

Capitalist COVID catastrophe

FIGHT or DIE!

By Martha Grevatt

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 damning: 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, homelessness 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 people will run out of unemployment benefits by year's end and could, along with others, lose housing when the eviction moratorium expires Dec. 31.

A lot of the particulars of the bill are still vague, but there are obvious problems with it. There's no repeat \$1200 “stimulus check” in it. Unemployment benefits still expire after 39 weeks. This bill just keeps the 26 weeks of regular benefits and the 13-week extension going and funds an additional \$300 per week (not \$600) after Dec. 31, for those who remain eligible at



'Strike for Black Lives,' July 20, Detroit.

that time. It allots an inadequate \$25 billion for rental assistance.

Undocumented workers and their 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 frontline 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, have engendered distrust around taking the vaccine. Transparency 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! □



1930



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# 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 allowed 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 overpowered by the weapons of war coming from Europe and the pandemics they faced. Though we have been attacked by the invaders from Europe, over and over in every way possible, and everything that has been done to destroy us, our culture and traditions, we still survived until 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 truths 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 non-Indians becomes a sensation around the world. We must continue to speak our truth, to live our truth and to support one another, for there lies our survival. The most powerful weapons that we can obtain are knowledge of truth and love for one another, and the practice of that truth and love.

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,  
 Mitakuye Oyasin,  
 Doksha,  
 Leonard Peltier



PHOTO: MAIREAD SKEHAN GILLIS  
 National Day of Mourning, Plymouth, Mass., Nov. 26.

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### WW now in print on monthly basis

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Workers World suspended printing and mailing of the newspaper on March 19. We have continued publishing articles on workers.org, along with a weekly PDF of what would have been the printed version.

We are pleased to announce that we

have resumed printing and mailing on a monthly basis, for now. Subscribers should have received a printed paper in September and October. Print subscriptions will still be extended in consideration of the temporary suspension of printing and the currently more limited print schedule.

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

— *WW managing editors: John Catalinotto, Martha Grevatt, Deirdre Griswold, Monica Moorehead, Betsey Piette and Minnie Bruce Pratt.*

### Join us in the fight for socialism!

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

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

Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, attacks on im/migrants, misogyny, 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 by people’s movements. The super-rich and their political representatives have intensified their attacks on the multinational, multigender and multigenerational working class. It is time to point the blame at — and challenge — the capitalist system.

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

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

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# 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 \$500

billion 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 struggles, who all extended, in their own words, solidarity for this demand.

D12 leader Omowale Clay stated in opening remarks:

"The U.S. debt is as real as the crime for which it sprung, which demands acknowledgment to 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 government 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 has only exacerbated hardships and the death 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 1989 called "Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act."

As a motivation for HR Bill 40, Conyers said at the time that, "African slaves were not compensated 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 through today. I 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 that "would then make recommendations to Congress on appropriate remedies to redress the harm inflicted on living African Americans." (Go to [tinyurl.com/y3sxb3g](https://tinyurl.com/y3sxb3g) to read the June 6, 2002 "Reparations and Black liberation" article) This bill never got out of committee under the Clinton administration.

Go to D12 Movement's Facebook page at [tinyurl.com/y5sv7j3r](https://tinyurl.com/y5sv7j3r) to view the entire webinar.

*The following are edited remarks presented to the webinar by Workers World Party First Secretary Larry Holmes.*

It's an honor to share the platform with these freedom fighters with many, many decades of experience. I had a very good conversation with brother Omowale, where he broke down their plans for moving forward with this demand that the new administration issue an executive order as part of a down payment on reparations, that they set up various programs mostly to deal with health care, state-of-the-art hospitals in Black communities, programs to train doctors and health workers. And that should be done immediately.

I think [this demand] will interest and excite many forces, including many in the Black Lives Matter movement. We all know how important they are and the force they played in the Intifada against police terror over the past six months. It's a good project. It also says that we're not going to have some "honeymoon period" for the Biden administration. And as a matter of both principle and practice, we should not have this "honeymoon period."

Biden is a loyal servant of capital. He's a white supremacist, maybe not the most infamous one, but he's there. He has always been comfortable with white supremacists. [He has been] infamous for being against even affirmative action programs. It's a good time to put forward a strong, popular way of raising and popularizing reparations.

About two months ago, more than 40 unions representing 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 about 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 demanding 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. Let's not do what some of us — not all of us — did when Obama got in and we gave him a honeymoon. And I think we paid for that. □



Go to [tinyurl.com/y5sv7j3r](https://tinyurl.com/y5sv7j3r) 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 that 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 the one whose bullets hit Taylor.

Local and national demonstrations demanded the arrests of all three police officers. Protests included those called by players in the Women's National Basketball Association and the men's National Basketball Association during their playoff games in the summer.

### Jurors denounce state attorney general

On Sept. 23, a Kentucky grand jury failed to indict the cops for killing Taylor. Only one of the police, Brett Hankison, was indicted on a much lesser charge — for "wanton endangerment" — because his bullets struck the apartment of Taylor's neighbors, who happened to be white.

Two of the grand jurors later publicly denounced the instructions they received from Kentucky State Attorney General Daniel Cameron, saying these did not include any options to indict the police for murder.

The lack of any serious indictment was tantamount to saying that the death of Taylor was justified.

Then, on Dec. 4, Kentucky's nine-member Prosecutors Advisory Council voted unanimously not to hire a special prosecutor to reopen Taylor's case. Her mother, Tamika

Palmer, had made this request.

The council stated before an angry crowd of Black Lives Matter activists that they did not have the "authority" to review how AG Cameron handled the grand jury proceedings, despite concerns of two of the jurors. The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund stated that Cameron had "displayed an inappropriate bias in favor of the officers." (Washington Post, Dec. 4)

### 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 held to demand justice for Breonna Taylor.



Artists and activists honor Breonna Taylor with a 7,000-square-foot mural — the size of two basketball courts — in Annapolis, Md.

Among the 33 slides in "The Warrior Mindset" for police cadets were more quotes from Hitler than from any other person, including: "The very first essential for success is a perpetually constant and regular employment of violence." (New York Times, Oct. 31) The slide show has reportedly been discontinued, but no one is saying how long it had been in use before it was exposed.

A lawyer, David Ward, obtained information about this slide show on behalf of the family of Bradley J. Grant, killed by a Kentucky state trooper in 2018. Grant was in mental distress when he was fatally shot. The New York Times quoted Ward as commenting: "This type of training — these quotes [from Hitler] — creates a mind set that these troopers are at war, that they need to come to work ready for battle. This type of mind set is likely to create an adversarial situation or a violent encounter, and I think that becomes even more likely when you encounter a person who is suffering a mental health crisis and is less likely to respond to verbal commands in a rational way."

These objectionable and racist manuals are not the exception but the norm as police are given the green light to act above the law, to unleash militarized training and weaponry, especially on communities of color and workers in general.

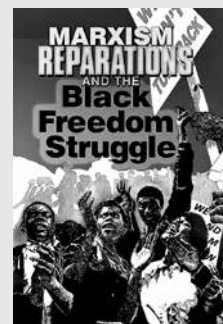
As long as there are Breonna Taylors, George Floyds, Sandra Blands and Tamir Rices, there will remain resistance in the street, with just and justified demands to defund and abolish the police. □

### Marxism, Reparations & the Black Freedom Struggle

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Available at major online booksellers.

Free PDF at [workers.org/books](https://workers.org/books)



# 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. View the webinar at [tinyurl.com/y58r2va5](https://tinyurl.com/y58r2va5).*

Welcome to our webinar on disability rights — or the lack of them. December 3 is the day the U.N. declared 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 1978 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 use as an excuse to shoot them.

