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Boston #SayHerName

Black women lead BLM march

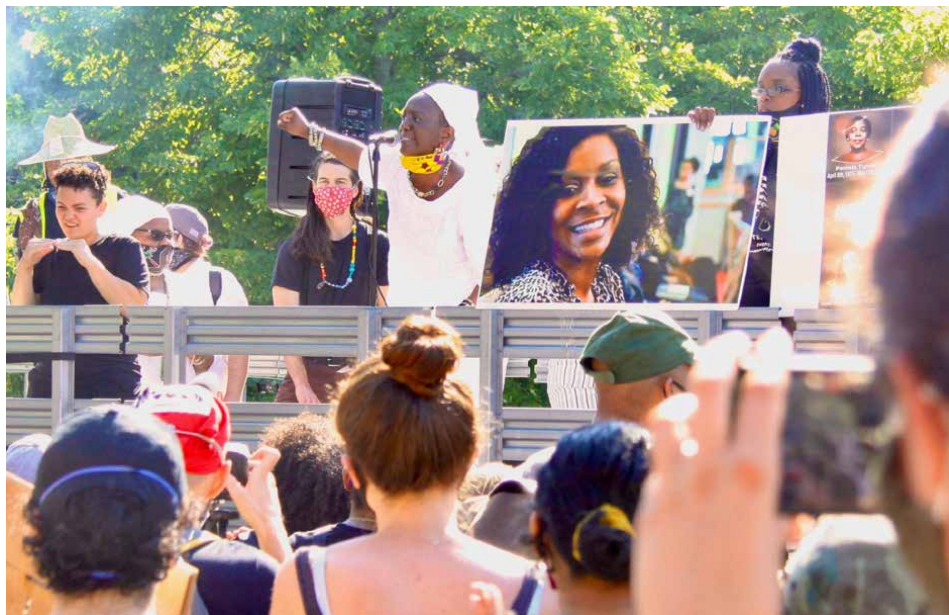


PHOTO: G. CARENS

Boston activists Karlene Griffiths Sekou and Monica Cannon-Grant uphold Sandra Bland's likeness and legacy, kicking off the July 4 #SayHerName rally.

By M. Skehan and G. Lechat
Boston

Over a thousand people took to the streets July 4 to center Black women's role in the ongoing Black Lives Matter rebellion. Gathering in Boston's Nubian Square, recently stripped of its slave name, the #SayHerName demonstration and march were organized by the initiative of Black women community leaders Daunasia Yancey, Karlene Griffiths Sekou and Lanise Colon Arira Adeeke.

Activist and civil rights lawyer Kimberlé Crenshaw, best known for originating the concept of intersectionality — that “race,” class and gender social categories create interrelated and deeper experiences of discrimination, especially for Black women — envisioned the #SayHerName campaign in 2014 to ensure that their stories are not ignored.

While some names like Sandra Bland and Breonna Taylor have received increasing attention, on par with some of the Black men murdered by police, others like Michelle Cusseaux and Kayla Moore, both murdered by cops confronting them in mental health crises, remain

lesser known. The killers of all four have, however, evaded justice. The “qualified immunity” recently upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court, that protects cops from accountability and consequences, is part of the longer list of privileges and abuses that have moved many from reformists to police abolitionists.

Community and labor solidarity was evident at the Boston action. Team Solidarity of the Boston School Bus Drivers, United Steelworkers Local 8751 provided a 24-foot flatbed truck to carry the women leaders and performers from Nubian Square to the Boston Common. Demonstrating Black and Indigenous unity, Chief Sachem Wompimeequin Wampatuck of the Mattakeeset Tribe with the Massachusetts Indian Nation and North American Indian Center of Boston activists offered land acknowledgements and statements of solidarity.

Black women lead march on cop headquarters

Under attack from intersecting forms of institutional and interpersonal violence, Black women led the local marchers to the Boston Police Department headquarters

in the heart of the Black community as they held the street to demand: “Abolish the Police!” As Griffiths Sekou said: “Black women are overlooked, erased, stigmatized and feared. ... No matter what you do to us, we're still gonna rise, and we're gonna take other Black women with us. We're gonna take everyone with us! This is the vision, the imagination and the new world that is on its way!” Griffiths Sekou also demanded that \$40.1 million in the bloated BPD budget go to a community-controlled fund to uplift the health and safety of Black residents.

Speakers decried racist gentrification and attempted theft of the community's Harriet Tubman House by greedy real estate developers, while standing in front of the endangered South End landmark. Its future — a thriving Black community center or death by condo conversion for high-income white residents? — currently hangs in the balance in Boston's Suffolk Superior Court. Sistahs of the Calabash performed Wade in the Water, “a war cry,” in tribute to Harriet Tubman.

The Sistahs explained in a post accompanying the video of their performance: “Mama Moses called on the water divinities to guide our ancestors to freedom! An action at the Combahee River, planned and led by Harriet Tubman on June 2, 1863, in the Port Royal region of South Carolina, freed more than 750 slaves. This is the only military campaign in American history planned and led by a woman.”

Arriving at the Boston Common in the evening, the day “to lament those murdered, center and uplift all Black womxn” and share in radical joy ended in a moving cultural resistance program of dance, song, drumming, spoken word, speeches and food. There were trans and nonbinary people of color, mothers demanding justice for their children murdered by the BPD and young women dancers honoring the life of Breonna Taylor.

Quoting Audre Lorde, Yancey read, “It is better to speak remembering we were never meant to survive.” Yancey added, “We want to be righteously angry, and we want to be holding each other in love.” □



WW PHOTO: TONI ARENSTEIN

The 6th annual “#SayHerName — Sandra Bland” protest organized by Peoples Power Assemblies/NYC, Union Square, July 13. Bland, a Black woman, was murdered while in custody in Waller County Jail in Texas on July 13, 2015.

Down with white supremacy!

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Rayshard Brooks Peace Center Struggle for community control in Atlanta

By Arielle Robinson
Atlanta

July 11 — Today the Atlanta community continued to protest, demanding community control for the site of the burned-out Wendy’s restaurant where Atlanta police murdered Rayshard Brooks the night of June 12.

The Saturday demonstration, organized by Community Movement Builders, was in support of a Rayshard Brooks Peace Center on the site. The center would be a place where the community can gather without fear of repression. It would be completely controlled and operated by those in the community with no control by any government forces — especially the police.

Protesters marched about 2 miles to the Wendy’s site, which has become a memorial to Brooks. Some protesters were armed and waved the red, black and green flag of Black Liberation as they marched.

Some protesters also demanded justice for 8-year-old Secoria Turner, who was tragically killed near the site of the RBPC on Saturday, July 4.

At the site were shirts and signs dedicated to Brooks’ memory. Numerous abolitionist messages were sprayed on Wendy’s ruins. The site has also become a space to honor all victims of the Atlanta Police Department and of police nationwide.

Then on Monday, July 6, the APD, using some city workers — some of whom were reluctant to cooperate — tore apart the memorial. The APD threw away the numerous shirts, flowers and other artifacts dedicated to Brooks and other APD victims. The demolition happened after Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms claimed that armed guards at the RBPC site were responsible for the shot that killed Secoria Turner.

Those who were occupying the site at the time, including Turner’s aunt, said that the shooters were not associated with the RBPC and, furthermore, the shooting did not occur at the burned-out Wendy’s. The shooting happened across the street.

Although it is not entirely clear what happened on the



The Rayshard Brooks Memorial Center in Atlanta.

Fourth of July, multiple things have been made clear by organizers and supporters of the RBPC. They have emphasized that the killing of Turner was tragic and devastating — and rightfully so, as those in the struggle for Black Lives would never want to see the death of a child.

Organizers were also clear that Mayor Bottoms is using the tragedy of Turner’s killing to further repress those fighting for Black Lives. Bottoms used Turner’s death to spew Black-on-Black crime rhetoric, saying “Members of the community [are] shooting each other.” (tinyurl.com/yec9nj9qe)

She attempted to shift attention away from police brutality, the responsibility of the APD for Brooks’ death and the righteous demands of the Black community, by saying: "You can't blame this on a police officer; you can't say this is about criminal justice reform."

Despite Bottoms’ disingenuous comments, protesters in Atlanta are still struggling to establish a Rayshard Brooks Peace Center where Brooks were murdered, knowing that the police are not protectors of Black people.

Saturday was just the beginning of what Community Movement Builders organizations says will be a continued movement to establish the center. □



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

Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, attacks on im/migrants, misogyny, LGBTQ2+ oppression and mistreatment of people with disabilities. It means joblessness, increasing homelessness and impoverishment and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism.

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

and trans people are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis.

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

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

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

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Students, workers remove Confederate general name from school

By **Otis Grotewohl**
Charleston, W.Va.

In a huge victory for the growing movement against racism and national oppression, members of the Kanawha County Board of Education of Charleston, W.Va., voted 5-0 on July 6 to change the name of what used to be known as “Stonewall Jackson Middle School.”

The junior high school has a Black student population of 44%, but it was shamefully named after a disgraced Confederate general, when it opened as a high school in 1940.

The struggle to remove the name started in early June, shortly after the lynching of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Students and staff alike quickly organized and took action. An online petition was created and circulated by students and community members. Teachers at the school unanimously voted to change the name through their faculty senate, with support from the community. Following the petition and Faculty Senate vote, people addressed their results to the Board of Education.

Students, teachers and community members started picketing the board office, even as the board was holding their meetings virtually, due to the pandemic. In late June, students and community held a march from the Abundant Life Ministries building—a majority Black church that had been active in the struggle to change the name of the school—to the Kanawha County Board office, where it ended with several speakers. On July 6, the board held a physically distanced, in-person meeting. Several students gave passionate presentations to the board, as people picketed outside.

Progressive-minded people throughout the city and state celebrated on social media after the board voted to make the change. Jay O’Neal, a history teacher at the school who helped organize his colleagues, enthusiastically expressed his thoughts to Workers World, “It’s been exciting to see everyone in the school and community, come together to make the name change happen. I’m proud to have been part of that.” (July 6)

Many of the picketers proposed that the school be renamed after numerous African American heroes in history who are somehow historically connected to West Virginia.

One of the proposed names is Katherine Johnson, a mathematician whose spirited story was portrayed in the 2016 movie, “Hidden Figures.” Johnson died earlier this year at the age of 101.

Another person who has been suggested is Carter G. Woodson, an important figure credited with founding what is now celebrated as Black History Month. Woodson was an educator who taught throughout the state.

One of the people who attended the picket outside the board meeting told Workers World there were “several attempts to change the name before.” They added that “this time was successful only because of the strong community support, in addition to the current, global rebellion against U.S. racism, led by Black, Brown and LGBTQ2S+ youth.”

School district’s historical significance

The removal of the school name is also symbolic in that the Kanawha County Board of Education building was the battleground of the “textbook war” several decades ago. In 1974, Kanawha County Board member Alice Moore started a bigoted crusade against what she considered “forced multiculturalism” and “egalitarianism” after the English Language Arts Textbook Committee of Kanawha County recommended that 325 books be used in the school curriculum. Among the books were titles by George Jackson, Eldridge Cleaver, Alex Haley, Kate Millett and Allen Ginsberg.

Moore’s right-wing crusade was joined by white, evangelical zealots and the terrorist Ku Klux Klan. Meanwhile, progressive religious groups, unions and most of—but unfortunately not all—the self-proclaimed, local Marxist groups at the time supported the books. Many of the white parents refused to send their children to school until the books were removed from the buildings and many backward coal miners also carried out “wildcat” strikes against the books.

