

Migrants lead struggle as 'Reopening' fuels resistance

By Sue Davis

May 18 — Ford Motors CEO Jim Farley said during a recent conference call, “The auto industry is [the U.S.] economic engine. Restarting the entire auto ecosystem is how we restart the economy.” (New York Times, May 18)

But Farley has it wrong. It's the 400,000 production workers at the Detroit Three automakers, Ford, General Motors and Fiat Chrysler (FCA), who resume working today around the world who will have the final say. After a series of wildcat strikes across the industry in mid-March protesting unsafe working conditions in close quarters and lack of protective equipment, the workers are going back with some — but not enough — protection. Their temperatures will be taken after reporting to work each day, and masks, gloves and eye protection are required.

According to the New York Times, FCA has set up transparent curtains to prevent transmission between people who work



Fruit warehouse workers — one with a sign reading, 'Fair pay for pandemic [hazard]' — are striking 13 locations in Washington state.

next to each other and screens for two workers simultaneously installing under-the-hood components. Ford has installed portable sinks and hand-sanitizer

dispensers throughout plants and no-touch faucets and soap dispensers in restrooms. General Motors will only start with a single shift.

The United Auto Workers has argued for mandatory testing of all workers daily or weekly. But the Detroit Three bosses only agreed to test workers with symptoms. Autoworker Caravan, an activist rank-and-file group in the UAW, is petitioning for N95 respirators for every worker.

On the first day back, autoworkers already saw problems: unwrapped masks laid out on tables by guards not wearing gloves, surfaces that have not been cleaned since March, workers with virus symptoms allowed to work, dirty fans, and more.

Non-unionized workers who make cars for foreign companies, mostly in the South, were ordered back to work on various dates in May. This writer has not found media reports about these workers, though their concerns are the same as UAW-represented autoworkers. Some activists protested outside the Tesla electric vehicle plant in Fremont, Calif., where CEO Elon Musk has vowed to defy the governor's

Continued on page 4

Economic ruin, pandemic pose question Capitalism or Socialism?



By Martha Grevatt

This is a slightly edited and expanded version of a talk given during the "What Road To Socialism?" webinar held by Workers World Party on May 16.

May 17—According to the Department of Labor, the official unemployment rate is now almost 15 percent. A staggering 37 million workers are counted as unemployed.

But so-called “real unemployment” is closer to 23 percent when you count “discouraged” workers who gave up looking for work, part-time workers who need a full time job, undocumented workers who cannot collect benefits, misnamed “independent contractors”—gig workers—who must jump through extra hoops to get benefits, and others.

Millions of these jobs are gone for good. Businesses, large and small, have gone

under. Even if their employer survives, many more laid-off workers will not be called back. The capitalist economy was already slowing down before COVID-19 cut into workers' purchasing power and into the tax base of local and state governments.

Some workers are being forced back to work, even as the pandemic's death toll climbs. So many are risking their lives for low wages. So many are carrying the added burdens of special oppression as

Black, Brown, Indigenous, women, gender-oppressed, LGBTQ2+, migrants and/or disabled workers — or as incarcerated workers.

As a result, class consciousness is growing as the masses question the legitimacy of capitalist wage-slavery and seek a way out.

The way out is socialism and the question — What Road to Socialism? — could


Continued on page 4

Editorials

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| Breonna Taylor: A tragic occurrence | 10 |
| Malcolm X, Ho Chi Minh ¡presente! | 10 |

- | | |
|-------------------------|----|
| #FreeBlackMamas | 2 |
| Save the USPS! | 3 |
| Working class democracy | 3 |
| Trump vs. birth control | 5 |
| Becoming a Marxist | 8 |
| MOVE says 'Free Mumia!' | 8 |
| Sandino lives! | 10 |

TEAR DOWN
THE WALLS
Inside the U.S. Prison System



6-7

- Andrea Circle Bear
- Bolivian prisons
- Freed by the people
- 'The right to struggle'
- Prison's political function

SOCIALIST DEMANDS

FOR THE
COVID-19 CRISIS

1. Free healthcare for all

2. Nationalize the healthcare system under community control. Build emergency hospitals

3. Full pay, benefits and guaranteed income for all

4. Food, housing, medical supplies, & utilities including internet for all

5. Suspend rent, evictions, mortgages, utility shutoffs & ALL debt

6. Prioritize resources for communities of color, migrants, LGBTQ2+ people, seniors, youth, people with disabilities

7. Empty prisons & detention centers. Shut down ICE. End racist attacks

8. Community control. No cops, military

9. \$2 trillion to workers, not the banks

10. End U.S. wars, sanctions, and environmental destruction

WORKERS WORLD PARTY

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- | | |
|-------------------|----|
| Palestine's Nakba | 3 |
| Sanctions Kill | 9 |
| Ecuador | 11 |

Philadelphia

#FreeBlackMamas demand prisoner release

By Joe Piette
Philadelphia

Protesters, led by currently and formerly incarcerated women, trans and non gender-binary people, held a rally on May 15 in a city park next to Riverside Correctional Facility to demand the release of people held in Philadelphia jails and an end to unjust cash bail. The action featured speeches by women recently released from RCF, as well as people still incarcerated who joined by phone. Everyone respected social distancing and mask requirements due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Organizers on both sides of the prison walls planned the action. It was broadcast via radio so incarcerated people could listen to the speakers. Huge signs with slogans reading, “Free Our People!” and “Free Black Mamas!” were held up for people at RCF to see. In turn, they made noise and banged on cell doors to join the protest and demand their release.

Most people held in RCF have not been convicted of any crime, but are held there because they cannot afford bail, or because a judge refused to allow bail. In Philadelphia, which is the poorest large city in the U.S., the vast majority of incarcerated people are detained because it is impossible for them to raise even a few hundred dollars for bail.

Latonya Meyers, organizer of the Philadelphia Community Bail Fund, said: “We are demanding that District Attorney Krasner, the First Judicial District Judges and Mayor Jim Kenney take immediate action to free all our people from the Philly jails. It is completely unacceptable that in the midst of a global pandemic we are putting people’s lives at risk unless they can afford to purchase their freedom. All our mamas and families behind bars need to come home now.”

Jae Garcia, an organizer of the action, who is currently incarcerated at RCF, spoke by phone: “We should not be sentenced to death by incarceration in a pandemic. None of us want to be the next statistic reported dead at RCF. We need the mayor, district attorney and judges to open their



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Sisters at the May 15 protest hold the child of one and the photograph of their mother, the child’s grandmother, now imprisoned in Philadelphia.

eyes and realize that all our lives are at stake here. There are thousands of people here that need to go home to their families and children. We should not be locked up with the key thrown out, especially when most of us are pretrial and innocent until proven guilty.”

Organizer Luz Acevedo stated: “I don’t think we should die in jail like animals die in cages. There’s nothing we can do in there; we are locked in. Our rights are taken totally away. When this epidemic hits RCF, a lot of us are going to be dead. And I don’t know what the government is planning to do. We need a voice!” Acevedo was recently bailed out by the Philadelphia Community Bail Fund.

After hearing from speakers both inside and outside the jail, participants marched to the prison’s chain-link fence where they held up signs and banners, anticipating that they would be seen by thousands of incarcerated people.

The demonstration was organized by the Philadelphia Community Bail Fund, the People’s Paper Co-Op, Decarcerate PA, the Dignity Act Now Collective, Youth Art and Self Empowerment Project, and many organizers currently incarcerated at Riverside Correctional Facility. □



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

Join us in the fight for socialism!

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. □

If you are interested in joining Workers World Party contact: 212.627.2994

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this week

♦ In the U.S.

‘Reopening’ fuels resistance, migrants lead	1
Capitalism or Socialism?	1
#FreeBlackMamas demand prisoner release	2
Working class democracy and centralism	3
Portland, Ore.: ‘U.S. mail not for sale’.	3
Trump vs. birth control	5
The struggle and personal growth	5
Janet Africa: Freed by the people	6
Sekou Odinga: ‘The right to struggle’	6
Andrea Circle Bear: Centuries of genocide.	7
Rashid Johhson: Prison’s political function.	7
Becoming a Marxist	8
MOVE says ‘Free Mumia Abu-Jamal’.	8

♦ Around the world

The Nakba: 72 years of ongoing catastrophe	3
Bolivian prisoners: ‘We want to live!’	6
Sanctions = Health terrorism	9
Nicaragua: Augusto Sandino ipresente!	10
Ecuador and COVID-19, Part 2	11

♦ Editorial

Breonna Taylor: A tragic occurrence.	10
Malcolm X, Ho Chi Minh ipresente!	10

♦ Noticias en Español

Pandemia y etapa final del capitalism.	12
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Working-class democracy and centralism

By Makasi Motema

We are taught in school that the United States is a democracy, but this claim is completely divorced from the reality of class struggle. The wealthy ruling class, which owns the greater proportion of our economy through the stock market and banking system, has complete ownership of our electoral process as well. They fund political campaigns, finance an army of Washington, D.C., lobbyists and hand out lucrative industry jobs to their most faithful political servants.

The politicians we elect are merely the servants of capital, who will never do anything to harm the interests of their masters. The members of the ruling class themselves are never on the ballot. This is not a democracy — it's a dictatorship of the rich.

True democracy would reflect the popular will of the masses, the bulk of them belonging to the working class. Socialist revolutions aim to take control of the means of production — the levers which control the economy — and in so doing, establish rule by the working class.

There's no better example of true working-class democracy than the constitutional referendum held by the Republic of Cuba in 2019.

In looking to update the constitution, the Cuban government solicited the opinions of most of the population — 11.2 million people as of 2018 — and allowed them to author amendments themselves. Nearly 9 million people attended over 100,000 meetings islandwide, making

783,174 proposals to the constitution. (Granma, Nov. 27, 2018)

Can you imagine such a referendum taking place in the U.S.?

But how to achieve a socialist revolution? How can the working class establish the kind of working-class democracy enjoyed by the Cuban people? V.I. Lenin wrote in his 1906 report on the Unity Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party that a revolutionary socialist organization should conduct itself in accordance with its principles. He argued that revolutionary socialists should practice “democratic centralism.”

Democratic centralism is how revolutionary socialist organizations engage in working-class democracy in a revolutionary context. Drawing on the collective strength and wisdom of the membership, democratic centralism seeks to arrive at an accurate analysis of the political struggle. Debate builds confidence among the members about the organization's ideas, political positions and revolutionary orientation. This confidence in the organization and among its members is vital for creating unity of action — centralism — when socialists need to act or are threatened by state repression.