The case of Eleanor Bumpurs was highly publicized in 1984. Ms. Bumpurs was 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 her 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 had occurred? Now, with cameras documenting incidents, we know how frequently they happen.

Another crisis we are facing is the coronavirus pandemic. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that people are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 if they have serious underlying chronic medical conditions, such as a chronic lung disease, serious heart condition or weakened immune system.

Adults with disabilities are three times more likely than adults without disabilities to have these conditions. And if you are in a nursing home, as many disabled people are, you are in a confined space that has shown to be 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 law, people with disabilities can be paid 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 limited mobility, you need an accessible entrance — not stairs!

### Growing fight back

The list goes on, but there has been fight back and growing understanding of these situations. And the fight back is strong and getting stronger. There is 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



WW PHOTO

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

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 their way through the court system.

In 2006, in recognition of the worldwide 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 the U.S. ratified human rights treaties defending women, children and migrant workers.) The U.N. convention is much more liberal in granting disability benefits. In fact, the treaty affirms the rights of all people with disabilities to live in their community and have the necessary support to do so.

The Peoples Power Assemblies/NYC, long active in this struggle, looks forward to next year, when we will be vaccinated and can engage in more struggle to bring about necessary changes.” □

# Kroger workers demand a just contract

By Gloria Rubac  
Houston

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 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 1883 and is the largest supermarket by

revenue in the U.S. and the second largest general 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.

With nearly 2,800 stores in 35 states under two dozen banners and annual sales of more than \$121.1 billion, the company can 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 \$25.9 billion in April 2020.

([tinyurl.com/y2l92s9h](https://tinyurl.com/y2l92s9h))

This hardly seems like a time for concern about a funding shortage, especially with something as critical as health care during a national and global health crisis like COVID-19.

According to the union, it is unacceptable that Kroger has implemented the elimination of a labor-management health care trust fund that members have counted on for over 40 years and taken away hazard pay.

A petition, which Kroger workers were asking customers to sign, states that Kroger has stripped employees of a voice in their benefits by implementing a cost shifting compensation package that only benefits Kroger.

It is appalling that a company so vast with so much wealth would take away health care from workers who are risking their health to make record profits for



Gloria Rubac on the picket line with Kroger workers.

Kroger.

Capitalism works on the theory that workers are replaceable wage slaves, but UFCW Local 455 demands health care, hazard pay and a fair contract. They deserve it and more. We must all insist that Kroger bargain with the union and meet their just demands. □

# Oppose DEA surveillance plan!

By Princess Harmony

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: even if someone benefits financially 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 prescribers of opioid use disorder medication. 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 holds data on patients, though to a lesser degree than the proposed Pharmacy

Prescription Data System, and information included isn’t the same between states. At the federal level, the Automated Reports and Consolidated Orders System details the manufacturing of controlled substances, supply chains, and distribution.

The push by the DEA to include methadone and buprenorphine endangers patients, because it may cause the distributing pharmacist to refuse to disperse 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 continue to be given fair and positive healthcare. □



# China’s global vaccines—a game changer

By Sara Flounders

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 the pandemic.

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 February.

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 economic bloc 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 disease — and its centrally planned economy — has enabled China to become a force able to provide medical supplies and essential personal protective equipment on a global scale. (See “China’s socialist planning and COVID-19,” *Workers World*, April 3)

Now China has emerged as the one country able and willing to freely 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 millions of doses 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 repeatedly stressed that China’s vaccines were for sharing, especially with the developing world. On May 18, Chinese President Xi Jinping, at the opening of the 73rd session of the World Health Assembly, promised that COVID-19

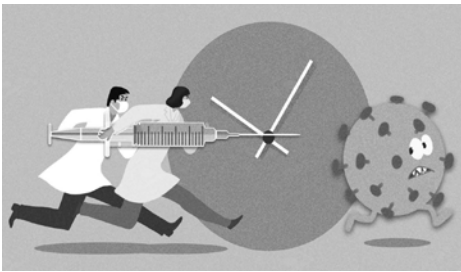


IMAGE: LIU RUI/GT

vaccine development and deployment in China would be created for global public good. The WHA is the decision-making body of the U.N.’s World Health Organization.

On May 29, as the pandemic surged, Trump severed all U.S. ties with the WHO, with no subsequent offers of U.S. aid or cooperation in global pandemic research.

Now China’s contribution will ensure vaccine accessibility and affordability in developing countries. ([tinyurl.com/y3d26p25](https://tinyurl.com/y3d26p25)) China also pledged \$2 billion to those countries for needed infrastructure to cope with the pandemic. ([tinyurl.com/y33wfbtr](https://tinyurl.com/y33wfbtr))

In a June video summit with African leaders, Xi stated that “once the development and deployment of a COVID-19 vaccine is completed in China, African countries will be among the first to benefit.” ([tinyurl.com/y4d34qoe](https://tinyurl.com/y4d34qoe)) This promise was restated by President Xi at the Nov. 21 G20 summit via video.

On Oct. 8, China signed an agreement with the GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, to formally join a vaccine implementation plan. This means that China’s vaccines will be a global public product and will be given priority in providing vaccines to developing countries. ([tinyurl.com/y2a5zurs](https://tinyurl.com/y2a5zurs))

### U.S. attacks from sidelines

U.S. imperialism is incapable of matching China’s incredible humanitarian effort. So it is hardly surprising that China’s global aid is repeatedly criticized by U.S. corporate media and Washington think tanks.

CNN raised capitalist alarm against free distribution of hundreds of millions of vaccine doses by quoting Yanzhong Huang, a senior fellow at the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations: “The vaccines can also be used by Beijing as an ‘instrument for foreign policy to promote soft power and project international

influence’ [in] vaccine diplomacy.” ([tinyurl.com/y4lwv7oy](https://tinyurl.com/y4lwv7oy))

But even while criticizing China for giving aid around the world, U.S. media have been forced to admit that China has largely eliminated the coronavirus inside its borders. Because China has essentially contained the virus, there’s no urgent need to vaccinate every person in its 1.4 billion population.

### Five new vaccines

China currently has five coronavirus vaccines developed by four companies. All five vaccines have reached Phase 3 clinical trials in at least 16 counties. Phase 3 is the final test for a vaccine before it is judged to be safe for mass distribution.

The companies developing the Chinese vaccines are both state-owned public companies and private companies working collaboratively with companies around the world. Their collective goal is to guarantee large-scale production of vaccines at affordable prices, along with technology that will enable local production.

CanSino Biologics, which developed a coronavirus vaccine with a research unit of the Chinese military, will deliver 35 million doses of its vaccine to Mexico, one of 5 host countries for its trials. The prestigious international medical journal, “The Lancet” published the clinical trial data of first and second phases of that vaccine. ([tinyurl.com/yd8uheb3](https://tinyurl.com/yd8uheb3))

Sinovac Biotech Ltd. is another China-based biopharmaceutical company that focuses on the research, development and manufacturing of vaccines. Sinovac has signed agreements with PT Bio Farma, a leading biopharmaceutical company in Indonesia, for the supply, local production and technology licensing to produce at least 40 million doses of CoronaVac there before March 2021. Sinovac is also providing 46 million doses to Brazil and 50 million doses to Turkey. ([tinyurl.com/y5zz3uqk](https://tinyurl.com/y5zz3uqk))

China National Biotec Group, a unit of state-owned pharmaceutical giant China National Pharmaceutical Group (Sinopharm), has two vaccines undergoing Phase 3 trials in 10 countries, mostly in the Middle East and South America. CNBG is capable of producing more than 1 billion doses in 2021.

