

Profits, U.S. sanctions spread COVID-19

By Sara Flounders

March 10—As COVID-19 (coronavirus) spreads, it is a clear reminder that germs and viruses don't respect national boundaries in an interconnected world. But the mainstream press has certainly not publicized how corporate capitalism and imperialism cross national boundaries to destroy people's health.

The responsibility of U.S. corporate power, especially the medical-industrial complex, in the calculated destruction of basic health care capacity in the U.S. and worldwide must be challenged. On a global scale, the connection of the largest U.S. pharmaceutical corporations to U.S. sanctions policies—whether signed by executive order, voted for in the U.S. Congress or pushed by U.S. ambassadors through the United Nations Security Council—demands careful scrutiny by investigative journalists, human rights organizations and working-class organizations.

Consider the role of Josh Black. He was U.S. head of sanctions and counterterrorism enforcement at the United Nations from 2008 to 2016 under the Obama administration; then Black joined the Trump administration's National Security Council.

Black's stated role was coordinating



International Working Women's Day, March 8, New York City.
More on the worldwide epidemic on pp. 6, 7, 10.

WW PHOTO: SARA FLOUNDERS

“peacekeeping operations” and sanctions policies passed by the U.N. Security Council—measures calculated to strangle economies and ruin lives in Iran, North Korea, Libya, Syria, Yemen and Sudan.

Josh Black now represents the giant medical corporations that hold people's lives hostage to profits. He is still based at the U.N., now as vice president of one of this country's most powerful

lobbying organizations. PhRMA—short for Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America and also known as Big Pharma—is the global lobby for the U.S. pharmaceutical industry.

In his new role Black is still involved in enforcement and compliance with U.S.-imposed sanctions. On his LinkedIn site he brags: “Looking forward to presenting on complex 50% rule scenarios at the ACI

Economic Sanctions Enforcement and Compliance conference on May 2nd.”

There are whole series of conferences and seminars where global sanctions compliance, internal audits and investigations, international trade, banking, insurance are discussed. Entire fields of law, banking and accounting are involved in enforcing hundreds of sanction regulations and brutally cutting off every possible source of supplies and equipment to starve targeted countries.

Josh Black is just one of thousands of lobbyists and government officials who rotate in and out of lobbying and government positions. Their role changes very little from appointment to appointment; it is always about setting and enacting policies, laws and regulations that benefit capitalist corporations.

PhRMA is often called the war criminal of public health. It represents the world's largest pharmaceutical companies, including Merck, Eli Lilly, Pfizer, Bayer and Bristol-Myers Squibb. It is part of a coalition of insurance providers, pharmaceuticals and investor-owned hospitals in the Partnership for America's Health Care Future.

PhRMA is the organizational think tank behind the push to derail “health-care for all” campaigns at national and

Continued on page 6

WW COMMENTARY

Did COVID-19 cause the Wall Street crash?

By Deirdre Griswold

March 10—The coronavirus COVID-19 is very serious. But it is not the cause of the stock market crash on March 9. While every effort is being made to push the market up again, the fact remains that the crash happened and can happen again.

Let's ask this question: Why was there no market crash when COVID-19 was spreading in People's China? The virus originated there and has caused many more deaths in China than anywhere else—more than 3,000. The U.S., by contrast, has had just 27 COVID-19 deaths as

of today, yet the economy here is reeling.

China has had to shut down production in many areas in order to effectively contain the virus. But that didn't cause a worldwide economic crisis.

What has just happened in the New York Stock Exchange is another thing entirely.

The weekend of March 7-8 saw the emergence of a crisis of the capitalist system itself. And the money men saw it coming. So on Sunday night, the Federal Reserve Bank pumped at least \$50 billion into the stock market in “overnight

Continued on page 10

Super Tuesday & the Sanders movement 8

Rafael Cancel Miranda ¡presente! 2

Oakland teachers: ‘Sanctions kill!’ 11

Health care for workers

North Carolina ‘Medicare 4 All’ 4

What the virus demands 7

Socialism and the epidemic 7

Editorial: Biggest public threat 10



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International Working Women's Day 3, 5

Buffalo, Bay Area, New York City

Domestic violence & the racist state

Assassination of Astrid Conde

Citizen of the troika 9 France 10
Russia, Turkey, Syria 11

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Puerto Rican freedom fighter Rafael Cancel Miranda ¡presente!

Workers World Party mourns the passing of Rafael Cancel Miranda and celebrates his life, chronicled here in a slightly edited statement from the International Committee for Peace, Justice and Dignity.

Today, March 2, the beloved Puerto Rican Patriot Rafael Cancel Miranda has left us, surrounded by the love of his family and his people. All his life he was fervently committed to the struggle for the independence of his beloved Puerto Rico.

His assault on the U.S. Congress on March 1, 1954—66 years ago—together with Lolita Lebrón, Irvin Flores and Andrés Figueroa, was to draw international attention to the colonial situation of Puerto Rico, and for that audacious and heroic act he was sentenced to life imprisonment.

Thanks to Fidel’s intervention, amnesty was achieved during the Carter administration in 1979 after 25 years of hard prison time in U.S. penitentiaries. Once free, Rafael continued to fight for his people and the independence of Puerto Rico until the day he died.

Every week, until recently, we received his messages of strength and solidarity. Along with his political commentary he would be remembering his colleagues, highlighting the birthday of freedom fighter Oscar Lopez Rivera. He



From left, Irvin Flores Rodríguez, Rafael Cancel Miranda, Lolita Lebrón and Andrés Figueroa Cordero after their arrest.



WW Managing Editor Monica Moorehead and Rafael Cancel Miranda at a Free the Cuban Five rally in Washington, D.C., on June 7, 2014.

wrote reviews of books that denounced Yankee colonialism, and as a gifted poet Rafael would often send a poem with the common theme that called on us never to give up on our struggles.

“Pa’lante always!” he told us at the end of each of his messages and always added in red, “You reach the finish line sooner on your feet than on your knees.” ...

With his deep conviction to defend just causes, Don Rafael did not hesitate for a moment to accompany us to Washington, D.C., on three different occasions during the fight for the freedom of the Five Cuban Patriots and denouncing the U.S. blockade of Cuba.

We are deeply moved by his departure, and it is difficult to escape the feeling of being orphaned at this time when a man of his stature, with his love for his country and his courage, is most needed.

As he requested, there will be no flags at half-mast, not even a minute of silence.

Instead there will be an infinite applause for his life, tall and dignified with his fist held high accompanied by his anti-Yankee rebellious spirit.

Long live Rafael Cancel Miranda! Long live a free Puerto Rico! Hasta la victoria siempre! □



Join us in the fight for socialism!

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

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

Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, attacks on im/migrants, misogyny, 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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WORKERS WORLD

this week

♦ In the U.S.

Did COVID-19 cause the Wall Street crash?	1
New York City rally honors women warriors.	3
Buffalo IWWD protests systems of oppression.	3
Oakland coalition takes to the streets	3
Oakland cuts education services, not school cops.	3
N.C. workers push Medicare for All, union rights.	4
Domestic violence, racism and state repression	5
Seattle: Workers need health care, not Trumpcare!	6
Workers need protection from the virus.	7
COVID-19: Socialist and capitalist responses	7
Super Tuesday and the Sanders movement.	8
Mumia Abu-Jamal: Justice delayed	11
Oakland teachers resolve: ‘Sanctions kill!’	11

♦ Around the world

Profits, U.S. sanctions spread COVID-19	1
Rafael Cancel Miranda ipresente!	2
Astrid Conde ipresente!	5
Lessons for the anti-imperialist movement	9
French anti-worker law passed—without a vote	10
Imperialist war’s impact on Syria continues	11

♦ Editorial

Biggest public threat: health care for profit	10
---	----

♦ Noticias en Español

¿Cómo podemos deshacernos del capitalismo?	12
El coronavirus en perspectiva.	12

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Oakland School Board cuts educational services, not school cops

By Judy Greenspan
Oakland, Calif.

March 4—Tonight the Oakland School Board made a decision to cut more than \$20 million from student services and clerical staff, but refused to make any cuts in the Oakland School Police force. A last minute amendment by Director Rosann Torres to lay off one-half of the school police department failed by a close 4-3 vote.

This vote came late in the night after a spirited rally outside and inside the board meeting, bringing together almost 10 years of organizing by the Black Organizing Project, involving Oakland teachers, families, clergy, students and community members.

Outside the board meeting where there were over 150 people, Jessica Black, organizing director of BOP, recalled the legacy

of Black community activism in Oakland. “We are going in as part of a history of Black folks, our ancestors, who have been fighting this fight for years ... who have said enough is enough. We don’t want to wait; we want police eliminated from schools, and those funds repurposed to things that are actually going to benefit children.”

Inside, at least 50 people made public comments at the meeting that had only one agenda item—massive cuts in student services. Speaker after speaker appealed to the board to instead end the school-to-prison pipeline by defunding the Oakland School Police force.

The Oakland Unified School District is the only system in the 18 districts that make up Alameda County with its own police force. According to OUSD data, Black students make up 26 percent of the school population, but 76 percent of students arrested.

In September 2019, BOP presented a “People’s Plan for Police-Free Schools” to the school board, calling for the elimination of the Oakland School Police Department by 2020. The plan included restructuring campus safety personnel as peacekeepers; reinvesting the \$2.3 million police budget into school mental and behavioral health and special education staff; and establishing community oversight of campus safety personnel, along with community policing. BOP has linked this campaign to the overall struggle of teachers, parents and students for economic and racial justice in Oakland. (tinyurl.com/rhfgfkg)

In a BOP statement released after the vote was lost, the group thanked the community for coming together and speaking out at the board meeting. BOP also stated, “For us, [it] was a vivid example of how the school board is more interested in policing Black and Brown students than in

protecting them and making courageous decisions to cut harmful policing departments and punitive discipline practices.

“This is bigger than a campaign or an organization; it is a united front and together we have taken intentional steps in creating Black Sanctuary in Oakland schools. WE are so close!” According to BOP, their racial justice plan received more support than ever from both the community and the board at that meeting.

The Black Organizing Project is continuing its campaign to lay off the police and restore the cuts to student services. Check out blackorganizingproject.org and #EliminateSchoolPolice on Twitter.

In other Oakland solidarity action, the activist Oakland Education Association recently passed a strong anti-imperialist, anti-sanctions resolution. See www.workers.org/2020/03/46703/.

INTERNATIONAL WORKING WOMEN’S DAY!

New York City Rally honors women warriors

The International Working Women’s Day Coalition held a speak-out on March 8 at the site of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City. People from various struggles gathered to honor the women warriors from the past and to link arms with those all over the world who continue to fight.

They also paid tribute to the 146 workers, mostly young immigrant women and girls, who were killed in the fire at the Triangle factory on March 25, 1911. They could not escape the fire because the bosses had locked the doors to the stairwells and exits. These women were forced to either jump to

their deaths or die of smoke inhalation—for the “crime” of being superexploited.