The importance of Lenin

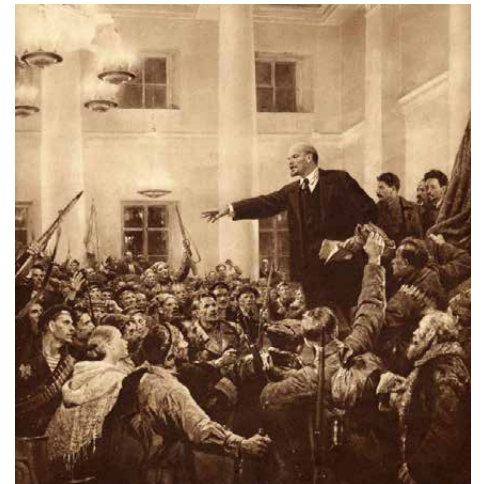
The broadest range of opinions must be sought in order for the views of the working class to be accurately represented. In his 1906 report, Lenin said: “We should seek the widest possible discussion of the decisions of the Congress. We must call upon every member of the Party to take a

conscious and critical stand on these resolutions. ... If we have really and seriously decided to introduce democratic centralism in our Party, and if we have resolved to draw the masses of the workers into intelligent discussion of Party questions, we must have these questions discussed in the press, at meetings, in circles and at group meetings.”

On the question of debate, Lenin continued: “[T]here must be the broadest and freest discussion and condemnation of all steps, decisions and tendencies that we regard as harmful. Only through such discussions, resolutions and protests can the real public opinion of our Party be formed. Only on this condition shall we be a real Party.”

Why is this battle of ideas necessary? Because dialectical materialism, the philosophical underpinning of Marxism, is a science, and scientific ideas must be rigorously tested. A revolutionary socialist organization must test its ideas through physical struggle — organizing the masses and protesting against the state — and through internal debate. In this way, socialist cadre sharpen their own political analysis, as well as that of their comrades.

The other aspect of this formulation is centralism. Once a free debate has been had, it is necessary to vote on a final decision. After a vote, it is of the utmost importance that the minority submit to the will of the majority. Continuing to agitate for a minority view or failing to take united action creates an instability which weakens the party and can be seized upon by the forces of repression.



Painting shows V. I. Lenin speaking to soldiers and civilians.

Revolutionary socialists operate under intense capitalist pressure. They must be able to react quickly to changing conditions, act forcefully when opportunity emerges and weather intense attacks from reactionaries. This requires strict adherence to the party line on any given issue, once it has been established. This is the meaning of centralism.

Above all, the question of internal organization for revolutionary socialists is a political question — it is not merely a matter of logistics and procedures. Rather, it is the fundamental proof that a revolutionary organization practices the ideas which it espouses. It is evidence that revolutionary socialists live by working-class democracy, just as they fight for it.

For Lenin's entire works, see marxists.org/archive/lenin.

Portland, Ore.

'U.S. mail not for sale'

Over 20 cars lined up to cheer postal workers during the afternoon shift change on May 8 at the Portland, Ore., United States Postal Service Processing and Distribution Center. Messages of solidarity were plastered over the cars and Elvis Presley's “Return to Sender” was playing.

A manager from the center joined the rally, stating, “Letter carriers get to hear daily community support for our postal service, but for people out here at the P&DC, this is a very important show of support.”

Alyssa Pariah, a local radio show host, was part of the caravan. “I'm inspired that postal workers are fighting back and that community is behind them! The People's Postal Service is dependable and secure,” she said.

Solidarity signs included “PPE, Testing and Hazard Pay for Essential Workers!” “Save Our Postal Service: NO Privatization!” and “Save the People's Postal Service, Fund the USPS!”

— Report and photo by Lyn Neeley



The Nakba: 72 years of ongoing catastrophe

By Ted Kelly

May 15 is the day commemorating Yom al-Nakba, the Day of Catastrophe, when white European settlers declared war on the people of Palestine in 1948. In the violence that immediately followed the settlers' so-called “independence” declaration, at least 700,000 Palestinians were forced out of their homes, and

hundreds of towns and villages were destroyed.

While Nakba Day acknowledges the start of this imperialist attack, Palestinians and their supporters around the world know this catastrophe never ended and continues to this day. The Palestinian diaspora now numbers in the millions, with millions more internally displaced and dispossessed within the

borders of the so-called state of Israel.

The white-supremacist occupation forces that now control Palestine receive billions of dollars in weaponry and military hardware every year from the U.S. The archconservative lackey of Ronald Reagan, Alexander Haig, once referred to Israel as “the largest American aircraft carrier that cannot be sunk,” and it is indeed the launch zone of many U.S. imperialist crimes across Western Asia. Research done by Palestinian novelist and Workers World Party comrade Susan Abulhawa reveals that Israel is also the most prolific per capita arms trafficker in the world.

Despite Israel's backing from the most notorious imperialist forces on the planet, Palestinians have engaged in decades of heroic resistance against their colonial oppressors. From the hijackings and high-profile kidnappings of the 1970s to the first and second Intifada and the Great March of Return protests in Gaza ongoing since 2018, Palestinians have fought back to restore their national sovereignty. They have launched an international Boycott,

Divestment and Sanctions campaign to empower workers to cut off cultural and commercial support for the Zionist entity. Their struggle has won the support of major revolutionary leaders from Fidel Castro to Nelson Mandela.

Workers World Party supports the right of self-defense and national determination of the Palestinian people, as well as the right of return of all Palestinians to their homeland.

As Palestinian poet and author Mahmoud Darwish said in a radio broadcast in 2001, “We are not looking back to dig up the evidence of a past crime, for the Nakba is an extended present that promises to continue in the future.

“We do not need anything to help us remember the human tragedy we have been living for the past 53 years: We continue to live in the here and now. We continue to resist its consequences, here and now, on the land of our homeland, the only homeland we have.” (tinyurl.com/yc8h467a/)

From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free! □



Solidarity with Palestine in Philadelphia, June 2018.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Migrants lead struggle as ‘reopening’ fuels resistance

Continued from page 1

stay-at-home order and force workers back to work without safety measures.

Workers protests continuing to grow

Payday Report has cataloged 206 strikes, walkouts, sick-outs, sit-ins and pickets demanding safe working conditions in every corner of the country since COVID-19 accelerated in the U.S. The newsletter believes that is a real undercount, estimating there are scores of small actions by both unrepresented workers and union members.

One example of the latter is the 25 workers at Hood River Distillers in Hood River, Ore. Members of Teamsters Local 670 set up a picket line on May 6 after management made a final contract offer with weakened health benefits and paltry wage increases. (nwlaborpress.org, May 13)

Meanwhile, some essential workers are having personal and financial problems. Delivery drivers are protesting they can’t find bathrooms since usual locations in fast-food restaurants and chains like Applebees, KFC and Subway are only open for takeout now. A group of truckers circled Constitution Avenue in Washington, D.C., on May 13 protesting low pay and unsafe conditions. When some independent drivers applied for loans as small businesses, they were told they did not qualify for funding.

The United Farm Workers is calling on all supporters to sign a petition supporting the HEROES bill, which includes financial assistance for undocumented agricultural workers and legally protects these essential workers from deportation during the pandemic. Sign the petition at tinyurl.com/ycxns8af/.

Protests increasing by im/migrant workers

Those who risk the most by standing up for their rights are immigrant workers. But that didn’t stop Mexican



Children — mostly of Latinx immigrant parents — hold signs supporting their parents and other workers seized during an Immigration and Customs Enforcement raid at a poultry processing plant in Mississippi in August 2019.

migrants who pick fruit in Washington state’s famous Yakima Valley from going on strike for safety measures and increased hazard pay the week of May 15 at seven major sites. Workers at six other sites joined over the weekend.

Evidence is emerging of increasing COVID outbreaks among migrant farmworkers. While they practice social distancing in the field, the problem is employer-provided hotels — four workers to a room, two to a bed. As of May 8, 169 of the 340 migrants under H-2A contracts from Mexico and Haiti who pick, plant, sort and pack tomatoes at the 32-acre hydroponic farm Green Empire Farms near Oneida, N.Y., tested positive. After they are quarantined for two weeks, they will go back to work.

But organizer Celso Mendoza, who migrated from Veracruz, Mexico, in 2002 won’t be able to. Years ago, Mendoza was instrumental in organizing Mexican contract workers earning \$6 an hour at a Forest, Miss., poultry plant. After the labor contractor which hired the workers tried to cut wages by 10 percent, Mendoza organized the workers in protest, and within a year they

joined the Food and Commercial Workers union (UFCW). Their contract provided better pay and working conditions — and no third-party labor contractor.

Poultry workers have been forced by a Trump administration order to go back to work despite the epidemic, which is highly contagious in close quarters. Tragically, Mendoza’s life was cut short at 59 by COVID-19. Celso Mendoza !Presente!

Immigrant workers are increasingly taking action to protect themselves during the pandemic. Maritere Gomez, an organizer with the worker center Arise Chicago, which helped organize Mexican contract workers who make personal protective equipment at LSL Healthcare near Chicago, says, “I think undocumented workers need to unite. ... If undocumented

people don’t stand up for themselves, nobody will, certainly not their boss or the government.”

Payday Report was a primary resource for this article except when other sources were cited.



Workers protest unsafe conditions due to COVID-19 as the Tesla auto plant reopens in Fremont, Calif., May 17.

Capitalism or Socialism?

Continued from page 1

not be more relevant.

This is not a new question. Millions upon millions of workers and oppressed people have pondered the matter since 1848 when Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote “The Communist Manifesto.” For 172 years, advanced members of our class have read and studied, and reread and restudied, the classic work of these two monumental thinkers — a must-read for anyone interested in real social change.

The Manifesto: ‘As correct today as ever’

In an 1872 introduction, Marx and Engels wrote, “However much that state of things may have altered during the last twenty-five years, the general principles laid down in the Manifesto are, on the whole, as correct today as ever.”

And in fact those general principles are still as correct as ever in 2020. As Marx and Engels wrote in 1848, “Society as a whole” remains “split up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other — Bourgeoisie and Proletariat” — known as the capitalist class and the working class.

The working class is different today. A big chunk of factory jobs were wiped out by technology, while the

service proletariat has grown. In the past few decades the number of workers in precarious jobs has risen. Mass incarceration has vastly expanded.

But the antagonism between the exploiters and the exploited remains irreconcilable.

Could this be any clearer than at this moment in history: the inherently antagonistic relationship between the two contending classes?

It is in the interests of the working masses to stay home and stay safe and alive. But it is in the interests of the capitalists to force workers back on the job to produce value, even if some of them die.

Capitalist exploitation spawns resistance

Capitalism cannot be fixed. During the Great Depression of the 1930s — the last time unemployment reached such catastrophic levels — the communists and socialists who led the working class in fierce class battles understood this.

Left forces grew exponentially in the early 1930s by organizing the unemployed. Unemployed Councils fought evictions by putting families back in their homes. They fought utility shutoffs by turning the gas back on. They sat in at government offices to demand relief. “Fight or starve” was the rallying cry. There were important strikes, including general strikes in San Francisco and Minneapolis and a third threatened in Toledo.

This gave the working class the organization and strength to take on the world’s biggest corporations, including General Motors, in the sit-down strike wave from 1935 to 1937. The sit-down occupations posed the question: Who should own the means of production, bosses or workers?

Unions made huge gains in the decades following, and membership in the new Congress of Industrial Organizations skyrocketed. But the capitalist system of exploitation was still the dominant mode of production.

‘What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.’

