

As former top cop fires strikers

Calif. grad student wildcat grows

By Martha Grevatt

There has been a surge of strikes in the U.S. recently, many of them fueled by demands for a decent income that keeps up with the cost of living.

Right now, graduate student workers at the University of California Santa Cruz are on the front lines. They are on a wildcat strike to win a cost-of-living allowance—once common in union contracts, but now something few workers have and most workers need.

The movement began with a “grading strike” in December with 233 grad student workers refusing to submit grades. On Feb. 17, they escalated the withholding of their labor into a full teaching strike. Because the current master contract between the whole UC system and United Auto Workers Local 2865 has a no-strike clause (and no COLA language), they had to take the brave step of going on what’s known as a “wildcat strike.”

But what was the alternative to striking? It was to continue juggling impossible bills — paying exorbitant rents in Santa Cruz, as well as groceries, child care, health care and other obligations.

The grad workers are up against formidable foes, including the Santa Cruz Police Department, which arrested 17 strikers for blocking traffic on the first day of the escalation.

Also positioned against the strikers is UC President Janet Napolitano, who has issued termination letters to 54 of them with additional student workers disqualified from teaching opportunities the next quarter. Before assuming the UC presidency, Napolitano was the top cop under President Barack Obama, heading up the Department of Homeland Security. Now, with a salary of \$540,000 a year, she can do without a COLA increase.

Democrat or Republican, a boss is a boss!

The UAW top leadership did not authorize and, unfortunately, has not backed the strike. Previously the union

bureaucracy opposed Local 2865 for passing a progressive resolution supporting the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement against Israeli apartheid.

But despite the challenges, the strike has spread. Carlos Cruz, a fired teaching assistant in the History Department, told WW: “Folks from different universities have been outraged so we’ve started to see a COLA campaign at UC Santa Barbara, Davis, UCLA and San Diego,” and demands also include the immediate reinstatement of all those fired. At UCSC the grading strike began with less than 250 student workers, but now twice that many have pledged to strike next quarter to protest the terminations.

While Napolitano’s spokesperson Andrew Gordon claims the strikers’ actions “unfairly impact undergraduate students,” many undergraduates see that it is the firings that will disrupt their education. Hundreds have signed a solidarity statement supporting the strike. Faculty are also behind the grad students. (The Guardian, Feb. 28)

All workers need COLA!

The UAW, which represents graduate students around the country as well as at UC, first gained COLA language in its contracts with the auto companies in 1948. The basic premise was that when prices go up, wages should also rise to keep up with inflation.

Some progressives in the union were leery that COLA would actually give the bosses an excuse to cut wages when prices dropped. But over the years, as COLA increases were “folded into” autoworkers base pay in every new contract, the formula meant that union members received a bigger share of the value they created.

At one time, when over one-third of all U.S. workers belonged to unions, COLA was standard contract language. This also put pressure on non-union employers to pay wages that were linked to inflation—so workers would think they didn’t need a union!

Decades of concessions and union busting now paint a different scenario. Only 10.3 percent of workers in this



Grad students at UC Riverside back strikers, Feb. 21. More on academic workers, page 4.

country are unionized. Many of them have lost COLA, including Ford, General Motors and Fiat Chrysler workers, who were among the first beneficiaries. With the help of the capitalist state, the companies used the 2009 auto bankruptcies to seize workers’ hard-fought gains, including COLA.

The COLA that strikers at UCSC are asking for is a fixed amount to support their housing needs, but their demand is based on the original principle—that wages should reflect the worker’s actual living expenses and not be undercut by capitalist cost-cutting.

Cruz explained, “To me it’s important, because we see it as a fight against poverty, indentured servitude. Someone like myself, from an immigrant, single-parent household, we’re told our whole lives that education was the way out of poverty, but we live in continuous precarity. We have to get second and third jobs, or take out loans. We are expected to perform, but we are so exhausted. A lot of folks turning in one kind of poverty for another, a more educated one, but will continue to lead precarious lives.”

These grad student workers are fighting for their economic survival, but every worker has a stake in the outcome. □



Workers World
hails Int’l Working
Women’s Day!

By Kathy Durkin

This is partially based on articles previously published in Workers World newspaper to commemorate International Working Women’s Day. New information has been added.

March 8, International Working Women’s Day, is a day of solidarity with women and people of all genders worldwide who face U.S. militarism, as well as with the world’s workers who are

superexploited and abused by imperialist corporations.

Capitalism, with class society, private property ownership and patriarchal relations, is at the root of women’s, gender and national oppression. Global corporations, in their drive for megaprofits, superexploit the world’s workforce, intensify inequality and poverty, and spew racism, bigotry and misogyny.

Transnational companies and their local bosses abuse women, with physical

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Seattle

Solidarity with Wet’suwet’en Nation

By Jim McMahan

About a hundred people marched through central Seattle in solidarity with the Wet’suwet’en Nation of Canada on Feb. 29. This was a prayer walk on occupied Duwamish land, organized by the Protectors of the Salish Sea, led by Indigenous people with allies.

A week earlier on Feb. 23, Seattle cops brutally attacked the Protectors’ peaceful pro-Wet’suwet’en prayer walk, which was made up of Native singers and drummers. Six were arrested, and many were pepper sprayed.

Facing a heavy, outlandish police presence, the Protectors resumed their prayer walk on Feb. 29 with more people and supporting organizations. They then marched to the waterfront where a water blessing ceremony with singing was held.

The Protectors have organized a number of actions in support of Wet’suwet’en in recent years, along with their demand that Washington state Gov. Jay Inslee declare a climate emergency for the Salish Sea (Puget Sound and the Straights of Georgia) due to the increasing existential threat to salmon and orca and their habitats.

“We’re here to stand with the Wet’suwet’en, who have literally been invaded by the government of British Columbia,” said Paul Wagner, a founder of Protectors of the Salish Sea. He was referring to the recent brutal occupation of Wet’suwet’en land by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the government of British Columbia -- an assault on behalf of Coastal GasLink, which aims to build a multibillion-dollar gas pipeline across sovereign and unceded Wet’suwet’en land.

Solidarity with Wet’suwet’en continues to grow all across the continent! □



Solidarity with Wet’suwet’en, Seattle, Feb. 29.

WW PHOTO: JIM MCMAHAN

WORKERS WORLD

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WORKERS WORLD

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 hails International Working Women’s Day!

Continued from page 1

and sexual violence, as they mistreat and disregard all workers. The quest for profits drives the horrible crimes of sex and human trafficking of women, children and people of all genders.

All this cries out for a socialist solution: public ownership of industries; production for human needs, not profits; guaranteed jobs, health care and all necessities; sharing of wealth and resources — and peace.

Cuba has shown that socialism can provide the basis for women's equality. Led by the Federation of Cuban Women, women there have made great political, economic and social strides since the revolution triumphed in 1959.

True character of Women's Day

The pro-socialist and working-class essence of IWWD remains, despite capitalist and media cover-ups of its real meaning. Its history is rife with struggle and solidarity. This special day has been celebrated by socialist countries and parties, national liberation movements, anti-imperialist, anticorporate, women's and workers' organizations on many continents.

This historic day's founder was Clara Zetkin, a leader of the left wing of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) and head of their International Women's Secretariat. The SPD, which had 82,000 women members in 1910, promoted women's rights, including the right to organize politically and vote. Zetkin agitated for 21 years to establish International Working Women's Day.



Clara Zetkin (left) and Rosa Luxemburg, 1910, Stuttgart, Germany.

Women in Europe were pouring into factories as expanding industries needed their labor. They were hired at low pay to do unsafe, horrific jobs without legal rights. Determined to fight for political and economic rights, they joined labor unions and socialist parties. It was a time of great ferment and burgeoning socialist ideas.

German socialist Luise Zeitz, in collaboration with Zetkin, proposed at the Second International Socialist Women's Conference in August 1910, held at the Workers Assembly Hall in Copenhagen, that a special day be set aside annually to recognize the worldwide struggles of women workers and to build solidarity. Participants agreed to fight for the 8-hour workday, maternity leave and health benefits.

Another impetus for Women's Day, Zetkin recognized,



Women's militia in Cuba ready to defend the revolution.



Women of Gabriela march in Manila, the Philippines.



International Working Women's Day, 2019, Nairobi, Kenya.

was the demonstration in New York by thousands of garment workers, mainly im/migrants and many socialists, demanding their rights, on March 8, 1908. So was the three-month garment workers' strike a year later — the “Uprising of the 20,000” — led by 23-year-old Clara Lemlich, a Russian-Jewish immigrant.

Over 100 women from 17 countries, representing labor unions, women's organizations and European socialist parties, voted unanimously for the proposal. It declared: “In agreement with the class-conscious political and trade union organizations of the [working class] in each country, socialist women in all countries shall organize a Women's Day each year.” (leftwrite.wordpress.com)

Zetkin, a political strategist, calculated that organizing for IWWD was a crucial step in building an anti-capitalist movement. She aimed to foster cooperation among women in labor unions, women's organizations and socialist parties so they would fight jointly. This would raise class and socialist consciousness and push the class struggle forward. In her estimation, the most political women workers would be won to opposing capitalism — the source of women's oppression — and would embrace a socialist perspective.

An internationalist, Zetkin deduced that a yearly, coordinated multicountry protest on the same day for the same demands would empower women's struggles and also break down national chauvinism, strengthening ties between women in different countries and building antiwar sentiment.

One year later, Zetkin's strategy took hold. More than 1 million people, mostly women, poured into the streets of four European countries on March 19 to demand jobs and an end to gender discrimination. Russian revolutionary Alexandra Kollontai said that the first “Working Women's Day was one seething sea of women, certainly the first show of militancy [in Europe] by working women.”

IWWD started a revolution!

In 1913 and 1914, European women protested the looming world war on Women's Day. On March 8, 1917, striking women textile workers joined women attacking bakeries over high bread prices in Petrograd, Russia. They asked soldiers to put down their rifles.

Soon 90,000 protesters were in the streets, calling for “peace, land and bread.” This earthshaking action led to the Russian czar's ouster, which opened the gates to a workers' revolution later that year. In 1921, the socialist Soviet Union was the first government in the world to codify women's equality.

Zetkin, fervently antiwar, was jailed repeatedly for agitating against World War I. Demonstrations won her release. She left the SPD in 1916 because of its pro-war position and, with Rosa Luxemburg and others, established the precursor to the Communist Party of Germany.

An antiracist, Zetkin opposed U.S. Jim Crow laws. She wrote an impassioned plea in 1932 calling for the release of the Scottsboro Brothers, nine young African Americans who were being railroaded to prison, and possible execution, on false charges of sexually assaulting two white women. One of the women later refuted the charges and then joined the mass movement that saved their lives.