A similar tragic situation happened 80 years later when 25 mostly Black women workers were massacred in a fire at the Imperial Foods processing plant in Hamlet, N.C., when the bosses locked the emergency exits.

The speakout—“Rise Up and Resist for a Just Society!”—was co-chaired by Candice Sering and Brenda Stokely, co-coordinators of the IWWD Coalition. Speakers included Puerto Rican freedom fighter Esperanza Martell; Terrea Mitchell, Peoples Power Assemblies-NYC; Sawyer Eason, PPA-NYC

and Transcore; Eliana Jaramillo, Street Vendors Project; Michelle Thiele, Gabriela NY; Deborah Dickerson, Picture the Homeless; Monica Moorehead, Workers World Party; Vianca, Puerto Rico Boricua Resistance; Fatima speaking on behalf of Palestinian political prisoner, Khalida Jarrar; Lida, Honduran Women’s Resistance, Jaime Keys Leigh, Socialist Party and Sue Davis, long-time reproductive justice activist.

The group marched to Washington Square Park where another International Women’s Day event was being held. When it marched in, the IWWD delegation got the attention of members of the media and many others who came over, drawn to the banners and signs.

Several signs addressed the new coronavirus epidemic, demanding “Free Testing & Care for Coronavirus COVID-19” and “Mandatory Paid Sick Leave & Cancellation of Bill Payments for All with COVID-19.”

The lead banner declared: “Every Issue

Is a Women’s Issue. No War on Women. Unity at Home and Abroad to Fight for Women’s Liberation.” Chants included “From Palestine to the Philippines, Stop the U.S. war machine!”

On March 7, the IWWD Coalition held a program of cultural activism at The People’s Forum, and some of the March 8 speakers performed songs, dance and spoken word reflecting their struggles.

— Report and photos by Brenda Ryan

Oakland Coalition march takes to the streets for ‘self-determination’

Nearly 500 people rallied at Fruitvale Plaza in East Oakland and marched through nearby neighborhoods on March 8 to commemorate International Working Women’s Day. The sponsoring coalition, led by Gabriela, a progressive Filipino women’s organization, called upon women to “take the streets and rise up to demand an end to gender-based violence against women and TGNC (transgender and gender-nonconforming) communities, to resist militarization and displacement, and to unite for self-determination. Join us as we collectively protest, singing ‘Un Violador en tu Camino’ (a song sung by women in Chile protesting government-sanctioned violence against women).” (See IWWD 2020 Facebook page.)

Speakers included many women from local Bay Area communities fighting violence against women, including representatives from the Anti Police-Terror Project, Youth vs. the Apocalypse, Black Organizing Project, Mujeres Unidas Activas and the Palestinian Youth Movement. A group of sex workers from St. James Infirmary, including many transwomen, spoke out against the violence

facing them at the U.S.-Mexican border, in their native countries to the South and in the U.S.

The day, which began with Aztec dancers, ended with Zumba organized by Latinx women and open to all who wanted to participate. The entire day was filled with moving testimony from Indigenous women from all around the world fighting U.S. militarism and oppression.

Cat Brooks, cofounder of APTP, summed up the spirit of the day when she said, “We are winning. It doesn’t feel like it. It doesn’t look like it. But I promise you the reason why white supremacy is raging ... the reason why everything is in chaos is because they know we are coming for them.”

— Report and photo by Judy Greenspan



Buffalo IWWD demands end to systems of oppression



Powerful speakers kicked off an International Working Women’s Day rally March 8 in Buffalo. They called for an end to the systems that oppress women and gender-oppressed people, especially war, sanctions, human

trafficking, wage theft, genital mutilation and all other kinds of violence. Chanting loudly, the demonstrators then took off to march past the mansions of Buffalo’s wealthiest families.

— Report and photo by Ellie Dorritie

N.C. workers push Medicare for All, union rights

By Dante Strobino
Durham, N.C.

On the day before the March 3 “Super Tuesday” 2020 primary elections, hundreds of city and state workers across North Carolina and the South demanded that their employers and state and congressional candidates support expansion of union rights and the Medicare for All Act of 2019 (H.R. 1384).

Adding to the numbers of working people who see Medicare for All as the only way to comprehensively insure themselves and their families and contain skyrocketing health care costs, the North Carolina Public Service Workers Union, United Electrical Workers (UE) Local 150 and the Southern Workers Assembly hosted “pickets for health.” These were a continuation of their campaign at workplaces across the state for Medicare for All, with actions in six cities: Charlotte, Greensboro, Durham, Raleigh, Goldsboro and Rocky Mount.

Their campaign is to pressure city councils to pass a resolution endorsing H.R. 1384 now before Congress. New council resolutions were introduced in Charlotte, Goldsboro, Whitakers and Raleigh. The city of Durham and other local governments across the South have already passed resolutions calling for the bill’s passage.

Saving lives and money

Responding to a frequently asked question about funding for the bill, UE Local 150 President Bryce Carter stated that “a new study from Yale University found that 68,000 lives and \$450 billion would be saved under Medicare for All per year. We are already paying for it. We have the most expensive health care system in the world.”

According to public records acquired by the UE, many employers also stand to save money from the bill, which would primarily drive down wasteful administrative costs from health insurance corporations and lower pharmaceutical and health care expenses under a universal, single-payer system where the government could bargain down prices.

In Charlotte, savings to the city’s contribution to health care premiums under Medicare for All would add up to more than \$10 million annually. Lower premiums under Medicare for All would reduce workers’ costs by an estimated \$3,734,000 a year. In Raleigh, taxpayers would likely save \$22 million. The city of Greensboro would save an estimated \$14.8 million annually.

“City workers need immediate relief from high premiums they currently pay, citing the premium for basic family coverage of \$434.50 per month. That amounts to about 20 percent of take-home pay for workers starting out. Let’s join the rest of the industrial world and support a universal health care program, which for us is Medicare for All,” stated Dominic Harris, a Water Department worker and president of Charlotte City Workers Union.

In mid-February, a coalition of ten organizations, including the NAACP, Action N.C., Healthcare Justice N.C., National Nurses United, N.C. Public Service Workers Union-UE Local 150 and the Southern Workers Assembly signed on to a letter calling on the Charlotte City Council to lower health care costs for its employees and pass a resolution in support of Medicare for All. This was the coalition’s first action.

Flagrant denial of union rights affects health care

North Carolina public workers are denied the right to bargain collectively. Workers in Charlotte, for example, cannot negotiate even incremental improvements in their health care coverage, making the protection of health for them and their families all the more difficult.

City workers in Greensboro and Durham are currently waging a campaign to improve their cities’ grievance procedures. On the day of the actions, Durham City Workers Union activist Kellie McLean, from the Department of Parks and Recreation, was fired.

McLean had been wrongfully placed on a Corrective Action Plan in the summer of 2019 and given three months to make improvements. When the three months were over, management delayed its response and then decided to keep her on the CAP. She wrote an 88-page rebuttal letter, which was ignored by management and simply placed in her file. Then in December, when she was under review after her second CAP, she wrote a 105-page rebuttal.

After two months of stalling, DPR Director Rhonda Parker, who has since resigned due to pressure from the



Raleigh, N.C., workers rally for health care, union rights, March 2.

PHOTO: UE LOCAL 150



Charlotte, N.C., workers rally.

PHOTO: UE LOCAL 150

union’s campaign, wrote back in late February that she was upholding management’s decision. This then led to McLean’s termination.

Her case highlights many of the flaws in the current grievance procedure, including not being able to remove false and misleading information from one’s personnel file, not having a co-worker union steward to speak up with you at all steps of the grievance procedure, not being able to file formal grievances about management abuse and not having an unbiased panel that makes final decisions rather than the city manager.

“Myself, as well as dozens of other Parks and Rec workers, have been forced to quit because of the hostile working conditions in the School Age Care program,” stated DeMario Jennette, former DPR employee. “Nearly the entire program staff has quit in the last year. This program has a long list of staff [who] were very enthusiastic about the program when they were hired, but soon became demoralized by the micromanagement and unprincipled and overly harsh criticisms and unwarranted discipline from management.”

“The city’s current evaluation system ‘EPEP’ allows for supervisors to overscrutinize employees and perform so-called ‘coachings’ daily on every little thing they felt the worker did wrong. Even if they are false, we have no recourse to have them removed from our files, and [they] can impact our merit pay and even lead to unjust discipline and terminations,” stated John Morris, maintenance technician in the Water Management Department and member of UE Local 150. “We need a grievance procedure that holds management accountable on all levels.”

Health care is a right!

State mental health workers from Cherry Hospital and O’Berry Center hosted an action at the Goldsboro City Hall, with support from local NAACP activists, City Council Member Antonio Williams and State Representative Raymond Smith, who both spoke in favor of expanded and improved Medicare for All.

“State employees and state taxpayers are being gouged by insurance companies, like Blue Cross Blue Shield, collecting enormous premiums. Every year in recent memory, the costs of our premiums and deductibles have been going up. Family plans now cost us over \$700 per month. Under a Medicare for All system, hundreds of millions will come back to N.C. taxpayers and more back into the wallets and purses of state workers. Let’s join

the rest of the industrial world and support a universal health care program, which for us is Medicare for All,” said President William Young of UE Local 150 union at Cherry Hospital, Food and Nutritional Services.

In the buildup to the rally, union leaders were shocked when they received a phone call from a union member at Central Regional Hospital who had pulled his shoulder while working with a patient. He was out of work and had filed for workers compensation. However, as a state employee who is assumed to have decent benefits, he is forced to pay 100 percent of his health care premiums.

Outside of Rocky Mount, in the town of Whitakers, workers at the Cummins Diesel Engine plant circulated fliers at shift change in support of Medicare for All and hosted a rally at the Bloomer Hill Community Center. They plan to introduce a resolution in support of Medicare for All to the Whitakers Town Council.

Recent Commonwealth Fund data show that in successive years one in three U.S. residents with insurance foregoes a doctor visit or filling a prescription because the person cannot afford it. Forty-two percent with a first-time cancer diagnosis spend all their savings within two years. Premiums continue to go up well beyond inflation. That’s underinsurance at expensive rates.

‘Health care, not warfare’

“We need health care, not warfare,” chanted graduate workers from the University of North Carolina and North Carolina State University, alongside city workers in front of Raleigh City Hall. Graduate workers face their own health challenges working at state universities while not receiving any dental or vision care. Many forego cleanings, leading to deteriorating teeth.

“The current health care system does not support workers. As UNC graduate workers, we are not given dental insurance and are restricted from many services that are considered essential for basic health care. This is unacceptable. Medicare for All would provide access to health care including vision and dental,” stated Miranda Elston, graduate employee at UNC Chapel Hill and member of UE Local 150.

The Southern Workers Assembly and UE Local 150 plan to continue workplace organizing to win passage of H.R. 1384.