The Black community of Charleston supported the books being introduced into the classrooms because the list contained several African American authors who may not have otherwise been read or studied in the schools. It was also obvious that the attacks on the books were a direct attack on all oppressed people. The Klan planted dynamite at one of the elementary schools, shot at school buses and threw stones through the windows of homes of parents who opposed the “book boycott.” Fortunately, there are no recorded fatalities from those incidents.

Self-determination, decolonization are keys to defeating racism

Sadly, the textbook war is credited with giving birth to the arch reactionary Heritage Foundation, as well as inspiring white evangelicals to become active in national politics. In some ways, the textbook war was similar to the struggle over busing that happened in Boston in the early 1970s, where some progressive forces did not defend the aspirations of the Black community besieged by racists in South Boston.



WW PHOTO: OTIS GROTEWOHL

Charleston protest, July 6.

As Workers World Party founder and chair Sam Marcy wrote regarding the struggle over busing in Boston in the pamphlet “Busing and Self-Determination,” “It is the oppressed people’s right to choose, and it is the obligation of Marxists in the oppressing nation to vigorously support and relentlessly defend that right.”

In contrast to what happened 46 years ago in Kanawha County, students, community members, workers and left activists united—with very little opposition—to force the School Board to take considerate action on July 6.

Throughout the U.S.—as well as the world—nationally oppressed and gender-nonconforming youth are taking matters into their own hands by tearing down monuments and statues of oppression. As Marxist-Leninists, it is our duty to unconditionally lend solidarity to the Black Lives Matter movement. Every time a symbol or a name of an historic exploiter is removed from a public space, our class comes closer to creating a better world! □

Cambridge, Mass. For Us, By Us Collective leads protest

By **Katya Zinn**
Cambridge, Mass.

On June 22, the author acted as an accomplice to a Black-youth-organized civil disobedience demonstration in Cambridge, Mass. This is their field report.

Central Square, 6 p.m. An early summer dusk painted a grapefruit haze over awnings of padlocked dive bars and deserted cafés. Outside City Hall, protesters blocked two lanes of traffic. The sit-in, led by Cambridge Black youth in Community; For Us, By Us Collective (FUBU), demanded reclamation

of taxpayer dollars from the trigger-happy hands of police.

Action began in Fort Washington Park. Volunteers dispensed masks, bottled water, snacks, hand sanitizer and extra signs: staples of socially responsible COVID-era civic engagement.

Meanwhile, organizers Lorra Marseille, Queen-Cheyenne Wade and Bilien Teklu outlined three demands for the city budget: 1) a Youth of Color collective (wherein youth are compensated for their work) to provide community outreach and infrastructure; 2) Community Safety Crisis Response Programs led by and for marginalized/low-income residents, unaffiliated with the Cambridge Police Department; and 3) a 2 to 3 ratio of affordable housing in few housing developments. (“Affordable” is defined by maximum qualifying incomes of \$40,000 for two-parent households and \$25,000 for single-parent ones).

Taking to the streets

Armed with cardboard signs painted with these demands, organizers led 20 to 30 accomplices down Massachusetts Avenue. Their voices echoed from a rolling utility cart carrying a public address system donated by the Boston School Bus Drivers Union, United Steelworkers Local 8751.

A black wire threaded through one of the cart’s mesh holes ended in a handheld mic. This traveled up and down the march’s frontlines as organizers took turns leading chants. Flanked by street medics with crosses of red duct-tape stuck to their T-shirts, protesters sat, spread across the intersection for 90 minutes.

“I wrote this poem six years ago,” said Tashawn Taylor, who performed a powerful tribute to hundreds of Black lives lost every year to police violence. “But if you told me then it would still be relevant today ... I would’ve believed you.”

‘On freedom’s side’

Queen-Cheyenne Wade gave a powerful speech demanding a new era of “trust in

our community’s abilities to imagine and create a world where we can all live freely, in love and liberation.” Halfway through her speech, she began to sing:

“Which side are you on, my people?”

She raised her voice over the wail of sirens as a squad of motorcycle cops closed in from both sides: “Which side are you on?”

Officers in riot gear began directing stationary vehicles with billy clubs. Traffic had been stopped since the beginning of the demonstration by neon-vested street marshals supporting the movement.

“We’re on freedom’s side!” the crowd yelled.

The road ahead

As of press time, Cambridge City councilors agreed to postpone a scheduled increase to Cambridge’s police budget until the 2021 Fiscal Year. While one would hope for more decisive action from city leadership, this marks a definitive first step toward Community FUBU’s demands. Here’s what you can do today to support their work:

1. Email citymanager@cambridge.gov in support of a Crisis Safety Response Program under Policy Order #149 with ZERO police involvement.
2. Call Cambridge City Hall at 617-349-4000 and leave a message in support of canceling the budget increase that is postponed until the next fiscal year. Tell them we will not be stalled by half-measures and will keep fighting for a safer Cambridge for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC).
3. Follow @CommunityFUBU on Facebook for updates. (tinyurl.com/yaxcrvhv)

Remember, comrades, claim no easy victories, and fight on! The road ahead is long and winding, but so far this much is clear: The People’s Revolution has taken to the streets. Black youth are at the front lines, and if you’re still watching from the sidewalk, the time has come to act. Either get behind them or get out of their way. □

Maine Thousands of workers strike Bath Iron Works

Over 4,300 production workers — represented by Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW) Local S6 — walked off the job at the Bath Iron Works shipyard June 23 after unsuccessful contract negotiations. Workers had made concessions in their last contract, but are reluctant to agree to attacks on seniority rights, increased health care costs and subcontracting which threatens current workers’ jobs.

Bath Iron Works is one of the U.S. Navy’s largest shipbuilders and a major employer in Maine, with a total of 6,800 workers. General Dynamics, the company that runs the BIW shipyard, raked in \$3.34 billion in 2018, largely through contracts from the Navy. Now General Dynamics is trying to squeeze even more profits from the workers.

IAMAW International President Robert Martinez Jr., wrote in a letter to President Trump that the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act “reduced the company’s effective tax rate from 28.6 percent in 2017 down to 17.8 percent in 2018. With this windfall, General Dynamics greatly increased stock buybacks and dividend payments, giving nearly \$2.9 billion to their stockholders in 2018 alone.”

After the company threatened to hire scabs to cross the picket line, the union released a quote from the poem “Ode to a Scab” by Jack London: “No man has a right to scab so long as there is a pool of water to drown his carcass in.”

Even though three union members have tested positive for the coronavirus, General Dynamics has cut off health insurance for the thousands of strikers and their families. Local S6 officials are asking that solidarity donations to their strike fund be sent to paypal.me/LocalLodgeS6.

The workers’ last strike in 2000 went 55 days before a new contract was won.

— **Report and photo by Joe Piette**



Behind the walls

By Mirinda Crissman

Hunger strike in solidarity with George Floyd uprising

On June 4-9, there was a hunger strike by detainees at Mesa Verde Immigration and Customs Enforcement Processing Center in Bakersfield, Calif. In a video shot by detainees and released through the Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity, detainees held up handwritten signs reading, “BLM,” “Change the System” and “Para la discriminación” (Stop the discrimination). One detainee explained, “We stand with the Black Lives Movement and against the system that took the lives of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade and so many Black people.”

Asif Qazi, a detainee inside the Mesa Verde facility, explains: “ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) always puts forth very inaccurate information ... in order to discourage the cause of liberation. We’re doing this on our own ... because of the recent deaths in ICE custody of Choung Woon Ahn and Carlos Mejia [not the famous Nicaraguan musician]. We are doing this because of ICE’s continuous lies in front of federal judges about how they have made it safe for us to be detained here during the coronavirus pandemic when it’s really not safe at all.”

In the video, another detainee reads the following demands: “We stand united in protest and fight for change. We want to end racism and racist police. We want the police to stop murdering Black people. We want the police to stop arresting and accusing people of color. We want the police to stop caging and deporting immigrants. We want the Black and Brown people to be free.

“We here at Mesa Verde want to be safe and free. We want the Attorney General to investigate the situation inside our detention center during the pandemic that led to the deaths of our friend Mr. Ahn and also Carlos Mejia. Power to the people.” (Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity, June 8)

Lisa Knox, managing attorney at Centro Legal de la Raza, an Oakland-based organization that works with detained immigrants across California, says she’s always seen the systems of criminal justice and immigration as intertwined: “They’re both part of the targeted mass incarceration of Black and Brown people.” (Ourprism.org, June 12)

Case numbers in the thousands

At least 48,764 cases of COVID-19 have been reported among prisoners. The data suggest that even these numbers may be underreported. Texas leads in the number of cases with 7,757, followed by the Federal Bureau of Prisons with 6,621 cases. Ohio, Michigan, California and Tennessee are right behind Texas and the BOP with 4,950, 3,991, 3,800 and 3,171 cases, respectively.

Over 600 prisoner deaths from the virus have been reported, with 91 from the federal BOP, 84 each in Ohio and Texas, 68 in Michigan and the rest in other states. Among prison staff, 10,342 cases and 42 deaths have been reported. (The Marshall Project, June 25; Texas Tribune, July 7)



Im/migrants in detention are often given aluminum blankets, like this one made by Grassroots Leadership in Austin, Texas.

Across the country, 658 youth in juvenile facilities and 771 staff members have reportedly been infected with the virus. (The Sentencing Project, June 24)

Cruel and unusual: Lack of air conditioning exacerbates medical conditions

Across the hottest places in the U.S., caged humans often face unbearable and sometimes lethal conditions behind the walls where air conditioning is not provided. The Prison Policy Initiative has found that famously hot states lack universal air conditioning in prisons and jails. These include Alabama, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. (Prisonpolicy.org, June 18, 2019)

In Texas alone, “75 of the state’s 104 prisons and jails do not have air conditioning in most inmate housing areas where temperatures often rise above 100 degrees in the summer.” The Texas Department of Criminal Justice spent \$7 million fighting a lawsuit by prisoners demanding AC at the Wallace Pack Unit near College Station, where it would only have cost \$4 million to do it. (Texas Tribune, March 21, 2019) The TDCJ also has a hard time retaining guards, who also cannot stand the heat behind the walls without AC.

Cruelty is often the point, as refusing to install air conditioning is a matter not just of short-term cost savings, but of appearing tough on crime. In 2014, the

people of Jefferson Parish, La., only voted to build a new jail after local leaders promised there would be no air conditioning.

Benny Hernandez, an incarcerated man in Texas, told Prison Policy Initiative how torturous heat is in prisons: “It routinely feels as if one’s sitting in a convection oven being slowly cooked alive. There is no respite from the agony that the heat in Texas prisons inflicts.”

Health conditions, such as diabetes and obesity, as well as taking psychotropic or high blood pressure medications, can limit anyone’s ability to regulate heat. Older people are highly susceptible to organ failure in the heat. Prisons, jails and detention centers cage people who are vulnerable to heat precisely because of their conditions. Extreme heat is an enemy to health, especially when you are confined to a cage and especially during the COVID crisis.

Release kids from detention

On June 27, a federal judge in Los Angeles ordered the release of migrant children who have been held longer than 20 days in any of the country’s three family detention centers, citing the coronavirus. The ruling applies to 124 children living in detention centers in Texas and Pennsylvania. Citing terrible sanitary conditions and rapid spread of the virus in these facilities, the judge is the first to give a specific deadline (July 17) rather than call for “prompt” release. The children will be released to designated relatives in the United States upon parental designation. (NY Times, June 26)

Solitary confinement: Parole doesn’t mean release

The dedication to punishment within the prison-industrial complex cannot be overstated. In its report “Solitary Confinement Is Never the Answer,” the Unlock the Box Campaign documents the impacts and risks associated with the 500% increase in the use of solitary confinement, which is the punitive way prisons have decided to respond to the pandemic.

