

‘Red House on Mississippi Ave.’ Portland activists block eviction

By Johnnie Lewis
Portland, Ore.

Dec. 14 — The Kinney family — owners of the now internationally famous “Red House on Mississippi” — is the last Black-Indigenous family in their neighborhood. They have been fighting foreclosure, and now eviction, since 2018.

The house, purchased in 1955, is in the Albina district — a collection of neighborhoods in the only sections of Portland where Black people were allowed to own property for most of the 20th century. The district, home to the majority of the city’s Black population, has long been under attack by developers and gentrifiers and targeted for so-called urban renewal — actually, removal. This once vibrant Black community has been destroyed.

In its place, the banks — historical redliners — and wealthy real estate developers, aided and abetted by the city’s white politicians, have built an interstate highway, a sports arena, a hospital expansion, along with thousands of new, high-priced houses, condos and apartments. For the most part, people of color, poor and working people have been priced out of Albina, where the median price of a house is now \$649,000.

The Kinneys say they paid their mortgage on time but got caught up in a predatory loan scheme to take their home. Urban Housing Development LLC purchased the property in 2018, but the family remained in the house while pursuing lawsuits in state and federal court to keep the home.

After a years-long court battle over the foreclosure, a judge ordered the Kinneys evicted in September 2020. The attempt to evict the family led to a mobilization of militant support.

‘Red House Autonomous Zone’

In an effort to defend the Kinney family from eviction, hundreds of Black Lives Matter, antifa, black bloc, Occupy,



Joined by supporters, the Kinney family resists eviction from their home.

Popular Mobilization and other Black youth, people of color, white, queer revolutionaries have established a Red House Autonomous Zone similar to Seattle’s Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone. It involves a compound of about six square blocks around the house that includes a kitchen serving free meals and a coffee shop supporting the movement with free coffee. On Dec. 8, the compound was attacked by Portland police.

On Dec. 10, this reporter entered the compound, now behind 10-foot-high barricades, to learn more about the police assault. I was warmly greeted by defenders, offered free food but asked to not take photos. It helped that I brought a Workers World newspaper with the headline: “Evo Morales returns, Bolivians eject coup regime.”

A Black leader-organizer, asking to remain anonymous, told WW: “Early on the morning of Dec. 8, at least 50 police vehicles, sirens going off, blue lights flash-

The house, purchased in 1955, is in the Albina district, a collection of neighborhoods in the only sections of Portland where Black people were allowed to own property for most of the 20th century. The district, home to the majority of the city’s Black population, has long been under attack by developers and gentrifiers, and targeted for so-called urban renewal — actually, removal.

ing, blocked off street intersections all around here. At least 100 Portland cops and Multnomah County sheriffs — looking like Robocops — attacked the Red

House.”

Police broke down the front door and assaulted the owner Michael Kinney and others asleep in the house. Deputy sheriffs arrested them and charged them with trespass in their own house. Their guests were also arrested.


The defenders were unable to stop the initial assault on the house and the arrest of Michael Kinney and the others inside. But very quickly the hundreds of defenders regrouped and prevented the deputies, who were backed by the cops, from taking possession of the property and house and removing its contents.

The organizer recounted how defenders armed with wooden banner and placard poles, broom handles, tree limbs, baseball bats, trash can lids and other homemade defensive weapons, in an organized and military fashion, “pushed the cops down the street and out of the neighborhood.”

Another activist told WW: “Twelve of our people were grabbed by the cops, but for lack of evidence, most were released uncharged. The Portland cops announced the same day that they would arrest no more until those arrested were actually charged with something.”

It was clear that the activists were serious about defending the Kinney family. While in the compound, this reporter was told by young activists: “We’re here to stop the eviction. We’re waiting for our marching orders.” Just then a platoon of maybe 30 people marched by, chanting in cadence, carrying poles and shields. As a former U.S. Army soldier and an organizer for the American Servicemen’s Union (1968-69), this reporter knows a military formation when they see one.

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Release Mumia now!

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

The Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police has done everything possible to silence Mumia Abu-Jamal and bury his fight for justice. In February their obstruction even included filing a “King’s Bench” petition — which sidesteps and pre-empts all other judicial or appeal procedures — to attempt a change in venue for his appeals hearing.

But Abu-Jamal’s global supporters, insisting on his innocence and demanding his immediate release, have other ideas.

Twice recently, a broad coalition of U.S. and international groups and individuals has succeeded in gaining major media coverage for the former Black Panther and journalist, who is Pennsylvania’s best-known political prisoner. On Nov. 16, former football star and Black Lives Matter activist Colin Kaepernick issued a statement in support of Abu-Jamal. This aired during a virtual press conference that included prison abolitionist leader Dr. Angela Davis, and other luminaries. Mainstream media, including CNN, have continued to raise Abu-Jamal’s case as a result.

On Dec. 9, on the 39th anniversary of Abu-Jamal’s unjust incarceration, supporters again caught the attention of the media with a live press conference in West Philadelphia near Malcolm X Park. There, less than two months earlier, anti-police brutality protesters clashed with Philadelphia police following the cop shooting of Walter Wallace, Jr.

The anniversary gathering also included a free food giveaway and the launch of Abu-Jamal’s newest book, “Murder Incorporated Vol. 3: Perfecting Tyranny.” Those attending were treated to free donuts and coffee as several news outlets and independent journalists covered the event, despite the bitterly cold and windy weather. (More information available at prisonradiostore.com.)

Marking the day that Abu-Jamal was shot and wrongly arrested for the murder of a Philadelphia police officer, the event was organized by a coalition that included



Pam Africa speaking at Dec. 9 press conference to ‘Free Mumia now!’

Mobilization4Mumia, Campaign to Bring Mumia Home, International Concerned Friends & Family of Mumia Abu-Jamal, and MOVE.

Speakers included Pam Africa, Minister of Confrontation for International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal; Mumia’s spouse, Wadiya Jamal; Noelle Hanrahan with Prison Radio; Yahné Ndgo from Black Alliance for Peace; Ted Kelly with the Prisoners Solidarity Committee of Workers World Party; Razakhan Wali of Nation TIME Judicial Research; Gabriel Bryant with the Black Philly Radical Collective, and others.

Pam Africa unveiled a local campaign to rename a Philadelphia street “Mumia Abu-Jamal Way.” Freed MOVE 9 members Janet and Janine Africa spoke and denounced the Philadelphia City Council’s recent apology for the city having imprisoned them for 41 years, calling it a “public relations stunt.”

Janine Africa stated: “An apology with no action behind it is meaningless. Show us a symbol of your sincerity by releasing Mumia Abu-Jamal.” □



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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

Join us in the fight for socialism!

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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- | | |
|--|--|
| National Office
147 W. 24th St., 2nd floor
New York, NY 10011
212.627.2994
wwp@workers.org | Boston
284 Amory St.
Boston, MA 02130
617.522.6626
boston@workers.org |
| Atlanta
PO Box 18123
Atlanta, GA 30316
404.627.0185
atlanta@workers.org | Buffalo, N.Y.
335 Richmond Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14222
716.883.2534
buffalo@workers.org |
| Austin
austin@workers.org | Central Gulf Coast
(Alabama, Florida, Mississippi)
centralgulfcoast@workers.org |
| Bay Area
P.O. Box 22947
Oakland, CA 94609
510.394.2207
bayarea@workers.org | Cleveland
216.738.0320
cleveland@workers.org |

- | | |
|--|--|
| Dallas
dallas@workers.org | Portland, Ore.
portland@workers.org |
| Durham, N.C.
804 Old Fayetteville St.
Durham, NC 27701
919.322.9 970
durham@workers.org | Salt Lake City
801.750.0248
slc@workers.org |
| Houston
P.O. Box 3454
Houston, TX 77253-3454
713.503.2633
houston@workers.org | San Antonio
sanantonio@workers.org |
| Philadelphia
P.O. Box 34249
Philadelphia, PA 19101
610.931.2615
phila@workers.org | West Virginia
WestVirginia@workers.org |

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Workers World
147 W. 24th St., 2nd Fl.
New York, NY 10011
Phone: 212.627.2994
E-mail: ww@workers.org
Web: www.workers.org



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Editors: John Catalinotto, Martha Grevatt, Deirdre Griswold, Monica Moorehead, Betsey Piette, Minnie Bruce Pratt

Web Editors: ABear, Harvey Markowitz, Janet Mayes

Prisoners Page Editors: Mirinda Crissman, Ted Kelly

Production & Design Editors: Gery Armsby, Mirinda Crissman, Sasha Mazumder, Scott Williams

Copyediting and Proofreading: Paddy Colligan, S. Hedgecoke

Contributing Editors: LeiLani Dowell, G. Dunkel, K. Durkin, Sara Flounders, Teresa Gutierrez, Joshua Hanks, Makasi Motema, Gloria Rubac

Mundo Obrero: Teresa Gutierrez, Carlos Vargas

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WW PHOTO: MAUREEN SKEHAN
Ed Childs, UNITE HERE Local 26, with Bishop Felipe Teixeira, in solidarity with Indian workers and farmers on Dec. 12.

Boston rallies for striking workers, farmers in India

By Steve Gillis
Boston

Hundreds of millions of Indian workers and farmers staged the world’s largest strike on Nov. 26 and are continuing to shut down areas of the economy. On Dec. 12, the anniversary of the racist and discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act of India’s fascist-minded Modi government, the Boston South Asian Coalition brought international solidarity with these laborers to an organizing center of the world-imperialist project: Harvard Square in Cambridge, Mass.

Nearly 100 people came out in the pouring rain to denounce the U.S. and Indian governments’ violent police-state and austerity attacks against India’s multinational working class.

Speakers from a broad range of progressive organizations applauded the occupation of New Delhi by hundreds of thousands of farmers, who have been brought to starvation by neoliberal laws slashing compensation for their produce.

Speakers representing the Free Saibaba Coalition, Alliance for a Secular and Democratic South Asia, Indian American Muslim Council, Workers World Party, Party for Socialism and Liberation, and UNITE HERE Local 26 were among the many inspiring voices livestreamed with coordinated international actions.

Workers World Party’s solidarity statement, given by Maureen Skehan, called “for the U.S. to immediately withdraw all aid and support to the repressive Modi government.” Skehan added: “To hell with the new anti-worker farm bills and labor codes that will reap megaprofits for greedy Wall Street agribusinesses like Bayer-Monsanto, and stifle workers’ rights and wages!”

For more information, go to facebook.com/TheBostonCoalition/. □

‘Solidarity with the people, not the state’

By Maureen Skehan

Skehan delivered the Workers World Party solidarity message at the Dec. 12 action called by the Boston South Asian Coalition in support of farmers and workers in India who are leading historic strikes.

As we come together on a rainy Saturday, there is much cause for revolutionary optimism as we lift up and learn from the mighty workers’ struggle in India today.

On Dec. 15 of last year, the courageous women-led uprising in Shaheen Bagh, Delhi, was born in direct response to India’s state-sponsored violence and repression against Muslim students, workers, their families and migrants. With women in the lead, this movement quickly spread across India and electrified the world, inspiring women workers and our class everywhere.

The breadth and strength of the Shaheen Bagh movement caused the Modi government and its imperialist backers in the U.S. and Britain to tremble with fear, seeing the organized determination of the workers and most oppressed in society fighting back. Well, they’re still trembling today after two world historic strikes have shook the Indian state and global capitalist system in just a year’s time!