A popular chant of the campaign is: “We don’t want your stupid wall, we want Medicare for All.” □

WW Commentary

Domestic violence, racism and state repression

Part 1

By Monica Moorehead

This slightly edited article first appeared in the 1995 pamphlet, “Capitalism’s War on Women: Why the system is responsible for violence against women,” published by World View Forum. The article was written before O.J. Simpson was acquitted of murder charges by a majority-Black Los Angeles jury on Oct. 3, 1995. The article was also written before the #MeToo movement was founded in 2006 by Black feminist activist Tarana Burke. Read the article in its entirety at workers.org

There can be no doubt that the O.J. Simpson case has been instrumental in bringing national and international attention to the growing epidemic of domestic violence. All the talk shows have devoted considerable time to the issue, so certainly consciousness has been raised to a much higher level because of the tragic murder of Nicole Brown Simpson.

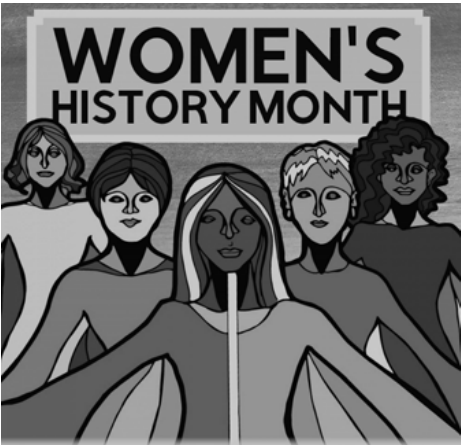
But what will happen after the spotlight disappears from the trial? Will domestic violence disappear all of a sudden, or will it remain a serious threat for millions of women who continue to live in constant fear of what might happen to them? Did the issue of sexual harassment go away following the fallout from the [1991] Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas hearings? Of course not.

The state’s response to violence against women

Many women will be looking to the courts to help relieve them of their fears and to literally help save their lives. That certainly is understandable. The laws protecting women from domestic violence were fought for and won by the strength of the women’s movement and other progressive forces. What other recourse do women have in this society but to look for protection from the judicial system?

But are these laws strongly enforced? Can they truly be enforced in a society that views women as second-class citizens and, in the case of women of color, as third-class citizens? How many more women have to be attacked or die before some fundamental change takes place?

In ever-spiraling repetition, male judges have turned their backs on these women, treating them as if they were the criminals instead of the victims. For



instance, in 1986, Judge Paul Heffernan in the Somerville [Mass.] District Court told Pamela Dunn, a battered wife, that she was wasting his time in requesting police protection at the taxpayer’s expense. Shortly after that, she was found shot, stabbed and strangled to death.

Another judge commented after Dunn’s murder: “Judge Heffernan gave her a good dose of what I like to call reality therapy. I don’t believe in breaking up families.” (tinyurl.com/v6nz6vb). In other words, he didn’t believe that a woman should leave her male spouse under any circumstances — because, like it or not, she is his “private property till death do they part.”

[In 1994] a Maryland judge sentenced a man to only 18 months in jail with time off for good behavior — for murdering his wife. What was her “crime”? She was found in bed with another man. The judge commented that he was very reluctant to give any jail time to the man because he sympathized with his reaction. Is that justice? Hardly.

This is not an uncommon response from the courts nor from the cops, who often do not even respond to emergency calls by battered women. Remember how the police responded with a ho-hum attitude to Nicole Simpson when she called 911 out of desperation in 1989? Instead many cops refer to cases involving women as “domestics” and are known to abuse their spouses and girlfriends in great numbers.

Lynching — and African-American response to Simpson case

What was the initial response by the African-American community to the O.J. Simpson case in 1994? In almost every

poll the response of African Americans to the question of whether they thought Simpson would get a fair trial was “no” by well over half of those interviewed. The fact that the O.J. Simpson case had turned into an unprecedented, sensationalized media spectacle had not gone unnoticed by African Americans and other progressive people.

Even before Simpson was arrested for these murders, the press tried to convict him in the minds of the masses. First, Time magazine ran deliberately doctored images of Simpson on its cover that made him look menacing. Second, the media played the tape of Nicole Simpson’s 1989 call to 911 over and over, saturating the airwaves. These tactics were used by the



The late Recy Taylor in 1944 and at age 97. This heroic rape survivor fought for justice for the rest of her life.



media, in collusion with the police and the courts, to paint a racist, stereotypical picture of Simpson as being just another dangerous Black man who murdered a white woman.

There is also feeling among some Black people that because Simpson is Black and his ex-wife was white, he is presumed guilty in the eyes of whites and therefore will become just another statistic in the legal lynchings that have taken place against African Americans and other people of color. These lynchings were historically commonplace when an alleged rape of a white woman was claimed.

The most well-known of these cases was the Scottsboro trials. The Scottsboro defendants were nine young Black men

to as the “racist use of the rape charge.” Contrast this with the fact that there is no recorded instance of even one white man being executed for raping a Black woman, as in the case of Recy Taylor, a Black woman gang-raped by six white men in Alabama in 1944.

Yet such rapes were commonplace during the epoch of slavery. Black women were viewed as sexual objects by slave owners, in addition to being outright private property. And this monstrous legacy of slavery has continued right into contemporary times. Thus, it is no wonder that there is deep suspicion and resentment in the Black community over the Simpson trial. □

Astrid Conde ¡presente!

By Martha Grevatt

A gunman assassinated Astrid Conde, a former combatant with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), on March 5. Shot in Bogotá outside her home, she is one of almost 200 ex-guerrillas killed since the Final Peace Agreement between FARC and the Colombian government was signed in 2016, and the 15th killed this year.

The Alternative Revolutionary Force of the Common, also known by the acronym FARC, denounced the wave of violence against former participants in the armed struggle — who are now engaged in legal political activism under the terms of the peace accords. The Legal Solidarity Corporation, responsible for the security of the ex-combatants, states that Conde was complying with the legal

requirements of the reintegration process. The FARC denounced the lack of protection for its members under the right-wing government of President Iván Duque Márquez.

A former political prisoner after four years in jail, the 40-year-old Conde was released under the peace agreement, which she had signed and was working to implement. While inside the prison, Conde was very active with the Collective of Political Prisoners. Her most recent activism was with a women’s rights group, Defense and Rights.

Conde, a guerrilla for close to 20 years prior to the signing of the agreement in Havana, was the latest Colombian social justice activist to be assassinated. According to Telesur, “United Nations Special Rapporteur Michel Forst highlighted the impunity of the murders of

social leaders and the lack of preventive administrative measures against the crimes. The UN representative stated that ‘Colombia is the country with the highest rate of murders of human rights defenders.’” (March 7)

“Only a sick society could tolerate without a blink this extermination,” said FARC Deputy Sandra Ramírez. “The government with its silence and lack of guarantees for those who are working for peace ends up legitimizing these murders.” (El Espectador, March 6)

Roughly 800 labor, human rights, Afro-descendent, Indigenous, environmental and other social justice workers have been murdered since the agreement to end the 50-plus-year war was signed.

The deliberate failure of the Duque government to implement the peace accords was one of a number of issues driving the



Astrid Conde

recent general strikes that have rocked Colombia.

Despite unimaginable state repression and paramilitary terror, the Colombian people are part of a worldwide wave of working-class resistance. □

WW COMMENTARY

Workers need health care, not Trumpcare!

By Jim McMahan
Seattle

March 9—In Washington state, there were 15 deaths from COVID-19 (coronavirus) and 79 diagnosed cases of the disease as of March 6. With the epidemic growing there, the state’s Department of Health reported 22 deaths and 162 cases as of today.

Most fatalities have occurred at the Life Care Center, a nursing home located outside Seattle in Kirkland. There, 19 patients died of the virus between Feb. 19 and March 9. It is likely there will be more tragic deaths there. Today, positive test results for 31 of 35 patients were reported. Seven of the facility’s 55 current residents already have COVID-19 symptoms. Results are unknown for the remaining 20 patients.

Timothy Killian, Life Care spokesperson, says the nursing home received only 45 test kits on March 5 for its then 120 residents. That was 15 days after the first COVID-19 death there! This crisis is the fault of the Trump government, which should have produced enough test kits for Life Care—as well as for all people and medical facilities that need them nationally.

Patients’ visitors are frustrated at the lack of communication from Life Care officials about their relatives’ health. Killian says no other facilities are willing to take ill Life Care residents.

Impact of virus on workers

Of the 180 workers employed at Life Care, 65 have been self-quarantined at home since Feb.19 because they have symptoms of COVID-19. Killian did not

know how many workers have been tested or hospitalized, nor has he confirmed if those confined at home are being paid.

Like other cities, Seattle has huge medical complexes and foundations for research and training. But health care for the working class is rapidly declining, and the system is badly equipped to deal with COVID-19. Workers need health care, not neglect—or the nothing that is Trumpcare.

The health care industry’s goal is to maximize profits, not to meet the needs of the multinational working class. This situation is even worse when a challenge arises, such as the COVID-19 epidemic, as millions of people have no health insurance or providers.

Life Care puts profits before people’s lives

Life Care Centers of America, Inc. is “a closely held” for-profit corporation with 200 facilities in 28 states and a total of 40,000 workers. The company has 14 facilities in Washington state.

Between the great resources at Life Care centers and the government, there can certainly be more aggressive treatment and isolation measures to save patients’ lives. Company officials could bring in additional health care workers to relieve the facility’s employees who are putting their lives on the line.

Life Care is only the latest case showing how this for-profit industry harms workers and patients by having an insufficient workforce—even in an emergency. But workers are fighting back.

From Jan. 28-30, 7,800 members of SEIU Healthcare 1199NW struck seven

Swedish-Providence hospitals in the Seattle area. Their main demand was: Fill the 900 vacant workers’ positions. The lack of sufficient staff has affected patients’ health care and exhausted many workers.

Also, government workers have protested over the 500 vacant positions at the Seattle Veterans Hospital.

Another problem: Not enough masks are available. They are essential because they protect people from getting sick. Few people are wearing them outside. Retail workers in stores aren’t wearing them; some report the bosses won’t allow them to do so.

Masks are even being rationed in local hospitals. Health care workers are demanding more of them. The transnational 3M Company is surely anticipating huge profits from sales of these masks, which have been pumped out at plants in South Dakota, Latin America and China. But the U.S. government didn’t stockpile nearly enough—and there’s a worldwide need for them.

Rally warns of dangers at prisons, shelters

There is a looming threat of COVID-19 among workers in prisons and homeless shelters. At a rally on May 7 in front of the Tacoma Northwest Detention Center, an immigration prison, speakers warned of the virus’ threat to prisoners. They explained how a disease can rapidly move through a prison with inmates living in close quarters, while health care inside



SEIU Healthcare 1199NW members on the picket line for patient safety, Jan. 28. PHOTO: SEIU

is almost nonexistent. If an epidemic is severe, it can even breach the prison walls. The Tacoma prison has already had outbreaks of such contagious diseases as mumps and chickenpox.

La Resistencia, the rally’s organizer, asks supporters to call the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department and politicians to demand an inspection of the prison and the release of all elderly and sick prisoners and those with chronic medical conditions.

The response to the COVID-19 health care crisis could be strongly affected by the demands and mobilization of workers and communities. An aroused and united working class demanding the right to essential medical care would make health care industry moguls lose profits, but it would save many lives.