The report notes that “the number of people held in solitary confinement in the United States ballooned to an estimated 300,000 people in April, as compared to the estimated 60,000 people held in solitary confinement each day prior to the outbreak. Prolonged solitary confinement is an internationally recognized form of torture that we know is causing widespread harm, and it also colossally fails to contain the spread of the virus.” (Solitarywatch.org, June 15)

Many prisoners granted parole are nevertheless stuck in virus-ridden facilities due to COVID-19-related and other bureaucratic delays. Across several states, prisoners are kept locked up because they were not able to start or complete classes required for release, even though having to stay inside these concentration camps for the poor may be a death sentence.

In Texas, nearly 15,000 people who have been granted parole remain locked up. Most are enrolled or are pending placement in required classes that have been suspended. Tennessee continues to cage 1,300 people who have been granted parole. (Austin Statesman, June 14) □



July 4, Philadelphia. PHOTO: TAHIR ASAD, VIRTUOUS LION PRODUCTIONS

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Build Workers World!

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

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

What would really show solidarity with the already vibrant Black Lives Matter movement here and abroad? Raising the struggle to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal so it becomes a worldwide cry. The very reasons why Mumia is in jail are that he used his voice and his pen to expose racism, especially the role of police terror in Philadelphia. Then the system framed him, denied him a fair trial and attempted to kill him. Mumia’s case

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

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

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Free Imam Jamil Al-Amin!

By Shafeah M'Balia

Here is a slightly edited transcript of remarks from the July 2 webinar presented by the Prisoners Solidarity Committee of Workers World Party titled, "Free Mumia! Free Them All!"

Let me start by saying bismillah. I ask Allah to guide my heart and guide my tongue. As-salamu alaykum everyone. Free the land, on the move. My name is Shafeah M'Balia. I am the Southern Regional Coordinator for Imam Jamil Action Network. Imam Jamil was formerly known as H. Rap Brown.

I want to thank Workers World for inviting IJAN to highlight the latest updates in Imam Jamil's case. I also want, on behalf of IJAN, to give shoutouts of solidarity to Brother Mumia and all the other political prisoners and prisoners of war. Free Imam Jamil! Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Free them all!

I never want to start talking about this case from the angle of the state. But with the shortness of time tonight



Shafeah M'Balia PHOTO: GARRIE ROUSE

it's absolutely critical for you to have heard the voice of the person who has repeatedly confessed for 20 years to what Imam Jamil was convicted for. Five minutes is not enough to present the history, the importance, the legacy or the case of Imam Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin, formerly known as H. Rap Brown. But it is enough time to focus your attention on the act of signing the petition for retrial for Imam Jamil at whathappened2rap.com.

This past January, at the inaugural hearing of the Fulton County Georgia Conviction Integrity Unit — organized to hear past cases where that office had made mistakes of injustice — former U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young called on the unit to review the case of Imam Jamil. He said it was heavy on his heart because Imam Jamil had been wrongfully convicted.

The petition campaign for a retrial was started immediately, and when 10,000 signatures were reached, Kairi Al-Amin, Imam Jamil's son, an attorney, and other attorneys filed formally for the retrial. The case is being reviewed now by this unit.

Keep the pressure on!

We must keep the pressure on! It is only, and I think brother Larry [Holmes] raised this earlier, it is only from the pressure of the people that these institutions will respond. We must keep the pressure on Fulton County District Attorney Paul Howard, showing him that the support of the people is held by Imam Jamil. We have more than 47,000 signatures as of this morning (July 2).



Imam Jamil Al-Amin

We want 100,000 because every signature goes to the DA's office and adds to the pressure. The U.S. empire is terrified by the threat of Black insurrection. And it is the work that is being done in the streets now that is putting pressure on all the Paul Howards and this [DA] Paul Howard to charge the killers of Rayshard Brooks.

It is that work in the streets and your focused work on this petition now at whathappened2rap.com that will win a new trial for Imam Jamil. Now in this time of uprising, when people are demanding the defunding and demilitarizing of the police and community control of the police, when people and governments around the world are speaking and marching in solidarity with Black lives in the United States, we remind ourselves that Imam Jamil was one who worked at building unity and solidarity from neighborhood streets to the national level to the international level, both before and after he became Muslim.

Now, while we fight voter suppression and attempted intimidation, Imam Jamil had the character, courage and leadership to physically defend Black people's right to vote and to form independent political organizations to address the needs of the people. He upheld the rights of our people to defend ourselves.

Imam Jamil showed character, courage and leadership when the crack epidemic was raging through our communities to clean up the neighborhoods. You didn't see 11-year-old girls laying themselves across car windshields at the stoplight selling their bodies for it in the West End. Now, as the police make money off



our young people in street organizations, so-called gangs, Imam Jamil showed character, courage and leadership to bring them together in summits across the country to see their purpose in building peace, building security for our community and building community. That work continues today.

'Freedom Fighter of South Africa'

For those newly joining the people in the streets, the young ones who are bringing their bodies into struggle, some of the ones who've been out here already will tell you about Nelson Mandela, "Freedom Fighter of South Africa," who withstood 27 years in prison for standing for power in truth.

But Imam Jamil, Mumia Abu-Jamal, Mutulu Shakur, Jalil Muntaqim, Ruchell Magee, Sundiata Acoli and many more are our Mandelas, political prisoners and prisoners of war withstanding 20, 40, 50 years and more in U.S. gulags, U.S. prisons, for standing for justice and truth.

And we know that struggle today in the streets is going to produce more Mandelas. Imam Jamil is a bridge between our Mandelas of the 60s, 70s, 80s and up until today. We ask you to stand for his freedom, to sign and share the petition for a retrial at whathappened2rap.com.

Free Imam Jamil! Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Free them all! And if there's anything that I've said that is inconsistent with what Allah has given us, all faults are mine, and if there's anything that I've said that has helped you to gain insight, all praises to Allah. As-salamu alaykum. □

After cruel treatment of mourners Texas death penalty under fire

By Gloria Rubac
Houston

While executions are nothing unusual in Texas, the state outdid itself last week. It not only executed Billy Wardlow, but then its church liaison for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice used the viewing of the body by loved ones to verbally attack Wardlow's fiancée and her friends.

Wardlow had been an 18-year-old kid when he accidentally killed a man during a scuffle for a gun. He was trying to steal a car to leave Texas and run away from a childhood filled with abuse and neglect. He regretted the death for the 25 years he spent in prison.

After all that time behind bars, Texas then murdered him July 8.

Following Texas executions, the funeral home hired by the prison system takes the bodies to Grace Baptist Church in Huntsville so families and loved ones can finally touch and talk to them one last time, without glass separating them.

On July 8, Gina Bradford, the prison system's liaison for families whose loved ones have died while in prison, interrupted Danielle Allen, the fiancée of Wardlow, in the church as she was sobbing, touching his face and softly speaking

her goodbyes to him. Wardlow had asked that photos and videos be taken of him after his execution and friends were quietly doing that.

In the video, one can hear Bradford say, "Okay, enough with the pictures, okay? Normally, we have been stopping y'all from coming inside the church because this is not the time or the place for that." The two women taking pictures calmly told Bradford that Allen had asked them to take pictures as Wardlow had wanted.

But Bradford continued disrupting the quiet of the church by declaring, "Next time if we let you in, don't wear your shirts okay? Or we will not let you in at all." The shirts were yellow with the words "Abolish the Death Penalty" on the front and were signed "Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement."

Allen was ignoring the rude interruption as Bradford continued, "I don't have to let you in here. I have taken my day, my time, so you could be here."

That was the breaking point for Allen, who raised her voice for the first time. "Excuse me! Your day? Your day? I have just lost the love of my life and you're talking about your day. Just shut up!"

"I'm letting you be with him. I don't have to, but I am," Bradford said, refusing to give her name when asked. Allen told

her she would find out her name, adding, "She ruined my last minutes with Billy."

Thanks to friends who recorded this traumatic treatment and thanks to people who posted it on social media, the video went viral. The family of an innocent death row prisoner, Rodney Reed, tweeted it, as did death penalty activist and spiritual advisor to people on death row, Sister Helen Prejean. Activists posted the video on Facebook. This continued all night long.

Before noon the following day, the TDCJ was forced to disavow Bradford's behavior and posted on its Facebook page: "The woman in the video is not an employee of the TDCJ nor does she represent the views of the agency. Loved ones should have the opportunity to grieve. The agency has addressed the issue to ensure she is no longer involved in the viewing process and moving forward, TDCJ



Billy Wardlow and fiancée, Danielle Allen, October 2019

chaplains will remain on site to ensure this does not happen in the future."

TDCJ was quick to cover itself from the outrage of activists around the world. According to many of them, including this reporter's experiences, the truth is that Bradford's behavior had usually been rude and disrespectful. It will not be a solution for ministers who work for the system to be present at the church.

The only solution for grieving families is the total abolition of the racist, anti-poor death penalty. □

Revolution and proletarian

By Makasi Motema

A socialist revolution is an uprising of the proletariat — the working class, those who do not own the property necessary to run a business but must instead work for someone else. A socialist revolution is an awakening that causes the mass of workers to resist their oppression. In order for this outburst of energy to create revolutionary change, the working class must have a way of expressing that energy politically.

Historically, that political form is the creation of a new democracy for the working class. This new working-class democracy exists both separately — and in opposition to — the existing capitalist political system.

This new political system is meant to represent the interests of the working class and the oppressed. It is composed of, and run by, members of the working class to carry out their interests. As Russian revolutionary leader V.I. Lenin described:

“What is the class composition of this other government? It consists of the proletariat and the peasants. ... What is the political nature of this government? It is a revolutionary dictatorship, i.e., a power directly based on revolutionary seizure, on the direct initiative of the people from below, and not on a law enacted by a centralized state power. It is an entirely different kind of power from the one that generally exists in the parliamentary bourgeois-democratic republics of the usual type still prevailing in the advanced countries of Europe and America.” (tinyurl.com/y7aldeq5)

Deep organizing

If the emergence of a new working-class political system is necessary for revolution, it is important to understand that this system does not form spontaneously. This system, wherever it has emerged, is forged by intense organizational labor.

The primary problem for the working class is not capitalism per se; it is division. The members of the working class far outnumber the capitalist class. If the only problem faced by workers were oppression by capitalists, then those capitalists could easily be overthrown in a single evening by the collective action of the working class.

But collective action is easier to describe than to undertake. The working class in most countries, especially the U.S., is not united. It is divided along many lines including — but not limited to — race, gender, sexuality, sexual preference, disability, age and citizenship status. The capitalist class does everything it can to reinforce these divisions so that workers do not see their common interests as a class.

If the primary problem of the working class is division, then the primary task of revolutionaries is organization. In order to create a working-class democracy, that class must be united through intensive organizing efforts. As the most class-conscious members of the working class,

revolutionary socialists are obligated to take on the work of organizing. We must sew up the tears in the fabric of our class. Only then can a working-class democracy be constructed.

Deep organizing is the process of political agitation, education and organization. Political agitation means that workers, on an individual level, must be outraged by the oppression they face, rather than resigned to it. Agitation explains to workers that their problems are not an inevitable consequence of the structure of the world, but result from deliberate choices made by the oppressor.

