



# Iran-Venezuela solidarity breaks U.S. blockade

By Kathy Durkin

In an act of solidarity, Iran is sending a fleet of five tankers carrying 1.53 million barrels of needed gasoline and related fuel products to Venezuela. On May 23, 25 and 26, the first three ships traveled through the Caribbean Sea and entered Venezuelan territorial waters with a Venezuelan naval and air escort. That delivery broke Washington's criminal blockade against the Venezuelan people.

Venezuelans in Caracas, the capital, are cheering the victory over the U.S., which had threatened to stop the ships by force. Of Iran's determination and solidarity, Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza said, "Iran and Venezuela have always supported each other in times of difficulty." (Guardian, May 23)

Socialist Cuba's President Miguel Díaz-Canel proclaimed on Twitter: "Long live solidarity among peoples!" (May 24)

Both sovereign nations — Iran and Venezuela — challenged severe U.S. economic sanctions and bellicose threats of military action. President Donald Trump announced that the U.S. had Venezuela surrounded. So far Washington has not attempted retaliation following the delivery. It remains to be seen whether the U.S. will act against either or both countries.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani strongly warned the U.S. against interfering: "If our tankers in the Caribbean or anywhere in the world face trouble caused by the Americans, [the U.S.] will be in trouble. We have the legitimate right to defend our sovereignty and territorial



PHOTO: ORINOCO TRIBUNE

First Iranian ship docks in Venezuela May 25, at port serving El Palito oil refinery.

integrity and to serve our national interests." (Guardian)

The danger of U.S. military intervention is ever-present, given the history of U.S. attacks against Iran and its attempts to subvert Venezuela's Bolivarian government led by President Nicolás Maduro. In April, Washington ordered additional Navy warships, surveillance aircraft and special operative teams to the Caribbean, sending more destroyers close to Venezuela.

Washington lashed out verbally at Russia, China, Cuba, Iran and Venezuela about Iran's bold action, and U.S. military brass warned that their warships are patrolling the Caribbean.

### Russia, China condemn coup attempt

In another show of support for Venezuela, Dmitri Polyanskiy, Russia's U.N. representative, introduced a

resolution in the U.N. Security Council on May 22, calling for no interference in Venezuela. In effect he denounced the May 3-4 coup attempt against the Bolivarian government. Russia's resolution appealed to member-states to condemn the use of force, mercenaries and all forms of terrorism.

Venezuela's military stopped the incursion carried out by a 60-person paramilitary force in speedboats, led by U.S. Army Special Forces veterans, whose goal was to overthrow Maduro. Funding for their training camps in Colombia came from Venezuelan counter-revolutionary politician Yon Goicoechea.

China supported Russia's Security Council resolution, expressed support for Venezuelan sovereignty and criticized U.S. sanctions. Indonesia, South Africa and Vietnam agreed.

### Why Venezuela needs fuel

Venezuela has 300 million barrels of oil reserves, the largest of any one country. Oil revenue accounts for 95 percent of Venezuela's export earnings.

Why does Venezuela need to import fuel? Venezuela needs diluents to refine its heavy crude oil so it can flow through pipelines. U.S. sanctions have stymied domestic production of gasoline, as they prohibit importing diluents.

In August 2017, the Trump administration leveled brutal economic sanctions on Venezuela. In January 2019, Washington imposed a crushing oil embargo against

Continued on page 10

## Pandemics can foment social revolutions

By Larry Holmes

The following slightly edited talk was given during the Workers World Party webinar "What Road to Socialism?" on May 16.

Welcome everyone to this important national meeting of Workers World Party. I wish we could be meeting in person, but dire circumstances make that impossible. So we have to have this digital meeting. But that doesn't mean we can't accomplish a great deal.



More webinar talks 6-7

I'm sure that most of you are thinking about what the next week will bring. Can you get back to some normal routine? How many people will die and suffer? Or maybe you're wondering what the next two months will bring. That's very human.

But it's important to look at what's happening from a historical perspective. It's important to remember that pandemics, especially ones the size of the pandemic the planet is contending with now, have a way of fomenting social revolutions. The most oppressed of the planet's

Continued on page 7



- What is a Marxist-Leninist party? 2
- COVID cover-up in Georgia 5
- Reproductive justice pushes back 10



Fruit packers on strike, Washington state.

### Labor fights back!

- Postal workers 3
- Portland essential workers 9
- Agricultural workers 9
- CUNY instructors 9



4-5

- Free our youth!
- ICE detainees
- N.C. inside-outside worker solidarity
- Urgent appeal for Major Tillery

### Breaking news

## Justice for George Floyd! Jail killer cops!

May 27 — A second night of militant protest against the racist lynching of 46-year-old, George Floyd, by a white police officer on May 25, took place in Minneapolis, Minn. Protesters caused a massive shutdown on 101 Freeway to demand the arrest and prosecution of the killer cop for murder and drove cops out of a neighborhood. Protests also took place at the Third Precinct where protesters refused to back down, despite being bombarded with tear gas canisters. National protests against police brutality have been called for the last weekend in May.

Go to [www.workers.org](http://www.workers.org) to read more coverage.

Kerala, India 8 Ecuador 8 China 11

# What is a Marxist-Leninist party?

By Deirdre Griswold

*This is a slightly edited version of a talk given during a discussion with members and candidates of Workers World Party on May 17.*



Many parties calling themselves Marxist and Leninist have come and gone. WWP is here and growing, after more than 60 years of struggle. This is due to our general program, our militancy in practice and our internal structure.

Now we're entering a new period of crisis and class struggle, unlike any we've ever seen before. Capitalism is always anticipating growth — more production, more exploitation of labor, more profits. But instead, the capitalist economy is imploding as we speak. Debt is overwhelming the existing structures and institutions. Suddenly everything has gone into reverse, and tens of millions of workers are being thrown over the cliff.

In order to fight for the workers and the most oppressed, this party has to be both strong and flexible. We have to be able to "spin on a dime." When something happens, we can't wait for others to move.

So how do we decide what to do and how? How do we function?

WWP is a Leninist party, meaning we practice democratic centralism. How does that work? It's simple. When decisions have to be made or actions taken, the majority decides. Then it's the responsibility of all members to carry out the decision.

At this point, we're not so large that we should be overburdened with formalism. Nor can we take a vote every time something needs to be done. We can't let formality consume our attention and hinder our ability to act. When a consensus can be arrived at, we should move forward. This happens all the time.

We have an elected Interim Central Committee that discusses our program and actions. Each branch has a steering committee, as well as members on the ICC.

It's the job of leaders to convince and win over other comrades to new concepts or strategies. But the leaders must

also learn from the members. Older members have experience, but newer members bring fresh insights into the party.

Our party tradition is strong on making sure the most oppressed are represented at all levels of leadership. A leading body composed only of straight white men is inconceivable in this party.

Another aspect of this is the role of caucuses in the party: There is a caucus for women and people of oppressed genders; a people of color caucus; an LGBTQ2+ caucus; and a disability rights caucus. These caucuses discuss what actions to take regarding their special oppression, and also what needs to be explained about these oppressions to the whole party and the movement.

There's an old saying: Theory is gray, but the tree of life is green. WWP is alive and green, gearing up for the struggles that are sure to come while solidly based in Marxism and Leninism.

*Griswold is one of the founding members of WWP, which formed in 1959. She has been the editor of WW newspaper since the early 1970s. Griswold represented the party on the steering committee of the Bertrand Russell International War Crimes Tribunal in 1966-67, was the party's first candidate for president in the 1980 U.S. elections, and has represented the party in relations with socialist Cuba and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. □*

Due to the measures taken in the NY-NJ area to prevent the spread of COVID-19, we are temporarily suspending the printing and mailing of our print edition, starting with the March 19 issue. Plans are to publish individual articles on this site, along with a PDF of what would be the printed version. We will review this decision as the pandemic develops. We recommend that subscribers with access get our free email subscription and share our articles on social media. Print subscriptions will be extended by the length of the stoppage.

— WW managing editors:  
John Catalinotto, Martha Grevatt,  
Deirdre Griswold, Monica Moorehead,  
Betsey Piette and Minnie Bruce Pratt.

## MUNDO OBRERO WORKERS WORLD

### this week

#### ◆ In the U.S.

- Pandemics foment social revolutions . . . . . 1
- What is a Marxist-Leninist party? . . . . . 2
- New USPS boss is racist, sexist, job-killer . . . . . 3
- 50 years after the Great Postal Strike . . . . . 3
- Witness at Karnes Family 'Detention' Center . . . . . 4
- N.C. union rallies. . . . . 4
- Car caravan: Free Our Youth! . . . . . 4
- Int'l movement demands justice for Major Tillery . . 5
- Georgia 'reopens' with questionable data. . . . . 5
- Why I joined Workers World Party. . . . . 6
- Pandemic and Trump's anti-migrant agenda . . . . . 6
- 'Safe jobs save lives!' . . . . . 6
- Fight for the rights of people with disabilities! . . . . 7
- Packinghouse workers vs. bosses . . . . . 9
- Portland caravan supports essential workers . . . . . 9
- CUNY and the struggle against COVID-19 cuts . . . . 9
- Abortion clinic bought by abortion rights group. . . 10

#### ◆ Around the world

- Iran-Venezuela solidarity breaks U.S. blockade . . . . 1
- NYT misses Kerala's COVID-19 success. . . . . 8
- Ecuador's people speak out. . . . . 8
- U.S. tries to deflect COVID fiasco onto China . . . . . 11

#### ◆ Editorial

- Lessons from the most oppressed . . . . . 10

#### ◆ Noticias en Español

- Los migrantes lideran la lucha . . . . . 12
- El imperialismo y el derecho a la autodeterminación 12

## MUNDO OBRERO WORKERS WORLD

## Join us in the fight for socialism!

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

Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the never-ending quest for ever-greater profits.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>National Office</b><br/>147 W. 24th St., 2nd floor<br/>New York, NY 10011<br/>212.627.2994<br/>wwp@workers.org</p> | <p><b>Boston</b><br/>284 Amory St.<br/>Boston, MA 02130<br/>617.522.6626<br/>boston@workers.org</p>              |
| <p><b>Atlanta</b><br/>PO Box 18123<br/>Atlanta, GA 30316<br/>404.627.0185<br/>atlanta@workers.org</p>                    | <p><b>Buffalo, N.Y.</b><br/>335 Richmond Ave.<br/>Buffalo, NY 14222<br/>716.883.2534<br/>buffalo@workers.org</p> |
| <p><b>Austin</b><br/>austin@workers.org</p>  | <p><b>Cleveland</b><br/>216.738.0320<br/>cleveland@workers.org</p>   |
| <p><b>Bay Area</b><br/>P.O. Box 22947<br/>Oakland, CA 94609<br/>510.394.2207<br/>bayarea@workers.org</p>                 | <p><b>Dallas</b><br/>dallas@workers.org</p>  |

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Durham, N.C.</b><br/>804 Old Fayetteville St.<br/>Durham, NC 27701<br/>919.322.9970<br/>durham@workers.org</p> | <p><b>Portland, Ore.</b><br/>portland@workers.org</p>             |
| <p><b>Houston</b><br/>P.O. Box 3454<br/>Houston, TX 77253-3454<br/>713.503.2633<br/>houston@workers.org</p>          | <p><b>Salt Lake City</b><br/>801.750.0248<br/>slc@workers.org</p> |
| <p><b>Pensacola, Fla.</b><br/>pensacola@workers.org</p>  | <p><b>San Antonio</b><br/>sanantonio@workers.org</p>              |
| <p><b>Philadelphia</b><br/>P.O. Box 34249<br/>Philadelphia, PA 19101<br/>610.931.2615<br/>phila@workers.org</p>      | <p><b>West Virginia</b><br/>WestVirginia@workers.org</p>          |

Workers World  
147 W. 24th St., 2nd Fl.  
New York, NY 10011  
Phone: 212.627.2994  
E-mail: ww@workers.org  
Web: www.workers.org



Vol. 62, No. 22 • May 28, 2020  
Closing date: May 27, 2020  
Editor: Deirdre Griswold

Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, Martha Grevatt, Monica Moorehead, Betsey Piette, Minnie Bruce Pratt

Web Editors: ABear, Harvey Markowitz, Janet Mayes

Prisoners Page Editors: Mirinda Crissman, Ted Kelly

Production & Design Editors: Gery Armsby, Sasha Mazumder, Scott Williams

Copyediting and Proofreading: Paddy Colligan, Sue Davis, S. Hedgecoke

Contributing Editors: LeiLani Dowell, G. Dunkel, K. Durkin, Sara Flounders, Teresa Gutierrez, Joshua Hanks, Makasi Motema, Gloria Rubac

Mundo Obrero: Teresa Gutierrez, Carlos Vargas

Supporter Program: Coordinator Sue Davis

Copyright © 2020 Workers World. Verbatim copying and distribution of articles is permitted in any medium without royalty provided this notice is preserved.

