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)

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

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

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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 to read more coverage.
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.

Capitalism produces all wealth in society, and this wealth should remain in the hands of the workers who create it. WWP has been active in the struggle for socialism and a socialist world since 1939. We are a discussion group — a party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a revolutionary communist party.

Capitalism is a system of production and distribution of goods that is social— workers own the means of production. But wealth is created only by workers. WWP believes that the existing social order is not only unjust but impossible to change. It is what we call a system of class—rich people own the means of production and control the means of distribution.

The wealth created by the working class is owned by a small layer of people, not the workers. This contradiction is the root of social instability. But the capitalist system can’t wait for others to move. Workers have to act— we have to move.

Workers World Party is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a multi-national, multi-generational and multi-gendered organization that not only aims to abolish capitalism, but to build a socialist society because it is the only way forward! Our party 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 immigrants, misogynist, LGBTQ+ oppression and mistreatment of people with disabilities. It means joblessness, increasing homelessness and impoverishment; and lack of health and security 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, etc. Most people get what they pay for. Wages are lower than ever, and youth are saddled with the ever-greater profits.

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 act quickly. But we also have to be able to change direction as the needs of the moment require.

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 Intern 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 the 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 LGBTQ+ 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 during the movement.

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

Griswold is one of the founding members of WWP, which was born in 1939. 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.
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 anti-worker practices.

Criticism of the new postmaster has centered on his $2 billion 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 1975 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 APWU argues that the postal board of governors is asking from Congress $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 sorting systems, drones and other cutting-edge technologies that speed goods through the supply chain. Once we complete, our managers use XPO Smart™ labor analytics to optimize productivity.”

In other words, the company specializes in the science of weeding out any employee who’s not superproductive and supercompetent, 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 reducing good jobs and adding 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 sexual assault case. Workers were fired for complaining about a manager’s “unsavory sexual touching and lewd, obscene and vulgar sexual remarks.” The employer said it had sexual harassment protocols, was purposefully kept out of the hands of temp—who made up 80 percent of the workforce.

In 2014, the New York Times reported, four temp workers 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 roof, 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 unsafe working conditions. 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)

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 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. By May 19, 13.8 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 indefensible 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 anti-war and Black workers were inspired by the Black Liberation Movement. The rebellious spirit of the times led to defi- ant action within the post office. After the last few years of educational 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 2012 after 30 years in the USPS.

Workers striking in 2018 against XPO, the new postmaster’s former company, with a long record of ‘anti-union animus.’

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 protection.

American Postal Workers (APWU) President Mark Dimondstein recalls that the 1970 Postal Strike created worker control of the workplace and independent unions designed to be free from the political patronage and cronyism that had plagued the old Post Office Department.

“Now,” he contin- ued, “the APWU is deeply con- cerned with the lies that the USPS is tell- ing to make Mr. Louis DeJoy, a multimillion-dol- lar 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, cut- ting 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 still resistance from postal workers and the people of this country.

Mr. DeJoy also proved 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.

50 years after the Great Postal Strike

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—millions of young people are 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 1996. The state’s 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 which are not nearly as well-resourced as those that 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 Latina/o youth, 30 percent of Black youth, 26 percent of Indigenous youth and 36 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 njdqj.org)

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 15 to 22 percent, depending on gender. (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 Family Residential Center, one young person recently transferred from PJJSC to another family detention center’s front doors, formerly incarcerated young adults, family members of incarcerated young people, community leaders, City Council members and all anti–ICE activists turned out to demand an end to the deep pain, fear, uncertainty and isolation that children have experienced while locked behind bars, separated from their 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 after the pandemic. We felt 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 PJUJC 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.”

Shiralee 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 Kenny: 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 the Project 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 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, Amnistie 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.

Walking up to Karnes, I was greeted by 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 brutal family separation carried out in 2018. Then hundreds of children were displaced, leaving trauma causing them to repeat the cycle. ICE’s current deplorable actions have been dubbed “Family Separation 2.0.”

“Safe Jobs Save Lives”

N.U. 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. Many prisoners and their families have tested positive for COVID-19 and have three died, making it one of the hardest hit prisons in the nation.

In an open letter the North Carolina Public Service Workers Union, United Electrical Workers Local 190, 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 for fail to pay a 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 caravan drove past O’Berry Neuro-Medical Treatment Center of Goldsboro Public Works Department, public sector union members, their community partners, and Goldsboro community 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, by Bryce Carter, O’Berry executive. Salmon told employees from Greensboro Streets Department worker and president of UE Local 150, and union Vice President Sheryl All, “I have a few minutes.” City Administrator 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 27 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 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.

