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 “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 AIC.”

By Sara Flounders

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 reserves,” $90 billion to the banking system in March 10, 2020.

By Deirdre Griswold

Profits, U.S. sanctions spread COVID-19

Did COVID-19 cause the Wall Street crash?

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Economic Sanctions Enforcement and Compliance conference on May 20th.”

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 international levels.

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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 Ricanelist 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, mercy 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 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 denounced 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!😊

WW Managing Editor Monica Moorehead and Rafael Cancel Miranda at a Free the Cuban Five rally in Washington, D.C., on June 7, 2014.
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 100 people 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, Jessisa 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 for self-determination. … 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. 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.

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 and windows to prevent them from jumping to safety.

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 speak-out — “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, Terresa Mitchell, Peoples Power Assemblies-NYC; Sawyeraxon, 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, Hochurian 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 Working 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 pandemic, 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 Tierra’ and perform spoken word reflecting their struggles. — Report and photo by Judy Greenspan

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 Intimacy, including many transwomen, spoke out against the violence facing them at the U.S.-Mexican border, in their native countries to the South and the U.S.

The day, which began with Aztec dancers, ended with Zamba 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. imperialism 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 IWW 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 Dorritle
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 insulate 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, Durham, 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. We’re 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 $3,754,000 a year. In Raleigh, taxpayers would likely save $22 million. The city of Greensboro would save an estimated $18,4 million annually.

“City workers need immediate relief from high premiums they currently pay, citing the premium for basic family coverage of $424.00 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 Treatment Technician in the Water Management Department who is currently on workers compensation due to an occupational injury.

On March 2, 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 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 President Kellie McLean and the Department of Parks and Recreation, was fired.

McLean had been wrongly 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 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.”
Domestic violence, racism and state repression

Part 1

By Monica Moorehead

This slightly edited article first appeared in the flyer 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 copious attention 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 citi- zens 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 request- ing 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 real- ity therapy. I don’t believe in breaking up families.” (Havriliak.com/06/26h).

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 mur- dering 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 atti- tude to Nicole Simpson when she called 911 out of desperation in 1994? Instead many cops refer to cases involving women as “domestic” and are known to abuse their spouses and girlfriends in great numbers.

Lynching — and African-American American-respondent 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, sensa- tionalized 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 919 call to 911 over and over, saturating the airwaves. These tactics were used by the accused of raping two white women on a train in Alabama in 1993. The case gar- nered national and international atten- tion. A number of the young men were sentenced to the electric chair by an all-white jury before one of the women recanted the accusation. The Alabama courts were key in coercing these women, who were poor, to make false statements against the young men. These young men’s lives were spared from this attempt to legally lynch them, but other Black men have not been as lucky.

Between 1930 and 1981, court records indicate that 40 out of the 415 men exe- cuted for rape were Black, and in many of the cases, the alleged victim was a white woman. This is what is often referred 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 Recky 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.

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But are these laws strongly enforced? Can they truly be enforced in a society that views women as second-class citi- zens 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 request- ing 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 real- ity therapy. I don’t believe in breaking up families.” (Havriliak.com/06/26h).

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 mur- dering 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 atti- tude to Nicole Simpson when she called 911 out of desperation in 1994? Instead many cops refer to cases involving women as “domestic” and are known to abuse their spouses and girlfriends in great numbers.

Lynching — and African-American American-respondent 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, sensa- tionalized 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 919 call to 911 over and over, saturating the airwaves. These tactics were used by the accused of raping two white women on a train in Alabama in 1993. The case gar- nered national and international atten- tion. A number of the young men were sentenced to the electric chair by an all-white jury before one of the women recanted the accusation. The Alabama courts were key in coercing these women, who were poor, to make false statements against the young men. These young men’s lives were spared from this attempt to legally lynch them, but other Black men have not been as lucky.

Between 1930 and 1981, court records indicate that 40 out of the 415 men exe- cuted for rape were Black, and in many of the cases, the alleged victim was a white woman. This is what is often referred 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 Recky 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 guerrilla with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), on May 5. Shot in Bogotá outside her home, she is one of almost 200 ex-guerril- las who have been killed since the judicial accord signed and was working under the peace accord, which she had signed and was working to implement. While inside the prison, Conde was very active with the Committee 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 preven- tive administrative measures against the crimes. The UN representative stated that ‘Colombia is the country with the highest rate of murders of human rights defend- ers.’" (March 7)

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

Roughly 800 labor, human rights, Afro-descendent, Indigenous, environ- mental 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 gov- ernment to implement the peace accords was one of a number of issues driving the
Workers need health care, not Trumpcare!

By Jim McMahan
Seattle

March 9 — In Washington state, there were 15 deaths from COVID-19 (corona-virus) disease, 1,179 new cases and a case-fatality rate of 1.3 percent. That was 15 days after the first COVID-19 death here! This is the fault of the Trump government, which should have produced enough tests kits for Life Care — as well as for all people and medical facilities that need them nationally.