Workers World (ISSN-1070-4205) is published weekly except the last week of December by WW Publishers, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl., New York, NY 10011. Phone: 212.627.2994. Subscriptions: One year: \$36; institutions: \$50. Letters to the editor may be condensed and edited. Articles can be freely reprinted, with credit to Workers World, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl., New York, NY 10011. Back issues and individual articles are available on microfilm and/or photocopy from NA Publishing, Inc, P.O. Box 998, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-0998. A searchable archive is available on the Web at www.workers.org.

A headline digest is available via e-mail subscription. Subscription information is at workers.org.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to

Workers World, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl.

New York, N.Y. 10011.

# Racist, sexist, job-killing, strike-breaking, anti-union robber baron appointed to head USPS

By Joe Piette

An earlier version of this article appeared in *Labor Notes* May 15.

The Trump administration, COVID-19 and U.S. Senate reluctance to provide needed funding have put the U.S. Postal Service in dire economic straits. To make matters worse, newly appointed Postmaster General Louis DeJoy comes with 35 years experience in labor analytics — the art of eliminating as many jobs as possible — and other antiworker practices.

Criticism of the new postmaster has centered on his \$2 million in contributions to the Trump campaign and other Republican causes since 2016 and his fundraising responsibilities for the 2020 Republican National Convention in Charlotte, N.C. His former company, New Breed Logistics, had a terrible labor record, rife with sexual harassment, discrimination, speedup, workplace injuries, excessive use of temps, misclassifying workers as independent contractors and inadequate sick leave during the current pandemic.

## More automation

DeJoy, whose term begins June 15, is only the fifth postmaster general since 1971 to not come from within the U.S. Postal Service bureaucracy. His experience in supply chain logistics was clearly a factor in his appointment.

DeJoy's New Breed Logistics, before it merged with XPO Logistics, was a contractor to the USPS for more than 25 years, "supplying the organization with logistics support for multiple processing facilities," the USPS announcement revealed.

Currently XPO does extensive business with the Postal Service (\$57 million in 2017), potentially putting DeJoy in the position of overseeing decisions that affect his personal financial interests. He served terms as XPO's CEO and a board member before retiring in 2018. The company continues to rent warehouse space from him, and he and his spouse own between \$25 million and \$50 million in XPO stock.

The funding that the postal board of governors is asking from Congress includes \$25 billion for "modernization."

What might DeJoy's version of modernization look like? Take a look at the website of XPO: "Our focus is on robotics, autonomous vehicles, automated sortation systems, drones and other cutting-edge technologies that speed goods through the supply chain. Once startup is complete, our managers use XPO Smart™ labor analytics to optimize productivity."

In other words, the company specializes in the science of weeding out any worker who's not superproductive and supercompliant, with no regard to seniority or a worker's humanity. We can expect DeJoy to bring this same mentality to running the postal service.

Postal workers have experienced "modernization" before. Like in other industries, every wave of technological innovation since the 1980s has made work more difficult, while eliminating jobs, deskilling positions and increasing the number of lower-paid temporary workers.

Now during the pandemic, all postal workers are considered essential. All are exposed to COVID-19 dangers, but temp workers get much lower pay and benefits!

## 'Anti-union animus'

While DeJoy was CEO, New Breed acted with "anti-union animus," the National Labor Relations Board ruled in 1994. That's when New Breed avoided hiring Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) members after securing a contract to run a U.S. Army terminal in Compton, Calif.

In 2008, DeJoy and Boeing provoked a 57-day strike of 27,000 Machinists (IAM), who fought back against plans to outsource 5,000 union jobs in parts delivery and facilities maintenance to nonunion New Breed Logistics. The longest strike in Boeing history ended with a compromise deal that prevented the loss of 5,000 jobs but allowed New Breed to deliver parts to Boeing factories.

In 2013, a Tennessee jury awarded \$1.5 million to three New Breed temp warehouse workers in a sexual harassment and retaliation lawsuit. The workers had been fired for complaining about a manager's "unwelcome sexual touching and lewd, obscene and vulgar sexual remarks." The employee handbook, which had sexual harassment protocols, was purposefully kept out of the hands of temps — who



Workers striking in 2018 against XPO, the new postal head's former company, with a long record of 'anti-union animus.'

PHOTO: XPO EXPOSED

made up 80 percent of the workforce.

In 2014, the *New York Times* reported, four women working for New Breed in a Memphis warehouse suffered miscarriages after supervisors refused their requests for light duty during their pregnancies. Workers hoped that conditions would improve when XPO took over, but instead things got even worse — workers were now expected to pack 120 boxes per hour instead of 60 and were punished for too-long bathroom breaks. In 2017, a woman died of cardiac arrest on the warehouse floor, and workers around her were told to keep working. In 2018, two more women miscarried.

Since 2000, XPO and its subsidiaries have racked up 16 wage-and-hour violations, with fines totaling \$35 million. They have also been dinged six times for employment discrimination, five times for labor relations, eight times for aviation safety, and 22 times for health and safety violations. The state of California has repeatedly awarded back wages to XPO truck drivers who were misclassified as independent contractors.

Truck drivers, warehouse workers and intermodal drivers at hundreds of XPO facilities worldwide held a day of protests on May 30, 2019, against abuses and wage theft. U.S. efforts were coordinated by the Teamsters, who organized a handful of XPO units. "As someone who drives from Tijuana, Mexico to San Diego every single day to work more than 12 hours," said driver Jose 'Chema' Rodriguez, "it's ludicrous that I'm still unable to afford

to live in the United States because of the compensation and benefits XPO has denied me by misclassifying me as an 'independent contractor.'"

When the pandemic hit, the *New York Times* reported that XPO offered to "lend" workers up to 100 hours of time off—but they would have to repay the time. A Miami truck driver told the paper that even if he got coronavirus, he would have to keep driving his 18-wheeler. On April 4, workers walked out of an XPO warehouse in Palmyra, N.J., over COVID-19 concerns, after three workers became infected. (Video of walkout: [tinyurl.com/yd2wefxk](https://tinyurl.com/yd2wefxk))

## Time to fight

Already the pandemic has caused the deaths of more than 60 postal workers, and as of May 24, more than 97,000 people have died in the U.S., disproportionately people of color and the elderly. Over 17,000 postal workers have been sickened or have had to self-quarantine.

The pandemic has created a massive funding crisis for the postal service, but the struggle to save the postal service is taking place under a presidential administration that is openly hostile to its existence. The threat to postal jobs and benefits also comes at a time of historic unemployment, with more than 38 million unemployment claims filed since late March. Perhaps one-third of the U.S. workforce has become jobless; many may never get their jobs back.

The 38 percent turnover rate among noncareer employees at USPS in 2018-19 will likely decrease. Workers in these second-tier, permatemp positions (mail handler assistants, postal support employees, city carrier assistants and rural carrier associates) may be unwilling to quit — despite inflexible schedules, arrogant supervisors, the physical demands of the work and working too many or too few hours. People will be desperate to feed and house their families.

If workers can't afford to walk away from the job, they might be more willing to fight for their rights on the job — much like workers during the great postal strike of 1970. The postal workforce at that time included many veterans newly returned from the Vietnam War, who came back angry — veterans were extremely antiwar — and Black workers were inspired by the Black Liberation Movement. The rebellious spirit of the times led to defiant action within the post office. After the last few years of education worker strikes, Black Lives Matter protests and the #MeToo movement, it appears such a spirit is percolating again.

Piette began as a postal clerk, became a letter carrier and retired in 2011 after 30 years in the USPS.

## 50 years after the Great Postal Strike

By Dave Welsh

Fifty years ago, wildcatting postal workers shut down the U.S. mail for a week in the 1970 Great Postal Strike over poverty-level wages. President Nixon tried to use Army and National Guard soldiers to break the strike — without success. The strike resulted in creation

of an independent U.S. Postal Service, with union contracts providing pay raises with cost-of-living escalators, a no-layoff clause and union protections.

American Postal Workers (APWU) President Mark Dimondstein recalled that the 1970 Postal Strike created the USPS as "an independent agency, designed to be free from the political patronage and cronyism that had plagued the old Post Office Department."

Now, he continued, "the APWU is deeply concerned with the appointment process to make Mr. Louis DeJoy, a multimillion-dollar major donor to President Trump, the next

Postmaster General, and whether the administration has returned to the days of political interference and patronage.

"Mr. DeJoy has a choice. ... He can choose to be a Postmaster General who implements the destructive plans of this White House: raising postal rates, cutting services, undermining stable union and family-sustaining jobs, and selling the public Postal Service to corporations for their private profit. And if that is his choice, Mr. DeJoy will be met with stiff resistance from postal workers and the people of this country.

"Or Mr. DeJoy can prove true to his stated commitment to the public Postal Service, its employees and our mission binding the country together through universal service to all. If so, he will be a welcome addition to the postal family."

Joe Piette contributed to this article. Both Piette and Welsh are retired members of the National Association of Letter Carriers.



1970 Great Postal Strike, New York City.

## Car caravan

# Free Our Youth!

By Joe Piette  
Philadelphia

As states across the U.S. took steps to stop the spread of COVID-19—closing schools and workplaces, canceling events and shifting to supporting children in their homes and communities—one group of young people is being left behind: the nearly 50,000 youth locked up across the country. Releasing young people held in detention centers was the focus of a “Free Our Youth” car caravan in front of the Philadelphia Juvenile Justice Services Center on May 18.

At least two children have tested positive for COVID-19 while in juvenile jail, but the number of incarcerated youth has actually increased from 105 on May 7 to 125 on May 18. An additional 21 young people under 18 are currently in pretrial incarceration in the city’s adult jails, being held indefinitely because the courts are closed due to COVID-19. Many more Philadelphia youth are incarcerated in juvenile placement facilities outside the city, with possible release dates delayed because of court closures.

Teenagers between ages 15 and 17 can be charged as adults and held in adult jails in Pennsylvania because of Act 33, passed in 1995 for particular felonies that met certain conditions. On any given day, dozens of children ages 14 to 17 are housed in adult jails in counties across Pennsylvania while facing charges in adult court. Most will see their cases dismissed or moved to juvenile proceedings, but not before they spend weeks, months or even years locked

up with adults.

Youth pretrial detention is marred by racial disparity. Less than 21 percent of white youth with delinquency cases are detained, compared to 32 percent of Latinx youth, 30 percent of Black youth, 26 percent of Indigenous youth and 25 percent of Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander youth. Time held in confinement before trial isolates them from their families and communities and exposes them to the risk of victimization while detained. (see [ojdp.ojp.gov](http://ojdp.ojp.gov))

Discriminatory court practices increase racial disparity again after trials. For example, while 14 percent of all youth under 18 in the U.S. are Black, the percentage of youth in prison who are Black ranges from 35 to 42 percent, depending on gender. ([prisonpolicy.org](http://prisonpolicy.org), Dec. 19)

Across the U.S., there are over 400 reported youth in juvenile facilities who have been diagnosed with COVID-19, not counting children held alongside adults in local jails, ICE detention centers, and other facilities.

### ‘It made me feel like a caged animal’

Speaking outside the West Philadelphia youth detention center’s front doors, formerly incarcerated young adults, family members of incarcerated young people, community leaders, City Council members and allies took turns describing the deep pain, fear, uncertainty and isolation that children have experienced while locked behind bars, separated from their



Zekiya Cherif, whose son was previously incarcerated at the Philadelphia Juvenile Justice Services Center, speaks to protesters on May 18.

families during the worst public health pandemic in a century.

Organizers shared an audio recording from one 16-year-old who spent time in adult jail during the pandemic: “We couldn’t come out of our cells that much or interact with each other. It made me feel like a caged animal. Since I’ve been home, it’s been hard to sleep.”

“As a parent, it’s heart-wrenching,” said Zekiya Cherif, whose 18-year-old son was recently transferred from PJJSC to another state facility. “It’s almost like your child’s life could be taken away with a sneeze or a cough. We are here to stand in the gap for our children, who are voiceless.”

Shineal Hunter said: “As an educator, and family member of an African-American youth recently involved with the criminal justice system, I am appalled by the injustices faced by Black and Brown families. ... I want to ask Mayor Kenney: If it were a young person in his family, would he act now or allow them to sit in jail during the COVID-19 pandemic?”

City Councilmember Kendra Brooks said, “In juvenile detention facilities, social distancing looks a lot like solitary

confinement. This kind of long-term isolation is not only deeply inhumane, but could have long term effects on youth development. The safest and most ethical thing we can do for them and for our communities is to bring them home.”

Michaela Pommells of Village of Arts and Humanities said, “We call on our city officials to imagine these young people as their own children and respond ethically and responsibly.”

People in cars listened to the event on Zoom as they stopped at the main entrance or drove around the facilities and honked after speeches, mimicking applause.

The community coalition called on officials to halt the new admission of youth to detention facilities; lift all juvenile detainers and bench warrants; prohibit the use of solitary confinement for youth currently in detention; suspend probation requirements, penalties and collection of fines and fees, and release all youth in detention back to caretakers or guardians.