Political education is necessary for identifying, in the clearest terms, exactly who the oppressors are — the capitalists and the violent state agents in their service — and how precisely workers can best resist them. Organization is the process of building political structures. In a revolutionary context, that structure is working-class democracy.

Dual power

What happens when the working class is organized into a democratic political structure? What happens to the capitalist political structure which exists to manage society’s economic exploitation? Can these two systems co-exist?

They cannot. A situation where two rival political systems exist in the same country is inherently unstable. If one government is legitimate, the other cannot be. But who determines legitimacy? It is not a matter of passing laws (two rival governments can both pass laws which directly contradict each other). What determines legitimacy is the backing of the people.

Rule by the working class is actual democracy. It is rule by the majority over the minority. The capitalist system is the reverse — rule by the minority (capitalists) over the majority (workers) — and it is therefore inherently undemocratic.

As political organization increases and more and more workers are brought into the working-class political structure, the legitimacy of the working-class structure increases. As political legitimacy is a zero-sum game, the capitalist system will begin to lose its legitimacy in turn. Only one political system can survive. A study of social revolutions shows that this process plays out whenever the organized working class and oppressed rise against their oppressors.

The soviets

The Russian word for “council” is soviet. In the early 20th century, the czarist government of Russia grudgingly permitted the creation of councils, or soviets, of the working class and peasantry. These soviets took up local political questions. Initially, this was a reform meant to placate the masses by giving them a political outlet for their frustrations. But with the advent of World War I and the rise of working-class organization, the nature of

the soviets changed.

Class-conscious workers engaged in intense organizing drives, and this led to a rise in the number of soviets. Workers formed soviets within their workplaces and networked those political bodies to larger, citywide soviets in places like Petrograd. Even the simple act of participating in a workers’ Soviet had a radicalizing effect on workers.

The demands of workers grew as they felt they had some control over their workplace or their government. As radicalization increased, so did the influence of the Bolsheviks, the revolutionary wing of the Russian Social Democratic Workers’ Party. At the same time, the rising power of the soviets meant a decline in power first for the czar — leading to the 1917 February Revolution and his abdication — and then for the capitalist Provisional Government that replaced him.

Besides industrial workers, soldiers in the Petrograd garrison and sailors of Russia’s fleet also joined and participated in the soviets. The sailors from the Kronstadt base near Petrograd were particularly revolutionary and were the first to push for an overthrow of the capitalist government and the establishment of a socialist republic. This participation of soldiers and sailors placed an armed force at the disposal of the revolutionary government.

As Lenin wrote a few months after the February Revolution:

“The working masses constitute the vast majority of the population, they control the soviets, they are aware of their power as a majority, they see everywhere the promise of a ‘democratized’ life, they know that democracy is the rule of the majority over the minority (and not the reverse—which is what the capitalists want) ... they cannot but aspire toward supreme rule by the people, i.e., the majority of the population, toward affairs being managed according to the will of the worker majority as opposed to the capitalist minority. ... There is no other way out. Either we go back to supreme rule by the capitalists, or forward toward real democracy, towards majority decisions. This dual power cannot last long.” (tinyurl.com/y7jvezpe)

The Russian workers did indeed go forward. In the October Revolution of 1917, the Bolsheviks and the soviets overthrew the Provisional Government. The revolutionary government that arose, which eventually came to be known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), set an example for the world of what working-class political power could achieve.

Red star over China

In China, an entirely new dimension of dual power developed when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was forced to openly rebel against the ruling landlord-capitalist Kuomintang Party (KMT). That dimension was the control of physical territory by workers, peasants and the CCP.

During the 1920s, the workers’ movement in China’s major cities grew rapidly, driven in large part by the organizing efforts of the CCP. At the same time, peasants in the rural countryside were organizing to overthrow the domination of oppressive landlords. Eventually, the CCP backed the peasant movement as well. In 1928, Mao and other members of the CCP established the Jiangxi Soviet in the remote, mountainous border region between the Jiangxi and Fujian provinces. The creation of not just a working-class and peasant government, but a sovereign territory required a tremendous amount of political organizing as a precondition. As Mao stated:

“[T]he regions where China’s Red political power has first emerged and is able to last for a long time have not been those unaffected by the democratic revolution ... but regions ... where the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers rose in great numbers in the course of the bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1926 and 1927. In many parts of these provinces trade unions and peasant associations were formed on a wide scale, and many economic and political struggles were waged by the working class and the peasantry against the landlord class and the bourgeoisie.” (tinyurl.com/ycvl7xwp)

The Jiangxi Soviet initiated radical land reform policies. Peasants enacted these changes through peasant associations, which were political organizations much like the workers’ and peasants’ soviets of the Russian Revolution. Throughout the course of the revolution, the CCP was able to expand its physical territory through military means and its political influence through organizational means. Whenever the CCP’s military, the Red Army, pushed KMT soldiers out of a village or county,



Members of the National Liberation Front in Vietnam carry picture of their leader, Ho Chi Minh.

democracy

The U.S. capitalist system could not have come into being, nor can it continue to maintain itself, without the aid of white supremacy and the oppression of Black people. Likewise, anti-Black racism could not continue in the face of the powerful social movements that seek to end it, without the power and influence of the capitalist ruling class — which stokes racism in order to divide the working class, suppress wages and maintain political control.

CCP organizers immediately followed — establishing Peasant Associations, reducing rent and fighting against the oppression of women.

Vietnam and the strategic hamlet

Beyond the creation of liberated base areas, the CCP had also realized that the process of revolution — of organizing working-class democracy — created lasting social changes that remained even when the enemy recaptured CCP territory. This insight was later seized on by revolutionaries in the Vietnamese National Liberation Front (NLF) during their struggle against U.S. imperialism.

The basic organizational unit of Vietnamese workers and peasants was the Village Committee. Village Committees executed a radical agrarian social policy. That policy included political education, redistribution of land that had been controlled by wealthy landlords, rent reduction and punishing those who lent money at exorbitant rates. The NLF also worked to increase agricultural production, open schools, punish corruption and eliminate brutal civil servants and village leaders. The Village Committee, like the Peasants Association in China and the workers' soviets in Russia, was a democracy of the peasants and proletariat.

Beyond village administration, liberation associations were also created so that various groups could use the struggle to combat the oppression they faced. There were Farmers' Liberation Associations, Women's Liberation Associations, Youth Liberation Associations and Student Liberation Associations, among others. The Farmers' Associations had the most impact in expanding the NLF because of the rural nature of Vietnam. Women's Liberation Associations caused the deepest social change, and the NLF took a very hard-line stance in support of women's rights.

Most remarkable about the organizational efforts of the NLF was that they often occurred directly under the nose of the U.S. imperialists and their puppet governments. In the early 1960s, the U.S. and its puppet Diem regime instituted the "strategic hamlet" program. This was a system of concentration camps by another name. Large villages were turned into highly militarized security zones with checkpoints and barbed-wire fences around the border.

Nevertheless, NLF organizers were able to access these strategic hamlets and continue organizing the revolution. By day, villagers obeyed the puppet government. But at night, NLF organizers provided political agitation,

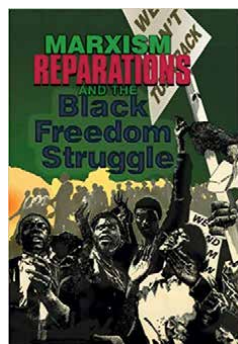
of the U.S.? It is because of the essential role that the oppression of Black people has played in the process of capitalist wealth production.

The U.S. capitalist system could not have come into being, nor can it continue to maintain itself, without the aid of white supremacy and the oppression of Black people. Likewise, anti-Black racism could not continue in the face of the powerful social movements that seek to end it, without the power and influence of the capitalist ruling class — which stokes racism in order to divide the working class, suppress wages and maintain political control.

Any working-class revolution in the U.S. will need to directly challenge the status of the Black working class as super-oppressed workers, as well as the violent repression suffered by the Black community at the hands of the police.

In the U.S., as in every country where the working class and the oppressed have risen up against capitalist exploitation, the only means of creating these social changes is through the organization of working-class democracy. Over the past several years, there has been a rise in Workers' Assemblies, bringing together members of the working class to struggle against oppression.

This expansion of real democracy must continue and must accelerate. The struggle of the Black working class — as well as the task of uniting with white, other people of color, the gender-oppressed, the disabled and the able-bodied, elders and undocumented workers — can only be advanced through the organization of Workers' Assemblies along the soviet model. And that level of unity can only be achieved through deep organizing. This is the inescapable duty of revolutionary socialists during a period of monumental change.



Minneapolis police station on fire, May 28.

education and organization. Barbed-wire fencing could not block the spread of the revolution across South Vietnam. As in China, the social changes caused by the revolution could not be undone by the imperialists merely seizing or maintaining military control.

George Floyd

Today, the U.S. is in the midst of a rebellion that might transform into a revolution. Which class is in motion? It is the Black working class — and those who would struggle alongside them in solidarity — spurred by the intolerable violence perpetrated by the police on a daily basis. According to the New York Times, the Black Lives Matter protests may be the largest in U.S. history. (July 3)

This is not the first time that a Black-led rebellion has engulfed the country. Why is it that the Black struggle causes such dramatic shifts in the political landscape

Can dual power exist in the U.S.?

The creation of working-class democracy inherently creates a legitimacy crisis for the capitalist ruling class. Only American exceptionalism could lead one to believe that the ruling class of the U.S. would be uniquely invulnerable to such a crisis should the workers of this country organize against their oppressors.

A unified working class would in the first place be totally destabilizing for the capitalist exploiters. The unity of workers in the world's largest economy would likely result in crashing profits for the ruling class. A unified working class struggling to win better wages and benefits could shut down entire sections of the economy. If the capitalist ruling class were to give in to worker demands, capitalist profits would plummet, causing a ripple effect for capitalists around the world.

Politically, the capitalist government of the U.S. is already held in low esteem. It has proven totally incapable of handling the challenges of modern society, shown most acutely by its failed response to the COVID pandemic.

Anyone who still remains under the false impression that the U.S. government is not completely driven by capitalist greed would have those notions quickly disabused by the rise of a true working-class democracy. There is no doubt that the working class here would come to the same conclusions as the Russian working class a century ago. Our options would be to accept the "supreme rule of the capitalists" or "go forward toward real democracy."

It is only the power of the state, which some on the left still grudgingly respect and fear — the power of the police to crush social movements with ruthless violence. But where were these mighty stormtroopers six weeks ago when freedom fighters in cities across the country set police vehicles and precincts aflame? Where was the power of the state when workers reappropriated corporate wealth by smashing store windows and taking what they needed?

The police, like so many institutions in the U.S., are in decay despite the influx of expensive military equipment. The current rebellion has shown the limitations of the coercive power of the state to stop even spontaneous and disorganized resistance. It has no hope of controlling a united working class acting decisively. Under these conditions, the emergence of a workers' state — the working class acting in its own self-defense — is not just possible, but likely.

Revolution

We stand on the precipice of a revolution that will be both rapid in its expansion and all-encompassing in its scope. The capitalist ruling class has never faced a direct challenge to its hegemony in the heart of the U.S. empire since the Great Depression of the 1930s. The impact of such a clash will have earth-shattering repercussions. The outcome of this conflict will be determined by the will of the working class — the will to organize, the will to struggle, the will to win. □

Marxism, Reparations and 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 • 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

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Supreme Court rules for religious right, against health care

By Sue Davis

After signing three progressive decisions in June, Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts revealed his true conservative stripes July 8. Not only did he sign one ruling supporting so-called “religious rights,” he signed two.