As German fascism menaced, Zetkin agitated for all workers, women and men, to join the fight against war and fascism in the Parliament (Reichstag) on Aug. 30, 1932. At the age of 75, ailing and nearly blind, Zetkin bravely spoke for an hour as Nazis yelled death threats at her.

50 years of Women's Day

IWWD actions around the globe over the last 50 years have included the freeing of political prisoners in Uruguay, sit-ins in Argentina of agricultural workers and uprisings in the Philippines. Coordinated actions have protested the U.S.-led war in Iraq and the U.S.-backed Israeli siege of Gaza. Yemeni women have denounced the U.S.-backed Saudi war in Yemen.

In 2010, there were worldwide commemorations of IWWD on its centennial, as well as a determined post-earthquake march in Haiti.

Indigenous peoples have protested corporate destruction of the planet. South Korean workers have demanded gender equality at work. Bangladeshi garment workers have rallied, and domestic workers in Indonesia have marched. Sex workers have insisted on their rights. Migrant workers have demonstrated in Australia, Asia and Europe for legal protection and rights.

Demonstrations were held in the Middle East and North Africa in the early 2010s during the Arab Spring. Events hailing women workers have been held in South Africa. Throughout Latin America, marches for reproductive rights, especially safe legal abortion, and against



“Uprising of the 20,000” garment workers in three-month strike, 1909-1910, New York City.



Russian women workers' strike on March 8, 1917, sparked czar's ouster, paved way for workers' revolution.

antiwoman violence have been held yearly. In 2018, winning LGBTQ2+ rights was hailed in India. Last year, Cubans celebrated 60 years of socialist revolution.

In the U.S., the women of Youth Against War & Fascism and Workers World Party revived IWWD's revolutionary legacy in 1970, marching from a rally in historic Union Square to the Women's House of Detention in New York. They expressed solidarity with their imprisoned sisters, including two of the New York Panther 21.

The Women's Fightback Network began to commemorate IWWD in New York in 2004. Out of that grouping was born the International Working Women's Day Coalition, which has annually marked this special day since 2009 with demonstrations, rallies and meetings.

On several occasions, the coalition has memorialized the 146 victims of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of March 25, 1911, at the building's site in New York. This coalition always raises struggles of women workers, im/migrants, people of color and gender nonconforming people in the U.S., while promoting global solidarity.

A socialist women's conference today

Many of Zetkin's demands resonate today, including the need to improve conditions for women workers, with labor unions, legal protections, jobs at a living wage, health care, and all the necessities of life — and to build worldwide class unity and solidarity.

But imperialism and its endless wars raise other issues than those Zetkin addressed. Colonialism, capitalist globalization and national oppression — with underdevelopment of continents, theft of land and resources, super-exploitation of workers, and the propagation of racism and all forms of bigotry — greatly broaden the demands from those raised in 1910 in Copenhagen.

A global socialist women's conference today would first extend invitations to women in Africa, the Middle East and the rest of Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean — whose countries have been oppressed by imperialism. Such a gathering would promote reparations for countries ravaged and impoverished by global capitalists and demand an end to all imperialist militarism.

Also invited would be women workers and people of all nationalities and genders in the U.S. — im/migrants, refugees, single parents, the unemployed, homeless, seniors, youth, people with disabilities, survivors of sexual abuse and domestic violence, low-income individuals, rural women, LGBTQ2+ people prisoners, sex workers, and all those lacking health care and other necessities. Everyone's grievances would be heard and incorporated into demands.

Clara Zetkin was right in saying that international solidarity is essential. She stressed that it is urgent that women and all workers organize to get rid of capitalism and fight for socialism. That is the legacy of 110 years of International Working Women's Day.

The writer's grandmother, Sophie Stoller, an immigrant garment worker, was employed at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory. She was ill and didn't go to work on the day of the fire. A socialist, she joined the 1908 garment workers' march and the “Uprising of the 20,000.”

On the picket line

By Alex Bolchi and Sue Davis

NLRB ruling seeks to kill joint-employer doctrine

Following a similar Department of Labor rule issued Jan. 12 (WW, Jan. 23), the National Labor Relations Board weighed in on Feb. 25 with a new legal regulation that makes it harder to prove that corporations are responsible when franchise owners or contractors violate labor laws. The regulation, which becomes effective April 27, will make it harder for workers at franchises to sue when they are fired in retaliation for attempting to unionize, according to the Feb. 26 New York Times. In addition to workers in the fast food industry, this covers workers hired by contractors at staffing agencies and cleaning services.

The definition of the joint-employer doctrine, included in the federal Fair Labor Standards Act, was broadened in 2015 by the Obama administration even if the corporation only controlled workers indirectly. An example is if the company demanded that franchises use software with specific scheduling practices. But the Trump-stacked board tried to load the dice when it added the word “substantial” to the words “direct and immediate” to describe the company’s control.

Speaking for the union-supported National Employment Law Project, Executive Director Rebecca Dixon pointed out the obvious: “[I]f a company retains control over the essential terms and conditions of the work, it should share responsibility for the workers.” She also called out the regulation’s inherent racial bias against Black and Latinx workers in the subcontracted temporary industry. “While Black workers constitute 12.1 percent of the overall workforce, they make up 25.9 percent of temporary help agency workers; Latinx workers are 16.6 percent of all workers, but 25.4 percent of temporary help agency workers.” (Feb. 26)

The Times article noted that pro-labor groups might challenge the new rule since it diametrically opposes a recent federal appeals court decision upholding the 2015 joint-employer doctrine. (For more on why the NLRB is bad for workers, read “State of the Union” in the Feb. 23 Times magazine.)

Kickstarter workers first to unionize in tech industry

Kickstarter workers —engineers, directors, analysts, designers, coordinators and customer support specialists—are the first at a major tech company to unionize. Calling themselves Kickstarter United, the workers had been organizing since last March to join the Office and Professional Employees Union (OPEIU). The vote on Feb. 18 was 46 to 37. Calling the tech sector “a new frontier for union organizing,” OPEIU President Richard Lanigan welcomed the workers into “the labor movement’s efforts to improve the livelihoods of tech employees everywhere.” (theverge.com, Feb. 18)

Although the Kickstarter CEO was initially wary of the union and insisted on an official NLRB vote, he told The Verge he doesn’t see the vote “changing [the company’s] mission or vision.” TechCrunch.com reported Feb. 18 that both staff and contractors at a growing list of tech companies have expressed interest in unionizing—Spin, Instacart and Pittsburgh-based Google tech workers, along with media outlets BuzzFeed and Vox.

35-year high in major strikes 2018-19

No matter how much braggart in chief President Donald Trump boasts that his economy is benefiting his working-class base, the facts prove otherwise. According to the Economic Policy Institute report issued Feb. 11, the “number of striking workers surged in 2018 and 2019,” after decades in decline. Based on data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the EPI noted that it marked “a 35-year high for the number of workers involved in a major work stoppage over a two-year period.” That began with 485,200 workers in 2018—“a nearly twentyfold increase from 25,300 workers in 2017”—and continued in 2019 with 425,500 workers.

The jump in numbers, EPI explained, “is largely fueled by an increase in stoppages involving at least 20,000 workers.” These include public school teachers from West Virginia to Chicago to Los Angeles and many states and cities in-between, as well as unionized workers at General Motors, Stop & Shop, the University of California and AT&T.

EPI Policy Director Heidi Shierholz, who co-authored the report, said in a statement, “The increase in strike numbers shows that workers understand that joining together in collective action remains an effective way to raise wages and benefits, and improve working conditions.”

Co-author Policy Associate Margaret Poydock pointed out that the uptick “has occurred despite current policy that makes it difficult for many workers to effectively engage in their fundamental right to strike.” She pointed to the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, which the House passed Feb. 6, but which will not be approved by the current Senate.

Will the surge continue? Stay turned. □

Wayne State teachers protest mass firings

By Jamie McQuaid
Detroit

On Feb. 26, nearly 100 lecturers, graduate instructors, students and allied workers marched through Wayne State University’s main campus in Detroit to protest the mass firing of lecturers, who are nontenured instructors, announced in February.

Chanting passionately and carrying protest signs, teachers and their allies marched in the wind and snow through the campus student center and around the main library. Some historically minded lecturers created signs with nothing on them save illustrations of the traditional French guillotine. The march ended in the atrium of the Faculty Administration Building, where the offices of WSU’s president are located.

The atmosphere was one of frustration and uncertainty, but also of solidarity and hope. While a representative of the lecturers’ union, the American Association of University Professors-AFT Local 6123, promised further protests at the next Board of Governors meeting, armed campus police assembled in the area. The representative of the union was not allowed to deliver a petition with over 800 signatures in support of the protesting lecturers to President Roy Wilson until the chief of WSU’s special police force could arrive on the scene.

The demand for a demonstration and union action began the second week of February when 38 percent of the lecturers at Wayne State’s College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) received notifications that their employment contracts would not be renewed for the following academic year. Every lecturer in CLAS who was up for a renewal was denied, without exception. This meant that lecturers — many of whom hold distinguished academic awards for their commitment to student success and support — were effectively fired, leaving academic staff in a state of panic as they scrambled to find potential work at other institutions in the fall. [Academic workers are often forced to apply for openings a year before projected availability.]

Wayne State’s administration maintains that many of the lecturers will be hired back in the fall,

but how many (and who) remains to be seen.

This practice stems from an already existing trend at Wayne State — and many other colleges across the country — to pursue austerity programs by replacing tenured faculty with more precariously employed and underpaid lecturers. In a bid to win back some employment protections, the AAUP-AFT won an agreement from the university administration last year to supply those lecturers who would not see their contracts renewed with earlier notifications, so they would be able to find work elsewhere.

What was agreed, as a bargained, common sense approach to provide academic workers in unstable employment with some greater security, has instead been used by the administration to instill a culture of fear among workers who want to rely on working-class power to win basic rights in the workplace.

Attempts by the administration to justify these actions are easy to see through. Wayne State officials have claimed that it is impossible for the university to adequately project how many lecturers they will need to employ in the coming academic year, since they have not drawn up a budget for the coming 2020-21 terms. At the same time, however, Wayne State has committed over \$20 million to construct a new basketball arena and almost another \$50 million on building renovations, largely paid for by funds brought in from the labor of Wayne State lecturers.

This is, of course, to say nothing of President Roy Wilson’s salary which, in his most recent contract, increased about \$100,000 in 2018 to over \$603,000 annually. As Wayne State’s teachers continue to see fewer opportunities for secure tenured positions, stonewalling at reasonable demands for a cost-of-living adjustment or expanded benefits and an increasingly antilabor attitude from their administration, academic workers across the university are beginning to realize that Wayne State’s administration needs them more than they need the administration. □

Jamie McQuaid is the History Department union steward for Graduate Employees Organizing Committee-AFT Local 6123.



PHOTO: AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS

Lecturers and allies call out Wayne State administration Feb. 26.

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. □

How can we get rid of capitalism?