The caravan protest was co-sponsored by The Youth Art & Self-empowerment Project, the Village of Arts & Humanities, Movement Alliance Project, Philadelphia Community Bail Fund, Decarcerate PA, Reclaim Philadelphia, Amistad Law Project, ACLU of Pennsylvania, Human Rights Coalition, VietLead, National Domestic Workers Alliance-PA Chapter, Project SAFE, Philadelphia Student Union, Philly Neighborhood Networks, Philadelphia Bail Fund and POWER Live Free. □



## Witness at the prison gates

# Karnes Family ‘Detention’ Center

By BLS  
Karnes City, Texas

On May 16, I found the Karnes County Family Residential Center tucked away on a secluded road in Karnes City, Texas. This place is one of three family detention centers in the U.S. Another is the South Texas Family Residential Center in Dilley, and the third is Berks County Residential Center in Leesport, Pa.

When I got to Karnes, I was greeted by about a dozen honking cars decorated with signs like “Keep families together” and

“ICE kills!” Booming car horns flooded this quiet little town. These horns were roaring in protest of the recent dreadful ultimatum that parents inside Karnes are faced with: “Remain in detention as a family indefinitely” or “Let us separate you from your children.”

It is shocking that Immigration and Customs Enforcement would force such a decision on these families after the brutality of family separation carried out in 2018. Then hundreds of children were displaced, causing lifelong trauma for them and their families. ICE’s current deplorable actions have been dubbed “Family Separation 2.0.”

Many of the families detained at Karnes are asylum seekers and are fleeing violence in their home countries. There are babies in jail who are with the only caregivers they have ever known, their parents, and now ICE wants to take them away.

Those of us in the caravan that day hoped that the families heard our horns on the other side of the gates and know that we stand in solidarity with all of them. We demand that ICE free families—together! □



WW PHOTO

May 16 car caravan protesting migrant family imprisonment at the Karnes County Residential Center — first immigrant detention facility in Texas to be licensed as a ‘child care provider.’

## ‘Safe Jobs Save Lives’

# N.C. union rallies to free prisoners, support city workers

By Dante Strobino

Union workers and community members organized a car caravan protest in front of Neuse Correctional Institute in Goldsboro, N.C., on May 12 to demand the freedom of all prisoners. This was in response to the fifth COVID-19 related death of a prisoner in North Carolina state prisons the week prior. At Neuse itself, nearly 500 prisoners have tested positive for COVID-19 and three have died, making it one of the hardest hit prisons in the nation.

In a press release the North Carolina Public Service Workers Union, United Electrical Workers Local 150, stated: “The blatant denial of basic human rights by prison officials and their lack of response leaves inmates paying the ultimate price. Many were sentenced for nonviolent crimes, not a death penalty. Prisons and detention centers are not the answer to

the challenges facing our society and pose a significant health risk to both incarcerated individuals and workers during this pandemic.”

Along with the union, this action was supported by the statewide N.C. United for Survival & Beyond Coalition and Pitt County Coalition Against Racism.

Directly after leaving the prison, the rally continued as over 30 employees of the city of Goldsboro Public Works Department, public sector union members, their community allies and three City Council members protested at City Hall for proper personal protective equipment, hazard pay, staggered shifts and other safety measures to protect city workers from COVID-19.

City workers have been raising their concerns with management and the city administration since late March. After not hearing sufficient response, workers took their concerns directly to City Manager Tim

Salmon. After demonstrators crowded into the lobby of the city administration building and waited about 15 minutes, and after Salmon was prodded by Council Members Taj Pollack, Antonio Williams and Brandi Matthews, the city manager finally came downstairs to greet the crowd.

Looking disturbed, Salmon hastily took the letter, signed by employees and their allies. Bryce Carter, a city of Greensboro Streets Department worker and president of UE Local 150, and union Vice President Sekia Royall, a food service assistant at O’Berry Neuro-Medical Treatment Center in Goldsboro, attended the rally with other UE 150 members to back the city workers’ campaign for “Safe Jobs Save Lives” and support their right to unionize.

After receiving the letter, Salmon dismissed the crowd, telling them there was no appointment and attempted to dodge questions from the media. It was clear

he had no substantial concern for city employees’ safety.

### Action continues ‘Safe Jobs Save Lives’ campaign

Sixteen workers in the Goldsboro PWD wore stickers reading, “Safe Jobs Save Lives” to work on April 7 and signed a letter, along with 30 community supporters, addressed to City Manager Salmon. To this date, there has been no official response — other than management attempting to intimidate city workers for exercising their constitutional rights.

Workers delivered a followup letter on April 21 to Public Works Director Rick Fletcher, outlining their concerns for safety and violations of their constitutional rights to freedom of association, including joining a union.

“Other essential businesses have

*Continued on page 5*

# International movement demands justice for Major Tillery

By **Betsey Piette**

On May 17, word spread via social media that Major Tillery, a political prisoner at Pennsylvania's State Correctional Institution Chester, was sick with chills, a sore throat and a fever for several days. On hearing of Tillery's illness and knowing that COVID-19 was running rampant in U.S. prisons, the international prisoner defense movement sprang into action. It launched a petition, in English and French, and a phone and letter-writing campaign directed to SCI Chester administrators.

In addition to demanding medical treatment for Tillery, the campaign protested the total prison lockdown. Prisoners have been denied showers and cleaning of cell blocks, as well as phone calls or other communication with the outside. Food for sick prisoners was placed on the floor outside their cells.

Tillery has alerted supporters that a major roadblock to receiving treatment is Dr. Paul Little, employed by Wellpath, who has the final say on which prisoners receive COVID-19 tests. Tillery writes: "They saying they are protecting the elderly by locking us up for 24 hours, but with no air and no movement for months is killing us with [our] respiratory problems, no vitamin D. In the last 9 days we have received nothing. ... They are using this pandemic as punishment."

It was Tillery who blew the whistle in 2015 when Mumia Abu-Jamal was near death due to untreated hepatitis C in SCI Mahanoy. When the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PADOC) retaliated by moving Tillery to SCI Frackville, he filed a federal pro se lawsuit demanding medical treatment for Mumia and all prisoners. At Frackville, after he succeeded in obtaining services for aging prisoners, the PADOC retaliated again and moved him to SCI Chester.

Tillery, whom Abu-Jamal describes as a "jailhouse lawyer who shook the prison walls," has been held in solitary confinement for 20 of his 37 years in prison "because of something prison administrators hate and fear above all things: prisoner unity; prisoner solidarity." (For information on his case, see [justiceformajortillery.org](http://justiceformajortillery.org).)

PADOC statistics list one prisoner and 14 guards as COVID-19 positive at SCI Chester as of May 18, but do not say how many prisoners were tested. Statewide, 226 inmates and 157 guards have tested positive, with five prisoners and one guard dying from the virus.

In addition to the call-in campaign, the Coalition to Abolish Death by Incarceration rallied outside SCI Chester on May 19, urging officials to release inmates, especially the elderly and sick. The protests and call-ins had an impact. By May 20, people incarcerated at SCI Chester were getting showers, phone calls and access to prison kiosks. The prison also started randomly testing 30 to 40 people at a time. However, as of this report, Tillery has not been tested.

## Letter from Richard Wright's daughter

Prominent among those galvanizing international support for Tillery is Europe-based activist Julia Wright, daughter of author Richard Wright. Excerpts from her letter to Kenneth Eason, SCI Chester Administrator, follow:

Dear Mr. Kenneth Eason,

I just watched with deep interest your January 2017 talk on "The Path to Prison" (TEDx Talks/You Tube). My father, the late African American writer Richard Wright, used to quip: "Who would ever want to be a cop or a prison guard?" But as a journalist he also taught me how to listen to all sides of all stories, so I paid

careful attention to your reminiscences of your traumatic childhood years at the hands of bullies.

You spoke of your fears resulting from bullying: Would you get your lunch money stolen? Would the contents of your bookbag be strewn on the ground for you to crawl all over? Would you get beat up? No wonder you developed a stutter, a difficulty to look people in the eye, and started to pull your hair out.

As my father recalls in his book "Black Boy/American Hunger," he too was bullied at an early age, but his mother, who was the wife of a sharecropper, the son of a slave, could not afford boarding school. She gave him a thick stick and sent him out to face the bullies or return home to corporal punishment. The result: a narrative which is now taught in U.S. schools.

Your mother chose a different but sincere path: She sent you to the Milton S. Hershey School for Disadvantaged Children. You say in your comments: "At last, I felt safe." You graduated and eventually become a prison custodian and now, under COVID-19, the acting Superintendent of SCI Chester.

Central to the problem of bullying is the preying by virulent and violent elements over vulnerability and helplessness. The super bully today is the virus threatening bullies and bullied alike. To the extent you, an African American single parent's son, were bullied when little, I hope you can place yourself in the shoes of the elderly, vulnerable and immunocompromised, whose immediate release would constitute no threat to the community.

I was struck by your lifelong respect for your mentor Milton S. Hershey (who died in 1945, the year [Wright's famous novel] "Black Boy" was published). Clearly, you sincerely cherish Hershey's vision of help for the disadvantaged



Call-in campaign on behalf of Major Tillery.

before it is too late.

Consider that this is your opportunity to turn your prison into a safe, caring, disinfected, COVID-19-free space. Just as your mentor Milton S. Hershey turned his school into a model of safety, welcoming bullied children, now you have the opportunity of becoming the Black Hershey of the U.S. carceral system by turning SCI Chester into a new experiment of safety, justice for all and an enlightened policy of release under COVID-19 for all to emulate.

I call upon you to provide testing for all inmates and staff, with transparency on numbers of positive cases; to disinfect all cells and common areas; to provide regular access to showers, hygiene and PPE for all inmates and staff. Provide yard, phone and internet access to all prisoners on a regular basis, with regular walk-throughs by prison administrators, including yourself.

And grant the immediate release of as many prisoners as possible from SCI Chester, including Major Tillery who is elderly, African American and more likely to catch the virus, [as he is] already immunocompromised. His having set up a welfare program for elders behind bars is not a threat to the community, on the contrary. In the spirit of your mentor, yours sincerely, Julia Wright. □

## N.C. union rallies to free prisoners, support city workers

Continued from page 4

provided PPE and hazardous pay. I would like the city of Goldsboro to take the lead on this matter," stated Anya Dawson, Operator 4 in the PWD in front of the May 4 City Council meeting. "We come in contact with blood-borne pathogens and leachate on a daily basis, along with animal and human feces. We inhale fumes and come in contact with things that could expose us to COVID-19. We deserve these

basic protections."

Essential city workers in many municipalities across the state have demanded and minimally received PPE and hazardous pay. Municipal chapters of UE Local 150 in Charlotte, Durham, Raleigh and Greensboro have received that in addition to extra cleaning supplies, staggered shifts and smaller crew sizes to help with social distancing.

"As a state worker I understand the burden and privilege to be called an essential

worker in this time," stated Vice President Royall. "We are fully behind the city workers' demands for more PPE and hazardous pay."

City of Goldsboro workers are continuing to build their organizing committee so they can fight and win the much deserved safety, rights, raises—and even save lives. □



PHOTO: UE LOCAL 150, NC PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS UNION

Goldsboro city workers, wearing "Safe Jobs Save Lives" stickers, delivered petitions to city management May 12.

## Georgia 'reopens' with questionable data

By **Arielle Robinson**  
Atlanta

Even as Georgia reopens certain businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic, the state's Department of Public Health continues to make errors in tracking the number of COVID-19 cases.

One error found earlier this month on the state's DPH website led readers to believe that newly confirmed COVID-19 cases in counties with the highest infection rates had decreased every single day for the previous 14 days.

In this DPH data, the dates were reordered so that Sunday took place twice a week, and data from Saturday, May 2, came before data from Sunday, April 26. In reality, there was not a clear downward trend of confirmed cases. A spokesperson for Gov. Brian Kemp apologized after

public outcry over the data.

Another error occurred in both April and May when the DPH at least twice falsely listed children as dead from the virus when they had not died.

The DPH data for May were unclear on whether more than 1,000 deaths from COVID-19 had occurred in Georgia. Later, the department clarified that more than 1,490 people had died from the virus.

Over the weekend of May 16-17, a DPH "processing error" once again made it appear that the number of COVID-19 cases in Georgia had decreased. The DPH said it had unintentionally included 231 serologic test results in the positive cases. Serologic tests are used to search for COVID-19 antibodies in the blood.

Because results from serologic tests are only considered "probable" by the DPH, they are normally not included in the

confirmed cases. By including these serologic tests, the DPH made it appear that COVID-19 cases in the state had suddenly decreased.

### 'Reopening' threatens working class

Georgia is among the first states in the country to reopen during the COVID-19 crisis. Despite officials saying the state was ready to reopen, Georgia's own public health agency either cannot or will not provide those affected by this crisis with accurate information to truly assess the danger the virus poses to the working class, especially Black and Brown people.

Besides making "errors," the DPH has also changed some of its guidelines on how it tracks cases.

When the pandemic started in Georgia, the DPH attributed the date a person was confirmed to have COVID-19 to when they

got back positive test results. Since late April, the DPH has changed this to the day a patient says their symptoms started. If the patient is unsure, the department refers to either the day the test sample was collected or when the results came back.

With the latter method, it can take weeks for information on cases to come in, so it will look like cases are decreasing in the state—even if they may not be.

