, especially the needs of the most oppressed. □

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 expired and the rent and mortgage moratorium ended.

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 spreading faster in most of the U. S. than they did last spring. Whatever state governments decide about opening or closing businesses, the COVID-19 spread will impede much economic activity.

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, hunger and COVID-19.

Human solidarity impels a socialist society. The drive to maximize profits drives capitalist society. The last five months have already shown that socialist societies are far more effective in confronting this pandemic than capitalist 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, misogyny and xenophobia.

One thing the Democratic and Republican party proposals agree on is renewing some version of the \$1,200



People wait to receive help at a food bank distribution in New York City in May.

one-time “stimulus” payment doled out last spring. Trump maneuvered to get his name on the checks’ memo line to take credit for payments that were mailed, and he will likely find a way to claim credit for this payment.

The biggest battle looms over the Democrats’ proposal to extend the \$600 per week supplement to unemployment insurance for the rest of the year. This payment has kept tens of millions of unemployed workers and their families from economic catastrophe. But those payments expired last week.

The Republicans now propose paying only a \$200 a week supplement. They say no one should get more than 70% of their salary. This payment is inadequate for keeping the economy afloat, not to mention the workers. It reinforces the inequality of U.S. capitalist society — which means it reinforces racism, misogyny and other forms of bigotry.

The Republicans say they don’t want to pay people more for 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 the workers, and the executives whose salaries skyrocket when they cut 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 major funding for state and local governments to deliver needed services, for public health measures to confront 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 plan falls 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 houselessness.

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.

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 certainly gives new meaning to the Black Panther Party slogan: “Repression breeds resistance.” □

A tribute to Assata Shakur

Continued from page 4

free breakfast programs, health clinics and other vital services, while at the same time promoting the right to armed self-defense against police terror and state repression. The Panthers were forerunners with their call for community control of the police.

COINTELPRO or Counter-Intelligence Program was created by the FBI then led by notorious J. Edgar Hoover in the early 1950s. The aim of COINTELPRO was to use every dirty tactic, including demonization in the media, to discredit and eventually destroy national liberation movements like the Panthers and their leaders. Assata, for instance, was harassed, arrested and falsely accused of several bank robberies beginning in the late 1960s. She was acquitted each time of the bogus charges.

Then on May 2, 1973, Assata and two other Panther members, Sundiata Acoli and Zayd Malik Shakur, were stopped by white state troopers on the New Jersey Turnpike. Shots were fired, which resulted in the death of Shakur and Assata being shot multiple times. One of the troopers died. Assata and Acoli were charged with murder and convicted by all-white juries.

Both were railroaded to prison based on their political beliefs and convictions. Assata spent more than six brutal

years in men’s and women’s prisons before she was able to escape to Cuba where she was welcomed with open arms. Acoli has been imprisoned for almost 50 years.

There are now posters in post offices and even a huge billboard in New Jersey calling for the arrest of Assata as a “terrorist.” The CIA has falsely accused Cuba of “exporting terrorism” since soon after its revolutionary leadership defeated the U.S.-backed invasion at the Bay of Pigs in 1961 and declared the country to be socialist.

It is important for the progressive movement here and worldwide to expose the U.S. as being the biggest exporter of terrorism. Its deadly weapons, including drones, maim and kill to protect the profits of the bosses and bankers.

The bounty on Assata will boomerang and eventually help to introduce her inspirational story to a whole new generation of younger activists who are already disenchanted with capitalism and all its ills. And it will bring about a deeper solidarity with Cuba.

Black activists pay homage to Assata at many movement events with her own words: “It is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win. We must love and protect each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains.”

U.S. hands off Assata and Cuba!



Assata Shakur (left) and Monica Moorehead in Havana, Cuba, 1997.

Moorehead saw Assata again in June 2000 as part of a U.S. delegation that met with Fidel Castro on the cases of political prisoners Mumia Abu-Jamal and the martyred Shaka Sankofa. The delegation also participated in a Cuban TV panel on the growth of the U.S. prison-industrial complex.