“One essential businesses have...”
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 else: anything; prisoner unity; prisoner solidarity.” (For information on his case, see the new documentary, The Path to Prison (TEDx Talks/You Tube).) My father, the late African American writer Richard Wright’s daughter, is not a threat to the community, on the contrary. In the spirit of your mentor, a welfare program for elders behind bars is not a threat to the community, on the contrary. In the spirit of your mentor, you speak of your fears resulting from bullying? No wonder you developed a bookbag be strewn on the ground. You graduated and you wondered about what happened to you in the school. She gave him a thick stick and beat up? No wonder you developed a stick. Because results from serologic tests are used to test for COVID-19 antibodies in the blood. In the state’s Department of Public Health continues to make errors in tracking the number of COVID-19 cases. On hearing of Tillery’s illness and knowing that he was elderly, vulnerable and immunocompromised, my father recalls in his book “Black Boy” (published). Clearly, you sincerely cherish Hershey’s vision of help for the disadvantaged. 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 else: anything; prisoner unity; prisoner solidarity.”... (For information on his case, see the new documentary, The Path to Prison (TEDx Talks/You Tube).) My father, the late African American writer Richard Wright’s daughter, is not a threat to the community, on the contrary. In the spirit of your mentor, you speak of your fears resulting from bullying? No wonder you developed a bookbag be strewn on the ground. You graduated and you wondered about what happened to you in the school. She gave him a thick stick and beat up? No wonder you developed a stick. Because results from serologic tests are used to test for COVID-19 antibodies in the blood. In the state’s Department of Public Health continues to make errors in tracking the number of COVID-19 cases. On hearing of Tillery’s illness and knowing that he was elderly, vulnerable and immunocompromised, my father recalls in his book “Black Boy” (published). Clearly, you sincerely cherish Hershey’s vision of help for the disadvantaged.
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 predominantly 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 impact was looking for an organization that would more adequately address the issue of race. I was introduced by a friend 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.

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 transgenerational 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 of our struggles are interconnected. We need one another to survive. I learned of revolutionary optimism through the party and learned how to show solidarity with folks 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 in this world need one another because humanity is not inherently self-sufficient. 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. She is a Georgia State University student and frequently writes for Workers World newspaper as well as other local publications.

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 you. 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.

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.

‘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 returned to work, “safety” has been a simultaneous crisis of the capitalist system itself. It is characterized by overproduction in major sectors of the capitalist economy, such as energy production and transportation sectors. We are seeing over the DSMR 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 Food Grocery workers, and others. 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 up without any written agreements with their unions or the workers. That means workers will be forced back into dangerous environments, risking their lives. As of April 28, Workers World 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 of all meatpacking factories, no matter the risk to poultry, hog slaughtering and meatpacking workers across the country. They work in damp, cold environments that have proven to be major hotspots for infection and death.

On May 13, labor leaders honored the life of Celsa 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 86 an hour.

As of May 13, 10,000 workers at 1,900 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 most processing plants in 12 counties.

Southern Workers Assembly regional conference

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 sector local lifting the pressure of ICE’s so-called enforcement.

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 days after he recorded the video.

The SWA has been in touch with striking bus drivers in Birmingham, Ala. Greg Rody, president of the 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 and about 50 percent of the other grocery workers 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 under 25.

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 for it! 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 bitterly, 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 250 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.
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 against the feudal system that really just needed a good kick to push it into the trash bins of history.

The current pandemic poses yet another problem for people for whom the state should purchase and provide, not private employers to pay subminimum wages to workers with disabilities, 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. 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.

We struggle with the youth and the Black and Brown working class to be the targets of racism and gender-oppression. We’re trying to intervene in the workers’ movement, sometimes very effectively. And we’re proud of it. But we’re not the ones who decide exclusively what we can accomplish during our lifetime. Everything depends on the conditions decide that.

I’m speaking now pre-dominantly 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 this sense, 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 something similar to the agricultural revolution in the US, to the bad conditions that the planet’s population get angry because of the already terrible conditions, in addition to the kind of radical, revolutionary capitalism that existed before it is doing to the global capitalist economy. There’s still going to be a worldwide depression— that’s the kind of thing that is all the misery and suffer- ing— and part of that is going to be permanent.

There’s a tremendous strike going on in Washington state now among workers, women, workers, women, and gender-oppressed, and LGBTQ 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 bit 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 factory or a park or some workplace where we will get sick.” 

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 is it all. We are all class in any way that we can to liberate ourselves.

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 in a place that’s supposed to be the wealthiest and the richest in the world, class struggle is 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’ interest.

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.

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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 liberal-left-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.

In 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 “even if the state has the ability to do something, does it actually do the things that it sets out to do or does the political will that aligns with the capacity.”

The U.S., with its highly developed economy, marshals massive resources for controlling the virus, but so far only 5,000 people have died, 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.

“Very early on,” Suryanarayan says, “Kerala started to have the feeling of a sense 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.

