

Philly encampment: ‘Housing now!’

By Ted Kelly
Philadelphia

Sept. 14 — For over three months, “BLACK LIVES MATTER” was shouted in hand-painted white letters across a massive banner on 21st Street at the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, near the steps of the iconic Art Museum of Philadelphia.

A tent city, whose population steadily grew all summer, stretched below the banner.

The people who lived right there on the street tied the banner to light poles after rebellions rose up across the U.S. when police murdered George Floyd May 25. Philly police then tear-gassed peaceful protesters twice in two days, and protesters burned cop cars.

Members of the city’s homeless and unhoused community began on June 10 to set up their tents at a deserted baseball field in the shadow of high-rise luxury condos and museums of high art. They pitched tents on the lawn of the Auguste Rodin Museum, the largest collection of the works of that sculptor outside of

France, and just across the street from the Albert C. Barnes Museum, which houses a collection of paintings estimated to be worth over \$25 billion.

A fierce thunderstorm ripped the Black Lives Matter banner from its tethers a month ago. But the residents remain, after nearly 100 days, in the tent city named Camp James Talib-Dean, in honor of an organizer who died in June.

Capitalist epidemic of homelessness

Project Home estimates over 6,000 people now experience homelessness in Philadelphia. On any given night in the U.S., over half a million people are without housing, with one-third having no shelter at all. Philadelphia’s 27% poverty rate has made it the poorest major city in the country for nearly a decade.

Since 2000, Philadelphia has lost at least 20% of its affordable housing. In 2017, Philadelphia had the highest home foreclosure rate in the country, twice the national average. One out of every 100 homes was seized by the banks or the state.



As Philadelphia city officials and cops threaten eviction, hundreds of people defend #HousingNow encampment. Here, Sept. 9.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

“Philadelphia has been victim of a predatory housing market, of redlining, of discrimination, of racial injustice, of police violence, of state violence, of neglect, of abuse, of mismanagement for generations,” encampment organizer Tara said at a recent press conference at Camp JTD. She added, “We have been fighting for access to housing for low- and no-income Philadelphians for a long time, and we are not going to stop until we get it for every one of us.”

Jennifer Bennetch is a lead organizer of a second encampment, Camp Teddy, located in front of the Philadelphia Housing Authority headquarters, just a mile and a half north of Camp JTD. She sees the city’s paltry attempts to “provide services” to residents at both camps as its preparation for eviction. “We barred homeless outreach precisely for this reason.”

During a press conference last week after police threatened another eviction, a small group of clergy members arrived in

a police van. Escorted by a phalanx of both uniformed and plainclothes Civil Affairs cops, the clergy members approached the barricades and attempted to interrupt the press conference. Speakers turned them away and chastised them for interrupting, noting that no member of this delegation had visited the camp before.

Scapegoating unhoused persons

This prompted Mayor Kenney to charge encampment residents with “threatening violence.” And later he even alleged they were stockpiling “weapons.” He has also claimed that the encampments no longer shelter unhoused residents but are filled with “protesters and outside agitators.”

“If there are no homeless people left,” asked Bennetch sarcastically, “why do they keep coming here with homeless outreach services? The City just wants to protect the criminal enterprise that is the Philadelphia Housing Authority.”

“The Mayor and the Democratic Party of Philadelphia are directly responsible

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Memorial for Daniel Prude, killed by police in Rochester, N.Y. More on page 3.

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Global Days of Rage

For Jennifer Laude and all victims of U.S. military aggression

The following is adapted from a Sept. 11 announcement by GABRIELA Alliance of Filipino Women.

The month of September marks the Filipino people’s victory against the continuation of permanent U.S. military bases in the Philippines. On Sept. 16, 1991, with widespread call and mobilization in the country, the Philippine Senate officially ended the 1947 contract with U.S. naval bases. The removal of the bases showed the strong opposition of the Filipino people against the presence and intervention of the U.S. military in domestic and foreign policies.

However, the Philippine government’s subservience to foreign powers continued as it later signed in 1999 the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) and then the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) in 2014 amid the strong opposition of the Filipino people.

With VFA and EDCA, U.S. soldiers who committed rape and murder in the country went free. The latest was on Sept. 7 when President Duterte awarded an unconditional pardon to U.S. Marine Joseph Scott Pemberton, who murdered trans Filipina Jennifer Laude.

Cases of rape, physical abuse, murder and indiscriminate weapons firing are nightmares that will haunt the Filipino people as long as there are U.S. soldiers in the country, and as long as justice is not served for past atrocities. Brutal violence against LGBTQ Filipinos will only worsen under U.S. militarism – we must fight for the safety and protection of all women and LGBTQ Filipinos.

To express our solidarity and our rage against this injustice, we call on our friends and allies to join our online protests on September 11 and 16.

To participate in the Sept. 16 action (10 a.m. Manila, 7 p.m. LA/Vancouver) please register at forms.gle/UDV5yFTUt3UHXguP9. Our calls: U.S. Out of



GABRIELA

the Philippines! Junk the Visiting Forces Agreement! Junk EDCA! Justice for Jennifer Laude and all victims of U.S. military abuses!

What you can do:

1. Hold actions in front of Philippine embassies and consulates in your countries.
2. Write letters of protest and send to Philippines embassies/consulates in your country, with CC to GABRIELA.
3. Protest on social media using the hashtags: #USOutOfThePhilippines #JunkVFA #JusticeForJenniferLaude #DefendFilipinoWomen. Tag @gabrielaphils and @gabriela.usa.
4. In the U.S., support the Philippine Human Rights Act.
5. Join upcoming actions on Sept. 21 as we mark the anniversary of martial law in the Philippines.

Follow GABRIELA Philippines and GABRIELA USA on social media. Facebook: @gabriela.alliance, @gabrielausa. Instagram: @gabrielaphils, @gabriela.usal. Twitter: @gabrielaphils, @gabriela_usa. □



Join us in the fight for socialism!

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

Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the neverending quest for ever-greater profits.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

National Office

147 W. 24th St., 2nd floor
New York, NY 10011
212.627.2994
wwp@workers.org

Atlanta

PO Box 18123
Atlanta, GA 30316
404.627.0185
atlanta@workers.org

Austin

austin@workers.org

Bay Area

P.O. Box 22947
Oakland, CA 94609
510.394.2207
bayarea@workers.org

Boston

284 Amory St.
Boston, MA 02130
617.522.6626
boston@workers.org

Buffalo, N.Y.

335 Richmond Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14222
716.883.2534
buffalo@workers.org

Cleveland

216.738.0320
cleveland@workers.org

Dallas

dallas@workers.org

Durham, N.C.

804 Old Fayetteville St.
Durham, NC 27701
919.322.9 970
durham@workers.org

Houston

P.O. Box 3454
Houston, TX 77253-3454
713.503.2633
houston@workers.org

Pensacola, Fla.

pensacola@workers.org

Philadelphia

P.O. Box 34249
Philadelphia, PA 19101
610.931.2615
phila@workers.org

Portland, Ore.

portland@workers.org

Salt Lake City

801.750.0248
slc@workers.org

San Antonio

sanantonio@workers.org

West Virginia

WestVirginia@workers.org



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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



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Editor: Deirdre Griswold

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

Web Editors: ABear, Harvey Markowitz, Janet Mayes

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

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Mundo Obrero: Teresa Gutierrez, Carlos Vargas

Supporter Program: Coordinator Sue Davis

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Rochester, N.Y.

Second week of protests for Daniel Prude

By RJ Red
Rochester, N.Y.