Read Assata’s open letter published May 3, 2013: revolutionaryfrontlines.wordpress.com

The following link is a two-hour meeting Assata Shakur held with activists during the World Youth Festival in Havana in 1997 taped by People’s Video Network founding member, the late Key Martin: tinyurl.com/y625j2we/.

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 Sahara cycles between savanna 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 decades 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 Sahara dust plume takes local conditions and globalizes them, the plume itself emerges from 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 profiteering in 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



PHOTO: JEREMY GILCHRIST

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

to operating the machinery of war. By 2019 the U.S. and the European Union (including Britain) had produced 47% of the world’s greenhouse gases according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. (ipcc.ch/sr15)

Rising global temperatures are felt sharply in the Sahara as drought conditions. Since 1950, 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 prevents 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 1920 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 bosses.

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, would probably be sustainable. (tinyurl.com/y6bqo3hp)

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. According to 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 and profit by finance capital. (Vol. 21, pp. 36-50, tinyurl.com/y3q36cp5)

Six Sahel nations (Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad) are

former French colonies and five remain tied to the French banking system. National treasuries have had to deposit at least half or more of their reserves (formerly 100%) in Paris. National credit policy remains substantially determined by decisions taken in France. Thus, the former colonizer is absorbing financial resources needed to combat soil degradation and many other needs.

U.S. imperialism impacts land, climate

An example of the role of U.S. imperialism in Africa via its proxy NATO can be seen in the case of Libya, which is approximately 95% desert and makes up about 20% of the Sahara, as defined by its land area receiving fewer than 4 inches of precipitation per year.

From March to October 2011, a NATO-led coalition of states, ranging from Belgium to Qatar, launched over 160 tons of cruise missiles and multiple air strikes against the anti-imperialist state of Libya. During that assault, the U.S. installed, recognized and funded with billions of dollars in seized Libyan assets “National Transitional Council” forces. They ultimately captured, tortured and killed the former head of state, revolutionary leader Col. Muammar Gadhafi.

The attacks also destroyed the critical infrastructure of, and the political power to repair, an ambitious Libyan de-desertification project, the “Great Man-Made River.” It was 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, world 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 125°F, the highest temperature ever measured in the Iraqi capital. These heat waves are not an extreme, unpredictable weather aberration. Rather, they are both a symptom of capitalism and a sign it is destroying life on the planet.

For decades now, average Earth temperatures have continued to rise, with each successive year hotter than the last. From “unseasonably” warm winters to killer heat waves, the planet’s unnaturally warming climate cannot be ignored. In May 2015, over 2,500 died in India due to severe heat and drought conditions. Between August 2019 and March 2020, wildfires raged across Australia, burning 46 millions acres, killing 34 people and over 3 billion animals.

Unless action is taken to dismantle the horrific capitalist economic system, incidents like these will only increase in

frequency and intensity.

Under capitalism, ecological concerns and human life take a back seat to increasing the power and profits of the ruling class. Environmental devastation, pollution, death, deforestation, species extinction and the dangerous warming of our planet are all seen as acceptable losses in the pursuit of private property.

Capitalist countries contribute heavily to ecological destruction through war. Imperialist countries such as the U.S., England, France, Germany and Israel spend trillions of dollars and dedicate enormous industrial capacity to expanding their military might, all for the purpose of defending their economic interests worldwide.

As the undeniable truths of anthropogenic climate crisis are felt more intensely with each passing year, many people call for reform or a “greener” capitalism. The reality is that capitalism cannot be reformed; only socialist economic planning can resolve these contradictions.

Rather than serving the desires and profits of the powerful few, socialist economies

are structured to serve the needs of the people, to provide for their collective well-being. Socialism enables people to be truly free—free from scorching heat, war, famine and poverty. This is much different than the false capitalist notion of “freedom”—freedom to ravage and exploit others.

A socialist economy would dedicate productive forces toward facilitating human life in a way that does not ravage the planet. Socialism means a world in which the planting of trees, the cleanup and restoration of ecosystems and the elimination of deadly pollution are taken seriously.