By Makasi Motema

The following slightly edited talk was given at a class on “Why We Need a Revolution” in New York City on Feb. 29.

How do we deal with the mass injustice perpetrated by the capitalist ruling class? We can observe the current election and see clearly there is no electoral road to socialism. There is no electoral road to justice. The ruling class owns our so-called democratic process.

The politicians and officials in the Democratic and Republican parties are merely the employees of wealthy bankers, real estate executives and health insurance CEOs. They exist to do their bidding, and nothing more. Anyone attempting to use the capitalist democracy to increase the power of the working class, at the expense of the capitalist ruling class, will find their way blocked.

What then is the solution? If the interests of the working class are irreconcilably opposed to the interests of the ruling class; if the ruling class holds total control over the democratic process; how do we proceed? The solution is to abandon the specter of capitalist political power and embrace working-class power.

The strength of the working class is in



A factory committee meets during the 1917 Russian Revolution.

our numbers and our labor. We greatly outnumber the capitalist ruling class. Even their security forces, the military and police—which make up the capitalist state—would be woefully outmatched by the forces that a united working class could bring to bear. And that is the key: the unity of the working class.

Separately, we are weak and powerless. United, we are unstoppable. A united working class could also withhold its labor from the capitalist ruling class. It is workers who power our economy. Factories, ports, shipping, supermarkets, fuel—all the vital arteries of our society are controlled by workers.

Should we be organized toward a single goal, if we were ever to withhold our labor,

we would bring society to a grinding halt. This is how working-class economic power can create revolutionary political change.

The goal then must be to unite the working class. In order to pull off such monumental feats, the working class must be given a deep, highly structured organization.

In order to combat the false democracy of the capitalist class, the working class must have a true workers' democracy.

Learning from history

If we look back at history, every successful socialist revolution has followed this path. Though each revolution had different characteristics—driven by the material differences in their respective countries—all successful revolutionaries understood the importance of organizing the masses into a durable and democratic structure that could resist the ruling class.

In the Russian Revolution, it was the Workers Councils which drove the radicalization of Russian society. In Petrograd and other industrial cities, factory workers

were brought together in democratically run councils. They debated and voted on measures which would improve their lives as workers. Being brought together in struggle against the bosses, they radicalized and grew bolder in their demands.

In February 1917, the workers of one Petrograd factory asked their bosses for an eight-hour workday. By October 1917, those same workers were demanding their bosses provide them with arms. It was through the process of democratic organization that workers began to learn their power. There are no shortcuts.

This pattern has held throughout the world. In China and Vietnam, village councils formed the backbone of the revolution, providing resources and security for China's Red Army and Vietnam's People's Liberation Army. In Cuba, the backing of rural peasants gave cover to the guerrillas of the 26th of July Movement. Even today, in Bolivia and Venezuela, it is the neighborhood people's councils that form the front line of the resistance against right-wing coup forces.

There are no shortcuts. The working class must be organized if we are ever to have a chance of defeating the capitalist ruling class. This must be done because it is our only hope of putting a stop to the injustices of class society. □

Black labor: From chattel slavery to wage slavery

The Black Freedom struggle **Part 4**

By Sam Marcy

The following is excerpted from chapter 5 of Marcy's “High Tech, Low Pay: A Marxist analysis of the changing character of the working class,” first published in 1986. Note that a few selected words have been updated to reflect current usage. Marcy is the late chairperson of Workers World Party. “High Tech, Low Pay” is available as a free download at workers.org/marcy.

It is utterly impossible to understand the contemporary role of Black workers in this country and particularly their situation in the trade union movement without considering them in a broader political framework. A study of Black labor, especially over the last 25 years, that omitted the general political struggle, the freedom struggle of the Black people as a whole, would make for a very constricted and even distorted view of both the great achievements of Black workers in the trade union movement and the equally great, if not greater, drawbacks of their situation.

The Black Freedom struggle

Racism has permeated every layer of capitalist society; the trade union movement from its earliest times up to the present has been permeated with chauvinism and vicious discriminatory practices. The trade unions are the most formidable working-class organizations in the country. Aside from temporary retreats and taking into account the long duration of the political reaction, they are bound to become organs of the great struggles for emancipation from both racist oppression and capitalist class exploitation.

But all of this has to be considered in the broader arena of the overall political struggle of Black people, in which the trade unions have certainly been a significant part, but only a part. In reality, what happens there is a reflection of what is going on in the Black struggle as a whole.

The great battles of the 1960s and 1970s in particular must be considered in evaluating and analyzing how this reflected itself in the unions.

Just to take one example out of many: In April 1969, some 500 Black workers shut down production at the Ford plant in Mahwah, N.J., for several days. The workers walked out because a foreman called one of the workers a “Black bastard.” Although the official United Auto Workers leadership urged the workers to return to their jobs, they nevertheless stayed out until the foreman was ousted from the plant. This was the famous so-called wildcat strike at Mahwah organized by the United Black Brothers, and it represented a significant victory for all the workers.

If this significant victory for the UAW at that period is seen only in the trade union framework, it could present an oddity. But when seen in the larger framework of the overall Black political struggle, one gets a far truer measure of its significance for the local struggle as well as nationally.

There were other significant developments in the UAW that came on the heels of the great 1967 rebellion in Detroit and ushered in a series of electoral victories for the Black workers in the UAW. “Suddenly the UAW leadership stopped the practice of mobilizing opposition to Black candidates in local elections. Within a few months after the formation of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, Black workers were elected as presidents of Local 900 (Ford's Wayne plant), Local 47 (Chrysler Detroit Forge), Local 961 (Chrysler's Eldron Gear), Local 7 (Chrysler), Local 51 (Plymouth), and even Local 1248 (Chrysler Mopar), where only 20 percent of the plant's 989 workers were Black. A Black was elected for the first time as vice president of Briggs Local 21. ...”¹⁶

Before the Mahwah struggle took place, there were a considerable number of political rebellions and insurrections of

Black people. There was the Harlem rebellion, followed by Watts, Newark, and Cleveland, to name only a few, and of course the largest of the mass insurrections took place in Detroit. Following the assassination of Martin Luther King in 1968 there were a total of more than 500 rebellions throughout the whole country.

How then can the struggles of Black workers for equality be seen as strictly trade union struggles? Few if any of the very significant gains made by Black workers could have been attained without the so-called outside struggle, that is, the general political struggle put up by Black people. That was the real catalyst, the basic generator for the trade union gains, many of which were not only vital but indispensable, considering the long and difficult task to attain equality which still goes on.

What is said about the Black struggle applies equally and to some extent even more to the Latinx struggle, the women's struggle and the [LGBTQ2+] struggle. Any gains made in the unions must be related to the broader struggles which generated them. It would of course be fruitful to speculate on how different it could have been had the struggles been initiated by the trade union movement rather than being forced upon it. But this is the music of the future, not of the past.

There are about 110 million workers in the U.S. today. In the mid-1980s, only about 17.3 million belonged to unions, as we've discussed earlier. However, there can be no doubt that the union movement will become the fundamental lever for working-class struggle. The anti-labor



PHOTOS: FIGHT FOR 15 CHICAGO

Sept. 18, 2018. Black women join protest over sexual harassment at McDonald's, taping demands to corporate headquarters.

offensive which has been sweeping the country for several years is bound to produce one of the truly great upsurges of the working class, and this time the union movement will not be in the rearguard but in the vanguard of the struggle as regards Black, Latinx, Asian, and Native people, women and [LGBTQ2+ people].

The tardiness of the working-class response to the offensive of the ruling class in the face of such profound political and social reaction can be explained in part by the lack of a mass political party of the working class. The response from the working class, both organized and unorganized, is likely to come as the result of spontaneous outbreaks which will take the form of trade unionism but not necessarily in the way the trade union officialdom presides over the union movement. What more concrete form it will take we have to leave for events themselves to reveal.

Suffice it to say that the very intensity of the political reaction, generated by the Reagan administration and prepared earlier by the Carter administration and its predecessors, has created the conditions for a tumultuous social upheaval, not a controlled one that could be easily manipulated by contemporary bourgeois politicians and the trade union bureaucracy.

Continued on page 6

State makes last-ditch effort to deny Mumia justice

By **Betsey Piette**
Philadelphia

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court has a long and openly biased history when it comes to justice for political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, having denied all his appeals over the 37-year ordeal to win his freedom. True to form, on Feb. 24, four justices on the state’s highest court granted an extremely rare King’s Bench Petition backed by the Fraternal Order of Police to move jurisdiction over Abu-Jamal’s current appeal away from Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner’s office.

This ruling, coming just one week before Krasner was due to respond to a request from Abu-Jamal’s attorneys for new hearings before the state’s Superior Court, brings a temporary halt to Mumia’s appeal.

Last November the FOP filed a King’s Bench petition in the name of Maureen Faulkner, who was the spouse of the police officer Abu-Jamal is accused of killing, after a lower court denied her previous request to be a “party of interest” to the case.

The petition, alleging Krasner is biased in favor of Abu-Jamal, asks the court to direct state Attorney General Josh Shapiro, not the Philadelphia DA’s office, to handle upcoming appeals.

King’s Bench used for ‘extraordinary relief’

A throwback to British colonial rule, King’s Bench gives the highest courts extraordinary authority to override the ordinary legal process. It lets the Pennsylvania Supreme Court appoint a “special master” — most likely a prosecutor — to investigate whether Krasner’s office has a conflict of interest in handling Abu-Jamal’s appeals.

This granting of “extraordinary relief” reeks of a cover-up and is all about thwarting justice.

Last September Abu-Jamal’s attorneys petitioned to send the case back to the Philadelphia Courts of Common Pleas after new evidence in his case had been discovered in December 2018 in hidden file boxes. The subsequent FOP-backed filings came after Krasner accepted Mumia’s request. Krasner was expected to formally approve the petition on March 2.

The Faulkner/FOP King’s Bench petition criticizes Krasner for not being aggressive enough in opposing a ruling by Common Pleas Court Justice Leon Tucker granting Abu-Jamal’s right to new appeals. The police group also claims Krasner was “biased” because he turned over a former prosecutor’s evidence that they felt should have remained buried.

‘Where’s my money?’

Evidence uncovered in the hidden files supports long-held charges by Abu-Jamal’s legal defense of prosecutorial, judicial and police misconduct in this



Bird of Freedom for Mumia in Philadelphia, Feb. 28.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

case—including witness coercion, racism in jury selection and withholding evidence favorable to the defense.

One key piece is a letter to Joe McGill, the prosecutor in Abu-Jamal’s initial hearings, from Robert Chobert, the state’s key witness, asking, “Where is my money?”

Chobert, a cab driver working with a revoked license, claimed to have seen Abu-Jamal shoot police officer Daniel Faulkner. However, photos belonging to the Philadelphia Bulletin proved that Chobert’s cab was not even at the scene. The King’s Bench Petition actually declares that DA Krasner should have colluded with prosecutor McGill to bury this evidence.