People are being massacred 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 Centers of America, 77 are 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 health 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 make money. Anti-breastfeeding efforts are part of the multinational working class. This situation is even worse when a challenge arises, such as the COVID-19 epidemic, as companies of all kinds 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 3,000 workers 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 is the latest complex showing how this for-profit industry harms workers and patients by having an insufficient workforce — even in an emergency. But workers know how a disease can rapidly move through a prison with inmates living in close quarters, while health care inside is almost nonexistent. If an epidemic is severe, it can even break 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 demanding the release of the prison and the release of all elderly and sick prisoners and those with chronic medical conditions.

The response to 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 could save many lives.

The call for free, universal medical care for people of all nationalities and genders, prisoners, undocumented immigrants 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 PIKMA sees it, hospitals, drugs, medical equipment and all forms of health care, along with every government service, should 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 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, according to a report in the public, who wanted to pass a binding nonresistance resolution encouraging breastfeeding at the May 2018 U.N. 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 were threatened to wish harsh economic sanctions on Ecuador’s critical trade goods and on scheduled aid just for introducing a nonbinding U.N. resolution.

The 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 Russia’s contribution to the 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 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 life-saving medicines, sanitizers, and medicines. 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 care 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 growth problems among 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 unpated medicines, antibiotics and vaccines in order to raise general health standards.

According to reports by the Center for Economic Policy and Research 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. Iran’s government has sold off sales of thoseamped Iran’s efforts to respond to the outbreak, limiting access to medical supplies, tests kits and information about the virus. Sanctions on the U.S. that imposed 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 Islamic 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.


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 work 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 “in this national emergency, our calls on government to coordinate response and resources to stop spread of COVID-19” and has developed an extensive list of demands to protect the health and income of airline workers. (afacw.org)

“The 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 United. (Buzzfeed.com, 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 measure 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 to allow sick people to stay home rather than go to work.

The government must guarantee the

Coronavirus highlights gap between socialist and capitalist responses

By Joshua Hanks

March 9—Mounting concern and panic over the global spread of COVID-19—the coronavirus that has gripped headlines as more countries grapple with its spread. Over 100,000,000 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 coming under similar 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 increases in testing capabilities 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 amount of government made 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 wreck havoc. This is where universal health care coverage and security interest.”

Asked if China’s response was “possible only because China is an authoritarian,” 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 Brion, 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.” (cgtm.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.

After 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 slashing 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 has reported that for 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 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 in 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.
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 globalization imperatives depends on has been seriously disrupted. Small businesses and big businesses are in trouble.

Financial markets over the past week and a half haven’t seen losses like this since the 2008 financial crisis, with a 3,000-point fluctuation. The stock market was closed for a few days, and then once it opened, Monday and Tuesday it was alright, and then Thursday and Friday, 1,000 points yesterday (Monday, 4th April), but then downtrend got going. 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 there is a new form of neo-liberal, neo-colonial 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 burst. The second wave of 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 to come in and give a green light to white supremacy—and it is the case that this is the biggest opportunity for a historic anti-imperialist, anti-imperialism. There are contradictions. There have 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 burst. The second wave of the coronavirus may be the final straw that could break it.

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Lessons for the anti-imperialist movement
A proud citizen of the ‘troika’, Part 2

By Camilo Mejía

Part 2 of a talk Nicaraguan-born anti-war organizer and Iraq war resister Camilo Mejía delivered in December 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 its U.S.-backed Contra War success, the Sandinista National Liberation Front immediately began to undermine all the achievements of the revolution, including the land reform, literacy campaign, victo-

ries in gender equality, health care, edu-

cation programs, workers rights and much more. The country ceased to be a sover-

geign 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 and the war 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 com-

plained, 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 privat-

ization and austerity neoliberal policies.

The Organization of American States never expressed any interest in the coun-

try, despite reports of electoral fraud, even

seen 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 damaged economy, 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 97 percent, provide 60 months of credit and lending programs to support hun-

dreds 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 achieve-

ments. Under presidents Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro, despite constant U.S. intervention in the form of sanctions, Venezuela has launched a series of pro-

grams designed to promote the devel-

opment of the South American nation, including housing programs that have built approximately 3 million homes for Venezuela’s poorest citizens, food dis-

tribution programs, education programs and much more.

In the case of Cuba, not only has their revolution survived over 60 years of econo-

mic, political, diplomatic and even mili-

tary war from the United States, it has managed to achieve incredible victories in health care and education, not to mention medicine, climate resilience, the develop-

ment 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 all the people who oppose the U.S.”

So let me tell you something, the ene-

mies 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-impe-

rialist, 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 transna-

tional corporations.

We need to understand how U.S.-

funded nongovernmental organizations have seized control of the post-truth nar-

rative of dictatorships and democracy, and how they have weaponized identity politics, human and civil rights, to create division among us and to redirect our sol-

iarity efforts toward the rejection of gov-

ernments that are fighting tooth and nail against the very same policies that are causing tre-

mendous human suffering and environ-

mental degradation in our communities, right here in the United States.