Sept. 13 — Nearly six months ago, Daniel Prude was murdered by police officers in Rochester, N.Y., while experiencing a mental health crisis. Initially, the details of the case were swept under the rug by Rochester Police Chief La’Ron Singletary and Mayor Lovely Warren. However, on Sept. 2, body camera footage of the murder of Daniel Prude at the hands of Rochester Police Department became publicly available.

The same day the family of Daniel Prude called a press conference to share the gruesome video and details of the cover-up by RPD with the community. Joe Prude, the brother of Daniel, condemned the police action, declaring it a “cold-blooded murder.”

On Sept. 2 and on following days, large numbers of protesters assembled at Rochester’s “public safety” building, demanding justice for Daniel Prude. On the first day, protesters were arrested for attempting to enter the building where the mayor was holding a press conference. On the second night, the police responded with force, beating people with batons and shooting pepper balls into the crowd. Pepper balls are a glass ball filled with pepper powder, lightly coated in plastic, which can cause serious permanent injury or even death.

The next few days saw protests growing larger as more community members, saddened by the loss of another Black man murdered by police and enraged by RPD’s reckless disregard for human life, joined the marches. By the weekend, demonstrations had grown to over 1,000 people. Often beginning at MLK Park, protesters sang and chanted “Out of your houses, into the streets!” and were met with love and support from the neighborhood.

At this writing, protests have been ongoing for 11 consecutive days. Rochester had already seen regular protests weekly since the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police. Members of Workers World Party’s Buffalo branch — only an hour away — have been on the ground to demonstrate their solidarity in their neighbor city’s struggle against police violence.

Demonstrators met with brutality

Every day, the people of Rochester are posting new first-hand images of their injuries at the hands of police. Many people have been shot point-blank with pepper balls, some even being shot directly in the face and eyes.

Police have brought out dogs and deployed flash-bang grenades and tear gas, as well as an LRAD Sound Cannon, a sonic weapon police use to disorient protesters. Protesters are armed with little more than water bottles and umbrellas for protection. Most people are attacked by police without a clear reason, and many shot at while running away and attempting to disperse. Police have circled the city scooping up fleeing people, making opportunist arrests of unlucky people they come across. Some protesters report being covered in pepper spray, shackled and locked in a police van for an extended period of time.

One person present at a protest, Roderick Douglass, said of his experience being abducted and arrested by police: “I was the first person arrested and one of the last unshackled and released after more than four hours. I wasn’t alone. Shortly after my arrest, a close comrade and roughly a dozen others were taken

into custody. None of those arrested were ‘rioting.’ None were throwing bottles. We were on the front lines attempting to keep people safe and calm.

“We were using our bodies to shield vulnerable people from the onslaught of rubber bullets and pepper balls being launched into the crowd. All of us were shot at close range multiple times before being abducted. Our bodies were covered in fresh welts and bruises, many of us bleeding. At least one man was shot in the eye.”

Douglass explained the excruciating conditions arrestees were subjected to after the arrests: “Three more hours passed. We were handcuffed behind our backs the whole time. Numbness and agony set in. Your shoulder blades burn. Your wrists bleed. You’d give just about anything for the ability to get blood flow to your limbs. Cramping set in due to the dehydration. No water. Covered in pepper spray. Everyone wincing in pain. This was our punishment for the sin of trying to protect people.” (Roderick Douglass on Facebook)

During the protests, the police specifically singled out street medics, firing tear gas and pepper balls as they attempted to treat injuries and rescue incapacitated individuals. One anonymous street medic recalled the deliberate targeting of medics by police: “When we were being pushed back into residential neighborhoods, there was someone who had been shot point-blank in the eye with a pepper ball. My medic buddy and I were trying to treat the person and get them to safety, when two RPD cowards snuck out from behind a building and fucking sniped me. They were aiming right at us. I got clapped in the hand by one pepper ball, and a whole bunch popped off around us, separating us from our other medics, who were helping the injured person. This is not a new tactic for the police, they’ve historically targeted medics, but we are ready for it.” (posted on Facebook)

At one point on Sept. 5, police surrounded United Downtown Presbyterian Church, trapping people inside and firing pepper balls at the building. The church was being used as a safe place for people to get away from the violence. Pepper balls could be seen splattered on the side of the brick wall the next day.

As well as the overwhelming threat of police assault, attacks from the far-right were also a safety concern. On Sept. 4, two cars drove through the crowd of



PHOTO: CARMEN PAUL CIBELLA

Marching for Black Lives Matter in Rochester, N.Y., during days of September protests.

protesters, hitting one person. Bear mace was sprayed onto dozens of people by someone inside the vehicle. Luckily, street medics were on site to assist, and no serious injuries occurred. Rumors of other fascists in the area continued in social media over the next few days, keeping protesters vigilant.

Looking forward towards victory

In the wake of the popular demonstrations, on Sept. 8 Police Chief Singletary abruptly retired and the entire command staff resigned. Some may view this as a final victory, but most of the protesters understand the problem lies in the racist foundations of policing as an institution, rather than a few “bad apples” or inadequate leadership of RPD.

Protests have continued despite the resignations, and people have consistently advocated for defunding and abolishing the police.

A list of demands compiled by Free the People Roc, a group focused on defunding the police and abolishing the prison-industrial complex, has been popularly adopted by many people in the city since the protests for George Floyd. Those demands include dropping all charges brought against protesters since May 30, defunding police, paying reparations to people and their families who’ve been impacted by police brutality, ending mass incarceration and surveillance, and cancelling rent and reinvesting funds from RPD to provide needed housing.

Other demands arising since the murder of Daniel Prude include firing and prosecuting the officers involved, prohibiting RPD’s use of military-grade weapons, passing legislation prohibiting

police from responding to mental health calls, and the resignation of Mayor Lovely Warren and Deputy Mayor James Smith.

Some demands have already been won, such as the repeal of Section 50a which had kept police disciplinary records hidden, making the police somewhat more accountable to the community. Another victory was the removal of RPD officers from Rochester City School District, a significant step towards fighting the school-to-prison pipeline and for the abolition of the prison-industrial complex.

Of course liberation will never be granted through the courts, it must be fought for in the streets. The decisive factor in maintaining these smaller victories will be whether or not the people can gain and keep control over the streets, and keep collective pressure on the police and city government.

With each protest day, the protesters grow smarter and become more well organized. Despite heavy police repression and many injuries and arrests sustained in the fight for Black liberation, the people are resilient and remain dedicated to their cause. They have seen the protests in Portland going on for over 100 consecutive days and know that this fight is a long haul.

The great revolutionary Fred Hampton once said, “Everything would be alright if everything was put back in the hands of the people, and we’re going to have to put it back in the hands of the people.” Workers World Party is with the people of Rochester and oppressed people across the world struggling for national liberation. We echo the call for defunding and abolishing the police, rent cancellation and dismantling the prison system. □

Demonstrators demand firing of police



WW PHOTO: RJ RED

Buffalo, N.Y., Sept. 4.

On Sept. 4, hundreds of protesters took to the streets and gathered outside the district police station in North Buffalo in the busy Hertel Avenue shopping area. The demonstrators demanded the firing of over a dozen cops with histories of police brutality and called for

their salaries of almost \$1.5 million to be allocated for community needs instead.

The demonstration was a culmination of days of protests and confrontations with police, stemming from an incident days earlier when police lined up to defend racists who attacked a Black Lives

Matter protest. When BLM demonstrators had tried to march on Hertel Avenue, they were threatened by two white men who disrupted the BLM protest, brandished knives and hurled racial slurs at demonstrators.