The real conflict of interest

While King’s Bench was not intended for use by an individual or group simply displeased with a government action, it appears that the Pennsylvania Supreme Court continues to make exceptions when it comes to the police. Many justices on this court, including two on the panel that ruled in favor of the petition, receive FOP funding.

This court’s actions delay Abu-Jamal’s pending appeal, which just happens to involve charges of misconduct by a former member of the same court, retired Justice Ronald Castille. His well-established alliance with the FOP and bias against Abu-Jamal is central to this case.

In 2016, a U.S. Supreme Court ruling declared it improper for a prosecutor who had sought the death penalty to later rule, as a judge, against the defendant’s appeal. That decision involved Castille, who was Philadelphia DA during the murder trial of Terrence Williams. Later, as a Pennsylvania Supreme Court justice, Castille rejected Williams’ appeal.

As Philadelphia DA during Abu-Jamal’s initial hearings for a new trial, Castille sought to expedite the death penalty in the case. While campaigning for the higher

court bench, Castille ran as a death penalty advocate with broad support from the FOP. Once on the higher court, Castille refused to recuse himself from all four of Abu-Jamal’s appeals.

Judge Tucker’s granting of Abu-Jamal’s appeals was based, in part, on the Williams ruling. Summarizing his decision, Tucker wrote: “If a judge served as a prosecutor and then the judge, there is a finding of automatic bias and due process violation.”

Whither Krasner?

When Larry Krasner, a progressive defense attorney, ran for DA in 2017, many people of color communities and progressive organizations in Philadelphia had his back. He ran for office on his reputation as a lawyer who would take on the cops and the establishment.

However, in assuming the functions of Philadelphia district attorney, Krasner became part of the bourgeois state apparatus that functions

to maintain systemic racism, classism and repression. Upholding Abu-Jamal’s conviction has been central to the legacy of this office. If Krasner has demonstrated any clear bias in these proceedings, it’s been for the benefit of Castille and the FOP.

Krasner shocked and angered many supporters after the election when he appointed Castille to his transition team. At a Common Pleas Court proceeding in April 2018, in which Krasner’s office argued against Abu-Jamal’s appeal, this reporter witnessed members of the FOP and the Faulkner family thanking Krasner’s community representative for the DA’s handling of the case.

At several hearings prior to Judge Tucker’s ruling in December 2018, the FOP, retired prosecutors and members of the Faulkner family packed the courtroom in obvious efforts to intimidate the judge. At a final hearing, as it became more evident that the judge might actually consider Abu-Jamal’s attorney’s arguments, Maureen Faulkner threw a tantrum and denounced the court.

Now the FOP and Faulkner want to replace DA Krasner with Attorney General Shapiro, who has established a reputation of bias against prisoners seeking justice. When Krasner took office in January 2018, he fired several old guard prosecutors, including some who had been part of the prior DA’s prosecution of Abu-Jamal. Many were subsequently hired by Shapiro.

In a 1997 decision, Commonwealth v. Mulholland, the higher court ruled against a King’s Bench petition that sought to replace a prosecutor with one thought to be more favorable. The court called this request “prosecutor shopping.”

The “Hail Mary” efforts by the FOP in this petition reflect their futile efforts to prevent the truth in Abu-Jamal’s case from ever seeing the light of day. Many politicians whose careers were built on their participation in this case stand to lose. □

Black labor: From chattel slavery to wage slavery

Continued from page 5

The very tardiness in preparing a party of the working class, which in Europe and other areas has taken generations to build up, makes inevitable that the pent-up rage at the oppression and exploitation endured by all strata of the working class will break out in another form. It would seem to emanate most easily from the workplace and from the vast pool of unemployed.

The special oppression of women, Black, Latinx, Asian, Arab, Native and [LGBTQ2+] workers will make them a magnet for one another.

A former science adviser to Reagan in late 1985 told a Cable News Network (CNN) interviewer that “unemployment in Western Europe constitutes the greatest danger to Western civilization.” Of course, it’s true! But not only in Europe.

The capitalist “recovery” here in the U.S. has been taking place amidst some 15 million unemployed, if comprehensive calculations are made. Social peace cannot be maintained on such an explosive material base.

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Demonstrators call for freedom for Mumia, slam state’s efforts to delay justice

Flanked by a large white “Bird of Freedom” wearing a “Free Mumia” sign, dozens of activists from Philadelphia and New York gathered outside the office of District Attorney Larry Krasner on Feb. 28. The demonstration was called in anticipation of Krasner’s finally filing a response on March 2 to the Post Conviction Relief Act petitions filed by Mumia Abu-Jamal’s attorneys last September.



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Pam Africa speaks at Philadelphia rally Feb. 28.

However, just days earlier on Feb. 24, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court accepted a King’s Bench petition from Fraternal Order of Police proxy Maureen Faulkner charging Krasner with being biased toward Abu-Jamal. The FOP petition sought to replace Krasner with conservative Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro and bury new evidence uncovered in December 2018. The demonstration outside Krasner’s office was followed by a spirited march through Center City, ending outside Shapiro’s office where activists blocked a busy intersection before dispersing.

Pam Africa, Minister of Confrontation for the MOVE Organization and leader of International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, opened the rally: “The struggle to free Mumia is a fire they can’t put out. They want to bury the evidence that

Mumia is innocent. The system has used every ploy they can come up with to try to kill Mumia.”

Johanna Fernandez, with the Campaign to Bring Mumia Home, stated, “A King’s Bench petition essentially asks the courts to intervene in a situation of ‘great public interest.’ It is not intended to carry out a vendetta when an individual in the case doesn’t like what the state is doing. ... In all his briefs DA Krasner has vigorously opposed Mumia. The only thing he did, and that’s because he was told to by Judge Tucker, was to release hidden evidence. Now they want to bury that, too.”

Keith Cook, Abu-Jamal’s older brother, concluded the initial rally, calling for justice for his family: “We got railroaded because they wouldn’t let us speak in the court 37 years ago. Now we are so close to freedom, and we won’t let them silence us this time.”

— Philadelphia Workers
World bureau

Boston forum honors Malcolm X

By Boston Workers World bureau

Feb. 22 -- Fifty-five years after his assassination on Feb. 21, 1965, Malcolm X continues to be an inspiration today for activists, young and old. This was expressed at a Black History Month forum held here tonight where people gathered to discuss, report on and learn about his life.

Sponsored by the Boston branch of Workers World Party, the meeting entitled “Malcolm X: What does his legacy mean for today’s global struggle” featured Monica Moorehead, a managing editor of Workers World newspaper and editor of the book, “Marxism, Reparations and the Black Freedom Struggle.”

After showing a video clip of Malcolm’s speech “By Any Means Necessary,” Moorehead told the audience, “If Malcolm X only championed the rights of Black people inside the U.S. with his nationalist positions, that would be enough right there to respect and applaud him as a working-class hero. But Malcolm was much more. He was a Pan Africanist, revolutionary nationalist, developing an anti-imperialist, anticapitalist perspective. He wanted to take the plight of African peoples globally with a declaration of demands from OAAU



Leighsandra, Queen-Cheyenne and Monica Moorehead, Feb. 22. WW PHOTO: STEVAN KIRSCHBAUM

[Organization of Afro-American Unity] to the United Nations, when it provided more a forum for oppressed peoples then than it does now, due to the influence of national liberation struggles. And that perspective lives on today with the struggle of migrants not just from Latin and South America but from Africa, the Caribbean, Asia and the Middle East, who have been driven from their homeland because of the superexploitation of their labor and resources by the profit-hungry

multinationals and banks.”

Tonight’s program was chaired by mYia X and Robert Traynham, longtime leaders of WWP Boston. They also introduced special guest speakers, Queen-Cheyenne and Leighsandra, co-presidents of the Marxist Student Association at Suffolk University.

Part of the students’ joint statement read, “Malcolm X/el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz has long been an inspiration to us; someone who we have looked to for

empowerment, wisdom and his understanding of unity every day. One of the many reasons we continue to fight against these larger institutions that don’t believe we belong. We view solidarity with all the oppressed people of the world as all of us continuing Malcolm’s dedication to that work in spirit. We understand the needs for not only building solidarity and community, but educating those around us about the exploitative and violent history of the United States: the imperial core/empire.

“Malcolm gives a great quote about academia and our institutions’ failure to address our realities. Our higher education systems are built on the backs of our ancestors and the ideals of white supremacy, continuing the oppressive cycle through ideas of elitism, ‘professionalism’ and the talented tenth. In the words of Malcolm X: ‘And just because you have colleges and universities, doesn't mean you have education.’”

A special tribute was paid to Traynham, who recently turned 83 years old. He has been a leader of United Steelworkers Local 8751, Boston School Bus Drivers Union, for over 40 years. His militant life history traces the Black Freedom Struggle from the 1960s through the present day. □

Pennsylvania prison officials refuse to distribute Workers World to prisoners

By Ted Kelly

This article is based on a March 2 national press release.

For the second time in less than three months, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections has blocked prisoners’ subscriptions to Workers World newspaper. In a letter received at Workers World’s central office in New York City, the DOC announced their refusal to distribute two recent issues of the paper on the grounds that “the publications referenced above imply that striking achieved the inmate’s goal or prison reform. As such, it encourages this type of activity within the prison system.”

The issues in question (WW volume 62 #6 and #7) contain articles that describe a recent hunger strike carried out by Demetrius Grant, an inmate at State Correctional Institution Albion. In the interview, “Anatomy of a hunger strike: A prisoner speaks,” Grant told WW, “I went on a hunger strike because of the unconstitutional, inhumane and repressive conditions.”

The suicide rate among Pennsylvania prisoners is three times the national average. In 2019, the rate of suicide was the

highest in 25 years. These conditions have been exacerbated by the repressive and heavy-handed tactics of the state’s DOC. Rather than address the incredible violence, toxic facilities and mental health crises in prisons, the administration has dedicated its efforts to blocking inmates’ access to reading materials.

Prisoners are well aware of how bad the situation is in the facilities that confine them -- prisoners at SCI Albion already know why Dee Jay Grant went on a hunger strike. The inmates there know that an abusive staff doctor who was named in the article has either resigned or was forced to quit.

This rejection of Workers World newspaper is retaliation against prisoners who want to advocate for themselves in the face of dangerous and torturous conditions. A security captain at SCI Albion told Grant two weeks ago that the staff intended to block the newspaper because “It’s giving prisoners too much of a voice.”

In 2017, the Pennsylvania DOC sent a similar letter to Workers World denying the distribution of the newspaper. In it, they said that the publication was blocked because it “contain[ed] articles that call for people to join the fight against white supremacy.”

The state DOC official who is responsible for that rejection, Diana Woodside, is the same one who has repeatedly blocked Workers World over the past several years.