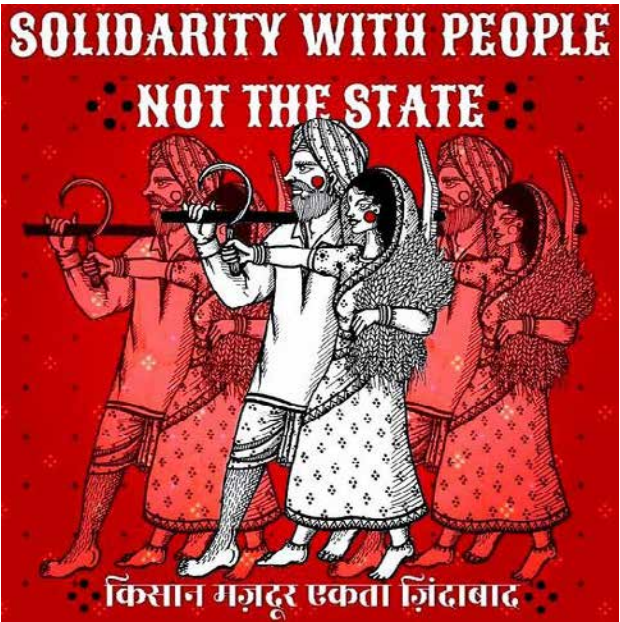
Workers World Party salutes and applauds the latest massive Nov. 26 strike of 250 million plus workers and farmers that shut down India. This massive outpouring of militant, organized labor is exactly what is needed here in the U.S. It is also why there is almost zero coverage in the U.S. corporate-controlled media of this historic workers’ mobilization against austerity and repression.

The U.S. ruling class fears what the working class is capable of when it gets inspired, organized and unified in demanding social, economic and political justice, along with reparations for centuries of crimes against Indigenous and Black and Brown peoples.

The farmers who grow the food to feed the people must be defended and their rights and just compensation restored! To hell with the new anti-farmer bills and labor codes that will reap megaprofits for the greedy agribusinesses and bosses while stifling workers rights and wages!

The images of farmers breaking through blockades to march on Parliament and workers holding sit-ins and mass rallies, blocking train tracks and burning effigies of Modi — all of these would bring much holiday cheer to U.S. workers under attack, if they could see and feel the strength of this massive, coordinated fightback.

Workers here want to study and learn from the organizing methods and tactics of workers in India, and the unions, and socialist and communist organizations — on how they reach the masses and mobilize them into an organized strike force.



GRAPHIC: BOSTON SOUTH ASIAN COALITION

Today, we must prepare to “Fight or die!” as the triple threat of Covid deaths, systemic racist terror and capitalist decay accelerates, causing misery for workers everywhere!

We call for the U.S. government to immediately withdraw all aid and support for the repressive Modi government. We demand a repeal of its discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act. We call for the Boston City Council and cities across the U.S. to pass resolutions condemning discriminatory and racist laws in India, supported by U.S. imperialism. We see a direct parallel between the CAA and U.S. laws written to terrorize Black, Brown, Indigenous, immigrant and poor workers, including caging children and families and executing oppressed and disabled people incarcerated on death row.

This latest strike of over a quarter billion people in India is an earthquake of resistance and the aftershocks can be felt from Wall Street to Fleet Street — by all of finance capital. The Modi government and imperial powers have effectively been “served notice.” Their time is up!

This organized resistance by the workers in India is what we need here at home to fight hunger, evictions, unemployment, racist police murders, the tortuous, for-profit prison system, oppression of migrants and capitalism’s destruction of the planet.

We dream of a sea of U.S. workers marching in their own class interest, and waving red flags, a symbol of the workers’ strength and unity against capitalism — as we have seen in India, and in China, Cuba, Venezuela and Vietnam where socialism is advancing.

Together let’s globalize workers solidarity and build workers power! Long live the fighting spirit of the Shaheen Baghs! Long live Revolutionary Socialism! □

‘Red House on Mississippi Ave.’

Portland activists block eviction

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Since the arrests, more and more fighters have gathered behind the 10-foot-high barricades surrounding the house, where many live round the clock. People have brought in boxes of food and crates of bottled water, firewood, sleeping bags, tents, canvas sheets and more. The nice smell of food cooked, along with the biting but pleasant aroma of smoke from cedar wood fires, wafted over the compound.

Barricades were strengthened in anticipation of more police attacks. Groups of a dozen or so stood watch around wood fires near entrances, armed for self-defense. Oregon is an “open carry” state, meaning that most people are allowed to carry firearms openly without a permit.

Resistance wins

The determination to defend the last Black family in the Albina appears to have paid off.

KGW News reported Dec. 10 that the

developer who bought the Red House is willing to sell it back to the Kinneys at cost. As of Dec. 11, a GoFundMe campaign had raised over \$280,000 — enough for the Kinneys to buy back their home under such a deal. The developer seems to be responding to public pressure — but has not yet directly contacted the family.

According to a Dec. 14 statement by the Kinney family, Portland’s Mayor Ted Wheeler has had to back down on his threat to use cops to evict the family by force. The family has demanded and received a public apology from Wheeler for harm caused to the family and for “the emotional violence caused by evictions against Black and Indigenous families.”

The statement conveys firmly that, as the family has not yet secured their home, supporters would still be present, defending them and the house.

Lyn Neeley contributed to this article.

New York City

Cops and landlords go hand in hand



With the looming Jan. 31 expiration of the federal ban on evictions — and landlords already evicting tenants — protests, stoop defense and militant housing actions are spreading.

In Brooklyn, a Dec. 11 downtown protest that began at housing court made the just demand to stop all evictions during the twin pandemics of COVID and joblessness. Ralliers were met by violence and arrests by the NYPD. The crowd of about 50 people faced dozens of police, two helicopters and at least ten police vans. Cops put 20 people in jail, one of them an 80-year-old woman.

Dozens of people mobilized jail support and cheered protesters when they were released from jail later that night. Their arrests and detention also exposed them to COVID. A video of the police attacking the anti-eviction protesters went viral.

— Photo and report by Tony Murphy

Now’s the time to ‘accelerate our efforts’ to free Mumia

By Angela Davis

Professor Angela Davis, herself once a political prisoner, is a founding member of Critical Resistance, a national organization dedicated to dismantling the prison industrial complex. On Nov. 16, Davis delivered the following remarks during the virtual press conference “Freedom & Abolition: A critical moment in the fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal.”

Mumia Abu-Jamal has played such a pivotal role in the processes of popular education that have led us to this critical juncture and what one might call the century-and-a-half-year-old effort to acknowledge the structural and systemic character of racism and to take seriously the demands for abolition. Abolition of the death penalty, of prisons, of the police. And so it is right and just that we should accelerate our efforts, on this new terrain, to finally free our brother-comrade.

Much attention has been focused on Philadelphia recently from the elections, to the police killing of Walter Wallace because he was experiencing a mental health crisis, to the arrest by federal agents of the teacher and community activist Anthony Smith—and we know that barely a week before his arrest, Philadelphia Magazine had applauded Anthony Smith’s community service and his exceptional leadership. And all around the world we have followed the work of Anthony Smith’s organization, the Black Philadelphia Radical Collective, and many of us passionately support the 13 demands they have submitted.

We know also that the City Council in Philadelphia recently offered an apology, an official apology, for the 1985 bombing which killed 11 MOVE members, including five children, and completely destroyed 61 homes.

So I’ve been asked to briefly describe Mumia’s case in the context of the long history of political repression in this country and in the context of the utilization of the criminal legal system to produce pretexts for incarcerating people who have chosen to develop radical resistance strategies in relation to racist state violence.

Mumia is a relatively younger member of a generation of Black radical activists and intellectuals who have challenged the structural and systemic character of racism long before this recognition helped to accelerate efforts to reimagine some of our society’s fundamental institutions. Because of our radical stances we were targeted by the state. In many instances the state demonized and railroaded countless numbers of Black radicals, some of us who were freed, but many of whom have been imprisoned for as many as five or six decades.

Mumia was targeted by the Philadelphia police and COINTELPRO, beginning with his membership in the Black Panther Party. His declassified 500-page FBI file shows that the Philadelphia police, in consultation with COINTELPRO, for many years had tried to peg a crime on Mumia. We also know that at least one-third of the police involved in his case were jailed after it was discovered that they had systematically tampered with evidence in large numbers of cases across the city of Philadelphia.

COINTELPRO’s role in Mumia’s frameup

I think that few people know that the investigation of the killing of Daniel Faulkner, the policeman whom Mumia is accused of killing, that this investigation was conducted not by the homicide unit of the Philadelphia police department but by its “Civil Defense Unit,” which was the local police arm of [former FBI Director] J. Edgar Hoover’s COINTELPRO.

In 1981, Mumia was sentenced to death. And from death row [he] produced brilliant critiques of the prison industrial complex, mass incarceration, capital punishment, and other institutional consequences of racial capitalism. Many of us are aware of the fact that his widely circulated writings have helped to humanize people in prison and people on death row.

Like many others of my age, I’ve been an active supporter of Mumia for many decades. And I’ve had the honor of speaking on his behalf at United Nations conferences and other international venues where Mumia, for example, was declared an honorary citizen of Paris. (The last person before him to receive that distinction was Pablo Picasso [in 1971].) I participated in that ceremony in Paris as his surrogate.

Leonard Peltier, Mutulu Shakur, Russell Maroon Shoatz, Ed Poindexter, Veronza Bowers, Romaine “Chip” Fitzgerald, David Gilbert, and my former co-defendant Ruchell Magee are just a few of the U.S. political prisoners who have spent the vast majority of their lives behind bars and as we know are currently the most vulnerable with respect to COVID-19. We’ve already



Angela Davis speaking at press conference for Mumia, Nov. 16. WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

heard about Russell Maroon Shoatz’s condition. And we’ve heard [Yale professor and global health activist] Gregg Gonsalves emphasize the need for compassionate decarceration, an abolitionist strategy.

Thanks to international organizing efforts, Mumia is perhaps the most well-known political prisoner in the world. And these international efforts saved his life when he came dangerously close to execution in 1995. Mumia’s case exemplifies the length to which the state will go to silence those who speak truth to power. And this is why the Fraternal Order of Police has been unrelenting in its attempt to silence him and his supporters.

But now that structures of policing have finally been exposed for their systemic racism, and as we call for justice in the names of Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd, and Walter Wallace, and so many others, and now that the city of Philadelphia has issued an official apology to MOVE, now is the time to accelerate our campaign to bring Mumia home. Let’s not forget that Mumia’s identification with MOVE and his empathetic reporting on the city’s repression of MOVE rendered him a major target of the Rizzo administration.

Mumia’s case and the abolition movement

As you’ve heard from Johanna [Fernandez] and others—Linn Washington for example—his case is riddled with violations. Especially the concealing of exculpatory evidence and the presence of Kenneth Freeman at the scene

, of the killing of Daniel Faulkner although the prosecutor was aware of the fact that Freeman had been identified as the shooter by four witnesses. And [on May 13th, 1985] the same night of the MOVE bombing, Kenneth Freeman was found dead in a parking lot, gagged and handcuffed.

We know that there were clear violations in relation to the selection of the jury. Eleven out of the prosecution’s 14 peremptory challenges were used to eliminate Black jurors. Of course, this in itself, as it’s already been pointed out, supports the call for a new trial. The Supreme Court has ruled that the elimination of jurors on the basis of race is a major violation. And as Johanna and others have pointed out, newly discovered file boxes in the DA’s office, which were there for 37 years or so, contained a list of potential jurors highlighting their race.