— Report by Victor Enrique

Labor calls for work stoppage for Black Lives

This statement by Labor for Black Lives was issued Aug. 31 and signed by over 50 labor organizations. Signers include United Electrical Workers (UE), United Auto Workers Region 9A (covering eastern New York, New England and Puerto Rico), Fight for \$15, International Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, as well as 18 locals of teacher unions, six Service Employees (SEIU) locals, numerous other state and local unions, regional and local labor councils, and other labor organizations. Many individual elected union officers also signed. A complete list can be found at laborforblacklives.org/

While no actions have as yet been announced, the appeal by such a broad grouping of unions to masses of organized and unorganized workers to wage political strikes against police violence

and white supremacist terror is a huge step forward.

Last week’s actions by professional athletes in the NBA, WNBA, NFL, MLB, and professional tennis are a call to action for all of the labor movement.

They remind us that when we strike to withhold our labor, we have the power to bring an unjust status quo to a grinding halt. The status quo – of police killing Black people, of armed white nationalists killing demonstrators, of millions sick and increasingly desperate – is clearly unjust, and it cannot continue.

As unions representing millions of workers across the country, we stand in solidarity with our comrades on the courts, on the fields, and in the streets. We echo the call to local and federal

government to divest from the police, to redistribute the stolen wealth of the billionaire class, and to invest in what our people need to live in peace, dignity, and abundance: universal health care and housing, public jobs programs and cash assistance, and safe working conditions.

Progressive labor leaders stood with the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. We have a long history of supporting the Black Freedom Movement and we will not stop now. The labor movement and the Movement for Black Lives are each other’s keepers, and we are ready to work together to do what we must to win justice for our people.

We support the demands for racial justice echoing throughout this nation, and the simultaneous call for a more just economy. We will use our strength



and influence to make sure organized labor is on the right side of history in this moment. □

Philly encampment: ‘Housing now!’

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for this crisis, due to their actions and inaction. ... Democratic officials want to spread misinformation about us, when they’re the same ones who cry about the Republican Party and the Trump cabinet spreading disinformation and fearmongering.”

Bennetch also points out that the encampments are much safer than the beds in municipal shelters, which Kenney says are being offered to residents. “There’s a lot of misinformation about safety. How many cases of COVID have there been in the shelter system? And how many cases of COVID have there been in these encampments?” (At least one person, a 46-year-old man from Puerto Rico, died from a COVID outbreak that spread in Philly homeless shelters. There have been no known COVID cases in the encampments.)

Anthony Lloyd, an unhoused activist and formerly incarcerated worker, said, “I represent a percentage of returning citizens. I represent a percentage of people who suffer from mental health problems. We’re not just fighting for homes for the people that live out here, we’re fighting for homes and equality for everybody in Philadelphia.” He said the elected officials have abandoned them.

“When you deprive people of housing, we become ‘savages’ by circumstance. This is minuscule to what they really owe us! If they can take everything from us, what’s gonna stop them from taking it from y’all, the moment you can’t pay your bills?”

Another resident of Camp JTD is Tata Scott. “My brothers and my sisters, they don’t have nowhere to go,” she said. “I’ve experienced homelessness on and off for four years. What are we doing that’s so



Activist Samantha Rise speaks as others hold makeshift shields to protect the encampment on Aug. 18.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

wrong? Are we invading y’all homes? ... They have to wonder when they gonna eat, where they gonna sleep, how they gonna properly use the bathroom.

“This is evil. And it has to stop. ... There’s elders out here. There’s veterans that fought in the wars. What about

‘We are gonna fight. We are gonna ask, but we’re gonna take housing. We’re gonna set up encampments. We’re gonna fight not just for housing —we’re gonna fight for health care; we’re gonna fight for childcare; we’re gonna force this country to take care of its people!’

them? What about the families? What about the pregnant women? What about all of us? We want to be seen, too! ... We got homeless people. We got LGBTQ. You got the whole m-f-ing nation out here. ... Please be brave enough to fight

with us — to defend us. Because we’re not going anywhere.”

‘We are gonna fight’

Workers World Party member Mike Wilson has spent over 40 consecutive days at Camp JTD assisting residents and organizers. “The measure of any society, for what it’s truly worth, is how they treat their weak and vulnerable,” he said. “We want the mayor to hear this very clearly from us. We’re gonna fight for housing. And we’re gonna take housing.”

The Kenney administration claims that vacant “affordable” housing units are being fixed up for people who are “fit” to live in them — but not Camp JTD residents, who suffer from addiction and mental illness.

Wilson says those having addiction or mental illness still qualify for the right to permanent housing. Further, the city has absolutely failed to provide these people with the services they need. That means people must take it upon themselves to acquire the properties withheld by the city.

“This is a war! This is a war from the poor! This is a war from those who are being left out in this society, while Wall Street gets drunk on profits!” said Wilson,

also a member of Philly REAL Justice. “We are gonna fight. We are gonna ask, but we’re gonna take housing. We’re gonna set up encampments. We’re gonna fight not just for housing — we’re gonna fight for health care; we’re gonna fight for childcare; we’re gonna force this country to take care of its people!”

Residents and organizers have repeatedly said that they will take down all the barricades defending the entrances to Camp JTD, when the mayor calls off the cops and stops threatening forcible eviction. Organizers went so far as to invite Kenney to brunch at a Sept. 11 press conference.

YahNé Ndgo of the Black Alliance for Peace urged the mayor to meet with residents: “Mayor Kenney ... talk to your constituents. The individuals who are down here are individuals who you have a responsibility to.”

“We are the ones who are willing to negotiate,” said Dominique, the lead organizer at Camp JTD. “He is the one who is not listening ... who is continuing terrorizing us. I don’t know what else to say. We asked him to acknowledge us, and he said, ‘The police are coming.’”

All weekend, another banner has flown at the corner of 21st street. It reads, “Dear Mayor Kenney: You’re cordially invited to Brunch & Conversation @campjtd on Monday 9/14 @ 11am. No Violence. No Barricades. All Solution. RSVP (regrets only).”

The night before camp residents’ scheduled brunch meeting with Mayor Kenney, police in nearby Lancaster, Pa., shot and killed a man who was diagnosed as having autism. His body lay on the street for four hours, before it was finally retrieved by the coroner.

By noon Monday, it was clear Mayor Jim Kenney was not going to show.

Another resident of Camp JTD shook his head and murmured, “City of Brotherly Love.”

Tata replied, “City of Brotherly Love is a bunch of bullshit, and y’all know it.” □



James Talib-Dean houseless encampment, July 13.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE



Tent homes at Benjamin Franklin Parkway and 21st Street.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Talib Williams

‘Imagine a world without prisons’



By Talib Williams

Talib Williams spoke from Soledad prison Aug. 29 via a recording, introduced by his spouse Tasha Williams, at the webinar “Black Lives Matter: Justice for Peaceful Black Soledad Prisoners.” Williams blows the whistle on injustice inside Soledad and reaches beyond the walls to report the truth, suffering retaliation from the authorities. He has written three books, including “Annotated Tears, Vol. 2, Soledad Uncensored,” and is a respected imam in the prison’s Muslim community. At the age of 17, Williams received a 50-year prison sentence for defending himself against a man who had tried to take his life. In prison for almost two decades, and up for early parole in 2017 for good behavior, in 2020 he is still waiting for his hearing. For information about how to support Williams, go to Prisoners Solidarity Committee of Workers World Party on Facebook and talibthestudent.com/. Webinar can be viewed at tinyurl.com/yx96lkr9.