The state-owned Sinopharm announced on Nov. 19 that its coronavirus vaccine had been administered to nearly 1 million

people with no sign of adverse side effects. ([tinyurl.com/y25pgtcv](https://tinyurl.com/y25pgtcv))

### Easy-to-share vaccines

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 ultra-freezing temperatures for storage and shipping. To remain viable, the Pfizer vaccines must be stored at ultracold -75°C (-103°F) and the Moderna vaccines at -20°C. The Chinese vaccines require only standard refrigeration of 2°C to 8°C (36°F to 46°F).

But even a temperature that is not ultracold is a challenge to maintain in shipping and storage in large parts of the world.

Cainiao, a Chinese logistic arm of the Alibaba Group, says it now has end-to-end climate-controlled infrastructure in place and ready to distribute the Chinese vaccines worldwide. The company has partnered with Ethiopian Airlines to launch cold-chain cargo operations for the transportation of temperature-sensitive medicines from China throughout Africa and the Middle East. These new air freight flights will operate twice a week from Shenzhen International Airport to Africa. ([tinyurl.com/y44u3bt7](https://tinyurl.com/y44u3bt7))

### 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](https://tinyurl.com/y359jurr))

The U.S. government funded COVID vaccine research with more than \$10.5 billion in grants to pharmaceutical companies. But unlike polio and earlier vaccine research, these giant private corporations will sell the publicly funded product back to government agencies at an enormous profit.

Capitalist private ownership is the biggest roadblock to solving any global problem that endangers the public good. □

## Now in print and available

### *Capitalism on a Ventilator: The impact of COVID-19 in China & the U.S.*

“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 here in the U.S. It pushes back against the racist anti-China campaign in the media.

Due to the growing hostility of the U.S. establishment toward China, and the accompanying surge in anti-Asian racism, it was an enormous challenge to find printers and distributors for this book.

The chapters include articles by many published authors, including: Ajamu Baraka, Monica Moorehead, Mumia Abu-Jamal, Margaret Kimberley, Vijay Prashad, Lee Siu Hin, Sara Flounders, Carlos Martinez, Kevin Zeese, Deirdre Griswold, Max Blumenthal and more.

The effort to place “Capitalism on a Ventilator” on a large corporate website turned into a several-month struggle with the world’s largest online bookseller—Amazon. Amazon Books promises ease of placement, best order fulfillment and lack of censorship, but failed to deliver.

Amazon’s blocking of this book is a clear example of U.S. corporate censorship. We were notified: “Due to the rapidly changing nature of information around coronavirus, we are referring customers to official sources for advice

about the prevention or treatment of the virus. Amazon reserves the right to determine what content we offer according to our content guidelines. Your book does not comply with our guidelines. As a result, we are not offering your book for sale.”

Despite claims that it publishes only “official sources for advice” on COVID-19, Amazon has allowed books promoting wild conspiracy theories — saying the virus is exaggerated, a hoax or human-made and that masks and quarantines are useless. Amazon has also listed products that are dangerous quack “cures” for COVID-19.

### Behind the censorship

Hostility to China as national policy impacts every area of discussion. This is reflected in the trade war, sanctions and military operations, in the canceling of educational, sports and cultural exchanges and in the suppression of any coverage on any level of China’s accomplishments. It is hardly surprising it extends to blocking books.

Many important chapters in this anthology were written in March, April, and May as the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic hit the U.S. and people were actively looking for answers. Why has China done so

much better in containing COVID-19 and saving lives?

The questions working people worldwide started asking sent U.S. media outlets and private corporate platforms into a wall of censorship and political repression.

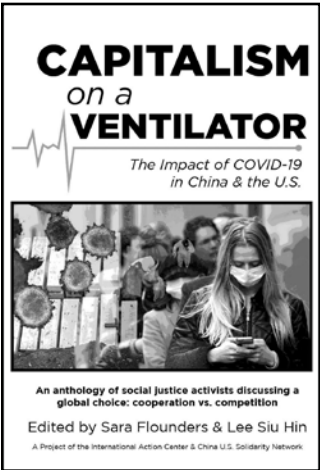
Be part of challenging the corporate media’s lies and racism!

The book’s table of contents and list of authors, along with four chapters, are available at [wp.me/p4Yme1-404](https://wp.me/p4Yme1-404)

The print book can be purchased online at: [www.tinyurl.com/CapVent-print](https://www.tinyurl.com/CapVent-print)

It is also available as a downloadable ePub at KOBO.com: [www.tinyurl.com/CapVent-ebook](https://www.tinyurl.com/CapVent-ebook)

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](https://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. The following commentary is part 2 from an interview by Joe Piette with jailhouse organizer and environmentalist Bryant Arroyo, who is confined at State Correctional 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 stuck here and I have to take every measure and precaution to protect myself.

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

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

I say "up to this point" because DOC

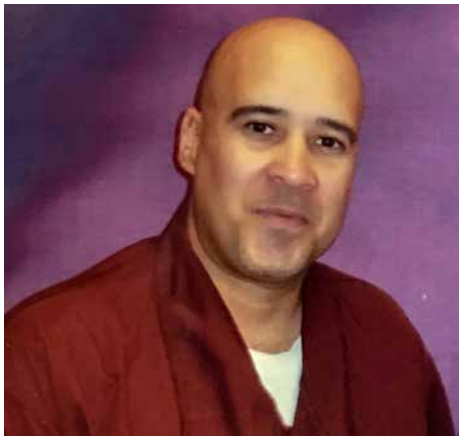
Secretary John Wetzel recently ordered the administration of my facility, SCI Frackville, to receive multiple mass transfers from SCI Camp Hill, SCI Dallas, and SCI Coal Township. Those three facilities are known COVID-19 hotspots. So it is reprehensible and unconscionable that Wetzel, the very top correctional official, opened up the floodgates to a potential outbreak 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 N90 masks. 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 those 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 \$5 placed on your

account — to take it. The thing I know about getting paid to take some sort of medication or vaccination is that it has always been seen as an experiment.

The statistics show that a lot of people



Bryant Arroyo

refused to take it for that simple reason. It was a total debacle. It was really suspicious 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 COVID vaccine, there's a lot of distrust and a lot of concern. 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 exaggerated the "miracle cures" that were going to solve this thing overnight. So there's no way you're gonna stick something in me that comes from a contract between Trump and Pfizer and have me think the main purpose of it was to protect me.

I refuse 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 concerns, about our issues, they're falling short. Because of the strictures 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 population.

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. Nobody wants to come out because 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 quagmire. □



# Scheduled federal executions infuriate activists

By Gloria Rubac

The outrage expressed by anti-death penalty activists was visceral as the news came out that Trump had authorized the federal government to use a firing squad, the electric chair, or a gas chamber for upcoming federal executions.

Ozell Brandley, the brother of Clarence Brandley, who spent 10 years on Texas death row before finally being found innocent, told WW: "A pardon for convicted administration members but death by firing squad for Blacks, Hispanics and minorities! Double standards in the criminal justice system and the White House!"

Angie Agapetus, a longtime activist with the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement, told WW: "Just unbelievable! Cruel to want to rush them, even as the rest of the developed world has rejected the death penalty. No decency here."

For 17 years, no federal executions were carried out in the U.S. But in 2020 alone, the U.S. Department of Justice has executed eight people since July, and now has five more executions scheduled before Trump leaves office — four Black men and a white woman.

Brandon Bernard's execution is set for Dec. 10, which ironically is International Human Rights Day. The next day, Dec. 11, Alfred Bourgeois is also likely to be legally lynched.

In Bernard's case, five of the jurors in his trial have now stated that they no longer think he should be executed. Also, a prosecutor who helped secure a death penalty for Bernard has said she does not now approve of him being executed.

On Jan. 12, Lisa Montgomery — a woman extremely mentally and physically damaged — is set to be murdered. Then, on Jan. 14, Corey Johnson will be next. Both Bourgeois and Johnson are mentally disabled. The U.S. Supreme

Court barred the execution of people who are intellectually disabled in a 2002 decision in a Virginia case.