This constitutes an attack on prisoners’ First Amendment rights, as well as the right of any news publication to cover what is being done to the tens of thousands of people currently being held in Pennsylvania state prisons. Workers World proudly aims to raise up the voice of prisoners, all oppressed people and all readers who are currently incarcerated to receive their subscription completely free of charge.

Dr. Suzanne Ross, a prominent activist and mental health professional, responded to the DOC’s most recent censorship of Workers World: “Prisoners value reading Workers World newspaper. They want information. They need information. The prisons are not providing them with this kind of material. And here’s an organization that is providing it for free. To try to stop that is a clear violation of First Amendment rights, and it is outrageous to block prisoners’ right to education.”

Workers World calls on the DOC to cease rejecting this vital source of news



Demetrius "Dee Jay" Grant

and information for prisoners once and for all. These attacks on prisoners’ rights exacerbate the criminally dangerous conditions the DOC has inflicted on inmates across the state. Time and again the DOC has resorted to more brutal violence and deeper repression, rather than ameliorate the conditions that lead prisoners to strike and voice concerns in the first place. □

Call the PA Dept. of Corrections today and tell them to stop blocking prisoners’ access to a newspaper that tells the truth about mass incarceration!

- Diana Woodside

Policy Director

717-728-4119
- John Wetzel

DOC Secretary

717-728-4109

A revolutionary view of the Sanders campaign

Part 2

By Scott Williams

The following article was written before the Nevada caucus and South Carolina primary, which were won by Bernie Sanders and Joe Biden, respectively. As of March 2, Sanders remains the front-runner for the Democratic Party presidential nomination. For the entire article, and more coverage next week, see workers.org.

Elections: A barometer or an organizing tool?

As revolutionaries, we know that socialist transformation is necessary for humanity and to sustain life on Earth, and we know this transformation cannot come about by using the “master’s tools” described in the U.S. Constitution. Rather, we view capitalist elections as a limited survey of the attitudes of the multinational working class and the other classes in U.S. society. Every four years, about 55 percent of the voting-age population—with a greater proportion of voters from the less oppressed and older sectors of the working class—choose a president from either of the two major parties, both of which are owned and operated by the capitalists.

Sanders’ campaign has attempted to use the Democratic Party to raise issues in the interests of the working class. Many Democratic Socialists of America members view the Sanders’ campaign, and electoral politics more generally, as the primary channel to engage and radicalize the working class. This is unlike the period from the 1930s to the 1970s when the left looked toward the labor movement or other social movements as the centers of politicization and class identity development.

The argument of DSA and other left groups that have worked alongside the Sanders’ campaign is that the campaign is a shortcut to building mass consciousness. Many young activists have hit the streets in the name of the Sanders’ campaign to promote classwide solidarity against the billionaire ruling class and to try to win supporters to their socialist organization.

Ruling-class ideology insists that the primary arena of politics is bourgeois elections, particularly national elections for president. Thus, when the left plans a political strategy, the question of whether to run in elections is a question of what is the most effective type of mass organizing that can build revolutionary socialist consciousness.

The Sanders’ campaign has prioritized the central tenet of the Occupy movement from the last decade: the struggle of the 99% versus the 1%. Sanders has put forth stronger positions on racial justice, migrant rights and many other policies that reflect the hard work of organizers in people’s movements.

Sanders’ 2016 primary campaign took on the right-wing establishment Democratic Party and had a major impact in winning thousands of new people to socialist organizations. The DSA and others have joined this year’s campaign with the goal of recruiting new members and pushing the campaign to the left, riding the wave and seeing where they will end up.

What happens when or if the DNC steals the nomination from Sanders? Will organizations to the left of the Democratic Party still insist on voting “Blue no matter who”? Will there be a political fracture in which the Sanders’ movement, even despite the refusal of Sanders himself, decides to make a “dirty break” from the Democratic Party and form a new socialist electoral third party?

What if Sanders were to get the nomination and then win the election against Trump? Who will defend him from the wrath of the capitalists and a stock market that could be in free fall? Will a mass movement emerge and move in a more radical direction, emboldened by the results?

Will the mirage of capitalist democracy be revealed as a fraud? Will that demoralize the masses or radicalize them?

While the fate of the Sanders’ movement is yet to unfold, the most pressing question for revolutionary socialists may be: What is the most effective way to agitate, educate and organize this Sanders’

movement into an anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, revolutionary movement?

Which road to socialism?

Workers World Party believes that the goal of revolutionary parties when entering capitalist electoral politics should be to advance a revolutionary program in order to shatter illusions of capitalist democracy and win broad working-class support. The Democratic Party in the past has been the graveyard of social movements. Still, bourgeois political campaigns can reflect and show the significance of people’s movements.

The question of critical support for or independence from the Sanders’ movement is one we plan to answer through action. We will attend Sanders’ campaign rallies in order to meet this movement and push for revolutionary socialism. We will be in the streets with this movement, raising demands that speak to young people looking for revolutionary change. We look at this development with revolutionary optimism and we will study it closely.

WWP is still considering how to intervene in the 2020 presidential campaign. We will definitely run a major ideological campaign, entitled “Which road to socialism?” With this effort, we will put forth our revolutionary socialist perspective in a wide variety of ways. We will organize regular discussion groups in our branches across the country to engage these questions, all the while reaching out to the Sanders’ movement and those to its left to discuss the contradictions of social democracy and attempt to win people to fight for revolutionary socialism.

We will challenge the weaknesses of Sanders’ movement and push it in a revolutionary direction, not by being sectarian or opportunist, but by waging an honest ideological and mass struggle that speaks to the needs of the working class and the oppressed to go further.

Even moderate social reforms can take place only under the pressure of mass movements in the streets and in our workplaces. Real revolutionary socialism, including the seizure and liberation



of private property in the means of production, cannot occur by amending the U.S. Constitution. It must be the result of a worldwide mass movement that uses various tactics and strategies to defeat capitalist rule.

With this in mind, we will launch a series of mobilizations to fight the racist, anti-worker policies of the Trump administration. That the Democratic Party has enabled these policies—for example, the U.S. sanctions that have terrorized hundreds of millions of people on the planet—will expose the imperialist character of both parties.

Currently we are working with hundreds of organizations to launch an international campaign against U.S. sanctions, entitled Sanctions Kill. Campaigns like this allow us to connect with those directly impacted by U.S. sanctions passed by Democrats and Republicans. We will mobilize on May Day to unite the movements against capitalism, imperialism, racism and all the crimes of this system with a show of solidarity on this socialist-inspired, international day of struggle.

We will continue to mobilize against U.S. imperialism in all its manifestations, as part of our devotion to our worldwide class. We will continue to organize for the most oppressed of our class—for incarcerated workers, for political prisoners, for low-wage workers, for people with disabilities, for the homeless, for those oppressed because of gender or gender expression or national origin, and for migrants and refugees—all with the goal of building a broadly popular communist party steeled in combat and the day-to-day struggles of our class.

Finally, we will use this election to push for real democracy. While this election may be seen as a referendum on Trump’s social and economic policies, we will push to make this election a referendum on the crimes of capitalism. Imagine, a people’s referendum in which we vote with our feet, by withholding our labor and by fighting for a real future, a socialist society. □

A proud citizen of the troika

Why and how U.S. imperialism targeted Nicaragua

By Camilo Mejía

Part 1 of a talk Nicaraguan-born anti-war organizer and Iraq war resister Camilo Mejía gave Feb. 21 at the United National Antiwar Coalition meeting at The People’s Forum in New York. It has been slightly edited.



PHOTO: UNITED NATIONAL ANTI-WAR COALITION
Camilo Mejía speaking at UNAC conference Feb. 21.

On Nov. 1, 2018, former National Security Adviser John Bolton gave a speech in Miami in which he first mentioned the “troika of tyranny,” referring to Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela, stating that the three are causing a tremendous amount of human suffering.

So today I would like to speak to you as a Nicaraguan, a Sandinista and a proud citizen of the troika, because being a citizen of the troika means that my country is a main target of U.S. aggression—which means we must be doing something good.

And just like the axis of evil speech, back in 2002 when George W. Bush laid down what would become U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, this troika of tyranny speech also has basically laid down the foundations of U.S. aggression toward Latin America.

So I’d like to speak a little bit about the context that we’re in, but in simple terms, I believe that

the time of U.S. hegemony has come to an end. What we are also seeing is a lot more serious than that because the neoliberal economic world order has also proven itself to be ineffective and to be causing tremendous amounts of suffering, human suffering, as opposed to the troika.

These neoliberal policies have caused gross inequality, environmental destruction, great poverty, disease, infant and maternal mortality, the destruction of countries’ infrastructure and the destruction of countries’ sovereignty.

Alongside that, what we have is a world of emerging world powers that are taking an approach that is very different and that is basically grounding its new relationships in collaboration and the rebuilding of infrastructure, the development of new, cleaner technologies. What we’re seeing really is that there is an alternative being created in the face of all this neoliberal suffering.

Yet, what we see is that the United States, rather than change its ways and right its many wrongs, continues to make

the same mistakes and to try to impose its neoliberal policies all over the American continent and the world.

I don’t have to convince you that many of the disastrous impacts that we are seeing in Latin America and the rest of the world we are also seeing here. The neoliberal policies of privatization and austerity have caused the vast majority of people living in the United States great suffering, from gentrification to environmental injustice and destruction, to police and state brutality, to housing, health care and education crises. Neoliberalism, not the troika, is causing all this tremendous human and environmental suffering.

The situation abroad isn’t any less urgent. The massive uprisings that we’re seeing from Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, Honduras, to Paris, France, and throughout the rest of the world are in direct response to the impact of neoliberal policies and the impact that that’s having on the vast majority of humanity.

Continued on page 9

Solidarity with Kashmir!

By Calvin Deutschbein

Parts of this statement were presented at a March 1 rally in Durham, N.C.

Workers World Party is here today with you all to build a movement to counter racism, Islamophobia, inequality and other forms of oppression at home and to connect to liberation movements globally from Palestine to Kashmir. Workers World Party has always recognized the right of the people of Kashmir to self-determination. WWP considers Kashmir to be an oppressed nation under the rule of India—which is itself oppressed by world imperialism.

Kashmir’s population is about 14 million people. Two-thirds of its population are Muslims, making it India’s largest Muslim-majority state. Two-thirds of the valley is in India, about one-third in Pakistan, and a very small piece is in China. Kashmir has been a region of deep dispute between India and Pakistan since 1947, when both countries gained independence from British colonial domination. India and Pakistan have fought four wars over the status of Kashmir. Following the revocation of Kashmiri sovereignty in August 2019, Prime Minister Modi and the right-wing Indian Hindu nationalist party BJP have escalated attacks against the Kashmiri people and Muslims and other oppressed people throughout India.