Georgia's DPH also changed how it measures infection rates, raising the standards used to determine if a county has a high rate. In the graph it uses to track infection rates in counties, blue represents a low rate while red means a high rate.

Dr. Harry J. Heiman, a professor from Georgia State University, remarked that if the DPH had kept to its original standards, about a third to one-half of all Georgia counties would be shaded red. □

# Why I joined Workers World Party

By Arielle Robinson

I was introduced to Workers World Party when I first moved to Atlanta from Derry, N.H., after high school. I was born and raised in New Hampshire, and being a Black woman growing up

in a predominately white area, it was inevitable that I would be exposed to the deeply racist society that is this country.

Racism radicalized me, and since leaving New Hampshire, I was looking for an organization that would more adequately address the issue of race. I was introduced by a Black comrade to Workers World, and upon joining I found that I was able to put radical language to not just my own experiences, but the experiences of Black people in the U.S. and around the globe.



Arielle Robinson.

I learned about the national question, and through the party I was able to expand my visions and opinions about liberation. Through attending my first party conference last year, I learned further about the struggles that transgender folks, disabled people, sex workers and many more of the working and oppressed

classes face, and I learned that I don't struggle alone.

I joined the party because it taught me to put away individualism and realize that all our struggles are interconnected. We need one another to survive. I learned of revolutionary optimism through the party and learned of and met the countless freedom fighters inside the party and out who inspire me and others when times look bleak.

The party has taught me that socialist

revolution is possible and that people can work together for the common good because humanity is not inherently selfish. The party has taught me that as Marxists it is important to read and study to be able to make revolution possible.

I enjoy looking through demonstration photos from the 1960s, '70s, '80s, and more, and seeing that party signs are there. I think it shows the party's commitment to show support for the oppressed, and I'm glad to be alive today with some of those people from the '60s, '70s and '80s.

I joined the party because I believe that we can make those party slogans possible. That's why I joined Workers World.

*Robinson (she/her) is a candidate in Atlanta, soon to become a full member of Workers World Party. She is a university student and frequently writes for Workers World newspaper as well as other local publications.*



**On May 16 — with an in-person party conference not possible during this pandemic year — Workers World Party held an extended webinar on the theme of “What Road to Socialism?” On these pages are slightly edited versions of some of the dynamic presentations given that day.**

# Pandemic and Trump's anti-migrant agenda

By B.L.S.

I'm humbled and thankful to have this opportunity to share some of my firsthand experiences with y'all. As a legal assistant, I work closely with asylum seekers who are detained in Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody.

There is no doubt that the Trump administration has used this pandemic as an excuse to push its anti-immigration agenda. The border has been shut down and thousands of migrants expelled. Now, in at least one detention center, ICE is offering parents an ultimatum: 1) give us permission to release your child while you remain in detention or 2) remain detained with your child. After all the trauma families suffered in 2018, ICE is

still trying to separate families.

I could hear the anguish in the voices of our clients. Some have even told me they fear they won't make it out alive. A COVID-19 outbreak is inevitable and the risk of spreading the coronavirus is not taken seriously by ICE or private operator GEO Group's staff. This is proven by the lack of sanitation in the facility, and the fact that the practice of social distancing is impossible.

These families are trapped; they don't have access to personal protective equipment or hand sanitizer. The GEO staff members and ICE officers don't wear masks or any other sort of PPE either, risking the spread of this deadly virus.

The physical and mental health of people in these detention centers begins to

deteriorate the longer they remain in detention. Quality medical care is nonexistent.

Mental health care is also absent in these facilities. Some people fear being placed in solitary confinement if they disclose suicidal ideation or feelings of depression.

After our clients heard about the pandemic through the news on their TVs, our clients began demanding answers from ICE. After ICE was bombarded, they decided to rid the TVs of all news channels.

There is no reason these people should remain in detention other than for profit. GEO Group and CoreCivic together made almost \$500 million last year.

There are 1,181 confirmed COVID-19 infections among detainees in the U.S. However, as of May 16 only 2,368 of the 26,660 detainees have been tested,

according to ICE, so that number may be even higher ([ice.gov/coronavirus](http://ice.gov/coronavirus)). Unfortunately, Carlos Ernesto Escobar Mejia was the first to die from COVID-19 while in ICE custody. A father at Karnes has taken his own life amid the pandemic, and more deaths are inevitable if things don't change.

Not one more preventable death should occur! We need to free them all!

*B.L.S. is a Mexicana currently living in San Antonio. An advocate for immigrants, she works as a legal assistant at a non-profit serving asylum seekers. She has decided to be a part of WWP to stand in solidarity with immigrants, protect the environment and continue the fight for Medicare for All.*

# 'Safe Jobs Save Lives'

By Dante Strobino

As the coronavirus continues to have a massive impact on people's health and as some businesses have closed, there is a simultaneous crisis of the capitalist system itself. It is characterized by overpro-

duction in major sectors of the capitalist economy, such as energy production and hospitality and transportation sectors.

We are starting to see this spiral through the economy, which is having a major impact on tax revenues for local governments. As always, it is the working class that is taking the brunt of the hit.

Yet as workers are forced to work in dangerous conditions, there has been an explosion of workers' strikes across the country. There have been over 200 wildcat workplace strikes related to COVID-19, including by football jersey workers who were converted to protective gear makers, poultry workers, bus drivers, and Amazon warehouse, Whole Foods and other grocery workers. Strikes are occurring across all essential industries, as workers take their lives into their own hands.

Many auto, textile, meatpacking and other manufacturing plants are opening



Dante Strobino.

up without any written agreements with their unions or the workers. That means workers will be forced back into a dangerous environment, risking their lives. As of April 28, Workers' Memorial Day, 61,000 people had died in the U.S. from this virus.

Yet Trump, after refusing to command industries

to produce necessary health care equipment like ventilators and surgical masks, invoked the Defense Production Act to force the opening up of all meatpacking factories, no matter the risk to poultry, hog slaughtering and meatpacking workers across the country. They work in damp, cool environments that have proven to be major hotspots for infection and death.

On May 13, labor leaders honored the life of Celso Mendoza, an immigrant union leader, who died of COVID after warning his coworkers of its dangers. He had migrated from Veracruz, Mexico, and worked on the processing line at a chicken plant in Forest, Miss., for \$6 an hour.

As of May Day, over 5,000 meatpacking and 1,500 food processing workers have been sickened by the virus, while over 20 deaths in these industries have been reported, says the Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW). (Since then, these

figures have increased.) The largest concentration of plants is in the U.S. South and Midwest. In North Carolina, 982 workers have tested positive for COVID-19 at 20 meat processing plants in 12 counties.

## Southern Workers Assembly fights for safety

The Southern Workers Assembly has launched a Safe Jobs Save Lives campaign to support the struggles of workers across the South to organize at the workplace with calls for safety and power. We have concentrated on supporting workers in meatpacking plants and transportation sectors and lifting up their struggles.

Bus and transit drivers have taken part in workplace actions, including strikes during this period. In New York City, 98 transit workers died as of May 1.

A video recorded by Detroit bus driver, Jason Hargrove, calling out a coughing passenger on social media, has been transformed into a TV ad calling attention to the toll the virus is taking on Black people. Hargrove died of COVID-19 11 days after he recorded the video.

The SWA has been in touch with striking bus drivers in Birmingham, Ala. Gregg Roddy, president of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 725, spoke on SWA's recent webinar about the drivers' successful job action. Elsewhere across the South there have been transit strikes in Richmond, Va., and Greensboro, N.C., as

well as many other cities.

One thing that these two industries — meat processing and transit — have in common is that their workforce is overwhelmingly made up of Black and Brown workers. More than half of all meatpacking workers are Latinx. About 30 percent of the country's transit operators are Black and 14 percent are Latinx, according to U.S. census data. Sixty-five percent of them are over 45 years old, and 15 percent are older than 65.

The Southern Workers Assembly promotes a slogan, first stated by Sam Marcy, the late chairperson of Workers World Party: “If you have a union, fight to make it fight. If you don't have a union, fight to get one!” That is what we are doing across the South. This includes helping to build citywide solidarity structures, such as local Workers' Assemblies. These can help give workers space to speak bitterness, but also to help them see their own struggles against their bosses as part of a larger fight against the capitalist system.

*Strobino (he/him) is an International Representative for the United Electrical Workers (UE) and has worked with the North Carolina Public Service Workers Union, UE Local 150 for over 15 years. He is on the Coordinating Committee of the Southern Workers Assembly and a member of the Durham branch of Workers World Party.*

# Fight for the rights of people with disabilities!

By Mary Pinotti Kaessinger

Disability is a condition that strikes all classes. Ruling-class families start charities, like the Kennedys, who started the Special Olympics. That's nice, but it didn't bring universal health care, shelter or good food — faults in the system which the pandemic has so blatantly exposed.

Others who have had access to television platforms conduct lengthy telethons, like Jerry Lewis, who engendered pity by bringing disabled children before the cameras. According to a famous T-shirt slogan, "Piss on Pity!" We don't want pity. We want respect!

Those of us in the working-class fight aim to assert our dignity and make things right. We do this on many fronts. Capitalism provides us with endless opportunities.

Militant disability rights activists, including WWP members, joined other activists to form the People's MTA (Metropolitan Transit Authority) to fight for accessible subways and more. New York City subways have elevators

in only 20 percent of the stations. Subways are important for more than getting around. They bring us to work. A NYC comptroller's study found the employment rate was significantly higher among people with disabilities who lived near a subway line than for those who did not.

Disabled activists from WWP formed the Fair Wages Task Force, along with the New York state chapter of the National Federation of the Blind. We wanted to reform the Fair Wages and Standards Act of 1938, which allows employers to pay subminimum wages to workers with disabilities, often pennies on the dollar.

Our effort fell short. If we persisted and got the minimum wage, participants would lose benefits that Medicaid provides, like aides. That's how the government enforces the impoverishment of people with disabilities.

Another major fight at the heart of the current disability rights movement is for "independent living." That means living in our homes in the community rather than in nursing homes or other institutions. Also, nursing homes have

become breeding grounds for the COVID-19 virus.

The current pandemic poses yet another problem for people who use ventilators to breathe. Those who use them, like disability activist Alice Wong, feared her life-saving ventilator would be taken away for use by formerly able-bodied people, hospitalized with COVID-19. A New York law allows the state, in the event of a hospitalization, to confiscate ventilators kept at home. In a medical crisis, the state should purchase and provide ventilators for all who need them.

The fight for socialism will tear down the rickety, mean structures of capitalism. Building socialism will allow us to build things the right way.

*Pinotti Kaessinger (she/her) joined WWP in the early 1970s. As a union activist, she gravitated toward the party-initiated Center for United Labor Action, acting as a "shop steward" for people applying for unemployment benefits. Today she is active with the Disability Rights Caucus of WWP and the People's MTA.*

## Pandemics can foment social revolutions

Continued from page 1

population get angry because of the already terrible conditions, in addition to the bad conditions that the pandemic imposes on them, and then become ready to revolt. This is especially true if the dominant system is a decrepit, decaying system that really just needs a good kick to push it into the trash bins of history.

The bubonic plague of the 14th and 15th centuries played a big role in arousing the peasantry in the struggle to end feudalism. One pandemic that some of you may know a little bit about is the 1918 influenza. A very bad, very deadly pandemic. It is believed to have killed somewhere between 50 and 100 million people, including three-quarters of a million people in this country. And that was at a time when the population of the U.S. was about 105 million.

That pandemic did not have the same impact on the economy that the present one is having for a number of reasons. Perhaps the most important reason is that that was during World War I, the first global imperialist war, and most of the U.S. economy was directed toward the war. All the working class was directed toward war production.

That's different than now. It's primarily weapon systems and bombs that imperialism makes now. That buffers the economy to a certain extent. Also, U.S. imperialism had an advantage. Europe was devastated by World War I; the U.S. was not. As a matter of fact, what the war did was begin to push U.S. imperialism into position so that it would ultimately grasp the capitalist system in a big way and become the leading imperialist power.

### Pandemic and economic depression

Medical science 100 years ago was undeveloped by comparison to today, so the expectation of people about what government and medicine could do to protect them was completely different than what it is now. This current pandemic will be viewed historically — this is a turning point in the decline of U.S. imperialism and world capitalism.

No matter what happens to the pandemic — whether a vaccine is discovered, whether we even have more tests (which people are so frustrated about) — that's not going to change what this pandemic and the economic crisis that existed before it is doing to the global capitalist economy. There's still going to be a worldwide depression — the unemployment and all the misery and suffering — and part of that is going to be permanent.

Why? Because this pandemic has caused a permanent rupture at a time when all the scientific and technological achievements of capitalism — particularly of U.S. capitalism and all the wonderful integration of the economy based on globalization and technology — means very little. Because when people look at the economy and look at world capitalism and imperialism, they do not see strength. To the contrary, they see weakness. They see a system that is falling apart.

This contradiction, more than any other contradiction in my lifetime, spells out that from now on, in a very clear and brutal way, capitalism is fighting socialism. The old, decrepit, dangerous system is fighting to block the birth of something new on a global level.