Socialism recognizes the necessity and importance of Indigenous self-determination and stewardship in relation to the climate crisis. Capitalist economic and political structures are inherently hostile to Indigenous peoples, their sovereignty and their methods for living respectfully with the land. From Turtle Island to Aotearoa—known to settlers as North America and New Zealand—and everywhere else across



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

the globe, Indigenous people must have self-determination so that these rightful protectors of their lands can fully return their carefully developed understandings into practice.

If the death cult of capitalism is allowed to stay its course, humanity will continue to see untold suffering. Hotter heat waves, massive droughts, blights and crop failures, wars over resources, mass human displacement, new diseases — all these and more will become the new normal. This cannot be allowed to happen.

The working class must push for socialism and work to undo the deep scars of capitalism, for the good of all life on this planet. □

The virus, the GDP and the profit motive

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

Specifically, the gross domestic product, “the broadest measure of goods and services produced,” fell 9.5% in the 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 similar collapse.

The Times would have us believe the downturn was entirely due to the coronavirus — wholly independent of the organic workings of the capitalist system. However, socialist China, where the virus was 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 capitalist economies so much more vulnerable to the pressure of the pandemic? And is the economic crisis caused entirely by the pandemic? Or is capitalist overproduction at play here?

There were signs of a recession in early 2020 even before the coronavirus had an impact on the U.S. economy. These included an oil glut, a decline in manufacturing activity and a slump in retail sales. General Motors had closed plants in Michigan and Ohio as well as in Ontario, Canada.

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 — the only class that creates value — and especially for the most oppressed. Now capitalism is at a dead end; the normal cycles of “boom and bust” are operating 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, is dominated by for-profit pharmaceuticals, insurance companies and private care providers. No wonder COVID-19 has been so devastating in the capitalist U.S. — from the nearly 160,000 who have died as of Aug. 4 to the tens of millions of unemployed and their families. Many are still waiting for jobless benefits, which have now been cut as provisions of the CARES Act expire.

The loss of benefits will further drive down purchasing power and with it the GDP. Millions of jobs are not likely to come back, regardless of when a vaccine is developed or the pandemic is under control. The recession, in the making since before COVID-19 hit, has morphed into an economic catastrophe on top of a public health nightmare.

But not everyone is suffering. The filthy rich are getting richer, including the owners of Apple, Facebook, Alphabet (owner of Google) and Microsoft. Amazon’s earnings doubled while the company took away workers’ “hazard pay.”

Capitalist mouthpieces like the Times don’t want workers to see beyond the coronavirus’s impact. Their job is to suppress class truth. But more and more workers and oppressed people are realizing that mass unemployment, the genocidal impact of the coronavirus, racist police violence and capitalist exploitation are all connected.

This rotten system must be overthrown! □

Brazil: From pandemic to genocide

By Makasi Motema

Since the pandemic began on March 11 according to the World Health Organization, Brazilians have suffered 96,000 deaths and 2.8 million infections — the second highest number of infections in the world after the United States. Far from marshaling his country’s resources to battle the disease, President Jair Bolsonaro has intentionally sabotaged Brazil’s COVID-19 response. Like his U.S. analog, the right-wing Bolsonaro has shown a brazen defiance of scientific data as well as basic common sense. He has repeatedly claimed that fears of the virus are overblown and often appears in public without a mask.

This is in spite of the fact that both Bolsonaro and his spouse have contracted the disease. Parallels to the self-destructive foolishness of conservatives in the U.S. — exemplified by the recent death of Trump supporter Herman Cain — are striking.

President Bolsonaro has allowed the coronavirus to decimate the economic lives of Brazil’s poorest residents. Unlike most world leaders, Bolsonaro vetoed a moratorium on evictions. In the city of São Paulo more than 2,500 families either face eviction or have lost their homes already. (Yahoo News, July 30) Favelas — communities of improvised housing consisting mostly of corrugated metal shacks — are expanding as more and more Brazilians are forced from their homes by ruthless landlords. The limited access to sanitation

in these densely packed favelas only fuels the spread of the virus.

Race and Class

The economic and health impacts seen across Brazil have disproportionately affected Brazilians of African descent. Brazil has the largest Black population outside of Africa. As the descendants of slaves, Black people in Brazil have endured a long history of racist oppression. The COVID-19 crisis has perpetuated that oppression.