And perhaps even more egregious are the instructional tapes that were produced by Assistant District Attorney Jack McMahon, who pointed out that educated Black people should not be selected to serve on the jury. But also, as he said, “Blacks from the low-income area are less likely to convict” and, as a result, “I don’t want these people on your jury.” As he said: “It may appear that you’re being racist or whatnot but again you’re just being realistic. You’re just trying to win the case.”

So finally, the framing of Mumia and his incarceration are part of a larger story of structural racism and repression linked to global capitalism, linked to racial capitalism. Racism drives incarceration and infects policing all over the world, from Rio de Janeiro to Johannesburg, to London, to Paris. Here in the U.S., mass incarceration especially affects Indigenous people and Black and Latinx communities.

And I think we need to emphasize the fact that the very same forces that have driven the creation of the prison industrial complex are responsible for the fact that many people in other countries, in countries of the Global South, have seen their whole economies destroyed by capitalist incursions. They have no other choice than to flee. Thus, the borders and the walls and immigrant detention facilities are integrally linked to racist policing and the prison industrial complex.

I should point out that abolitionist strategies emphasize the connections of all of these institutions. At a time when structural critiques of racism are gaining traction, and specifically its centrality to policing, we gather here to demand the release of Mumia Abu-Jamal and other political prisoners whose trials and sentences were irreparably influenced by their political beliefs and by their challenges to this very system. □

The framing of Mumia and his incarceration are part of a larger story of structural racism and repression linked to global capitalism, linked to racial capitalism.

Buffalo, N.Y. Anti-racists oppose ‘Watchmen’ hate group

By Workers World Buffalo bureau

A group of antifascists and community members assembled Dec. 5 across the street from a park next to a low-income housing project in an industrial area in north Buffalo, N.Y. They came to oppose a parade organized by the Rolling Patriots, a white supremacist group.

The anti-racist demonstrators held signs condemning the presence of extreme right-wing groups and



Buffalo, Dec. 5. WW PHOTO

demanding better protections for workers facing the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Rolling Patriots often participate in anti-mask, anti-shutdown events, catering to the interests of business owners who want to remain open despite all-time-high COVID-19 infection rates in Erie County. They endanger the health and well-being of frontline workers and the general public.

The Patriots use anti-mask and anti-shutdown rhetoric to lure people in and recruit many for more violent white supremacist groups.

Their parade was attended by members of the Watchmen, a local hate group that also has connections with other far-right extremist groups like the Proud Boys and the Aryan Renaissance Society.

As the Patriots’ caravan left the parking lot to start their parade, Watchmen and Proud Boys approached the anti-racist demonstrators, armed with heavy flashlights and stun guns. A short scuffle broke out, but no serious injuries occurred.

The anti-racist demonstrators held strong against the fascist threats and attacks, while Tonawanda police, Erie County Sheriffs and New York State Troopers looked on, making no arrests.

The message from the community was clear: the people of Western New York oppose racism and fascism—whether it manifests itself openly, or hides behind anti-mask propaganda. □

Car hits anti-ICE march

New York City

By G. Dunkel
New York City

Since the beginning of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2014, there have been at least 100 car attacks on protesters in the U.S.

Most recently, in Manhattan near 39th St. and Third Ave., a car plowed at high speed through a group of protesters on Dec. 12. They had been marching in solidarity with a hunger strike by people incarcerated at the ICE detention center in Bergen County, N.J. The jail is just across the Hudson River from Manhattan.

The marchers were chanting “Free them! Free them all!” immediately before the car struck. Six people were hospitalized, with injuries ranging from minor to serious.

The driver was Kathleen Casillo, a 52-year-old white woman from the New York City borough of Queens. The police went easy on her. She received a desk appearance ticket for “reckless endangerment” after she told the cops that the protesters “frightened” her. In most cases, a desk appearance implies a misdemeanor charge, given for a relatively minor act.

In contrast, the cops ticketed one protester Nicole Besuden, for “obstruction of governmental administration” and “disorderly conduct” simply because she was helping a friend who had been hit by the car when an EMT driver arrived to pick up the injured person.

Some protesters claimed on Twitter that the police, who flooded the area with bicycle cops after the car strike, arrested a number of protesters. Some Twitter



Protesters regroup after a car drives into their anti-ICE march in Manhattan.

video feeds show cops forcing protesters into unmarked cars.

Coverage of this violent incident was widely picked up on international social media. A chilling video clip on Twitter of the car accelerating through the crowd has been viewed tens of thousands of times. □

Detroit State representative confronts white supremacy

By Martha Grevatt

Trump attorney Rudy Giuliani took his road show—aimed at disenfranchising Black voters—to the Michigan State Legislature’s House Oversight Committee on Dec. 2. At that hearing an African-American member of the committee, Rep. Cynthia A. Johnson of Detroit, raised a point of order asking why the chair was “allowing people to come in and lie.” Rather than address Johnson’s courageous challenge, Republican Chair Matt Hall ruled her out of order.

Rep. Johnson is a Detroit community activist first elected to the State House last year. She says that since the hearing she has received “thousands” of calls that include death threats and despicable slurs. Speaking on CNN, she compared the racist and misogynistic abuse to domestic violence, but said she is not afraid of the “cowards” who sent anonymous messages.



Michigan State Rep. Cynthia A. Johnson of Detroit calls out Rudy Giuliani, Dec. 2.

In a video posted on social media, Johnson defied the bigots. “This is just a warning to you Trumpers: Be careful. Walk lightly. We ain’t playing with you. Enough of the shenanigans. Enough is enough,” she said. “And for those of you who are soldiers, you know how to do it. Do it right. Be in order. Make them pay.”

Johnson’s righteous response drew the ire of Michigan House Speaker Lee Chatfield, who removed her from all committee assignments, including the Oversight Committee and Families, Children and Seniors Committee. Chatfield said he was “looking into further disciplinary action as the proper authorities conduct their own investigations.” In a Dec. 9 statement he said, “We have been consistent in our position on this — violence and intimidation is never appropriate in politics.”

In response to that outrageous allegation of “violence and intimidation,”

Johnson clarified that by “soldiers” she meant “soldiers for Christ, soldiers against racism, soldiers against domestic violence, soldiers against domestic terrorism.” However, rather than rushing to her defense, Democratic Party officials, including Michigan’s Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, have taken a wishy-washy position — denouncing both the threats against Johnson and her response to them. This draws an equal sign between racism and opposition to racism.

The exception is the Michigan Legislative Black Caucus, which issued a statement demanding Speaker Chatfield “apologize and reinstate Representative Cynthia A. Johnson to her committee assignments immediately.” Now even Gov. Whitmer is saying Chatfield went too far in removing Johnson from her committees.

Community rallies behind Johnson

Johnson’s activism did not begin with her election to office. In 2015, for example, she organized “Light Walks.” Held at night, the weekly walks continued for months until finally the city installed working street lights in the Dexter/Waverly area

of Detroit. (Workers World, Sept. 3, 2015)

Unlike the Democratic establishment, Detroit community organizations have denounced the attacks on Rep. Johnson. Michigan United issued a statement of support, saying, “Rather than continue this futile effort to silence Black voices, lawmakers should instead unite to confront our common enemy, the virus.”

Detroit Action stated: “The call for civility from the Michigan Democratic Party is woefully insufficient as it fails to adequately support Rep. Johnson, fails to address how Rep. Johnson’s treatment is steeped in misogynoir, and fails to address the actual pain that representatives of color are dealing with when faced with actual death threats.”

The Moratorium Now! Coalition is holding an “All out — Support Cynthia Johnson” demonstration outside Rep. Johnson’s home on Dec. 16.

Racist attacks on legislators of color, along with racist voter suppression, serve to bolster national oppression, settler colonialism and capitalist exploitation. These attacks must be challenged at every turn. □

Columbus, Ohio Justice for Casey Goodson!

By Martha Grevatt

Franklin County Sheriff’s Deputy Michael Jason Meade killed Casey “Tank” Goodson Jr. in his family’s Columbus, Ohio, home on Dec. 4. According to family eyewitnesses, Goodson “literally walked across the yard, walked into the back fence to get to the side door, had his Subway [sandwich] and mask in one hand [and] keys in the other, unlocked and opened the door and stepped in the house” — and then was shot. The family dispute claims by the sheriff’s department that Goodson pointed a gun at Meade. (Black Queer Intersectional Collective of Ohio facebook)

Goodson’s gun was licensed and he had a concealed carry weapon permit. He was legally armed when Meade killed him. He had no criminal record and was not even the person sheriff’s deputies were looking for. The murder of the 23-year-old Goodson has sparked mass anger.

Hundreds attended a rally on Dec. 12 co-sponsored by Black Queer Intersectional Collective (BQIC) of Ohio, People’s Justice Project, Black Abolitionist Collective of



Casey Goodson

Ohio and the Central Ohio Freedom Fund. Speakers included Goodson’s siblings, uncle and mother, who all spoke lovingly of “Tank.” Goodson’s sixth-grade teacher, with whom he reconnected as an adult, gave remarks, along with Pastor Mike Young and speakers for sponsoring groups. The family attorney, Sean Walton Jr., spoke on many issues raised by the case, including the right of Black people to bear arms.

There had also been a rally the previous evening called by Black Liberation Movement Central Ohio and Deescalate Ohio Now! Heartbeat Movement.

No charges in homicide

Goodson’s family has made eight demands: the immediate termination, arrest and indictment of Michael Jason Meade for the murder of Casey Goodson Jr; revocation of Jason Meade’s pension; transparency in the investigation and release of all video and audio recordings; immediate release of evidence to Casey’s mother, Tamala Payne; Franklin County Sheriff’s Department cover the funeral

expenses of Casey Goodson Jr.; the firing of Columbus Police Chief Thomas Quinlan for negligence in failing to contact the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation in a timely manner; commitment from Franklin County Commissioners to divest from Franklin County Sheriff’s Department; and commitment from the Columbus City Council to divest from Columbus Police Department. (BQIC facebook)

According to BQIC, “the investigation has been terrible from the beginning, with Columbus Police intentionally not calling in the correct people to process a police brutality incident.” The state Bureau of Criminal Investigation then declined to take the case. The investigation is now in the hands of the FBI and the U.S. Department of Justice.

The Franklin County coroner ruled the cause of death as homicide. There were “multiple gunshot wounds to the torso.”

Since the shooting, it has come to light that Meade is a right-wing pastor who manages to find Biblical “justification” for



Nighttime rally for Casey Goodson, Dec. 11, Columbus.

police brutality. These views, voiced in a 2018 sermon and in his interview for his current job the same year, apparently did not raise any red flags with the sheriff’s office.

Columbus police are known for excessive use of force, including against demonstrators protesting the lynching of George Floyd. The rally crowd held up the names of Henry Green, Julius Tate Jr., Tyree King, and others killed in recent years by Columbus police and around the state.

At the protest, people chanted “Lock up Jason Meade!” and “Justice for Casey Goodson!” A march followed the rally. Solidarity demonstrations were held in other cities. □

Defend incarcerated workers!

By Monica Moorehead

These comments were given at the Dec. 10 webinar of the Prisoners Solidarity Committee of Workers World Party.

The theme of tonight’s webinar is “Build class solidarity with incarcerated workers: No walls in the workers’ struggle.” The PSC wanted to sponsor this webinar on International Human Rights Day — the day in 1948 that the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The UDHR is a document that supposedly proclaims “the inalienable rights which everyone is entitled to as a human being — regardless of race, color, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”

But as revolutionary activists, we know that these words ring hollow for those living in the belly of the beast, the U.S. — a country built on the legacy of stolen Indigenous lands, slavery, colonialism and wage slavery. We live under a capitalist system that

puts profits before people’s needs; where millions of people are disenfranchised because of their nationality, gender identity, gender expression, disabilities, age and/or their social status.