I just want to thank everybody for being there in support of what’s going on right now, support [of us] in an environment where our voices are continually silenced. I think it’s important for people to reflect on the fact that we live in a society where what we’re experiencing right now at Soledad has been going on. The situation that goes on daily in public, with police-involved shootings and systemic racism in society that cameras record, takes place at a high degree inside prison. Prison is an environment where oppression is silenced, and that makes it invisible to where all we know about institutions are their names. We hear about Soledad, we hear about Attica, we hear about Rikers Island, but we don’t really know what goes on inside. We’ve got to be concerned



Talib Williams. PHOTO: TALIBTHESTUDENT.COM

with what goes on inside here, and I really appreciate the attention that’s being paid. I also want to point out that we’re in a time where I believe that it’s important for us to imagine and inspire people to imagine a world without prisons. Because the effect that prison has on the individuals inside prison is one thing, but the ramifications that continue from what we go through are endless. And although it may be hard for people to imagine what do we do with people who commit crime, what you gotta realize is that there was once a time where people couldn’t imagine a world without slavery. ... It took people to take the chance of committing acts of running away from slavery, in order to get people the ability to have that imagination. □

Houston lab OKs execution drug

By Gloria Rubac
Houston

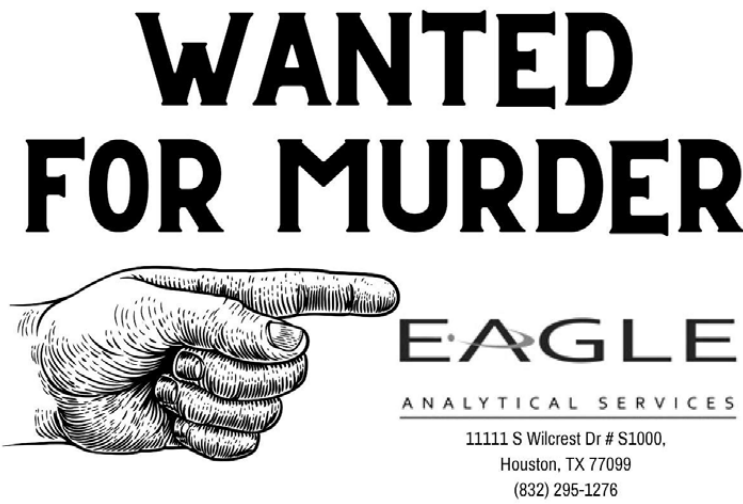
Anti-death penalty activists have exposed and humiliated a Houston science lab found to have approved the purity of raw pentobarbital. Since only a small number of pharmaceutical companies are still allowing their drugs to be used to execute people, U.S. Attorney General William Barr and the U.S. Department of Justice located the pentobarbital in Houston. When Reuters News Agency asked Houston’s Eagle Analytical Services if they knew they were testing a drug that was to be used to execute people, their reply was, “No comment.” (tinyurl.com/y5eeyltk) On Sept. 11 at a busy intersection by the lab, activists held signs condemning Eagle lab for cooperating with the DOJ’s plans to bring back the federal death penalty. They handed out “Wanted for Murder” fliers to people at bus stops and to passing motorists. The group then went to the lab entrance, which is protected and surrounded by wrought iron fencing and is accessible only through electronically controlled gates. Employees came out to film the protest, and Houston cops surveilled the demonstration. One employee told the group, “Yes, I’m okay with the lab approving drugs for executions because I support the death penalty, and I am glad the federal government is executing people.” He refused to give his name. Yancy Balderas, who spoke to lab employees

on a bullhorn, told Workers World, “It’s important we continue to protest and to inform people how this local lab secretly did this work for the U.S. government to kill people. We can’t leave the task of testing drugs to labs who have no oversight. The drug they approved is not only killing people but is torturing them in the process.” As she was protesting and videoing the demonstration, activist Delia Perez-Meyer, said, “We have to organize against the death penalty at all levels, and right now particularly at the federal level because they are leading the country in executions this year. Plus, these are the same drugs that are used at the state level. The whole

system of the death penalty is corrupt and needs to be totally dismantled.” Perez-Meyer has fought for decades to help her brother Louis Castro Perez, who is on Texas’ death row, prove his innocence.

Federal executions protested

The next scheduled executions by the Trump administration are of William LeCroy on Sept. 22 and Christopher Vialva on Sept. 24. Federal executions take place at the federal prison in Terre Haute, Ind. Five federal executions have taken place already this year, three in July and two in August. In the midst of a global pandemic, the Trump administration and the DOJ decided to start executions while lawyers are unable to meet with their clients, investigators can’t properly do their work, and witnesses to executions are unwilling to travel to Indiana to be present. These are the first federal executions in 17 years. According to the Death Penalty Information Center, “the resumption of federal executions was criticized by corrections officials, religious leaders, conservative commentators, former state and federal judges, prosecutors, law enforcement and corrections officials, and family members of homicide victims.” Protests on Sept. 22 and 24 will take place in Terre Haute, as well as cities around the country. In Houston, they will be held at 2:00 p.m. at the Mickey Leland Federal Building. □



Activists handed out fliers ‘WANTED FOR MURDER’ in front of execution drug lab in Houston, Sept. 11.

After COVID-19

Growing old in prison

By Major Tillery

Major Tillery is an innocent man who has spent 35 years in prison because gross prosecutorial and judicial misconduct led to his fraudulent conviction for murder in 1985. He has spent 20 years in solitary confinement. Major has become an advocate for prisoners’ rights against the injustice of the police and courts. He submitted this letter to Tear Down the Walls this month. This is the third time my block has been placed in isolation due to the Covid virus. I am myself a Covid survivor. I’m not blaming anyone about my situation besides Pharaoh Trump, and the poor care of the healthcare provider WellPath and their Dr. Little, who is a fifth-rate doctor at best. [Editor’s note: Dr. Paul Little and other medical staff at SCI Chester were named in a lawsuit for malpractice and misdiagnosis by a former inmate in February of this year.] This pandemic is very hard on everyone, prisoners and staff, and my block was hit the hardest. But for the

elderly it is extremely hard, with lack of exercise, and only getting a half hour out of cell time alone for showers, kiosk, and phone. Your bed becomes a killer to your bones. The anxiety of knowing you can catch a virus that has no real cure can be hard to take -- even at 70 years old. I trained my body over the years to work out, but this is a long lockdown. Just like in the streets there’s a lot of people who have gained “Covid weight” from being quarantined. I now experience post-Covid symptoms, such as shortness of breath, my bones hurt, not to mention fatigue at times. When I had Covid I was told I had to ride it out because there is no known cure. At least I can say here at Chester the administration makes an effort to try to have some in-cell activities. I recognize the need to prevent the spread of this virus, and the precautions that need to be taken. But



Major Tillery. PHOTO: CINDY LOU MILLER

when you have older people with other medical conditions like myself, lack of exercise, and isolation, stress, and plain old boredom can exacerbate your underlying conditions. The first lockdown was about five months ago, and this is the third lockdown for my block, so this is growing hard on all the men — regardless of age — on this block. But what can you do when you live in a country that elected Pharaoh for President. I will say this: At Chester the administration is always trying to contain the virus, even asking prisoners for input. But we need more outside time with social distancing because being cooped up in the cell without fresh air can be counterproductive. With this virus it’s like taking two steps up, then three steps back. □

LABOR DEFENDS BLACK LIVES

‘We as workers are powerful’

By Dominic Harris

The following article is based on a talk given during a Sept. 10 webinar, “Workers Defend Black lives,” sponsored by Workers World Party. Dominic Harris is president of UE Local 150, Charlotte, N.C. United Electrical Workers has been in the leadership of U.S. labor organizing to defend Black lives. View webinar at tinyurl.com/y6m9z593.

We’re at a time in history where a lot of things are coming to an impasse, and most of those things are coming to a boil! What UE has decided to do is support workers doing a stoppage of work, about eight minutes an hour if you feel like it, maybe more, to let people know that we recognize the hurt and the pain of our members and all of our people.