– The Communist Manifesto

The precarious conditions of today have sparked working-class resistance not seen since the post-World War II strike wave: over 200 job actions in a period of months. Every sector of the working class has become

engaged: fast-food, retail, health care, education, food processing, automotive, agriculture, construction and more. Most noteworthy at this moment is the state-wide strike of low-paid fruit processing workers, most of them migrant workers of color in Washington state.

Meanwhile, rent strikes are uniting workers whose incomes have fallen, leaving them unable to cover the increasingly exorbitant cost of housing.

Only the working class can solve the crisis

We must unite our class. We must organize the ones working and those unemployed, the documented and undocumented, with union representation and without, with steady jobs and in a precarious economic situation, here and around the globe—we are all part of the international working class.

Capitalism need not last for eternity. We have to bring this understanding to our class. To return to the Manifesto: “The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the labourers, due to competition, by the revolutionary combination, due to association. ... What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.”

Let’s turn the inevitable into reality and bring down the murderous capitalist system once and for all.

Grevatt is a retired auto worker and Trustee of UAW Local 869. She’s a managing editor of Workers World newspaper and author of a pamphlet, “In our hands is placed a power: The Flint Sit-down Strike.”



In Washington state, over 1,000 agricultural workers went on strike in the Yakima Valley, which has the highest rate of COVID-19 infections on the U.S. West Coast.

Case heard by Supreme Court

Trump v. birth control

By Sue Davis

Health care is the most pressing issue in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. So it's in keeping with the Trump administration's overall right-wing agenda to attempt to destroy a vital plank of the Affordable Care Act through Trump v. Pennsylvania, the legal case heard by the U.S. Supreme Court on May 6.

At stake is the issue of whether a business, a university or a religious non-profit should pay for birth control for its employees or students when the entity objects to contraception on "religious and moral grounds."

This is the third time this issue — which affects women and gender-nonconforming people of reproductive age (15-44) and their families — comes before SCOTUS.

Setting the stage for the court case is the fact that the Health Resources and Services Administration, an agency in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services controlled by the president, ruled during the Obama presidency that birth control was "preventive care." That meant contraception could be free — totally covered by the employer's insurance without copays or cost-sharing.

The first case that came to the Supreme Court was *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* in 2014. SCOTUS ruled then that private employers could claim religious objections to paying for such insurance, but the court stipulated that the Obama administration had to provide workers with a way to access such health coverage, which it did by having state medical groups or insurers cover the cost.

The second case, *Zubik v. Burwell*, heard in 2016, was a "religious-freedom

challenge" to the birth control mandate by a group of religious nonprofits. Similar to the Hobby Lobby accommodation, nonprofits were to notify the state groups or insurers of their objection, and the state or insurer would cover the cost. But the nonprofits claimed that due to the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act such a provision placed a "substantial burden" on them — for merely having to register their objection. Rather than issue a ruling, the court threw the case back to appeal courts, where it has lingered until now.

In the meantime, in keeping with Trump's vitriolic assault against reproductive freedom and LGBTQ2+ rights, and his hypocritical cheering for religious rights, Trump's HRSA reversed the ACA mandate on Oct. 6, 2017. That expanded the rights of private and non-profit employers and universities to claim "religious and moral principles" to deny insurance coverage for contraception.

The reversal offered no alternate means for affected workers or students to gain birth control coverage.

Civil rights lawyers were quick to condemn the fact that the expanded and sweeping definition of religious freedom could be used to deny civil rights protections for LGBTQ2+ people.

What's at stake

Both Pennsylvania and New Jersey brought the current suit against the HRSA, supported by amicus briefs from many states, medical, civil rights and reproductive health organizations. The case claims HRSA does not have the legal authority to give employers such a broad exemption. The Trump administration cited its power under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and insisted HRSA had the authority



A March 2016 demonstration in support of birth control coverage in the Affordable Care Act in front of the U.S. Supreme Court, Washington, D.C.

to create "comprehensive guidelines" for preventive care.

There has been a trend among legal conservatives to oppose new policy giving more power to the executive branch. Vox's Ian Millhiser points out that tendency seems to have continued despite Trump's election. He notes that all five conservatives on the court express "a desire to shrink Congress's power to delegate authority to executive agencies." Both Justices Clarence Thomas and Neil Gorsuch implied during the hearing that neither RFRA nor the ACA provided enough guidance to create religious exemptions. (May 6)

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg led the progressive opposition to the case when she proclaimed from her sickbed: "You have just tossed entirely to the wind what Congress thought was essential ... that women be provided these services, with no hassle, no cost to them. Instead you are shifting the employer's religious beliefs, the cost of that, on to these employees who do not share those religious beliefs." (nymag.com, May 11-24)

Who was Ginsburg speaking for? The millions of women and gender-nonconforming people — low-wage workers who are predominantly "essential" Black and Brown staff, youth, rural women, immigrants, women with disabilities and domestic violence survivors — who made up at least half of U.S. jobholders and contributed about 40 percent of the U.S.

gross domestic product in 2017.

Before the ACA, birth control made up about 30 percent of women's total out-of-pocket health care costs, according to the National Women's Law Center. In 2013 that mandate saved women more than \$1.4 billion for birth control pills, which is a lot of money, considering white women only make 81 cents for every dollar a white man makes — and women of color make much less.

"When cost is not a barrier to birth control, patients are better able to choose the method that meets their needs and have access to it consistently," said Kristyn Brandi of Physicians for Reproductive Health. (HuffPost, May 6) The Guttmacher Institute reported that the number of abortions in 2017 fell to the lowest rate recorded since abortion was legalized in 1973 — due to the birth control mandate.

One obvious solution to this issue of public health, which has been turned into a political football, is a single-payer system of health care for all — with employers totally removed from the picture.

It will take mass, grassroots organizing to create a truly not-for-profit, non-discriminatory, free health care system for the 99%.

The Supreme Court will issue its ruling in late June. All those who value women's and LGBTQ2+ people's contributions to society will be rooting for a verdict trouncing Trump's misogyny and bigotry. □

The struggle and personal growth

By Sue Harris

What motivates some people to dominate and/or destroy, based on their illusory sense of superiority, even when it is against their own interests? Who are these people who profess to be acting in the name of "freedom and individual liberty," while gathering together and refusing to wear protective masks in the midst of a pandemic, potentially infecting others?

They indignantly protest loudly and menace health care workers who urge them to desist. They are influenced by the president and other right-wing demagogues, who incite them to take to the streets to oppose lifesaving shutdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic, while they promote racism and terror.

Despite the dangerous epidemic, class relations assert themselves: Bosses fire "frontline" health care workers for demanding personal protective equipment so they can perform lifesaving services in hospitals. Prison guards neglect and abuse prisoners who have little protection against COVID-19, while they are also susceptible to it. (See "On Prison Guards" by Mumia Abu-Jamal posted May 5 at workers.org.)

What motivates a person to act against their own interests, even their survival, to harm others? The most important basis for how one sees the world is formed in one's earliest human interactions. That first sense of one's place in the world can expand, depending on how much broader contact is allowed with new people. One learns to cooperate with peers and to value others' needs.

But prohibitions and restrictions on the development of relatedness, stemming from early experiences with

significant people, can stunt that growth and prevent a person from respecting others' needs. These restrictions take the form of barely noticed negative assumptions about others, becoming prominent at times of crisis or an opportunity for change. This can be true with bigoted thinking, which is learned, and can become more entrenched in a crisis. Or it can be unlearned.

To loosen restrictive thinking requires challenging and critically viewing unnoticed assumptions. The individual can then reject previous assumptions or hold onto them and reject the person who challenged them. The outcome depends on a person's degree of connectedness to other people and how powerful the original prohibitions were and still are.

Some people who only see their personal circumstances can be educated to gain an understanding of the wider world. If they can rid themselves of old thinking and can change, learning to connect with others and develop solidarity, then they can progress.

Pandemic: capitalist and socialist countries' outcomes

The imperialist countries are being challenged by the coronavirus pandemic. As of May 9, the U.S. leads the world with 1,347,309 cases and over 80,000 deaths (242 deaths per million people).

Yet Socialist Cuba has reported 1,754 cases and 74 deaths (7 deaths per million people). It has sent medical workers to over 20 countries to share their medical and community health expertise to fight the virus. China, where the disease hit first, has no new deaths. Vietnam has 288 cases and no deaths.

The U.S. media's response to Cuba's offers of

assistance to other countries is to attack those accepting Cuba's aid. They explain away the relative success in socialist countries like China, Cuba and Vietnam in overcoming the pandemic by attributing it to so-called "authoritarianism" and "obedience" of their populations in accepting quarantines.

These distortions, promoted by big business, serve to maintain the illusion that the U.S. and other capitalist countries are "free," that workers exercise their freedom by ignoring the dangers of infection, rejecting protective measures and returning to work during the pandemic.

But a growing number of workers of all nationalities and genders are resisting return-to-work orders and protesting, demanding a safe workplace, PPE and hazard pay. As the death toll mounts, some people are rejecting their old assumptions and waking up to the reality of the crisis, understanding they share a common situation with those around them.

When they resist, they see themselves in a new way. They are scared, but they may feel more effective and part of humanity. Those who hold onto their fixed positions, in a world that is crumbling around them, fear the abyss and grip their self-image even tighter.

But what makes real change, which has a vast influence on society, is the united struggle of the multinational, multigender working class, the rejection of all bigotry and the building of solidarity. With that comes the growth of class consciousness. Then an anticapitalist, pro-socialist perspective can develop.

Harris is a clinical psychologist in New York City. Kathy Durkin contributed to this article.

TEAR DOWN THE WALLS!

Bolivian prisoners protest: ‘We want to live!’

By Ted Kelly

Incarcerated workers at the largest prison in Bolivia staged a mass uprising on May 11, demanding freedom and protesting dangerous conditions exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The rebels chanted, “We want to live!” and “This is not a riot, this is a fight for life!”

Two prisoners have already died from COVID-19, and hundreds more have been exposed. The incarcerated workers held in this prison camp say that no precautions have been taken to help stem the spread of the deadly coronavirus. The prison is located in Santa Cruz, the epicenter of the viral outbreak in Bolivia.

The Centro de Rehabilitación Santa Cruz, known as “Palmasola,” is a maximum security prison complex where incarcerated workers and their families are encamped within a heavily guarded perimeter. According to teleSUR, the housing capacity at Palmasola is 800 people, but there



Police mounted a repressive presence on May 12 at Palmasola, a major Bolivian prison, as incarcerated people protested inside.

PHOTO: EL NACIONAL

are currently 6,000 people there. (May 12) Entire families are held at Palmasola, with hundreds of children under the age of six living inside the camp. Police who guard the facility are notoriously corrupt, and

bribery in exchange for goods and housing is commonplace.

In 2013, violence broke out at the facility, leading to the deaths of 31 people. The deaths were blamed on gang activity, but

the conditions themselves in this densely populated concentration camp for poor and oppressed Bolivians should be considered the primary cause.

