It’s December 2020. The working class in the United States is facing a crisis of survival. It is the worst such crisis since the Great Depression, especially for the most oppressed.

The statistics are daunting: One in six households face hunger; one in five workers are out of work; some 30 million renters and homeowners face homelessness in the coming winter months. The COVID death toll will hit 300,000 any day now. The virus is now the leading cause of death in the U.S., passing heart disease and cancer. Hospitals are unable to cope with the surge in COVID cases. There could likely be half a million deaths before vaccines are widely available — more than double the 200,000 projected as a worst case scenario at the start of the pandemic.

The parallel economic and public health disasters feed each other. Hunger, houselessness and loss of job-based health insurance all increase the risk of contracting COVID-19, developing serious and even life-threatening symptoms and being unable to access medical treatment. On the flip side, being exposed to COVID-19 and needing time off work can cost a worker their job.

In reaction to this crisis, some Democrats and Republicans in the House and Senate along with President-elect Joe Biden hope to pass a bipartisan, $908 billion, “something is better than nothing” bill. “Without the money,” according to the Dec. 4 New York Times, “many families could go hungry, become homeless and face other hardships.” Twelve million families cannot even access these benefits, nor others like food stamps and Medicaid. There has always been an epidemic of hunger, homelessness and inadequate medical care in communities of color — and it is getting worse.

But now the emergency is broader. The whole working class is being pauperized. For-profit health care impedes the battle with COVID

A mass vaccination program has the potential to put the scourge of COVID — and its devastating economic fallout — behind us. But the pitiful $16 billion in the rescue bill for vaccine distribution will protect few people in the U.S., let alone the rest of the world.

We’re told that frontline health care workers, who interface with COVID patients all day long, will be first in line to be vaccinated. Next will be the most vulnerable: people over 65 and those whose medical conditions put them at greater risk. After them other “essential” workers in supermarkets, agriculture, education, etc. will get the shots. Eventually everyone will supposedly be vaccinated.

But that scenario raises more questions than it answers. Is the shot free to anyone? If not, how much will it cost? What about the millions of uninsured?

Do the rich have to wait their turn like everyone else? Or will 36-year-old Mark Zuckerberg, most definitely not a front-line worker, get vaccinated before the elderly? And will Jeff Bezos wait in line behind low-wage essential workers at his Amazon-owned Whole Foods?

Capitalism, where everything including health care is a commodity to be sold on the market for profit, is the biggest obstacle to a mass, global vaccination campaign. The capitalists of each country compete with each other, impeding global cooperation to defeat the pandemic. Big Pharma corporations, including Pfizer and Moderna, are battling it out to make a vaccine at the lowest possible cost, in order to maximize their own profits.

Wherever human needs take a back seat to the bottom line, the masses suffer. Big Pharma’s drive to maximize profit, combined with the legacy of racist medical experimentation on Black and brown communities, has engendered distrust around taking the vaccine. Transparancy around side effects is lacking.

Will the Trumpite anti-maskers also be the loudest anti-vaxxers, further endangering their communities with their super-spreading defiance?

1930s: Fight or starve!

When the Great Depression hit in the 1930s, there was no social safety net. Social Security, unemployment insurance, food stamps and a range of government assistance programs were nonexistent. From the veterans’ Bonus March to the Ford Hunger March to numerous eviction defense actions, it was the class struggle that won these benefits. The New Deal programs weren’t a gift bestowed upon the suffering masses by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. They were, as FDR himself explained, “riot insurance.”

When the masses got tired of waiting in long food lines — which we are sadly seeing again — or just going without, they organized around the slogan: “Fight or starve!” Many demonstrations were organized by the Communist Party USA. After spending the better part of 2020 enduring this pandemic depression, after watching our loved ones get sick and die of COVID, the working class is again in a desperate situation, one magnified by the fascist threat posed by the growth of white supremacy. State-sanctioned police terror and the growth of extralegal paramilitary formations like the Proud Boys are two sides of the same coin.

This 1930s-level suffering is compounded further by misogyny, anti-LGBTQ2S+ bigotry, ableism, Islamophobia and xenophobia.

We must demand: Medicine for people — all the people — not for profit! Money for health care, not warfare! Food, housing and jobs are basic human rights! Smash white supremacy and bigotry!

Workers and oppressed people face two choices: Fight or die!
Message from Leonard Peltier to National Day of Mourning 2020

Greetings my relatives, friends, loved ones and supporters,

First of all, I want to thank you for the privilege of being able to express my feelings about this “Day of Mourning,” as we call it, and “Day of Thanksgiving,” as the rest of the U.S. calls it. Sometimes I’m at a loss for words to express all the thoughts I have going on in my head after 45 years of imprisonment.

I do want to express my appreciation for our ancestors before us, who fought so hard that we would live today. I want to express my feelings of remembrance for the ones who were overtaken by the weapons of war coming from Europe and the pandemics they faced. Though we have been attacked by the invaders from Europe, over the centuries, and everything that has been done to destroy us, our culture and traditions, we still stand and still today because we are an expression of the Creator’s Will and an expression of the Creator’s Truth. We are a manifestation of that truth, that all mankind should live within the boundaries of those laws. There is nothing that came from Europe that has made this portion of the Earth a better place to live, but like all nature, we have survived. And nature continues to survive, though mankind is on the edge of destroying itself. The truth that our people spoke of, the need to live in harmony with each other, the Creator, the Mother Earth, and respect one another’s approach to spirituality — when expressed by all-Indians becomes a searing around the world. We must continue to speak our truth, to live our truth and to support one another, for there lies our survival. It is the most powerful weapon that we can obtain are knowledge of truth and love for one another, and the protection that truth gives us. We must unite and work together every chance we can and embrace all others who are of like mind and willing to work to correct this worldwide pandemic of greed and selfishness that has infected the whole earth and mankind.

On this Day of Mourning, let us again remember our relatives before us, who fought every challenge imaginable that we might survive, and in our prayers say “Thanks for not giving up. Thanks for giving your lives that we might live.”

And to all of you out there, I want to say thanks for not giving up on me and my quest for freedom. May the Creator bless you in every way. Your brother always, in all ways.

In the Spirit of Crazy Horse and Resistance,
Mitakuuye Oyasin,
Dokahka, Leonard Peltier

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Workers World suspended printing and mailed distribution. We have continued publishing articles on workers.org, along with a weekly PDF edition. We will resume printing and mailed distribution on a regular basis.

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

Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the neverending quest for ever-greater profits. Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, attacks on im/migrants, misogyny, LGBTQ2S+ oppression and mistreatment of people with disabilities. It means joblessness, increasing homelessness and impoverishment and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism.

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

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

WWP fights for socialism because the working class need not rely on imperialist profits. The wealth workers create should be socially distributed.

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

We recommend that subscribers with internet access get free email subscription and share our articles with your contacts and on social media.

— WWP managing editors: John Catalinotto, Martha Grevatt, Deidre Griswold, Monica Moorehead, Betsy Piette and Minnie Bruce Pratt.
Black activists to Biden: A down payment on reparations NOW!

By Monica Moorehead

On Nov. 27, a People’s Webinar entitled, “Post Election Fight for Reparations Now!” was organized by the Brooklyn, N.Y.-based December 12th Movement to demand that President-Elect Joe Biden issue an executive order to make a down payment of at least $14 trillion on the debt owed to the descendants of enslaved Africans. The panel included long-time Black leaders and activists in the political, community and labor sectors who all pledged, in their own words, solidarity for this demand.