UE 150 is a majority Black union. And what we strive to do is to put us on equal footing with our employers. That’s been our whole game.

Workers, we see ourselves as somebody that’s just trying to make it from day to day. That’s not what we are. We are the people that make the world. We make it turn, we make it work, we make it move. We’re the people that generate the income for the millionaires and billionaires. We’re the people that have sacrificed time at home to go on call to be ready for work, to show up at work on time, every day, just to make sure that we can put food on the table for our kids and make sure that the country can exist as a whole.

Understand this: We as workers are powerful. We are more than what we are seen as being by our supervisors and our employers. We are the world.

And what we can do with that power that we have is use it. We can use it to change the way that police, police. We can use it and change the way that the economy moves and works for us. We can use it to change the minds of ourselves and those who oppress us, by simply not showing up. That’s all we have to do.

If we don’t move the world, the world don’t move. We hold up the world with our hands. We are holding up the

world with our labor, and if we use our labor as leverage – then there’s nothing anybody can deny us.

A \$15 minimum wage isn’t enough anymore. We need to go for more. If you work at McDonald’s, I say stand up for yourself, because ain’t nobody else going to do for you.

We have two parties that have been basically taken control of by the corporate classes. So we need to do one of two things: Take over one of those parties, or create our own and let them know that we do not have either of their backs.

The political class and the political elites, they play this game with us and they treat us like we don’t matter. They haven’t even been able to pass a suitable relief deal for workers, like they’ve done in other countries.

We want Medicare for All. Every industrialized nation around the world has managed to give their people a universal health care system. They managed to do it, and this supposedly richest country in the world can’t do that?

We support Medicare for All with everything we have, we’re willing to use our labor as leverage to get that across. And that puts power back in our hands. Because right now if you get fired, more than likely you’re going to lose your health care. You’re back at the mercy of your employer. Medicare for All gives us power.

Free college gives us power because instead of having to work far too many hours to put our kids through school, now they can simply go by applying and achievement measurement to whatever school that they want. We want marijuana legalization because that gives us more power, it takes away the power of cops to come into your house just because you want to smoke a blunt. And we’re going to drop down the prison incarceration rate by freeing every one of those people that have a marijuana charge. We can get those people out of jail.

Donald Trump claims to be this president that’s all about the people. But even though polls support the legalization of marijuana, he doesn’t support it. Even though polls support free college and Medicare for All, he doesn’t support that.



Dominic Harris WW PHOTO: MIRINDA CRISSMAN

And we can say the same about Joe Biden. We are the people and we have told him many times, many times over, that we want a Green New Deal. We want to put power back in our hands with federal job guarantees.

We want all of these things because we deserve them. We’re the people and we deserve to live as suitable a life as our oppressors do. We deserve to strive for higher places of being in society.

Now I’ll tell you a little dream of mine. It might be a dream, but it should be reality. I want to live in a world where instead of working for a dollar, we work for the benefit of all mankind. You should be able to wake up in the morning and say, “What can I do for my fellow man?” Instead of what do I need to do to pay these bills, which are ever mounting, especially in this time when unemployment is sky high rate, where 50% of people that are unemployed can’t even afford basic necessities, and we still don’t have a relief plan.

We need to do everything we can to make sure that every person is whole in this nation. That every person can wake up in the morning and know what they’re doing is right and what they’re doing is justified just because they’re a human being and they deserve these basic human rights.

Work stoppages, general strike, whatever we have to do to make the political system move for us is what needs to happen! You can’t put [our lives] in their hands anymore. You got to make them understand that we’re workers, we control this world. It’s not the other way around. □

Professional athlete strikes inspire other workers

By Monica Moorehead

The following article is based on a talk given during a Sept. 10 webinar, “Workers Defend Black Lives,” sponsored by Workers World Party. View webinar at tinyurl.com/y6m9z593.

National Football League football is the most popular U.S. professional sport, with 32 teams at a combined worth of \$91 billion.

So when Colin Kaepernick first took a knee four years ago to protest police brutality and systemic racism, during the playing of the reactionary national anthem, he took on 32 of the world’s richest team owners.

These bosses, with Trump’s support, collectively “blackballed” Kaepernick from playing in the NFL. They claimed his actions would hurt their bottom line, saying fans would be turned off from watching NFL games if any players followed in Kaepernick’s footsteps.

The Washington Post released a poll on Sept. 10 showing at least 56% of football fans support NFL players taking a knee. A similar poll back in 2018 by the Wall Street Journal found only 43% fan approval. This is an important barometer indicating a significant political sea change, especially for a sport that has been so militarized and conservatized over the decades.

Throughout U.S. society there has been a dramatic shift in terms of how police are viewed, especially since the public lynching of George Floyd in Minneapolis. On May 25 people worldwide saw a Black man being tortured for almost nine minutes by four white police officers. One kept the full weight of his knee on the neck of Floyd, who was screaming “I can’t breathe” and “I want my mother.”

Ever since, millions of people have been in the streets, almost daily, demanding to defund and even abolish the police in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. Confederate statues, monuments and other visible pro-slavery images have been torn down or forced down by the masses.



Monica Moorehead WW PHOTO: MIRINDA CRISSMAN



Los Angeles Lakers, including LeBron James, take a knee, inspired by Colin Kaepernick.

Athletes strike for Black lives

The protests have had a tremendous impact on athletes in pro sports, beginning with the National Basketball Association and the Women’s National Basketball Association.

In late August, following the horrific police shooting of Jacob Blake, a 29-year-old Black father of six shot seven times in the back in Kenosha, Wis., the Milwaukee Bucks carried out a heroic wildcat strike by refusing to play an NBA playoff game in Florida. Other NBA teams, in a show of strong solidarity, also refused to play over the

next three days.

The WNBA refused to play games for one to two days and every WNBA team locked arms together in solidarity. This prompted players in Major League Baseball, National Hockey League and Major League Soccer, that are a majority white, to refuse to play as a team or as individuals. This is an important step toward building anti-racist unity.

The number one tennis player in the world, Naomi Osaka, wore seven different face masks before her tennis matches with one name on each – Ahmaud Arbery, Philando Castile, George Floyd, Trayvon Martin, Elijah McClain, Tamir Rice and Breonna Taylor – before winning the 2020 U.S. Open on Sept. 12. She was thanked by the families of Arbery, Floyd and Martin for using her platform to raise BLM awareness of police violence and systemic racism. Osaka refused to play a match in late August before the U.S. Open in solidarity with the Bucks’ action.

Why are athletes included in this webinar on workers supporting Black Lives Matter? Sports are immensely popular in the U.S., whether professional or amateur. But what gets lost is that athletes, whether they receive millions of dollars or hundreds of thousands of dollars in salary, are workers.

They are gladiators well paid to entertain the masses. In all professional sports, players are represented either by a union or an association that negotiates with the bosses for a collective bargaining agreement. And now growing numbers of college athletes are becoming more conscious as workers and want to be organized.

Worker labor, worker power

It is the players who fill the arenas and the stadiums, not the bosses – who get super-rich in the billions of dollars from the ticket sales, concession sales and especially TV revenues. As with workers in a plant or restaurant, the players’ labor – in the form of skills and talent – produces a commodity, a thing of value that can be bought and sold.

Continued on page 8

YES! SOLIDARITY FOREVER!

A Kenosha activist demands justice

By Katrina Miller

This slightly edited talk was given at the Workers World Party Sept. 10 webinar, “Workers Defend Black Lives.” View webinar at tinyurl.com/y6m9z593.