If we had a socialist system, it would be absolutely no problem at all to shut down the economy for as long as

was necessary and advise people to shelter at home. They wouldn't have to worry about losing jobs or losing food or whatever they need. It's only under this degenerate, dying system that these greedy capitalists are freaking out. They're demanding, "Open up the economy, send workers back to the factories. We don't care if they get sick. We don't care if they die; we need to make the profits."

That contradiction is very clear and very stark. The working class — all sectors of it — is being hit very hard. No sector is hit harder than Black and Brown workers, women and gender-oppressed, and LGBTQ2+ workers, seniors and people with disabilities — always the most oppressed of the working class. But that doesn't exclude other sectors, who maybe a little while ago thought they were relatively "privileged." They're finding that those privileges are blowing away in the wind.

### Working class is fighting back

Workers are not just freaking out. They're doing that, as we all are. But they're fighting back. They're angry. They're saying: "No, we don't want to go to a plant or a factory or some workplace where we will get sick and maybe die." There are tremendous, militant, glorious wildcat walkouts and strikes, not only in this country but around the world.

There's a tremendous strike going on in Washington state now of farmworkers, the most oppressed of all workers, migrant workers. It's important for us to understand that, because of this militancy, this workers' rebellion is going to grow. Workers are going to need help in order to organize themselves in a way that they've never been organized since the 1930s. They're depending upon the help of revolutionaries like us, socialists and communists, who are dedicated to the working class — not to tell them what to do, not to substitute ourselves for them, but to help them in every way we can.

We are Workers World Party. Our name says it all. We exist to help our class in any way that we can to liberate themselves.

I think that one of the big lessons of the Bernie Sanders campaign and the Jeremy Corbyn campaign in Britain — good, important, progressive campaigns in many respects that had a lot of support — is that even with the support they had, they were not grounded in the struggle of the workers. They may have put forward demands, universal health care and other good things that we all support, but they weren't in the workers' struggles.

Now people who were supporting them on both sides of the Atlantic are realizing that the next thing we have to do is to ensure that our struggle is grounded in the working class — that it's part of the working class getting organized, getting powerful, becoming independent of bourgeois parties and fighting on its own. Without that,

electoral campaigns will have little meaning in the progress of a struggle.

I'm very proud, and members of my generation are very proud, about what we were able to accomplish. I've been in the struggle for almost a half a century. My comrades and I fought against the racist, imperialist Vietnam War. We sided with the Vietnamese. We supported liberation movements from Palestine to South Africa to Puerto Rico. We supported Malcolm X, the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation struggle. We supported the struggle of women to free themselves from patriarchal oppression. We solidarized ourselves with the struggle of LGBTQ2+ comrades and that entire community to free themselves from oppression. We supported the struggle of people with disabilities.

We struggle with the youth and the Black and Brown workers who are the targets of racism and national oppression. We've tried to intervene in the workers' movement, sometimes very effectively. And we're proud of it. But we are not the ones who decide exclusively what we can accomplish during our lifetime. Events and conditions decide that.

I'm speaking now predominantly to young comrades and friends. You have a different role because of what is happening now and because of this crisis that the world is entering—that capitalism is entering into. There is the possibility that in your generation, you may actually be able to bring capitalism to its end—but this is not guaranteed.

I want you to think about this and meditate on it and relate to it. If you're serious, if you're bold, if you have the patience, if you have the staying power, then that's one thing the

older generation can give you. We may have made mistakes, and there may be some things we didn't see. But we had staying power. That's why many of us are still here. After the better part of half a century, we get that.

That's worth a lot. If you get that, you just may be able to accomplish revolutionary things in your lifetime.

Don't leave it for other generations, if you can accomplish it now.

Long live our party, long live the socialist revolution, and good health to all of you.

*Holmes is the First Secretary of Workers World Party and a theoretical contributor to WW newspaper. He met the party through the American Servicemen's Union and joined the party as an antiwar GI.*



***'The most oppressed of the planet's population get angry because of the already terrible conditions, in addition to the bad conditions that the pandemic imposes on them, and then become ready to revolt. This is especially true if the dominant system is a decrepit, decaying system that really just needs a good kick to push it into the trash bins of history.'***

**— Larry Holmes**

# New York Times misses the mark on Kerala's COVID-19 success

By Joshua Hanks

It is almost five months since China first alerted the World Health Organization about cases of what is now called COVID-19. The ensuing pandemic has revealed stark differences in the responses of governments around the world. As Workers World has reported, communist-led governments in countries like Cuba, Vietnam, China and Laos have handled the pandemic much more effectively than capitalist governments in the U.S., Britain, Brazil and Sweden.

India's state of Kerala, led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) — CPI(M) — has also achieved resounding successes in both containing the virus and protecting people from its economic fallout. Workers World ran an article on April 2 detailing Kerala's handling of the pandemic, while capitalist media mostly ignored the state's response.

In contrast, capitalist media outlets continually laud states like New York, led by limelight-seeking Gov. Andrew Cuomo, despite the state having well over 360,000 confirmed cases, 23,000 deaths and a growing hunger crisis, with lines at food banks stretching for miles in what looks like a scene from the Great Depression.

Kerala's population of around 35 million people is only slightly less than that of California, the most populous state in the U.S. It is not a small state, and its successes cannot be chalked up to having less

people to deal with.

On May 22 the New York Times finally picked up on what's happening in Kerala, conducting an interview with political scientist Pavithra Suryanarayan of Johns Hopkins University, who studies state capacity in Kerala and neighboring Tamil Nadu state. Remarkably, the entire interview makes zero mention of the CPI(M), its mass organizations like the Democratic Youth Federation of India or the Centre of Indian Trade Unions, which have been instrumental in the state's pandemic response.

The interview hints at the basis of both Kerala's success and the failure of capitalist countries like the U.S. Suryanarayan posited that “[e]ven if the state has the ability to do something, does it actually do it when it needs to? You have to have a political will that aligns with the capacity.”

The U.S., with its highly developed economy, marshals massive resources for things like the Pentagon, Wall Street bailouts, mass incarceration of Black and Brown people, and extensive border controls. States like Kerala and countries such as Laos and Vietnam do not have economies that are as highly developed, yet what they do have, and what appears to be the key factor in containing the virus, are proactive, people-centered leftist governments and mass organizations that can mobilize millions of party members and the masses to achieve common goals for the public good.

Without the leadership of leftist and communist parties, and without the strong connection between those parties and the people they serve, it is very unlikely that states such as Kerala would be able to pull off such successful responses to COVID-19.

“Very early on,” Suryanarayan says, “Kerala started to have the feeling of a class-based dynamic, in which what is to be discussed is: ‘How do we create a solid welfare state? How do we come to an understanding about the basics of society that everybody needs?’” This class-based dynamic contrasts sharply with the political environment in other Indian states, where resurgent Hindu nationalism has inflamed ethnic, religious and caste-based conflicts.

In the U.S., Britain and other developed Western countries, white nationalism and racism are also on the rise, pitting different sectors of the multinational working class against each other. People of East Asian descent have faced a wave of violent attacks and discrimination in the West, with leaders like Trump actively fanning the flames of racism through discriminatory, bigoted rhetoric and actions. The Trump administration has used the pandemic to push more of its racist, anti-immigrant agenda, with advisors like white nationalist Stephen Miller calling for suspending all immigration into the country.

The U.S., more than any other country, has the material capacity to not only



An artist draws graffiti to ‘thank coronavirus warriors’ on the wall of the Ernakulam General Hospital in Kochi.

contain the virus, but to provide for all the basic needs of its people during the shut-down and beyond, from housing and food to health care and employment. It also has the ability to send doctors and medical supplies to struggling countries throughout the world in order to stop the virus globally and prevent the resurgence of the disease.

Yet the U.S. has failed to do so because under capitalism profits come before people.

States like Kerala, with far fewer resources than the world's sole superpower, have far more effectively protected the health and well-being of their people, regardless of their ethnicity or religion.

Here are links to Workers World articles on other countries' response:

- Cuba: [workers.org/2020/03/47126](http://workers.org/2020/03/47126)
- Vietnam: [workers.org/2020/04/47577](http://workers.org/2020/04/47577)
- China: [workers.org/2020/03/46882](http://workers.org/2020/03/46882)
- Laos: [workers.org/2020/04/47983](http://workers.org/2020/04/47983)
- Kerala: [workers.org/2020/04/47453](http://workers.org/2020/04/47453)

## Ecuador's people speak out Part 3

By Michael Otto  
Ibarra, Ecuador

Parts 1 and 2 are available online at [www.workers.org/tag/ecuador](http://www.workers.org/tag/ecuador).

Workers World spoke with Pedro de la Cruz, an Indigenous representative at the Constituent Assembly of 2008, the Constituyente, who spoke of what was happening in his region.

De la Cruz and Indigenous leaders of five communes in and around Cotacachi, a town in the countryside about 30 miles west of Ibarra, made use of “ancestral herbal cleaning agents” and raised funds to purchase chemicals (there was no government help) when they organized “mingas” — community work for collective action — to disinfect roads and streets.

Faced with the COVID-19 threat, the communes organized road closings with roadblocks to prevent the National Police from reentering the communities of the canton after an incident involving repression of youths. Road closings restrict traffic to only one entrance, making it possible to disinfect every car entering the area.

“Solidarity and social economy” campaigns are rising up out of necessity

everywhere to solve local problems. Indigenous, community-based and socialist programs will serve as models for a new Ecuador. People in Otavalo and other cities are organizing urban gardens with municipal assistance.

An article published on [greennetwork-project.org](http://greennetwork-project.org) on April 22 illustrates the leadership of an Indigenous elected official in Azuay Province. The official used provincial resources to organize mingas to provide health assistance and support people in quarantine.

### Peasants deliver harvests

The people governing Azuay promote bartering agricultural produce with two neighboring provinces. Peasants have delivered 45 tons of Indigenous harvests from small farming communities free to poor neighborhoods in nearby Guayaquil.

In Quito a team of volunteers is prepared to work with the municipality in a campaign to assist 3,500 people who live on income from recycling, which adds up to approximately 15,000 people counting their families.

In the very epicenter of the pandemic, Mónica Brito Mendoza, teacher and activist from the sector of the Guasmo Sur in Guayaquil, was interviewed by Voices from Guayaquil. (April 25, [rebellion.org](http://rebellion.org))

In her sector of Guasmo, Brito Mendoza reported, “Seven cooperatives with approximately 3,000 families do not have access to free medical care. We have the Guasmo hospital nearby, but this hospital has not been able to meet the demand of the population, since it had to attend the cases

of COVID-19 in the whole city.”

The teacher/activist said, “Without access to free hospital or medical care, the poor families in my cooperative, living in precarious and overcrowded housing, have created solidarity networks.” Free medical care is provided by volunteers online through direct phone calls and via Whatsapp texting. Neighbors distribute food to each other, making certain that the poorest families are fed. Organizing to disinfect streets twice a week helps to calm people and to solidarize the community.

Brito Mendoza herself has contracted and survived the coronavirus, thanks to telemedical assistance, but she has lost family to the disease. She is actively helping others, using the same digital technology that she believes saved her.

She observed: “We are fortunate that in our neighborhoods the self-employed merchants carry the groceries to our doorsteps. Throughout the morning, the sellers of the most varied products that can be offered in the market parade around, selling fruits and vegetables, dairy products, grains, seafood and medicine, all in tricycles, cars and trucks, accompanied by their respective speakers. This has made it so that you don't need to go out much.

“Our country has suffered a hard blow to the health budget in the last three years,” she continued. “In coastal areas such as Guayaquil, workers in charge of vector spraying to control mosquitos were fired, and in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have had to face an impressive increase in dengue outbreaks because the fumigation budget was practically eliminated.

“This should lead the people of Guayaquil and Ecuador to understand that free public health care is a citizen's

right that the State must guarantee. Without health there is no life; without health there is no economy.”

The masses of Ecuador had shut the country down in the first week of last October in solidarity with the Indigenous uprising against President Lenin Moreno's package of International Monetary Fund austerity measures that ended the fuel subsidy. The country was ready to heat up the streets again on May Day.

Public service workers had been suspended without compensation in the months of March and April. Trade unions (which represent 4 percent of the working class) denounced the layoffs, flexibilization [allowing bosses to worsen working conditions and control schedules] and a proposal to tax wages to pay for the crisis.

### CONAIE issues manifesto

This year the Confederation of Indigenous Nations (CONAIE) issued a manifesto with strong unifying demands. May Day was quiet in comparison with October, but when the pandemic runs its course, the people will rise up again. It's only a matter of time.

Meanwhile, 40,000 prisoners are threatened by overcrowding, which makes physical distancing impossible. There were prison uprisings in Ibarra and other locations. Prison factories are producing rough coffins for Guayaquil. On the morning of April 12 prisoners in El Inca Social Rehabilitation Center in Quito began a hunger strike to demand testing and health protections in the face of the COVID-19 emergency.

The Department of Labor provoked an outcry from trade unions and the Ecuadorian Medical Federation on April 28

*Continued on page 9*



A 2018 popular protest in Quito targets the Ecuadorean president.