D22 leader Omowale Climate stated in opening remarks:

“The U.S. debt is as real as the crime for which it sprung, which demands acknowledgment and concrete action. Therefore, it is the urgency of now, that demands that this president use his authority to issue an executive order for this first down payment on the debt owed.”

“What must we do? We must mobilize our people so that Day One of Biden’s presidency is Day One of reparations right now. We are in support of all efforts and actions that benefit and raise the quality of life of masses of people who have been devastated by the current pandemic, and victims of the corporate greed that is taking the life toll. However, the extreme devastation this pandemic has brought squarely on the conditions of the Black community will not be allowed to be brushed aside as simply our people’s pre-existing conditions.”

A number of talks referred to House of Representatives Bill 40 introduced by the late Congressional Black Caucus member John Conyers from Michigan back in 2005. “Reparations and Study Reparations Proposal for African Americans Act.”

As a motivation for HR Bill 40, Conyers said at the time, “Africa owes reparations compensation for their labor. More unclear, however, is what the effects and remnants of this relationship have had on African Americans and our nation from the time of emancipation throughout today.” He chose the number of the bill, 40, as a symbol of the 40 acres and a mule that the United States initially promised freed slaves.

Conyers cited a number of objectives of the bill — including setting up a commission to study reparations and then make recommendations to Congress on appropriate remedies to redress the harm inflicted on living African Americans.”

Go to tinylurl.com/y30v735 to view the entire webinar.

Kentucky board denies justice for Breonna Taylor

By Monica Moorehead

Almost nine months since the senseless murder of Breonna Taylor, the struggle to win justice remains elusive but goes on. Taylor, a 26-year-old African American EMT worker, was killed by Louisville, Ky., police on March 13.

The murder of Taylor, shot six times while in her bed, gained national attention two months later, after the lynching of George Floyd by Minneapolis police on May 25.

Three white police officers used the excuse of a “no knock” warrant to forcefully gain entry to Taylor’s house with a battering ram during an ill-advised drug bust. It turned out to be the wrong house.

Taylor’s partner, Kenneth Walker, called 911 in response to the assault, not knowing it was cops who were trying to break into the house. When Walker attempted to defend himself and Taylor, the police fired an indiscriminate barrage of shots, hitting Taylor. Then cops did not allow an ambulance to attend to Taylor for half an hour — too late to save her life.

None of the cops were arrested for any degree of murder, including manslaughter. The only cop put on desk duty was Brett Hankison, was indicted on a much lesser charge — for the cops for killing Taylor. Only one of the police, Brett Hankinson, was ever arrested for any degree of murder, including manslaughter.

Protests included those Black activists to Biden: A down payment on reparations NOW! who is suffering a mental health crisis and is less likely to be armed with less weaponry, especially on communities of color and working people in general.

In late October it was revealed that Kentucky’s police training materials had once contained slides quoting both Adolf Hitler and Confederate General Robert E. Lee, in relation to tactics for brutally repressing anti-po- lice demonstrations like those at the University of Kentucky police manual glorified Hitler.

In late October it was revealed that Kentucky’s police training materials had once contained slides quoting both Adolf Hitler and Confederate General Robert E. Lee, in relation to tactics for brutally repressing anti-police demonstrations like those at the University of Kentucky.

The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund stated that the Kentucky police manual glorified Hitler, who is suffering a mental health crisis and is less likely to be armed with less weaponry, especially on communities of color and working people in general.

The council stated before an angry crowd of Black workers, “The right to life is not a right that is to be treated lightly. For those of us who have any experience with the organized labor movement, that’s a big step forward.

About two months ago, more than 40 unions repre- senting millions of workers issued a statement calling for work stoppages against racism. That’s important. [This was] also out of concern that Trump might try to hold on to power with a coup. Even some of the unions are talking about a general strike. Whether we’re excited about the general strike to save what they call democracy, which we know as something being phony, is another argument. But the mere fact that they’re talking about having a general strike against anything, for those of us who have any experience with the organized labor movement, that’s a big step forward.

And some of them are even trying to extend that call for a general strike to covering COVID relief. So there are lots of good things happening, things that from the point of view of labor give the rank-and-file workers something to organize around and push back the conservative top leadership of the organized labor movement.

So I hope that this demand to Biden for a down payment on reparations will be one of a number of foundations, one of a number of bases for a new wave of struggle right off the bat in 2021. I think that the budget crisis we face right now is a crisis that should be done immediately.

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I’ve spoken before about the power of a number of bases for a new wave of struggle right off the bat in 2021. I think that the budget crisis we face right now is a crisis that should be done immediately.
Disability rights — and justice
By Mary Pinotti Kaessinger

The following remarks were delivered during a webinar hosted by the Peoples Power Assemblies/NYC on Dec. 3 in observance of the International Day for Persons with Disabilities. The disability rights movement is about living a full life, actively participating in all spheres of society — getting an education, working, having a family and other social connections.

The movement has a two-pronged strategy. One is the legal route, which led to passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in the U.S. in 1990. The other strategy is direct action, which began in 1975 when members of ADAPT [formerly Americans Disabled for Accessible Public Transit] sat down — literally got out of their wheelchairs and down on the ground — in front of buses in Denver. ADAPT has continued with sit-ins whenever needed, including in June 2017 in Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell’s office to support the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare), which was threatened — and still is.

Growing concerns
As the disability rights movement has grown, so have our concerns. First and foremost is racist policing. Black disabled lives matter. Over 50% of people of color killed by police are disabled. Some have neuro-divergent illnesses that are invisible and may lead to unpredictable behaviors, which the racist police are not used to about them.

The case of Eleanor Bumpurs was highly publicized in 1984. Ms. Bumpurs is a 66-year-old African American woman, described as “mentally ill,” who was being evicted from her apartment in the Bronx, because she was four months behind in rent. She told the marshals evicting her that she would pour boiling water on them if they approached her. So the police who were backing up the marshals shot her. That was 1984 — before there were cell phone cameras documenting these events. Who knows how often this sort of incident with people with disabilities would have gone unseen?

Adults with disabilities are three times more likely than adults without disabilities to have these conditions. And if you are a woman of color and disabled, then you are in a confined space that has been labeled a petri dish for the transmittal of COVID-19. If we consider aging to be a disability, as the ADA does, then the number of people with disabilities who live in nursing homes grows even larger. I was heartened to hear yesterday that nursing home residents are slated to be in the first tier of recipients of the COVID vaccine.

Another battle we have to fight is the pauperization of people with disabilities. That arises because disability benefits are tied to income. If you make more than the guidelines require, you do not qualify for the benefits you may need, like help with laundry or cleaning. By federal standards, if you have a disability and are below minimum wage, but the benefits limit makes fighting for the minimum wage problematic. This is a battle the National Federation for the Blind has been fighting for years.

Housing is another difficulty. Here the problem is accessibility. If you have the number of people in an accessible entrance — not stairs!

Growing fight back
The list goes on, but there has been a fight back and growing understanding of these situations. And the fight back is potent, as many of us have come to an annual parade in New York City, as well as in other cities, to celebrate the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Prior to the COVID shutdown, the NYC parade drew over 15,000 people. Disabled in Action has brought lawsuits against the NYC Metropolitan Transit Authority to put elevators in all subway stations. These challenges are winding there way through the court system.