Last year a U.S.-backed, right-wing coup overthrew the democratically elected government of Evo Morales, the first Indigenous leader of modern Bolivia. Morales’ social-democratic government was one of the few remaining “Pink Tide” administrations whose tenure brought about a massive increase in Indigenous sovereignty, standards of living and autonomy over Bolivian resources and production.

Since the fascist takeover in November 2019, Bolivians have protested against the coup government and its rollback of social reforms. The illegitimate right-wing administration of Jeanine Áñez has completely failed to protect Bolivians from the coronavirus. Morales is currently in exile in Argentina, where he has been granted political asylum. □

‘We got out because of the people’

By Janet Africa

These slightly edited remarks were given April 24 at the “U.S. Empire vs. Political Prisoners” webinar teach-in sponsored by Mobilization4Mumia and held in honor of the 66th birthday of political prisoner and revolutionary Mumia Abu-Jamal, incarcerated for 39 years by the U.S. state.

On the Move! Happy birthday, Mumia — we love you!

I just wanted to give people a little story about when we met Mumia. When we were first locked up in 1978, Mumia was one of the first few media people who accurately reported on MOVE, and he was serious about understanding what MOVE was about. And once he heard the teachings of John Africa, he was moved by that, and he internalized them into his own life. He always says, “Long live, John Africa!” because he’s had a lot of information given to him. And he reveres that information and he incorporates it in his own life.

As a journalist, he covered our trial

with in-depth coverage on MOVE. And at times that left him at odds with his own employers, but he did not stop; he would go into that courtroom. And he would watch what went on in that courtroom and judge it fairly and put it out in the news, just like it was.

He wouldn’t slant the MOVE side and he wouldn’t slant the court side, so people got to see the absolute position of what was going on in those courtrooms. And, of course, the system didn’t like it because they wanted it slanted the way other media had done to MOVE.

Anyway, Mumia has supported MOVE for a long time, a long time, and we support Mumia and we will continue to support Mumia.

I’ve been a political prisoner for 41 years, in prison, in the bowels of this system, for doing something I didn’t do, the same as Mumia. And I can’t explain in words to people the mistreatment, the debasement, how people are treated in prison, the prisoners.

But when you are a political prisoner, they deliberately do things to hurt and

mess you up as bad as they can because they want you to stop. And that’s what they’re doing to Mumia. That’s what they’ve been doing to Mumia.

I want people to understand this. They told us we wasn’t getting out of any jail — and we got out after 41 years. They’re saying Mumia is not getting out of jail. Use the example of MOVE when they say he isn’t getting out.

We got out because of the people, because of the support that people have behind MOVE — and have behind Mumia now. We’re saying, “Don’t stop that pressure!” Don’t stop forcing these people to answer for everything they do.

Because you got to understand the reason they got moving in there was because they feel a lot of pressure from Mumia. They feel like he can move people in a way that they don’t want them to be moved. So they try to quiet him, try to make him sick, try to kill him.

People! Everybody! We have made giant steps. You have made giant steps. But don’t stop, keep continuing the fight where we put pressure on the system. The people,



PHOTO: CARLOS AFRICA

Janine (left) and Janet Africa upon their release in 2019.

the strategy of John Africa, is what got us released. And this is what we need to get Mumia released. It was a victory for us and we got to continue this victory.

Don’t let it stop. Demand answers when they come up with those silly things they come up with. I’m pushing you to do what’s right. Make them qualify why Mumia is still in prison despite his innocence.

We are joining all of you, who joined to help get us out of prison, to help get Mumia out, and we will not stop. On the Move! □

‘The right to struggle by any and all means’

By Sekou Odinga

These slightly edited remarks were given April 24 at the “U.S. Empire vs. Political Prisoners” webinar teach-in sponsored by Mobilization4Mumia and held in honor of the 66th birthday of political prisoner and revolutionary Mumia Abu-Jamal, incarcerated for 39 years by the U.S. state.

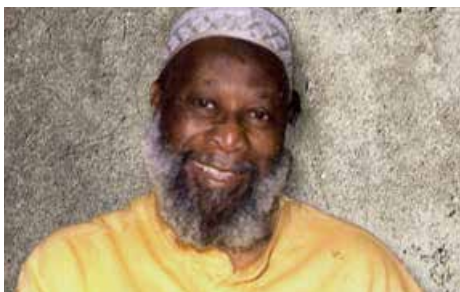


PHOTO: SEKOUODINGA.COM

Sekou Odinga while imprisoned.

I’m a representative of the Northeast Political Prisoner Coalition and also a former political prisoner of war. I’ve been home for some five and a half years now. I’m honored to be here among so many other great folks to speak about political prisoners.

Let me start out by saying happy birthday to Mumia Abu-Jamal. We go way back. I don’t know if he remembers me when I was on the ground in Philadelphia, but I met him years ago with one of his leaders, Reggie Schell.

It’s important that we realize that, without our help, some, if not all, of our political prisoners will die in prison. Probably that’s something that most of us have already heard or know. So the question becomes: Well, what are we going to do about it?

I think this event is a great example

of solidarity. The way we could all come together and speak about the things that are on our minds and wish brother Mumia a happy birthday. But we have to do something else. We have to do more — we need to really come together in solidarity.

The best resource that we have access to is people power. We need to commit to unifying and organizing the power of the people. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of people who already support freeing political prisoners, prisoners of war. We have to find a way to unify and organize ourselves to speak and to demand collectively the release of our political prisoners.

All the people, all the political prisoners, all the groups, committees, individuals need to come together under one banner to demand release of political

prisoners. Maybe something like the Jericho Movement; maybe we can come together and organize ourselves and come up with something that we can all agree on.

Anyhow, we just have to! We just have to come together and do more than just talk. Talk is not enough. We need to do more. If we don’t, we’re dropping the banner for our political prisoners.

And all these governors talking about releasing nonviolent prisoners. We can’t allow them to take the narrative and decide how we can struggle. We have a right to struggle by any and all means, and we can’t consider our political prisoners criminals if they took to the battlefield. That don’t make them a criminal; that makes them a hero. We have to remember that. □

FREE THEM ALL!



Andrea Circle Bear and six centuries of genocide

By Mirinda Crissman

Andrea Circle Bear, of the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation near Eagle Butte, S.D., was the 29th federal inmate to die due to the coronavirus in Bureau of Prisons custody. She was sentenced to serve 26 months. Circle Bear was being held at Tripp County Jail in South Dakota up until March 20. Then, because she was pregnant, she was transferred to Federal Medical Center Carswell in Fort Worth, Texas. FMC Carswell is the only federal medical prison for women in the United States. (Indian Country Today, April 29)

Upon her arrival, social distancing and quarantine measures for prisoners and guards were not deployed to prevent the spread of coronavirus until after the facility officer of the American Federation of Government Employees Local filed complaints about the minimal guidelines they were given. This delay in implementing safe practices is but a part of the systemic negligence that killed Andrea Circle Bear.

After displaying symptoms for COVID-19, she was sent to a Fort Worth Hospital. “Circle Bear was placed on a ventilator to help her breathe. On April 1, she gave birth while on the ventilator via cesarean section, and on April 4 she tested positive for COVID-19,” according to the BOP. She died on the ventilator, and her baby was returned to her family in South Dakota. (Fort Worth Star-Telegram, May 1)

Families Against Mandatory Minimums President Kevin Ring explained in a press release calling for an investigation into Circle Bear’s execution by the state: “Not every prison death is avoidable, but Andrea Circle Bear’s certainly seems to have been — she simply should not have been in a federal prison under these circumstances. In fact, nothing better demonstrates our mindless addiction to punishment more than the fact that, in the midst of a global pandemic, our government moved a 30-year-old, COVID-vulnerable, pregnant woman not

to a hospital or to her home, but to a federal prison.” (tinyurl.com/y7j258qt)

U.S. perpetrates racial and gender violence

Violence and neglect administered by the U.S. are nothing new to Indigenous nations, as they’ve been steadfast in their resistance to ongoing genocide for six centuries. “[I]mperialism and ongoing (settler) colonialisms have been ending worlds for as long as they have been in existence.” (“A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None” by Kathryn Yusoff) But this system was constructed, and it can be dismantled.

Legislation has been one of the ways this imposed order has tried to separate Indigenous people in North America. Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate scholar Dr. Kim Tall Bear explains that the Dawes Act of 1887 and state-sanctioned monogamous marriage functioned as colonial tactics to divide and conquer this land and its people. The act marked the breakup

of collective tribal land into individual allotments, which forced Indigenous people into capitalist and proprietary relationships to land, which had not existed previously. (“All My Relations” podcast, March 19, 2019)

By offering 160 acres to a head of household, 80 acres for a wife, and 40 acres for each child, there was a real incentive to be monogamously married and to biologically reproduce. Within this structure, women could not be considered heads of household. So women and children became legally codified as the property of those who could. As a man owned and possessed land, he owned and possessed his spouse and children.



WW PHOTO: MIRINDA CRISSMAN

Mural art depicting Indigenous triumph over snake-like colonial destruction of humans and land. Taken outside the Station Museum of Contemporary Art in Houston. Mural by Deanna Santiago of the Esto'k Gna, also known as the Carrizo/Comecrudo Tribe of Texas.

Ongoing settler colonialisms and the recent execution of Andrea Circle Bear demonstrate why the U.S. is a central perpetrator of racial and gender violence. Indigenous people are arrested at high rates disproportionate to their percentage of the population. They are the only group that is killed by police at a higher rate than Black people.

Murdered, missing Indigenous women

At the same time, Indigenous women, girls and Two Spirits people are murdered or reported missing every year. To raise awareness for the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women, Girls and Two Spirit people, organizations like Missing Flowers, Native Justice Coalition and the Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women raise #MMIWG2S in our collective consciousness.

Violence against this segment of the population remains unbearably high. The Department of Justice found that the murder rate of Native women is 10 times higher than the national average. And we know this is underreported. “The National Crime Information Center reports that, in 2016, there were 5,712 reports of missing American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls, though the U.S. Department of Justice’s federal missing persons database, NamUs, only logged 116 cases.” Human trafficking and mass murder, whether carried out

by state or nonstate actors, is in the service of capitalism and white supremacy. (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Report, Urban Indian Health Institute, 2018)

Native people have been in reciprocal relationships with the land for generations, despite attempts to disrupt that. Where war is being waged upon the land via fracking for oil, abandoned uranium mines or the construction of the wall across the southern U.S. border — First Nations people find themselves in zones sacrificed in the name of profit for a few. Destruction of the environment and other settler-imposed structural inequalities are the reason why infection rates for COVID-19 have been so high on reser-

vations disproportionate to the Native makeup of the population. (Workers World, April 29)

Gov. Noem threatens legal sovereignty of Sioux tribes

As COVID-19 ravages Indigenous communities, we turn to Andrea Circle Bear’s tribal lands. South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem is threatening federal legal action against the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe because they refuse to take down highway security checkpoints, which they put up to protect their people from the coronavirus. Native nations understand that self-determination and self-defense are a matter of life or death. (NPR, May 12)

Support for Indigenous sovereignty must be central in our struggle for liberation. We must all change our relationships to this land and to each other. On our way to that not-so-distant future, we must recognize expressions of gendered violence take many forms, including police brutality, mass incarceration, immigration policies and state-imposed reproductive oppression, and we must fight against them. Solidarity with Andrea Circle Bear’s family and community, both inside and outside prison walls!