And this is especially true of incarcerated workers, who are super-exploited as slave labor and are super-repressed if they are people of color, women, gender non-conforming, disabled and/or elderly.



Prisoners suffer an even greater social stigma of demonization — that is, being labeled as dangerous, expendable. Therefore, millions are locked away, unseen and unheard, for years, for life — and even executed — whether they committed “crimes” or not.

Just look at all the federal executions that have occurred recently with rapid speed under Trump. Another one took place today and four more are scheduled for January.

But the incarcerated are part of our class, the working class, who are resisting terrible conditions intensified by the COVID-19 crisis, including unemployment, hunger, and evictions. Yes, incarcerated workers, be they in jails, prisons or detention centers, are also organizing and resisting decades of intolerable conditions, including COVID — especially incarcerated workers in Alabama, who are organizing a month-long work stoppage starting Jan. 1.

As someone who was born in Alabama, under the trauma known as segregation, I can only imagine

the multiple trauma of modern-day slavery conditions behind these walls, especially as the U.S. Justice Department is suing the Alabama prison system for violating the human rights of prisoners.

We will be hearing about this important struggle on the inside and also how our movement on the outside can show solidarity as a movement with them.

We will also be getting an update on the almost four-decades-long struggle to free political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, who was falsely arrested 39 years ago, on Dec. 9, 1981, and convicted of killing a police officer in July of 1982. Mumia was sentenced to death row — until he was released into general population in 2011 due to a worldwide movement to save his life. But the struggle continues to free him from a Pennsylvania dungeon — and now Colin Kaepernick has joined this fight.

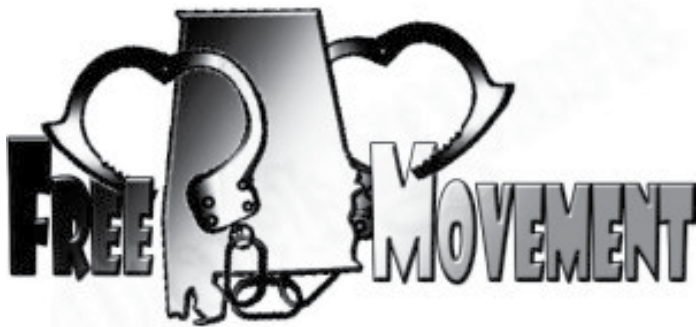
So as we prepare to usher in a new year of struggle and fightback, as we prepare to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the heroic Attica prison rebellion, we say, “Tear down the prison walls and free them all!” □



Swift Justice

‘A fight from the inside out’

These slightly edited comments are from a Dec. 10 webinar organized by the Prisoners Solidarity Committee of Workers World Party. Swift Justice is currently incarcerated within the Alabama Department of Corrections system. For more on prison stoppage by the Free Alabama Movement, see Workers World, Dec. 4.



Co-moderator Devin C.: What is the Free Alabama Movement? Some have deemed the Alabama prisons as the most inhumane in the U.S. Can you shed some light on some of the conditions there? Why is it important for people on the outside to show solidarity with these imprisoned workers’ January month-long work stoppage and economic blackout?

Swift Justice: I personally wouldn’t sit there and try to gauge how inhumane one prison is over another prison in the United States. Any prison that has any human rights violations is inhumane; it’s all equal in our eyes. The issue here in Alabama is that for so long society in Alabama — they just cherish the fact that individuals come to prison and are basically tortured and treated like animals.

The main frame of the “free society” is that “you should have thought about that before you did the crime, so you do the time.” The thing about that is every prison system that exists that has any kind of human rights violations, treating us as animals instead of human beings, is deplorable, just deplorable, and it’s an injustice.

Here in Alabama, we have seen over and over, and all throughout the years, overcrowding. Overcrowding is one of the leading factors why we have issues inside the prison such as violence and the unjustified deaths by overdoses and by natural causes as well. When you have overcrowding, you are heightening diseases, you’re heightening the issues of mental health — and you’re heightening

every aspect of any prison reform that people are fighting against today.

It’s really indescribable here. Guys live in filthy areas; they live in areas that are just inches away from another man. And with this coronavirus epidemic, it is even

worse — the denial of mental health and denial of medical treatment.

You would not have this [outside] in what we call “the free world.” So why would you have us sitting like this, but you call it rehabilitation?

Devin C.: This month of economic blackout and strike will cut right through a very important moment. On Jan. 20, we will see a transition of U.S. power from Donald Trump to Joe Biden. Neither of them is committed to prison abolition. Now that Biden has won under the guise that he is a progressive alternative to Trump, how will the Free Alabama Movement move forward to appeal to people to embrace prison abolition and not reform?

Swift Justice: I don’t think our focus is on Biden, as much as it is on society for real. Because one thing about Biden,

we already know Biden’s history. Nobody that is calling themselves a prison reformer, a prison abolitionist, a slavery abolitionist, is ignorant to the fact that Biden wrote the 1994 crime bill — which was a huge contributor to the overcrowding all over the U.S. in the federal prisons and adopted in the states.

Our focus is, we’re just going to keep moving forward. There’s nothing that’s gonna stop us from doing what we’re doing. We are dealing with the 13th Amendment itself [allowing slave labor in prisons] in a joint resolution that’s being processed through the Congress very soon, and the Department of Justice is suing the Alabama Department of Corrections.

Joe Biden, if anything, he’ll be the one who vetoes any changes. And he will not make any changes personally; the presidential powers don’t exist to that point. So we have to rely on those people that we

have put these legacies in. And it’s looking good; it’s really looking good right now. Bernie Sanders has been pushing. And, being that Bernie Sanders is actually sponsoring the bill to remove the exception clause out of the 13th Amendment, it

speaks volumes [to what the movement has done] because you got to remember, Bernie Sanders also voted for the 1994 crime bill.

Finally, this is all nothing but fuel to the fire. I mean, this should give spark to anybody who is in prison. As we’ve always said, this has been a fight from the inside out, not just an outside fight. We are not

going to sit back! We know as freedom fighters that nobody is going to be the “knight in shining armor.” We cannot depend on any elected official to do that.

We know that we’re going to have to fight for ourselves. In order to save us, we have to save us. □

As we’ve always said, this has been a fight from the inside out, not just an outside fight. We are not going to sit back! We know as freedom fighters that nobody is going to be the “knight in shining armor.” We cannot depend on any elected official to do that.



Kempis Ghani Songster

'The struggle of working people in the prison system'

These slightly edited comments are from the Dec. 10 webinar organized by the Prisoners Solidarity Committee of Workers World Party.

Co-moderator Monica Moorehead: We're very excited to welcome to the panel Kempis Ghani Songster. He is the Healing Justice Organizer for the Amistad Law Project and the host of the new monthly podcast show, "Move It Forward." He is also co-founder of Ubuntu Philadelphia. Our earlier panelist, Swift Justice, was speaking from an Alabama prison. What similar conditions did you experience in Pennsylvania prisons? Why should the issue of mass incarceration concern all workers? How does the struggle of people on the inside affect all of us?

Kempis Ghani Songster: Thank you for having me. As Swift Justice was talking, and I was hearing the sounds coming through his phone receiver, it brought back some visceral memories from me, some cellular memories for me, because December 28 will mark my third year back in the wide open world after 30 years of incarceration.

That began in 1987, at the age of 15, for me. I was sentenced to life without parole at the age of 15 in Pennsylvania. And in Pennsylvania, life without parole is not like life in a lot of other states, where you might serve 20 years or 25 years or any number of years, and then you're eligible to see the parole board. In Pennsylvania, life means natural life — you're sent to prison effectively to die. Which is why we increasingly know "life" now as "death by incarceration by the state." Because anything so final as death shouldn't be called life. We call it what it is — death by incarceration.

The only reason why I'm on this call with you today is because the U.S. Supreme Court made some rulings, starting on June 25, 2012, with *Mila vs. Alabama*, saying that it's unconstitutional to sentence children, or people under 18 years of age, to mandatory life without parole. And because it applied to me, I was eventually resentenced. But I'm still on lifetime parole — I'm on parole for the rest of my life. So I'm not entirely free, I'm still chained to the plantation.

The 'we' of incarcerated people

When I speak about incarcerated people, I'm going to use the term "we." I'm not going to say "them," because I still feel I'm talking about me, because at any given time, I could be sent back to serve out the rest of my sentence.

I really appreciate being here, with you. That's not some trite cliché thing to say. I really appreciate it, because I know that I'm not supposed to be here. In Pennsylvania and in my prison experience, the struggle is a lot like what Swift Justice was talking about. My analysis of the situation of incarcerated workers comes from my observation, as well as analysis that was groomed by people like Karl Marx and James Boggs and C.L.R. James and Hannah Arendt.

Hannah Arendt talked about a society where exchange of products has become the chief public activity, where even the laborers — because they're confronted with commodity owners — become owners of their own labor in a manufacturing society that judges men not

as persons, but as producers according to the quality of their products. It was through that lens that I started to analyze exactly what the situation was with incarcerated workers.

The value of work to someone inside

Because we were in a situation where we were already devalued as human beings, we were already squeezed out of a workforce that was increasingly automated and cybernated. We were the people that were no longer needed in the workforce. And so this society's answer to this growing army of people who were no longer needed in the workforce was to round them up and warehouse them.

And in the situation that we found ourselves, as we entered the prison gates, we were strip-searched and told to strip down and put on this new prison uniform. As we walked through our day-to-day life in prison, we began to see that, not only are we judged as nonpersons, but we're also judged as not-producers anymore. We're just consuming items identified by a number.

Too few of the people that I knew would look at their new predicament with that kind of political depth, at least initially, but unless you were the walking dead, you felt the sting of being slapped by an invisible hand entering that dreary place where everyone's status says to them loud and clear — you have no value, you ain't worth shit to society anymore if you ever did at all. To

of scabs. That's what I also experienced in Pennsylvania. We weren't able to organize on a mass level, like we see going on in Alabama.

Family generosity allows such men, who resist by not working, to hold out for a while, but eventually they desist, and they break down and get a job. Everybody does. Well, not everybody — some people are implacable, like some of our political prisoners.

This has been what I've observed as the struggle of working people in the prison system, where we have 2.5 million people [in the U.S.] who are now held hostage. Not in the interest of "justice" or "public safety," but in the interests of a handful of elite sociopathic hustlers, hell-bent on using force to squeeze and suck the last drops of use value from the bodies of Black, Brown and poor white people who have no longer any use value to the "free" world.

This has been our struggle in Pennsylvania, fighting against life without parole, which basically guarantees that [the state will] have an increasing number of permanently held people, so that they can squeeze, forever, every last drop of labor power they can from these individuals — from us.

Prison work and the outside world

Now moving forward, I'm seeing what the relevance of our prison struggle has to do with folks on the outside. The most problematic layer of the conditions that



Kempis Ghani Songster co-produces the podcast "Move It Forward" which can be listened to at transom.org/2020/move-it-forward/

have your labor valued even at 19 cents an hour can seem like a saving grace. Just as having a good job in free society can do wonders for a person's self-esteem, having a job or work assignment in prison can go a long way with helping a person preserve or regain a modicum of dignity and self-worth.

Resistance and prison work

But some men behind the walls, like at the prison that I left from, we had never worked in the free world, we had been in a prison since we were children — like me incarcerated since the age of 15. So work offered people like me a sense of being grown-up and responsible, even if the wages paid were less than the allowance that our parents had given us. We still felt grown-up.