Johnson's lawyers, Ronald J. Tabak and Donald P. Salzman, said that "allowing Corey Johnson's execution to go forward would be a grave injustice."

"Johnson is a person with intellectual disability. Yet, despite compelling evidence demonstrating his intellectual disability, no jury or court has ever listened to the evidence at a hearing to decide if he has intellectual disability.

"Johnson suffered an awful childhood filled with physical and emotional abuse and extreme neglect, all risk factors for intellectual disability. He lived a transient

intellectual and emotional impairments, because he could not learn and because she could not cope with his significant limitations, they added.

Dustin Higgs who, like Johnson, is African American, is scheduled to be executed on Jan. 15, the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King. On the Civil Rights leader's birthday, Trump will celebrate by legally lynching a man who did not kill anyone! All the witnesses agreed that the sole shooter was his co-defendant, who got a sentence of life without parole.

## Targeting people with disabilities

If all these killings take place, Trump will have abetted the execution of more

people than any president in over a century. On top of that, attorneys have not been able to meet with their clients due to the COVID pandemic. The executions are to take place in the federal penitentiary in Terra Haute, Ind., where the virus is rampant.

The Justice Department is rushing to execute as many federal death row inmates as possible before Biden has a chance to reimpose a death penalty moratorium.

"The pace of these federal executions has no historical precedent," said Robert Dunham, executive director of the Death Penalty Information Center, in a press release. "The last time more than one person was executed during a transition period takes us back to

Grover Cleveland's first presidency in the end of the 1880s." (Nov. 30)

Independent human rights experts with the United Nations have called on the U.S. government to consider clemency for Lisa Montgomery amid concerns that she received inadequate legal assistance during her trial in 2007.

"Ms. Montgomery was the victim of an extreme level of physical and sexual abuse throughout her life against which the State never provided protection and for which it failed to offer remedies. She suffered from several mental health conditions which the State failed to care for. When it came to the capital proceedings, the State betrayed her yet again, neglecting to consider these essential and determining facts as mitigating circumstances," the experts said in their letter. (news.un.org, Dec. 3)

Montgomery could become the first woman in the United States to die from the death penalty in 67 years.

Death Penalty Action and the Terre Haute Death Penalty Resistance will be protesting all the upcoming executions outside the prison. The Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement will protest at the Mickey Leland Federal Building in downtown Houston.

This country was built by by enslaved people's labor on stolen land. After slavery was abolished, the rich plantation owners "invented" convict leasing. Prisons were established to serve the wealthy. Lynchings were the norm of the day at the turn of the last century. Today, we have legal lynchings.

In the U.S., 1,527 executions have taken place since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976. The majority have been in the former Confederate states. But over the last two decades, the number of executions has gone down, the number being sentenced to death has gone down, and public support for the death penalty has gone down. This is true even in Texas, which leads the country with 571 executions since 1982.

Donald Trump's current blitz of legal lynchings will only add to his long list of crimes against our class — the undocumented, women, Muslims, LGBTQ2S+ people, the disabled, people of color, workers as well as the environment.

A shameful, racist and criminal legacy. □



Members of the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement protested Trump's eighth execution since July at the Mickey Leland Federal Building in downtown Houston on November 19. In this photo are Trey Legall, Leonard Benton, Andre Ross, Gloria Rubac and Leonard Walker. Many passers-by honked in support and gave thumbs-up approval.

childhood, shuttled between numerous homes and 10 different schools before he reached adolescence," wrote his lawyers. (Media, Entertainment, Arts Worldwide, Nov. 21)

When Johnson was 13, he was abandoned by his drug-addicted mother to a residential facility for children with



# 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 sacrificed his stellar athletic career in 2016 when he began to take a knee in protest against police terror during the playing of the U.S. national anthem at National Football League games. Following is his statement, which can be heard at [youtu.be/To62En75n8I](https://youtu.be/To62En75n8I).

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 did very little talking. I just listened.

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

Earlier this year the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner issued a

statement noting that "Prolonged solitary confinement, the precise type often used in the United States, amounts to psychological torture." Mumia Abu-Jamal has spent roughly 30 out of his 38 years in solitary confinement.

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.

He had no record before he was arrested and framed for the death of a Philadelphia police officer. Since 1981, Mumia has maintained his innocence. His story has not changed.

Mumia was shot, brutalized, arrested, and chained to a hospital bed. The first police officer assigned to him wrote in the report that "the Negro male made no comment," as cited in Philly Mag. Yet 64 days into the investigation, another officer testified that Mumia had confessed to the killing. Mumia's story has not changed.

But we are talking about the same Philadelphia police department whose behavior "shocks the conscience," according to a 1979 Department of Justice report — behaviors like shooting non-violent suspects, abusing handcuffed prisoners, and tampering with evidence. It should therefore come as little surprise that, according to Dr. Johanna Fernandez, over one third of the 35 officers involved in Mumia's case were subsequently convicted of rank corruption, extortion, and tampering with evidence to obtain convictions in unrelated cases.

This is the same Philadelphia police department where officers ran racial profiling sweeps — like "Operation Cold Turkey" in March 1985, targeting Black and Brown folks — and bombed the MOVE house in May of that year, killing 11 people, including five children, and destroying 61 homes.

The same Philadelphia police department whose officers, eight days before the 2020 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 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 overheard Judge Sabo telling a colleague, "I'm gonna help them fry the n\*\*\*\*\*."

Found in December 2018, in an inaccessible storage room of the District Attorney's office, six boxes of documents for Mumia's case revealed previously undisclosed and highly significant evidence showing that Mumia's trial was tainted by

a failure to disclose material evidence in violation of the United States and Pennsylvania constitutions.

In November 2019, the Fraternal Order of Police filed a King's Bench petition asking the court to allow the state attorney general, not the Philadelphia DA's office, to handle the upcoming appeals. As the FOP president John McNesby said just last year, "Mumia should remain in prison for the rest of his life."

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's 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 an elder with ailments. He is a human being who deserves to be free.

Free Mumia! ☐



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



Prisoners Solidarity Committee  
of Workers World Party

@pscwwp

1

## RELEASE THEM ALL!

The Prisoners Solidarity Committee of Workers World Party calls for immediate and mass releases of prisoners due to the inability to social distance. This must include the release of those workers sentenced to life in prison and life without parole (LWOP). We emphasize the immediate release of elder and immunocompromised prisoners. Those released should be assigned to a job or guaranteed income, housing, medical care and healthy food.

2

## FREE ACCESS TO PHONE CALLS, MAIL AND DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

Prisoners, family and community have the right to communicate with each other. The state has used the pandemic to isolate incarcerated workers from their communities and their class.

3

## END PRE-TRIAL DETENTION

We call for the immediate release of the thousands of workers currently being held in prisons, jails and detention centers across the country without having been convicted of a crime. We demand a complete moratorium of any prisoner transfers, especially without a conviction.

4

## FREE NON-COERCIVE COVID TESTING, ACCESS TO CDC APPROVED HAND SANITIZER, PPE, AND HYGIENE ITEMS

## 5 ALL PRISONERS WHO TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID MUST BE IMMEDIATELY TRANSFERRED TO NON-PRISON HOSPITALS

No punishment for those who test positive. No more de facto executions by COVID-19!

6

## STOP ALL PRISON TRANSFERS, CELL EXTRACTIONS AND SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

Transfers spread COVID19. Cell extractions and solitary confinement are tools of retaliation against prisoner organizers. Solitary confinement is torture.