In 2006, in recognition of the world-wide struggle for disability rights, the U.N. established the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

So far 177 countries have ratified it — but not the U.S. (Nor has it the U.S. ratified human rights treaties defending women, children and migrant workers.) The U.N. convention is much more liberal in granting the rights of people with disabilities to live in their community and have the necessary support to do so.

Demonstration inside Macy’s in New York City, on International Day for Persons with Disabilities in 2019.

Kroger workers demand a just contract
By Gloria Rubac

Essential workers at Kroger grocery stores in Houston have been campaigning for public support outside stores this fall. Kroger workers are members of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 455, which covers parts of Texas and Louisiana.

“Kroger is trying to take away our health benefits that we have had for over 40 years. Plus, during the pandemic, they rescinded the hazard pay that we were getting,” one worker explained to this reporter. “We are still essential workers staying on our jobs during the pandemic, but Kroger is not respecting the dangerous conditions we work in. We put our lives and our families’ lives on the line every day we report for work.”

Kroger was founded by Bernard Kroger in 1889 and is the largest supermarket by revenue in the U.S. and the second largest grocery retailer behind Walmart. It is the fifth largest general retailer in the world and the fourth largest U.S.-owned private employer in the U.S. It is ranked 23 on the Fortune 500 for 2020.

With nearly 2,800 stores in 35 states under two dozen banners and annual sales of more than $121.1 billion, the company cannot certainly pay their employees generously. Kroger has seen a surge in profits this year, making $1.2 billion in the first quarter. A press release Kroger put out Dec. 3 said its sales grew 10.9%, and digital sales grew a whopping 108%.

For the fiscal year 2020, Kroger reported earnings of $1.9 billion, with an annual revenue of $122.3 billion, an increase of 0.4% over the previous fiscal cycle. Kroger’s shares traded at over $32 per share, and its market capitalization was valued at $85.4 billion in April 2020.

The Drug Enforcement Administration is seeking more control and surveillance in the lives of people who use opioids, particularly people who use the medications buprenorphine (Suboxone, Subutex, Sublocade, Bunavail, or Zubsolv) and methadone (Diskets, Methadose). The DEA’s mission in this regard is, on paper, to prevent diversion — the sharing or selling of methadone and buprenorphine to people unauthorized to have it – of the medicines. Yet an argument could be made that diversion serves a positive, harm reduction goal, given that those who are addicted are in danger to themselves and others. From the sale, the buyer is using it to stave off the effects of opioid withdrawal — withdrawal that can be deadly.

In September the agency proposed the creation of software capable of searching for and identifying patients and prescribing doctors who should not have access to patient data. This expansion, coupled with the immense power the DEA already has, would serve to put a damper on people reaching out to methadone and buprenorphine clinics for legal methadone and buprenorphine.

According to its proposal, the DEA wants its agents to have access to patient deidentified data. This means private information on medicine fills and refills, gender, and other things. The Pharmacy Prescription Data System will give the DEA information on patients and their habits to a degree previously unseen in the United States.

Currently monitoring occurs at the state and federal levels. The Prescription Drug Monitoring Program of each state currently monitors patients and associated data in a manner that is up to a lesser degree than the proposed Pharmacy Prescription Data System, and would inform included in the same between states. At the federal level, the Automated Reports and Consolidated Orders System details the manufacturing of controlled substances, supply chain, and distribution.

“The push by the DEA to include methadone and buprenorphine endangers patients, because it may cause the drug distribution, to deidentify patient information to dispense buprenorphine. It may also be harder for methadone clinics to do their job while including patient-level information on everyone who is given it.

We must resist this encroachment of people’s privacy. Opioid-addicted patients must be given fair and positive healthcare.”
In the U.S., with less than 5% of the world’s people, there is little concern for the fate of the globe’s other 95% who are facing by far the worst of the crisis. When, how and under what conditions a vaccine will be distributed in the U.S. is the overwhelming U.S. concern. Rates of COVID-19 deaths in the country have reached astounding levels and are still climbing. A toll of 500,000 deaths is predicted by July.

The current Washington administration has been clear that vaccines for the rest of the world will not be forthcoming until U.S. needs are met. This was reinforced by President Donald Trump at a Nov. 21 meeting of the G20, the international organization of governments and central bank governors.

China’s global health project

Meanwhile, in China the COVID-19 virus is under control. There have been fewer than 5,000 deaths. Its containment of the virus through its centrally planned economy—has enabled China to become a force able to provide medical supplies and essential personal protective equipment to governments worldwide. (See “China’s socialist planning and COVID-19,” Workers World, April 3)

Now China has emerged as the one country able and actually free to provide hundreds of millions of doses of lifesaving vaccines globally.

Chinese leaders have promised developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America priority access to its successful vaccines. The pledge is that China’s vaccines will be a global public health product. These are not empty promises. China has the technical ability to mass produce vaccines and, even more importantly, to deliver the vaccines around the world.

In a further challenge to multibillion-dollar privately owned pharmaceutical companies, China is committed to providing the technological know-how for manufacturing these vaccines locally. Early in the pandemic, Chinese leaders authorized Ahmed Zewail, a former Nobel laureate in chemistry, to form an academic team to develop vaccines for Africa.

On Oct. 8, China signed an agreement with the GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, to form a joint vaccine implementation plan. This means that China’s vaccines will be a global public good and will be given priority in providing vaccines to developing countries.

The new Chinese vaccines— and the state-owned Sinopharm announced on Nov. 9 that its coronavirus vaccine had been administered to nearly 1 million people with no signs of adverse side effects. (tinyurl.com/y4lwv7oy) The COVID-19 vaccines made by Chinese pharmaceutical companies are similar to vaccines effective in many other pandemics, such as polio and flu shots. These vaccines are easier to replicate with technology currently in place globally. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines were developed using a new technology, making these vaccines more difficult to mass produce.

The Chinese vaccines have another crucial advantage: They do not require months of production to reach full-scale manufacture and distribution.

China challenges Big Pharma

The new Chinese vaccines—and the pledge to share the technology and distribution with the world—is a fundamental challenge to U.S. pharmaceutical corporations. Those multibillion-dollar businesses have among the highest profit returns of any industry group. (tinyurl.com/y359jurr)

The U.S. government funded COVID vaccine research with more than $8 billion in grants to pharmaceutical companies. But unlike polio and earlier vaccine research, these giant private corporations with their multiple add-on costs to government agencies at an enormous profit. But even a temperature that is not kept at the specified level can mean failure of the vaccine.

China’s global vaccines—a game changer

By Sara Flounders

“Capitalism on a Ventilator: The Impact of COVID-19 in China & the U.S.” is a new anthology contrasting the effective Chinese response to COVID-19 with the disastrous response of the U.S. The anthology is written in March, April, and May as the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic hit the U.S. and people worldwide were actively looking for answers. Why has China done so much better in containing COVID-19 and saving lives?

The book also questions why government agencies started asking sent U.S. media outlets and private corporate platforms into a wall of censorship and political repression.

The anthology is being sold in the corporate media’s lies and racism!