A person's very humanity is inextricably tied to jail-house work. And lack of family support or lack of family — because I knew people that didn't have any family anymore — compels some people to work.

Some people at some time avoid prison jobs for as long as they can for personal or political reasons. They don't want to participate in their own enslavement and exploitation. It's their personal protest or resistance that always has the potential of reclaiming some proprietorship of prison labor power. These kinds of men and their stance are rendered insignificant by a population

motivated the emergence of the movement in Alabama is the level to which the prison-based economy has been assimilated into the culture of society at large.

Everybody out in society has somehow been benefiting from prison labor.

And not only has everyone in prison been participating in their own exploitation and oppression through prison labor themselves, but they've been enabling this country's prosecution of endless wars — a genocide of war campaigns on other human beings and other parts of the world. Weapon manufacturers such as General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Boeing — just to name a few — all depend on prison labor.

Thus, imprisoned people, if they organize properly, can very well have a significant impact on this country's ability to destroy more lands and more people.

But as the weapons industry pays politicians to stoke the flames of more and more war in order to create, maintain and grow markets for their weapons — so also they're going to force prison labor to increase and accelerate. Because warehoused human beings are simply too valuable to release — even and especially after they educate, rebuild, rehabilitate themselves, transform ourselves.

Continued on page 8



ART BY LAUREN WALKER FOR TRUTHOUT

Ramsey Prison Unit

The terror of Texas

By Nanon M. Williams

Nanon Williams was arrested in 1992 at age 17 for capital murder and spent years on death row. In 2005, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled people under 18 could not be sentenced to death. His sentence, along with 70 others, was commuted to life and he is still fighting to prove his innocence. He has earned two associate degrees, a bachelor's degree and a master's degree; he was about to finish his second master's, when the prison declared no one could earn two masters.

For decades Williams has published a newsletter, "The Williams Report," with the help of his comrades in California. He began writing poems after going to death row — published in a 2000 book: "The Ties That Bind Us" — and has continued to write essays as well as several other books. With his autobiography "Still Surviving," his words began to be heard across the country, and he became a leader against the Texas death row. Later Williams published "The Darkest Hour: Stories and Interviews from Death Row" exposing the inhumane and brutal conditions others have faced.

In a personal communication, he wrote, "For three decades they have stripped me of my freedom, of love, of having children, or even the simple act of attending a funeral. I now have grey hair, yet I am still young. I have survived hundreds of executions — abuse at a level the mind can't fathom — and these people think I won't challenge them on the BS they are doing here? Please."

In a cover letter sent with this article, Williams expressed gratitude to Workers World newspaper for being a voice for the voiceless. — By Gloria Rubac

"Find out who made the calls, who wrote letters and made complaints, and. ..." These are the cries of the Ramsey Unit administration in Rosharon, Texas, after Gloria

Rubac wrote an article in Workers World newspaper dated Nov. 19. "And what?" is now the question being asked.

The message is being sent that if inmates in Texas prisons dare to write about the brutality, violence, abuse, terror and rising death toll within its plantation-like slave camps, prisoners will be punished.

Guards are asking questions about who contributed to the article; statements are being made, and phone calls are currently being reviewed. Why? For what purpose? Do we not have freedom of speech, the right to assemble, to file a grievance or call our loved one to address what takes place, or contact the media to help us without fear of being persecuted? Are our constitutional rights so blatantly disregarded that we still face solitary confinement, risk being shipped countless miles away from our loved ones and then arrive at a new prison with the label that we are a threat?

Only a couple of years ago, Donsha Crump and I exposed the quota system for disciplinary charges here in Texas prisons. We made it public when a written order was found that illustrated in writing that it is a common practice in Texas prisons to give cases for a "gig."

This was exposed by various activists as well as Workers World newspaper and eventually mainstream press. Pressure mounted. The prison system had to investigate and looked at various departments within all 100 or so prisons.

However, we know we can't expect an

institution to investigate itself and come out with results against itself. That process was not only a sham, but a warning to prison administrators to simply be smarter as they prepare for gigs.



Nanon Williams with his mother, Lee Bolton, when she visited him on death row in 1998.

In fact at this very moment, security audits are taking place, as well as a PREA (Prison Rape Elimination Act) audit. Disciplinary cases have skyrocketed within this prison, especially with the new administration. The same practice is taking place along with the same measures and means of threatening us to keep the hell quiet.

What is a gig?

What is a gig? It is a paperwork hustle to rob taxpayers of money, justify reasons to keep prisoners incarcerated by writing bogus disciplinary cases and justify the funding needed for prisons to obtain paper trails, falsify bogus reports for hours of disciplinary hearings supposedly

held and to justify money needed for security measures never used.

In other words, a paper trail is created so budgets are increased, which at the same time proves that prisoners are a threat to society.

We see front-page stories railing about crimes committed by prisoners being released, but this pales in comparison to the horrific crimes and brutal abuse the public never sees, the crimes that aren't on the front page. For prisoners like us to dare to challenge the nature of our incarceration, who have the courage to challenge a system hell-bent on destroying us, prisoners like Mumia Abu-Jamal, Shaka Sankofa and so many others, we end up being killed or end up rotting in prisons for decades.

If we are to change as a people or as a country, we must first look inside our prisons to support those considered to be the least of us. We must look at the poor, working-class communities whose youth are destined to be warehoused in these modern day concentration camps, where people are being executed, outright killed, tortured and abused in ways that destroy who they are.

If the government treats people as less than human, what can we expect? If the system persecutes us for speaking out and organizing against racist injustice and abuse, then everyone's rights are threatened anywhere!

The Internet has made the world a small place, and we can connect with each other globally — so let's use that to create a better world. We can only do that by challenging the power structures that still see us as dollar signs, people who can produce profits, people who can be exploited. For a system to see us as mothers and fathers, or sons or daughters, or simply as human beings, change must come.

We must make fundamental change. We must make a systematic change! We can do it! Yes, we will! □



ART BY ROGER PEET FOR JUSTSEEDS.ORG

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TEAR DOWN THE WALLS

A small illustration of a prison tower and a chain-link fence.

Kempis Ghani Songster

'The struggle of working people in the prison system'

Continued from page 7

So the prison population continues to increase. Even as crime rates drop, the prison population still goes up, because people are receiving longer sentences — life without parole, death by incarceration — in order to hold them in prison and milk their labor power until they die.

This is why building solidarity with incarcerated workers is so important, because there is no separation between what goes on "outside" in society and what happens to incarcerated workers behind the walls. In fact, mass incarceration is this society's response to the increased rejection of people of color and poor people from the workforce.

Mass incarceration — I'm not a fan of the term "mass incarceration." To me, the word is "human warehousing." It's not mass incarceration. These are not faceless masses of people; these are human beings. They had births; their parents had dreams for them; they got families that are doing the time with them. They have faces; they have stories; they have souls, and they have spirits. This is not mass incarceration.

This is human warehousing and the beginning of the movement. One of the first steps in this movement is to interrogate our own consciousness, our own perception of the issues that we're fighting against. And that means

interrogating the language that we use, right? We're talking on this Day of International Human Rights. We have to use language in our movement that confers humanity onto people.

COVID-19 and prison

So in this human warehousing, it's crucial that we address the issue of the pandemic. Because COVID-19 behind the walls is killing people en masse. Pennsylvania prisons have turned into volcanoes of the virus; they're epicenters of the virus. People are dying; guards are coming in and just infecting people left and right.

And we're screaming out at the top of our lungs, on our rooftops: "Release the vulnerable! Release the vulnerable!" And they won't, they won't release people.

Even though the U.N. has issued a call for countries all around the world to decarcerate — especially urging America to begin to decarcerate. Countries like Turkey have already released over 100,000 of their prison population. Iran has released over 100,000 people. Countries all over are way ahead of the game.

The U.S. is using punitive measures to address a public health crisis. And this is very, very important for the rest of us in this society, because it's an egregious and glaring continuing crisis of human rights abuse. □

A look at Venezuela’s National Assembly election

By John Catalinotto

Venezuela’s December 6 National Assembly (AN) elections overcame the prior pro-imperialist majority in that body and catapulted the ruling United Socialist Party (PSUV) into an overwhelming majority. President Nicolás Maduro, also of the PSUV, won big.

The imperialist politicians and corporate media, especially in the U.S., Canada and Europe, will attempt to minimize the defeat of their puppet Juan Guaidó and disparage the legitimacy of the election.

Elected from a small constituency to the last AN and appointed acting president from his party, in January 2019 Guaidó declared himself interim president of the country. U.S. and European imperialist governments quickly backed Guaidó and his fraudulent claim. They tried to mobilize all anti-revolutionary Venezuelan parties behind him.

In an attempt to unseat Maduro, Guaidó and his supporters mounted three serious maneuvers during 2019, including a barely disguised invasion over the border with Colombia. The Venezuelan armed forces backed the Maduro government, as did the popular mobilization; together they crushed these coup attempts despite U.S. backing for Guaidó.

The coup failures further split the already divided Venezuelan rightists into two major factions, both representing the oligarchy. The seditious pro-coup forces backing Guaidó were opposed by more moderate rightists wanting to work within the electoral system. They have even asked the U.S. to recognize the Venezuelan government, lift the economic sanctions and begin normal trade and investment.

Three of the four major opposition — pro-oligarchy — parties took part in the Dec. 6 elections. Guaidó refused to participate and called on everyone to boycott the election. Not everyone did.

Some 107 parties, including 97 in opposition to the government — most of them small bourgeois parties — ran over 14,000 candidates for 277 seats in the AN. Seats are distributed through a combination of direct votes for candidates and proportional representation for parties, with large voting percentages leading to overrepresentation.

Regarding the electoral blocs whose political impact we are discussing, here are the results: PSUV bloc 69.3% (253 seats), the rightist Democratic Alliance 17.7% (18 seats), Communist Party (PCV) 2.7% (1 seat) and Homeland for All (PPT) 1.4% (0 seats).

The latter two are considered to the left of the PSUV. Many other parties got between 0.5% and 4.6%, but have insignificant independent political weight.

The PCV has petitioned for seven seats instead of one. Despite the precautions for COVID-19, the vote ran smoothly, and the observers — including those from progressive organizations in the U.S. — declared it was conducted fairly and votes were fairly counted.



Voting is smooth and fair in Venezuela.

While there was a landslide victory for the PSUV, the strength of this victory is diminished by the relatively low level of participation, which was 31% of the eligible voters.

Venezuela Analysis podcast

For a more detailed analysis of the election in English, Workers World recommends its readers listen to a podcast moderated by Margaret Flowers of Popular Resistance that features her introduction and presentations by Vijay Prashad of Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research and Paul Dobson of Venezuelanalysis. (For podcast, go to venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/15073.)

Flowers made it clear she believed the main duty of anti-imperialists working within the imperialist countries was to expose the lies and anti-Maduro, anti-revolutionary propaganda of the corporate media and to fight to get world imperialism off the backs of the Venezuelans.

Prashad discussed the full-court press attack by U.S. imperialism on Bolivarian Venezuela over the last two decades, which he called “hybrid warfare.” War is not just the physical attack,” he explained, but there is information war, diplomatic war, an attempt to isolate the enemy, economic war and war on the country’s currency. All of this has been waged against Venezuela.

The U.S. has realized, Prashad said, that while it can bomb the hell out of a country, it can’t subdue the population, thus “it can’t really win.” It tries to delegitimize the government and wage economic, commercial and financial war, creating a major currency problem, making it impossible for Venezuela to recover. “It has really screwed up the political sovereignty of the country.”