Prisons disappear people. We need to end cycles of colonial violence by disappearing prisons. Tear down the walls! □

Solidarity with Andrea Circle Bear’s family and community, both inside and outside prison walls! Prisons disappear people. We need to end cycles of colonial violence by disappearing prisons. Tear down the walls!

‘Prison has always served a particular political function’

By Rashid Johnson

These slightly edited remarks were given April 24 at the “U.S. Empire vs. Political Prisoners” webinar teach-in sponsored by Mobilization4Mumia and held in honor of the 66th birthday of political prisoner and revolutionary Mumia Abu-Jamal, imprisoned for 39 years by the U.S. state. Kevin Rashid Johnson, currently held in the Pendleton Correctional Facility in Indiana, is a member of the Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee.

I’d like to extend my revolutionary salute to Mumia on his birthday. And I think that we do need to continue to fight for his freedom after decades of unlawful and political

imprisonment. And to sum up quickly, from the dungeons of feudal Europe to the razor-wire plantations of today’s capitalist America, prison has always served a particular political function. Containing, suppressing and discouraging people of color, the poor and the people from resisting the oppressive conditions imposed upon us by our class enemies.

In fact, alongside the police and military, the role of prisons is an essential aspect of the ruling-class nation’s exercise of state power. So it’s neither accidental, nor the product of devious conspiracy, that prisons in capitalist society are targeted at specific demographics and poor people. It is therefore the central component of the struggle against class and racial oppression that all of us unite and

struggle against in prisons as they exist and operate in capitalist society.

This is especially important and relevant in this era of the global COVID-19 pandemic where prisons present the particular danger of the spread of this pandemic and the greater danger to the lives of those in prison, who are particularly vulnerable to this virus. So not only must we up the ante in the fight against the injustice of mass incarceration, we must also develop new alliances and methods of struggle, seizure and exercise of power by the masses in the face of these new challenges that the establishment has proven utterly incompetent and incapable of protecting anyone from.

And with that, I will conclude with these words: Dare to struggle, dare to

win. And we should fight for all power to all the people. □



Kevin Rashid Johnson, self portrait, 2013.

WW COMMENTARY

You have to experience everything

By Olujimi Alade

This is an expanded and slightly edited version of a talk given during the “What Road To Socialism?” webinar held by Workers World Party on May 16.

My life today is completely different than it was four years ago: I am a college graduate and now a member of the workforce — although that could change. Sitting here in the early months of 2020, it is clear to see that we are headed toward a crisis that will put the U.S. and the world in a tailspin.

An epidemic is threatening to put the global economy in the worst recession since 2008, maybe even since the Great Depression. And while I have trepidations as to exactly what the future holds, I am more optimistic now than I was four years ago or at any point in my life. With this in mind and knowing what I know now, here is what I would tell my younger self.

Living in a capitalist society, we’ve been taught to take everything at face value. We have been brainwashed into believing that the U.S. is the greatest, most noble country in the world and a force for fairness and justice in the world. This echo chamber is omnipotent and unrelenting. From family members telling you to be grateful to live in the United States, to teachers force-feeding you propaganda about the virtues of the U.S., to the media demonizing dissenters (a la Marc Lamont Hill).

For most of my life, I bought into this “American exceptionalism” until the 2016 election forced me to rethink everything I was led to believe about the U.S. If the U.S. is really the greatest country in the world, it should have the ability to stop fascism from returning in full force. If it was really a meritocracy, then a candidate with the credentials of Hillary Clinton (whom I vigorously supported then) should not have any problems being elected. And to add to the absurdity, the Democratic Party resorted to the same xenophobic frenzy that it spent the entire 2016 election lambasting Trump with.

The last part had me puzzled, so I tried to analyze why the Democrats’ knee-jerk reaction was to blame Russia and third-party voters. As I studied the foreign policy of not only Hillary Clinton but Barack Obama, it became clear to me that the Democratic Party was not the progressive force I believed it was throughout my life. It was just as invested in preserving U.S. global hegemony as the Republican Party. The moment I came to that conclusion, I started to question more.

How did the Democratic Party develop such loyalty

among marginalized voters in spite of offering them so little? How can center-right politicians put on such a flawless veneer of radicalism? Are there any viable alternatives to the joke that is the two-party system? As I pondered these questions, it led me to do something I hadn’t done enough in the past.

Read more theory

To some extent, I was always disturbed by the injustices that plagued the world. It broke my heart to see people on the street, in the middle of winter, frostbitten, with nowhere to go. It rattled my core to hear daily stories of women getting abused, belittled and mistreated, and it perplexed me to know that LGBTQ2+ people are not afforded the basic dignities that every human being deserves.

As much as these oppressions disturbed me, I never had a proper, fundamental understanding of why these marginalizations existed in the world and how they are fostered every single day. Moving beyond liberal politics meant analyzing the roots of every axis of oppression; that meant studying theory from authors from marginalized backgrounds.

The more I read works from the likes of Audre Lorde, Leslie Feinberg, Frantz Fanon, Kimberlé Crenshaw, the more I was able to understand the axis of oppression beyond the standard, performative liberal fare. In addition to these authors, Marxist theory enabled me to appreciate the class struggle in a deeper, more intimate way.

Taking dialectical materialism to heart

All my life, I was led to believe all sorts of justifications for the status quo. The Constitution is permanent; the rich achieve success on their own merits; women are inherently less capable than men. After reading and engaging with Marxist theory, especially dialectical materialism, I now know that the status quo is not constant and that a better society is possible.

From that, I realized that systems of oppression

are not due to an individual’s failure, but products of oppressive power structures that are not constant. It was through studying dialectical materialism that I realized that racism was a product not of innate differences between races, but of a deep-rooted relationship between mercantilism, slavery, colonialism and capitalism.

Through dialectical materialism, I realized that patriarchy is not a universal fait accompli but a product of class relations and that certain egalitarian relations existed prior to colonial-imposed class structures. And through dialectical materialism, I discovered that heterosexuality is a social construct used to reify class relations.

The most important thing I acquired in the process of learning about dialectical materialism is that kyriarchy — these interlinked oppressive power structures — is not natural nor permanent — it can be fought and it can be defeated. Knowing this, the next step is putting this awareness into practice.

You are not alone

Growing up in a capitalistic society like the U.S., one is socialized into the hypercompetitive “dog-eat-dog” mindset, where both successes and failures are viewed through an individualistic lens. If you are rich

and successful, it is because you worked hard for it, and if you are poor and destitute, you are probably not motivated and driven.

Over these past few years, I have unlearned these individualistic, meritocratic modes of judgment and realized that the masses are more important than the individual. You are not a failure if you ask for help, and you are not a failure if you appear vulnerable.

Personally, I have discovered great ways to practice this in my day-to-day life. These include organizing, joining political groups dedicated to building class consciousness and forming study groups to reinforce important political theory in concepts.

I have grown immensely over these past four years, and even though I wish I knew these things when I was younger, I know them now and am all the better for it. □

On anniversary of historic bombing

MOVE’s message: ‘Free Mumia!’

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

This is an expanded and slightly edited version of a talk given during the “What Road To Socialism?” webinar held by Workers World Party on May 16.

May 13 was an historic and emotionally charged day as the city of Philadelphia took time to commemorate the horrific bombing of the MOVE family 35 years ago. Police dropped a C4 military-grade bomb on their west Philadelphia home, killing six adults and five children. City officials, including then Mayor Wilson Goode Sr., let the resulting fire burn, destroying 62 homes in the working-class Osage Ave. neighborhood.

What makes this year’s observation different is the release, over the last year and a half, of all remaining MOVE 9 members imprisoned since 1978. Their release was the primary MOVE demand at the time of the 1985 attack.

Several MOVE members, including those who lost children in the fire, participated in the commemoration. This was a cause for celebration, but also a call for rededication to struggle so that none of the deaths have been in vain.

The predominant demand of all MOVE members participating in interviews and webinars around the anniversary was not for apologies, but for justice — foremost, the release of MOVE supporter, journalist and political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Leading up to the anniversary, city officials and others

have debated whether an official city apology is in order. In 2018, during a street-naming ceremony in his honor, Wilson Goode Sr., Philadelphia’s first Black mayor in office in 1985 — who authorized the police assault on the MOVE compound — issued a personal apology. Today Goode challenged current city officials to follow suit. Eleven of 17 city council members have expressed support for a resolution to issue a formal city apology for the bombing.

‘We need justice, not apologies’

So far, no apologies have been forthcoming for the years in prison served by the MOVE 9 or MOVE member Ramona Africa. But even Ed Rendell, the district attorney during the 1978 case against the MOVE 9, admitted the



MOVE members and friends welcoming home Delbert Africa (top row, 4th from left) on Jan. 18, 2020, after 42 years in prison.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

30-to-100-year sentences given the MOVE 9 for allegedly killing police officer James Ramp were excessive.

In the original trial, Judge Edward Malmed, who sentenced the MOVE 9 to third-degree murder, admitted he did not have “the faintest idea” who killed officer Ramp. With access to parole repeatedly denied, they all served over 40 years.

Rendell built his career from district attorney to Philadelphia’s mayor to head of the Democratic National Committee to governor of Pennsylvania. It is of little solace that he speaks up now. And not one city, state or federal official was ever held accountable for the deaths and destruction they caused on May 13, 1985. Instead, the sole adult survivor of the fire, MOVE member Ramona Africa, was the only person punished — by being sent to prison.

In a poignant moment during a May 13 interview on WURD radio, Mike Africa, Jr., son of MOVE 9 members Debbie and Mike Africa, Sr., described all the individuals killed or impacted by the May 13 fire, including the adults he looked up to and the children he played with. He made special mention of Ramona, who he described as being responsible for bringing him back into the family. “I will always love her,” Mike said.

The 1985 fire not only took lives, it devastated a thriving, predominantly Black working-class neighborhood, which never fully recovered. Gerald Renfro, 74, a block captain and member of an Osage Ave. neighborhood association, expressed their ongoing struggle: “True

Continued on page 9

Sanctions = Health terrorism

By Betsey Piette

A timely international webinar, sponsored by SanctionsKill.org on May 9, featured representatives from Cuba, Iran, Nicaragua, Syria and Venezuela, plus a statement from Zimbabwe addressing the deadly impact of U.S. sanctions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 1,000 people from nearly every continent, including multiple U.S. cities, viewed the event. The United National Antiwar Coalition hosted the event, which Popular Resistance streamed, providing over 4,000 additional views.

During the coronavirus crisis, the U.S., with the highest global death count, has cruelly intensified sanctions and military threats, effectively weaponizing COVID-19 to bring about regime change in countries whose governments refuse to follow the dictates of Washington and Wall Street. Criminal U.S. sanctions are officially imposed on 39 countries — over a third of the world’s population — and colonized Puerto Rico through the Jones Act. The sanctions deny access to medicine and medical equipment vital for fighting COVID-19, as well as to world markets for food and other necessities.