The one potentially affecting millions of women and gender nonconforming people of reproductive age (15-44) and their families involves the contraceptive mandate in the Affordable Care Act. This is the third time the court reviewed the issue in the last six years. (SCOTUS rulings on other religious topics will be covered in a future article.)

Setting the stage is the fact that the Health Resources and Services Administration, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services controlled by the President, ruled under Obama that birth control was essential “preventive care.” According to HRSA, that meant it would be free, covered by the employer’s insurance without copays or cost-sharing.

The first case in 2014 was *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*. The court ruled then that private employers could claim religious objections to paying for such insurance under the Affordable Care Act. But it stipulated that the Obama administration had to provide workers with access to such coverage, so it had state medical groups or insurers cover the cost. (Workers World, June 2014)

The second case, *Zubik v. Burwell*, heard in 2016, was a “religious-freedom challenge” to the birth control mandate by a group of religious nonprofits led by Little Sisters of the Poor Saints Peter and Paul Home. Similar to the Hobby Lobby accommodation, nonprofits were to notify insurers of their objection, and the state or insurer would cover the cost. (Workers World, June 2016)

But the Little Sisters and others claimed that due to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act such a provision placed a “substantial burden” on them for merely having to register their objection. Rather than issue a ruling, the Supreme Court threw the case back to appeals courts, where it lingered until now.

Court promotes ‘religious freedom’ to discriminate

Determined to fulfill a misogynist campaign promise, the Trump administration changed the HRSA wording in 2017 so that any business, university or religious nonprofit could opt out of paying for birth control for employees or



Reproductive Justice activists protest outside SCOTUS to uphold access to contraception, March 23.

students by signing a waiver objecting to contraception on religious or moral grounds. By adding “moral” grounds, the immoral bigot-in-chief invited all employers to cash in on the ill-defined windfall. It was immediately opposed by Pennsylvania and New Jersey, while Little Sisters et al., filed in favor of it.

Justice Clarence Thomas wrote the majority 7-2 opinion. (Justices Elena Kagan and Stephen Breyer joined the five conservatives in order to request an in-depth review of HRSA and RFRA mandates by the appeals court.) The opinion asserted that both mandates authorized Trump’s expansion of permissible exemptions. Furthermore, Thomas asserted that “It is Congress” in its wording of the Affordable Care Act that has “failed to provide the protection for contraceptive coverage.” (Intercept, July 9)

Justice Samuel Alito took that reasoning a step further, posing: “If Congress thought that there was compelling need to make free contraceptives available for all women, why did it make no provision for women who do not receive a paycheck?” (Slate, July 8)

For the two dissenters, the Intercept quoted Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who was joined by Justice Sonia Sotomayor: “In accommodating claims of religious freedom, this court has [in the past] taken a balanced approach, one that does not allow the religious beliefs of some to overwhelm the rights and interests of others who do not share those beliefs. ... Today, for the first time, the court casts totally aside countervailing rights and interests in its zeal to secure religious rights to the nth degree.”

The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

condemned the court’s decision: “Using the cover of ‘religious freedom,’ this ruling makes bad economic and health care situations even worse. ... This agenda has, for decades, targeted reproductive healthcare as one of many strategies to inflict control on Black, Indigenous and other people of color ... to uphold white supremacist, Christian nationalist, classist, and patriarchal systems of oppression.”

“The vast majority of the 70 million Catholics in the United States long ago rejected the Catholic bishops’ authority,” wrote Catholics for Choice in a stinging reply to the court’s ruling. “Attacks on the birth control benefit jeopardize people’s health and safety, particularly the most vulnerable in our society, people of color, young women, those in rural areas and those with lower-incomes.

“Let’s be clear — real religious freedom must mean ensuring freedom of religion and freedom from religion.”

Countering the attack on health care

Citing government statistics, Ginsburg was quoted by the Intercept as writing: “Between 70,500 and 126,400 women would immediately lose access to no-cost contraceptive services. ... This court leaves women workers to fend for themselves, to seek contraceptive coverage from sources other than their employer’s insurer, and absent another available source of funding, to pay for contraceptive services out of their own pockets.”

The RCRC noted that in one year, 2013, the ACA helped people save over \$1 billion in out-of-pocket costs for birth control pills.

According to the National Women’s Law Center, the ruling jeopardizes access of 61.4 million women to no-cost birth control under the ACA. The NWLC stresses it’s also important as health care.

The Intercept also reported that four members of the Congressional Caucus for Women’s Issues responded to the attack on free birth control by announcing they would immediately file legislation to block the Trump exemptions from taking effect. In a joint statement Reps. Diana DeGettle, Judy Chu, Barbara Lee and Lois Frankel stated: “A decision about whether to use birth control is one that should be between a patient and their doctor. Giving an employer the ability to interject themselves in that decision — by limiting a patient’s access to free birth control — is unconscionable.”

Kathy Durkin contributed research to this article.

Police terror, COVID-19 are women’s issues

These slightly edited remarks were given by Monica Moorehead at a June 7 International Women’s Alliance webinar: “Building our militant global women’s movement to resist imperialism in the time of COVID-19.”

This series of International Women’s Alliance webinars could not have come at a more opportune time. A wave of rebellion is sweeping the globe. Who would have thought six months ago that the epicenter of this rebellion would be the U.S. — the imperialist belly of the beast? It is both shocking and not surprising that this is happening.

The billionaire ruling class, their Wall Street investors and the Trump government are having nightmares, fighting among themselves, knowing that their entire system is under attack — first for ignoring all the early signs of the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by the lack of testing and health care for everyone, including essential workers — and with the unemployment rate approaching Great Depression levels, not counting 2 million incarcerated workers in prisons and detention centers, undocumented migrant workers, working-class and oppressed youth. Workers are resisting with strikes, sit-ins, car caravans and even resisting armed neofascists who want to reopen businesses.

The second pandemic is the rebellion ignited on May 25 by the horrific torture and police lynching of the 46-year-old Black man in Minneapolis, George Floyd. It took five days for the cop who asphyxiated Floyd to be charged and several days later for the three other cops to be arrested. That rebellion will reach two weeks tomorrow (June 8).

This rebellion against police terror has brought together Black, Latinx, Indigenous and white people of all generations, genders and abilities with marches, rallies, shutting down bridges, interstates, carrying out civil disobedience and expropriation — all in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, with people risking their health to be in the streets in all 50 states, in large and small cities. This inspiring

rebellion has spread around the world on almost every continent in solidarity with Black Lives Matter, which is an international struggle.

Underneath these two unprecedented pandemics is a dying capitalist economic system based on making profits, not meeting human needs. Capitalism has been in a permanent economic crisis since the housing market crash in 2008. It never has and never will fully recover. This crisis is reflected in low-wage jobs, lack of housing, closings of hospitals and clinics, mass incarceration, a rise in domestic and sexual violence, attacks on reproductive justice, police brutality, environmental racism, lack of healthy foods, and more.

For working-class people and people of color, there has always been a generational social crisis for years before 2008. But COVID-19 has made these issues more acute, especially with the genocidal numbers of people of color dying, at a rate 50 percent higher than whites due to institutionalized racism.

Women are resisting on all fronts

In my organization, International Working Women’s Coalition, our main slogan is “Every issue is a woman’s issue.” We have a 10-point program that gets to the heart of the issue:

Can we live without all the basic human needs like health care, jobs, housing, food and more? We say that in order to win these rights, you have to unite and fight capitalism and imperialism, which propagates white supremacy in all forms. And patriarchy and gender oppression are used to divide women and all sectors of our class.

Who are on the front lines in the COVID-19 crisis? Mainly health care workers, the majority being women who put their lives on the line to save lives, but are dying because they don’t have personal protective necessities, access to ventilators and other lifesaving equipment. Women, especially women of color, have seen their numbers swell as incarcerated workers. Many are single mothers.

Women have also been victims of police violence, like Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old Black EMT worker, shot eight times by Louisville, Ky., police while sleeping this past March. Her 27th birthday was on June 5. She is just the latest victim of police terror. There’s Sandra Bland in Texas, Rekia Boyd in Chicago, Shantel Davis and Kyam Livingston in New York, and countless other women of color whose lives have been tragically cut short. None of the police involved have been arrested or charged.

But women are resisting on all fronts. Women of color, Black, Latinx and Indigenous, as well as anti-racist whites, a vast majority of them young, are on the front lines of this rebellion, not backing down from the police. Health care workers are rallying and marching against their terrible conditions, fighting both COVID and saying Black Lives Matter. Women are on the front lines fighting these and other neoliberal policies emanating from the imperialist system both at home and abroad.

The COVID-19 virus may be keeping a lot of us off the streets due to age and preexisting health conditions, but we can still show solidarity in other ways to fight any isolation, including women’s assemblies. We need to agree on some global united days of action on issues that most impact women, because despite where we live and struggle, we face the same struggles and the same fight against the same oppressive system. A good start is to defend this global rebellion against police and military terror, however long it lasts, because it is a woman’s issue. As the Assata Shakur chant says, as it applies to women and gender-oppressed people, “We have nothing to lose but our chains.”

Monica Moorehead is an executive committee member of IWA. She is also a coordinator of the International Working Women’s Day Coalition in New York City. Moorehead is a managing editor of Workers World newspaper and a contributing writer for the 1995 pamphlet, “Capitalism’s war on women: Why the system is responsible for violence against women.”

What is needed to reopen schools in the U.S.?

By John Catalinotto

July 13 — The Trump administration has ignored facts, science and the advice of experts when issuing an order for schools to open countrywide. Pediatricians, teachers and other education workers who are on the front lines have said they want to reopen schools, but only under safe conditions. They say that Trump and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos place children, their families and educators' health and lives in danger.

Trump's July 8 tweet demanded schools reopen or they will lose federal funds. This tweet parrots the capitalist ruling class's orders to restart the economy. Only workers at work can produce the surplus value (profits) that the bosses rob from them in the normal process of capitalism.

Some 27 million U.S. workers depend on schools to provide the child care they need to free them to work for the bosses. No other organized child care is available. Trump's demand the schools reopen shows he wants this economic recovery to start before the November election, whatever the long-term risk for killing thousands of educators, parents and children.

Trump's position reflects his usual priorities — winning the November presidential election while satisfying the U.S. ruling class. Regarding schools in this case, he fears that if the economy continues to stall, he will lose. For Trump, losing is the first step to the bottom of the cesspool.

Resistance to school openings — keep it united

Some 85% of teachers who responded to union surveys in both the Chicago and Los Angeles school districts expressed the view that they should not reopen schools without a well-thought-out plan to maximize safety. These unions are especially important because recent union struggles have sharpened their political activity and their contact with children and their caregivers.

“Our members have made it very clear that they are not willing to put the health — and the lives, quite frankly — of their students, or their students' families, or their own in jeopardy under any circumstances, and especially now if the Trump administration is talking about using them as guinea pigs to help jumpstart the economy,” said Chicago Teachers President

Jesse Sharkey. (ctulocal1.org, July 9)

Because capitalist society uses public schools for more than educating the next generation of workers, however, the choice of whether and how to open them involves the needs of a broad section of the working class. Unraveling this issue reveals how capitalist society functions, with the COVID-19 pandemic shining a spotlight on the cracks.

It should be kept in mind that the education system, like the rest of capitalist society, operates in an unequal way based on class and income and reflects the special oppression of people of color and other oppressed sectors — those facing racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia and ableism.