Kerala, like Cuba, Vietnam 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 Asian descent have face a wave of violent attacks and discrimination in the West, with leaders like Trump actively fanning the flames of racism. As long as the government can portray immigration and refugees as a threat, it can revitalize a bitter witch-hunt against those who are not white.

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 contain the virus, but to provide for all the basic needs of its people during the shutdown 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’ responses:

- Cuba: workers.org/2020/03/47122
- Vietnam: workers.org/2020/04/47577
- China: workers.org/2020/03/46882
- Laos: workers.org/2020/04/47983
- Kerala: workers.org/2020/04/47553

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.

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 communities in and around Cotacachi, a town in the countryside about 30 miles west of Ibarra, made use of “ancestor honor” (religion and culture) and raised funds to purchase chemicals (there was no govern ment help) when they organized “miniblockades” to prevent the National Police from reentering the communities of the canton after an incident involving repression of youths. Road closings restrict traffic in precarious and overcrowded housing, where many live in unhygienic conditions and control schedules [and a proposal to tax wages to pay for the crisis].

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 to poor neighborhoods in nearby Guayaquil.

In Quito a team of volunteers is prepared to work with the municipality in a campaign of self-defense against layoffs, the national minimum wage that is 3,000 USD, life in overcrowded housing, 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.

Workers World ran an article on greennetwork-project.org on April 22 illustrates the massive support that is available to the private sector to provide health assistance and support people in quarantine.

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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 reorder 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 a percent of the working class) denounced the layoffs, flexibilization [which represent 4 percent of the working class] 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 unity 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 Ibarra and other locations. Prison factories are producing rough coffins for Guayaquil. On the morning of April 12 prisoners in Ibarra and other locations. Prison factories are producing rough coffins for Guayaquil. On the morning of April 12 prisoners in Ibarra and other locations. Prison factories are producing rough coffins for Guayaquil. On the morning of April 12 prisoners

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

Continued on page 9

An artist draws graffiti to thank coronavirus workers on the wall of the_emakulal General Hospital in Kochi.
Strike enters third week

Packinghouse workers vs. bosses

By Jim McHahan
Seattle

May 24 – Strikers 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 one worker hotel, workers have stayed out on strike for safety for more than two weeks—a great feat because they don’t yet have union ties. 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 contending with 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, sanitation, plastic shields on packing lines and testing. They are also demanding a 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 its agriculture-related and processing industries alone. And the agricultural season is just getting underway.

In the face of this, the Trump administration is doing its best to hold down the labor movement. 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 over-riding closure actions called by local officials. (Seattle Times, May 23)

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

The workers have been assisted throughout by representatives of Familias 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 Neely

Large plazas covered supporters’ cars during the Portland, Ore., caravan for essential workers held May 21. It started at the East Portland Post Office, circled twice 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 postal service. Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, who has contributed $2 million to the Trump campaign and Republican candidates, was recently appointed the new Postmaster General, and seven postgraduate institutions.

“All we want is for them to join the car caravan. They are fighting for greater safety at work, necessary personal protective equipment, social distancing and paid leave.”

Ecuador

Continued from page 8

(a three-day 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 Maria Paula Romo, the former commander of the National Police that murdered 11 people during the October uprising) tweeted #022 after the outcome was announced. The bill 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 tents and trailer “hospital” from there to Guayaquil. But there is an untold story in Pedernales, a coastal town that was ransacked. The workers have been hit hard by the pandemic. As a condition for receiving aid, he has demanded the USPS quadruple package prices, 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 (UPCW) Local 7. “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/yrx2jja)

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.

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 postgraduate institutions. Its students are the children and many of the parents who are working class. 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 come from families that say they would be more crowded and harder to find, and it will take long to find housing.”

Michelle Strach, 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 halls?”

The PSC represents the full-time and adjunct faculty at CUNY, as well as librarians, technical and administrative 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 continued to phase in some students. 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 Portland from the 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 press conference started with Elizabeth Hovey, an adjacent 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.

The Rank-and-File Action, 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 hold 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.
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, the jobs office reported a non-seasonally adjusted unemployment rate since the 1930 Great Depression. As of May 21, 38.6 million people had filed for unemployment — more than the combined population of 21 states. One-fifth of the workers in Hawaii, Michigan and Nevada are out of a job. (bls.gov/bls/ news.release.htm) The Bureau’s data also began to factor in an estimated 2 million incarcerated workers, along with undocu- mented and 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 is 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 positions and paid median annual wages of only $18,000. (tinyurl.com/y3x8g8f)

Low-wage workers who are nationally predominantly — and disproportionately — Latinx, Asian-Pacific Islander — always receive even lower, poverty-level wages than those in higher-paying jobs. Even times less. (tinyurl.com/yeg5tv) Racism rears its ugly head in the fact that 27 percent of all U.S. Muslims live at below the poverty line — the majority of U.S. Muslims are Black, Latinx or Asian. (tinyurl.com/yzqmg2)

Low-wage workers, two-thirds are women. If statistics were kept for gender-nonconforming people, an even bigger picture would be in the category of “low-wage women and gender-oppressed workers.” Women are typically paid 15 percent less than white male workers — as a greater gap for women of color. (tinyurl.com/y9xzcvx)

According to the BLS, in 2019 only 19.2 percent of people with a disability were even employed.