Hello, everyone! I’m an activist in Kenosha, Wisconsin – a town that wouldn’t be where it is without United Auto Workers Local 72. I’m a member of Students for a Democratic Society, a nationwide student activist group.

I’ve been involved in many campaigns pertaining to events locally and worldwide, but none have hit me more than the attempted murder of Jacob Blake at the hands of Rusten Sheskey, a Kenosha police officer.

I remember having gotten home from a regular day on Sunday [Aug. 23], when Facebook exploded for me. Messages from other activists nearby, flooding my phone about whether I had heard the news, directing me to a live stream quickly picking up attention, not just locally but nationwide.

A Black man, shot in the back, in my town? In a neighborhood I’ve passed through countless times, blocks from where I went to high school. I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. I could not believe it.

I was scrolling desperately through Facebook to find out if he’s alive, who it was, what happened, anything. And I made the unfortunate choice to watch that video. The video of the attempted murder of Jacob Blake, as he tried to step into his car, an act far from deserving of seven point-blank shots in the back. And while that was hard to watch, what is much harder to take in is the knowledge that the police force in this country can shoot a father [in front of three of his six children] and, so far, get away with it.

I rushed to the scene, as did many others, to demand



Katrina Miller WW PHOTO: MIRINDA CRISSMAN

the name of the officer, to demand accountability, to demand the indictment of the officer, to demand justice.

We demanded answers: Why was Jacob Blake left on the ground bleeding for an hour? How could they justify shooting him? How many times can this keep happening? Tension escalated, and when police tried to drive a cop car (whose tire had been slashed) into our crowd, it spilled over.

The Kenosha Police Department had already brought riot police onto the scene. That’s key to remember: When you see a protest, look who is dressed for a riot. It’s not us.

Regardless, the police were vastly outnumbered by angry citizens demanding justice and they quickly left. Then people poured from the scene to the police station downtown.

We gathered and we spoke and we expressed our frustrations, and we were met by riot police, by guns on the roof, by SWAT [Special Weapons And Tactics] vehicles pulling up.

The cops barricaded streets, but you know what they defended, what they blocked? The courthouse, the police

station, the offices. Not our homes! They didn’t protect the people. They attacked us, they gassed us, they attempted to prevent us from acting on our right to protest, our right to criticize their actions, to criticize the system.

But that Sunday wasn’t the end. We carried on into Monday, gathering early for marching and protests. And yet again were met by violent resistance! This has been a pattern shown by the police time and time again.

They claimed we were backed by outside agitators, but the only agitators we saw were all the cops from out of town sent in, the National Guard sent in, the armed militia who roamed our streets, who we were pushed back into. Militia who with the support of the police killed Joseph “Jojo” Rosenbaum and Anthony Huber, two more victims of the emboldened fascist presence in the U.S.

Medics were gassed, we were shot at, we were pushed back and corralled like animals, like we were the ones roaming the streets killing people of color, like we were the ones using weapons of war on people, like we were behaving like the police do.

How does standing up to injustice justify being shot, being gassed, being rounded up like animals and arrested for curfew – as my fellow SDS activists, Adelana Akindes and Victor Garcia, were while the far-right militia got to roam free.

Activists from across the country called into the Kenosha Detention Center demanding the release of Adelana and Victor and all other arrested on bogus charges by unmarked officers in unmarked cars—like the Gestapo.

This is fascism and a clear violation of our rights. Students for a Democratic Society stand with all who fight fascism and racism and police brutality. Solidarity with all workers across the country!

In Kenosha, we need justice, and we need a Civilian Police Accountability Council now. Thank you everyone. □

Georgia

Campus workers fight for Black and Brown lives

By Arielle Robinson
Atlanta

This is a slightly edited version of a talk given at the Workers World Party Sept. 10 webinar, “Workers Defend Black Lives.” View webinar at tinyurl.com/y6m9z593.

In and around Atlanta, labor unions have been connecting the issues of labor to racial justice. Unions are recognizing that issues of labor and racial justice are inseparable and are taking action to link the issues.

The United Campus Workers of Georgia, part of the larger CWA (Communication Workers of America), have been holding demonstrations and getting the word out to the public through different media, connecting the return to school to the current crisis of racism.

On Aug. 6, UCWGA members and supporters held a die-in outside the University of Georgia in Athens before the school opened. The protest was directed at the University System of Georgia (USG), which has forced all its institutions, which are public universities, to return to school in person.

As union members were expressing their righteous outrage, an open records request [from a Georgia Tech student] exposed that Corvias, a company operating the university dorms, wanted students to go back to school and fill dorms to full capacity. (tinyurl.com/y2kmdbhj)

The company acknowledged quite openly in the media that it was not following any of the guidelines to protect against COVID. The company simply did not want to lose any money from dorms closing down! [If Georgia State had opened its dorms at 75% capacity, Corvias would have lost \$3.1 million over the school year, according to the Aug. 7 Georgia Recorder.]

Furthermore, the University System of Georgia lost millions when coronavirus forced schools to close down in March. Now, while Georgia is one of the hot spots in the nation for COVID, USG has made students and workers return to school in person in the middle of the pandemic.

This past July, UCWGA released a statement honoring the memory of Ana Cabrera Lopez, a 32-year-old

Latina woman who worked in service and maintenance at UGA. Lopez, who died of COVID-19 this summer, reportedly had said, before she became sick, that she was scared to work on campus.

As UCWGA members protested, they made sure to call out the fact that COVID is disproportionately affecting Black and Brown workers and that those workers not only include professors, but also janitors, maintenance workers, dining hall workers, student workers within dorms, teaching assistants and many more.

At USG institutions, the majority of people working maintenance and janitorial positions are Black and Brown people and women. As protests continue, the union makes sure to emphasize that when maintenance people are sent in to clean, in order to follow CDC guidelines, UGS is sending in Black and Brown people – workers – to die.

As if the threat of death was not enough, Kennesaw State University laid off 24 university employees just a week before school started. The KSU chapter of UCWGA was quick to release the information to the public, emphasizing that the president, who makes half a million dollars a year, did not take a pay cut. Instead, Black and Brown people and women – the lowest-paid janitors and staff members – were fired in the middle of the pandemic.

The union continues to be on a “No-Layoffs” campaign, releasing videos to the public and trying to get the word out through the press and protests. The union proposes that the president and those making the most money take pay cuts.

The UCWGA at KSU has been strongly emphasizing that when the university fires people, it is unnecessarily firing people from marginalized backgrounds – those who are suffering most already from the health and economic crisis. □



Arielle Robinson WW PHOTO: MIRINDA CRISSMAN



‘The unions are really the military wing of the working class. If the unions band together to collectively shut down the system – a one-day, 24-hour shutdown – that’s going to send a definitive message that these actions by the police will stop. The people are sick and tired of carrying the burden of white supremacy, of racism, of sexism, of all the different forms of discrimination. We are at a very ripe moment for a major victory if we continue to organize a bottoms-up struggle to change the dynamics of this capitalist system, a grassroots movement that’s going to change the face of the future of this country.’

—Chris Silvera, Secretary-Treasurer and Principal Officer of Teamsters Local 808, served as the first chair of the Teamsters National Black Caucus. Silvera spoke on the Sept. 10 webinar, “Workers Defend Black Lives.”

COVID and People of Color

Is it genocide yet?

By Teresa Gutierrez

If you are a person of color, you too, like me, are probably traumatized and fed up with reading article after article that states: “Black and Brown people are especially affected by the coronavirus.”

Substitute “coronavirus” with most diseases or other dire social conditions such as unemployment, gentrification, hunger or broader social calamities such as climate change — and there too, people of color will be the most impacted.

In other words, people of color bear the brunt of every single damn capitalist calamity.