The call for free, universal medical care for people of all nationalities and genders, prisoners, undocumented im/migrants, refugees and the homeless must be raised—and implemented all over the U.S. □

Profits, U.S. sanctions spread COVID-19

Continued from p. 1

state levels. It has spent \$28 million on lobbying, arguing that the U.S. government can’t pay for a nationalized health care system. As PhRMA sees it, hospitals, drugs, medical equipment and all forms of health care, along with every government service, must be a source of private and corporate profit.

A whole series of interlocking industries of insurance, medical and pharmaceutical corporations depend on maintaining and expanding health care for profit.

U.S. sanctions threaten even breastfeeding

Just how far these capitalist medical and food industries will go, and what kinds of brutal threats they are prepared to make to enhance their profits, can be seen by their actions around breastfeeding.

The World Health Organization estimates that breastfeeding infants would save 820,000 lives of children under five annually. To educate the public, WHO wanted to pass a nonbinding resolution encouraging breastfeeding at the May 2018 U.N. World Health Assembly in Geneva. The resolution called on governments to “protect, promote, and support breastfeeding” and for policymakers to restrict the promotion of unhealthy food products.

Ecuador was scheduled to introduce this resolution. The U.S. officials at the meeting quietly threatened to unleash harsh economic sanctions on Ecuador’s critical trade goods and on scheduled aid just for introducing a nonbinding U.N. resolution. This dire threat of sanctions signaled capitalist support for the \$70

billion infant formula industry.

Finally Russia, already sanctioned, agreed to introduce the breastfeeding resolution. But language calling for an end to “inappropriate promotion of foods for infants and young children” was removed after the U.S. reportedly threatened to cut its contributions to WHO. (NY Times, July 8, 2018)

Sanctions target health care globally

More than 39 countries are currently under U.S. economic sanctions—more than one-third of the world’s population. But as in the case of Ecuador, every country can be routinely threatened with economic strangulation for the smallest attempt to limit U.S. profits.

The very existence of powerful corporations is based on expanding the price of medicines and creating shortages of doctors, drugs and hospitals. Nationalized health care programs around the world threaten their profit-taking. Developing countries that have invested substantial resources in dramatically improving health standards and medical access are an increasing target of U.S. corporations.

The destruction of public health caused by U.S. imposed economic sanctions is extensively documented. Denial of medicine and nutritious food has been measured in painful detail in Iraq, Iran, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Zimbabwe and Venezuela, including preventable deaths and stunted growth of children.

The destruction of national health programs is not just a by-product of hyperinflation and freezes on trade and credits—it is the intent of sanctions. The pharmaceutical corporations are using sanctions as a weapon to defend and

expand profits. They are behind a calculated policy of depriving countries of the ability to purchase large quantities of inexpensive and unpatented medicines, antibiotics and vaccines in order to raise general health standards.

According to reports by the Center for Economic and Policy Research and Korea Peace Now, sanctions are responsible for the deaths of 40,000 people in Venezuela over two years, and 4,000 people in the DPRK in 2018, primarily by depriving access to medicine.

Sanctions breaking down health care in Iran

As the COVID-19 outbreak continues to spread worldwide, the impact of U.S. sanctions on health care threatens to thwart attempts to contain the disease. U.S. sanctions have severely hampered Iran’s efforts to respond to the outbreak, limiting access to medical supplies, test kits and information about the virus.

Before the U.S. hit Iran with the harshest sanctions ever, Iran had an advanced, free health care system in place. There was also a system of private health care.

The Iranian government has focused on expanding basic health care ever since the Iranian revolution in 1979 nationalized oil and gas resources. The government became the main provider of health care with an extensive network of primary, secondary and tertiary services. There is a vast network of over 17,000 Health Houses—neighborhood health clinics for immunizations, pre- and post-natal care and urgent care needs. The Health Houses provided free contraception and other family planning tools lacking in many neighboring countries.

In a war-torn region of the world, Iran became an important country for medical tourism, attracting over 100,000 in 2016. But the intensification of sanctions and the resulting hyperinflation have undermined decades of progress.

The rapid spread of COVID-19 in Iran confirms that U.S. imposed sanctions on a third of the world’s people will quickly impact the whole global population.

Next: Part 2: Sanctions attack global health care systems, workers in U.S. suffer.

Rainbow Solidarity in Defense of Cuba

by Leslie Feinberg

This ground-breaking book is a compilation of 25 articles about same-sex love and sex/gender variance in Cuba’s pre- and post-revolutionary history.

Available, along with complete Lavender & Red series, as free download at workers.org/books.



What the virus demands—workers need protection

By Deirdre Griswold

As more and more people face potential infection by the COVID-19 virus, workers in the U.S. need to fight for a program to protect our health, our lives and our income during this crisis. While the coronavirus can infect anyone, it is workers on the job—especially those who cannot stay home and whose jobs put them in touch with hundreds, even thousands of people every day—who will be most exposed.

Workers in unions need their representatives to draw up demands on the bosses right away to mitigate their exposure to the virus, to provide whatever protective equipment or gear may be deemed useful, and to continue to pay their wages and salaries so there is no loss of income in the event of illness or quarantine. The unions need to review what their health plans cover and make sure that every member gets the diagnostic tests and medical treatment necessary to combat the virus.

There is already movement by unions in that direction.

Unions mobilizing against COVID-19

The Association of Flight Attendants states that it “continues to call on government to coordinate response and resources to stop spread of COVID-19” and has developed an extensive list



Hospitality workers in New Orleans stormed into Mayor LaToya Cantrell's news conference on March 9 to demand emergency sick pay and health coverage, and an emergency order from the city that no one be fired or evicted from their homes due to COVID-19 illness.

of demands to protect the health and income of airline workers. (afacwa.org)

“Now is the time to use every possible tool available to guarantee the highest level of protection... to prevent the spread of infection, to protect health care workers, and to preserve our capacity to respond to a potentially widespread outbreak,” said Jane Thomason, an industrial hygienist with National Nurses Union. (Buzzfeed.org, March 6)

United Steelworkers Local 8751, the Boston School Bus Drivers Union, has prepared a thorough list of demands to the company that operates school transportation. “As we have throughout our proud 45-year history, Local 8751 members are pledged to protect ourselves and the most

precious cargo we carry, by every and any means necessary, with a scientific and justice-minded approach that allows us and the communities we serve to proceed with hope for the best, while preparing for the worst,” the local explained.

Medicare for All now!

The federal government needs to cover the medical costs of anyone not fully insured who requires diagnosis and/or treatment for the virus. It must also cover loss of income during illness and recovery and/or quarantine—an important measure to limit the spread of COVID-19 is to allow sick people to stay home rather than go to work.

The government must guarantee the

salaries and health care coverage of any workers who lose their jobs due to the virus. People from oppressed communities, low-wage workers and fast food workers—often predominantly women of color—are at special risk of losing their jobs.

Also at special risk are im/migrants being held in Immigration and Customs Enforcement concentration camps—most of them workers in their home countries—as well as people incarcerated in the prison-industrial complex, who are being exploited as workers there by state and corporate powers. In these confined situations, the health care provided is already less than minimal. A worker-initiated campaign to “Close the camps! Shut down the prisons!” needs to accompany demands for protection for those trapped in them from the evolving epidemic.

This country, unlike most other developed nations, has no overall national health care program. All workers—with or without health care insurance, with or without unions—need to band together and fight for free health care for all, based on the current emergency. This can stimulate the broader mass campaign for ongoing, universal, free health care, popularly known as Medicare for All.

We don't need to wait for the elections to raise these demands. A health crisis is unfolding before our eyes, and the time to act is now! □

Coronavirus highlights gap between socialist and capitalist responses

By Joshua Hanks

March 9—Mounting concern and panic over the global outbreak of COVID-19 has gripped headlines as more countries grapple with its spread. Over 100,000 people worldwide have been confirmed positive for the virus, with many more cases surely going undetected. Italy has locked down the entire country, and other countries are considering drastic responses.

The Western media focused for months on China's response, often condemning it as authoritarian and downplaying its effectiveness. Yet it has become clear that China's unprecedented quarantines, rapid construction of new hospitals, huge increase in testing capabilities and production of medical supplies, free testing and treatment, and mass mobilizations of medical workers, People's Liberation Army soldiers and Communist Party members have succeeded in slowing the spread of the virus and reducing infections.

China's ability to take steps based on human need rather than by seeking to maximize profit has given it an advantage in combating the epidemic.

Praise for China's approach

In a March 4 interview with the New York Times, Dr. Bruce Aylward, part of the WHO team that visited China in February, said, “A rapidly escalating outbreak has plateaued, and come down faster than would have been expected. Back of the envelope, it's hundreds of thousands of people in China who did not get COVID-19 because of this aggressive response.”

He added, “China is really good at keeping people alive. Its hospitals looked better than some I see here in Switzerland. We'd ask, ‘How many ventilators do you have?’ They'd say, ‘50.’ Wow! We'd say,

‘How many ECMOs?’ They'd say, ‘Five.’” (ECMOs are machines that circulate blood outside the body for oxygenation.)

“The [Chinese] government made it clear: testing is free,” Aylward pointed out. He noted if you tested positive for COVID-19 when your insurance ended, the state picked up all costs, and that in the U.S., personal cost is a barrier to speedy treatment: “That's what could wreak havoc. This is where universal health care coverage and security intersect.”

Asked if China's response was “possible only because China is an autocracy,” Dr. Aylward replied, “I talked to lots of people outside the system—in hotels, on trains, in the streets at night. They're mobilized, like in a war, and it's fear of the virus that was driving them. They really saw themselves as on the front lines of protecting the rest of China. And the world.”

Sylvie Briand, director of Infectious Hazard Management at the WHO, told reporters, “Measures on movement restriction have delayed the dissemination of the outbreak two or three days within China and a few weeks outside China.” (cgtn.com, Feb. 19)

High-cost response in the U.S.

The U.S. response to growing numbers of COVID-19 cases contrasts with China's. In a Feb. 26 press conference, Vice President Mike Pence, who has no medical training and was governor of Indiana during one of that state's worst HIV outbreaks, was tapped by President Trump to direct the federal government's response.

During the press conference, Trump made several misleading and outright false claims that contradict the government's own scientists. He claimed that cases are “going very substantially down, not up” and that the U.S. is “rapidly

developing a vaccine” and “will essentially have a flu shot for this in a fairly quick manner.”

The director of the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Dr. Anthony Fauci, however, stated that a vaccine won't be ready for another 12 to 18 months. Health Secretary Alex Azar refused to say that a potential vaccine would be affordable for all. This mirrors other parts of the high-cost U.S. health care system.

At the March 3 White House press conference, CNN correspondent Jim Acosta tweeted: “WH is allowing only still photos of this Coronavirus briefing. No audio or video permitted.” A week earlier the administration sought to lock down information about the outbreak, instructing scientists to coordinate all statements and public appearances with Pence.