U.S. imperialism has many allies, very powerful ones, and they are not divided. They don’t waste time vying 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 gov-

ernments. The same people who have facilitated the use of chemical weapons against Iraqi Kurds and Iranian mili-

tary and civilian populations and who are demolishing Palestinian homes are funding human rights activities 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 environ-

ment and humanity. We need to learn to live with dignity and to fight for what is decent and right.

So I am here as a proud citizen of the troika, I am here as someone who has been a Sandinista since before birth because both of my parents were insurg-

ents in the fight against Somoza, and who will remain here 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-impe-

rialist movement that is grounded in a strong understanding of regime change in the 21st century and that is capable to go beyond the corporate headline, to dig deeper, to reach across smear cam-

paigns and see through the smokescreen of imperialism in order to see the values that unite our struggles and that can help us to stand together as we fight for a better world.!
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 cracks in U.S. health care. 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 no plan for how the coronavirus, like a whole host of other smaller groups, called for a referendum. The case for implementing a single-payer health care system—popularized by the Sanders campaign as “Medicare for All”—could not be stronger. And that means it is also the only obstacle to delivering the response that is urgently needed. The French government’s cut-back pension plan in Paris. The French Communist Party, France Insoumise (France Unbowed) and other smaller groups, called for a referendum. The unions are calling for more protests at the end of March after the municipal elections are completed.

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 college have walked out repeatedly.

Still, the French government under President Emmanuel Macron—a former investment banker—did not back down and withdrew 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 Edouard Philippe invoked a constitutional procedure that let him force the bill through the Assembly Feb. 25 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.

Biggest public threat: health care for profit

By Mike Pence said that health insurance premiums are woefully inadequate for this mass out-break. Even things as basic as medical insurance are in short supply.

Bernie Sanders has been one of do-nothing criminality. He offers no plan for how the coronavirus, like a whole host of other smaller groups, called for a referendum. The case for implementing a single-payer health care system—popularized by the Sanders campaign as “Medicare for All”—could not be stronger. And that means it is also the only obstacle to delivering the response that is urgently needed. The French government’s cut-back pension plan in Paris. The French Communist Party, France Insoumise (France Unbowed) and other smaller groups, called for a referendum. The unions are calling for more protests at the end of March after the municipal elections are completed.

Mass sentiment that health care is not a right is a major factor driving Bernie Sanders’ popularity. Medicare for All is the simplest and most 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%.

That’s 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!”

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?

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 lay-offs, 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 mass capital 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 is just fine. On the contrary. Wars in the U.S. has expanded enormously in recent years, but it has all been at the top. Billionaires 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-LGBTQ+ big-otry, 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**

_Byt 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 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-Qaeda and the Islamic State group. Fighters and their families in these groups had fled to Idlib with Turkey’s help in the war against U.S.-backed Syrian forces in northern Syria.

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 reportedly killed 10 Turkish soldiers and a journalist and wounded 12 others. The U.S. and NATO forces, fearing Idlib’s liberation, have been fighting U.S.-imposed economic sanctions; and

- the Turkish regime is accused of killing— and the Fraternal Order of Police, the Pennsylvania Association of Police and the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) of Philadelphia.

_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

- 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; and

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

Whereas U.S.-imposed economic sanctions continue 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 see the abolition of all U.S.-imposed economic sanctions which in effect constitute undeclared war, therefore it is

Resolved that the Oakland Education Association will continue to call for the immediate end to all U.S.-imposed economic sanctions in opposition to United States-imposed economic sanctions against other countries, and in support of the March 13-15 International Days of Action for the Removal of U.S.-imposed Sanctions and Economic Warfare during the month of March 2020, including endorsing the March 14 Oakland public educational forum.

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

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 Professor and filmmaker Harold James says, “This is the ‘mumia exception.’” In a Feb. 24 ruling granting a King’s Bench petition filed by Maureen Faulkner—whose son, 14-year-oldstay-at-home schoolboy Billy, was killed by a police bullet—Larry Krasner was biased in handling Mumia Abu-Jamal’s current appeal of his 1982 conviction and should be replaced.

Faulkner’s request was granted after two lower courts turned down his 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 included Abu-Jamal’s own attorney, 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 Celender as the “special master” to investigate whether Krasner’s office showed bias in Abu-Jamal’s appeal. Celender 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.

Mumia Abu-Jamal: Justice delayed is justice denied

_By Betsey Piette Philadelphia_

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¿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 irremisiblemente opuestos a los intereses de la clase dominante; si la clase obrera tiene control total sobre el proceso democrático; cómo procederíamos? 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 superadas por nuestras fuerzas.

Esto nos llevará a tomar el control y a llevar a cabo tales hazañas monumentales, 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 profundamente estructurada. Para combatir la falsa democracia de la clase capitalista, la clase obrera debe tener una verdadera democracia obrera.

Aprendiendo de la historia

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

En febrero de 1977, los trabajadores de una fábrica de Petrogrado pidieron a sus jefes un día laboral de ocho horas. Para octubre de 1977, esos mismos trabajadores exigían que sus jefes les proporcionaran armas. Fue a través del proceso de organizar a las masas 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 campo 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 ser decisivo porque nuestra única esperanza de poner fin a las injusticias de la sociedad de clases.