It appears as though the imperialists are doing nothing to intervene, he added, but they are really heavy on intervention. “It bleeds the country slowly and is much more devastating than direct bombardment.”

Prashad explained the low turnout not only by demoralization of the population brought out by the effects of the hybrid war, but also directly by the pandemic, which makes people want to stay home, and by calamitous fuel shortages in the midst of an election, which limit transportation to voting sites.

There’s a problem for all socialist experiments that rely on commodity prices, said Prashad. Venezuela still

relies on its oil exports. When the price of oil dropped, the country lost income.

He pointed to the efforts of Vietnam to find ways of bringing capital into the country to develop domestic industry: “No country wants to socialize poverty.”

In a message to activists in the imperialist countries, Prashad urged that they tell their government to cool it and end the hybrid war.

Dobson and the critical left

Flowers pointed out that Dobson was a leftist working within Venezuela, and he would discuss internal, domestic problems and contradictions. Besides being active in Venezuela Analysis, Dobson is an active supporter of the Popular Revolutionary Alternative (APR), a new bloc of left-wing groups formed in July whose major element is the PCV and which takes a clear anti-imperialist stance on all international issues. These parties had supported the PSUV in confrontations with the rightists in past elections.

Dobson said the main question was the turnout, low for Venezuela standards. He blamed some of it on disillusionment with political leaders and argued that most Venezuelans at this time are looking for solutions to the severe economic problems. He also pointed out that there has been migration out of the country of 4-5 million voters, about 20% of the voters on the books.

Venezuela has held 26 elections since Hugo Chávez was elected president in 1998, Dobson noted. Without any evidence, the U.S., the European Union and the Organization of American States — a tool of U.S. imperialism — refuse to recognize the legitimacy of the election and call it a fraud.

Dobson discussed changes in the grassroots in Venezuela regarding government programs, saying: “We’re in the seventh year of recession;” and “The government is looking to resolve some of the problems in favor of large capital.” By this he meant that some of the sectors of the economy are being opened to privatization, without addressing the problem of low wages that are not enough to feed people adequately.

Dobson also explained that because the pro-Guaidó grouping called a boycott, it meant the PSUV would win in a landslide — as happened. That meant the parties in the APR could run independently without jeopardizing the Bolivarian government. So the APR groups withdrew their support from the government in power and publicly objected to the domestic policies of the PSUV.

There are 13 different groups on the left that make up the Popular Revolutionary Alternative (APR). The PSUV put many obstacles up to their participation. They were not allowed to participate in the national debates, and they had to run on the PCV ticket in the elections.

The APR bloc proposed a significant increase in wages, especially minimum wages, and the tying of future increases to the prices of a package of goods. They also pushed for government-planned construction of new factories to produce necessary goods. Dobson said they were pleased with the 170,000 votes that showed a revolutionary presence among the population.

For more on sanctions, see sanctionskill.org.

Defend Chich’il Bildagoteel!

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

Apache clans and over 300 Indigenous nations are organizing to protect Chich’il Bildagoteel, the Oak Flat site in southeastern Arizona, from devastating copper mining extraction.

The mining was given a federal go-ahead by passage of the Southeast Arizona Land Exchange and “Conservation” Act, included in the 2015 National Defense Authorization Act signed by President Barack Obama. Subject to “environmental review,” the act gave land sacred to the Apache to the Resolution Copper Mine, a joint venture by the notorious Rio Tinto and BHP Billiton. The act was a land swap so private companies could exploit federal Tonto National Forest land, including Oak Flat, in exchange for deeding other “private land” to the U.S.

While the U.S. Forest Service had set a late 2021 deadline for the final environmental impact statement, the Trump administration recently moved the deadline to this December. (tinyurl.com/y2s2b7zk)

Arizona Congressperson Raul Grijalva told radio

station KJZZ on Dec. 1 that the Trump administration is cutting corners: “They would have the deal cut [before the Biden inauguration], and it would be very difficult for us to undo after it’s done.” Rep. Grijalva and Senator Bernie Sanders have introduced legislation to repeal the land transfer.

Chich’il Bildagoteel holds petroglyphs, precolonial history and burial grounds of at least eight Apache clans and two Western Apache bands. Home to medicinal plants and water sources rising from the Apache Leap Tuff aquifer, Oak Flat is on the National Register of Historic Places.

The San Carlos Apache, neighboring Indigenous nations and environmental groups have mobilized to prevent destruction of the area, revered by the Apache.

In a November statement, Dr. Wendsler Nosie Sr., former chair of the San Carlos Apache, said: “In the days ahead, Chich’il Bildagoteel needs us. We have been given strong indication that the Forest Service will be making their decision on the Oak Flat land exchange. This will immediately begin the process of handing over a sacred site to one of the largest mining companies in the world.



PHOTO: SANDRA RAMBLER/CENSORED NEWS

Apache clan members and supporters rally to defend Chich’il Bildagoteel (Oak Flat) in December 2019.

“For more than a decade, people all over the world have had eyes on Oak Flat. And on the ground, countless people have been in solidarity with the Apache people as they fight to protect Oak Flat. Oak Flat needs all of us now to come together.”

To take action, go to apache-stronghold.com.

WORKERS WORLD

editorial

The pandemic of capitalist profiteers

There is a new term to describe the super-rich: “centi-billionaires.” They are individuals whose net worth comes to over \$100 billion.

Having added \$67.2 billion to his net worth in 2020, Amazon owner Jeff Bezos tops the list of global centi-billionaires: \$182.2 billion as of Dec. 13, according to the Forbes website. Next in line, Tesla founder Elon Musk’s net worth of \$147 billion represents an increase of over \$100 billion to his wealth since 2019.

Both Microsoft founder Bill Gates — net worth of \$118.3 billion — and Facebook’s Mark Zuckerberg — net worth of \$101.8 billion — saw income gains of over \$10 billion each in 2020.

Meanwhile, the 651 richest billionaires in the U.S. enjoyed a total net increase of over \$1 trillion since the pandemic hit in mid-March, according to an analysis of Forbes financial data by Americans for Tax Fairness and the Institute for Policy Studies. Their current combined net worth was over \$4 trillion, as of Dec. 11. (tinyurl.com/y3qceb8e)

With tens of millions out of work, and an end to extended unemployment insurance looming on the horizon, it is hard to fathom just what it means to have this much wealth — and to have done next to nothing to

earn it. After all, the mega-profits of these super billionaires come from exploiting the labor of their workers, not from their own sweat and blood.

Over a third of U.S. adults — around 83 million — are having problems paying for basic needs, including food, medical bills and rent/mortgage. The gains alone of these few hundred multi-billionaires since March 2020 could

feed all the hungry, house all the homeless and cover all the medical needs related to the vaccine.

If the U.S. Congress fails to pass a new relief bill, 12 million people will lose unemployment benefits on Dec. 26. Frank Clemente, Americans for Tax Fairness Executive Director, calculated: “Their pandemic profits [\$1 trillion] are so immense that America’s billionaires could pay for a major COVID relief bill and still not lose a dime of their pre-virus riches.” (truthout.com, Dec. 11)

According to Clemente, the wealth growth of these 651 billionaires could provide a \$3,000 stimulus payment to every person in the U.S. — and the affluent would still be richer than they were before the pandemic.

Jeff Bezos’ net worth is bigger than the GDP of most

countries. He could give everyone in Amazon’s 1.2 million full- and part-time global workforce a \$75,000 bonus and still be as wealthy as he was before COVID-19.

But such a “bonus” would only begin to cover the wealth Bezos has stolen from Amazon workers by not paying them the full value of their labor, especially since mid-March, when Amazon’s business skyrocketed due to the COVID-19 lockdowns.

In 2011 the Occupy Wall Street movement emerged to focus attention on the growing wealth gap between the wealthiest 1 percent versus the 99 percent of the population struggling to get by. At that time, Bezos’ net worth was “only” \$18.1 billion. In the U.S. 1,210 people had a total net worth of \$4.5 trillion — roughly two times the number of people who are worth that today. (www.forbes.com, Mar. 9, 2011)

That just confirms that, under capitalism, wealth continues to be concentrated at the top and in fewer and fewer hands. While the COVID-19 crisis is a contributing factor, the extreme wealth disparities and the rise of the centi-billionaires in the U.S. were also fueled by four decades of flat wages for workers, and centuries of discrimination based on race, sex, gender, sexuality, disability and more.

The vast wealth of the capitalists could be used to make the COVID vaccines free and accessible to everyone — and particularly to the most vulnerable workers and oppressed people — in the shortest possible time frame. But while a vaccine to prevent COVID-19 is welcome, what is long overdue is a revolution to end the pandemic of capitalist profiteers. □

Palestine

Nature under settler colonialism

By Rana Baker

This slightly edited presentation was given by Rana Baker, a Palestinian Ph.D. student at Columbia University, during the online Palestine Writes Festival, Dec. 5. Baker’s research focuses on infrastructure and environmental resources as micro-sites of political struggle in colonial and anti-colonial contexts.

It’s a real honor to be part of this historic festival and to be among many friends and allies. I’d like to thank Susan Abulhawa and all the organizers for their tireless work and for bringing us together in the best of ways despite this pandemic.

My brief presentation will address environmental politics and the possibilities of resistance in Palestine — my primary focus is Gaza.

Over the past years, the environment became an important component of liberal discourse. Scientists are no longer the only spokespeople for the environment. Environmental politics is now a matter that concerns public opinion as well. As a self-purported liberal democracy, Israeli hasbara [public-relations] has expanded to incorporate environmental issues and to use these issues to affirm Israel’s status as a progressive state.

Of course, this idea of Israel as an environmentally conscious liberal democracy plays into Zionism’s early Orientalist narrative of Palestine as an arid land which was never cultivated by its native inhabitants until European Zionist settlers established their moshavot, or agricultural settlements. This is all well-known.

Liberal environmentalism

What is relatively new is the way Israel has turned the discourse of liberal environmentalism against the Palestinians who resist its colonial violence. Gaza’s incendiary kites, which emerged during Gaza’s Great March of Return [in 2018-19], are an important example. Incendiary kites or balloons were basically Molotov cocktails attached to kites and balloons, then sent over to the Israeli side, where they eventually fell and set fire to Israeli agricultural crops.

Israeli Zionist and many liberal voices accused Palestinians of “environmental savagery.” Israelis called them “terror kites.” In and of itself, Israel’s reduction of Palestinian resistance to terror is not new. What was more curious in my view was that the pro-Palestinian

A photograph showing a person in a blue shirt and a head covering kneeling on the ground, working on a large, colorful kite. The kite has sections of red, green, and white, with a black triangle at the bottom. The person is holding a small flame, likely to set the kite on fire. The background is a sandy, open area.

PHOTO: IBRAHEEM ABU MUSTAFA
 Palestinian resister prepares incendiary kite to cross the border from Gaza into Israeli-held land.

A photograph showing a Palestinian flag and a large, colorful kite flying in the sky. The kite is made of many small, colorful pieces of fabric, creating a mosaic-like effect. The flag is visible in the background, and the kite is in the foreground, flying towards the right.

PHOTO: IBRAHEEM ABU MUSTAFA
 A Palestinian flag and an incendiary kite fly in southern Gaza on April 27, 2018.

us with practical and discursive tools oriented toward liberation. It is not a liberatory discourse.

Acts of creative disruption

Second, the possibilities of resistance are imposed. The colonized do not get to choose their means of resistance. The colonized are forced to be creative given the colonizer’s tendency to eliminate all possibilities of resistance. Gazans have been confined and isolated since 2007. They do not have the option of throwing stones at the Israelis or disrupting railway and transportation infrastructure. Gazans and Israelis are separated by a massive physical space. Anyone who approaches the fence gets shot.