In what bears striking similarity, to us in the U.S., to the actions of Trump and U.S. white nationalists, Modi uses religious differences as well as colonial divisions like race, gender, sexualities and class to incite violence. Both regimes use their borders—either India-Pakistan or Mexico-U.S.—as battlegrounds in the Islamophobic conception of “war and terror.” They continue the practice of British colonial rule: “Divide and conquer” tactics have left a legacy of national, and especially religious, animosity among all the peoples of the Indian subcontinent and within the settler-colonialist U.S.

At this time, Modi and his BJP party have a close alliance with U.S. imperialism. This makes it all the more clear that we need a movement at home in solidarity with liberation movements globally.

British colonialism, U.S. imperialism, Islamophobia and Hindu nationalists all sought to divide people by religious groups, castes, languages spoken and



nationalities, so that the workers under oppressive rule would not unite to threaten empire. And the cost to workers is immense: The British partition of India alone led to the displacement of between 14 million and 16 million people and the killing of more than 200,000 to 2 million people in mass riots; and it left a territorial dispute in Kashmir that has led to persistent atrocities to this day.

On Aug. 5 2019, BJP, under Modi's leadership, revoked Article 370, which had given Kashmiris the right to own land. Modi's action was meant to encourage millions of Hindus to move into the majority-Muslim territory of Kashmir. We cannot ignore the parallels between these actions and settler colonialism against majority Muslim territory in Palestine and against Indigenous peoples in what is now called the U.S.

This blatant bigotry, on display during the U.S. president's visit to India, unites Modi and Trump.

Kashmir is a heavily militarized zone, with some 600,000 Indian soldiers and paramilitary cops stationed in the territory. They act as an army of occupation against Kashmir. More than 10,000 men have been arrested, and more than 10,000 women have faced sexual violence from the occupying force. India has cut off all communication, including internet, phones and social media. Schools and markets are closed, and millions of people are left isolated and besieged. Police have opened fire on protest demonstrations in the capital, Srinagar, and other towns and cities. The population is under complete curfew, unable even to go outside. In the

face of these challenges, Kashmiris have not backed down and have been fighting back, as they have done for the last 72 years.

The situation in all of India is becoming increasingly violent every day. The state is targeting Muslims and other minorities and torturing them in concentration camps. Hindu nationalists vigilantes are attacking Muslims at their homes, businesses and places of worship. Modi and the BJP won't stop until India becomes an ethnonationalist state—or until a united

working-class movement stops them. And the movement against them is powerful and growing!

Just under two months ago, approximately 200 million workers participated

in the two-day All-India General Strike Jan. 8-9. One in six people in the world live in India, and at a bare minimum more than one in nine people in India took part in the strike—or about one striker for every 50 people in the entire world!

Although generally ignored by the Western capitalist news media, this was a world-shaking event and the largest general strike in world labor history.

Everywhere that national chauvinism, colonialism, imperialism or anything else attacks and attempts to divide the working class, workers come together powerfully to resist. We know that the best way to fight division, to fight hate, to fight Islamophobia is through solidarity. Through solidarity we can build a movement to counter racism, Islamophobia, inequality and other forms of oppression at home and to connect to liberation movements globally.

From Kashmir to Palestine, occupation is a crime! □

Durham rally hits Islamophobia in India, U.S.



PHOTO: DEMILITARIZE! DURHAM2PALESTINE

Durham, N.C.—Over a hundred protesters rallied here in solidarity with working-class and oppressed people under attack by right-wing Hindu nationalism and U.S. imperialism on March 1. They demonstrated here to say, “No to Fascism in India; No to Racism at Home” in response to recent anti-Muslim riots throughout Delhi and the invasion of Kashmir. The action, called by Muslims for Social Justice and Movement to End Racism and Islamophobia, was attended by a broad multinational, multigenerational crowd. Speakers from Muslims for Social

Justice, Movement to End Racism and Islamophobia, Black Workers For Justice, Demilitarize! Durham2Palestine, Jewish Voice for Peace, Workers World Party and Democratic Socialists of America drew connections between British colonialism, U.S. imperialism and Hindu nationalism, which all divide working-class and oppressed people based on religion, language, nationality and other colonial divisions.

— Report by Calvin Deutschbein

A proud citizen of the troika

Continued from page 8

Neoliberal policies translate to environmental destruction, morbid rates of mortality, hunger, disease and war, only to name a few.

So here we are this evening, and what more could we possibly ask for than to be able to participate in an anti-imperialist conference in the belly of the beast.

In this time of transition on a global scale, we are at the very epicenter of that transition—which means we have to be very aware of the circumstances and historical context in which we find ourselves, which present many dangers, but also many opportunities. In order to address those opportunities I'd like to, maybe just for a few minutes, go back to the troika, and I'll speak more specifically about Nicaragua.

The dirty war against Nicaragua

Between the years of 1926 and 1933, the United States used a big portion of

its military power, including war ships, artillery and thousands of well-armed U.S. Marines to capture and kill the last remaining rebel general in Nicaragua, Augusto Cesar Sandino. Gen. Sandino gave birth to the popular, anti-imperialist struggle for sovereignty and independence from the United States when he refused to accept terms of a truce that would have resulted in handing control of the country and its resources to the United States; he continued to fight a guerrilla war in which he and his men were at a gross disadvantage.

Yet thanks to their intimate knowledge of the terrain, popular support and the unbreakable resolve of his patriotic army, Gen. Sandino prevailed in 1933, and since then the Marines have never occupied Nicaraguan territory again.

However, the United States did not give up; they simply resorted to the use of lies and betrayal to obtain what Gen. Sandino had denied them for years in battle. They employed the services of a bourgeois

liberal general named Anastasio Somoza to lure Gen. Sandino into a trap, and Somoza assassinated Gen. Sandino exactly 86 years ago today! But the legacy of Gen. Sandino inspired the struggle for liberation, of a revolutionary movement that not only eventually defeated what became the Somoza dynasty, which ruled Nicaragua for more than 40 years, but which also became one of the three governments collectively known today as the troika of tyranny! Of course I am talking about the Sandinista National Liberation Front, or FSLN, the colors of which I'm wearing around my neck tonight.

When the Sandinista National Liberation Front defeated the U.S.-supported dictatorship of the Somoza family in 1979, the United States did not wait long to launch a counteroffensive to retain control and began training and financing the mercenary Nicaraguan army, known as the contras.

But since the U.S. Congress had banned the funding of mercenary armies,

the Reagan administration had to resort to creative ways to support the puppet army, including the sale of weapons to Iran during the Iran/Iraq war, a scandal that became known as the Iran-Contra Affair. That was the same war in which the U.S. armed the Iraqi army of Saddam Hussein with chemical weapons, which were later used against Kurds and the Iranian military and civilian population.

Another scheme to keep the war going saw the CIA facilitating the trafficking of crack cocaine into African-American neighborhoods in Los Angeles. This led not only to a health epidemic, but also a social one, as it created a violent drug-trafficking environment, causing alarming rates of addiction, mental health issues, unemployment, homelessness, to name a few. All the while the Reagan administration cut funding to social programs, including mental health services, housing, education and other basic needs.

To be continued in a future issue.

Weinstein verdict: Fame, fortune and rape

On Feb. 24, a New York state jury found former movie mogul Harvey Weinstein guilty of criminal sexual assault in the first degree and rape in the third degree. The first charge carries a sentence of 5 to 25 years and the latter 0 to 4 years, allowing a total maximum sentence of 29 years, minimum five. Sentencing is set for March 11.

The trial was a grueling ordeal for the brave women who charged Weinstein. Defense lawyers berated and intimidated accusers Jessica Mann and Miriam Haley, at times bringing them to tears and at one point inducing a panic attack.

This kind of revictimization, where the victim is put on trial, all too often serves to maintain silence. Not wanting to relive the terror, most rape survivors do not even report their experience. For every 1,000 rapes, 230 are reported, 46 lead to arrest and nine—less than 1 percent!—result in a trial. (Vox, Feb. 26)

Some survivors seek relief through civil lawsuits. But Non-Disclosure Agreements—essentially gag rules—are often attached to the settlements of those suits. These serve to silence survivors and keep them isolated and unaware of one another.

The legal maxim “innocent until proven guilty” complicates matters for survivors,

who most often do not have witnesses. But with 100-plus accusers, what more proof do you need in the case of Weinstein?

Yet presumption of innocence was the fallback position of his defense attorneys.

Weinstein’s lead attorney Donna Ratunno benefited in her career from the women’s liberation movement, which made it easier for women to enter male-dominated fields they had been excluded from. But Ratunno has allowed herself to be bought off, undermining the very movement that helped her advance.

But the women’s movement is alive and well. Protests in France, for example, inside and outside the César awards—the French equivalent of the Oscars—voiced outrage over the awards given to director Roman Polanski, who remains unrepentant of his 1977 statutory rape of a 13-year-old girl.

Consciousness determined by being rich

Weinstein’s high-priced lawyers managed to get him acquitted of the more serious charges of predatory sexual assault and first-degree rape. Nevertheless this serial rapist was stunned by the finding of partial guilt. He has been a captive of the capitalist mindset that money can buy anything.

That mindset did not develop in a vacuum. In fact, it is proof of the Marxist adage: “Being determines consciousness.”

Ever since patriarchy’s origins during the shift from communal to private property, men of wealth have had a free hand to exploit “their” workers—economically and sexually.

In the Western Hemisphere, this goes back to the “discovery” and colonial theft of the Americas and the subsequent rape of Indigenous women, girls, and LGBTQ2+ people. Slaveowning men raped their “property” as a matter of course. Working-class women are still sometimes forced to sleep with their bosses and/or their spouses’ bosses as an economic necessity.

As the Weinstein case exposed, this is even true of professionals seeking to launch a career in film—it’s commonly referred to as “the casting couch.” Now-famous women actors like Gwyneth Paltrow, Mira Sorvino, Salma Hayek, Angelina Jolie, Lupita Nyong’o and Annabella Sciorra—the latter testifying at the trial—were among boss Weinstein’s many victims.

When the movie millionaire’s crimes were featured in the New York Times and the New Yorker in 2017, movement groups #MeToo and #TimesUp invited sexual abuse survivors to come forward. Thousands upon thousands posted accounts of harrowing experiences. This exposed the pervasiveness and brutality

of patriarchal oppression.

“Me too” became a rallying cry in the struggle to end sexual harassment in the workplace. Sexual abuse is a labor issue, every bit as important as winning living wages, decent health care and safe working conditions. Workers have made it a strike issue, targeting McDonald’s, Google and other multibillion-dollar companies.

Me Too was actually founded in 2006 by Tarana Burke to empower African-American women and girls who survived abuse. After the verdict, Burke pointed out: “This case reminds us that sexual violence thrives on unchecked power and privilege. The implications reverberate far beyond Hollywood and into the daily lives of all of us in the rest of the world.