The book’s table of contents and list of authors, along with four chapters, are available at up.m/uy3qns-404

The Front button is purchasable online at: www.tinyurl.com/CapVent-print

It is also available as a downloadable ePub at kindle.com/978-1-64885-007-4

For those able to help in the publication of this book see: Amazon is Censoring ‘Capitalism on a Ventilator: The Impact of COVID-19 in China & the U.S.’ www.tinyurl.com/CapVent-help
Pennsylvania prisons throw pandemic protocols out the window

By Bryant Arroyo

Incarcerated workers across Pennsylvania are demanding that Department of Corrections Secretary John Wetzel reverse his disastrous decision to begin mass transfers of prisoners during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic following commentary in part from an interview by Joe Piette with jailhouse organizer and environmental activist Bryant Arroyo, who is confined at State Corrections Institution Frackville, falsely convicted of a crime.

The dangers that the top Pennsylvania Department of Corrections officials are imposing upon us can be prevented. I’m stack here and I have to take every mea- sure and precaution to protect myself.

Both prisoners and the people out- side are experiencing social isolation and social deprivations right now. We have those things in common, although we live in two somewhat different worlds.

I should give the administration props for providing newly available with the cleaning utensils and cleaning chemicals to help us prevent the spread of the infection. For the most part it was successful. We had zero cases, up to this point.

I say “up to this point” because DOC Secretary John Wetzel recently ordered the administration of my facility, SCI Frackville, to reverse multiple transfers from SCI Camp Hill, SCI Dallas, and SCI Coal Township. Those three facilities are known COVID-19 hotspots. The reprieve is reprehensible and unconscionable that Wetzel, the very top correctional official, opened up the facility to a potential out- break in places where there were no cases.

The quarantine block at SCI Frackville is B-C, I’m in B-D, the tier above. Officers are walking around in N95 mask. They’re not the boss, they don’t make decisions, they just follow orders. Lo and behold, an individual tested positive. Wetzel took “care, custody, and control” and he threw these pandemic protocols out the window. It’s a clear decision to jeopardize the health of both inmates and the staff that are on the forefront working the blocks and working in the facility. But you have to ask, why would Wetzel do this?

Recently the medical department locked us down for two days. They made the influenza vaccine available to who wanted it. For those who refused, they asked us to sign a waiver why we were refusing. I refused on the grounds that this is the first time in the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections history that they actually provided an incentive—a so-called “bonus” of 15 placed on your account — to take it. The thing I know about getting paid to sort some medication or vaccination is that it has always been seen as an experiment.

The statistics show that a lot of people refused to take it for that simple reason. It was a total debacle. It was really suspi- cious for them to pay us to get vaccinated. So the majority of the population of the entire facility refused.

Even when we talk about a potential outbreak, there are many more reasons and a lot of concerns. We already know they hit prisons with these vaccines first, to “immunize the herd” so to speak. A lot of people are saying, I’m not gonna take that either. I don’t know if it’s a placebo or if it’s some other experiment that has nothing to do with COVID.

Our President, who’s about to be ousted very soon, cannot be trusted. Trump also executives are taking the same approach for solving this thing overnight. So there’s no way you’re gonna stick some- thing on that. There’s a contract between Trump and Pfizer and have me think the main purpose of it was to pro- tect me. I refer to be part of that experiment. Psychologists who are supposed to make their rounds on the block aren’t doing it. A lot of the higher ups who are supposed to be asking us about our con- cerns, about our issues, they’re falling short. Because of the structures imposed by Wetzel, there’s a breakdown in the chain of command. They’re prioritizing the corporations, instead of the things that are essential for the inmate populations.

I’m trying to give you all a visual of what it looks like every day in here. Even if you go out to the yard, you still feel as though you’re locked in. There might only be two or three guys that come out with you at any one time. The majority of you only get one hour outside of your cell. There’s less people getting sun, which is a necessity for basic human life. It’s a hell of a gauntlet.

Scheduled federal executions infuriate activists

By Gloria Rubac

The outrage expressed by anti-death penalty groups was not unexpected. What came out one that Trump had authorized the federal government to use a firing squad, the electric chair, or a gas chamber for federal government to use a firing squad, the electric chair, or a gas chamber for

In Bernard’s case, five of the sole shooter was his co-defendant, who

The Justice Department is

Dustin Higgs who, like Johnson, is

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Colin Kaepernick: ‘Free Mumia!’

By Colin Kaepernick

During a virtual press conference Nov. 16 on the critical juncture in the fight to free political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, Colin Kaepernick expressed his support. Kaepernick credited his stellar athletic career in 2016 when he began to take a knee in protest against police terror during the National Football League games. Following is his statement, which can be heard at youtube.com/To62zE7nj88.

When I was invited to speak on behalf of Mumia, one of the first things that came to mind is how long he’s been in prison, how many years of his life have been stolen away from him, his community, and his loved ones. He has been incarcerated for 38 years. Mumia has been in prison longer than I’ve been alive. When I first spoke with Mumia on the phone, I was a little taken aback. I just listened.

Hearing him speak was a reminder of why we must continue to fight.

Earlier this year the United Nations Human Rights Council of the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner invited Mumia to speak. He spoke about his life, and the injustice and deprivation that he experienced at the hands of the white supremacy that rules the United States and Pennsylvania constitutions.

In his book, “Live from Death Row,” Mumia wrote that “prison is a second-by-second assault on the soul, a day-to-day degradation of the self, an oppressive steel and brick umbrella that transforms seconds into hours and hours into days.” He has had to endure this second-by-second assault on his soul for 38 years.

And a King’s Bench order provides the legal angle for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to uphold Judge Sabo’s original wish—which was for Mumia ultimately to die in prison.

Today we are living through a moment where it’s acceptable to paint “End Racism Now” in front of the the Philadelphia Police Department’s 26th District Headquarters. And yet a political prisoner, who has since the age of 14 dedicated his life to fighting against racism, continues to be caged and lives his life on a slow death row.

We’re in the midst of a movement that says Black Lives Matter. And if that is truly the case, then it means that Mumia’s life and legacy must matter. And the causes that he sacrificed his life and freedom for must matter as well.

Through all of the torture Mumia has suffered over the last 38 years, his principles have never wavered. These principles have manifested themselves in his writing countless books while incarcerated, in his successful radio show, in the time and energy he has poured into his mentorship of younger incarcerated folks, and the continued concern with the people suffering outside of the walls.

Even when living in the hells of the prison system, Mumia still fights for our human rights. We must continue to fight for him and his human rights.

Mumia is 66 years old. He is a grandfather. He is a humble man who has since the age of 14 dedicated his life to fighting against racism. He has had to endure this second-by-second assault on his soul for 38 years. And he continues to fight for his freedom.

Colin Kaepernick at his workout on Nov. 17, 2019.

The Philadelphia Police Department whose officers, eight days before the 2016 presidential election, shot Walter Wallace Jr. dead in the streets in front of his crying mother.

The Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police has unrelentingly campaigned for Mumia’s execution. During their August 1999 national meeting, a spokesperson for the organization stated that they “will not rest until Mumia Abu-Jamal burns in hell.” The former Philadelphia president of the Fraternal Order of Police, Richard Costello, went as far as to say that if you disagree with their views on Mumia, “you can join him in the ‘electric chair’ and that they will make it an ‘electric couch.’”

The trial judge on Mumia’s case in 1981, Alfred Sabo, was a former member of the Fraternal Order of Police. Court reporter Terry Maurer-Carter over-heard Judge Sabo telling a colleague, “I’m gonna help them fry the n**ker.”

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Mumia is 66 years old. He is a grandfather. He is an elder with ailments. He is a human being who deserves to be free.