Federal agencies are wholly unprepared for an epidemic of this scale. There are nearly 700 vacancies at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention due to a freeze in hiring Trump initiated to cut costs. Public health agencies across the board have suffered from funding cuts for years.

In 2018 Trump slashed 80 percent of the budget from the CDC program to prevent global disease outbreaks and disbanded the government's global health security team created to lead the U.S. response in a pandemic.

With nothing to back him up, Pence promised that the U.S. would be capable of performing over 1.5 million tests a week. The actual numbers are far lower. Washington state, which reported the most cases as of March 8, can perform a little over 1,000 tests a day. Oregon can only test 40 a day, while Arkansas can test just four or five. Earlier this week the CDC announced it would stop reporting how



In China, thousands of recovered patients are going home and the number of new virus cases has fallen dramatically.

many tests it has performed.

Statements about tests have omitted reporting that, in order to confirm a positive result, a person must be tested twice. A state conducting 1,000 tests a day can only test 500 people. The country's true testing capability is unclear, leaving the public in the dark as to just how widespread the virus has become.

The failure of capitalist health care

The slow, botched and opaque response of the Trump administration contrasts with China's rapid response that has slowed the spread of disease within its borders.

The U.S., with a larger but completely capitalist economy, has failed to do what China has done on its road to socialism. U.S. government officials seem more concerned with how the stock market and quarterly profits will be affected than with public health.

China's quarantines and other measures negatively impacted its economy, yet China's steps against the virus protected the health of millions of people—within China and around the world.

The capitalist U.S. seemingly cannot, or will not, prioritize the health of even the people living within its borders. □

WW COMMENTARY

Super Tuesday and the Sanders movement

By Larry Holmes

These edited remarks were given by Workers World Party's First Secretary Larry Holmes at a public meeting on March 5 in New York City.

First a word about the coronavirus (COVID-19). It is going to become a big political issue even more than it is now. It involves the world capitalist economy. Plants are shut down; production is shut down. The supply chain that globalized imperialism depends on has been seriously disrupted. Small businesses and big businesses are affected.

The financial markets over the past week and a half haven't seen losses like this since the 2008 financial crisis, with 1,000-point fluctuations. The stock market rose 1,000 points yesterday (March 4), but went down today. I think it rose yesterday because Joe Biden seems to be doing well. But the ruling class can't really do anything to stop it.

The Federal Reserve Bank and the central banks have put the financial system on life support for the better part of 10 years. We need to look at this very carefully because it could be the beginning of a new world capitalist crisis. Even though the virus is the catalyst, the impact that it's having on the economy is significant.

The economy has been on life support—especially the financial markets, where governmental banking agencies have been pumping in free money for people to borrow. It's been an enormous, frightening bubble looking for an excuse to start blowing up. The coronavirus may be the final straw that could break it.

If the U.S. economy begins going down, the Democratic Party leadership may regret what they are doing to Bernie Sanders at a time when the economy is slipping into an even deeper crisis. It's not only the inequality and low wages here, but people are being laid off and businesses of all sizes are closing down. That's a whole other level of crisis that could be in the offing.

When something like that happens, sometimes the ruling class wants somebody like Sanders, like FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt] to come in and do what they can to make sure the masses don't rebel and want socialism.

Democratic Party leaders panic over Sanders

We know what happened on Super Tuesday. Sanders did not do as well as people expected him to do. Most Democratic presidential candidates have gotten out of the race from [Michael] Bloomberg to [Elizabeth] Warren. Most of them immediately supported Biden, with the exception of Warren. We can only view this as part of the panic by the Democratic Party establishment who saw that Sanders was doing very well. Party leaders were ready to push Biden aside because he didn't seem to be a very effective candidate and has many weaknesses. Then they panicked about Sanders and figured that they had to come together and back Biden. This change happened this week. The media changed, too.

There is an element of fear that some voters had about Sanders. It's not their fault because the bourgeois media feed them the idea that Sanders can't win. Members of the ruling class in both parties are threatening to beat him into the past century. They don't want him to be the nominee. It's not that he can't win. It's that they don't want to have anything to do with anything called socialism—even if it's not really socialism. They don't want to make any concessions to the working class. They want to keep the wealth that they've extracted and robbed from the workers and the oppressed worldwide. That's the real factor. It is not over.

We'll see what happens in the upcoming primaries in Michigan and Illinois. There may be more surprises, but the Democratic Party leadership may do what they did in 2016—and that is crush the left wing of the party and usher in the neoliberal capitalist, imperialist wing. Sanders is not necessarily anti-imperialist. There are contradictions.

Our view of why the Democrats lost in 2016 wasn't because of Russia, but because they abandoned the working class—and not just for a few years—but for decades at a time of globalization, neoliberalism, austerity and union busting. The Democrats paid the price. They helped Trump get in.

Looking at some of the things that happened in the election; it's important for us to be clear and honest. A party that's struggling to be a party of the working class, like ours, has to neither fear nor deny the weaknesses of the working-class movement in our country. We have to accept them and assess what can be done about them.



Larry Holmes. WW PHOTO: LIZA GREEN

Default party of the masses

The Democratic Party has been the default party of the masses for nearly 100 years, at least since the New Deal and FDR. Then the ruling class were worried about the workers rising up and making a revolution or—at the very least—breaking with the bourgeois parties and forming a Labor Party or a social democratic party or a revolutionary party. At that time, the bosses said the workers shouldn't be class conscious and shouldn't break and form their own party and be independent. They said we are giving you the Democratic Party. It is your party.

And that's the way it's been for a long time, and it's hard to undo that. There have been efforts to undo that. For the left to break, for the working class to break, there has to be a break of oppressed people. Jesse Jackson's campaign was one such example. Maybe such a movement would have developed, not led by him, but by some

It's not that he [Sanders] can't win. It's that they don't want to have anything to do with anything called socialism—even if it's not really socialism. They don't want to make any concessions to the working class. They want to keep the wealth that they've extracted and robbed from the workers and the oppressed worldwide. That's the real factor.

people who supported him 30 or 40 years ago. The effort to do that now could be much bigger and much more consequential.

But the point is to still understand the hold that the imperialist Democratic Party leadership has over the workers. What you hear ad nauseam is how the Black workers in the South are so loyal and voted for Biden. One way to look at it—and it's not the whole picture, but one dimension of it—is this: Older Black workers in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi and South Carolina are old enough to remember apartheid and when they could not vote. They certainly know the oppression their parents and grandparents faced. They see Trump coming in and giving a green light to white supremacy—and it scares the hell out of them. Part of the vote for Biden is their reaction to Trump.

When Rep. Jim Clyburn from South Carolina, probably the highest-ranking and most influential Black congressperson, publicly endorsed Biden a few days before Super Tuesday and the primary in South Carolina, we knew it would affect the vote.

Congressman John Lewis is a hero, who was nearly beaten to death on the Edmund Pettus Bridge during the great march from Selma to Montgomery, Ala., in 1965. He has stage four pancreatic cancer, yet he had his staff drive him to the 55th anniversary of that historic march. He got out of the car and said people have to vote like they have never voted before. What he says has a lot of credibility. Just look at what happened in the South and other areas on Super Tuesday.

That's one dimension of it; another dimension of it is

this: Many younger Black people may not agree with that and have other feelings about it. The question is whether they can assert themselves with or without the help of more radicalized elements in the working class.

Another interesting dynamic is that the Latinx community, especially the younger members, are more in favor of Sanders. They have a different experience. Many of them are recent migrants. They're not so anticommunist because of where they come from. That's a problem for the Democratic Party leadership.

Labor leaders fear Sanders

The fact is that the official labor movement leadership in the U.S. is to the right of Sanders politically. Sanders is way to the left of them. One would think that the labor movement would support Sanders. His program is much better for workers.

But no. Top labor leaders are afraid of Sanders. This is a huge contradiction that's held back political and class consciousness in this country. It is a big factor. Also Sanders has his own contradictions. He may be very good on some issues but not all. We learned this four years ago.

Sanders seems to be very dismissive of racism and the national question. He's not unlike a lot of those in parties and forces in the global working class that consider themselves pro-working class, including some Marxists, who are dismissive of the struggles of people of color, women and queer people.

Sanders just came out with an ad that has Barack Obama saying good things about him. Obama is a neoliberal imperialist. For Sanders to put out an ad with Obama saying those things about him is confusing and disingenuous.

When Elizabeth Warren and Kamala Harris dropped out of the race, Sanders said little about it. He didn't say it is very unfortunate that the women who were in the race were forced to drop out. But we would be kidding ourselves to say that had absolutely nothing to do with patriarchy and misogyny.

If Sanders had admitted that factor, it might have gone a little way in terms of the women who were for Warren because they were hopeful that she could be the first woman president. But that's not how he thinks. If Sanders doesn't say more about it, he'll suffer the consequences.

Perspective needed on elections

What is WWP's program and what are its long-term goals? Why should we not try to find a way to intervene, rather than just wait for the outcome of whoever wins the nomination or election in November.

We need to discuss all this and have an approach. It isn't always easy, but a serious revolutionary party has to have an approach. This is the beginning—or could be the beginning—of the falling apart of the Democratic Party in a way where it will cease to have a stranglehold for the workers and the oppressed.

Some other formation that is independent, more pro-working class, more labor-oriented, maybe social democratic may come out of it. It's not preordained, but this is so big—with the economic crisis, climate crisis, war crises and all of the other crises that are interrelated—that now is the biggest opportunity for a historic social and political break from the domination and control of the Democratic Party. I hope that WWP will follow this carefully, comment on it and have a view to being in the revolutionary wing of it. □

Market Elections

By Vince Copeland

An invaluable reference for those seeking to understand the complexities of how the ruling class has been able to use the 'democratic process' to stay in power for more than two centuries — and how mass movements can break through the two-party straightjacket to bring about real change.

Copeland's book was first published in 2000. The paperback (296 pages) can be ordered from online booksellers.

Lessons for the anti-imperialist movement

A proud citizen of the ‘troika’, Part 2

By Camilo Mejia

Part 2 of a talk Nicaraguan-born anti-war organizer and Iraq war resister Camilo Mejia gave Feb. 21 at the United National Antiwar Coalition meeting at The People’s Forum in New York. It has been slightly edited.

When the FSLN lost the general election in 1990 [following the U.S.-backed Contra War], a series of neoliberal governments immediately began to undermine all the achievements of the revolution, including the land reform, literacy campaign, victories in gender equality, health care, education programs, workers rights and much more. The country ceased to be a sovereign nation and became a cheap market for transnational companies to savagely exploit, with no regard for the country’s people or its natural environment.

A situation similar to the drug epidemic in LA ensued in Nicaragua, as most of our citizens lost the safety net that had been provided by the Sandinista government: Mortality rates once again skyrocketed, campesinos lost their land, illiteracy went through the roof, poor children became malnourished, massive unemployment led to higher crime rates and unsafe neighborhoods, and with the sale of the electric company, the country went into a 16-year period of literal darkness.