According to The Guardian, 34% of the Brazilian population lives without basic sanitation. Of that population, 66% are nonwhite. In addition, 80% of Black Brazilians do not have health insurance. With limited access to sanitation and adequate medical facilities, Black people in Brazil are at an incredibly high risk of suffering from COVID-19. (June 9)

The numbers bear this out; in hospitals, 55% of Black and mixed-race patients die compared to 38% of white patients. Economic and class discrepancies only increase the disparity. A study showed that an illiterate Black COVID-19 patient was 4 times more likely to die than a white patient with a college degree.

Land, health care, and Indigenous rights

Recognizing Brazil’s long history of stealing Indigenous land and murdering Indigenous people — either through direct violence or the spread of disease — the Brazilian legislature attempted to pass a package of laws responding to the health

needs of the Indigenous population. Showing a shameless level of racism and contempt for human life, Bolsonaro vetoed several key measures. He blocked the provision of emergency funds and clean water to Indigenous communities, along with distribution of disinfectants and ventilators and an increase in intensive care units and hospital beds. All of these are badly needed in Indigenous communities.

According to official counts, which may be artificially low due to limited testing, 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. (National Geographic, June 2020)

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

The continued encroachment onto Indigenous land by loggers, gold prospectors and miners is a long-standing disease vector. Since he took office, President Bolsonaro has prioritized dismantling regulations limiting capitalist land incursions. It is feared that the weakened monitoring of Indigenous borders will lead to more land theft — and more deaths.



PHOTO: SERGIO NOBRE ON TWITTER

Brazilian unionists demand ‘Fora Bolsonaro’ — Bolsonaro out — July 29.

However, Indigenous people have suffered from the spread of disease by Europeans for centuries. When the pandemic began, Indigenous communities responded quickly. Many territories have set up roadblocks, encouraged community members to isolate, and begun sewing and distributing masks.

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

But oppressed people are doing everything they can to resist. Community groups in Brazil’s favelas are organizing to provide aid; labor unions and social organizations are pushing for Bolsonaro’s removal from office; and Indigenous organizers have brought their fight for sovereignty to the international stage. It’s vital the working class and oppressed in the U.S. and around the world act in solidarity with their struggle. □

Workers World Party salutes Fidel Agcaoili

Workers World Party sends its deepest condolences and firm solidarity to the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, the Communist Party of the Philippines and the world proletarian movement on the death of an extraordinary Filipino revolutionary, Fidel Agcaoili, on July 23.

Fidel’s deep, lifelong dedication to organizing working and oppressed people must be held high as an example and inspiration for revolutionaries around the world and in particular the youth.

He endured more than 10 years of incarceration as a political prisoner beginning

in 1974 during the Marcos regime, steadfastly refusing to abandon his revolutionary principles.

As a member of the NDFP Peace Negotiating Panel since 1989, he spent decades working toward a just and lasting peace in the Philippines. Since 2016, he had served as the chairperson of the panel.

Fidel supported and participated in the International League of Peoples’ Struggle, a broad, worldwide, anti-imperialist and democratic alliance of mass organizations, since its foundation in 2001, and he worked to build international

solidarity between the movement in the Philippines and organizations of working and oppressed people around the world.

These are only some of many significant contributions Fidel made to the struggle against imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism in the Philippines — contributions which include substantial work in the underground movement when fascist repression made aboveground organizing impossible.

In this time of a radically deepening imperialist crisis, we take to heart Fidel’s words that “precisely, because of these social transformations, people are forced to



PHOTO: NDFP

Fidel Agcaoili

resist. Forced to make demands for change. Forced to move in order to achieve their aspirations. And that is what will guarantee that the revolution will win.”

Fidel Agcaoili ipresente! Eid al-Adha! □

China pushes back U.S. empire of lies

By calvin deutschbein

The U.S. ruling class has increasingly turned to misinformation and propaganda to maintain control during the COVID-19 epidemic. This includes concocting imperialist conflict with China. 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 region in the world to report the virus 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. Much evidence also suggests that the 1918 pandemic (H1N1 virus), sometimes called “Spanish flu,” did not originate in Spain.