Free Mumia! (3)

Workers World Party believes that prisons are concentration camps for the poor and the oppressed. The US mass incarceration apparatus inflicts daily cruelties and humiliations on millions of members of our class, a disproportionate number of whom are Black, Brown, and Indigenous. Anything less is an indication that the complex dismantling of the prison industrial complex is unacceptable. Abolition is our demand and our goal. The major pandemic hotspots across the US are in prisons. There is no better time than now to loudly demand — Free Them All! Prisoners are incarcerated workers and members of our class, the working class. These demands are an immediate response to the mass death of incarcerated workers from the COVID-19 pandemic. They are demands on our way to building a world without prisons. They are demands to save lives.

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China replacing U.S. as world's leading scientific power

By Joshua Hank

The first day of December saw two major scientific events: the collapse of the radio telescope in Puerto Rico collapsed, and China's Chang'e 5 spacecraft landed on the moon. These two events are the latest developments in the new war between the U.S. and China—a new Cold War being fought on many fronts, from the fields of science and technology to the ideological and military arenas.

The U.S. is attempting to maintain its faltering grip on world dominance and prevent the rise of China, which offers an alternative world order based on multilateralism, mutually beneficial economic relations, and non-interference in internal affairs.

The deterioration of the U.S. as a scientific power became more stark with the collapse of the Arecibo observatory, which had become the world's largest radio telescope when completed in 1963. It held that title for 53 years—until China's 500-meter diameter radio telescope (FAST) overtook it in 2016.

The U.S. built Arecibo, in part, to covertly locate Soviet radar bases by tracking their signals bouncing off the moon. The observatory also discovered the first neutron stars and extrasolar planets, and contributed to the search for extraterrestrial life, gathering data analyzed by the SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Life) Institute.

Collapsing under weight of budget cuts

Beginning in 2001, Arecibo—like other publicly funded projects spanning science, health, education, transportation and the environment—saw its funding cut both under Democratic and Republican administrations, which pushed austerity and privatization while securing limitless budgets for police and the military.

In 2011, the National Science Foundation decreed Arecibo a federal fund that had now outlived its usefulness. Arecibo’s management charge had been cut to a bare minimum. Finally, on Dec. 1, the observatory’s 900-ton instrument platform fell onto its thousand-foot-wide receiver dish, while one of the towers holding the receiver snapped in half.

The destruction of the Arecibo observatory was avoidable. The observatory could have been saved and perhaps prolonged its mission of scientific discovery. Instead, its collapse was the result of a U.S. government that has increasingly disinvested in science, education, health, and military wings of the state.

China’s FAST telescope

While the loss of the Arecibo observatory is a setback for science across the globe, the world is not without a large radio telescope. China completed its much larger and more modern telescope in 2016. It is 2.5 times more sensitive than the Arecibo observatory, with a dish spanning 1.5 kilometers. The FAST telescope, located in southwest China’s Guizhou province, cost the equivalent of $180 million. (tinyurl.com/y3k8ybk4)

China also spent an additional $260 million on poverty reduction in the area of the new observatory, and on helping to relocate the 3,000 residents living within five kilometers of the site. (Such a telescope needs radio silence, meaning there can be no nearby cell phones, televisions or radios.)

Within a year of its opening, the FAST telescope discovered its first pulsar stars, and since January has been declared fully operational. It has now discovered more than 240 pulsars, and in 2021 will open to international scientists. Scientists have already started using FAST telescope data collected from FAST. The telescope is also part of the SETI Institute’s Breakthrough Listen project, which represents the most comprehensive search for intelligent extraterrestrial life to date. (tinyurl.com/y3r43559)

China’s space program

On the day Arecibo collapsed, China’s Chang’e 5 lunar mission touched down on the near side of the moon, another scientific achievement in a long list since the founding of the People’s Republic in 1949. After launching a satellite into orbit in 1970, China’s research and development space program, sending more rockets into orbit than any other country. On Sept. 6, it launched its first reusable rocket, a key component of making space travel more cost effective and thus common. (tinyurl.com/y68tv4z)

Last year China’s Chang’e 4 mission became the first ever lander to touch down on the far side of the moon. The lander included the Lunar Micro Ecosystem, a sealed biosphere that successfully sprouted the first seeds on an extraterrestrial body.

Now the Chang’e 5 mission has collected samples of lunar soil and rocks, and blasted off from the moon for return to earth, scheduled for landing in mid-December 2020. The mission makes China only the third country to collect samples from the moon, after the Soviet Union and the U.S. China’s achievements in science and technology cover a wide area. Chinese scientists publish more scientific papers than any other country. China rapidly constructed the world’s largest high-speed rail system, which now covers over 35,000 kilometers. China has announced it will build a particle accelerator 300 times more powerful than the current record holder, the Large Hadron Collider. (tinyurl.com/y3k86p6j)

By the end of 2020, China’s funding of research and development is set to equal that of the U.S., the world’s current largest R&D funder. (tinyurl.com/y68tgbn)

U.S. space for the super-rich

Meanwhile, the U.S. continues to slash funding for any research that won’t lead to private profits or contribute to “state security.” Private companies like SpaceX use technology developed by publicly funded agencies in their drive to commercialize space. It’s a given that turn it over to space travelers for the super-rich and another front in imperialist conflict.

Increasingly, the U.S. has hindered its own scientific development by not prioritizing funding and resources for scientific projects, instead imposing steep austerity to satisfy the demands of Wall Street and “small government” politicians.

At the highest levels of power in the U.S. science is ignored and even mocked, as the COVID-19 pandemic has clearly illustrated. A substantial number of U.S. politicians do not accept the scientific consensus on climate change, evolution and other facts, instead opting for pseudoscientific and conspiracy theories.

China’s government is filled with scientists and engineers. A 1990 study by Li Cheng and Lynn White, “Elite Science and Conspiracy Theories,” found that 80 percent of mayors and Communist Party secretaries of cities over one million people—as well as governors, provincial Party secretaries and Central Committee members—had four-year degrees or more in science- and technology-related fields. Chinese President Xi Jinping studied chemical engineering at Tsinghua University and has a degree in Marxist studies as well as a Ph.D., in law. (tinyurl.com/y3k8f0dy)

In China there is no large, corpo rate-backed opposition to climate science and politicians do not rulelessly spread pseudoscience.

China’s large economy, with a firm foundation of publicly owned industries, can direct huge resources into scientific projects, and its Five-Year Plans guide scientific and technological developments. The Communist Party promotes and endorses science not only to explore space, but also to bring the COVID-19 pandemic under control and clean up the environment for the benefit of the people.

Guided by Marxism—that is, by scientific socialism—China prioritizes social goals and directs resources in a long-term, scientifically planned manner. Through this basis in Marxism, China has been able to maintain and become a global scientific leader, pushing humanity to new understandings of the universe and opening up new pathways for the future.

Embassy Protection Collective help monitor Venezuelan elections

By Jose Szepura

On Dec. 6, Venezuelans turned out to vote in the country’s National Assembly elections, and again with bated breath observers from all over the world wait for the final results.

Election monitoring groups have made their way to Venezuela to act as impartial participants in ensuring elections are free and honest and to record any irregularities which might hamper the electoral process.

One of these groups is the Embassy Protection Collective, whose members include Adrienne Pine, David Paul and Margaret Flowers, just recently left the U.S. for Venezuela.

Kevin Zeese, who unexpectedly died in Sept. 2020, was a co-founder of the Embassy Protection Collective part of the group that stayed in the Venezuelan Embassy in Washington, D.C., to prevent the illegal handover to right-wing Venezuelan authorities and the U.S.-backed Venezuelan candidate Juan Guaidó.