Despite that grim reality that befell Nicaragua for 16 years, the United States government [and] the U.S. corporate media never reported, much less complained, about the morbid existence of most Nicaraguans during that 16-year neoliberal period. There were no human rights organizations writing reports about the alarming rates of mortality, hunger, disease or anything else caused by privatization and austerity neoliberal policies.

The Organization of American States never expressed any interest in the country, despite blatant electoral fraud, overseen by the United States to prevent the Sandinistas from returning to power. It was as if the country no longer existed.

Sandinistas return, restore human rights

So today’s Sandinista government, in power for 12 years, has been able to cut poverty in half and extreme poverty by two-thirds, provide universal health care and education to all our citizens, rebuild our infrastructure, turn Nicaragua into one of the safest nations in Latin America, achieve 90 percent of food sovereignty, increase access to electric power from 54 percent to 92 percent, launch credit and lending programs to support hundreds of thousands of micro-, small- and

medium-size businesses, and place the country in the top three nations in the world in terms of gender equality.

Nicaragua is not alone in these achievements. Under presidents Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro, despite constant U.S. intervention in the form of sanctions, sabotage and regime change operations, Venezuela has launched a series of programs designed to promote the development of the South American nation, including housing programs that have built approximately 3 million homes for Venezuela’s poorest citizens, food distribution programs, education programs and much more.

In the case of Cuba, not only has their revolution survived over 60 years of economic, political, diplomatic and even military war from the United States, it has managed to achieve incredible victories in health care and education, not to mention medicine, climate resilience, the development of a sustainable economy and much more. Of the hundreds of millions of hungry children who roam the world homeless, not a single one of them lives in Cuba, as the revolutionary island, despite decades of U.S. aggression, has managed to completely eradicate homelessness.

This is the troika!

Build the anti-imperialist movement!

But I share all this with you, not only in the interest of my country and Venezuela or Cuba. I’m sharing this with

you because I keep hearing people say that “The enemy of my enemy is not my friend” or “denouncing U.S. imperialism doesn’t mean that we have to support dictatorships.” Another common one is: “We must support grassroots movements standing up to totalitarian regimes, even if they once were progressive.”

So let me tell you something, the enemies of your enemy, namely the troika nations, as well as other nations who are being targeted by U.S. regime change policies and other forms of aggression, are not being targeted because they are dictatorships. They are being targeted because we represent an alternative to the prevailing, neoliberal world order. It’s the same world order that’s denying U.S. youth a bright future, that’s destroying our environment, that’s turned basic human necessities into products to be bought and sold in transnational markets.

We need to build a united, anti-imperialist, internationalist movement that is [able] to understand the historical moment in which we find ourselves—a movement that is capable of telling the difference between an economic model that serves the interests of the poor and not the interest of the rich and transnational corporations.

We need to understand how U.S.-funded nongovernmental organizations have seized control of the post-truth narrative of dictatorships and democracy,

and how they have weaponized identity politics, human and civil rights, to create division among us and to redirect our solidarity efforts toward the rejection of governments and revolutionary movements that are fighting tooth and nail against the very same policies that are causing tremendous human suffering and environmental degradation in our communities, right here in the United States.

U.S. imperialism has many allies, very powerful allies, and they are not divided. They don’t waste time vilifying each other as they launch media smear campaigns that pave the way for regime change in Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, Asia and everywhere else, where they are burning Black and Brown bodies and destroying progressive programs for the poor under the guise of pro-democracy movements.

The same people who flood U.S. streets with drugs and violence are supporting efforts to overthrow revolutionary governments. The same people who have facilitated the use of chemical weapons against Iraqi Kurds and Iranian military and civilian populations and who are demolishing Palestinian homes are funding mercenary armies in places like Colombia and Nicaragua.

They are behind the narratives that keep us debating the merits and flaws of revolutionary governments fighting for self-determination, while they stand united in the destruction of our environment, our future and our ability to live life with dignity and to fight for what is decent and right.

So I am here as a proud citizen of the troika, a Nicaraguan, as someone who has been a Sandinista since before birth because both of my parents were insurgents in the fight against Somoza, and who will remain Sandinista until the very moment I draw my last breath.

I am not here to apologize for it; I’m not here to apologize for my government as we build this movement; I am not here to request help for our struggle.

I am here to tell everyone that your struggle and mine are one and the same and that if we are to work together, as we should, we must build an anti-imperialist movement that is grounded in a strong understanding of regime change in the 21 century and that is capable to go beyond the corporate headline, to dig deeper, to reach across smear campaigns and see through the smokescreen of imperialism in order to see the values that unite our struggles and that can help us work together as we fight for a better world. □



From left, WW Managing Editor John Catalinotto, author of ‘Turn the Guns Around: Mutinies, Soldier Revolts and Revolutions’; Jonathan Hutto, author of ‘Antiwar Soldier: How to Dissent Within the Ranks of the Military’; and Camilo Mejia, author of ‘Road from Ar Ramadi’ on his rebellion against the Iraq war., on May 22, 2018, at the University of Notre Dame. They were attending the Voices of Conscience conference on the movement of active-duty U.S. Armed Forces members who opposed U.S. wars against Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Fight for women’s liberation! Build Workers World!

As Marxists, we strive not just to honor history, but to make it—to promote changes that put workers and oppressed first instead of last.

That’s what motivated women at the Second International Socialist Conference in Copenhagen in 1910 to pass a unanimous resolution declaring March 8—the date in 1908 of a huge march in New York City of mostly women garment workers and socialists for better working conditions—International Working Women’s Day. Now IWWD is honored by people of all genders around the world.

Those Socialist women recognized that struggle was the only way to bring

about change in women’s lives. Like the Black Lives Matter movement, started by women, trans and gender-nonconforming activists, which boldly fights racism and demands redress for centuries of oppression. Women of color, who are two-thirds of low-wage workers and heads of families, are powering the fight for \$15 an hour, a union and an end to sexual harassment on the job.

The recent trial that found serial predator Harvey Weinstein guilty has energized the #MeToo Movement and Time’s Up. Now when women bring charges of rape and sexual attacks—in restaurants, hotels, offices, wherever they work—their

voices will convey new authority and respect. Meanwhile, all people must support trans women who risk life-threatening sexual assaults in the street and by police and prison guards.

WW will continue to solidarize with women who bear the brunt of Trump’s racist, sexist, bigoted, xenophobic agenda: im/migrant women detained and separated from their children for the “crime” of crossing borders to find work. We support “Dreamers” whose legal status is still in jeopardy.

If you appreciate WW’s year-round coverage of struggles that advance women’s liberation, join the WW Supporter

Program. For a donation of at least \$75 a year—and \$100 or \$300 or much more if you can—members receive a year’s subscription to WW, a monthly letter about timely issues and five free subscriptions to give to friends.

Write checks (either monthly or once a year) to Workers World and mail them, with your name and address, to 147 W. 24th St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10011. Or sign up at workers.org/donate/ for monthly deductions. Know we appreciate your help in building Workers World—for today and for the future. □

WORKERS WORLD editorials

Biggest public threat: health care for profit

The coronavirus COVID-19, first detected in China, has now spread around the world.

With hundreds of cases already identified across the U.S., this potential public health emergency has exposed glaring deficiencies in preparedness. Few people were reassured when Vice President Mike Pence said that health insurance will cover the cost of a test for COVID-19.

The fact is that the supply of tests is woefully inadequate for this mass outbreak. Even things as basic as medical masks are in short supply.

The anti-science president has assigned a pathetic \$8.1 billion in federal funds to combat COVID-19. His behavior thus far has been one of do-nothing criminality.

He offers useless statements like “It’s all going to work out.” as a solution, and actually promised at a Feb. 10 campaign rally: “By April, you know, in theory, when it gets a little warmer, [the virus] miraculously goes away.”

Because the disease threatens his

second-term campaign, it appears the president may be trying to manipulate infection statistics. For instance, the presidential office did not attempt to solve the problem of a cruise ship of thousands of potentially infected passengers that was moored in San Francisco Bay—people who would have spiked the U.S. disease rate if they set foot on dry land.

According to the New York Times, “As the government’s scientists and leading health experts raised the alarm early and pushed for aggressive action, they faced resistance and doubt at the White House—especially from the president—about spooking financial markets and inciting panic.” (March 8)

Trump is not the only obstacle to delivering the response that is urgently needed. Racism and poverty will once again limit access to information, testing care and medication. Moreover, people living in shelters, dependent on mass transit or in other ways subjected to a high level of potential contact with carriers who are

unaware they are infected could be at higher risk of contracting COVID-19.

Big Pharma, under fire for its role in fueling opioid addiction, will put profit first in the development of treatment and preventive medication. For-profit hospitals will do anything to keep costs down—at the expense of sick human beings.

The capitalist class is most worried about workers not coming to work, airline flights being cancelled, shoppers and diners staying home, and higher medical bills that private insurers will have to cover.

That’s what’s causing Wall Street to get the jitters, sending stocks into freefall on multiple days.

Health care is a right!

The case for implementing a single-payer health care system—popularized by the Sanders campaign as “Medicare for All”—could not be stronger. The glaring need was already present before the world even heard of COVID-19. Now coronavirus is a household word.

Mass sentiment that health care is not only a basic necessity, but a basic human right is a major factor driving Bernie Sanders’ popularity.

Medicare for All is the simple and reasonable proposition that if the U.S. government can provide health care for people over 65, it can provide health care for everyone in the country. Funds can be made readily available by cutting the Pentagon budget and taxing the 1%. What’s wrong with that?

It’s not profitable! That’s why the Democratic Party apparatus has coalesced to crush the Sanders movement. This attempt briefly drove stocks back up after Biden pushed Sanders down in the Super Tuesday primaries.

And that’s why it will take more than an electoral campaign to win health care for all. The movement that the Sanders campaign set in motion has to stay in the streets—no matter what happens with the election—and say, “People before profits, health care is a right!” □

French anti-worker plan becomes law—without a vote

By G. Dunkel

Hundreds of thousands of people have been in the streets protesting for months. Transportation strikes have disrupted travel. Public opinion supports the strikes, even though they were extremely inconvenient. Students and teachers from primary grades to universities have walked out repeatedly.

Still, the French government under President Emmanuel Macron—a former investment banker—did not back down and withdraw its reactionary anti-worker pension “reform” bill.

When the bill was introduced in the National Assembly in January, it quickly drew 40,000 amendments and fierce resistance. The United Left in the Assembly, which includes the French Communist Party, France Insoumise (France Unbowed) and other smaller groups, called for a referendum.

When it became clear that the government was

going to have serious problems getting the bill passed, Prime Minister Édouard Philippe invoked a constitutional procedure that let him force the bill through the Assembly Feb. 29 without a vote and without any more debate. (When a prime minister of a different party invoked this procedure a few years ago, Philippe resigned his assembly seat in protest.)

The coalition of unions and youth groups that has led the struggle against pension reform called for immediate protests. A large contingent from this coalition joined the International Working Women’s Day march on March 8 in Paris, vigorously raising the fact that Macron’s “pension reform” severely disadvantages women.

According to French Television, 60,000 people, mainly but not exclusively female, marched in Paris.