Today, the World Health Organization has strict guidelines against naming diseases after their purported origins.

While far from conclusive about the origins of COVID-19, an article in the International Journal of Antimicrobial Agents dated June 2020 is titled “SARS-COV-2 was already spreading in France in late December 2019.” It reports that researchers found that an intensive care unit patient who had been admitted for an influenza-like illness between Dec. 2, 2019, and Jan. 16, 2020, was later shown to have tested positive for COVID-19. The patient had no link to China and had not recently traveled abroad.

To label a virus after the first location that puts up an effective response only serves to demonize responses to new diseases, especially when that label is meant to place blame.

A pandemic is a global public health emergency. There is no such thing as a “state responsibility” attached to the first country reporting cases. HIV/AIDS was first detected in the U.S. in the 1980s. It has since spread to the whole world, but the international community has never demanded that the U.S. take responsibility or pay reparations.

On May 4, one of the world’s top science magazines, Nature, published a study by experts from China, the U.S. and Britain showing that the three major groups of nonpharmaceutical interventions taken by China — inter-city travel restrictions, early identification and isolation of cases, plus contact restrictions and social distancing — not only contained the spread of COVID-19 in China, but also bought precious time for the world. The study details that without these measures, Chinese coronavirus cases would probably have been multiplied 67 times to over 7 million.

How China contained COVID-19

While China has been accused of failing to stop COVID-19, in fact it took the most stringent measures within the shortest possible time, keeping the virus largely within Wuhan. Statistics show that very few cases were exported from China. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo has pointed to research by Northeastern University showing that strains of the novel coronavirus found in his state were not from

China. The New York Times cited U.S. research that most New York coronavirus cases did not come from Asia.

China put Wuhan under a temporary lockdown as of Jan. 23 — meaning that no outbound commercial flights or train services took place from Jan. 24 through April 8. It was impossible for Wuhan residents to travel overseas during this period.

When Wuhan was shut down on Jan. 23, only one case had been publicly confirmed in the U.S. When the U.S. on Feb. 2 closed its borders to all Chinese citizens and foreigners who had been to China within the previous 14 days, there were only eight confirmed cases in the U.S., according to official data. When the U.S. declared a national emergency on March 13, the number of its confirmed cases had ballooned to 1,896. When China lifted the lockdown on Wuhan, the number of confirmed cases in the U.S. had risen to 400,000. It took less than 100 days for the number of confirmed cases in the U.S. to surge from 1 to 4 million.

China collaborated with WHO and U.S. against COVID-19

On Dec. 27, 2019, Dr. Zhang Jixian, director of the respiratory and critical care medicine department of Hubei Provincial Hospital of Integrated Chinese and Western Medicine, had reported three cases of pneumonia of unknown cause immediately after receiving the patients. This was the first report of suspected cases of a new disease by local authorities in China. On the same day, the Wuhan CDC conducted epidemiological investigation and testing on those patients.

After the first public reporting of the pneumonia by the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission on Dec. 13, 2019, China completed the identification and sequencing of the virus as early as Jan. 7. It shared the genome sequence information with WHO and other countries on Jan. 11.

On Jan. 10, the Wuhan Institute of Virology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and other professional institutions were developing preliminary testing kits and stepped up research on vaccines and effective medication.

China honors Dr. Li Wenliang

The U.S.-based corporate media have spoken at length and with great inaccuracy about Dr. Li Wenliang, including a CNN Opinion piece on Feb. 11 titled “China’s hero doctor was punished for telling truth about coronavirus.” The reality is far more tragic and less favorable to the political program of CNN and other corporate media.

Dr. Li Wenliang was a good doctor who died on Feb. 6 while treating coronavirus patients. He was a member of the Communist Party of China, not a so-called “anti-establishment figure.” On March 5, he was named a “national model healthcare worker in fighting COVID-19.” On April 2, he was honored as a martyr.