Besides educating youth and providing child care for 27 million workers, schools feed tens of millions of children who would otherwise face nutritional insecurity. Even before the pandemic, schools provided one free or subsidized meal a day for 30 million children and a second meal for nearly 15 million children. With tens of millions of people losing their jobs in the past four months, the number needing and eligible for meals can only have grown.

Schools also provide organized recreation, a place to make friends, some minimal public health care in a country where that service is almost nonexistent, and mentoring when funds and personnel are available.

Good reasons for caution

In his July 8 tweet, Trump cited the American Academy of Pediatrics as urging the reopening of schools for the mental health and development of the children. Trump also named Germany, Denmark and Norway as countries where the reopening of schools has succeeded.

Trump failed to mention that these are among the few capitalist countries where the daily number of new infections has declined and remains low enough to allow existing public health organizations to test regularly and do contact tracing. These countries, within the limitations of capitalist societies, have some form of universal health care and a public health apparatus, unlike in the U.S.

It is at least possible that these countries may contain any new outbreaks until medical protocols for minimizing the

impact of the virus and/or vaccines are developed, though much about this disease/syndrome is still unknown.

In the U.S., where the national capitalist leadership is #1 in incompetence, bad will and anti-scientific ideology, infections are increasing rapidly, tests are inadequate, and school reopening is especially dangerous.

On July 10, the AAP walked back its position, joining the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and the School Superintendents Association to issue a statement attacking Trump's threat to withhold funds.

The statement read: “Local school leaders, public health experts, educators and parents must be at the center of decisions about how and when to reopen schools. ... Reopening schools in a way that maximizes safety, learning, and the well-being of children, teachers, and staff will clearly require substantial new investments in our schools and campuses.” It demanded Congress provide the needed funds. (tinyurl.com/yd7uazbn)

Extreme conditions, decisive solutions

The ruling class in general is pressuring worker-parents to get back to the job whether or not they have care for their children. They may be living on no income and savings that are evaporating — in a capitalist society that has no organized child care system aside from the public schools. The parents' situation will grow even more dire if they are dependent on unemployment insurance, as the additional \$600 supplement ends July 31.

And if they keep children at home — assuming they aren't evicted — they have to worry about how to feed them.

When schools shut down in March, for example, in New York City's gigantic system, educators cobbled together a distance-learning program teaching through the internet. Though it had obvious failures in equal access, that it functioned at all without extensive prior planning demonstrated the dedication of the educational staff.

At a minimum, however, the government will have to provide adequate access to those communities where inadequate internet broadband and access to devices made this type of learning difficult, if not



West Palm Beach, Fla.

impossible. These were often the same communities where the children's caregivers were “essential workers” and thus unable to homeschool children.

With food and housing insecurity on one side and the threat of severe illness or death on the other, the coronavirus has turned its magnifying lens on the contradictions of capitalism. Yet the teachers, students and their families are on the same class side of this issue.

Ideally, a coalition representing all school employees, bus drivers, the students and their working-class families, along with public health experts and representatives of children with learning or other disabilities or any needing special services would together make decisions and execute them. A recent Workers World article by Makasi Motema describes such a popular organization. (workers.org/2020/07/49903/)

U.S. capitalist society has the responsibility to provide adequate food, housing and education for all its population, including children with special needs. If the federal government can find \$2 trillion to \$3 trillion to bail out the capitalist economy, it can find the \$200 million to \$500 million needed to run safe, spacious and well-staffed schools — in person and/or at a distance during a pandemic.

If capitalist society is unable to do this, then it should step aside to allow organizations such as those representing teachers and other school workers and working-class parents run a new kind of society, a socialist society, where production is organized to serve people's needs, not to concentrate wealth in a handful of capitalists. □

Trump's xenophobic attack on international students

Bulletin, July 14: As U.S. District Judge Allison Burroughs was about to hear arguments challenging threatened cancellation of student visas where no online classes were being held, U.S. immigration authorities reversed themselves and rescinded the new rule. See article for background to this new setback for the White House.

By G. Lechat

Unions representing graduate student workers, many international, organized simultaneous July 13 rallies from coast to coast in opposition to a draconian Immigration and Customs Enforcement order threatening their right to remain in the U.S.

Ultimately, a million individual international students are endangered by their second-class status as visitors in this country and vulnerable to criminalization, detention, deportation and subject to the whims of whoever is in the White House.

ICE and the Student Exchange and Visitor Program (SEVP) announced July 6 that international students enrolled in institutions that do not plan to return to in-person instruction in the fall must

leave the country.

While this new xenophobic attack should be no surprise, it must be condemned! Trump began his presidency by terminating Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals and Temporary Protected Status, then ordered a travel ban singling out Muslims and now he exhibits blatant racism by blaming China for the COVID-19 pandemic.

On July 8, Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology sought a temporary restraining order against this new rule. The University of California followed July 9. Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healy announced on July 13 that the state is also suing with 17 other state AGs.

Additional universities, the Massachusetts AG and unions, including the United Auto Workers, American Federation of Teachers, Service Employees Union and Communications Workers of America, have all submitted amicus briefs (documents filed by non-participating parties that share an interest in the outcome of the Harvard/MIT suit). This attack on international student workers — who work in labs, teach,

grade, advise and write recommendation letters for undergraduate students — is also union busting, which all labor has an interest in opposing.

Arguing a technicality

The government is seeking to add this new restriction to the Federal Register — which contains all government agency rules and notices — and demands institutions planning to remain online confirm by July 15. Because Trump's administration ignored a required 30-day notice and comment period without a legitimate reason before, the Supreme Court reversed Trump's attack on DACA recipients on June 18. The educational institutions suing the government will argue that there is no new emergency since March warranting the change for foreign students.

The case is moving fast. Top-rated California immigration lawyer Stacey Gartland informed an online national UAW graduate worker stewards' meeting on July 10 that the case's Boston judge was very unhappy that the government failed to meet its own deadlines and requested a postponement. The judge only granted the government until July 13.

Even if this latest procedural abuse gets Trump's case tossed out of court, however, this xenophobic attack was traumatic for a million foreign students.

The Harvard Crimson of July 10 reported “fear, anxiety and grief over a profound loss of stability” had impacted the students. Because of restrictions based on the pandemic or politics, some have no country to go to if the U.S. expels them. Such restrictions may also stop them from returning if/when in-person classes resume. An incoming Harvard first-year student from Belarus has already been denied entry. (Harvard Crimson, July 9)

The students face unique situations depending on their degree progress, work arrangements and nation of origin. For graduate students, many of whom have been struggling through their unions for better working conditions, including more support for international students, the Trump edict is also an attack on union consciousness.

Division in ruling class

Trump's attack reveals division among ruling-class factions. Institutions like

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WORKERS WORLD

editorial

Capitalist system is ‘not above the law’

Big Media headlines trumpeted “Supreme Court says Trump not above the law” when SCOTUS ruled on July 9 that the president’s tax returns had to be revealed to — practically no one. The verdict gave narrow access only to New York state criminal prosecutors — and definitely not to Congress and certainly not to any members of the public.

The public — the people — us! We who are more than ready to say “Time’s up!” on legal protection for Trump and all of the CEO administrators of capitalism.

It’s time to charge and convict them — not on the narrow basis of tax evasion for profit — but for their capitalist crimes against humanity.

Especially in the U.S., the dual crises of the COVID pandemic and the economic collapse have exposed the utter inadequacy of capitalists to deliver the minimum necessary to even keep people within their system alive — much less fed, housed and healthy enough to get to work.

Marx and Engels in “The Communist Manifesto” predicted this moment of the failure of capitalism: “The modern laborer, on the contrary, instead of rising with the process of industry, sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence. ... And here it becomes evident, that the bourgeoisie [capitalist class] is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society, and to impose its conditions of existence

upon society as an overriding law. It is unfit to rule because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its [wage] slaves within [their] slavery.”

The contrast in the pandemic between a capitalist response based on competition and a socialist response grounded in cooperation could not be more dramatic. On July 12, the U.S. registered 416 deaths per million of population, with new cases reported at 58,349 that day. The state of Florida alone had 15,300 new cases. On the same day, China registered three deaths per million — and only seven new cases. (worldometer.com)

Cuba’s response, based on its socialist-planned infrastructure, has shown even more dramatic success. July 7 marked the country’s 11th consecutive day without a single COVID-related death, with only 2,399 total confirmed cases by that date. According to international BBC correspondent Fernando Ravsberg, “The Cuban public health system was prepared for massive casualties, but the truth is that in the worst moments of the crisis less than 60 percent of its hospital resources were needed.”

Even more remarkably, “Not a single Cuban health worker, whether a doctor or a floor cleaner, has succumbed to the virus.” This is in stark contrast to conditions in wealthy capitalist countries. (tinyurl.com/y8amjsbe)

But even some capitalist countries have been more successful than the U.S. in pushing back the virus. Germany, for instance, had only 109 deaths per million population by July 12. The difference in the two capitalist countries seems due, at least in part, to the fact that the German state is required by law “to provide social services to its citizens.”

According to the EPMA Journal of preventive medicine, Germany has an infrastructure that guarantees “sufficient, needs-based ambulatory and inpatient medical treatment, in qualitative and quantitative terms, as well as ... the provision of medicine.” (tinyurl.com/y9z839cl)

Workers and oppressed peoples won these guarantees in Germany through protracted and often bloody struggle, and during post-World War II conditions when capitalist West Germany confronted sharp competition from the socialist German Democratic Republic. While many of those gains have been cut back, they are still much greater than pay-as-you-go rationing in the U.S.

Death-dealing U.S. infrastructure

The less wide-ranging health and workplace protections that workers have won in the U.S. by militant actions, especially during the brutal decades of the Great Depression, have been under continuous attack by capitalist privatization forces.

This has meant the U.S. health care infrastructure is a shambles of private-profit noncommunication and noncooperation.

But what does the U.S. have as a coordinated infrastructure? Its military system — functioning in every state and with over 800 bases in 70 countries around the globe, with personnel everywhere from local recruiting offices like Spanish Fort, Ala., to soldiers based in Syracuse, N.Y., who fly remote drones in Afghanistan.

The projected 2021 U.S. military budget has a base of \$671 billion, with an extra “war-fighting” Overseas Contingency Operations budget of \$69 billion. All these billions are devoted to maintaining death-dealing U.S. capitalist “democracy” and profits worldwide through imperialist domination.

Imagine how different life would be for us — the people — the workers and oppressed people in the U.S. and around the world, if those billions were put to use in socialist planning. We could establish systems of infrastructure to support our health, housing, work, art — the blossoming of our lives and the lives of those we love.

It’s correct that those who head the U.S. state and lead this unjust system are “not above the law.” Because ultimately the law of Marxist economics will prevail — with people’s revolutions building new socialist systems using our collective imagination and collective power. □

Disabled people fight police violence with accessible protests

By Workers World Disability Rights Bureau

Because most of the mass protests held after the police murder of George Floyd were not accessible, on June 7 Black disabled activists in Milwaukee held their own. The Milwaukee action was the second George Floyd protest held by Black disabled activists. The first was held in Washington, D.C., where marchers shouted “Sign his name,” referring to George Floyd, to demand sign language interpretation accessible to people with hearing disabilities who communicate via sign language.