The unions are calling for more protests at the end of March after the municipal elections are completed. □



Union women members, dressed as iconic ‘Rosie the Riveter,’ protest the French government’s cut-back pension plan in Paris.

Did COVID-19 cause the Wall Street crash?

Continued from page 1

repurchase agreements.” Then on Monday the New York Fed announced it was ramping up its overnight cash injections to the market to at least \$150 billion.

This infusion of the remarkable sum of \$200 billion—of what is supposed to be the people’s money—has temporarily stabilized the market. But it reveals how fearful the capitalists are that a serious economic contraction or recession is looming.

Loss of jobs and health coverage

Of course the virus spreading here is a real concern for workers. Will the Trump regime spend anywhere near \$200 billion to keep them paid and healthy during the epidemic?

The biggest worry for workers is what will happen to them as the capitalist economy contracts. How many jobs will be lost? How many will lose not only their jobs but their health coverage at the same time? And that means coverage for all kinds of ailments, not just COVID-19.

To put what is happening in perspective, let’s look at the last time this country faced a serious flu epidemic. In 1918, toward the end of World War I, there was a much deadlier virus than today’s COVID-19. It killed up to 50 million people worldwide.

But that epidemic did not crash the stock market or lead to an economic depression. On the contrary, what followed was a decade of impetuous capitalist economic growth—until the huge stock market crash of 1929.

Right now scientists are trying to understand this new

coronavirus in order to create a vaccine against it. That’s important, but it could take 12 to 18 months from now. But what is also needed right now is an understanding of what makes capitalism itself so deadly, so destructive that the system lurches from depressions to wars in order to satisfy the lust for profit.

Expand—or die

Fortunately, there is a science that can explain capitalism. It’s called Marxism. Marxism explains why this system has to keep growing at any cost: Without greater production, without new markets for its products, capitalism will enter into a period of crisis.

This need to “expand or die” is what lies behind all the horribly destructive wars since at least 1898.

Right now U.S. capitalism is experiencing overproduction. The crash wasn’t caused by COVID-19, but the virus likely hurried it along. China has become an important market for U.S. goods, both agricultural and industrial. Now with COVID-19 shutting down economic activity in parts of that country, China is buying less oil from the U.S.

The U.S. has become the biggest oil producer in the world. But much of it comes from fracking shale oil, which is costly. That oil needs to sell at a price of at least \$68 a barrel just to break even. (Newsweek, March 8)

Oil prices on the world market have now fallen by 30 percent, the biggest drop since January 1991. The benchmark of the industry, Brent Crude, was selling for \$67.36 a barrel on Dec. 25. It is now selling for only \$33 a barrel and is predicted to drop to as low as \$20. That’s almost \$40 a barrel less than what it takes to produce shale oil.

The current downturn is a reminder of the market crash of 2007-08, which “wiped out workers’ savings and pensions, led to a massive wave of foreclosures and layoffs, introduced punishing austerity, invigorated attacks on workers’ ability to organize and fight, and gave rise to the gig economy and greater insecurity for wider sections of the working class.” (“Growing signs of deepening global capitalist crisis” by Ben Carroll, WW, July 19, 2019)

Symptom of overproduction

The sharp drop in oil prices is a clear symptom of massive capitalist overproduction. Oil drives economic activity. When there’s a glut of oil and its price drops, it’s a sign that economic growth is slowing down.

But capitalism must expand—or die. That’s how this system works.

Of course, economic expansion doesn’t mean everything gets better for the workers. On the contrary. Wealth in the U.S. has expanded enormously in recent years, but it has all been at the top. Millionaires became billionaires while workers’ wages stagnated.

Millions of young people in the U.S., many of them victims of the “gig” economy, have come to realize that there is little future for workers under capitalism. They now face the triple whammy of COVID-19, economic insecurity and this system’s long history of oppression: racism, sexism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, ableism, anti-LGBTQ2+ bigotry, poverty and more.

The time is coming for all progressive movements to coalesce in the struggle against this monstrous system of capitalism itself. □

Putin-Erdogan ceasefire

Imperialist war’s impact on Syria continues

By John Catalinotto

Talks in Moscow between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan ended March 5 with an agreement for a temporary ceasefire in Syria’s Idlib province. This agreement postponed a possible new conflagration in the war started by the U.S. and NATO regimes against the Damascus government.

While the ceasefire put the war’s escalation on hold, the conflict can still blow up at any moment. This danger is further proof that the imperialist offensive, started in 2011 to remove the Damascus government, is a plague on Syria’s people. Adding to the imperialist war crimes against Syrians are the continuing U.S.-led sanctions against Syria that prevent the people and government from rebuilding their country.

Earlier this year, Erdogan ordered Turkey’s fourth illegal invasion of northern Syria, following earlier military assaults in 2016, 2018 and 2019. The Turkish regime has allied with local reactionary forces — groups with ideologies similar to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group. Fighters and their families in these groups had retreated to Idlib due to the Syrian Army’s offensive.

With their latest offensive, Syrian forces liberated a third of the Idlib territory. But

the Turkish Army moved in to give logistical and combat support to the reactionaries. In response, on Feb. 27 the Syrian Air Force, backing ground forces, attacked and killed a reported 33 Turkish troops.

The Russian Air Force and guerrillas from anti-imperialist Hezbollah based in Lebanon have been supporting the Damascus government in its attempt to liberate the northern part of Syria from the reactionary terrorists.

Role of NATO

Since the Turkish Army is unable to prevail against Russian-Syrian forces on its own, Erdogan then appealed to its NATO partners for protection under Article 4 of the NATO pact in order to win support for its war against Syria. NATO condemned actions of Russia and Syria — carried out to thwart Turkish aggression — and pressed for so-called “humanitarian assistance.”

Yet despite U.S. verbal support for Turkey, NATO has so far denied the aid Erdogan requested. An open intervention on Turkey’s side would put NATO on a collision course with Russia under unfavorable conditions.

U.S.-NATO forces, including the Turkish Army, have targeted Syria since 2011 and have caused enormous killing and suffering inside Syria during that time. This included unleashing a war by reactionary terrorist

forces similar to the Islamic State group and al-Qaida. The imperialist war has made refugees of 4 million Syrian civilians, with millions fleeing to Turkey.

At the invitation of Damascus, Russia intervened in 2015. Since then, the Damascus government, with assistance from Russia, Iran and the Hezbollah guerrillas, has been able to win back most of Syria, smash the reactionaries and drive their remaining fighters and their families to Idlib.

Turkey, which has bought state-of-the-art anti-aircraft rockets from Russia, had participated in talks with Iran and Russia to wind down the war in Syria. The resulting agreement was supposed to remove Turkish troops from Syria. With U.S. approval or acquiescence, Erdogan ordered his army to take this new adventure to seize Syrian territory and support the reactionaries in Idlib. This offensive created the current crisis.

Erdogan uses refugees as pawns

To put pressure on European NATO members to come through with financial and military aid, Erdogan is using the millions of refugees in Turkey as pawns. His regime had earlier closed the border with Greece, that is, with Europe.

Following NATO’s refusal to provide aid, the Turkish military opened the barbed wire fences on Turkey’s northern border.

The Greek state broadcaster ERT showed videos on March 7 where “Turkish soldiers pushed fugitives towards the border with blows and kicks.” (Junge Welt, March 9)

Far from welcoming the refugees, the European regimes want to keep them in Turkey. The right-wing Greek government has ordered its troops and police to stop the refugees from entering Greece and thus Europe. This has added another dimension of horror to the lives of the refugees.

To build international solidarity, Greek communist and worker organizations have demonstrated to welcome the refugees. There was a demonstration of 10,000 people in Athens in early March.

On the other hand, Greek fascist organizations — acting much like the racist U.S. militias near the Mexico border — have impersonated police and beaten, stoned and otherwise forced the refugees back. There are even reports that German Nazis have participated in these attacks on the refugees.

The 2011 imperialist offensive against Syria has been a nightmare for the Syrian people. □

Oakland teachers endorse days of action against U.S. sanctions

The Oakland Education Association, part of the California Teachers Association/National Education Association, has taken heroic action on many issues affecting teachers, students, other workers and the larger Oakland community. February 21 marked the first anniversary of the historic Oakland teachers’ strike for lower class size, an end to school closures, more counselors and nurses, and higher wages.

The OEA has been working with a coalition to stop co-locations of charter schools on public school campuses. It has also joined the Black Organization Project Campaign to cut the school-to-prison pipeline by eliminating the Oakland school police department. On March 1, the OEA unanimously endorsed the Sanctions Kill Campaign, saying no to U.S. wars and U.S.-imposed sanctions and saying yes to funding education.

Abolish U.S.-imposed economic sanctions

Whereas sanctions and economic blockades are being imposed by the United States and its allies — in violation of international law — against countries that resist Washington’s neoliberal policies and regime change efforts; and

Whereas U.S.-imposed sanctions are a

form of economic warfare, causing death and suffering in some 39 countries with one-third of the world’s population as of 2019; and

Whereas U.S.-imposed economic sanctions block access to fuel, raw materials and replacement parts interfering with the functioning of critical infrastructure, i.e., electrical grids, water treatment and distribution facilities and hospitals;

Whereas in every country facing U.S.-imposed economic sanctions, the most vulnerable — infants, children, the chronically ill and the elderly — suffer the most; and

Whereas the U.S. military budget continues to increase while funding for public education and social programs suffer cuts; and

Whereas U.S.-imposed sanctions involving asset freezes and property seizures are modern-day piracy, allowing for massive redistributions of public wealth from sovereign countries into the accounts of U.S. banks and financial institutions; and

Whereas many organizations have been fighting U.S.-imposed economic sanctions for some time independently, now is our opportunity to collectively seek the abolition of all U.S.-imposed economic sanctions which in effect constitute undeclared war, therefore be it

Resolved that the Oakland Education Association goes on record in opposition to United States-imposed economic sanctions against other countries, and in support of the March 13-15 International Days of Action against U.S.-imposed Sanctions and Economic Warfare during the month of March 2020, including endorsing the March 14 Oakland public educational forum. □



Oakland teachers strike, 2019.

WW PHOTO: JUDY GREENSPAN

Mumia Abu-Jamal: Justice delayed is justice denied

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

When it comes to Mumia Abu-Jamal, local, state and federal courts have bent and broken every one of their own rules, frequently reversing prior judicial rulings to limit the Pennsylvania political prisoner’s access to justice. Temple University Law Journalism Professor Linn Washington Jr. calls this “the Mumia exception.”

In a Feb. 24 ruling granting a King’s Bench petition filed by Maureen Faulkner — whose late spouse Abu-Jamal is accused of killing — and the Fraternal Order of Police, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court essentially reversed previous positions regarding use of the King’s Bench extraordinary authority.

Pennsylvania Supreme Court rulings limit King’s Bench to issues of “public importance” that “require timely intervention.” As a legal principle, King’s Bench is inappropriate for individuals or groups simply displeased with a government action.

Faulkner’s petition, filed Nov. 12, 2019, claims Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner was biased in handling Abu-Jamal’s current appeal of his 1982 conviction and should be replaced.