“Whether you are an office worker, a nanny, an assistant, a cook, a factory worker—we all have to deal with the spectre of sexual violence derailing our lives.

“And, though today a man has been found guilty, we have to wonder whether anyone will care about the rest of us tomorrow. This is why we say MeToo.” (Variety, Feb. 24)

And Workers World Party says, “We too.” We will not rest until sexual violence, abuse and exploitation are banished from the Earth. □

Anti-racist action in a racist epidemic

As the coronavirus (COVID-19) spreads around the world, in its wake comes another kind of epidemic—an outbreak of anti-Asian racism and racism against im/migrants in general.

Ultra-rightists in Europe—Italy, Greece, France—are blaming the spread of the virus on migrants and refugees from Africa and the Middle East. From England come stories of Asian children violently targeted on school playgrounds. In social media internationally there is a continuing flood of insulting and racist anti-Chinese memes.

The U.S. has an ignominious history of anti-Chinese and anti-Asian discrimination. In the 19th century racist slanders that Chinese people carried diseases—from syphilis to the bubonic plague—were constantly used to justify discrimination. Legislators, capitalist bosses, white-only unions and “liberal” white women suffragists used this accusation to pass the infamous 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act banning Chinese workers from coming to the U.S.

One hundred years after the act was passed, in 1982 two Chrysler management employees bludgeoned a Chinese restaurant worker, Vincent Chin, to death in Metro Detroit. Their hatred was fueled by reactionary, anti-Japanese “Buy America” propaganda.

Now COVID-19 is being used in the U.S. to revive old anti-Asian racist slurs. On public transportation in New York City and Los Angeles, people of Asian descent have been attacked as “diseased.” At a motel in Indiana, a registration clerk says: “Asians not allowed.” Reports come in that Uber and Lyft drivers are refusing to give rides to people with “Asian-sounding” last names.

In a since-deleted web post, the health services center of the University of California-Berkeley actually listed xenophobia toward Asians as a “normal reaction” to the spread of COVID-19.

But racism is not “normal.” In the U.S. this current epidemic of racism is the result of hundreds of years of calculated

effort by bosses and capitalist owners to poison any positive connection between workers of different national backgrounds and to kill any revolutionary action by the country’s international working class.

The structure of U.S. capitalism rests on the seizure of Indigenous land and massacre of Native peoples; on the kidnapping, enslavement and unpaid labor of African peoples; and on the exploitation in wage slavery of workers who have emigrated into the country from all around the world, especially from underdeveloped areas assaulted by imperialist plunder and war.

Capitalism can only continue if workers turn against each other, distorted by the bosses’ propaganda, instead of uniting to fight against exploitation by the system. The current surge of anti-Asian racism in the U.S. calls for workers of all backgrounds to step up in solidarity against the slurs and violence. This solidarity is an essential step toward fighting the anti-union, anti worker onslaught now being mounted by the current right-wing administration.

‘Fight entrenched racism in U.S.’

The epidemic of anti-Asian racism is also a stark reminder of the necessity to fight entrenched racism in the U.S. -- the ongoing violence against Indigenous people, those of African descent, Latinx im/migrants, Muslims and people perceived as Muslims. The struggle against racism has to be waged on a daily and widely organized basis—at work and in schools, in the face of police assaults, on the subway, in conversations in social spaces, in community and movement organizations. This battle has to be waged if we are to build a path forward to a more just world and toward socialism.

Concrete anti-racist solidarity that can be taken against the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic could include special support to nationally oppressed peoples, like Indigenous and African-American communities, where lack of access to

insurance and health care brings greater peril during an epidemic; renewed militant action to free prisoners through bail and to close im/migrant detention camps, where infection risks are high from overcrowding and lack of health care; support to get community health and home health care workers—the majority women of color—proper protective equipment; and close attention to price controls and food distribution plans in nationally oppressed communities if areas are quarantined.

China has been an example to the world of how to limit and hopefully defeat COVID-19 by mobilizing a centralized “peoples’ response” to the COVID-19 epidemic—a response only possible because People’s China has been working since 1949 to build a path to socialism.

Let us in the workers’ and progressive movement in the U.S. strengthen our antiracist actions in response to the epidemic, so we can build solidarity that is the road to a socialist future here. □

1,000 protest anti-Chinese racism in San Francisco



Over a thousand people marched from San Francisco Chinatown to Union Square on Feb. 29 to protest the wave of racism against Chinese people in U.S. media and political circles, since the outbreak of COVID-19 in Wuhan, China. Organized by a broad coalition of Chinese-American organizations and supported by a local chapter of Veterans for Peace, the march started out in

Portsmouth Square Park, then took over Grant Avenue on the way to a mass rally in Union Square. People sang patriotic songs and enjoyed a militant dance by martial artists. Judge Julie Tang, interviewed in Chinese on Sing Tao Radio, said “Let us fight back together.”

— Report by Dave Welsh,
photo by Elias Welsh

Spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) exposes profit system

By Deirdre Griswold

March 2—As this is written, the coronavirus (COVID-19) has become a pandemic reaching around the world, almost entirely in the Northern Hemisphere.

The U.S., with 99 reported cases and six deaths, ranks 11th on the list of countries with confirmed COVID-19 cases. The number of newly infected people reported in the U.S. is now 24 and climbing.

China, where the outbreak began, is still the hardest hit country with a total of over 80,000 cases and 2,912 fatalities. With four times the population of the U.S., China has taken drastic measures to slow the spread of the disease. As of March 2 the National Health Commission reported only six new cases outside Hubei, where the outbreak started.

Other countries already hit much harder than the U.S. include South Korea and Iran.

So far, the death rate of this new disease comes to about one in every 40 people infected.

Why the U.S. nonresponse to the epidemic?

Given the speed with which these statistics have been compiled by the relevant health authorities, is there any reason why the U.S. government should not be in high gear preparing to deal with the spread of COVIN-19 here?

But just the opposite is happening. Anyone with an ounce of common sense must have been appalled when President Donald Trump, at a rally in South Carolina on Feb. 28, called the coronavirus a “new hoax” by Democrats to defame him. This made it clear that if people in government agencies are feeling pressure



On March 1, medical staff wave to a former patient who recovered from coronavirus at the Leishenshan Hospital in Wuhan, China.

to release resources to fight the virus, they will have to challenge the White House.

Trump’s “know nothing” attitude toward the virus isn’t just stupidity. It’s an attempt to sidestep the consequences of not preparing for an outbreak in the U.S. that medical scientists have been predicting for months and that has already begun.

Stock market affected

Triggered by the news of COVIN-19 deaths here, U.S. stock markets took a dive on Feb. 28. The Dow Jones dropped by 938 points—its biggest one-day decline since 2009.

This certainly got the attention of Washington. But at this point, the Trump administration is much more focused on shoring up the stock market than on protecting the population from COVIN-19. Government intervention is expected to

translate into the Federal Reserve lowering interest rates to stimulate “growth.”

How will that help people without health insurance who get sick? Who will pay their bills? Or instead will they be stuck with huge debts?

A majority of U.S. workers are struggling with multiple financial stresses and don’t have enough cash to cover a \$500 emergency.

Some health authorities are telling workers to stay home if they feel sick, but nearly half get no paid sick leave. No provisions have been made to compensate sick workers who stay home in order to avoid spreading the disease. This includes health care workers, who are much more likely to be sickened by the virus.

Workers who have jobs where they can telecommute or perform home care won’t be penalized. But a huge percentage of workers can’t do their jobs at home,

including fast food and hotel workers or cabbies and truck drivers, all of whom are notoriously underpaid.

What China did about it

All this contrasts sharply with China’s reaction to the spread of COVID-19 there. Measures were quickly taken to compensate for the lack of income caused by the quarantine of whole geographical areas. Debt payments were suspended by government decree.

Would Washington ever take such a step? The bankers and other creditors would scream bloody murder.

The Chinese government also built 16 brand-new hospitals to treat patients. No one is turned away for lack of insurance or money to pay the bills.

While China has in recent decades allowed some capitalist ownership, its basic infrastructure is state-owned, and policy is set by the 90-million member Communist Party. Its national health care system covered 90 percent of the population in 2019.

After decades of foreign domination that drained its wealth and stifled growth, China’s recent rapid economic and social development is due entirely to its great revolution that culminated in 1949. Workers and peasants who had fought the landlords and capitalist bosses eventually were able to take the power and embark on the enormous task of lifting hundreds of millions out of extreme poverty while laying the basis for socialist development.

As young people in the U.S. yearn for an end to capitalist exploitation and war, they are looking ever more closely at how to achieve socialism here. The spread of COVID-19 will only deepen the need to make revolutionary social change. □

How Cuba’s antiviral medicine is helping China

By Rosa Miriam Elizalde

Rosa Miriam Elizalde is a Cuban journalist and editor of the site Cubadebate. Reprinted from La Jornada, translation by Resumen Latinoamericano, North America bureau.

Cuba’s antiviral Recombinant Interferon Alpha 2B (IFNrec) is among the medicines chosen by China to treat the coronavirus, the disease that has already caused at least 1,800 deaths in that country. To date, there is still no specific vaccine.

Interestingly, Interferon has been in Cuba for 39 years; the country began the development of this protein with antiviral properties at the same time that the biotechnology industry was being invented in 1981.

In that year, you could count on one hand the number of countries of the so-called first world that were working on this set of techniques that used living organisms—or part of them—with the aim of obtaining products or modifying them to improve plants or animals, or developing biological systems for specific purposes, in particular for the improvement of human health.

This definition of biotechnology is based on a wide range of knowledge that is supported by elite disciplines such as microbiology, cell biology, biochemistry, genetics, bioengineering and chemical engineering,

molecular biology and immunology. The combination of these new techniques led to the so-called aircraft carrier of science, genetic engineering, which in Cuba opened its first center in 1986.

How can the phenomenon of Cuban biotechnology, which emerged in a country with no previous industrial development and under the obsessive blockade of the United States, be explained? How did it manage to become an economic line in a few years, while improving the health of the population, generating products and the basis of treatments for thousands of patents? Why was this an obsession of Fidel Castro?

Scientist Agustin Lage, who was director of the Havana Immunoassay Center—one of the many that emerged after the production of interferon alpha and beta in Cuba—has explained the miracle. “First a strong investment in education and health, with the guarantee of universal and free access is needed. Taking a stand for biotechnology, even during the worst crisis Cuba has experienced in the 1990s, and the social ownership of institutions that guarantees integration by freeing them from the trap of competing against each other.

“The design of the institutions as research-production-marketing centers that addresses the complete cycle of scientific research and the fact that in biotechnology, as in other industries of the so-called knowledge economy,

productivity depends directly on the creativity of the workers, and this, in turn, on motivation. Finally understanding that real, competitive science is being done with first-rate results.”