The other three members of the collective recently finished their six-month probation and 30-day probation for the action earlier this year. Similar to President Donald Trump’s reaction to the U.S.-backed elections, Guaidó refutes the legitimacy of Bolivarian president Nicolás Maduro. The intention of the U.S. government was to hand over the Venezuelan Embassy to an opposition government-in-exile.

It is not unprecedented, as during the 20th century-geopolitical changes in excess of World War II. Expatriates from Poland, France and the Netherlands had such arrangements in England, after their respective countries were overrun by Nazi Germany.

Venezuela has been mercilessly wracked by draconian economic sanctions, imposed by the Trump Administration in order to destabilize the Maduro government. Venezuela, like Bolivia, is a country rich in fossil fuels and natural resources, but the country’s elite is strongly tied to U.S. military/civilian elites.
Workers' and farmers' uprising shakes the Indian state

By Tamarai

“...there can be, nor is there nor will there ever be ‘equality’ between the oppressed and the oppressors, between the exploited and the exploiters. There cannot be, is nor there will be even to be ‘freedom’... as long as there is no freedom for the workers from the yoke of capital, and no freedom for the toiling peasants from the yoke of the capitalists, landlords and merchants.” — V. I. Lenin, “Soviet Power and the Status of Women,” (1919).

Bharat Bandh on December 8: The farmers have called for Bharat Bandh (India Shutdown) on Dec. 8 if a special parliament session does not repeal the laws. A joint statement released by CPI, CPI (M) and CPI (ML), Revolutionary Socialist Party and All India Forward Bloc said: “The Left parties extend their solidarity with and support to the ongoing massive agitation by Kisan (Farmers) organizations from all over the country against the new Agri laws. The Left parties extend their support to the call given by them for a Bharat Bandh on December 8.”

On Dec. 5, demonstrations in solidarity with the farmers were held in the U.S., Canada, Britain and Australia. This is indeed a very challenging yet exciting time for the toilers in India. Workers and farmers in India produce the wealth of the country, but the labor and the rich resources in the country are owned and under the control of the capitalist class. Bhagat Singh, the Indian revolution- ary who was hanged by the British in 1921, wrote: “The only forces you can rely (upon) to bring about that revolution whether national or the socialist are the peasantry and the labor.”

Workers can be terminated without just cause even if there is a need for their services. The government is hell-bent on destroying collective bargaining and trade unions, which currently represent less than 10 percent of all workers.

Success of Nov. 26 strike

Workers in banks, transport, steel mills, ports and docks, telecommunications, plantations, power plants, mines, oil and natural gas corporations, financial ser- vices, railways, post and telegraph services, and in the unorganized sectors, participated in the Nov. 26 strike. Tens of thousands of women working as health care workers and mid-day meal cooks went on strike. The charter of demands included direct cash transfer to the families who earn less than the income tax thresh- old, food grains to those in need, and pensions for all.

The political demands included withdrawal of all anti- worker labor codes and anti-labor laws. One of the key demands was to stop privatization of public sector units (PSUs), including those in the financial sector. India’s several PSUs continue to earn profit, regardless of what happens in the international markets. In the petroleum industry, over 90 percent of the country’s fuel needs are met by three PSUs: Indian Oil, BPCL and HPCL.

Agricultural Facts

Agriculture employs around 70% of India's population. However, it produces only about 15% of the country’s GDP. Agricultural output is more volatile than in any other major economy. India's food production is highly dependent on weather conditions, leading to frequent crop failures and price fluctuations.

The country's two main crops, rice and wheat, account for about 60% of the total production. However, India is a net food importer, importing about 30% of its total food requirements.

India's agriculture sector has also faced challenges due to the lack of adequate investment in research and development, and the infrastructure required to support the sector. The government has taken steps to address these issues, but progress has been slow.

On April 1, 2020, the Indian government announced a package of measures to support the agriculture sector. The package included measures to improve access to credit, increase the procurement of agricultural produce, and provide support to small and marginal farmers. The government has also taken steps to improve the logistics and supply chain infrastructure in the sector.

Despite these efforts, the agriculture sector continues to face significant challenges. The sector remains vulnerable to adverse weather conditions, and the lack of adequate investment in research and development continues to hinder productivity gains.

The government has also taken steps to improve the logistics and supply chain infrastructure in the sector. This includes investment in cold storage facilities and other infrastructure to improve the handling and storage of agricultural produce. The government has also taken steps to improve the payment systems for farmers, including the introduction of the National Agriculture Market (NAM) platform.

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Venezuelan court convicts the CITGO Six

By Lyn Neeley

Venezuela’s Supreme Court sentenced six top CITGO oil executives to prison for corruption, embezzlement, money laundering and conspiracy on Nov. 26. The foreign executives went behind the back of the Venezuelan government, the prosecution witnessed the biggest strike in history, with more than 250 million Indian workers putting down their tools to protest the government’s Labor Codes.

There was no provision for the most vulnerable migrant workers. Their untold suffering from a cruel shutdown due to the pandemic, which was imposed by the Modi/BJP government with four hours’ notice in March, is well documented.

The “contract labor system” was used to exploit workers by denying them the benefits available for permanent workers. The contract system has been criticized as a way to exploit workers and avoid the protections of the labor laws. The government has allowed the contract labor system to continue, which has led to a decline in workers’ rights.

On Nov. 26, the workers’ and farmers’ protests converged in solidarity when they organized the strike. The government had passed three labor codes on Sept. 20 that will enable big corporations to directly hire and fire workers, by dismantling government-controlled agricultural markets, which procure the farmers’ produce and assure them a support price. More than 80 percent of India’s farmers are marginal and small farmers owning less than two hectares — about five acres of land. They will have very little negotiating power with the big corporations and traders.

By taking action against the six executives, the Venezuelan government was calling them “political prisoners,” and demanded they be returned to the U.S.

Venezuela’s oil industry is a major asset of the government, accounting for about 95% of the country’s export earnings. CITGO is majority-owned and controlled corpora- tion, is the property of the Venezuelan state-owned oil company, Petróleos de Venezuela (PDVSA), which produced 3.1 million barrels of oil per day in 2019.


Venezuela. Trump announced that all Venezuelan assets including CITGO, worth $7 billion, would be withheld (stolen) from the Venezuelan government. The profits of this CITGO are being channeled to U.S. Presidential Advisor Jared Kushner. The looting of CITGO is part of the manipula- tion and increased effort to replace President Nicolás Maduro with the popularly elected president of Venezuela with the self-proclaimed “Interim President” Guaidó.

Many forces on the left think these recent actions by Maduro to retain in the most bourgeois elements are long overdue.
Trump and Somalia

The outgoing president took another deceptive public step on Dec. 2: He ordered the remaining 700 U.S. troops out of Somalia. These troops are part of the U.S. AFRICOM force that promotes U.S. imperialist interests throughout Africa. They will not reposition to nearby Kenya, also in East Africa.

The U.S. troops have been carrying out a bombing campaign against Somalia-based al-Shabab. Besides withdrawing troops from Somalia, Acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller announced a few other changes:

- Established a new military command for all U.S. forces in the region
- Ordered the remaining 700 U.S. troops out of Somalia. These troops are part of a brand new U.S. AFRICOM force that promotes U.S. imperialist interests throughout Africa. They will not reposition to nearby Kenya, also in East Africa.
- The Somali-based organization, al-Shabab.