Faulkner’s request was granted after two lower courts turned down her petition to be considered a party of interest in the case. In accepting her King’s Bench petition, the higher court not only overrode the lower courts, it excluded Abu-Jamal’s own attorneys, whose attempts to file responses to the ruling were denied because they “were not a party of interest.”

On March 3 the court appointed retired McKean County Court of Common Pleas Senior Judge John Cleland as the “special master” to investigate whether Krasner’s office showed bias in Abu-Jamal’s appeal. Cleland was given until June 1 to complete his investigation and another 60 days after that to submit his findings — a whole six months that further delays Abu-Jamal’s appeals until August 2020.



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Feb. 28 protest in Philadelphia challenges King’s Bench ruling.

Prosecutor shopping

The Faulkner/FOP King’s Bench petition criticizes Krasner for not being aggressive enough in opposing the ruling that granted Abu-Jamal the right to new appeals. It also claims Krasner was biased in turning over a former prosecutor’s evidence they wanted to keep buried.

These longtime Abu-Jamal opponents want a more conservative prosecutor, Josh Shapiro — someone more likely to continue the cover-up of police, judicial and prosecutorial misconduct in this case. Several former prosecutors previously involved in Abu-Jamal’s case, who were dismissed by Krasner when he took office in January 2018, were then hired by Shapiro.

In a 1997 decision, Commonwealth v. Mulholland, a higher court ruled against a King’s Bench petition that sought to replace a prosecutor, calling it “prosecutor shopping.”

If the Pennsylvania Supreme Court is looking to investigate possible bias concerning Abu-Jamal’s case, it need look no further than its own ranks. Now-retired Ronald Castille was on the Pennsylvania Supreme Court from 1994 to 2014, serving as Chief Justice from 2008 to 2014.

Abu-Jamal’s current appeal involves Castille, who was found by the U.S. Supreme Court to have demonstrated bias when he refused to recuse himself from cases he played a role in while he was Philadelphia’s District Attorney.

Abu-Jamal’s is one of nearly 20 such cases currently on appeal. □



Manifestación defiende La Ley de Salud Asquible ('Obama Care') en EE.UU., 2017.

¿Cómo podemos deshacernos del capitalismo?

Por Makasi Motema

La siguiente charla ligeramente editada se dio en una clase sobre “Por qué necesitamos una revolución” en la ciudad de Nueva York el 29 de febrero.

¿Cómo lidiamos con la injusticia masiva perpetrada por la clase dominante capitalista? Podemos observar las elecciones actuales y ver claramente que no hay un camino electoral hacia el socialismo. No hay camino electoral a la justicia. La clase dominante posee nuestro llamado proceso democrático.

Los políticos y funcionarios de los partidos demócrata y republicano son simplemente empleados de banqueros adinerados, ejecutivos de bienes raíces y directores ejecutivos de seguros de salud. Existen para hacer su oferta, y nada más. Cualquiera que intente utilizar la democracia capitalista para aumentar el poder de la clase trabajadora, a expensas de la clase dominante capitalista, encontrará su camino bloqueado.

¿Cuál es entonces la solución? Si los intereses de la clase obrera son irreconciliablemente opuestos a los intereses de la clase dominante; si la clase dominante tiene control total sobre el proceso democrático; ¿cómo procedemos? La solución es abandonar el espectro del poder político capitalista y adoptar el poder de la clase trabajadora.

La fuerza de la clase trabajadora está en nuestros números y nuestro trabajo. Superamos en gran medida a la clase dominante capitalista. Incluso sus fuerzas de seguridad, el ejército y la policía, que conforman el estado capitalista, serían lamentablemente superados por las fuerzas que una clase trabajadora unida podría ejercer. Y esa es la clave: la unidad de la clase trabajadora.

Por separado, somos débiles e impotentes. Unidos,



Un comité de fábrica se reúne durante la Revolución rusa de 1917.

somos imparables. Una clase obrera unida también podría retener su labor de la clase dominante capitalista. Son los trabajadores los que impulsan nuestra economía. Fábricas, puertos, envíos, supermercados, combustible: todas las arterias vitales de nuestra sociedad están controladas por los trabajadores.

Si estuviéramos organizados hacia un solo objetivo, si alguna vez retuviéramos nuestro trabajo, detendríamos a la sociedad. Así es como el poder económico de la clase trabajadora puede crear un cambio político revolucionario.

El objetivo debe ser unir a la clase trabajadora. Para llevar a cabo tales hazañas monumentales, la clase trabajadora debe tener una organización profunda y altamente estructurada. Para combatir la falsa democracia de la clase capitalista, la clase obrera debe tener una verdadera democracia obrera.

Aprendiendo de la historia

Si miramos hacia atrás en la historia, toda revolución socialista exitosa ha seguido este camino. Aunque cada revolución tenía características diferentes, impulsadas

por las diferencias materiales en sus respectivos países, todos los revolucionarios exitosos entendieron la importancia de organizar a las masas en una estructura duradera y democrática que pudiera resistir a la clase dominante.

En la Revolución rusa, fueron los Consejos de Trabajadores los que impulsaron la radicalización de la sociedad rusa. En Petrogrado y otras ciudades industriales, los trabajadores de las fábricas se reunieron en consejos administrados democráticamente. Debatieron y votaron sobre medidas que mejorarían sus vidas como trabajadores. Al reunirse en la lucha contra los patrones, se radicalizaron y se volvieron más audaces en sus demandas.

En febrero de 1917, los trabajadores de una fábrica de Petrogrado pidieron a sus jefes un día laboral de ocho horas. Para octubre de 1917, esos mismos trabajadores exigían que sus jefes les proporcionaran armas. Fue a través del proceso de organización democrática que los trabajadores comenzaron a aprender su poder. No hay atajos.

Este patrón se ha mantenido en todo el mundo. En China y Vietnam, los consejos de las aldeas formaron la columna vertebral de la revolución, proporcionando recursos y seguridad para el Ejército Rojo de China y el Ejército de Liberación Popular de Vietnam. En Cuba, el respaldo de los campesinos rurales dio cobertura a la guerrilla del Movimiento 26 de Julio. Incluso hoy, en Bolivia y Venezuela, son los consejos de la gente del vecindario los que forman la primera línea de la resistencia contra las fuerzas golpistas de derecha.

No hay atajos. La clase obrera debe organizarse si alguna vez tenemos la oportunidad de derrotar a la clase dominante capitalista. Esto debe hacerse porque es nuestra única esperanza de poner fin a las injusticias de la sociedad de clases. □

El coronavirus en perspectiva

MUNDO OBRERO editorial

¿Qué significará para las personas en los EE.UU. cuando el coronavirus se propague por todo el mundo? ¿Qué preparativos se están haciendo para ayudar a las personas aquí?

Las pandemias no son algo nuevo. En 1918, el virus de la gripe se convirtió en una pandemia por la cual Estados Unidos se vio muy afectado. Sin embargo, los soldados reclutados en el ejército que habían escapado de ser enviados al extranjero cuando terminó la Primera Guerra Mundial murieron por miles. Acuartelados en lugares cerrados, 45.000 soldados perecieron de influenza. Las muertes en combate de los Estados Unidos en la Primera Guerra Mundial, en comparación, fueron de 53.000.

Se estima que al menos entre 20 y 50 millones de personas en todo el mundo murieron en esa epidemia de gripe.

Ahora nos enfrentamos a lo que bien podría convertirse en otra pandemia. La ciencia y la tecnología médica han avanzado mucho en el siglo que ha pasado desde entonces. Sin embargo, eso no ha impedido que el coronavirus se propague rápidamente en esta era de cruceros y viajes en jet.

La China Popular ya ha movilizado a todo el país para frenar la propagación

del virus y tratar a quienes lo contraen. China también está tratando de garantizar que el gran número de personas en cuarentena no sea penalizado financieramente por ese aislamiento.

Sin embargo, el coronavirus ahora aparece en grupos de casos en muchos países del mundo.

Entonces, ¿qué se está haciendo al respecto en los Estados Unidos, en este país rico con tantos millonarios y multimillonarios?

El Miami Herald del 24 de febrero informó sobre el caso de Osmel Martínez Azcue, quien había sido enviado en un viaje de negocios a China y desarrolló síntomas similares a la gripe poco después de su regreso a Miami. Inmediatamente fue a su hospital local, donde solicitó una simple prueba de gripe. En cambio, le dieron el tratamiento completo: aislamiento, todo tipo de exámenes por personas en trajes de materiales peligrosos, una tomografía computarizada, etc.. Resultó que estaba bien; era solo gripe común.

Luego recibió la factura de su compañía de seguros: \$3.270.

Martínez tiene suerte de tener un seguro de salud, o le habría costado aún más. Muchas personas en este país carecen de cobertura médica. Martínez cree que el costo de la atención médica en los EE.UU. podría interferir con la reducción de las crisis de salud pública. “¿Cómo pueden esperar que los ciudadanos normales contribuyan a eliminar el riesgo potencial de propagación de persona a persona si

los hospitales están esperando cobrarnos \$3.270 por un simple análisis de sangre y un hisopo nasal?” le dijo al Herald.

La temporada de elecciones y la temporada de gripe se superponen

La temporada de elecciones ya ha comenzado en este país, al igual que la temporada de gripe. ¿Alguno de los candidatos presidenciales actuales advertirá de los peligros y exigirá un sistema de atención médica totalmente nacionalizado para que lo que sucedió en Miami nunca se repita? ¿Para que cualquier persona preocupada por un problema de salud pueda ver a un médico y tener la seguridad de que no se verá obligado a endeudarse o declararse en bancarrota como resultado?

Wall Street lamentará la caída en el valor de las acciones debido a la propagación de la nueva gripe. Sin embargo, ofrecerá poco consuelo a millones sin los medios para acceder al derecho básico de la atención médica.

Bernie Sanders, quien hace campaña como socialista, debería estar a la altura del título y enfatizar lo que la medicina socializada puede significar para los millones y millones que la necesitan. Uno de los editores de Workers World vivió en Gran Bretaña durante seis meses en 1966-67 y lo experimentó de primera mano. Un amigo estadounidense, con una visa de turista, cayó gravemente enfermo, fue hospitalizado y operado por una úlcera sangrante, y luego fue enviado durante dos semanas

para recuperarse en lo que alguna vez fue un castillo elegante en el Canal de la Mancha. Su factura al final fue de 15 peniques, por una llamada telefónica.

Gran Bretaña no es de ninguna manera un país socialista, pero debido a que estaba compitiendo con el bloque socialista en ese momento, el gobierno cedió a la presión masiva e instituyó un sistema médico financiado con fondos públicos.

El sistema médico de EE. UU. ya está sobrecargado y sobrevalorado, especialmente dada la crisis de los opioides. ¿Qué pasará cuando se propague el coronavirus? Ahora es el momento de exigir una revisión completa y la institución de la medicina socializada, definida en el diccionario como “la provisión de atención médica y hospitalaria para todos, mediante fondos públicos”. Nuestras vidas dependen de ello. □

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.



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