COVID-19 has exposed the fact that the current global infrastructure of capitalism — which the majority of the people live under — is not only incapable of addressing the pandemic, it is aggravating it.

On May 3, the United Nations Deputy Secretary General Amina Mohammed stated: “COVID-19 is a threat multiplier. We have a health emergency, a humanitarian emergency and now a development emergency. These emergencies are compounding existing inequalities. In advanced economies, we are seeing higher rates of mortality among already marginalized groups. And in developing countries, the crisis will hit vulnerable populations even harder.

“Weak health systems won’t be able to cope. Incomplete social protection systems risk seeing millions fall back into poverty. And governments with little economic firepower will not be able to cushion the impacts or recover quickly. Every single person will be affected by this pandemic.” (news.un.org)

Every single person yes, but people of color will be hit the hardest.

Public health crisis for people of color

Early on in the pandemic, news service Vox wrote: “with every day that goes by, it becomes clearer that the virus isn’t an equalizer at all. Instead, it is exacerbating the inequalities ... taking a disproportionate toll on low-income people, people of color and others ... already marginalized before the crisis.” (April 10)

Interestingly, if it were not for independent academic research, the official Centers for Disease Control tally would not be calculating the effects on people of color correctly.

Thank goodness for the nerds.

According to the Center for Disease Research and Policy, a Harvard University study concluded that “the CDC’s weighted population distributions underestimate the excess burden of COVID-19 among Blacks and Latinos.” (July 28)

This burden is substantiated by many laudable studies.

For example, Dr. Sherita Hill Gordon from Johns Hopkins University writes on that website: “People of color, particularly African Americans, are experiencing more serious illness and death due to COVID-19 than white people.”

The Journal of the American Medical Association writes: “Predominantly nonwhite communities bore



People line up outside Elmhurst Hospital Center in Queens to be tested for the coronavirus.

nearly three times the burden of COVID-19 infections and deaths as white neighborhoods.”

Furthermore, “residents of mostly nonwhite communities died of the coronavirus at nine times the rate of residents of largely white areas.” (July 28)

These conditions — along with the police terror that continues unabated — has resulted in the medical profession determining for the very first time that racism is a public health problem.

A statement issued by National Nurses United asserts “we all have a responsibility to understand and root out the racism in our systems and institutions that are driving these disparities.” (nnu.org, June 1)

Early in the pandemic, the neighborhood of Jackson Heights in Queens, New York, was hit hard. This is a beautiful, primarily immigrant and Black and Brown neighborhood, notwithstanding recent gentrification. In fact, it’s been noted as the most diverse place on earth. (Daily News, July 12, 2009)

In a May 18 Opinion piece in the New York Times, Ed Morales said, “Elmhurst and Corona Queens had its hospital quickly overwhelmed as an early epicenter of the coronavirus, and its residents live in ceaseless anxiety.

“Undocumented immigrants in the community don’t want to risk getting emergency care for fear of exposing their status. Roosevelt Avenue, with its chain of restaurants, inexpensive stores and nightlife haunts, turned into a dark, lonely promenade of sorrow and is likely to find it harder to recover than more affluent parts of the city.”

Congresswoman Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez, representing sections of Queens and the Bronx, said at the time that the pandemic “is not really creating new problems. It’s pouring gasoline on existing ones.” (NYTimes, May 4)

White supremacists thrilled

Does it not make sense to conclude that Donald Trump, who campaigned on a vile racist program, could care less if more people of color died than whites from COVID?

In fact, the Atlantic magazine headlined on May 8: “The Coronavirus Was an Emergency Until Trump Found Out Who Was Dying.”

Indeed.

That article continued, “The lives of disproportionately black and brown workers are being sacrificed to

fuel the engine of a faltering economy, by a president who disdains them. This is the COVID contract.”

In his Opinion piece, Morales noted that the first Latinx to die from the virus was a Salvadoran worker at a Smithfield meatpacking plant in South Dakota. Black folks in the South know well the horrors of working at Smithfield, founded in Virginia in 1936, now the largest pork producer in the world.

Fast forward to the Republican National Convention defiantly held in North Carolina at the height of the pandemic. The convention was a complete backlash to the righteous actions in the streets against police terror.

The RNC gave message after message to the oppressed that if COVID-19 doesn’t kill you, Trump’s cops will.

It is notable that, at the moment, a key “advisor” to Trump about COVID is Scott Atlas. He has no scientific or epidemiological background, but he does have Trump’s ear.

According to a Truthout article on Aug. 31, Atlas is “pushing a ‘herd immunity’ approach to the pandemic, which would allow the virus to spread nearly unmitigated through the population while protecting nursing homes and others. ... Building herd immunity in this way is an extremely controversial strategy and has been condemned by epidemiologists and the World Health Organization.”

William Hanage, a Harvard professor of epidemiology of infectious disease, wrote in the Guardian on March 15 that herd immunity as a coronavirus policy is like letting a house burn down without trying to fight the fire. Hanage states, “The government has inexplicably chosen to encourage the flames, in the misguided notion that somehow they will be able to control them.”

The logic of racist capitalism is: If it is mainly people of color dying from the virus, if it is mainly warehouse and grocery workers, custodial workers, nurses, farm-workers or bus drivers, why not let the fire spread?

What is to be done?

The oppressed in this country have experienced centuries of abuse and violence. But we have also forced capitalism to concede to our demands many times.

With COVID-19 and the many other calamities that the working class faces at this very moment, an opportunity arises.

White workers, especially youth, are seeing for themselves that this rotten capitalist system has destroyed their future. They have no stake in this system and look elsewhere for answers, to socialism for one.

They are solidly behind the movement for Black Lives Matter.

They agree that migrants have a right to be in this country.

The unity of oppressed and white workers has the potential like never before to make demands that will not just wring a concession from the 1%, but win a complete abolishment of their system.

This is an urgent task. The movement for fundamental change cannot wait until genocide reaches the communities of color. It is already too close. □

Professional athlete strikes inspire other workers

Continued from page 6

It is from workers’ labor that the owner derives profit. If a worker works eight hours, only part of that time covers the cost of the worker’s wage. The rest of the time is unpaid labor and it is from this that the owner gains surplus value. As a class, the bosses keep the surplus value created by the global working class as profits, resulting in an immeasurable gap between rich and poor, and workers feeling disempowered. Building workers’ assemblies can turn this around.

Once they refused to play, NBA players felt their power by withholding their labor. With the growing capitalist economic war on workers, spurred on by the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a rising chorus of workers talking about a general strike, harkening back to the general strike of millions of migrant workers on May Day 2006. This general strike would be even more classwide, including both economic and political demands and building off of a one-day national strike led by “essential”



Naomi Osaka at U.S. Open, Sept. 8.

workers but also inspired by NBA players.

As a Sept. 9 op-ed in the New York Times stated, “In May, essential workers at Amazon, Instacart and other

e-commerce and delivery companies staged a one-day national strike demanding better protections and higher pay. In July, thousands of workers from a range of industries walked off the job in support of the Black Lives Matter movement.

“At the other end of the pay scale, professional basketball players got their league to adopt a number of social-justice initiatives after they went on strike last month to protest racial inequality and police brutality. Last week, several large unions announced they are considering authorizing work stoppages to push for concrete measures to address racial injustice.”

The bourgeoisie, as heard through their mouthpieces like the Times, fear what is on the horizon: even bigger class-wide battles to come.

The writer’s father, Isaac Moorehead, was a title-winning coach of men’s and women’s basketball teams for over 40 years at historically Black colleges and universities.

Cross-country caravan to demand ‘Residency, now!’