While the U.N. has called for loosening of sanctions, and several countries, including many U.S. allies, have defied them and sent medical aid, it is more critical than ever that people in the U.S. strongly denounce the sanctions, which are essentially acts of war.

‘Sanctions are a declaration of war’

Chargé d’affaires of the Cuban Mission to the U.N. Ana Silvia Rodríguez Abascal opened the program, noting that she has lived all her life under the economic blockade imposed by the U.S. on Cuba in 1962. “An array of restrictions and laws have been signed over the years, strengthening the blockade,” she explained, “but over the last year the very aggressive policies of the current administration have damaged the economy by intentionally targeting hotels and the tourism industry

and restricting flights to Cuba.”

Abascal described how sanctions have escalated during the COVID-19 crisis, preventing shipments of fuel, medical equipment and other supplies necessary to address the pandemic. “Multinationalism and anti-imperialist solidarity are essential to counter the blockade.”

A statement from Dr. Frank Guni, Secretary for Administration, ZANU-PF North America, was read by Omowale Clay of the December 12 Movement. Guni explained that the struggle for independence from imperialism was focused on returning land in Zimbabwe to the people. “For the West this was an insult — that the Zimbabwe people dared to take their land back, so the U.S. set about to destroy our economy. President Clinton was instrumental in cutting off our country from the international trade and development fundamental to growth.”

Guni noted that due to prior experience in dealing with natural disasters and epidemics, Zimbabwe has been able to limit the impact of COVID-19. “Our only ‘crime’ is that the Zimbabwe government wants to determine their economy and development. ... Sanctions are a declaration of war — a war we must win.”

Nicaraguan Ambassador to the U.S. Francisco O. Campbell described the hardships and poverty caused by sanctions. “The Nicaraguan government’s policy of reconciliation and national unity to fight poverty was sustained by a strong participatory democracy, which until recently had gross domestic product growth of 5 percent annually,” Campbell said. “We provided free health care and education, built highways and opened new areas for economic development. ... In 2007 President George W. Bush suspended unilateral aid and imposed financial sanctions. Today the U.S. government uses its international influence to restrict Nicaragua’s access to loans in violation of international law.

“While the U.S. sanctions have impacted our health care system and ability to deal with COVID-19, Nicaragua’s

model public health care brigades, social distancing, contact tracing and border control agreements with Honduras and Costa Rica have limited the spread.” Campbell concluded, “Cuba, China and others are providing assistance, and we are confident that the indomitable spirit and determination of the Nicaraguan people will prevail.”

Sanctions = economic war

Syrian Ambassador to the U.N. Dr. Bashar Ja’afari stated, “We suffer from too many viruses — some human, some not. Economic sanctions and regime change efforts through military intervention and imposition of sanctions have left humanity suffering. COVID-19, an extraordinary circumstance that requires unification of international, regional and national measures, poses new challenges to the Syrian government.

“The central bank of Syria is unable to access our own funds, frozen by sanctions and U.S. pressure on international banks. ... The sanctions amount to health terrorism, on top of political, economic, financial, media and military terrorism by the U.S.,” Ja’afari said. “In March, U.N. Secretary General António Guterres called for the lifting of sanctions, but since then all initiatives and draft resolutions have been infiltrated by the West.”

Iranian Ambassador to the U.N. Majid Takht-Ravanchi addressed the negative impact of sanctions on his country’s ability to fight COVID-19. “The disease spreads like wildfire and the continued sanctions undermine our ability to fight it. Iran is experiencing one of the worst outbreaks of the virus, despite the fact that Iran’s medical facilities, doctors and nurses are among some of the finest in the world, as recognized by the World Health Organization.

“U.S. officials claim that humanitarian and medical needs are exempt from sanctions ... but several countries that supplied medicines and equipment to fight COVID-19 have stopped shipping to Iran because the sanctions make it impossible.



... We need to be able to fight COVID-19 without any hindrance.”

Venezuela’s Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Carlos J. Ron Martínez called for countries undergoing sanctions to come together to challenge the U.S. Martínez described U.S. aggression, including sanctions dating back to 2006, but escalating under the current administration, and the recent failed military attack. “We have received multinational solidarity from Cuba, China, and Russia, and the WHO, which has provided insulin, test kits and supplies. Venezuela today is the country in this region which has carried out the highest number of tests — 6,000 per million inhabitants — surveyed over 19 million people, and sent teams of 11,000 doctors to visit homes.”

In the final question-and-answer period, Martínez called on global movements to challenge the validity of sanctions which have become accepted policy. “We are in the middle of something as tragic as this pandemic and still there are U.S. lawmakers defending the use of sanctions. There has to be a political cost, not just criticism. ... These policies destroy the economies of nations for years to come and effect whole populations. ... We have to end this culture where regressive measures are acceptable as foreign policy.”

SanctionsKill.org organizers urged viewers to sign and share a pledge, available on the website, to oppose military action and continued U.S. sanctions. □

MOVE’s message: ‘Free Mumia!’

Continued from page 8

justice for the events of May 13, 1985, would have to include prosecuting city officials involved in the bombing. That’s why the community association protested the 2018 naming of a street after former Mayor Goode, Sr., who authorized the bombing.”

Workers World spoke with Mike Africa, Jr., who expressed disappointment that current Mayor Jim Kenney would not support an apology, even as a first step. “You apologize for bumping into someone by accident — this is so far beyond that,” Africa said. “Some city officials are helping us to raise other demands, especially freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal. They are giving us a platform to get out more information on what happened. Case in point — police brutality, mass incarceration, and excessive prison time. Apologies without actions are useless. Our people have endured so much. We are not asking for Goode, Rendell or any of the rest to be put in jail; all we want is for our brother Mumia Abu-Jamal to be freed.”

Neighborhood handed over to gentrifiers

Mike Africa, Jr., and other younger MOVE members are currently working on a project to provide bicycles to children

so they can be healthy and active. (Visit seedofwisdom.org to support this project.)

For decades since the destruction of their neighborhood, Osage Avenue homeowners have sought restitution from the city for the shoddy job done when their homes, initially rebuilt following the fire, soon started to fall apart. When no serious restorations were made, many homes were eventually abandoned.

Now, 35 years later, after gaining control over the properties through eminent domain, the city sold 36 abandoned homes in the neighborhood to the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority for \$1 each. After being rehabilitated by AJR Endeavors, the properties have been sold at prices ranging from \$249,000 to \$285,000 — a project that reeks of gentrification. From an investment of \$36 these redevelopers stand to gain \$9 million.

For 35 years the city of Philadelphia could not do justice by the residents whose homes were destroyed. Now that there are big profits to be made, Mayor Kenney, who does not support an official apology, is on board for a multimillion-dollar giveaway to developers, adding another chapter in this already sorry story.

But the most important chapter will be added when the people finally win freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal. □

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—Makasi Motema

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An all-too-familiar occurrence

Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old emergency medical technician in Louisville, Ky., was killed by eight police bullets as she lay in her bed at 1 a.m. on March 13. This tragic incident is an all-too-familiar event. Another young Black person has died at the hands of the shoot-first, ask-questions-later police. The police excuse for this horrific execution was that they had a warrant to search for drugs at Taylor’s home. It turned out that a different house had already been raided and an arrest made on the same warrant just hours earlier. Taylor’s partner, Kenneth Walker, who is also Black and is registered to carry a weapon, fired his gun at the people forcing their way into the house — who turned out to be two detectives and one police officer. Walker also called 911 before the police indiscriminately fired into the bedroom and killed Taylor. Defying logic, Walker has been arrested and charged with attempted murder of a police officer and first-degree assault,



Breonna Taylor

while the three officers involved in killing Taylor have been put on “administrative leave” pending further investigation. No one should be shocked if these white officers are not fired or even charged with the murder of an unarmed Black woman. Benjamin Crump — who served as lawyer for the family of murdered teenager Trayvon Martin — filed a wrongful death lawsuit on April 27 on behalf of Breonna Taylor’s family. It states that the police never announced themselves before invading the house and adds, “The actions of the defendant officers were

made in bad faith, were performed with a corrupt motive, were outside the scope of the defendants’ authority, were executed willfully and with the intent to harm, and were in violation of Breonna’s constitutional and statutory rights.” The lawsuit explains: “The defendants then proceeded to spray gunfire into the residence with a total disregard for the value of human life. Any defensive force used against the defendants was due to their forcible and unlawful entry into Breonna’s home.” (CNN, May 13) The heinous murder of Breonna Taylor is not an isolated incident. It comes after the February murder by two neofascists of 25-year-old Ahmaud Arbery while he was jogging in Brunswick, Ga. Besides both being African Americans, both Taylor and Arbery died at the hands of racist terrorists, legal and extralegal, in and out of uniform. White supremacy, but in different forms. Both of these killings illustrate vividly the protest chant: “Cops and Klan go hand-in-hand.”

It took Georgia police two months to arrest the father and son who killed Arbery. That only happened because his killing was captured on video, igniting outrage on social media and in the streets. Arbery attempted to defend himself, but had no protection. Walker attempted to defend his home with his weapon. Both Arbery and Walker had the right to defend themselves by any means necessary. Breonna Taylor was an EMT who worked at two hospitals. She was one of the millions of heroic essential workers on the front line attempting to save lives during this horrific pandemic. Now her young life has been cut short, not by COVID-19 but by police terrorism. All charges should be dropped immediately against her partner, Kenneth Walker. Pandemic or no pandemic, her death and Arbery’s show that as long as the capitalist system exists, the struggle for Black Lives Matter will not go away; it will not be silenced.

Malcolm X, Ho Chi Minh ¡presente!

This editorial first appeared on workers.org on May 18, 2018. We celebrate on May 19 the birthdays of two world-bending revolutionaries, Ho Chi Minh and Malcolm X. Born in 1890 in central Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh was the Marxist-Leninist communist who forged and led a people’s movement and army that defeated the invading imperialist might of both France and the United States and ultimately liberated Vietnam from colonialism. Born in 1925 in the U.S., Malcolm X was the African-American leader who raised to global attention the concepts of Black nationalism, Black self-defense and the right of self-determination of Black peoples. Malcolm X also made a major contribution to the global movement for Pan-Africanism. Neither met the other, yet their deeds and words intertwine, and together they continue to inspire us toward revolution.