By Olijimi Alade

My year as a Workers World candidate

The year 2020 conjures up a variety of feelings and emotions for people. Some view it as the year of the apocalypse, others as a more optimistic option. Count me in the latter category. I am a completely different person now than I was when the clock struck midnight on Jan. 1, 2020. I am more confident, more politically aware, and more empathetic.

The biggest reason for my personal growth is being a candidate for Workers World Party. Even as a liberal, I admired WWP from afar for their commitment to fighting and dismantling all forms of oppression, even if I didn’t agree with their communist ideology. After all, I was under bourgeois indoctrination. As I evolved as a leftist and looked to change the world, the Workers World Party fostered a nurturing environment the Workers World Party fosters. That is what happens when you are involved with Workers World. No matter who you are, they will do whatever it takes to help you find your voice. My contributions to the Workers World newspaper have been the culmination of this year of growth. For the longest time, I’ve wanted an avenue to voice my perspective on politics but I didn’t think there was an audience for my views. More to the point, I didn’t think I was much of a writer. Through writing for the WWP newspaper, not only did I realize there was an audience, I was able to become a better writer and more confident writer. Working under the mentorship of the paper’s managing editors enabled me to express my opinions and views in a mature and cohesive way and there was no better example of that than my article about the #endSARS movement in Nigeria (http://wwp.eu/syndy). If not for one ME’s advice, I don’t think the finished product would’ve been as good as it was, but that is what working with amazing comrades does to your abilities.

I am astonished as to how far I’ve come as a writer and the newspaper staff made it all possible. As 2020 comes to a close, I can’t wait to discover what 2021 holds.

By Deirdre Griswold

Contents:

- From Marx’s view of social evolution to Lenin’s ‘Imperialism’
- Social gains in the early years of Soviet power
- ‘Whose state?’ Our state — meaning all nationalities
- External and internal problems, strengths and setbacks
- To the 0.001 percent: You are wanted an avenue to voice my perspective on politics but I didn’t think there was an audience for my views. More to the point, I didn’t think I was much of a writer. Through writing for the WWP newspaper, not only did I realize there was an audience, I was able to become a better writer and more confident writer. Working under the mentorship of the paper’s managing editors enabled me to express my opinions and views in a mature and cohesive way and there was no better example of that than my article about the #endSARS movement in Nigeria (http://wwp.eu/syndy). If not for one ME’s advice, I don’t think the finished product would’ve been as good as it was, but that is what working with amazing comrades does to your abilities.

I am astonished as to how far I’ve come as a writer and the newspaper staff made it all possible. As 2020 comes to a close, I can’t wait to discover what 2021 holds. Being a candidate for Workers World Party has been one of the greatest experiences of my life and it would be an honor to be a full-fledged party member in the coming year.

Alade is a Nigerian-American.

Moonanum James, ¡presente!

Moonanum James, co-leader of United American Indians of New England and a survivor of cancer on Dec. 4 at the age of 70. A member of the Aquinnah Wampanoag nation, he fought to continue the legacy of his father, Wampanoag Frank James, the founder of the National Day of Mourning in 1970. Moonanum was a lifelong warrior in the struggle for Indigenous rights, a fierce anti-racist, anti-war veteran, and staunch internationalist. Workers World Party mourns his death and will be printing a more in-depth obituary and tribute in the near future.

Moonanum James, ¡presente! I

100 Years Later

Some Lessons of the Great Bolshevik Revolution

by Deirdre Griswold

Contents:

- From Marx’s view of social evolution to Lenin’s ‘Imperialism’
- Social gains in the early years of Soviet power
- ‘Whose state?’ Our state — meaning all nationalities
- External and internal problems, strengths and setbacks
- To the 0.001 percent: You are wanted an avenue to voice my perspective on politics but I didn’t think there was an audience for my views. More to the point, I didn’t think I was much of a writer. Through writing for the WWP newspaper, not only did I realize there was an audience, I was able to become a better writer and more confident writer. Working under the mentorship of the paper’s managing editors enabled me to express my opinions and views in a mature and cohesive way and there was no better example of that than my article about the #endSARS movement in Nigeria (http://wwp.eu/syndy). If not for one ME’s advice, I don’t think the finished product would’ve been as good as it was, but that is what working with amazing comrades does to your abilities.

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**Palestine Writes: A labor of love**

By Betsy Piette

Originally scheduled to take place in New York City this March, but canceled due to the pandemic, the Palestine Writes Literature Festival aired as a virtual event on Dec. 2-6. The event brought together writers, artists, publishers, booksellers, activists and scholars for conversations about art, literature and the intersection between culture, solidarity and political struggle.

The 4-day event featured over 100 diverse panelists and presenters in over 55 panels, workshops, children’s programs, cooking and craft demonstrations, and music and film events. The creative, interactive, cutting-edge virtual platform also offered the chance to buy and buy Palestinian olive oil, T-shirts, cookbooks, artwork and more. The virtual building was located in Jerusalem with meeting halls in Nazareth, Haifa and Jericho.

A common thread throughout the event was the love of literature and support of justice for Palestine. The festival also highlighted the richness of Palestinian art and literature for those who have not had the chance to explore these subjects. This is due to the severe restrictions on the movement and organizing of Palestinians by the Zionist state of Israel, and the censorship and repression of Palestinian speech in the U.S.

Organizers report that more than 3,000 people from over 35 countries registered to attend. Panels and events featured by the program listed at palestinewrites.org.

For all who had the privilege of listening to any of its talks, conversations and creativity during the Palestine Writes resounded as a labor of love and resistance. Kudos to key organizers, Workers World Party member Susan AbuWahab and Bill Mullens, as well as to their incredible support staff, including a team of expert translators.

Workers World will feature talks by some Palestine Writes participants in future issues.

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**Cuba’s medical brigades fight the pandemic**

By Kathy Durkin

Socialist Cuba embodies the spirit of international solidarity by its constant medical aid to countries around the world, especially those impacted by imperialism. This is not just an empty phrase. The true meaning of solidarity is shown every day by teams of Cuban health care workers—the doctors and nurses who have brought their skills and dedication to other Caribbean countries, Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and even to Europe.

When governments request help in medical emergencies, this socialist country and its health care professionals are eager to provide it. Fighting diseases or aid after disasters, whenever medical help has been needed, Cuba has quickly responded.

This remains true during the COVID pandemic. Since Cuba’s researchers have developed advanced treatments and medications to deal with the disease, Cubans are glad to share these and to send medical teams to help.

The island nation has sent 53 brigades of health workers from the Henry Reeve International Medical Brigade to over 40 countries during the global pandemic emergency, in addition to Cubans already working in 38 countries. (Granma, Nov. 25)

Cuban leader Fidel Castro established the Henry Reeve Brigade in 2005 to aid victims of Hurricane Katrina in the U.S., but Cuba’s aid was rebuffed by Washington.

**Solidarity with Haiti**

A milestone has been reached that deserves special recognition by supporters of both Cuba and Haiti. This December the Cuban Medical Brigade marks 22 years of providing aid to Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and among the most poverty-stricken nations in the world.

In 1998, when Hurricane Georges dev- astated Haiti, Cuba stepped up and offered medical and other assistance. The Cubans agreed to keep doctors in Haiti, for as long as necessary, and to train Haitian doctors who would return home to care for their own people. At that time, Haiti’s health care system was impoverished, and the average life expectancy was 49 years. The ravages of U.S. and European colonialism and imperialism had left the public health care sys- tem nearly nonexistent.