All this explains why Cuba has the most extensive vaccination program in the world (recognized by the Pan American Health Organization and other international organizations), which includes universal coverage for newborns with vaccines against 13 diseases; epidemiological surveillance with the use of immunoassays for more than 20 diseases; hospitals regularly use medicines such as interferon, monoclonal antibodies, cytokines, and other biopharmaceuticals.

Heberprot-P, a prodigious cure for diabetic foot ulcers that is in common therapeutic use in the national health network, could save a good part of the 83,000 patients who each year require amputation in the United States, whose government refuses to allow the commercialization of the drug because it comes from the rebellious little island.

Other factors play a role in the high public health indicators in Cuba, but there is no doubt that research in immunology and the use of industrial biotechnology have contributed to the reduction of infant mortality to 5 per thousand births while life expectancy is now 79 years.

The combination of these factors has allowed several infectious diseases to



BioCubaFarma’s Center of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (CIGB).

disappear, including polio, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and measles, and others to be controlled or reduced in their occurrence (hepatitis B; meningoencephalitis).

By the way, the man who put Fidel Castro on the path of biotechnology in the early 1980s was a Black Democratic congressman from Texas, Mickey Leland. He brought with him to Havana an eminent oncologist from Houston who used interferon in the treatment of cancer.

Leland was deeply hurt by his country’s government hostility to Cuba and considered the blockade not only counterproductive but inconsistent with U.S. values. “The United States,” he said, “should not refuse to sell medicine; the only victims are the sick and the helpless.”

Leland, a fighter against poverty in Africa, died in an airplane accident in Ethiopia shortly after uttering these words. Another fact hidden in the news. □



Manifestación antiimperialista en Caracas, Venezuela, febrero 2019.

Un orgulloso ciudadano de la troika

Por Camilo Mejía

El organizador anti-guerra nicaragüense y soldado resistente a la guerra de Irak, Camilo Mejía, ofreció esta charla el 21 de febrero en la reunión de la Coalición Nacional Unida Anti-Guerra (UNAC) en el Foro del Pueblo en Nueva York. Primera parte. Ligeramente revisada.

El 1 de noviembre de 2018, John Bolton dio un discurso en Miami en el que hizo referencia por primera vez a la troika de la tiranía, para referirse a Cuba, Nicaragua y Venezuela, afirmando que los tres están causando una tremenda cantidad de sufrimiento humano.

Así que hoy, me gustaría hablarles como un nicaragüense, un sandinista, y como un orgulloso ciudadano de la troika, porque ser un ciudadano de la troika significa que mi país es un blanco principal de la agresión de EE.UU., lo que significa que debemos de estar haciendo algo bueno.

Y al igual que el discurso del “eje del mal”, en el año 2002, cuando George W. Bush estableció lo que sería la política exterior de EE.UU. en el Oriente Medio, este discurso de la troika de la tiranía también ha establecido básicamente las bases de la agresión de EE.UU. hacia América Latina.

Así que me gustaría hablar un poco del contexto en el que nos encontramos, pero en términos sencillos, creo que el tiempo de la hegemonía de los Estados Unidos ha llegado a su fin, y lo que también estamos viendo es realmente mucho más grave que eso, porque el orden económico neoliberal mundial también ha demostrado ser ineficaz, y que está causando enormes cantidades de sufrimiento, sufrimiento humano, a diferencia de la troika.

Y entonces, ¿qué han causado estas políticas neoliberales? Han causado una gran desigualdad, la destrucción del medio ambiente, una gran pobreza, enfermedades, mortalidad infantil y materna, destrucción de la infraestructura de los países, destrucción de la soberanía de los países.

Y a la par de eso lo que tenemos es un mundo de potencias mundiales emergentes que están adoptando un enfoque muy diferente, y que básicamente esta arraigando sus nuevas relaciones en la colaboración y la reconstrucción de la infraestructura, en el desarrollo de nuevas tecnologías más limpias. Por lo tanto lo que estamos viendo realmente, es que se está creando una alternativa frente a todo este sufrimiento neoliberal.

Y sin embargo, lo que vemos, es que los Estados Unidos en lugar de cambiar sus formas y corregir sus muchos errores, sigue cometiendo los mismos errores y tratando de imponer sus políticas neoliberales en todo el continente americano y el mundo.

No tengo que convencerles de que muchos de los impactos desastrosos que estamos viendo en América Latina y el resto del mundo también los estamos viendo aquí (en Estados Unidos).



FOTO: UNITED NATIONAL ANTI-WAR COALITION

Camilo Mejía habla a la conferencia de la UNAC el 21 de febrero en Nueva York.

Las políticas neoliberales de privatización y austeridad han causado a la gran mayoría de las personas que viven en los Estados Unidos grandes sufrimientos, desde el desplazamiento de las comunidades pobres de sus barrios, hasta la injusticia y la destrucción del medio ambiente, pasando por la brutalidad policial y estatal, y las crisis de la vivienda, de la atención sanitaria y de la educación. El neoliberalismo, no la troika, está causando todo este tremendo sufrimiento humano y ambiental.

Levantamientos masivos

La situación en el extranjero no es menos urgente. Los levantamientos masivos que estamos viendo desde Tegucigalpa, Honduras, y San Pedro Sula, hasta París, Francia y en todo el resto del mundo son una respuesta directa al impacto de las políticas neoliberales y el impacto que están teniendo en la gran mayoría de la humanidad. Las políticas neoliberales que se traducen en la destrucción del medio ambiente, en tasas mórbidas de mortalidad, hambre, enfermedades y guerras, sólo para nombrar algunas.

Así que aquí estamos esta noche, y qué más podríamos pedir que poder participar en una conferencia antiimperialista en las entrañas de la bestia.

En este momento de transición a escala mundial, estamos en el epicentro mismo de esa transición - lo que significa que tenemos que ser muy conscientes de las circunstancias y el contexto histórico en el que nos encontramos, y el cual presenta muchos peligros, pero también muchas oportunidades, y para abordar esas oportunidades me gustaría, tal vez sólo por unos minutos, volver a la troika, y hablaré más específicamente de Nicaragua.

Entre los años de 1926 y 1933 los Estados Unidos utilizaron gran parte de su poder militar, incluyendo barcos de guerra, artillería y miles de marines estadounidenses bien armados para capturar y matar al último de los generales rebeldes que quedaba en Nicaragua, Augusto César Sandino.

El general Sandino dio origen a la lucha popular y antiimperialista por la soberanía e independencia de los Estados

Unidos cuando se negó a aceptar los términos de una tregua que hubiera resultado en la entrega del control del país y sus recursos a los Estados Unidos; continuó librando una guerra de guerrillas en la que él y sus hombres se encontraban en una situación de gran desventaja, pero gracias a su íntimo conocimiento del terreno, al apoyo popular y a la inquebrantable determinación de su ejército patriótico, el General Sandino prevaleció en 1933, y desde entonces los marines no han vuelto a ocupar el territorio nicaragüense.

Sin embargo, el gobierno de los Estados Unidos no se rindió, simplemente recurrió a las mentiras y a la traición para obtener lo que el General Sandino les había negado durante años en la batalla. Emplearon los servicios de un general liberal burgués, llamado Anastasio Somoza, para atraer al General Sandino a una trampa, ¡y lo asesinó un día como hoy hace exactamente 86 años!

Sandinismo inspiró la lucha

Pero el legado del General Sandino inspiró la lucha por la liberación de un movimiento revolucionario, que no sólo derrotó lo que se convirtió en la dinastía Somoza, que gobernó Nicaragua durante más de 40 años, sino que también se convirtió en uno de los tres gobiernos conocidos colectivamente hoy como la troika de la tiranía! Por supuesto que hablo del Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, o FSLN, cuyos colores (rojo y negro) llevo puestos alrededor de mi cuello esta noche.

Así que, cuando el Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional derrotó la dictadura apoyada por los Estados Unidos de la familia Somoza en el 79, (el gobierno de) los Estados Unidos no esperó mucho para lanzar una contraofensiva para retener el control y comenzaron a entrenar y financiar al ejército mercenario nicaragüense conocido como la contra.

Pero como el congreso estadounidense había prohibido la financiación de los ejércitos mercenarios, la administración Reagan tuvo que recurrir a formas creativas para apoyar a su ejército títere, incluyendo la venta de armas a Irán durante la guerra entre el Irán e Irak, un escándalo

que se conoció como el Asunto Irán-Contra, y esa fue la misma guerra en la que los Estados Unidos armaron al ejército iraquí de Saddam Hussein con armas químicas, que más tarde fueron utilizadas contra los kurdos iraquíes, y contra la población militar y civil iraní.

Otro turbio esquema para mantener la guerra fue que la CIA facilitó el tráfico de crack en los barrios afroamericanos de Los Ángeles, lo que se convirtió no sólo en una epidemia de salud, sino también en una epidemia social, ya que creó un violento ambiente de tráfico de drogas, causando alarmantes tasas de adicción, problemas de salud mental, desempleo, falta de vivienda, por nombrar algunos, todo ello mientras la administración Reagan recortaba los fondos para programas sociales, incluyendo servicios de salud mental, vivienda, educación y otras necesidades básicas.

Cuando el FSLN perdió las elecciones generales en 1990, una serie de gobiernos neoliberales comenzaron inmediatamente a socavar todos los logros de la revolución, incluyendo la reforma agraria, la campaña de alfabetización, las victorias en la igualdad de género, la atención sanitaria, los programas de educación, los derechos de los trabajadores y mucho más. El país dejó de ser una nación soberana para convertirse en un mercado barato que las empresas transnacionales podían explotar salvajemente, sin tener en cuenta a la población del país ni su entorno natural.

16 años de oscuridad

Una situación similar a la epidemia de drogas de Los Ángeles se produjo en Nicaragua, ya que la mayoría de nuestros ciudadanos perdieron la red de seguridad social que había sido proporcionada por el gobierno sandinista: las tasas de mortalidad se dispararon una vez más, los campesinos perdieron sus tierras, el analfabetismo se disparó, los niños pobres se desnutrieron, el desempleo masivo llevó a mayores tasas de criminalidad y a barrios inseguros, y con la venta de la compañía eléctrica, el país entró en un período de 16 años de verdadera oscuridad.

A pesar de esa sombría realidad que le tocó vivir a Nicaragua durante 16 años, el gobierno de los Estados Unidos, o los medios corporativos estadounidenses, nunca informaron, y mucho menos se quejaron, sobre la mórbida existencia de la mayoría de los nicaragüenses durante ese período neoliberal; no hubieron organizaciones de derechos humanos que escribieran informes sobre los alarmantes índices de mortalidad, hambre, enfermedades o cualquier otra cosa causada por las políticas neoliberales de privatización y austeridad.

La Organización de Estados Americanos nunca expresó ningún interés en el país a pesar del flagrante fraude electoral, supervisado por los Estados Unidos para impedir que los sandinistas volvieran al poder. Era como si el país ya no existiera.

Continuará en un número futuro.