At this moment, as the U.S. ruling class fans the deadly fires of racist hatred, Malcolm X and Ho Chi Minh unite to give a profound lesson in building international solidarity with oppressed people and nations. In 1924 — the year before Malcolm X was born — at the Fifth Congress of the Communist International in Moscow, Ho Chi Minh made a presentation during a session on the “National and colonial question.” He emphasized the importance of support for the Black liberation struggle in the U.S., saying in part: “It is well-known that the Black race is the most oppressed and the most exploited of the human family. It is well-known that the spread of capitalism and the discovery of the New World had as an immediate result the rebirth of slavery. ... What everyone does not perhaps know is that after sixty-five years of so-called emancipation, [Black people in the U.S.] still endure atrocious moral and material

sufferings.” (tinyurl.com/n5nlck6) Forty years later, in 1964, Malcolm X, El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, put the Black liberation struggle in a worldwide context, saying: “It is incorrect to classify the revolt of [Black people] as simply a racial conflict of Black against white, or as a purely [U.S.] American problem. Rather, we are today seeing a global rebellion of the oppressed against the oppressor, the exploited against the exploiter.” (Malcolm X Speaks) And he acknowledged the centrality of the national liberation war led by Ho Chi Minh to that global rebellion, saying: “Viet Nam is the struggle of all third-world nations — the struggle against imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism.” (1972 interview with Yuri Kochiyama, tinyurl.com/k93cq2n) The voices of both these revolutionaries



ring out with the clarion call of SOLIDARITY as the path to a future of justice and liberation. They remind us that we of the multinational, multigendered, global working class have a common oppressor in imperialist capitalism. We can resist its racism, its anti-woman and anti-LGBTQ2+ bigotry, its anti-immigrant hatred. We can — and must — rise up in resistance.

In the hearts and minds of Nicaraguan people
Augusto Sandino ¡presente!

By Camilo Mejía Nicaraguan-born antiwar organizer and Iraq war resister Camilo Mejía gave a talk on Feb. 21 at the United National Antiwar Coalition meeting at The People’s Forum in New York. Below is an excerpt from his remarks in tribute to General Augusto Nicolás

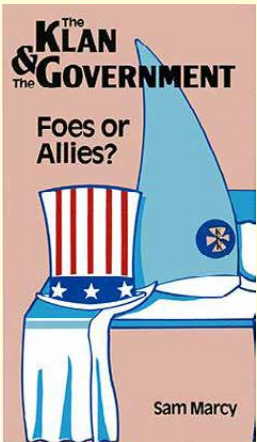
Calderón de Sandino y José de María Sandino — commonly known as Augusto César Sandino — a guerrilla fighter and founder of the heroic resistance to U.S. imperialist intervention of the Marines in Nicaragua during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Sandino was born on May 18, 1895, and was killed on Feb. 21, 1934.



Augusto Sandino

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 [Feb. 21]! 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 Klan & the Government
Foes or Allies?
By Sam Marcy
Examines the special relationship with the state that has allowed the Ku Klux Klan to exist for over a century despite its criminal history of lynchings, murders, and intimidation. Published in 1983.
Read it free at
www.workers.org/marcy/klan/



Ecuador and COVID-19

Regime wages ‘war against workers’

Part 2

By Michael Otto
Ibarra, Ecuador

Part 1, “Ecuador’s pandemic: Rightist regime fails to confront crisis,” is available at workers.org.

In a “war against workers,” President Lenín Moreno’s regime is exploiting the pandemic crisis to advance the same International Monetary Fund austerity package that provoked the great uprising in Ecuador the first week of October 2019.

On March 21, Minister of Health Dr. Catalina Andramuño resigned, criticizing the government when she could no longer comfortably defend Moreno’s obscene layoffs and budget cuts.

Radio Alba Ciudad announced on April 19 that 72 doctors had died (which contradicted Ministry of Public Health data) and quoted Andramuño’s replacement: “Minister Juan Carlos Zevallos said that most of the doctors and nurses with COVID-19 did not necessarily catch it inside the hospitals. It was ‘community contagion’ or health personnel brought it into these settings.”

That insensitivity is nothing short of outrageous. Government officials are the biggest source of fake news.

The underlying economic catastrophe is analyzed in a series of articles by economist Jonathon Báez on alainet.org: “It is urgent to inject liquidity and prevent at all costs the outflow of capital. It is essential that the state powers allow the financing capacities of the Central Bank of Ecuador to be used by the State [the CBE is shackled by the bankers and the IMF], that the electronic money mechanism be recovered by the CBE, a payment mechanism that [Moreno] handed over to the private banks and that at present would [enable the masses] to pay for goods and services, without the need for handling physical money, which is a source of [coronavirus] contagion.”

How neoliberal policies cost lives

Báez asked, “How many lives would have been saved if resources had been available? How many doctors would not have been infected in their work to save lives if they were equipped with the necessary resources?” (alainet.org, April 16)

Báez said that Moreno’s government slashed Ecuador’s national public health investment by 36 percent and fired more than 3,000 doctors and nurses in 2019. Right-wing Minister of Finance Richard Martínez paid \$341 million, including interest, on March 24 to a few millionaire creditors “close to the government” in the midst of the pandemic.

The Ministry of Public Health reported that, as of May 3, at least 3,469 health workers have been infected. Twenty-four confirmed deaths include 19 doctors, two nurses, one obstetrician, one dentist and a psychologist, with three other probable deaths. Ecuadorians no longer believe their government, which cannot hide the possibility that 90 health workers and in fact many more than 10,000 citizens have died from the coronavirus.

Since the state of emergency was imposed, 1,300 health workers (including hundreds of the fired doctors and nurses) have been given temporary contracts to work under the most dangerous frontline conditions.

During October’s popular uprising, the regime spread fake news that Cuban and Venezuelan agents were destabilizing the country. This ploy paved the way for Minister of Government María Paula Romo to fire 382 irreplaceable medical specialists in the Cuban Medical Brigade last November.

Ecuadorian author and poet Jaime Galarza Zavala wrote in his blog that the Moreno government’s hate-filled reactionary agenda lay behind its incompetence. “The regime did nothing! Absolutely nothing! It did not acquire the necessary medicines and equipment, nor did it organize the hospitals or prepare health contingents.”

Galarza added, “Lenín Moreno reigns but does not govern. He is happy to be wheeled onto the red carpet of the Washington White House and, at his best, to read the ‘bad handwriting’ of an official communiqué written by some mediocre person.”

Indigenous communes and peasant movements

The central government left every province and every city and community to cope with the coronavirus crisis unaided. In many cases the armed forces and police invaded Indigenous communes and used extreme violence to enforce curfews. Military police cut the hair of Indigenous young men to humiliate them.

The greatest danger was that armed forces would contaminate the communes. In response Indigenous leaders organized the people to block access roads which impeded delivery of their agricultural products to the cities where they were normally sold.

Leonidas Iza Salazar, president of the Indigenous and Peasant Movement of Cotopaxi, was interviewed in the city of Loja in the south of Ecuador on March 23 by Radio Periférik. (rebellion.org) “The health crisis affects all peasants, Indigenous peoples and Afro-Ecuadorians,” said Iza. He urged Ecuadorians to honor “the principles of solidarity, reciprocity, ‘randi randi’ [the Quechuan phrase is translated “to give and receive”], because we all need each other.

“Indigenous and peasant communities do not have coverage from the public health system. That is why we have strengthened our internal ancestral health system; we have our ancestral doctors. However, diseases like the coronavirus are complicated.”

Iza warned that “a single outbreak in our communities could cause a collective panic, since our practices in all activities are developed collectively. We cannot move our products from the countryside to the big cities now. Our people don’t only work in the countryside, but also in the cities like Quito, Guayaquil and Cuenca. There is no medical testing so that our members can go back to the communities.

“We are asking the central government to set up an emergency health fund. There are families who live from day-to-day, from informal trade, from daily sales, from piecework. None of the national government’s policies are designed for this sector.

“The government should buy directly from the peasants, and transfer the products free of charge to [the informal and poor] sectors of the population. Guarantee the direct transfer of our products to the cities to ensure that production in the countryside would not stop due to low prices. We have already lowered our prices, but the



Workers, Indigenous people led a general strike in Ecuador in October 2019 against already existing austerity measures.

middle men have not. And that is exactly where speculation is born.

“We cannot allow the National Government to only guarantee the profits of the large food companies and prevent us small farmers from taking our products to the city.”

CONAIE asks for unified demands

Another Indigenous movement, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities (CONAIE), negotiated with the central government to end the October 2019 uprising. On May Day this year, CONAIE proclaimed that what was needed is to unify “the demands of the Indigenous movement, the trade union movement, the popular organizations, the women’s movement and the people in general.” The May Day manifesto demanded that the rich be made to pay for the economic catastrophe they have created, not the people.

Multinational mining and oil operations continue during the pandemic, adding to class conflict and threatening communities of Indigenous peoples with extinction. The rupture of three oil pipelines caused by a sinkhole on April 7, in the northern Amazon, impacts 150 isolated Amazonian communities whose well-being depends on the rivers.

Part 3: Interviews with Ecuadoreans.

Pandemia ha acelerado etapa final del capitalismo;

¡El resto depende de nosotros!

Continúa de la página 12

independientes y todos los demás trabajadores que el sistema quiera marginar. Esto incluye trabajadores de planta, trabajadores de oficina, trabajadores de bajos salarios y trabajadores municipales, estatales y federales.

La organización de la clase trabajadora es más que una estrategia. Es una necesidad política absoluta, sin la cual no podemos maximizar la solidaridad de clase y prevalecer en la creciente lucha de clases. Los sindicatos que estén listos para ayudar en esta tarea marcarán la mayor diferencia. Pero si dichos sindicatos no están involucrados, no podemos permitir que eso frene la organización de los trabajadores.

Dependerá de los trabajadores, con toda la ayuda y solidaridad que podamos brindar, formar asambleas de trabajadores o consejos de trabajadores en todos los niveles, desde el lugar de trabajo hasta la ciudad y la región. La ventaja de las asambleas de trabajadores es que están abiertas a todos los trabajadores y desempleados, independientemente de las circunstancias. Deben estar abiertos a estudiantes y jóvenes, jubilados y cualquier otra persona que pueda ayudar. Si están abiertos, hará que el movimiento obrero sea potencialmente enorme, inclusivo y no se vea frenado por los lazos con el Partido Demócrata o por ideas y concepciones limitantes y limitadas que desafortunadamente son demasiado comunes entre el liderazgo actual del movimiento obrero organizado.

Además, si bien el lugar de trabajo, la industria y la geografía siguen siendo fundamentales para organizar a los trabajadores, los cambios y las nuevas condiciones hacen que la necesidad de organizar a los trabajadores más allá de su lugar de trabajo y, a pesar de otras circunstancias, sea posible y necesario. A medida que muchas luchas se convierten en luchas más grandes, y luego luchas políticas

y luego luchas por el poder, minimizar todo lo que crea barreras y límites en la organización de la clase trabajadora será una necesidad estratégica.

¡Preparémonos para lo que nos espera!

Para aquellos activistas que están desmoralizados al final de la campaña de Bernie Sanders y están agotados después de dedicar tanta energía a luchas difíciles que no resultaron bien, aquellos que creían que un mundo mejor es posible, pero que recientemente cuestionaron esa creencia, o quienes están traumatados y se sienten impotentes por lo que ha sucedido en los últimos meses o incluso antes, presten atención.

La diferencia entre el mundo de hace unos meses y el mundo de hoy es incalculable. Todo ha cambiado. Todo lo que muchos de nosotros sentimos ahora es sufrimiento, miedo e incertidumbre. Pero de tales dolores de parto, nacen revoluciones.