7

## HUMANE AND LIVABLE CONDITION FOR ALL

Including consistent showers and air conditioning in every cell and facility. A shocking number of prison facilities across the United States have no air conditioning in any spaces where prisoners are confined. Permanent lockdown in prisons has meant prisoners must choose between shower, exercise, fresh air, and speaking to their families.

8

## HEALTHY AND FREE MEALS FOR ALL

The shocking decline of quality and portions of food in prisons is causing an entirely new public health crisis in prisons. Prisoners are being forced to eat expired, rotten, and otherwise unhealthy food in order for contractors to cut corners and collect more profits.

9

## WORK FURLOUGH WITH FULL PAY

No prisoners should be forced to work for slave wages, especially during a pandemic. All prisoners should receive full wages during this requisite work stoppage and have access to commissary supplies free of charge. Prisoners should be paid the same minimum wage as workers on the other side of the walls.

10

## ALLOW THE FORMATION OF PRISONER UNIONS

Incarcerated workers must have the right to organize unions and political organizations without fear of reprisals to address the threats unique to their facilities. For these demands to be effective in transitioning to full abolition, prisoners must be able to organize, politically and for self-defense. Organize for abolition!

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 them Black, Brown, and Indigenous. Anything less than the complete 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 COVID19 pandemic. They are demands on our way to building a world without prisons. They are demands to save lives.



# China replacing U.S. as world’s leading scientific power

By Joshua Hanks

The first day of December saw two major scientific events: the Arecibo observatory in Puerto Rico collapsed, and China’s Chang’e 5 spacecraft landed on the moon.

These two events are the latest developments in the ongoing conflict 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 multi-lateralism, 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 aperture spherical 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 welfare — saw massive budget cuts under both Democratic and Republican administrations, which pushed austerity and privatization while securing limitless budgets for police and the military.

In 2011 the National Science Foundation decertified Arecibo as a federally funded research and development center. In 2017, during Hurricane Maria, a cable snapped and fell onto the main telescope dish. Arecibo’s management changed hands again in 2018. Finally, this 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 maintained and upgraded to prolong its mission of scientific discovery. Instead, its collapse was the result of a U.S. government that has increasingly prioritized the carceral, police, surveillance 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 1,600 feet, or 500 meters. The FAST telescope, located in southwest China’s Guizhou province, cost the equivalent of \$180 million. (tinyurl.com/y5kydvku)

China also spent an additional \$260 million on poverty reduction in the area of the new observatory, and on helping to relocate nearly 10,000 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 published 40 scientific papers using 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 built a highly advanced 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/yym66v4z)

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 a return mission to earth, scheduled for landing in mid-December. 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 five times more powerful than the current record holder, the Large Hadron Collider. (tinyurl.com/y9zbp69d) 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/y6xzgben)

### 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 and turn it into both a playground 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



China’s FAST telescope

and other facts, instead opting for pseudoscience and conspiracy theories.

China’s government is filled with scientists and engineers. A 1990 study by Li Cheng and Lynn White, “Elite Transformation and Modern Change in Mainland China and Taiwan: Empirical Data and the Theory of Technocracy,” 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/y38l9dyz)

In China there is no large, corporate-backed opposition to climate science and politicians do not recklessly 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 development to reach new heights. Its competent Communist Party embraces and promotes 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 develop rapidly and become a global scientific leader, pushing humanity to new understandings of the universe and opening up new pathways for the future. □

## France New wave of worker protests

By G. Dunkel

Responding to a call from the General Confederation of Labor (CGT), a major confederation of French trade unions, tens of thousands of people in over 80 localities came out into the streets on Dec. 5 to demand an end to part-time and temporary jobs and unemployment. The issues of heightened tensions around police violence and a new security law that had brought a massive outpouring of protest on Nov. 28, were also raised.

Because several unions in the CGT have been severely affected by the pro-business COVID-19 policies

of the French government, which has given large amounts of aid to big companies while allowing them to lay off workers, COVID-19 was another issue raised.

Other militant French trade union confederations, as well as some student unions, supported the CGT protests. Strong contingents from the “Yellow Vest” movement, which led broad protests against the government a year ago, took part in a number of the protests.

Philippe Martinez, Secretary General of the CGT, told the press at the demonstration in Paris: “There is no opposition between public and individual liberties and the struggle

for permanent jobs and against unemployment, especially in this period.”

In its address to the workers of France, the CGT called for them to reject racism, anti-Semitism and other hateful discourses which divide and weaken the working class. □



Demonstration opposing the so-called “Global Security Act.”

## Embassy Protection Collective help monitor Venezuelan elections

By Jose Szepara

On Dec. 6, Venezuelans turned out to vote in the country’s National Assembly elections, and the world waited with bated breath as 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 and poll observers to ensure that elections are honest and to record any irregularities which might hamper the electoral process.

One such group, 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 member of the Embassy Protection Collective and part of the group who 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. presidential 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 governments-in-exile existed during World War II. Expatriates from Poland, France and the Netherlands had such arrangements in

England, after their respective countries were overrun by the Nazis.

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. □



Members of Embassy Protection Collective defend Venezuelan Embassy in Washington, D.C., January 2019.



# Workers’ and farmers’ uprising shakes the Indian state

By TAMARAI

“There cannot 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, nor is there nor will there ever be real ‘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).

Constitution Day in India, Nov. 26, witnessed probably the biggest strike in history, with more than 250 million Indian workers putting down their tools to protest the government’s Labor Codes.

These new laws will escalate the plunder of resources and exploitation of the Indian people. Ten central trade unions gave the clarion call for the strike. Four of these are Marxist-led, affiliated with the Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist) Liberation (CPI [ML]), Communist Party of India (CPI), Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM), or the Socialist Unity Center of India (Communist).

Why are the trade unions and workers angry? The Indian government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), passed three Labor Codes on Sept. 23 — on Industrial Relations, Social Security and Occupational Health and Safety. These codes are pro-corporate and go against the working class; 29 hard-won labor laws have been merged into these labor codes.

The Industrial Disputes Act of 1947 required any company hiring over 100 workers to obtain permission from the local government before workers could be laid off. This threshold has now been increased to 300 workers. Trade unions are concerned that the new laws will promote a hire-and-fire policy.

The Industrial Relations Code will also make it more difficult for workers to exercise their right to strike — they will need to give 60 days’ notice, which is more than before. This makes it harder to form unions.

The Employees Provident Fund — a form of social security — will be offered only to establishments with 20 or more workers. Instead of increasing social security and pensions for millions of unorganized workers, which has been a demand of communist parties and trade unions, it excludes social security for workers in millions of micro enterprises.

There are no provisions 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 during British colonial rule in India. The current regime is going to institutionalize the contract labor system, which continued after independence through fixed-term contracts, instead of creating permanent jobs. Workers can be terminated without just cause even if there



Indian trade unions call for nationwide strike Nov. 26.

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 services, 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 strike demands included direct cash transfer to the families who earn less than the income tax threshold, food grains to those in need, and pensions for all.

The political demands included withdrawal of all anti-worker labor codes and anti-farmer 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.

The government is trying to sell the people’s assets to Indian and multinational corporations. According to Billionaires Insights Report 2020, published by UBS and PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), the net worth of Indian billionaires between April and July increased 35 percent, to \$423 billion. According to the Forbes’ India Rich List 2020, the net worth of India’s richest man, Mukesh Ambani, rose 73 percent over the past year, to nearly \$89 billion.

### Farmers’ and workers’ solidarity

On Nov. 26, the workers’ and farmers’ protests converged in solidarity when they organized the strike.

The government had passed three farm bills on Sept. 20 that will enable big corporations to directly have transactions with farmers 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.