WW PHOTO: MICHAEL OTTO



## Strike enters third week

# Packinghouse workers vs. bosses

By Jim McMahan  
Seattle

May 24 — Strikes broke out May 7 in several apple packinghouses and continue in Washington state's Yakima Valley. Latinx workers are striking more than a half-dozen big, rich packinghouses.

At least 400 workers have stayed out on strike for safety for more than two weeks — a great feat because they don't yet have unions. Workers have formed a caravan with many women in the lead and march from one packinghouse to another to encourage others to march out.

They are protesting the high rate of COVID-19 infections and the lack of safety equipment and measures in the packinghouses. Scores of workers have become infected. They demand face

masks, sanitization, plastic shields on packing lines and testing. They are also demanding hazard pay — usually an extra \$2-an-hour — for being essential, frontline workers. They now earn only the Washington state minimum wage of \$13.50 an hour.

Yakima County now has 500 cases of COVID-19 in agriculture-related industries alone. And the agricultural season is just getting underway.

In the face of this, the Trump administration acted for the bosses and against the workers. On May 18, the Food and Drug Administration and the Department of Agriculture ruled that the Defense Production Act could be invoked to keep the plants open, even if that meant overriding closure actions called by local officials. (Seattle Times, May 23)

Nevertheless, on Friday, May 22, the workers at Monson Fruit reached a new labor agreement — a victory for the workers' movement. Their five-worker negotiating committee gained an agreement for sanitization, social distancing and enforcement, and worker safety. The committee will continue to negotiate for fair wage increases as they go back to work.

The state, which has always defended the agribusiness bosses, was forced to set up testing for COVID-19 at the picket line outside one of the packinghouses. As this article is written, strikes continue at five packinghouses.

The workers have been assisted throughout by representatives of Familias



Fruit packers in Washington state are in their third week on strike.

Unidas por la Justicia/Families United for Justice — a 400-member union of berry field workers and workers in solidarity.

Workers filed an unfair labor practice complaint with the National Labor Relations Board on May 19 against Allan Brothers packinghouse. Also, two workers went on a hunger strike for justice against Allan Brothers.

"If we're essential, as recognized by law," one of them asked, "why aren't they giving us the pay we're asking for?" □

## Portland caravan supports essential workers

By Lyn Neeley

Large placards covered supporters' cars during the Portland, Ore., caravan for essential workers held May 21. It started at the East Portland Post Office, circled two Fred Meyer grocery stores and ended at Legacy Emmanuel Hospital. The event was hosted by Communities and Postal Workers United and attended by a number of local groups and organizations.

"U.S. Mail Not for Sale" signs protested President Trump's aggressive plan to privatize the people's post office. Trump is blocking a \$25 billion coronavirus aid package for the U.S. Postal Service, which has

been hit hard by the pandemic. As a condition for receiving aid, he has demanded the USPS quadruple package rates, which would kill affordable, universal delivery to every address in the country. Trump appointed the new Postmaster General, Louis DeJoy, who has contributed \$2 million to the Trump campaign and Republican causes since 2016 and has a record of killing jobs and opposing unions when he was the owner of New Breed Logistics.

The Fred Meyer grocery chain has terminated the \$2-an-hour "Hero Bonus" pay for essential workers. "Essential employees are literally putting their lives on the line for their employer and communities," said

Dan Clay, president of the Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 555. The union has seen an increase in COVID-19 cases among union members. Clay said there is a great risk in letting up on safety measures, like testing and contact tracing for all essential workers and their families. (tinyurl.com/y7xl25ja)

Nurses at Legacy Emanuel Hospital who face constant exposure to patients with COVID-19 left work to join the car caravan. They are fighting for greater safety at work, necessary personal protective equipment, social distancing and paid leave. □



Nurses, who left work to cheer on the caravan, holding signs demanding safe staffing, hazard pay and no reduction in work hours.

## Ecuador

Continued from page 8

(three days before May Day) with resolution #022, which declares COVID-19 does not constitute "an occupational disease" for health workers and other at-risk essential workers. Minister of Health Zevallos had claimed health workers brought the disease to work with them.

Minister of Government María Paula Romo (citizen commander of the National Police that murdered 11 people during the October uprising) tweeted #022 after the outcry. She said that the burden will be on workers to prove their illness is "a workplace accident."

Health workers and citizens protested drastic budget cuts and the firing of thousands of doctors and nurses in early 2019. Protests are ongoing in Ibarra, Quito, Cuenca and Guayaquil over the lack of personal protective equipment, inadequate supplies and hospital facilities to cope with the pandemic.

On March 26, the citizens of Pedernales had to go into the streets in violation of the curfew to stop the health ministry from moving their much needed mobile tent and trailer "hospital" from there to Guayaquil. But there is an untold story in Pedernales, a city without a hospital which hasn't yet suffered any fatalities from the pandemic.

Hundreds died in Pedernales four years ago on April 16, 2016, when it was levelled by a 7.8 magnitude earthquake that struck the coastal province of Manabi. The province's residents remember President Moreno's betrayal of the earthquake victims when he diverted \$800 million earmarked for reconstruction.

Ecuadorians will not forget how neoliberal governments always put profits first, before the needs of the people. □

## CUNY and the struggle against COVID-19 cuts

Special to Workers World

The City University of New York is the largest urban public university system in the United States. It has 275,000 students, spread over 11 senior colleges funded by New York state; seven community colleges, funded by New York City; and seven postgraduate institutions.

Its students are the children and members of the working class of New York City. Seventy percent are people of color. A majority were born outside the U.S. According to a CUNY survey, "Fifty-four percent of the students CUNY-wide reported household income of less than \$30,000, 38 percent reported less than \$20,000. Forty-two percent were first in their family to attend college. More than half said they work for pay."

New York is the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic in the U.S. Both the city and the state have had sharp increases in expenses and sharp decreases in revenues because of the pandemic.

Even though the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, recently passed by Congress, has over \$200 billion in its provisions for direct aid to CUNY and its students, the CUNY administration has decided to impose very drastic cuts on the education offered.

In response to multimillion-dollar cuts in state and city funding, CUNY colleges are laying off hundreds of adjunct faculty and reducing course offerings. The John Jay College of Criminal Justice has told over 400 adjuncts that they will not be rehired in the fall. That's a layoff of nearly 40 percent of John Jay's faculty. Thirty-five percent of adjuncts at the College of

Staten Island are scheduled for layoffs. Brooklyn and Queens campuses have announced cuts of 25 percent in course offerings.

What will this mean for CUNY students? Classes will be more crowded and harder to find, and it will take longer to graduate. Michelle Strah, adjunct assistant professor in the International Crime and Justice Program at John Jay College, asked at the May 21

Professional Staff Congress (American Federation of Teachers Local 2334) press conference, "Are we saying that our student population, from overwhelmingly disadvantaged, minority backgrounds, are second-class citizens who only merit a second-class education, warehoused in huge lecture classes?"

The PSC represents the full-time and adjunct faculty at CUNY, as well as librarians, technical and professional staff, and laboratory technicians.

**Two responses to the layoffs: the PSC and Rank-and-File Action**

The PSC demanded that the CUNY administration reopen their contract on health and safety issues, even as campuses were closed. They want CUNY to keep health insurance coverage on laid-off workers until 2021 and not challenge unemployment insurance applications.

The PSC held a car caravan May 18 in

Manhattan from CUNY's central office on East 42nd Street to Gov. Cuomo's Manhattan office and then to Billionaires

Row — the ultra-luxury tall towers at the southern end of Central Park. The May 21 press conference started with Elizabeth Hovey, an adjunct at John Jay and PSC chapter chair there, giving a presentation after an introduction by PSC president Barbara Bowen. A number of prominent Democratic politicians also spoke.

A group, Rank-and-File Action, was organized by some adjuncts at John Jay and Borough of Manhattan Community College who thought that the PSC's response was too weak. They proposed withholding grades until the last day of the semester, May 29, and held a Zoom meeting/virtual teach-in May 23.

Rank-and-File's proposal was turned down at the PSC's delegate assembly May 21, but that didn't stop their campaign and they pushed for full-time faculty support. Given the social isolation imposed by COVID-19, it is hard to gauge the response. Some students have begun a Twitter campaign to support the action of their teachers.

It is hard for workers to organize to defend their interests and their jobs in this time of plague, but it's certainly not impossible. □

## Dire economic crisis

## Lessons from the most oppressed

The U.S. is in a historic, crushing economic crisis, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. While the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported on May 21 the official unemployment rate was 14.7 percent, that same day Fortune magazine — a voice of the capitalist class — said the U.S. real unemployment rate was now 22.4 percent.

This is the highest U.S. unemployment rate since the 1930s' Great Depression. As of May 21, 38.6 million people had filed for unemployment — more than the combined population of 21 states. One-fourth of the workers in Hawaii, Michigan and Nevada are out of a job. (bls.gov/bls/news.reles) And these statistics do not begin to factor in an estimated 2 million incarcerated workers, along with undocumented migrant workers.

Capitalists use these numbers to assess economic damage to their class and to make plans to save their profits.

Communists look at these numbers and know that it's us and our family, friends and co-workers waiting in car lines 6 miles long for surplus food, trying to get emergency care from a doctor when health insurance was lost with the job, trying to keep from being evicted because there's no money to pay the rent.

Communists look at the statistics and know the hidden facts: Most of the people losing jobs are already low-wage workers,

because almost half of U.S. workers between 18 and 64 are employed in low-wage poverty jobs and paid median annual wages of only \$18,000. (tinyurl.com/ya38q5tf)

Low-wage workers who are nationally oppressed — Indigenous, Black, Latinx, Asian-Pacific Islander — always receive even lower, poverty-level wages than poor whites, some groups as much as two times less. (tinyurl.com/yces3tuv) Racism rears its ugly head again in the fact that one-third of all U.S. Muslims live at or below the poverty line — the majority of U.S. Muslims are Black, Latinx or Asian. (tinyurl.com/yblpzncz)

Of 23 million low-wage workers, two-thirds are women. If statistics were kept for gender-nonconforming people, an even bigger number would be in the category of "low-wage women and gender-oppressed workers." Women are typically paid 15 percent less than white male workers — with a greater gap for women of color. (tinyurl.com/y9xzcvvr)

According to the BLS, in 2019 only 19.3 percent of people with a disability were even employed.

Communists look at these facts and know who is suffering — and we look at our family, friends and co-workers and also see who is militantly organizing.

Because all over the U.S. low-wage and oppressed workers are rising — from

sanitation workers to health salon workers, from nurses to meatpacking plant workers. They are being led by people of color, women, LGBTQ2+ people and people with disabilities — all rising up to fight for their lives.

Fighting for their lives is not a metaphor, but a literal truth as low-wage "essential" workers still on the job go toe-to-toe with their bosses in an attempt to get life-saving personal protection equipment and other health safeguards.

For workers out of a job, economic "help" from the U.S. or state governments is completely inadequate, if not deliberately withheld. As of May 15, according to One Fair Wage, 44 percent of people who applied for unemployment have either been denied or are still waiting to be approved.

Many millions of workers are now those who have "nothing to lose but their chains," as the Communist Manifesto says. These are the "chains" of wage slavery.

## Lessons from past struggles

Utmost in importance now is to remember the lessons of struggle that have been given to us from those who fought for centuries against U.S. colonialism, enslavement and capitalism.

First and foremost is solidarity — the need to forge bonds of sympathy, unity and strength — to fight each other's

battles as if each was our own.

The struggle against white supremacy is at the core of this solidarity — as it always has been — as the capitalist ruling class again marshals all its official and vigilante forces of neofascism to try to turn white workers against oppressed nationalities and other oppressed groupings.

The other key lesson that we've been given by the fighters before us is to aim and dream for the world we want — not the deal our oppressors offer. Now is the time to advance demands that take us closer to the world we dream of.

We say: Food is a right! A job is a right! A guaranteed more-than-living wage and/or income are rights! Health care is a right! Freedom from racism and all forms of oppression are rights! Freedom from incarceration, either in prisons or detention centers, and from deportation, is a right! And in our world, these rights are for every person — whether in the official "workforce" or not.

Every day during this economic pandemic crisis, the most oppressed are leading in struggle, and every day they are teaching us again an age-old lesson from Black freedom fighter Frederick Douglass: "Without struggle, there is no progress."

Let us go forward to meet that challenge, wherever we are. Solidarity forever. □

## Abortion rights group buys Alabama clinic

By Devin Cole

On May 15, 2019, Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey signed into law one of the most restrictive anti-abortion bills in the U.S. The law banned all abortions in Alabama regardless of reason and with no exceptions. The Alabama law was part of a national right-wing campaign to challenge the Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion. (See "Policing the womb in Alabama," WW, July 9, 2019.)

Exactly one year later, on May 15, the Yellowhammer Fund — an abortion fund organization based in Alabama — purchased the West Alabama Women's Center in Tuscaloosa in order to keep the right to abortion available to women and gender-nonconforming people in the state. The center is one of only three abortion clinics still open in Alabama and the only one in west Alabama (in occupied Choctaw and Creek/Muscogee land).