Labeling Dr. Li Wenliang as an “anti-establishment hero” or “awakener” is very disrespectful to Dr. Li and his family. It is purely political manipulation with no sense of decency. On April 28, the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League of China and the All-China Youth Federation jointly issued “May Fourth Medals” to honor outstanding representatives and role models of Chinese youths. Dr. Li Wenliang was among the honorees.

The Independent Media Institute conducted a thorough investigation into the media’s unjust reporting about Dr. Li. In



China builds second hospital in 10 days.

a three-part series published in March and April titled “Truth and Propaganda about Coronavirus,” it concluded that the attempt of the imperialist media to describe what happened to Dr. Li as evidence of the Chinese government’s suppression of information about the virus was simply illogical.

China reports accurately on the virus

China’s relatively low number of confirmed cases and fatalities is attributable to the comprehensive, rigorous and thorough measures taken promptly by the Chinese government — such as completely shutting down transportation from Wuhan. Science magazine estimated in one of its reports that these measures helped prevent at least 700,000 infections in China.

On March 3, Dr. Bruce Aylward, a senior advisor to the WHO Director-General, noted in an interview with U.S. digital media Vox that China is not hiding anything. He expected that the data he collected through talks with physicians from various hospitals and other stakeholders would help corroborate China’s data.

On April 17, in accordance with the law of the People’s Republic of China, Wuhan issued a notification that revised upward the number of confirmed cases by 325 to a total of 50,333 and fatal cases by 1,290 to a total of 3,869.

Acting out of a high sense of responsibility to history, to the people and the lives lost to the coronavirus, Wuhan took the initiative to revise the numbers to reflect the facts it had gathered.

China’s style of government was a boon

Viruses do not distinguish between ideologies or social systems. The Communist Party of China and the Chinese government have played a decisive and critical role in leading the Chinese people in the successful fight against COVID-19.

China’s political system, which has effectively united and mobilized 1.4 billion people on a vast land of 9.6 million square kilometers, provided a strong political guarantee for China to overcome the difficulties faced by a country in order to pool all its available strengths and resources in winning the battle against

the virus. What has happened shows that the social system and development path chosen by the Chinese people suit China’s national conditions and that the CPC enjoys the firm and broad support of the Chinese people.

At a press conference of the WHO-China Joint Mission on COVID-19 on Feb. 24, Dr. Aylward said that China had rolled out probably the most ambitious, agile and aggressive disease containment effort in history. China’s bold approach changed the course of the disease and encompasses the most successful measures known to contain COVID-19.

China committed to internationalism

China firmly supports multilateralism. All along the country has been in good communication and cooperation with WHO and has never attempted to manipulate the organization. The suspension of funding by the U.S., which had been the largest contributor to WHO, has been widely opposed by the international community.

China’s actions with respect to U.S. journalists have been in response to the long-term repression of Chinese media in the U.S., 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 requires sovereign statehood, the technical cooperation channel between China’s Taiwan and WHO is unimpeded.

The Chinese government and people have provided many shipments of much-needed medical supplies to over 150 countries and international organizations, and these efforts are still ongoing. China has also leveraged its strong production capacity and promptly opened up its medical supplies market and export channels.

Preliminary statistics indicate that by May 6, Chinese provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities, institutions and companies had donated more than 9.6 million masks, 500,000 testing kits, 305,900 pairs of medical and other gloves, and 133,500 goggles to 30 U.S. states and 55 cities. □

100 Years Later

Some Lessons of the Great Bolshevik Revolution

By Deirdre Griswold, Editor of Workers World Magazine

An Open Letter to Revolutionary Socialists Everywhere
To Learn History, Practice Marxism-Leninism



100

100 Years Later

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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

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El Frente Nacional de Liberación de Vietnam

Revolución y democracia proletaria

Por Makasi Motema

Esta es la 2da. 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 gobernante Partido Kuomintang, el terrateniente-capitalista (KMT). Esa dimensión era el control del territorio físico por parte de los trabajadores, los campesinos y el PCCh.