Led by Punjab farmers, more than 300 farmers’ organizations have come together in several states in northern India and are demanding that the farm laws — which will lead to corporatization of agriculture — be repealed. As this article goes to press, close to 200,000 farmers are encircling New Delhi and are camping on the major national highways. Women farmers, Dalit (the most exploited in India’s repugnant caste system) farmers and farm labor workers, along with left-leaning Dalit unions with red flags, have joined the struggle.

Many of the demonstrations against the agricultural bills over the last several months have raised slogans like “Long live labor-farmer unity.” Historically there has been a strong opposition between the largely upper-caste farmers and the farm laborers, who are mostly landless Dalits.

Shreya Sinha, researcher on the political economy of development and agrarian change in India, writes in India Forum on Nov. 28: “Contradictions of class, caste and gender are known to undermine, if not completely paralyze, progressive agrarian politics across India. ... But there is much to celebrate in the efforts of the farm and farmer labor unions and other organizations towards overcoming these contradictions. ... They recognize that expanding and sustaining this effort not only needs continuous political work on the ground but also the involvement and support of other sections of society. This is reflected in the alliances they have built with other kinds of progressive organizations such as students’ unions, teachers’ unions ... the forging of these solidarities not only creates hope for progressive change within Punjab but also holds lessons for social movements beyond the state.”

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 land and the rich resources in the country are owned and under the control of the capitalist class. Bhagat Singh, the Indian revolutionary who was hanged by the British in 1931, wrote: “The only forces you can rely (upon) to bring about that revolution whether national or the socialist are the peasantry and the labor.”

As communists, we agree with Lenin when he said, “The struggle for land and freedom is a democratic struggle. The struggle to abolish the rule of capitalism is a socialist struggle.” (“The Proletariat and the Peasantry,” 1905) □

# 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 former executives went behind the back of the Venezuelan state and signed an agreement with two U.S. based-international financial companies — for which they were detained in Nov. 2017. They used CITGO, the Venezuelan-owned company, as collateral for loans of up to \$4 billion. They have been held in Venezuela for three years.

Venezuelan Attorney General Tarek William Saab said that by signing the contracts without the permission from the Venezuelan government, the former executives greatly “jeopardized the country’s assets.” (tinyurl.com/y69qw23a) They exposed CITGO to a possible criminal breach of the contracts they signed.

Jose Pereira, CITGO’s former president, was sentenced to 13 years and 7 months and fined 40% of the total amount embezzled. The other five executives will each serve 8 years and 10 months.

Although they were born in Venezuela, five of the executives had worked in the U.S. for many years. They had been awarded U.S. citizenship and dual nationality, and the U.S. media refers to them as “American oil

executives.” (tinyurl.com/y5u5wjhc)

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Vice President Mike Pence condemned the convictions, calling the six “political prisoners,” and demanded they be returned to the U.S.

This kind of special attention by the U.S. was not awarded to the two ex-Green Berets found guilty for the mercenary attack on Venezuela in May. The U.S. military veterans were captured by the Bolivarian government and are now serving a 20-year sentence in Venezuela. (tinyurl.com/y4mnotqo)

There was hardly any response by U.S. officials, except for a brief visit to Venezuela by former New Mexico Governor and U.N. Ambassador Bill Richardson, who tried to negotiate their release.

Venezuela’s oil industry is a major asset of the government, accounting for about 95% of the country’s export earnings. CITGO, a majority-owned and controlled company, is the property of the Venezuelan state-owned oil company, Petr6leos de Venezuela (PDVSA), which exports 41% of its crude oil exports to the U.S.

Venezuela is one of the top four suppliers of crude oil to the U.S. CITGO, the eighth largest U.S. refinery, supplies 4% of U.S. fuel through a network of some 5,000 gas stations in 30 states.

In 2019, the U.S. imposed increased sanctions on



PDVSA workers, Caracas, Venezuela, January 2017.

Venezuela. Trump announced that all Venezuelan assets including CITGO, worth \$7 billion, would be withheld (stolen) from the Venezuelan government. The profits from CITGO are being channeled to U.S. puppet Juan Guaid6. The looting of CITGO is part of the manipulation and increased effort to replace President Nicol6s Maduro, the popularly elected president of Venezuela, with the self-proclaimed “Interim President” Guaid6.

Many forces on the left think these recent actions by Maduro to rein 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 first redeploy to nearby Kenya, also in East Africa.

The U.S. troops have been carrying out extensive drone warfare against the Somali-based organization, al-Shabab.

Besides withdrawing troops from Somalia, Acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller announced administration plans in November to reduce U.S. troops from 3,000 to 2,500 in Iraq and from 4,500 to 2,500 in Afghanistan by mid-January.

Both big capitalist parties have started wars. Don't expect this to change.

Republican as well as Democratic administrations have ordered, since 1990, major aggressive wars against Iraq, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq again, and

with smaller forces against Syria, Libya and Ukraine. They have carried out strikes across Africa and engaged in subversion aimed at overthrowing progressive governments in Latin America.

The Republican and Democratic Party establishments share a common foreign policy goal: to maintain and if possible increase U.S. economic and strategic U.S. domination of the world. The Pentagon, the State Department, the CIA and various other sectors of the state apparatus enforce this strategy, regardless of which party is running the government.

Every invasion, bombing or other intervention by the U.S. has led to enormous suffering in the countries targeted, often with millions of victims. The interventions shower U.S. military industries with profits.

While the pretext for these interventions can be human rights, women's rights or stopping terrorism — most often the real reason is to grab resources, usually

oil, or to eliminate a strategic problem.

As U.S. imperialism's economic and moral authority declines compared to imperialist rivals — Europe, Japan — and especially to socialist China, Washington turns to weapons — where it is still Number One. Thus the drive to maintain hegemony pushes the world toward war no matter which party holds office.

Washington sometimes turns to other tools, from hired mercenaries to economic sanctions, to achieve the same goal of domination, with or without subversion or bombing. The sanctions sometimes kill as many people as war does.

In 2016, as an election ploy, Trump criticized "Washington's endless wars," although he supported them all when they began. After his four years in office, the longest ones — Iraq and Afghanistan — continue. His latest "withdrawals" might look like he's trying to keep a 2016 election promise — but skepticism is justified.

Meanwhile he pumped up the Pentagon

budget to record levels, exacerbated a confrontation with China, pulled out of the Intermediate Range Missile treaty with Russia, carried out many more drone strikes in Africa, dumped an historic agreement with Cuba, wrecked the nuclear treaty with Iran and assassinated an important Iranian political leader — or two.

Trump's erratic aggression, however, is no reason to give the Democrats a free ride. Rep. Jim Langevin, a leading House Democrat and chair of the House subcommittee on intelligence and emerging threats, exposed Democratic Party war-mongering. He called Trump's Somalia withdrawal "a surrender to al-Qaida and a gift to China." (theguardian.com, Dec. 4)

For the antiwar and anti-imperialist forces inside the U.S., any debate about Somalia should be seized as an opening to press demands to get U.S. troops out of all its 800-plus worldwide military bases, stop all U.S.-imposed sanctions and end U.S. world domination. □

## Commentary

## My year as a Workers World candidate

By Olijimi Alade

The year 2020 conjures up a variety of feelings and emotions for people. Some view it as the year of the apocalypse, others have 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 praxis (after all, I was under bourgeois indoctrination). As I evolved as a leftist and looked to take my political awareness to the next level, Workers World Party came to my mind.

I was already familiar with Leslie Feinberg and Monica Moorehead who were/are in the party, so it made sense to reach out to them. A member of the Philadelphia branch responded, and in an in-depth conversation I told him about my political evolution since the 2016 election. He in turn told me about his journey. I felt a sort of camaraderie from that first phone call that I never had before in a political context. He then invited me to a branch meeting.