Black disabled organizer Harvey Ross wants people to understand that people of color with disabilities are at higher risk of police violence. Ross said: “We are being policed and governed by incompetent people who can’t do their jobs, so we want their resignations. I have had police officers pull me over with guns drawn and ask, ‘Why do you have gloves on?’” Ross wears gloves when he drives because of his disability. (Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, June 7)

Disability rights journalist David M. Perry, whose son has Down syndrome, documented, in research for the Ruderman

Family Foundation, that as many as half of all people killed by police have a disability. (tinyurl.com/y7hau3fu)

In a June 15 WNYC radio podcast on “The Takeaway,” “The Overlooked Reality of Police Violence Against Disabled Black Americans,” Amy Walter spoke with African American disabled activist Haben Girma, author of “Haben: The Deafblind Woman Who Conquered Harvard Law.” She said: “When we talk about police violence ... and when we don’t comply because we didn’t hear the command, or we can’t move in a certain way, or we don’t see a physical gesture, or maybe there’s an invisible disability like a psychiatric disability, then the noncompliance is interpreted as threatening.”

“Right now the definition of protest is very able-bodied; it’s a physical standing up in the street holding signs. There are many different ways to protest. There are disabled people who are protesting in the streets using wheelchairs or other assistive devices. There are disabled people protesting from home through social media, through calls to their representatives, so we should expand the definition of protest. We also need to make sure the physical and digital protests are accessible. Content online needs to have

captions, sign language interpreters and images need to also include image descriptions.”

Accessibility was a priority at the Milwaukee protest. Activists picked out the route with the least amount of hills for those using manual wheelchairs and other mobility devices. Rest stops along the way were staffed by medics who issued supplies such as water and ear plugs. American Sign Language interpreters were present throughout and taught marchers how to sign “Black Lives Matter.” Protesters were encouraged to wear masks and observe social distancing. Many had masks with clear plastic covering the mouth, so people with hearing disabilities could read their lips.

Hundreds of protesters then marched to Red Arrow Park to remember Dontre Hamilton, a person with a schizophrenia diagnosis who was killed in 2014 when police shot him 14 times. Teighlor McGee, who runs an online platform called the Black Disability Collective and



Black Lives Matter protest by disabled activists, June 7, Milwaukee.

who grew up in Mequon, Wis., said that protests after Hamilton’s death were the first she had participated in when she was 16. “Seeing this accessible protest brings tears to my eyes,” she said on Twitter.

History of accessible protest

The recent endeavor to hold accessible protests is not without historical precedents. In October 1981, 3,000 people took part in the All Peoples Congress at wheelchair-accessible Cobo Hall in Detroit, voting overwhelmingly for “National Days of Resistance” to overturn Ronald Reagan’s program of cutbacks and attacks on labor, racism, sexism, ableism, LGBTQ2S+ oppression and war. In the Oct. 23, 1981, issue of Workers World the late Betsy Gimbel — a wheelchair user, Disabled in Action Secretary and WWP Disability Rights Caucus leader — described how the Disabled Focus workshop at the APC unanimously voted to support the Days of Resistance the following year and proposed that all actions be made accessible for people of all disabilities.

Gimbel, who helped lead the successful struggle for wheelchair lifts on New York City buses, explained how many of the APC organizers had worked to make the 100,000-strong May 3, 1981, march on the Pentagon against war, racism and cutbacks accessible. Gimbel told WW: “May 3 opened the door for the first time in history to disabled people — and now it’s up to disabled people themselves to walk through that door.” □

Trump’s xenophobic attack on international students

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Harvard and MIT want to adapt business as usual to the pandemic, avoid liability and retain the 41B international students’ contributions to the economy. (Democracy Now, July 8)

The xenophobic Trump, on the other hand, under the influence of senior immigration policy advisor Stephen Miller — regarded by many as a fascist — wants not only to force public school opening, whatever the cost, to give the appearance of normalcy, but also to show he is hard on foreigners and on establishment universities. It’s part of his election program.

Xenophobes in the administration have long blamed immigration and visitors for public health woes even before COVID-19. Meanwhile, the bureaucrats sharply cut funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health and the Environmental Protection Agency. Scientific consensus is clear, however; criminalizing movement and migration makes public health worse.

This all takes place in the midst of today’s Black Lives Matter rebellion. In the July 12 New York Times Sunday Review, Amna A. Akbar wrote that these uprisings “may be the largest in [U.S.] history,” and

they are gaining the power needed to combat the constant attacks because “movements today see our crises as intersectional ... not disconnected, discrete problems” but increasingly as “emerging from colonialism and capitalism.”

This developing consciousness is necessary to win reprieves beyond temporary court orders, leading ultimately to a society based on borderless working-class solidarity. It will take destroying the borders within our movements, developing unions that follow programs like that of UAW opposition to xenophobia and racism. And then go on to pick up broader causes from Black Lives Matter to abolish ICE. □

Deep organizing key to historic Flint Sit-Down Strike

By Martha Grevatt

These slightly edited remarks were given at a July 9 Workers World Party webinar on “Introduction to Revolutionary Deep Organizing.”

There is a medical definition for “inoculation”: a set of methods of inducing immunity against various infectious diseases. The capitalists inoculate people against unionization. So what does it mean for us in the context of the class struggle? What are the potential infections, and where and who do they come from? How do we inoculate ourselves and our constituents from these dangers that can impede the struggle?

As it is medically, inoculation is basically preparation for the hazards we face. What kinds of preparations are needed to inoculate against defeat and to win against capital? And how has today’s labor movement failed in this area? That’s a factor in a series of defeats for workers, resulting in givebacks and concessions — even now, when the wealthy class is richer than ever and can easily afford to meet our demands.

There are great examples of class struggle unionism, of left-led unions in history which engaged and prepared the rank and file for fierce class battles. We can learn a lot from the 1930s, from the Flint Sit-Down Strike of 1937, where communist leadership proved decisive.

There are some misconceptions about this historic strike, which began on Dec. 30, 1936, and ended on Feb. 11, 1937 — when General Motors agreed to do something it swore it would never do: recognize the United Auto Workers union. The big misconception is that the strike was a spontaneous event — that there was no preparation, that angry workers just stopped work and took over the plants.

Communists prepare for GM strike

In fact, UAW Vice President Wyndham Mortimer, a member of the Communist Party, arrived In Flint, Mich., in June 1936, and immediately began preparing for a showdown with GM. He managed to get the addresses of GM workers and then mailed them weekly mimeographed letters. They were smuggled into the plants and passed hand-to-hand down the assembly line.

Mortimer made house visits and phone calls, slowly signing up and building a nucleus of union supporters. He went out of his way to bring Black and immigrant workers into the organizing drive. And he held a secret meeting in a Black church by candlelight in the wee hours of the morning.

Regular meetings were held at the UAW headquarters in the Pengelly Building, where a number of left-wing parties also had offices. One of the educational leaflets discussed there was titled “What to do in case of a sit-down.”

UAW President Homer Martin, who was hostile to the left forces, maneuvered to have Mortimer transferred out of Flint. But the replacement was Bob Travis, also a CP member, who had distinguished himself as a skilled organizer at a GM plant in Toledo, Ohio.

On Nov. 13, 1936, there was what union organizers deemed a “dress rehearsal.” Bud Simons, another CP member, was a union organizer inside Fisher GM Body Plant Number One. When management tried to cut the number of workers on a particular job — an example of the hated speedup, a major motivating force in the union drive — some workers began arguing with the foreman and stopped working for a short time, shutting down the assembly line.

The next day two workers came to work to find their time cards pulled. They had been fired. The foreman tried to fire a third worker involved in the dispute. All the workers in the area stood still. They stayed inside the plant, but refused to work. Before production resumed, the worker who was still in the plant was not fired. The other two workers were located in town and put back on the job.

This kind of preparation is inoculation against fear and intimidation. According to the law, the workers had the right to organize. But in reality, GM was using the threat of being fired to keep the company union-free. Workers could be fired for the slightest offense. Union supporters wore their union buttons inside their shirt collars.

To overcome the fear, the workers had to feel their own power — the power to stop production — and win in a short skirmish with the boss.

Workers occupy plants, more sit-ins follow

All this was necessary to prepare workers to occupy the plants. Once the occupation began, Travis continued deep organizing among the workers, their families and the community to build strike support. He had a system of folders. One was for spouses — who proved instrumental in winning the strike through the Women’s Emergency Brigade and the Women’s Auxiliary. Both were led by left-wing women. Another folder was for children, and another for school teachers. One folder was for bus drivers, who were also on strike at the time. And so on.

Simons and Joe Devitt and Walt Moore, his comrades inside the Fisher Body plant, were also key. Henry Kraus, the chief propagandist during the strike, wrote: “They were very good organizers, not only natural organizers. Part of their political training was organizational. You do these things; you have to. Communists are that way, you know. ... You have to have a committee to do this and a committee to do that. Before you could say the word ‘go,’ they had everything on the way.”



Flint Sit-Down Strike children’s picket line, Feb. 3, 1937. Not only the strikers inside, but their families, had to be ‘inoculated’ against GM’s intimidation tactics.

This high level of class-conscious organizing helped bring the world’s largest corporation to its knees. This led to a whole slew of union victories after workers sat down in factories, stores, hotels, hospitals, restaurants and other workplaces.

Unfortunately, the kind of leadership that led the militant fights of the 1930s was driven out of most unions during the McCarthyite witch hunt. McCarthyism gained steam in 1949, after the victory of the Chinese Revolution struck fear in the hearts of the ruling class.

The union-busting Taft-Hartley Act, passed in 1947, had a clause that made it illegal for Communist Party members to hold elected union office. The Congress of Industrial Organizations, which led the struggle in the late 1930s, was now led by Philip Murray, who embraced class collaborationism. All member unions were ordered to adhere to the Taft-Hartley stipulation. The 11 left-led unions which refused were expelled from the CIO.

The other unions embarked on a massive purge of CP members, as well as members of the Socialist Workers Party — even though Taft-Hartley didn’t apply to them. They also campaigned to have the left unions decertified through National Labor Relations Board elections and replaced with anti-communist unions.

Today, only two of the 11 radical unions have survived: the United Electrical Workers, which still upholds the model of rank-and-file driven unionism, and the International Longshore Workers Union, which shut down the ports all along the West Coast on Juneteenth. You can bet it takes a deep style of organizing to get workers to partake in that form of class struggle!

The working class is rising. Power to the workers and oppressed!

Grevatt, UAW member, retired last year from working 31 years at Fiat Chrysler.

French workers resist COVID-19 layoffs

By G. Dunkel

Some big companies with major operations in France have been using the impact of COVID-19 on their business as an excuse to lay off thousands of workers, even though they have received major subsidies to maintain payrolls.

On July 8, the three unions representing workers at the Airbus facility near Toulouse — France’s Silicon Valley — called for a march from the Airbus facility to the local airport and back. An estimated 6,000 to 9,000 workers showed up for the march to the airport, where they occupied a runway, forcing some flights to divert. Airbus is a pan-European company and the main competitor of Boeing in the multibillion-dollar aeronautics market. It is planning to lay off 5,000 workers in France by the middle of 2021.

The layoffs at Airbus will have a ripple effect on the whole economy in the region. Workers at subcontractors, such as parts suppliers as well as service companies, will be devastated. Airbus order sheets are filled for the next 10 years, but 40% of the airlines, which are its direct customers, have postponed taking delivery of new planes. (FranceTVinfo, July 13)

The Finnish company Nokia, which supplies much of the telecommunications equipment in the European Union, has a major operation in France. It is threatening to lay off thousands of its employees. In response, the unions representing workers at a research center in the French region of Brittany leased a train to Paris, filled

it and marched to the sound of bagpipes from the Paris train station to the Invalides, headquarters of France’s military. Many of the signs read, “Hired in March, let go in June.”

At the Invalides they listened to speeches from Fabien Roussel, national secretary of the French Communist Party, and Eric Coquerel, a deputy from another left party called La France Insoumise, as well as other political figures. Then they marched back through Paris to the train station, again to the sound of bagpipes.