The Alabama abortion ban was quickly struck down by the courts. In the meantime a tremendous flood of donations poured into the Yellowhammer Fund from pro-reproductive-justice activists around the U.S. Over \$100,000 was raised in a single

day, and more than \$2 million in the first two weeks after the abortion ban became law. (al.com, July 3, 2019)

Amanda Reyes, executive director of Yellowhammer, said of the surge of support: "[The Alabama law] really pissed people off. I think they responded because ... they see that there is an additional way that they can do this work and be involved in this fight against fascism or far-right politics that we are experiencing in the United States."

However, according to Yellowhammer Fund's May 15 announcement, "[Money] isn't enough. At this point in time, access to a legal abortion requires access to a person to 'perform' it—whether that be a procedure done via vacuum aspiration, or simply handing over a few pills that the government won't allow patients to obtain themselves. Which is why the only way we can be certain abortion will remain in reach for everyone in the state is to make this next logical step: Yes, Yellowhammer Fund has purchased an abortion clinic!"

## Historic importance

This is the first time that a U.S. abortion fund has bought a clinic that performs abortions, and could mark a shift in

national strategies on how to provide access to reproductive health care. Since 1976, when the U.S. Congress passed the Hyde Amendment, the use of federal dollars for abortion coverage has been essentially banned to anyone insured by Medicaid—the majority poor people and people of color. This means abortion is available only to those who can afford it, rather than to all as a fundamental right.

As a member of the National Network of Abortion Funds, Yellowhammer was founded to provide financial support to low-income women seeking to exercise their reproductive rights. Fund volunteers commented in an interview with NNAF, "As residents of the rural South, we understand the social and structural barriers faced by people attempting to access abortion care in our region. Escorting patients from their cars to clinic doors is incredibly necessary, but we knew our patients needed more." (abortionfunds.org/welcome-yellowhammer)

Defining itself as "an abortion fund and reproductive justice organization serving Alabama and the Deep South," Yellowhammer states: "We envision a society in which reproductive decisions

are made free from coercion, shame or state interference, a society in which individuals and communities have autonomy in making healthy choices regarding their bodies and their futures. We commit ourselves to community education and empowerment, policy advocacy, and the development of systems of mutual aid to ensure that our friends, families and neighbors never go without the things they need." (yellowhammerfund.org)

The Yellowhammer Fund provided support for 313 abortions in 2018 alone—and that was without its own clinic. With the new space at the West Alabama Women's Center, safer, accessible abortions will be available for Alabama residents and others travelling from elsewhere in the Southeast. Additional services will be offered like contraception and trans-friendly care, including hormone replacement therapy for transgender people.

*Cole (they/them), from Birmingham, Ala., is the president of Strive (Socialist Trans Initiative), a Florida transgender advocacy organization, and a member of the WWP Pensacola branch. Minnie Bruce Pratt contributed to this article.*

## Iran-Venezuela solidarity breaks U.S. blockade

Continued from page 1

PDVSA, Venezuela's state-owned oil company, banning its sales on the U.S. market and fuel exports from the U.S. to Venezuela. It froze Venezuela's assets in the U.S. and barred U.S. private or corporate trade or business dealings with Venezuela's state-owned entities. Washington expanded that ban to non-U.S. companies.

Washington imposed the sanctions to force out President Maduro and his administration. As Marco Teruggi explained, "The United States government wants to strike at the heart of the Venezuelan economy: oil. The objective is to ensure that a collapse of the state-owned company PDVSA brings down the whole economy." (workers.org, March 13)

Sanctions have harmed the Venezuelan people, as funds from oil exports are used to buy essential food and medications.

Venezuela's oil output dropped precipitously in 2017 and 2018, but rose in 2019 and was stabilizing. This winter, the Treasury Department imposed sanctions on subsidiaries of Rosneft, Russia's largest oil producer, in an attempt to force the company to stop transporting Venezuelan oil. Rosneft carried 60 percent of PDVSA's oil. Rosneft closed its Venezuela operation in March.

The coronavirus pandemic then triggered an economic slowdown that reduced the global market for oil, so the already existing glut grew. Major producers agreed to decrease output. But prices remain low, which is hurting

PDVSA's operations and joint ventures. Venezuela's fuel shortages are recurring now due to falling oil output and the deepening impact of U.S. sanctions.

Also, the infamous 2019 electrical outages damaged Venezuelan refineries. President Maduro blamed them on sabotage instigated by forces tied to U.S.-backed opposition leader and self-proclaimed "president" Juan Guaidó. The two remaining refineries were closed in January due to lack of crude oil to process and the need for repairs and spare parts.

## Venezuela has allies

Iran volunteered to bring fuel and technical support to repair the Paraguana Refining Complex, Venezuela's largest oil facility. Aided by technicians from Iran

and China, repairs have begun. Recently, 20 Iranian flights have transported 700 tons of refinery parts and other materials from Iran and China.

But Washington is threatening Iran over its air corridor with Venezuela and ordering other countries to stop Iran's overhead flights and end trade and business deals with and fuel shipments to Venezuela.

Yet calls are growing for the U.S. to end the brutal sanctions against Iran and Venezuela, especially now during the pandemic, so both countries can better combat the deadly disease.

*Material for this article also came from the Orinoco Tribune, TeleSUR and Venezuela Analysis.*

# U.S. tries to deflect COVID fiasco onto China

By Sara Flounders

A growing world confrontation is roaring onto the political and economic scene. Not a day goes by without the corporate media in the U.S. carrying totally distorted and negative news attacks on the People's Republic of China.

Republicans and Democrats are trading barbs over who is “soft” on China. Business contracts and major trade deals are ruptured. Long-established science collaborations and academic and art exchanges are being unilaterally cancelled.

All this confirms a growing anti-China consensus in the U.S. corporate ruling class. The COVID crisis has made it clear to millions that the U.S. government is not just incompetent. It is actually incapable of solving the problems confronting not only the U.S. but the entire world.

The COVID-19 pandemic puts the source of contention into sharp relief. The struggle is about much more than two contending nation states or two great powers, as many commentators claim. At the same time, the contradiction that cannot be resolved is between a globalized world economy and the still existing but archaic capitalist system, based on the private expropriation of wealth and resources. The relentless drive of capitalism to reap a profit from every type of human interaction now stands exposed as the greatest danger to the people of the whole planet.

## Cooperation is a threat

U.S. capitalism has no effective way of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, even at home. This is a very public humiliation. It is also incapable of offering leadership to its imperialist allies or to the developing countries it has long dominated.

The narrow for-profit constraints of capitalism, the absolute need to maximize profits in order for the system to survive, make global cooperation impossible and deeply threatening.

U.S. imperialism has no solutions to two overwhelming problems: a capitalist economic crash and a public health disaster. The largest capitalist economic crisis in 90 years has shut down industries and services, leaving nearly 39 million, as of May 25, officially unemployed.

Capitalist economic crashes have been part of an inevitable cycle for the past 300 years. In today's thoroughly globalized economy, a cyclical crash can upend the lives and security of millions overnight.

China has been able to avoid these cyclical crises, but you wouldn't know that here. Its success is obscured by a barrage of attacks claiming to value freedom over dictatorship.

Democrats blame Republicans for the economic crash here, and vice versa. But both political parties and their talking heads understand that the competitive for-profit system itself must not be blamed. That could lead to revolutionary conclusions.

The U.S. now has the world's highest number of COVID-19 fatalities, almost 100,000, as of May 25. China, with four times the population, has had fewer than 5,000 fatalities. ([worldometers.info/coronavirus](http://worldometers.info/coronavirus)) This stands as a monumental indictment of the capitalist system, which is of course ignored in the corporate media.

## China's response exposes U.S. failure

The chaotic disorganization in the U.S. and the inability to test the population, even five months after the virus started to spread globally, expose the fragmented and competitive infrastructure.

Searing images are not easily erased: medical staff pleading for personal protective equipment in desperate job actions on YouTube videos and GoFundMe sites, while wearing rain ponchos, garbage bags, bandanas and shower caps; overwhelmed hospitals, exhausted staff and refrigerated trucks full of bodies.

By contrast, China, still a developing country and hit first by the virus, has exhibited an orderly, scientific and

highly organized response on a national scale. The whole country shut down, practicing social distancing and strict health protocols. At the same time, tons of equipment and thousands of medical personnel, outfitted head-to-toe in protective medical gear, were rushed to Wuhan.

Food distribution, orderly shopping, a guaranteed income and a freeze on all rent and credit card payments were immediately instituted. Free national health care already existed. Massive national testing produced immediate results.

Next, China sent hundreds of plane loads of medical equipment to every country in Africa and throughout Asia. Essential supplies were also shipped to Europe and the U.S.

And the U.S. government? At the very moment when appeals for human solidarity and cooperation were being made, Washington was instead hijacking and redirecting supplies from countries it had put under sanctions.

In other places where building socialism is the goal — including Vietnam, Cuba, Venezuela and even the state of Kerala in India — a mobilized population has proven the best protection against the virus and kept casualties very low.

## Competition at all costs

The U.S. failure to adequately test the population represents a failure of a system. The U.S. has no national health care system. Medical care is generally provided on a for-profit basis, from giant hospital groups to pharmaceuticals, labs and urgent care centers.

State and city agencies were already gutted of funds. In the past decade, many social services have been privatized and contracted out to private corporations.

The World Health Organization had offered a mass-produced and easily available test kit, used by more than 153 countries. But instead, the production of kits was given to private U.S. labs, which bid for lucrative contracts to make millions of kits. Many of them were defective. The whole campaign, which lacked any cohesive plan, was plagued with errors.

As a result, the U.S. still has one of the lowest rates of testing of any impacted country. This has hampered the ability to get accurate information on the spread of the coronavirus.

Because the U.S. lacks a national health care system, the reporting of local test results to state and national databases is still in complete disarray. The same thing is true of treatment plans and allocating scarce medical supplies.

The world epicenter of the virus became New York, a financial and media center and the largest city of U.S. imperialism. This made the medical chaos impossible to ignore. Now it is spreading across the country and is far from controlled.

As university labs try to fill the gap and help produce test kits, they run into a wall. Hospital systems and health insurance conglomerates are locked into exclusive contracts with giant private labs like LabCorp and Quest, which use competing and often incompatible software programs. It is almost impossible to enter a test result that is out of the network. (New York Times, May 21)

The racist and arrogant Trump administration is not the only cause of the COVID-19 fiasco. State governors, city mayors, Democrats and Republicans, are trapped in a tangle of conflicting regulations, competing lobbyists, exclusive contracts and unconnected platforms. Even arriving at a consistent and timely count of the number of positive tests and soaring fatalities is still impossible.

## Hunger grows

More than two months ago, a bipartisan \$2.2 trillion stimulus package was hammered out in Congress. Great promises were made of relief for workers and small businesses. But it turns out that only 4 percent of the “stimulus” is for working people. Moreover, undocumented migrants, prisoners and homeless people receive nothing.



PHOTO: XINHUA

Eight tons of medical supplies donated to Greece by the Chinese government arrive in Athens on March 21.

The \$367 billion promised to small businesses to stay afloat was immediately grabbed by large corporations. At the same time, trillions of federal dollars are being pumped into the stock market in a desperate attempt to revive it.

Millions of people who qualify for the meager funds are still jumping through bureaucratic hurdles — online forms, crashing databases and understaffed phones — trying to receive what they were promised.

Meanwhile, there are no plans to address the most glaring problem: hunger. Food lines stretch for blocks, and food pantries are completely overwhelmed.

It is estimated that more than 2 million people in New York City go hungry — a quarter of the population. In the Bronx, it's even worse: One-third are hungry. A patchwork of over 1,000 emergency food programs, including soup kitchens, food pantries and bag lunches provide limited and uncoordinated relief.

## Spreading COVID globally

Capitalism intentionally breaks down social cohesion. Mass mobilizations, unions and community-based organizations are a threat to exploitation. Police repression and racism are an essential part of the fabric of this society, used like Crazy Glue to forcibly hold together a crumbling system.

Even entirely reasonable solutions, such as the immediate release of prisoners from overcrowded prisons and detention centers, have been stalemated. Despite national campaigns, car caravans and tens of thousands of petitions and phone calls on the danger of prisons and detention centers spreading COVID-19, the prison population has not dropped substantially.

But migrant detention centers are being emptied in a way that spreads the virus globally. Although international air traffic is almost shut down, forcible deportations have been made even to countries that have closed their borders to slow the spread of the virus.

The Trump administration threatens sanctions against Central American countries that refuse to accept nationals who test positive. He is accused of willfully spreading the disease to Central America through deportations. (Salon, April 19)

## Military planning goes on

This decaying imperialist system does make plans. They are focused on elaborate, high-tech military preparations, new missiles, aircraft carriers, supersonic jets and building new bases. This is enormously profitable for the largest U.S. corporations — the military-industrial complex and oil giants that are linked to the largest banks.

Hostility to China is lucrative for these corporations. Their lobbyists, even in the midst of a pandemic, are demanding new funds and more plans.

The U.S. ruling circles have always been hostile to the revolution that transformed China and broke neocolonial domination. Their hope was that capitalist penetration of China would overturn this accomplishment.

Now that their hopes of regaining control of China's enormous market are fading, the threat of war is growing.