Durante la década de 1920, el movimiento de trabajadores en las principales ciudades de China creció rápidamente, impulsado en gran parte por los esfuerzos de organización del PCCh. 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, Mao y otros miembros del PCCh establecieron el Jiangxi Soviet en la remota y montañosa región fronteriza entre las provincias de Jiangxi y Fujian. La creación no solo de un gobierno de clase trabajadora y campesina, sino de un territorio soberano requirió una gran cantidad de organización política como condición previa. Como dijo Mao:

“[Las] regiones donde el poder político rojo de China surgió por primera vez y es capaz de durar mucho tiempo no han sido las que no se vieron afectadas por la revolución democrática ... sino regiones ... donde las masas de trabajadores, campesinos y soldados aumentaron en gran número en el curso de la revolución democrática burguesa de 1926 y 1927. En muchas partes de estas provincias se formaron sindicatos y asociaciones campesinas a gran escala, y la clase obrera y el campesinado libraron muchas luchas económicas y políticas contra la clase terrateniente y la burguesía”. (tinyurl.com/y2mfyke6)

El soviets de Jiangxi inició políticas radicales de reforma agraria. Los campesinos promulgaron estos cambios a través de las Asociaciones Campesinas, que eran organizaciones políticas muy parecidas a los soviets obreros y campesinos de la Revolución Rusa. A lo largo de la revolución, el PCCh pudo expandir su territorio físico a través de medios militares y su influencia política a través de medios organizativos. Cada vez que los militares del PCCh, el Ejército Rojo, expulsaron a los soldados del KMT de una aldea o condado, los organizadores del PCCh lo siguieron de inmediato, estableciendo asociaciones campesinas, reduciendo el alquiler y luchando contra la opresión de las mujeres.

Vietnam y la aldea estratégica

Más allá de la creación de áreas de base liberadas, el PCCh también se dio cuenta de que el proceso de revolución, de organizar la democracia de la clase trabajadora, creó cambios sociales duraderos que permanecieron incluso cuando el enemigo recuperó el territorio del PCCh. Posteriormente, los revolucionarios del Frente de Liberación Nacional de Vietnam (FLN) aprovecharon esta idea durante su lucha contra el imperialismo estadounidense.

La unidad organizativa básica de los trabajadores y campesinos vietnamitas era el Comité de la aldea. Los comités de aldea ejecutaron una política social agraria radical. Esa política incluía educación política, redistribución de tierras que habían sido controladas por terratenientes ricos, reducción de rentas y castigar a quienes prestaban dinero a tasas exorbitantes. El FLN también trabajó para aumentar la producción agrícola, abrir escuelas, castigar la corrupción y eliminar a los brutales funcionarios y líderes de las aldeas. El Comité de la Aldea, como la Asociación de Campesinos en China y los Soviets de los trabajadores en Rusia, era una democracia

de los campesinos y el proletariado.

Más allá de la administración de la aldea, también se crearon Asociaciones de Liberación para que varios grupos pudieran usar la lucha para combatir la opresión que enfrentaban. Hubo asociaciones de liberación de agricultores, asociaciones de liberación de mujeres, asociaciones de liberación juvenil y asociaciones de liberación estudiantil, entre otras. Las asociaciones de agricultores tuvieron el mayor impacto en la expansión del FLN debido a la naturaleza rural de Vietnam. Las Asociaciones de Liberación de Mujeres causaron el cambio social más profundo, y el FNL adoptó una postura muy dura en apoyo de los derechos de las mujeres.

Lo más notable acerca de los esfuerzos organizativos del FNL fue que a menudo ocurrieron directamente bajo las narices de los imperialistas estadounidenses y sus gobiernos títeres. A principios de la década 1960, los Estados Unidos y su régimen títere Diem instituyeron el programa de “aldea estratégica”. Este era un sistema de campos de concentración con otro nombre. Las grandes aldeas se convirtieron en zonas de seguridad altamente militarizadas con puntos de control y cercas de alambre de púas alrededor de la frontera.