Home-made incendiary kites and balloons must therefore be understood as acts of creative disruption. They are effective precisely because

they cause damage to Israel’s agricultural economy and pit Israeli settlers against their government. They are also effective because Israel’s military machine is incapable of neutralizing them. Israeli warplanes cannot bomb a kite since bombing them would necessarily cause damage to Israeli agricultural communities.

These acts of creative disruption must receive our full endorsement in public and private. If Palestinian resistance causes environmental damage, it is because there is an Israel to resist.

It is crucial to recognize the material nature of colonialism. Israel relies on a vast military and civilian infrastructure without which the very settler colonial integrity of the state cannot survive.

Sabotaging and disrupting this infrastructure lie at the heart of every liberation movement from North Dakota to Palestine. These are acts conducive to liberation, and we should not shy away from supporting them. □

Marxism, Reparations & the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper.
 Edited by Monica Moorehead.

Racism, National Oppression & Self-Determination ♦ Black Labor from Chattel Slavery to Wage Slavery ♦ Black Youth: Repression & Resistance ♦ The Struggle for Socialism Is Key ♦ Domestic Workers United Demand Passage of a Bill of Rights ♦ Black & Brown Unity: A Pillar of Struggle for Human Rights & Global Justice! ♦ Harriet Tubman, Woman Warrior ♦ Racism & Poverty in the Delta ♦ Haiti Needs Reparations, Not Sanctions ♦ Alabama’s Black Belt: Legacy of Slavery, Sharecropping & Segregation ♦ Are Conditions Ripe Again Today? Anniversary of the 1965 Watts Rebellion

Available at major online booksellers.

The cover of the book 'Marxism, Reparations & the Black Freedom Struggle' features a collage of images. At the top, there's a banner with the text 'WE WANT REPARATIONS FOR THE Black Freedom Struggle'. Below this, there are several black and white photographs of people, likely activists or workers, engaged in various activities. The overall design is bold and political.

COVER GRAPHIC: SAHU BARRON

Behind Morocco’s recognition of Israel

By G. Dunkel

It was a deal, pure — but not so simple. The U.S. recognized the Western Sahara — the last remaining colony in Africa according to the United Nations — as part of Morocco, while Morocco upgraded its substantial economic relations with Israel to full diplomatic relations.

The Western Sahara was controlled by Spain until 1975. When Spain withdrew, Mauritania, the country lying to its south, claimed some of its southern part; and Morocco claimed about two-thirds of the northern part of the Western Sahara. The Saharawi Indigenous movement, called Polisario, demanded independence. Then followed 16 intricate years of fighting, until the U.N. established a 1991 “peacekeeping” operation.

Trump’s Abraham Accords process

The peace agreement between the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Israel, signed at the White House in September, is termed an Abraham Accord. It lays out a process of normalization between some politically conservative feudal Arab states and the Zionists who want to end their isolation. Beyond diplomatic consequences, it let Trump and the Trumpites solidify

their connections to the Zionist state.

According to Axios (Dec. 10), Jared Kushner and special envoy Avi Berkowitz have tried enticing Morocco for over two years to recognize Israel in return for U.S. recognition of Morocco’s control of the Western Sahara. Since one-third of the Israeli Jews were born in Morocco and many have deep economic and cultural ties to that country, there is much support in Israel for full relations with Morocco.

But prominent Trump supporter Senator Jim Inhofe is a firm supporter of Polisario and has traveled a number of times to Algeria for meetings with Polisario leaders. When Trump and Inhofe fell out over the National Defense Authorization Act, a bill Inhofe is responsible for passing in the Senate, Trump saw he could do more than issue a few nasty tweets. He could break Israel’s isolation a bit more, tie Morocco more closely to the U.S. and let his ally, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, claim another success.

Popular response in Morocco

While there is a form of bourgeois democracy in Morocco — it has a prime minister, parliament, elections, judges and courts of law — the king, currently Mohammed VI, has extensive executive



A February demonstration was held in Rabat, Morocco’s capital, in support of Palestine.

powers and can make decisions of state, such as recognizing the state of Israel. With a big win — getting the major world imperialist power to recognize Morocco’s hold over the Western Sahara, a goal since 1975 — he can clamp down on protests, either in the streets or in parliament.

However, there were strong prior protests against recognizing Israel when the possibility the Moroccan government would make this decision became clear. A good example was the Nov. 27 demonstration in

front of the parliament building in Rabat, Morocco’s capital. (tinyurl.com/ybt93e8e) Polisario resumed fighting in November, asserting Morocco had broken the 1991 cease-fire agreement. “Trump’s decision changes nothing in legal terms over the question of Sahrawi, because the international community does not recognise Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara,” the Polisario Front said in a statement to Agence France Presse. (France 24, Dec. 11) □

Lucha de clases en China

¿cómo lidiar con los multimillonarios?

Continúa de la página 12

parte del riesgo crediticio.

En resumen, Jack Ma estaba poniendo \$2 para hacer negocios por valor de \$100, utilizando bancos estatales para financiar los otros \$98. Este reempaquetado de la deuda se denomina titulización. Es la conversión de un activo, especialmente un préstamo, en valores negociables, generalmente con el propósito de recaudar efectivo vendiéndolos a otros inversores.

Claramente, tales esquemas capitalistas no tienen nada que ver con modernizar China, aumentar su capacidad productiva o mejorar la vida de los trabajadores. Ahora, el nuevo borrador de las regulaciones destinadas a los microcréditos en línea obligaría a las empresas de tecnología financiera como Ant a financiar cerca de un tercio de sus préstamos. Esto podría reducir el valor de la empresa a la mitad, a \$150 mil millones.

Las regulaciones antimonopolio también tienen como objetivo evitar que plataformas digitales como Alibaba utilicen su dominio para intimidar a los vendedores con contratos de exclusividad.

Lucha contra los capitalistas chinos

La lucha contra los capitalistas chinos se prolonga. Tanto el poder como la riqueza de los capitalistas han crecido de manera explosiva. Pero también lo ha hecho la creciente coordinación de la planificación socialista. Durante más de 70 años, las condiciones de vida de millones de personas han mejorado constantemente.

The Economist, un semanario de negocios británico, describió esta tensión creciente, que es de gran preocupación para la clase capitalista en su conjunto. (“China apunta a sus empresarios”, 14 de noviembre)

En los últimos años, varias campañas han tratado de frenar a los grandes capitalistas chinos y la corrupción y la deuda resultante que traen, con el fin de mantener la estabilidad social y financiera de China. Esto ha sido especialmente cierto desde el 2013 y la presidencia de Xi Jinping.

El primer paso fue una campaña del 2013 contra la corrupción y el gasto generoso de los funcionarios del partido.

El siguiente fue lidiar con los capitalistas chinos que estaban invirtiendo miles de millones en inversiones extranjeras que los reguladores estatales consideraron maniobras apenas disfrazadas para desviar capital fuera de China. Estas no fueron inversiones que de alguna manera ayudaron al desarrollo de China.

Se ordenaron revertir compras como el parque de atracciones SeaWorld, clubes de fútbol europeos y grandes participaciones en Hilton Worldwide Holdings. Wu Xiaohui, presidente de Anbang Insurance, compró el hotel Waldorf Astoria en Manhattan. En el 2018, Wu terminó con una sentencia de prisión de 18 años por delitos financieros, y Anbang fue nacionalizada.

Ren Zhiqiang, un miembro de alto rango del Partido Comunista y un magnate de la vivienda que dirigía una empresa inmobiliaria estatal, fue sentenciado a 18 años de prisión en septiembre del 2020 por soborno y malversación.

La represión ha puesto fin abruptamente al auge del gasto mundial de las empresas chinas. Mientras que en el 2016 las fusiones y adquisiciones en el extranjero ascendieron a \$200 mil millones de dólares, en el 2019 se redujeron a menos de una quinta parte.

Elevar estándares estrictos para los préstamos en línea, limitar la cantidad disponible para pedir prestado y cambiar el entorno regulatorio financiero son todos esfuerzos para recuperar el control.

Supervisión de los trabajadores

Cómo proteger la propiedad estatal de funcionarios corruptos y detener acuerdos secretos con poderosos capitalistas chinos que están vinculados a las finanzas internacionales es un desafío mucho mayor. Requiere la participación y vigilancia de los trabajadores en cada industria.

Se está estableciendo una nueva estructura política para empoderar a los trabajadores a hablar y alentar a los cuadros comunistas a nivel local a monitorear lo

que los propietarios capitalistas pueden estar haciendo. Lo más importante es que se está creando a través de la Federación de Industria y Comercio de China. Esta es una poderosa organización no gubernamental de industriales y empresarios chinos bajo el liderazgo del Frente Unido de Trabajo del Partido Comunista Chino (PCCCh).

La federación se estableció en 1953, una época muy diferente. Aquellos fueron los primeros días de la reorganización de la industria y la construcción de una base socialista. La federación se describe a sí misma como un organismo para aumentar la comunicación entre el gobierno y la economía privada, y para ayudar al gobierno en la gestión de la economía privada y lograr el desarrollo sostenible. Tiene varios escaños en el Congreso Nacional del Pueblo.

En el pasado, su objetivo había sido construir relaciones más estrechas con entidades comerciales e industriales extranjeras y ayudar a los miembros chinos a viajar al extranjero en busca de oportunidades comerciales que ayudarían a impulsar las reformas económicas de China. Este organismo ha pedido ahora a los grupos privados que establezcan departamentos de recursos humanos dirigidos por el partido y unidades de control que le permitan al partido auditar a los gerentes de las empresas tanto en corporaciones privadas como estatales.

Se espera que los comités de supervisión de los partidos jueguen un papel más importante en las firmas tecnológicas gigantes. Una serie de nuevas regulaciones también impedirá a los inversores extranjeros tomar participaciones directas en la banca china.

Base socialista

Desde 1979, China ha cultivado la política de abrirse a Occidente y permitir que los capitalistas chinos crezcan y acumulen una gran riqueza. Se suponía que debían actuar como intermediarios con el Occidente.

El capitalismo, tanto chino como occidental, suele recibir todo el crédito por el salto en la capacidad productiva y el

desarrollo moderno en China desde 1979.

Sin embargo, precisamente porque China mantuvo una economía planificada y la propiedad estatal de las industrias centrales, ha podido evitar las crisis económicas que golpean a todas las economías capitalistas cada siete a diez años.

La verdadera fuerza impulsora de la rápida modernización de China y el salto de la pobreza extrema, el analfabetismo, las hambrunas y la dominación imperialista es la Revolución China, dirigida por el Partido Comunista Chino.

El cambio dramático que comenzó con la apertura de China en 1979 se debió a un acuerdo del gobierno, bajo Deng Xiaoping, para permitir la inversión capitalista occidental en China en condiciones controladas. El objetivo era lograr un crecimiento económico más rápido mediante la introducción activa de capital y tecnología extranjeros, manteniendo al mismo tiempo su compromiso con el socialismo.

Era un riesgo, especialmente porque el imperialismo lo veía como un camino de regreso a China.

La apertura de China a la inversión en 1979 estuvo condicionada a que el occidente levantara sus sanciones económicas completas, que desde la Revolución de 1949 habían buscado estrangular a China y prohibir toda tecnología, equipo industrial, inversión y comercio.