At the branch meeting, I was immediately taken by the atmosphere and the environment. The lengths comrades went to in order to ensure that everyone had a voice was phenomenal. I was able to hear



Alade with lead banner at Philadelphia United Front march, Nov. 7.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

input from people from various genders, races and sexualities, which was unlike other organizations I had been a part of where a certain group of people dominated discussions for large blocks of time.

This nurturing environment encouraged me to come to more meetings and it also enabled me to find a voice in ways that I've never been previously able to. From asking questions to further my understanding of Marxism, to making suggestions to the rest of the branch, I became bolder and more confident.

### Finding my voice

An important moment with the party was when I was invited to make a speech as a new candidate of WWP. Having never made a speech of this magnitude before, I was understandably nervous. When it came time to make the speech, the nerves

got the best of me and I froze on the spot. I was extremely discouraged with myself for short circuiting at such an important event where the entirety of WWP was in attendance.

If it wasn't for the encouragement of leading comrades from the Philadelphia branch and the party center, I surely would have ruled out the possibility of speaking on a public platform again, but it only inspired me. The conversations I had with them after my failed speech were further indicative of the nurturing, comradely environment the Workers World Party fosters.

This has given me the confidence to take a more active role in organizing and protesting. If someone told me this time last year I would be on the front lines protesting against police brutality, bourgeois exploitation, and imperialist warfare, I would have doubted you. I was never the

type of person who had the moxie to speak out against such injustices that plague our world.

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 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 (tinyurl.com/yyssfo8g). 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, ipresente!

Moonanum James, co-leader of United American Indians of New England, died 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, Wamsutta 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 navy 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, ipresente! □



PHOTO: HANNAH KIRSCHBAUM

Moonanum James speaks at National Day of Mourning, Plymouth, Mass., 2016.

## 100 Years Later

### Some Lessons of the Great Bolshevik Revolution

By Deirdre Griswold

**Contents:** From Marx's view of social evolution to Lenin's 'Imperialism' ♦ Social gains in the early years of Soviet power ♦ 'Whose state? Our state' — meaning all nationalities ♦ External and internal problems, strengths and setbacks ♦ To the 0.001 percent: You are cheering too soon

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# Palestine Writes: A labor of love

By **Betsey 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 five-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 browse bookstores 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 opportunity to experience this, 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 75 countries registered to attend. Panels and other events featured during the festival will be available to watch by clicking on a specific event in the program listed at [palestinewrites.org](http://palestinewrites.org).

For all who had the privilege of listening to any of its many conversations, Palestine Writes resounded as a labor of love and resistance. Kudos to key organizers, Workers World Party member Susan Abulhawa 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.*

# 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 aiding 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 Brigades to over 40 countries during the global pandemic emergency, in addition to Cubans already working in 58 countries. (Granma, Nov. 23)

Cuban leader Fidel Castro established the Henry Reeve Brigades 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 devastated 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 and care for their own communities.

At that time, Haiti’s health care system was impoverished, and the average life expectancy was 54 years. The ravages of U.S. and European colonialism and imperialism had left the public health care system nearly nonexistent.

With Cuba’s help, improvements were made in public health and also in literacy. The Cubans particularly assisted the poorest and most remote communities

with treatments, medications and health education.

When a catastrophic earthquake occurred in Haiti in 2010, 344 Cuban health workers were already working there. The Henry Reeve Brigade sent 350 more medical professionals. For the first 72 hours, it was the Cubans who provided post-earthquake emergency health care, performing surgeries and treating the injured, working 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 workers. Haitian Minister of Health Marie Greta Roy Clement welcomed the “Cuban friends,” recalling their critical assistance after the 2010 earthquake, 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 case numbers rise, “the development of the disease is not chaotic, thanks to our Brigade’s support.” (Telesur English, Dec. 4)

A special contingent of Cuban health professionals has supported Haitian doctors 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. □



Since 1998, Cuban medical teams have gone to Haiti to assist in health emergencies and after disasters.

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 coordinated protest marches. Demonstrations also took place in front of French embassies in the Netherlands and Germany.

The protests were targeting Article 24 of a new French security law that essentially makes it illegal to film any actions of the police. Anyone who puts a cop’s “face or any other 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 demonstration by the Adama Foundation — a group focused on the death of Adama Traoré, a Malian immigrant who died being “questioned” by the police — drew around 60,000 people. The Nov. 28 organizers had not expected larger crowds.

The cops, showing their repressive inclinations, had opposed even granting a permit for the Nov. 28 Paris march, alleging Yellow Vest and Black Box “provocateurs” would come. They were overruled by the courts.

well as on social media, showed cops tripping 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 Gérard Darmanin had to issue a tweet later that evening saying that the cops were going to investigate this “shocking” incident.

On Thursday, Nov. 26, the web news service Loopsider released videos of prominent French hip-hop artist and Black entrepreneur Michel Zecler being beaten by three cops. This beating was so shocking, so repulsive, so “unjustified” that it went viral, with over 14 million views by Friday evening. ([tinyurl.com/y35rmndr](http://tinyurl.com/y35rmndr))

would make the cops immune from prosecution. 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/yybosojd](http://tinyurl.com/yybosojd))

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-racist 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 photojournalist in the face. A building belonging to the Bank of France, the government’s central bank, was set on fire. □



In Paris, demonstrators carry a banner, “March for our freedom,” with a defaced portrait of the city’s chief police officer, Nov. 28.

**Out-of-control cops**

On Nov. 20 the National Assembly gave preliminary approval to Article 24. The next day, journalist groups put together some small preliminary demonstrations in several French cities. The cops clamped down on these, arresting 23 people.

On Nov. 23 the cops brutally broke up an encampment of homeless migrant people on the Place de la République in Paris. Videos on the mainstream nightly news, as

**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 personal 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





**Por Bryant Arroyo**

La política del Departamento de Correcciones contradice la supuesta responsabilidad de Wetzel de cuidado, custodia y control. La gente siente ansiedad. No podemos decir qué pasará de 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 están empleados aquí. Pero los altos funcionarios que toman estas decisiones los 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. Pero él no está aquí. Está en una oficina. [El personal] está en el piso. El pescado se pudre de la cabeza hacia abajo.

No se trata de transferencias de emergencia. Hay sitios del Plan B que se pueden usar en caso de desastre natural, pero no se están utilizando. En cambio, los prisioneros están siendo trasladados de los puntos críticos de COVID-19 a otras instalaciones.

¿Qué pasa si uno de ellos se contagia de un preso transferido de un punto de

alto riesgo y ese oficial se lo lleva a casa? ¿Entonces, qué tienes? Están creando un brote sobre otro, en lugar de encontrar una verdadera solución y protegernos a toda costa.

Posteriormente a este cambio de política, SCI Pine Grove anunció que transferirá a todos sus prisioneros adultos y se convertirá en un centro de detención exclusivamente para jóvenes. El Departamento de Correcciones tiene la intención de hacer esta transferencia masiva cuando el número de casos está en un punto crítico.

Las comidas generalmente se entregan durante los encierros, pero ahora los presos deben esperar en fila y llevar las comidas a sus celdas. Las comidas están frías cuando las reciben. Las comidas para quienes se encuentran en las Unidades de Modificación del Comportamiento y otras unidades de vivienda restringida se entregan en "carritos calientes" para mantenerlas calientes. Pero no hay suficientes [carritos] para la población en general. Ni siquiera es invierno, y las comidas ya están frías cuando los prisioneros las reciben.

## Ansiedad de aislamiento

Necesitamos sol, ejercicio y, lo más importante, interacción social. Estamos encerrados en nuestras celdas 23 horas al día. La crisis masiva de salud mental que está explotando en las cárceles, después de que [las personas] han estado confinadas así durante más de ocho meses, es ansiedad por aislamiento. Crea pánico, rabia, pérdida de control y total crisis mental. Necesitamos al menos dos horas [fuera de nuestras celdas]. Consecutivas. Sin intervalos. O tres horas, un período de día y otro de noche.