Sin embargo, los organizadores del FNL pudieron acceder a estas aldeas estratégicas y continuar organizando la revolución. De día, los aldeanos obedecían al gobierno títere. Pero por la noche, los organizadores del FNL proporcionaron agitación política, educación y organización. La cerca de alambre de púas no pudo bloquear la propagación de la revolución en Vietnam del Sur. Al igual que en China, los cambios sociales causados por la revolución no podían deshacerse si los imperialistas simplemente tomaban o mantenían 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 lucharían junto a ellos en solidaridad, estimulados por la intolerable violencia perpetrada por la policía a diario. Según el New York Times del 3 de julio, las protestas de Black Lives Matter pueden ser las más grandes en la historia de Estados Unidos.

Esta no es la primera vez que una rebelión liderada por los negros ha envuelto al país. ¿Por qué la lucha negra causa cambios tan dramáticos en el panorama político de los Estados Unidos? Es por el papel esencial que la opresión del pueblo negro ha jugado en el proceso de producción de riqueza capitalista.

El sistema capitalista de los Estados Unidos no podría haber surgido, ni puede continuar manteniéndose, sin la ayuda de la supremacía blanca y la opresión de los negros. Del mismo modo, el racismo anti-negro no podría continuar frente a los poderosos movimientos sociales que intentan ponerle fin, sin el poder y la influencia de la clase dominante capitalista, que aviva el racismo para dividir a la clase trabajadora, suprimir los salarios y mantener control político.

Cualquier revolución de la clase trabajadora en los EE. UU. tendrá que desafiar directamente el estado de la clase trabajadora negra como trabajadores súper oprimidos, así como la represión violenta que sufrió la comunidad negra a manos de la policía.

En los Estados Unidos, como en todos los países donde la clase trabajadora y los oprimidos se han alzado contra la explotación capitalista, el único medio para crear estos cambios sociales es a través de la organización de la democracia de la clase trabajadora. En los últimos años, ha habido un aumento en las Asambleas de Trabajadores, que reúne a miembros de la clase trabajadora para luchar contra la opresión.

Esta expansión de la democracia real debe continuar y debe acelerarse. La lucha de la clase trabajadora negra, así como la tarea de unirse con los blancos, otras personas de color, los oprimidos por género, los

discapacitados y los trabajadores sin discapacidad, los ancianos y los trabajadores indocumentados, solo puede avanzar a través de la organización de los trabajadores ‘Asambleas a lo largo del modelo soviético.’ Y ese nivel de unidad solo se puede lograr a través de una organización profunda. Este es el deber ineludible de los socialistas revolucionarios durante un período de cambio monumental.

¿Puede existir doble poder en los Estados Unidos?

La creación de la democracia de la clase trabajadora crea inherentemente una crisis de legitimidad para la clase dominante capitalista. Solo el excepcionalismo estadounidense podría llevar a creer que la clase dominante de los EE. UU. sería especialmente invulnerable a tal crisis si los trabajadores de este país se organizan contra sus opresores.

Una clase trabajadora unificada sería, en primer lugar, totalmente desestabilizadora para los explotadores capitalistas. La unidad de los trabajadores en la economía más grande del mundo probablemente resultaría en la caída de las ganancias de la clase dominante. Una clase trabajadora unificada que lucha por ganar mejores salarios y beneficios podría cerrar sectores enteros de la economía. Si la clase dominante capitalista cediera a las demandas de los trabajadores, las ganancias capitalistas se desplomarían, causando un efecto dominó para los capitalistas de todo el mundo.

Políticamente, el gobierno capitalista de 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 impulsado por la avaricia capitalista tendría esas nociones rápidamente deshabilitadas 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 serían aceptar el “gobierno supremo de los capitalistas” o “avanzar hacia la democracia real”.

Es solo el poder del estado, que algunos de la izquierda aún respetan y temen de mala gana: el poder de la policía para aplastar los movimientos sociales con violencia despiadada. ¿Pero 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 necesitaban?

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 espontánea y desorganizada. No tiene esperanzas de controlar 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 directo a su hegemonía en el corazón del imperio estadounidense desde la Gran Depresión de la década de 1930.

El impacto de tal choque tendrá repercusiones devastadoras. El resultado de este conflicto estará determinado por la voluntad de la clase trabajadora: la voluntad de organizarse, la voluntad de luchar, la voluntad de ganar. □