Beginning in 2010, the Obama-Clinton “pivot to Asia” signaled a determination to reassert U.S. dominance. The plan was to surround China with reinvigorated military alliances and new batteries of missiles. There was bipartisan consensus from the beginning to increase naval confrontation in the South China Sea and to heighten subversion from Hong Kong to Xinjiang, while stoking a trade war. Endless commentators have described this as the new Cold War.

The Pentagon's recent announcements of new nuclear tests, mass production of thousands of hypersonic nuclear missiles and U.S.-commanded war games in Europe and the Pacific are an ominous escalation.

In reality, it is a conflict created by an outmoded and decaying capitalist system that is confronting a new form of social cooperation and collective ownership that is just beginning to unfold — socialism. □

## Is Workers World essential to you? Then invest in it now!

COVID-19 has exposed everything wrong with capitalism:

- No national planning for universal free, quality health care.
- No provisions to support families from cradle to grave.
- No guaranteed high standard of living for all people.
- Institutionalized racism, sexism, LGBTQ2+ bigotry.
- Class system rigged in favor of profits for the 1%.
- Billions for the Pentagon, cutbacks for people's welfare, including food and housing.

Workers World provides the theoretical and organizational ammunition needed to crush this inhumane system and create one that supports the working class and all oppressed people — revolutionary socialism. If the need for that becomes clearer every day during this devastating pandemic — where everyone is being called upon to show

solidarity and form a united front — then please consider putting your money where it will really help achieve that goal.

We established the Workers World Supporter Program 43 years ago so readers could help promote working-class truth needed for revolutionary change. Members receive a year's subscription to WW, a monthly letter about timely issues and five free subscriptions to give others for a donation of \$75, \$100, \$300 or much more if you can. If you prefer, donate monthly, just so it adds up to a minimum of \$75 a year.

Write checks to Workers World and mail them, with your name and address, to 147 W. 24th St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10011. Or donate online at [workers.org/donate/](http://workers.org/donate/). It's easy to set up monthly deductions. We are grateful for your help in building Workers World — for today and for a socialist future! □



FOTO: FAMILIAS UNIDAS POR LA JUSTICIA

En el estado de Washington, empacadores de manzanas están en huelga desde tres semanas.

## Los migrantes lideran la lucha porque 'reapertura' alimenta resistencia

Por Sue Davis

18 de mayo: El Gerente Ejecutivo, (CEO siglas en inglés), de Ford Motors, Jim Farley, dijo durante una reciente conferencia telefónica: “La industria automotriz es el motor económico [de los EE. UU.]. Reiniciar todo el ecosistema automotor es cómo reiniciamos la economía”. (New York Times, 18 de mayo)

Pero Farley se equivoca. Son los 400.000 trabajadores de producción de los fabricantes de automóviles Detroit Three – Ford, General Motors y Fiat Chrysler (FCA) – quienes continúan trabajando hoy en todo el mundo quienes tendrán la última palabra. Después de una serie de huelgas improvisadas en toda la industria a mediados de marzo para protestar contra las condiciones de trabajo inseguras en lugares cerrados y la falta de equipos de protección, los trabajadores regresan con algo de protección, pero no suficiente. Se tomarán sus temperaturas después de presentarse al trabajo todos los días, y se requieren máscaras, guantes y protección para los ojos.

Según el periódico The New York Times, FCA ha instalado cortinas transparentes para evitar la transmisión entre personas que trabajan juntas y pantallas para dos trabajadores que instalan simultáneamente componentes debajo del capó. Ford ha instalado fregaderos portátiles y dispensadores de desinfectante para manos en todas las plantas y grifos sin contacto y dispensadores de jabón en los baños. General Motors solo comenzará con un solo turno.

El sindicato United Auto Workers (UAW siglas en inglés) ha abogado por pruebas obligatorias de todos los trabajadores diariamente o semanalmente. Pero los tres jefes de Detroit solo acordaron evaluar a los trabajadores con síntomas. Autoworker Caravan, un grupo activista de base en la UAW, está solicitando respiradores N95 para cada trabajador.

El primer día de regreso, los trabajadores ya vieron problemas: máscaras sin envolver



FOTO: STEVE ZELTZER

Los trabajadores protestan por condiciones inseguras debido a COVID-19 cuando la planta de automóviles Tesla reabre sus puertas en Fremont, California, el 17 de mayo.

colocadas en las mesas por guardias que no usaban guantes, superficies que no se han limpiado desde marzo, trabajadores con síntomas de virus permitidos a trabajar, ventiladores sucios y más.

A los trabajadores no sindicalizados que fabrican automóviles para empresas extranjeras, principalmente en el sur, se les ordenó volver a trabajar en varias fechas en mayo. Esta escritora no ha encontrado informes de los medios sobre estos trabajadores, aunque sus preocupaciones son las mismas que las de los trabajadores del automóvil representados por la UAW. Algunos activistas protestaron frente a la planta de vehículos eléctricos Tesla en Fremont, California, donde el CEO Elon Musk prometió desafiar la orden de permanencia en el hogar del gobernador y obligar a los trabajadores a volver a trabajar sin medidas de seguridad.

Las protestas de los trabajadores continúan creciendo

Payday Report ha catalogado 206 huelgas, ausencia por enfermedad, abandonos de puestos, sentadas y piquetes que exigen condiciones de trabajo seguras en todos los rincones del país desde que COVID-19 se aceleró en los EE.UU. El boletín cree que es un recuento muy bajo, estimando que hay decenas de pequeñas acciones tanto de trabajadores no representados como de miembros del sindicato.

Un ejemplo de esto último son los 25 trabajadores de Hood River Distillers en Hood

River, Oregon. Los miembros de Teamsters Local 670 establecieron una línea de piquete el 6 de mayo después de que la gerencia hizo una oferta de contrato final con beneficios de salud debilitados y aumentos salariales insignificantes. (nwlaborpress.org, 13 de mayo)

Mientras tanto, algunos trabajadores esenciales están teniendo problemas personales y financieros. Los conductores

de reparto protestan porque no pueden encontrar baños, ya que las ubicaciones habituales en los restaurantes de comida rápida y las cadenas como Applebee's, KFC y Subway solo están abiertas para recoger. Un grupo de camioneros rodeó la Avenida de la Constitución en Washington, D.C., el 13 de mayo, protestando por los bajos salarios y las condiciones inseguras. Cuando algunos conductores independientes solicitaron préstamos como pequeñas empresas, se les dijo que no reunían los requisitos para recibir fondos.

El sindicato United Farm Workers está pidiendo a todos los simpatizantes que firmen una petición que respalde el proyecto de ley HEROES, que incluye asistencia financiera para trabajadores agrícolas indocumentados y protege legalmente a estos trabajadores esenciales de la deportación durante la pandemia. Firme la petición en [tinyurl.com/yxns8af/](https://tinyurl.com/yxns8af/).

Protestas por trabajadores migrantes crecen

Los que más se arriesgan al defender sus derechos son los trabajadores inmigrantes. Pero eso no impidió que los migrantes mexicanos que recogen fruta en el famoso Valle de Yakima del estado de Washington se declaren en huelga por medidas de seguridad y aumenten el pago de riesgos la semana del 15 de mayo en siete sitios principales. Los trabajadores de otros seis sitios se unieron durante el fin de semana.

Están surgiendo evidencias de crecientes

brotos de COVID entre los trabajadores agrícolas migrantes. Si bien practican el distanciamiento social en el campo, el problema son los hoteles proporcionados por el empleador: cuatro trabajadores por habitación, dos por cama. Al 8 de mayo, 169 de los 340 migrantes bajo contratos H-2A de México y Haití que recogen, plantan, clasifican y empaquetan tomates en la granja hidropónica de 32 acres Green Empire Farms cerca de Oneida, N.Y., dieron positivo. Después de estar en cuarentena durante dos semanas, volverán a trabajar.

Pero el organizador Celso Mendoza, quien emigró de Veracruz, México, en 2002 no podrá. Hace años, Mendoza fue instrumental en la organización de trabajadores contratados mexicanos que ganaban \$6 por hora en una planta avícola de Forest, Miss. Después de que el contratista laboral que contrató a los trabajadores intentó reducir los salarios en un 10 por ciento, Mendoza organizó a los trabajadores en protesta, y en un año se unieron al Sindicato de Trabajadores de Alimentos y Comercio (UFCW). Su contrato proporcionaba mejores condiciones salariales y laborales, y ningún contratista laboral externo.

Los trabajadores avícolas se vieron obligados por una orden de la administración Trump a volver a trabajar a pesar de la epidemia, que es muy contagiosa en lugares cerrados. Trágicamente, la vida de Mendoza se vio truncada a la edad de 59 por COVID-19. Celso Mendoza! Presente!

Los trabajadores inmigrantes toman cada vez más medidas para protegerse durante la pandemia. Maritere Gómez, una organizadora del centro de trabajadores Arise Chicago, que ayudó a organizar a los trabajadores contratados mexicanos que fabrican equipos de protección personal en LSL Healthcare, cerca de Chicago, dice: “Creo que los trabajadores indocumentados necesitan unirse. ... Si las personas indocumentadas no se defienden por sí mismas, nadie lo hará, ciertamente ni su jefe ni el gobierno”. □

## El imperialismo y el derecho a la autodeterminación

Por Monica Moorehead

Esta es una versión ligeramente editada de una charla dada durante “¿Qué camino hacia el socialismo?” seminario web realizado por Workers World Party el 16 de mayo.

Una de las cinco características que V.I. Lenin, líder de la Revolución Rusa, presentó en su libro de 1916, “Imperialismo: la etapa más alta del capitalismo”, fue la finalización de la “división territorial de todo el mundo entre las mayores potencias capitalistas. El imperialismo es capitalismo en esa etapa de desarrollo en la que se establece el dominio de los monopolios y el capital financiero”.

El folleto de 1968, “Expanding Empire”, escrito por el miembro fundador del Workers World Party/Partido Mundo Obrero, Vince Copeland durante la Guerra de Vietnam, dice: “La inversión de capital en un país extranjero debe considerarse algo así como enviar una gran bomba de succión allí, que saca los metales del suelo, los productos del suelo y los frutos

de los árboles, con la ayuda, por supuesto, del trabajo de los [trabajadores] que trabajan en esta bomba de succión.

“Es como si las bombas estuvieran conectadas a tuberías que regresan al país [capitalista] “local”, a través de los bancos y las grandes corporaciones. Todos los productos ricos se bañan de las tuberías a los tesoros de estas instituciones, en forma de ganancias. Estas grandes bombas de succión, o “inversiones”, drenan a naciones enteras, y las ganancias son tan grandes que grupos rivales de grandes empresas, liderados por pequeñas camarillas de grandes bancos, entran en guerra entre sí por la explotación de estas naciones”.

Tanto Lenin como Copeland, durante un período de 50 años, describieron el mismo imperialismo que los países capitalistas ricos que se enriquecen con el subdesarrollo sistemático de las naciones oprimidas que se empobrecen con el robo de recursos, la crisis de la deuda, la guerra y la ocupación. Hay naciones oprimidas dentro de los EE.UU. de pueblos negros, marroñes e indígenas, que son desproporcionadamente más pobres en comparación con

los blancos. El imperialismo ha creado una guerra tanto en casa como en el extranjero.

Esta súper explotación es la base económica para los países de África, América Latina, el Caribe, Asia, Medio Oriente y las naciones oprimidas en el país que tienen derecho a la soberanía o la autodeterminación. Eso significa el derecho a determinar la mejor manera de desarrollar sus economías, sociedades y comunidades para satisfacer las necesidades básicas y culturales de sus poblaciones sin la interferencia de intimidación de los jefes corporativos y los militares. La autodeterminación incluye el derecho a la separación de la nación opresora, la autonomía política o la asimilación.

La pandemia de COVID-19 ha arrancado la curita de este sistema canceroso y monstruoso que ha dejado a miles de millones de trabajadores y personas oprimidas aún más vulnerables al sufrimiento y la muerte debido a la falta de atención médica, alimentos, vivienda, agua limpia y más - en una escala global, incluso aquí mismo, en el vientre de la bestia. Se predice que el hambre cobrará más vidas durante la pandemia a escala mundial que el coronavirus.

Intensificar la lucha de clases dentro de los EE. UU. es el método más efectivo para que los socialistas y revolucionarios aquí muestren solidaridad política con los pueblos oprimidos dentro y fuera de las fronteras artificiales. Los llamados “crímenes” de los pueblos oprimidos han sido sus luchas por la independencia económica y la igualdad política a través de las luchas de liberación nacional por cualquier medio necesario.

Sin otra opción, algunos países han recurrido a la reconstrucción socialista como la única respuesta al subdesarrollo, y más lo harán.

Moorehead es una editora general de WW y editora del libro, “El marxismo, las reparaciones y la lucha por la libertad negra”. Ella es una ex candidata presidencial de WWP. Moorehead se unió al partido a principios de la década de 1970 en Hampton, Virginia, a través del trabajo del Comité de Solidaridad de Prisioneros de Jóvenes contra la Guerra y el Fascismo. Ella es miembro de la sucursal de Nueva York.