La tensión del confinamiento solitario está provocando que estallen peleas durante las pocas horas que los trabajadores encarcelados no están encerrados. Como una reacción química, el resultado final de la

ansiedad por aislamiento es que reaccionas y ardes. Es como si fuéramos perros hambrientos a los que nos sacaran de una jaula. Todo lo que quieres hacer es comer, nutrirte y sentirte normal. Y el secretario Wetzel ha puesto a todo el Departamento de Correcciones de Pensilvania en desafío directo a los protocolos establecidos por los Centros para el Control de Enfermedades.

Hay cien personas en la cuadra. Cada nivel tiene unas 50 personas. Se abren en un horario escalonado, un nivel a la vez en intervalos de una hora, lo que crea una situación que nos priva de nuestro tiempo completo. Incluso cuando las personas pueden congregarse en la cuadra, ¿pueden practicar un distanciamiento social seguro? De ningún modo. No puedes mantenerte a seis pies de distancia.

Los presos están tomando medidas extraordinarias para mantenerse a salvo. Estamos tomando nuestras duchas. Contamos con utensilios de limpieza adicionales para mantener la higiene al más alto nivel. Y eso lo demuestra el historial de lo que hemos estado haciendo durante los últimos siete u ocho meses, que ha funcionado.

Pero todo eso está cambiando a medida que las transferencias pandémicas de Wetzel hacen imposible que los presos se protejan del virus.

Para empeorar las cosas, los trabajadores encarcelados como John Ludovici han dado la alarma sobre una violación sistemática de sus derechos como pacientes de salud mental. Dice que sus dos psicólogos de planta trabajan en la misma oficina que el gerente de su unidad. La presencia de alguien que no es el proveedor de atención médica del paciente, y mucho menos alguien que es su carcelero, durante las sesiones es una violación flagrante de los derechos de privacidad consagrados en la Ley de Responsabilidad y Portabilidad del Seguro Médico.

Ludovici ha presentado una queja ante la junta de licencias que certificó a los dos psicólogos. También presentó una queja administrativa contra la gerente de su unidad, a pesar de ser presionado por ella para que no lo hiciera.

### Incumplimiento del protocolo

Hay personal tanto masculino como femenino que están sincera y genuinamente preocupados no solo por contraer [COVID-19], sino por llevárselo a sus familiares. Wetzel está abriendo las compuertas en una instalación donde básicamente no habíamos tenido casos.

El incumplimiento del protocolo es el hilo principal que une todo lo que les estoy explicando y revelando, mientras estoy aquí. En la actualidad y nuevamente, el secretario Wetzel es la persona detrás de esto.

Hay 256 reclusos [que] llenan los dormitorios, que están abiertos sin puertas de celda. Noventa y ocho hombres que fueron trasladados a Camp Hill durante las renovaciones recientes en esta unidad de vivienda ahora están siendo regresados a Frackville.

El personal lleva máscaras MP95. Los guardias reciben horas extras obligatorias debido a la escasez de personal, ya que hay quienes presuntamente están en cuarentena durante 14 días. No sé si volverán a examinar [a los guardias] después de eso.

Unos 28 reclusos adicionales acaban de llegar de [SCI] Dallas. Uno de ellos dio positivo a los anticuerpos; en otras palabras, ha estado expuesto al COVID-19. Luego le volvieron a hacer la prueba y dio negativo. Así que también nos preocupamos de eso.

Es una receta para el desastre.

*Esto es parte de una serie de artículos en curso basados en conversaciones de los reporteros de Workers World con Bryant Arroyo.*

# ¡La clase trabajadora se une en toda la India huelga de 250 millones de personas!

**Por Martha Grevatt**

Por segunda vez este año, una movilización global en una “huelga de toda la India” sacó a 250 millones de trabajadores. Con una de cada cuatro personas en edad de trabajar en la India participando, este paro laboral de 24 horas puede reclamar nuevamente el estatus de “la huelga más grande del mundo”. La primera huelga general récord tuvo lugar el 8 de enero.

Participaron diez de las federaciones laborales de la India, unidas bajo la “plataforma conjunta”. Cinco estados (Kerala, Puducherry, Odisha, Assam y Telangana) fueron cerrados por completo, mientras que la actividad diaria se redujo en muchos otros.

News Click, una fuente de noticias progresista de la India, informó el 26 de noviembre: “La huelga provocó la interrupción del trabajo en bancos, servicios financieros, diversos servicios gubernamentales, transporte, unidades de acero, puertos y muelles, servicios de telecomunicaciones, plantaciones, unidades de generación de energía, carbón y otras minas, unidades de producción de petróleo y gas natural, y millones de otras industrias diversas”.

El informe continúa: “Es probable que las oficinas gubernamentales, los ferrocarriles, los servicios de correos y telégrafos y decenas de otras oficinas gubernamentales también se vean afectados ya que los empleados realizarán manifestaciones de solidaridad. Varias [cientos de miles] mujeres que trabajan como trabajadoras / ayudantes de Anganwadi [guardería infantil rural], trabajadoras de la salud, cocineras de mediodía y las empleadas en otros planes administrados por el gobierno también se han declarado en huelga”.

Citando la declaración conjunta del sindicato, dice: “Se han recibido informes de huelgas exitosas en minas de carbón y cobre, incluidas otras minas de recursos minerales. Los empleados de los sectores postal, de telecomunicaciones y siderúrgico también estuvieron en acción y los gramindak sevaks [trabajadores postales rurales] observaron una huelga del 100 por ciento”. ([tinyurl.com/y4wsthaw](http://tinyurl.com/y4wsthaw))

## Asentamientos, bloqueos de calles

Los huelguistas realizaron sentadas y manifestaciones masivas y bloquearon el tráfico y las vías del tren. Quemaron una efigie del presidente de derecha Narendra

Modi. Hubo una participación masiva de los trabajadores desempleados, no organizados, autónomos y del sector informal, así como de estudiantes. Las mujeres jugaron un papel destacado.

La plataforma conjunta **toda la India** de las federaciones laborales planteó demandas de ingresos mínimos, alimentos para las familias pobres, un número de jornadas garantizadas, salarios más altos, pensiones para todos y el fin de las jubilaciones anticipadas forzadas. Pidió al gobierno que detenga las privatizaciones y también retire todas las “leyes contra los agricultores y los códigos laborales contra los trabajadores”. Surgieron demandas adicionales en torno a una serie de cuestiones, desde la finalización de la subcontratación del trabajo hasta la reimposición de la jornada de 12 horas. La provisión de medidas de seguridad para detener la propagación de COVID fue un tema clave, ya que India tiene la segunda tasa de infección por coronavirus más alta del mundo. (Worldometers, 29 de noviembre)

Mientras 250 millones de trabajadores estaban en huelga, agricultores de todo el



Las mujeres jugaron un papel destacado en la huelga de toda la India, el 26 de noviembre.

país intentaron marchar hacia Delhi, la capital del país. Están protestando por un nuevo “proyecto de ley agrícola” a favor de las empresas agrícolas, pero los agricultores también se solidarizan plenamente con los trabajadores.

Las fuerzas gubernamentales bloquearon los caminos de los agricultores con barricadas y alambre de púas, y dispararon gas lacrimógeno y cañones de agua en medio del frío. Pero, anticipándose a los obstáculos impuestos por el gobierno, los agricultores empacaron una variedad de suministros, desde alimentos y agua hasta cargadores de teléfonos celulares. Estos agricultores decididos se negaron a moverse, rompiendo los bloqueos hasta que se les permitió ir al Parlamento y presentar sus demandas. □