With Cuba’s help, improvements were made in public health care and also in liter- acy. The Cubans particularly assisted the poorest and most remote communities with treatments, medications and health eduction. "Revere".

When a catastrophic earthquake occurred in Haiti in 2010, 344 Cuban health workers were already working there. The Henry Reeve Brigade sent 350 more med- ical professionals. For the first 72 hours, it was the Cubans who provided post-earth- quake emergency health care, performing surgery and treating those wounded alongside their Haitian comrades, before help arrived from other countries.

**Welcome to ‘Cuban friends’**

Last spring, after COVID-19 cases were first reported in Haiti, Cuban doctors already stationed in Haiti and ready to return home stayed to help a newly arriving delegation of 348 health work- ers. Haitian Minister of Health Marie Greta Roy Céline welcomed the “Cuban friends,” recalling their crit- ical assistance after the 2010 earth- quake, during a cholera epidemic brought by U.N. “peacekeepers” in October of that year, and after the deadly Hurricane Matthew in 2016. (Workers World, April 15)

Luis Olivero, Henry Reeve Brigade coordinator, said Cuban teams have “focused our efforts in fighting against the pandemic.” Even when numbers rise, “the development of the disease is not changing, thanks to our Brigade’s support.” (TeleSur, English, Dec. 4)

A special contingent of Cuban health professionals has supported Haitian doc- tors in containing the viral spread. Since COVID-19 appeared, Cubans have treated the most severely ill. Elizabeth Segura, Henry Reeve Brigade vice-coordinator, explained, “This is because the Haitian people have a lot of confidence in us.”

Scores of peace, justice, medical and solidarity organizations have called for the Henry Reeve International Medical Brigade to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for its major contributions to the world’s people during the current pandemic. ☐

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**France**

Half a million march against police

By G. Dunkel

In an explosion of anger and political rejection, 200,000 people marched in Paris Nov. 28 while another 300,000 in over 100 cities and towns across France held coor- dinated protest marches. Demonstrations also took place in front of French embas- sies in the Netherlands and Germany.

The protests were targeting Article 24 of a new French security law that essen- tially makes it illegal to film any actions of the police. Anyone who uses a cop’s “face or identity identifying element” on the Internet and causes that cop “physical or mental harm” could be fined $18,000 U.S. (15,000 euros) and a year in jail.

The call for protest came from several associations of journalists and was endorsed by major French trade union federations, anti-racist groups like the Adama Foundation, human rights organizations and a number of left-wing and socialist parties.

In early June, an anti-racist demon- stration by the Adama Foundation —a group focused on the death of Adama Traoré, a Malian immigrant who died by “questioning” by the police— drew about 3,000 complaints, but these led to less migrant people on the Place de la République in Paris. Videos on the mainstream nightly news, as well as on social media, showed cops trip- ping people, kicking them, beating them, and tearing up their tents. The majority of im/migrants into France come from Africa.

The videos were so shocking that Minister of the Interior Gérald Darmanin had to issue a tweet later that evening saying that the cops were going to inves- tigate this “shocking” incident.

On Thursday, Nov. 26, the web news service Loopsider released videos of prom- inent French hip-hop artist and Black activist Michel Zecler being beaten by three cops. This beating was so shock- ing, so repulsive, so “unjustified” that it went viral, with over 14 million views by Friday morning. (tinyurl.com/y35rmndr)

**March on Nov. 28**

All marchers interviewed by French national television, channel TV2, said they had seen the video and that they were moved to march because of it.

That 500,000 people came out into the streets to protest the police and their racist actions put tremendous pressure on the French government. President Emmanuel Macron posted on his per- sonal Facebook page that he was ashamed of the police action and was ordering a report on the beating of Zecler.

Marchers generally felt that Article 24 would make the cops immune from pros- ecuting. As one sign put it, “Cops fuzzed out, justice blinded.”

FranceTV Info, a newsletter sponsored by mainstream television networks, has tried to get information on how many complaints about police abuse are made and how many of these complaints lead to a formal case. (tinyurl.com/ycbosos7l)

The newsletter indicates that for 2019, during the Yellow Vest actions, there were about 3,000 complaints, but these led to less than 100 cases being filed against the police. A number of signs carried in the Nov. 28 march referred to the vicious attacks by French cops on the Yellow Vest marchers after that mass movement for economic justice began on Nov. 17, 2018.

Scores of protesters lost an eye or a limb because police targeted them with flash- bang grenades. Hundreds of Yellow Vest activists are still in prison on heavy charges.

While most of the Nov. 28 march was orderly, with union contingents mixing with human rights groups and anti-rac- ist contingents, there were some sharp confrontations with the cops toward the end of the march, after the sun had set. Police violence continued, including cops smashing a Syrian photographer in the face. A building belonging to the Bank of France, the government’s central bank, was set on fire. ☐
Por Bryant Arroyo

Los trabajadores encarcelados en Pensilvania exigen que el secretario del Departamento de Correcciones, John Wetzel, resuelva su departamento dejan de comenzar los traslados masivos de prisioneros en medio de la pandemia de COVID-19. El preso que organiza su sala es el organizador de compañeros en la cárcel y ambientalista Bryant Arroyo, recluso en la Institución Correccional Estatal de Frackville, falsamente condenado por un crimen.

La política del Departamento de Correcciones contradice la supuesta responsabilidad de Wetzel de cuidado, custodia y control. La gente siente ansiedad. No pueden decir que esté pasando un día para otro debido a estas decisiones impredecibles que son perjudiciales para nuestras vidas.

Agrava la salud mental. Tienen al personal en el medio. No pueden decir nada porque quieren mantener todo. Pero los altos funcionarios que toman estas decisiones les ponen en peligro, al igual que a nosotros.

El personal preocupado nos dice que su jefe, Wetzel, “preferiría tener un plan peligroso en lugar de ningún plan”. Wetzel no solo ha retrocedido en políticas que parecían estar funcionando para proteger a las personas, ahora está poniendo al personal y a los presos en una posición más vulnerable.

Es un día. La crisis de salud mental que los presos están tomando medidas encerrados en nuestras celdas 23 horas al día. La crisis de salud mental que está explotando en las cárceles, después de que [las personas] han estado confinadas durante más de ocho meses, es ansiopatía por aislamiento. Crea pánico, rabia, pérdida de control y aislamiento mental. Necesitamos al menos dos horas fuera de nuestras celdas. Consecutivas. Unas pocas horas, un período de día y otro de noche.

La tensión del confinamiento solitario está provocando que estallen peleas durante el tiempo de descanso, así como de estudiantes. Los trabajadores encarcelados no están encerrados. Como una reacción química, el resultado final de la ansiedad por aislamiento es que reaccionan agresivamente.

Estamos tomando nuestras duchas. Nos tomamos el tiempo que creen que se requiere para que las personas se hagan de la prueba y dan negativo. Así es como ella está en la sala de aseos. Luego le volvimos a examinar y decidimos que está expuesta a COVID-19. Luego, le volvimos a examinar y decidió que estaba positiva.

Estamos tomando nuestras duchas. En lugar de hacer las sesiones es una violación flagrante de los derechos de privacidad consagrados en la Ley de Responsabilidad y Portabilidad del Seguro Médico.

No podemos decir no porque no se puede decir no. No puedes decir no personas.."