De que el capitalismo se acabe antes o después no depende solo de la voluntad de los revolucionarios. Otras condiciones más allá de nuestro control también deben estar presentes. Sin embargo, nuestra voluntad y disposición podrían volverse decisivas. Si no estamos dispuestos y listos, ¿estamos dispuestos a empujar la tarea de acabar con el capitalismo a otra generación y permitir que el sistema continúe torturando y poniendo en peligro el planeta y toda la vida en él?

Trabajemos todos para restaurarnos y restaurarnos unos a otros para que podamos hacer historia. Los trabajadores y los pueblos oprimidos de este planeta necesitan revolucionarios dedicados que estén dispuestos a sacrificar todo para allanar el camino para un nuevo mundo libre de toda opresión. No necesitan revolucionarios para sustituir a las masas. Necesitan que todos den a la lucha lo que puedan dar, y necesitan a aquellos que puedan hacer que la lucha sea el trabajo de su vida. □



FAMILIAS UNIDAS POR LA JUSTICIA

En el valle de Yakima, estado de Washington, 1000 trabajadores agrícolas se declararon en huelga en mayo.

Pandemia ha acelerado etapa final del capitalismo; ¡El resto depende de nosotros!

Parte 2

Por Larry Holmes

Gran parte de las discusiones en el internet sobre el mejor camino hacia el socialismo a raíz de la nueva popularidad del socialismo, que ha estimulado el crecimiento de los socialistas demócratas de América y la campaña de Bernie Sanders, tienden a tener un defecto importante.

En general, las discusiones parecen suponer que debido a que las condiciones desfavorables para la radicalización de la clase trabajadora han perdurado durante mucho tiempo, son estáticas e inmutables para siempre. Como tal, las conclusiones son que el período del leninismo y la revolución han pasado hace mucho tiempo y que la clase trabajadora en los Estados Unidos nunca verá otra ruta para cambiar que no sean las elecciones capitalistas, ya que están vinculadas a las tradiciones, instituciones e influencia de la burguesía estadounidense.

Materialismo dialéctico y revolución

El problema con este pensamiento es que deja de lado un elemento esencial sin el cual todo cambio —especialmente la revolución— sería impensable. Ese elemento es el materialismo dialéctico. Las condiciones materiales, que cambian constantemente, en última instancia, obligan al cambio social, independientemente de cuánto tiempo lleve ese cambio o si lo vemos o no. La clase trabajadora puede estar políticamente inactiva durante muchas décadas, y luego los cambios drásticos en las condiciones materiales pueden impulsar a los trabajadores a un nuevo nivel de conciencia política, incluso conciencia revolucionaria, en un período de tiempo relativamente corto.

En este mismo momento, las condiciones materiales están en proceso de crear las condiciones políticas para el cambio revolucionario. ¡No debemos minimizar lo que está en juego aquí! Si las fuerzas que creen que la reforma y solo la reforma es posible son las únicas fuerzas que influyen en la clase trabajadora, será imposible que la clase obrera se libere de la clase dominante y sus partidos políticos. Eso, a su vez, socavaría la independencia y el potencial revolucionario de la clase trabajadora y ayudaría al capitalismo a sobrevivir una experiencia cercana a la muerte.

La última vez que la posibilidad de la revolución fue una amenaza real para la clase dominante estadounidense fue en el apogeo de la fuerza rebelde de la clase trabajadora en la década de 1930. El presidente Franklin Delano Roosevelt presionó sabiamente a la burguesía estadounidense para que aceptara las concesiones del New Deal a la clase trabajadora porque estaba preocupado por las perspectivas de una repetición de la Revolución Rusa en EE.UU. Esas fueron concesiones importantes. Pero también ayudaron al imperialismo estadounidense a sobrevivir a la Gran Depresión, lo que le permitió convertirse en el líder indiscutible del mundo capitalista durante la segunda guerra mundial.

Los marxistas han sido acusados de predecir prematuramente el fin del



WW PHOTO

Larry Holmes, Primero de Mayo seminario de Partido Mundo Obrero.

capitalismo desde que se publicó la primera edición del “Manifiesto Comunista” en 1848 en Londres. Baste decir que ninguna predicción es válida hasta que sea confirmada por los eventos. Sin embargo, eventualmente la alarma del lobo no será solo otra falsa alarma. Debemos tomar en serio las posibilidades. Por un lado, la clase dominante de Estados Unidos ya no parece tan invencible como solía ser.

Si uno mira detrás de la cortina del poderoso Oz, encuentras una clase dominante que nunca ha estado más insegura de sí misma. La mayoría de los miembros de la clase dominante aman a Trump porque ha estado dispuesto a hacer todo lo posible para enriquecerlos, no más tarde, sino ahora.

Aún así, el simple hecho de que un demagogo y charlatán vergonzosamente inestable e incompetente sea el líder del imperialismo estadounidense dice mucho sobre el estado de la clase dominante estadounidense. En realidad, la clase dominante imperialista más poderosa de la historia ahora es muy débil y desmoralizada y tiene poca credibilidad política. Además, su respuesta a la pandemia de COVID-19 la debilitará aún más. En el momento de la mayor crisis mundial de la historia, la elección del próximo presidente es entre Trump y Joe Biden, un político profundamente implacable que, como Trump, también es un agresor sexual.

Por supuesto, el imperialismo estadounidense sigue siendo muy peligroso, quizás incluso más peligroso ahora porque está luchando por su vida. El imperialismo estadounidense todavía tiene la economía más grande entre los países imperialistas, la mayor cantidad de armas nucleares y el ejército militar más grande y tecnológicamente más letal. Con una depresión económica que arrastra sus perspectivas de reelección, Trump podría intentar algo radical y violento para desviar la crisis a otra parte.

¿Qué hará la clase dominante?
¿Qué hará la clase trabajadora?

Nadie puede decir con certeza cómo se desarrollarán las crisis económicas y políticas que están ganando impulso. La clase dominante se ha visto obligada, al menos por el momento, a dejar de lado el libro de jugadas de austeridad que ha gobernado sus decisiones durante varias décadas. El gobierno ha actuado más drásticamente y mucho más rápido que en cualquier crisis anterior y ha inyectado billones de dólares a la economía. Es cierto que la mayoría de esos fondos se han destinado a las

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grandes corporaciones.

La mayoría de las personas que necesitan el poco dinero de ayuda que se supone que va a los trabajadores no lo han recibido todavía o no son elegibles para recibirlo. Aún así, el gobierno nunca ha pretendido proporcionar fondos de ayuda de emergencia en esta escala antes. Y nunca han hecho algo así en tan poco tiempo sin una gran lucha de masas que los obligue a hacerlo.

Que los capitalistas hayan hecho esto es una señal de cuán drástica e inusual es esta crisis. Algunos de los grandes capitalistas se quejan de que el gobierno está minando el capitalismo y está agregando billones de dólares a la deuda que romperá su sistema. ¿Qué hará la clase dominante cuando el sorprendente alcance del desempleo se vuelva innegable e irreversible? Si las fuerzas de la clase dominante logran llegar a un acuerdo entre ellas para continuar brindando cantidades históricamente masivas de ayuda de emergencia a la economía de forma indefinida, tal vez puedan evitar una rebelión social, mientras intentan encontrar una salida a la crisis. Ese escenario parece poco probable.

Es más probable que los capitalistas y sus políticos no acepten seguir gastando. La economía capitalista podría deslizarse en una caída libre. El aparato político del sistema a nivel nacional y en cada nivel inferior que podría paralizarse y comenzar a desmoronarse. La policía, en quien se basa el sistema como su primera línea de defensa contra los trabajadores, puede desmoralizarse e ser ineficaz. Los miembros de las fuerzas armadas podrían dividirse en base a la clase.

Imagínese bajo estas circunstancias si el movimiento de la clase trabajadora estuviera creciendo y envalentonado, altamente organizado y preparado para una lucha por el poder. Este escenario suena demasiado bueno para ser verdad. Lo que realmente se desarrolla será mucho más complejo y prolongado que esto. Sin embargo, nunca haremos una revolución a menos que podamos imaginar la posibilidad de una.

¿Un nuevo peligro fascista?

Nada ilustra más los peligros para el movimiento obrero que las amenazas de guerra y fascismo. Las potencias imperialistas utilizaron ambas armas para desviar la crisis capitalista de los años treinta. Un colapso económico catastrófico, una clase dominante debilitada y una gran parte de la pequeña burguesía que pierde sus negocios son las condiciones clásicas que podrían empujar a una sección de la clase

dominante a recurrir al fascismo para salvar su sistema. Trump ha ayudado a allanar el camino para tal contingencia.

Tenemos que tomar este peligro extremadamente en serio. Sin embargo, no es inevitable que un movimiento fascista sea lo suficientemente fuerte como para hacerse cargo del gobierno y el aparato estatal. El factor decisivo no será ninguna elección en particular o si los líderes del Partido Demócrata tienen más cargos elegidos que los republicanos. El objetivo principal de los multimillonarios que financian un movimiento fascista en un momento de crisis grave es aplastar el movimiento de la clase trabajadora. Sin embargo, en última instancia, no solo será el tamaño y el nivel de organización del movimiento de la clase trabajadora, sino el sentido de su propia fuerza y poder, así como su orientación revolucionaria, lo que determinará qué fuerza aplasta al otro.

Organización masiva de clase obrera: una necesidad política absoluta

A pesar de todo a lo que está siendo sometida la clase trabajadora, se está levantando y luchando. Cuando las condiciones vuelvan a ser seguras para que los trabajadores salgan a las calles en masa, y no podemos saber cuándo será eso, es probable que la ira y la rebelión masivas sean algo que nunca antes habíamos visto. Incluso en condiciones extremadamente difíciles, los trabajadores en trabajos donde no tienen el beneficio de pertenecer a un sindicato, como Amazon, Whole Foods, Instacart, Target y otros, organizaron abandonos de puestos y huelgas el 1 de Mayo para exigir condiciones de trabajo seguras y días de enfermedad pagados.

Desde trabajadores de la salud hasta trabajadores agrícolas migrantes, trabajadores de tiendas de comestibles y prisioneros, los trabajadores de todas partes luchan por el derecho a mantenerse con vida. Las fuerzas progresistas y revolucionarias necesitan apoyar a estos trabajadores. Ese apoyo debe mostrarse en más que palabras. Debe mostrarse en actos concretos de solidaridad. Los millones de trabajadores desempleados van a forjar un movimiento. Debemos ayudar a estos trabajadores con sus necesidades organizativas, y de cualquier otra manera que sea útil y posible.

Muchos sindicatos están perdiendo miembros. Eso significa que perderán recursos, lo que hará que sobrevivir sea más difícil. Por otro lado, el período más grande y militante de organización de los trabajadores puede estar abriéndose ahora. Y será una organización de base popular de abajo hacia arriba y no de arriba hacia abajo. La organización masiva de la clase trabajadora incluirá a todos los trabajadores, incluidos los trabajadores encarcelados, los trabajadores migrantes, los indocumentados, los desempleados, las trabajadoras sexuales, los vendedores ambulantes, los contratistas

Continúa en la página 11