Communists look at these facts and know who is suffering — and we look at those losing jobs with a composed countenance 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 sex workers to server workers. They are being led by people of color, women, LGBTQ+ 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 workers who worked on the assembly lines to-toe with their bosses in an attempt to get life-saving personal protection equipment and other health safeguards.

Fighting in 2020, working-class “help” from the U.S. or state governments is completely inadequate, if not deliberately withheld. (abortionfunds.org)

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 the most oppressed

Economic “help” from the U.S. or state governments is completely inadequate, if not deliberately withheld. (abortionfunds.org)

For workers out of a job, economic “help” from the system that is supposed to be the deal our oppressors offer. Now is the time to advance beyond this to make the changes 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 and/or 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 old-age lesson from Black freedom fighter Frederick Douglass: “When you advance as far as you can go in the system, you will be offered the choice: fight for your lives or lose your lives. 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 Human Rights Campaign actively responded to the abortion ban and organized a large 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 and reproductive justice organization based in Alabama and the Deep South — announced it had purchased a legal abortion facility. Aided by technicians from Iran and Venezuela, the facility was repaired and re-opened in just over a month.

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First and foremost is solidarity — the need to forge bonds of sympathy, unity and strength to fight each other’s battles.
A growing world confrontation is roaring onto the political and economic scene. Not a day goes by without reports of the corporate media that reflect their bosses’ interests, and sometimes data about the impact of the pandemic. Bilateral trade deals are ruptured. Long-established science collaborations and academic and art exchanges are being uprooted. The whole world is being dragged into a great new anti-China conspiracy.

China's response exposes U.S. failure

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

The $3.67 billion promised to small businesses to stay afloat unilaterally granted by large corporations, the same time, trillions of federal dollars are being pumped into the stock market in a desperate attempt to revive it. The U.S. now has the world's highest number of COVID-19 cases. And the U.S. government? At the very moment when their citizens were being infected, they took the money out of Wuhan.

By Sara Flounders

U.S. tries to deflect COVID fiasco onto China

By contrast, China, still a developing country and hit 90 years has shut down industries and services, leaving nearly 800 million unemployed already unequipped.

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. Its success is obscured by a barrage of attacks claiming to value freedom over dictatorship. And the U.S. government? At the very moment when their citizens were being infected, they took the money out of Wuhan.

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China's response exposes U.S. failure

The chaotic disorganization in the U.S. and the inabil-

it y to test the population, even five months after the virus started to spread globally, expose the fragmented and existing but still archaic capitalist system, based on the private expropriation of wealth and resources. The relentless drive of capitalists to reap a profit from new, untried techniques for the system to survive, make global cooperation impossible and deeply unprofitable.

U.S. is Workers World essential to you? Then invest in it now!

Workers World provides the theoretical and organizational support that is just as essential to the U.S. as the Chinese government's assistance. But it is a test of our collective 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 data does not produce a clear picture of the state of the world is in complete disarray. The same thing is true of treatment plans and allocating scarce medical supplies. The world epidemic of the virus New York, a financial and media center and the largest city of U.S. imperialism. This made the medical crisis impossible to ignore. Now it is spreading across the country and is far from controlled.

As universities labs to try to fill the gap and help produce test kits, they run into a wall. Hospital systems and drug manufacturers that have been propped up for the system to survive, make global cooperation impossible and deeply unprofitable.

The racist and arrogant Trump administration is not the only cause of the COVID-19 fiasco. State governors, city mayors, Republicans and Democrats, are trapped in a tangle of competing 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

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Los migrantes lideran la lucha porque ‘reapertura’ alimenta resistencia

Por Sue Davis

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 de coronavirus.

El sindicato United Auto Workers (UAW) está protestando en un nuevo frente contra el regreso a la fábrica. Los trabajadores han sido infectados por el COVID-19 en la planta de automóviles Tesla en Fremont, California. 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.

La planta de Tesla en California es una de las fábricas de automóviles que en los últimos meses han sido claves para la producción de ventiladores N95 para cada trabajador. 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.

Mientras tanto, algunos trabajadores de la planta de Tesla en California continúan protestando porque no tienen suficiente espacio para trabajar, ventiladores de aire y más. Los trabajadores protestan por condiciones de trabajo que pueden poner en riesgo sus vidas debido a la falta de protección, la exposición al COVID-19 y la falta de recursos necesarios para garantizar su seguridad.

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