A lot of union agitation is also happening at Sanofi, a major transnational pharmaceutical and vaccine company based in France.

Attacks on bus drivers

Social tensions, exacerbated by public health measures required to combat the coronavirus plague, have led to increasing attacks on public service workers. On July 5, in Bayonne, a small city in southwestern France, Philippe Monguillot, a bus driver who asked two passengers to put on masks now required on French mass transportation, was subject to a shockingly brutal attack.

The passengers grew so angry at this request that they pulled Monguillot off the bus, beat and kicked him in front of the other passengers and then fled before the cops came. He later died of his injuries.

On July 8, his family led a march of 6,000 people, dressed in white, from the bus stop where the attack had taken place to the police station investigating the crime. Bayonne is a city of 50,000 people. Buses in many French



Airbus workers march to Toulouse-Blagnac Airport on July 8; banner reads “No Layoffs.”

cities, including Bordeaux, Rennes, Nantes, Strasbourg and Mulhouse, stopped for a minute of silence when the march took off.

The minister of the interior, who is in charge of all the cops in France, and the minister of transportation came to a workers’ meeting at the bus yard where Monguillot worked and pledged justice would be done.

One of Monguillot’s colleagues, with tears in his eyes, told a FranceTV2 reporter that the driver “was a tiger in opposing injustice.” The workers are demanding the state provide more security to prevent future attacks.

France is not the only country where public service workers who request that people wear masks are being attacked. On July 5, in Brooklyn, N.Y., bus driver Anthony Reid, who is Black, was assaulted and suffered an eye injury after he asked a passenger to put on a mask. □



El capitalismo en un callejón sin salida

Fred Goldstein utiliza las leyes de la acumulación capitalista de Marx, y la tasa decreciente de ganancia, para demostrar por qué el capitalismo global ha llegado finalmente a un punto de inflexión.

Para mas información: LowWageCapitalism.com

editorial Monte Rushmore defensa del genocidio Una indignación monumental

Justo cuando pensábamos que las cosas no podían empeorar.

El discurso del 4 de julio, pronunciado al pie del Monte Rushmore por el fanático en jefe, nos recuerda que, bajo el sistema capitalista, las cosas siempre pueden empeorar. Especialmente cuando el ocupante de la Casa Blanca parece tener cero límites cuando se trata de comentarios, posiciones y acciones extravagante ofensivas y médicamente peligrosas.

Como jefe civil en el sector privado, Trump probablemente sería aún más sincero. Uno puede imaginarlo con los carteles, vistos desde su elección, que dicen: “Soy racista y estoy orgulloso de ello”. No es difícil imaginarlo llevando una bandera confederada, luciendo una esvástica o proclamando abiertamente el orgullo fascista una vez que deja el cargo público (¡cuanto antes, mejor!).

Como presidente de los Estados Unidos, tiene que ocultar su mensaje en retórica que defiende la “democracia”.

Los luchadores por la libertad que se rebelan en las calles están derribando, y empujando al estado a derribar, monumentos a los propietarios de personas esclavizadas y a los asesinos de pueblos indígenas. Para castigarlos por sus acciones heroicas, Trump se jactó de que impondría una pena de prisión de 10 años.

Para Trump y sus animadores secuaces, la justa rebelión en las calles representa “la definición misma del totalitarismo”. El presidente llegó incluso a llamarlo “un nuevo fascismo de extrema izquierda que exige lealtad absoluta”. Esto convierte la realidad en su cabeza.

Los matones y policías de la supremacía blanca han herido a muchos manifestantes, algunos fatalmente. Sin embargo, son activistas antirracistas arrestados desde el linchamiento de George Floyd quienes han sido acusados de delitos graves, y algunos enfrentan décadas o incluso cadena perpetua.

¿Qué es el monte Rushmore?

Dakota del Sur fue anexionada por los Estados Unidos en 1803 como parte de la Compra de Luisiana. El gobierno de los Estados Unidos luego permitió asentamientos allí, rompiendo los tratados anteriores hechos con la Nación Indígena Lakota. El teniente coronel estadounidense George Custer invadió las Black Hills en 1874, violando el Tratado de Fort Laramie de 1868 que había dejado a las Black Hills sin terminar con los Lakota,

para quienes las colinas son sagradas.

Después de que Custer descubriera el oro, los mineros blancos que buscaban fortuna invadieron las Colinas. En 1889, Dakota del Norte y Dakota del Sur se convirtieron en los estados 39 y 40. Como todos los 50 estados, desde Alaska y Hawai hasta

Nueva Inglaterra, Dakota del Sur es tierra robada a la población indígena.

Thunpkáshila Šákpe (“Los seis abuelos”) o Igmúthajka Pahá (“Montaña Cougar”) para los Lakota, la montaña fue renombrada después de Charles Rushmore, un rico hombre de negocios que frecuentaba el área en viajes de caza y prospección en la década de 1890. La profanación masiva comenzó en 1927 con la eliminación de

grandes cantidades de granito para crear los bustos familiares de los cuatro presidentes estadounidenses. Este trabajo tomó 17 años y costó casi \$1 millón, una considerable suma de dólares de impuestos en 1944.

El escultor, Gutzon Borglum, era miembro del KKK, quien anteriormente ayudó a construir el enorme monumento confederado en Stone Mountain, Georgia. El hijo de Borglum, Lincoln Borglum, quien completó Rushmore después de la muerte de su padre, imaginó más profanación al poner en piedra la Declaración de Independencia, la Constitución, la compra de Luisiana y el Tratado del Canal de Panamá.

¿De quién son las cabezas que profanan las Black Hills?

Los presidentes representados, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abe Lincoln y Theodore Roosevelt, representan varias etapas en el desarrollo del imperio imperialista de Estados Unidos. Los dos llamados “padres fundadores” eran ricos miembros de la esclavocracia con vastas extensiones de tierra. Lincoln, retratado como el líder benevolente que terminó con la esclavitud por sí solo, esencialmente liberó a los estados esclavistas para la expansión capitalista.

Roosevelt, según la versión de la historia de Trump, “llevó a los famosos Rough Riders a derrotar al enemigo en San Juan Hill”. Esta etapa imperialista del desarrollo capitalista coincide con la toma estadounidense de las colonias controladas por españoles en 1898; Puerto Rico sigue siendo una colonia empobrecida de los EE.UU. Pero San Juan Hill está en territorio liberado,

la Cuba socialista, algo que mil Monte Rushmores nunca pueden borrar.

La nostalgia de Trump por los monumentos que caen recuerda al gobernador de Alabama, George Wallace, que declaró en 1963: “Segregación ahora, segregación mañana y segregación para siempre”.

No sabemos cuánto tiempo la gigantesca y lucrativa trampa turística continuará intacta, con suerte no mucho más. Los valientes defensores de los tratados indígenas pudieron sostener la manifestación de odio fascista de Trump durante varias horas.

Esperamos con ansias el día en que todos y cada uno de los monumentos a la esclavocracia y el genocidio sean derribados y destruidos. Workers World Party/Partido Mundo Obrero se compromete a erradicar, no solo estas odiadas banderas y estatuas, sino cada rastro del sistema capitalista que generó los crímenes contra la humanidad que simbolizan estos objetos.

La pandilla fascista reunida en el Monte Rushmore es peligrosa, al igual que la retórica que la unió: la amenaza debe tomarse en serio.

¡Pero tenemos esperanza! Como el movimiento monumental que aún se desarrolla nos ha recordado, nada está escrito en piedra. □



Pueblos indígenas manifiestan en contra de Trump, 3 de julio, cerca de Monte Rushmore.

editorial ¿Por qué ganaron los beneficios de DACA?

La Corte Suprema por más de 230 años ha llevado a cabo los objetivos conservadores de sus creadores. Ha protegido la propiedad privada, incluida la “propiedad” de los seres humanos, y ha minimizado el derecho de los pobres a asociarse para la lucha unida. Actualmente, Corte Suprema de los Estados Unidos (siglas en inglés SCOTUS), consta de una mayoría de jueces conservadores y reaccionarios, más algunas excepciones.

Por lo tanto, muchas personas se sorprendieron de que el 18 de junio este tribunal de derecha detuviera a la administración Trump, al menos temporalmente, de deportar a los beneficiarios de un programa de la era de Obama – Acción

Diferida para los Llegados en la Infancia (siglas en inglés, DACA). Estos “soñadores” son hijos de migrantes que cruzaron las fronteras de los Estados Unidos con sus padres cuando ninguno de los dos tenía permiso legal oficial para vivir y trabajar en los Estados Unidos.

DACA les había dado a los niños el derecho de permanecer aquí. Trump rescindió DACA. “Soñadores” se refiere a la Ley DREAM anterior, nunca aprobada, que habría protegido a 2 millones de jóvenes indocumentados de la deportación.

La gran mayoría de los padres de los Dreamers han suministrado su trabajo, a menudo por bajos salarios, en los sectores más esenciales de la economía: agricultura, construcción, hoteles y restaurantes, además de trabajos en hospitales y otros servicios, incluido el cuidado de niños. Sus hijos, los Dreamers, superaron las “desventajas” de la pobreza para terminar la escuela u otra capacitación.

Se necesita un político particularmente vicioso para culpar a los inmigrantes de los problemas económicos en los EE.UU. Se necesita un criminal xenófobo como Trump para usar a los hijos de los

inmigrantes como chivos expiatorios para movilizar su propia base racista.

Tanto los beneficiarios de DACA como sus padres merecen el derecho de quedarse en los EE.UU. y trabajar, si así lo desean. Y deberían tener derecho a todos los beneficios que los trabajadores han ganado aquí, incluidos el Seguro Social, la compensación por desempleo, la atención médica, etc. La igualdad salarial y los beneficios ayudarían inevitablemente a todos los trabajadores.

La decisión de SCOTUS, que permite a la administración Trump una oportunidad para revisar sus tácticas anti inmigrantes, fue sin embargo una victoria, un pequeño paso adelante, importante para los beneficiarios de DACA.

El movimiento DACA mismo y sus partidarios en todo el movimiento de inmigrantes merecen crédito por llevar a cabo la lucha en los últimos años y especialmente la huelga general en 2006 para defender sus intereses. Esto incluye su campaña para abolir la pandilla de policías de inmigración, también conocida como el Servicio de Inmigración y Control de Aduanas, y para cerrar los campos de

concentración de ICE que retienen a los inmigrantes y propagan COVID-19.

Sin embargo, es importante entender por qué incluso los jueces reaccionarios de SCOTUS votaron en contra de Trump.

Durante el mes pasado, un movimiento por Black Lives Matter ha surgido 100 veces más fuerte que antes, impactando cada evento social. El movimiento de los y las inmigrantes han sido solidarios con BLM y viceversa. Este nuevo movimiento poderoso ha barrido monumentos de las calles y espectáculos policiales desde las ondas aéreas. Ha elevado la literatura antirracista a la cima de las listas de best-sellers y ha puesto la existencia de la policía en la lista de puntos para debate.

SCOTUS debe haber tenido esto en mente cuando tomó su decisión, junto con la decisión a principios de semana de que el Título VII de la Ley de Derechos Civiles de 1964 protege a los trabajadores LGBTQ2S + de la discriminación laboral.

Si bien ninguna de las victorias se ha hecho permanente, la ola de lucha global sin precedentes ya es algo que incluso los jueces reaccionarios de la Corte Suprema desearían evitar ahogar. □



2 de junio, San Juan, Puerto Rico.