Durante 30 años, desde la Revolución China de 1949 hasta 1979, los esfuerzos de China por el crecimiento y la modernización se vieron dificultados por las sanciones impuestas por Estados Unidos. Sin embargo, en estas tres décadas China reorganizó una sociedad subdesarrollada, caótica y devastada por la guerra, construyendo la tecnología y la infraestructura y educando a la clase trabajadora. Esto es lo que hizo posible el siguiente paso. A medida que crece la hostilidad del imperialismo estadounidense hacia China, amenaza con cerco militar y se intensifican las guerras comerciales y las sanciones, los líderes pueden estar examinando más de cerca los peligros que las fuerzas capitalistas internas traen al desarrollo socialista estable del país. □



En la pandemia en Colombia, empleados de la salud han protestado por la falta de elementos de seguridad para atender pacientes.

Lucha de clases en China ¿cómo lidiar con los multimillonarios?

Por Sara Flounders

“El aprendiz del brujo” es una vieja historia que se repite en muchas variaciones, desde mitos griegos hasta un famoso poema alemán de Goethe en 1797 y hasta una película de Alfred Hitchcock y varias versiones de Disney. Todas las variaciones tratan de invocar o desatar fuerzas abrumadoras que no se pueden controlar.

En “El Manifiesto Comunista”, Karl Marx y Friedrich Engels compararon la sobreproducción salvaje e imprudente del capitalismo moderno que conduce a choques incontrolables con “el hechicero que ya no es capaz de controlar los poderes del mundo inferior al que ha invocado con sus hechizos.”

Esa es la preocupación de China hoy: cómo tratar con el multimillonario Jack Ma y su Grupo Ant, la empresa de tecnología financiera más grande del mundo y un aprendiz de brujo de hoy en día.



Ant se había fijado para vender acciones por un valor récord de \$34,4 mil millones, pero el 3 de noviembre, solo dos días antes de que la compañía realizara la oferta pública inicial (OPI), más grande del mundo, el gobierno chino y los principales bancos estatales de repente se movieron para suspender la venta. Esta acción sin precedentes fue el ejemplo más dramático hasta la fecha de un esfuerzo continuo para frenar a los capitalistas chinos y restringir algunos de sus esquemas más peligrosos.

Jack Ma es un firme defensor de una economía abierta e impulsada por el mercado. Su opinión a menudo expresada es que la regulación gubernamental sofoca la innovación. También es miembro del Partido Comunista Chino desde hace mucho tiempo. Permitir que los capitalistas chinos ingresen al partido comenzó como un esfuerzo por asegurar la lealtad de estos capitalistas emergentes a la construcción socialista y tener algún medio de control sobre ellos. Sin embargo, es claramente una contradicción porque usan su influencia y posiciones partidistas para promover su propia riqueza.

Alto interés, alta deuda

Ant Group se creó como una empresa técnica, para sortear las regulaciones chinas más estrictas sobre los bancos. Pero Ant Group en realidad es un banco, sin una sucursal, pero que otorga millones de microcréditos y otorga crédito con solo tocar una aplicación telefónica.

Debido a que Ant Group está registrado como una empresa técnica, cobró intereses a los consumidores a una tasa cuatro veces superior a la que pueden cobrar los bancos.

Ant dirige Alipay, cuyos mil millones de usuarios activos lo convierten en el principal sistema de pago en línea de China, superando al efectivo, los cheques y las tarjetas de crédito. A través de sus plataformas de pago y préstamos, Alipay ha procesado transacciones por valor de 17

billones de dólares en China durante el año pasado.

Al igual que otros gigantes tecnológicos chinos, Ant Group tiene datos valiosos sobre los clientes y controla un canal digital a través del cual se prestan y gastan cientos de miles de millones de dólares.

Tener tal poder en manos privadas es una fuente de tensión entre los planificadores socialistas y los empresarios capitalistas. Ant Group comenzó como un servicio de pago para la gigante plataforma de comercio electrónico de propiedad privada Alibaba, también fundada por Jack Ma.

Alibaba posee un tercio de Ant Group. La valoración combinada proyectada de Alibaba y Ant es de más de \$1 billón. Para quienes apoyan la Revolución China, la pregunta es si esta abrupta decisión del gobierno de detener la venta de acciones es una opción esencial o simplemente una decisión de mano dura de los reguladores bancarios.

¿Son estas nuevas entidades financieras disruptivas para la planificación socialista de China? ¿O son una forma creativa, de vanguardia, de dar a millones de trabajadores un fácil acceso a fondos y productos?

Un informe compilado por el estado examina la forma en que los microcréditos de Ant Group y otras empresas de tecnología financiera alientan a los pobres y a los jóvenes a acumular deudas, a cuatro veces la tasa de interés regular. Este crédito fácil ha provocado un aumento de las deudas incobrables, especialmente para los trabajadores jóvenes sin experiencia. La deuda de las tarjetas de crédito aumenta un 30 por ciento al año y ha alcanzado 10 veces el nivel del 2010.

¿Cómo afectará el hecho de que cientos de millones de personas ahora enfrentan una deuda creciente en el plan ampliamente publicitado de China para poner fin a la pobreza en el 2020? ¿Pueden los bancos estatales chinos capear una crisis como lo hicieron los bancos capitalistas globales en el 2008? Para rescatar a los bancos, los gobiernos capitalistas impusieron una austeridad despiadada. Millones de personas perdieron sus hogares, mientras que los programas sociales se redujeron hasta los huesos.

Los bancos globales entran en acción

La decisión de los reguladores financieros chinos y el liderazgo del Partido Comunista Chino de suspender al Grupo de Tecnología Ant ha sido cubierta ampliamente en publicaciones financieras y comerciales en el Occidente capitalista.

Esta cobertura expresa conmoción y preocupación. Restringir el mercado capitalista en China, incluso a riesgo de las críticas internacionales, es algo nuevo. La venta anticipada de acciones de Ant en las bolsas de valores de Shanghai y Hong Kong se había descrito en términos elogiosos. Había miles de millones en juego e implicaban un alto apalancamiento financiero e inversores ansiosos que compraban con margen.

El Grupo Ant de China contrató a Goldman Sachs como director principal conjunto en la OPI, mientras que Citigroup Global Markets Asia Ltd., JPMorgan Chase & Co., JP Morgan

Securities (Far East) Ltd., Morgan Stanley Asia Ltd. y Hong Kong Securities Ltd. son los patrocinadores conjuntos.

Según los informes, Credit Suisse Group AG estaba trabajando como coordinador global conjunto. Dos bancos de propiedad estatal, China International Capital Corp. y China Securities Co., formaron parte de una cotización en la Junta de Innovación de Ciencia y Tecnología de la Bolsa de Valores de Shanghai, denominada STAR Market.

Está claro que los bancos imperialistas, que son completamente hostiles a la construcción socialista, han tenido un papel importante en este banco chino de propiedad privada. Se esperaba que la cotización generara 400 millones de dólares solo en comisiones para los bancos de inversión globales.

“La OPI habría fijado el valor de Ant en unos asombrosos \$359 mil millones de dólares, más que el banco más grande del mundo, JP Morgan, y más grande que el Banco Industrial y Comercial de China (ICBC), respaldado por el estado”, escribió Yahoo! News en el 7 de noviembre.

“China temía que la empresa privada, que estaba a punto de atraer a más inversores extranjeros a su estructura de capital, se hubiera vuelto demasiado grande para quebrar”.

Riesgo para la planificación socialista

La revista, The Economist, del 14 de noviembre calificó la acción como un tiro a la proa del grupo de tecnología financiera más grande de China.

La suspensión del 5 de noviembre por parte de los reguladores de la oferta pública inicial de \$37 mil millones de Ant con menos de 48 horas de anticipación se interpretó al principio simplemente como una advertencia para su fundador, Jack Ma, quien anteriormente había criticado a los bancos estatales de China. Pero el 10 de noviembre, la publicación de un extenso borrador de nuevas reglas para todos los grupos de tecnología dejó en claro que Ant no era el único objetivo. Las nuevas regulaciones involucran a toda la industria tecnológica de China.

Claramente, también hay una creciente comprensión por parte de los capitalistas internacionales de que el Partido Comunista Chino todavía juega un papel dominante y está decidido a mantener la planificación socialista. Esto significa negarse a permitir que los poderosos capitalistas chinos pongan en riesgo la economía planificada. También está claro por el tamaño de esta venta propuesta que los capitalistas chinos como Jack Ma son enormemente poderosos y están conectados internacionalmente. Su tamaño e influencia ha crecido.

¿Representan realmente un riesgo para la estabilidad del estado?

Los medios de comunicación en China han prestado mucha atención a explicar los riesgos involucrados. Esquemas especulativos similares que involucran apalancamiento financiero llevaron al colapso capitalista global del 2008 y otros anteriores. Con tantos bancos imperialistas involucrados en Ant Group y su arriesgada configuración apalancada, China podría estar especialmente vulnerable en una crisis capitalista, especialmente cuando hay

crecientes amenazas estadounidenses de sabotear deliberadamente el crecimiento de China.

Trampa de la deuda

El Diario del Pueblo, periódico oficial del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de China, publicó un artículo el 28 de octubre, una semana antes de que se suspendiera la OPI de Ant, titulado “Mantener la seguridad financiera como máxima prioridad”. El artículo advirtió: “China ha establecido un enorme sistema bancario, bursátil y de bonos. Sin embargo, esto ha dado lugar a nuevos riesgos y desafíos normativo”. El artículo llamaba a las instituciones financieras a “fortalecer el liderazgo del Partido”.

El Grupo Ant y otras empresas de tecnología financiera promovieron préstamos fáciles a clientes jóvenes y conocedores de Internet pero que no tienen acceso a una tarjeta de crédito. Su reclamo era estar sirviendo a clientes excluidos financieramente, previamente desatendidos, con suscripción instantánea y recepción de fondos.

El crédito fácil con un toque de teléfono para productos de consumo, viajes y la creación de pequeñas empresas puede conducir rápidamente a trampas de deuda para millones que no tienen experiencia en endeudarse.

En los Estados Unidos de hoy, casi todos los trabajadores viven endeudados. Alrededor del 41 por ciento tiene deudas médicas. Millones de personas están abrumadas por préstamos para estudiantes y préstamos para automóviles. La pérdida de un trabajo puede conducir rápidamente a la falta de vivienda. Durante tres generaciones, desde la revolución comunista de 1949, la deuda entre trabajadores y campesinos era casi desconocida en China. Antes de la revolución, millones de personas habían nacido endeudadas, cargando con la deuda de sus familias, y se vieron obligadas a venderse a sí mismas y a sus hijos a los propietarios para pagar las deudas.

Nuevas regulaciones

Los crecientes volúmenes de deuda de tarjetas de crédito están abrumando a algunos bancos. Si se produce un incumplimiento masivo, Ant Group se queda con el dinero mientras que los bancos estatales asumen el riesgo.

¿Cómo es esto posible?

La política de Ant Group ha sido utilizar el mismo juego de manos de Wall Street que llevó al colapso capitalista global de 2008. Esto no es nada nuevo ni innovador. Las empresas de tecnología financiera han estado reempaquetando y vendiendo millones de préstamos de alto riesgo. Solo el 2 por ciento de los préstamos que Ant había facilitado a fines de junio estaban en su balance en octubre, según su prospecto de OPI.

Ant Group se asocia con los bancos estatales de China. El grupo recoge las tarifas y los pagos iniciales y luego vuelve a empaquetar millones de microcréditos y los vende a los bancos estatales. Ahora el 98 por ciento de la deuda de Ant Group es propiedad de bancos estatales. Esto deja a los bancos estatales asumiendo la mayor

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