By G. Lechat and Gloria Rubac

Bulletin: The United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled Sept. 14 against TPS recipients, holding that President Trump can terminate the legal status of people of all countries now living in the U.S. under protection of the program. The ruling leaves hundreds of thousands vulnerable to deportation.

On Sept. 21, im/migrant activists will depart Los Angeles for San Francisco, the first of 54 stops across 32 states on the #TPSJourney4JusticeII bus tour, ultimately arriving in Washington, D.C., in mid-November.

In 2018, the first Jornada por la Justicia calling for protection of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) recipients criss-crossed the country after Trump terminated the program. TPS is now set to end after Jan. 4, 2021, for 411,000 recipients who will then lose legal work authorization, driver’s licenses (in most states) and protection from deportation. (nationaltpsalliance.org)

In June, the intensifying #ResidencyNow fight drew a caravan of over 200 cars to D.C. Amidst the Black Lives Matter rebellion and COVID-19 pandemic, the summer mobilization centered the multinational unity of the Black and Brown TPS community and their contributions as essential workers.

“We want to be legalized,” Massachusetts activist Julio Perez told Workers World. “We have been living legally in the U.S. for 20 or more years and gotten nothing, so we also empathize with the 12 million undocumented in this country.”

Perez will drive the 13,000-mile Journey for Justice II route, designed by the National TPS Alliance, National Day Laborers Organizing Network (NDLON) and Central American Resource Center (CARECEN). The 300 hours of driving will cost him all his vacation time, plus eight weeks unpaid leave including two in quarantine, before returning to work as a custodian at Harvard University. Recognizing the urgency of protecting large numbers of members, Perez’s union SEIU 32BJ negotiated the time off.

TPS workers have already paid their dues to the U.S. Elmer Romero, Director of Strategic Partnership for CARECEN, organizing in Houston’s Salvadoran community with well over 36,000 TPS-holders, explained to Workers World, “The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that the TPS community is composed of essential and necessary workers to sustain and serve the economy of our nation. It is an immoral and inhumane act to deny



For caravan map and information about Journey for Justice, go to www.nationaltpsalliance.org/journey-for-justice/.

a legal immigration status to the people who take care of us and feed us.”

Histories of violence

U.S. residents are eligible for TPS, if their nation of origin becomes unsafe due to disaster or violence. Like Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), it temporarily protects recipients from removal. TPS is not a path to citizenship, although many recipients have 20-plus years of 18-month extensions. TPS recipients have 300,000 U.S.-born children.

Trump’s cancellation of TPS for all ten of the currently designated countries — El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Nepal, Nicaragua, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and Yemen — is racist. He notoriously labeled these nations “s — hole countries,” blaming the victims for conditions U.S. imperialism created.

TPS was a concession to 1980s Salvadoran activists who fled the right-wing dictatorship, which President Reagan was financing with over \$3 million per day in today’s dollars. A majority of Tepesiana/os — the Spanish-speaking recipients’ word for their status — are Salvadorans who arrived after the 2001 earthquake there.

U.S. interventions in Honduras and Nicaragua also heightened the devastation of Hurricane Mitch before those countries were designated. The U.S. has forced debilitating debt onto Haiti for two centuries. ICE detainees are also disproportionately Haitian.

No disaster is entirely “natural” in countries destabilized by U.S. intervention. U.S. and British imperialism reduced Nepal to “one of the poorest countries on the planet” before its 2015 earthquake. (Workers World, April 28, 2015) Various “pretexts ... cover for

U.S. imperialism’s geostrategic and economic interests” in the Horn of Africa and the Middle East as well. (Workers World, April 5, 2019)

Decades of immigration policy shifts mirror capitalism’s instability. Im/migrants keep the U.S. economy humming, when business is booming. Immigration to escape the aftermath of U.S. policies is encouraged; the exodus neutralizes the threat posed by revolution developing after a disaster. In downtimes, the ruling class swerves the other way — cutting workers.

Many Black and Brown union leaders, who are revitalizing the U.S. labor movement and benefiting everyone, have TPS. Cancelling TPS is union-busting, purging leaders to undermine resistance to the next attack — whether it’s unemployment, right-to-work or unsafe reopening. Wall St. is the beneficiary.

Transformative journeys

The National TPS Alliance formed immediately after Homeland Secretary Kristjen Nielsen announced the termination in January 2018. By March, activists filed Ramos v. Nielsen in the 9th Circuit Court, arguing that racism led to unconstitutional procedural corner cutting by the Trump administration. Supreme Court justices, on the defensive during the BLM rebellion this June, conceded DACA litigants’ same argument, although they remain without a path to permanent residency. And Trump immediately attacked DACA again. TPS recipients still await the lower court decision on Ramos.

As the attacks inspire militant activism, #SaveTPS has given way to the all-inclusive call for #ResidencyNow. Doris Reina-Landaverde, a national TPS and SEIU leader, and like Perez, a Harvard custodian in Massachusetts, told Workers World: “We don’t want to save TPS. We want permanent residency. When we fight, it’s for everyone now and all the people who come in the future. It’s what we need for our families. It’s not about saving — it’s about fighting.”

G. Lechat, Boston, an activist with FIRE (Fight for Im/migrants and Refugees Everywhere), is a co-founder of Harvard TPS Coalition, a joint effort between the University’s workers from SEIU 32BJ, UNITE HERE Local 26 and AFSCME Local 3650.

Gloria Rubac, Houston, an activist with FIRE, is one of the founders of the South Texas Human Rights Center in Falfurrias, Texas, working to save migrant lives at the U.S./Mexico border.

WW BOOK REVIEW

‘Disability Visibility’

By Jean Bowdish

Living under capitalism and acknowledging you are disabled changes many aspects of your life. It both restricts and expands your immediate universe. It changes how you see the world around you. The restrictions are created and imposed by capitalism. The expansion comes from becoming part of a community.

“Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century,” edited by Alice Wong, was published this summer. Wong dedicated the book “To my younger self and all the disabled kids today who can’t imagine their futures. The world is ours, and this is for all of us.”

Though I am far from being a kid, this book opened my eyes and my universe.

The book’s epigraph is a comment by Neil Marcus, actor and playwright active in the development of disability culture: “Disability is not a brave struggle or ‘courage in the face of adversity.’ Disability is an art. It’s an ingenious way to live.”

Wong’s collection of 37 stories is wide-ranging, encompassing a variety of disabilities. She is very clear the book “is not Disability 101 or a definitive ‘best of’ list. ... These stories do not seek to explain the meaning of disability or to inspire or elicit sympathy. Rather, they show disabled people simply being in our own words, by our own accounts.”

In 2014, Wong partnered with StoryCorps, a national oral history organization, to create the Disability Visibility Project. Originally planned as a one-year

project to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act, the project grew. Now the DVP is over 140 oral histories describing what it means to live with a disability. Wong also has a Disability Visibility podcast, creating, sharing and amplifying disability media and culture.

The book is divided into four sections: Being, Becoming, Doing and Connecting. Each opens with a quote from a contributor in that section. My favorite quote comes from Sandy Ho in the Becoming section: “Taking up space as a disabled person is always revolutionary.”

The essays are a collection that describes the lives of people with disabilities. Some are written to be part of this collection, most are sourced from existing material, from eulogies to poetry, to a statement given before the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, to an open letter from the Harriet Tubman Collective.

The contributors are people who were born with disabilities and those who have become disabled, cultural workers, incarcerated workers, attorneys, doctors, authors, activists — barrier breakers representing different communities. Some address the specific issues facing people of color, and many identify as queer.

Wong closes her introduction: “Disabled people have always existed, whether the word disability is used or not. ... Disability is not a monolith, nor is it a clear-cut binary of disabled and non-disabled. Disability is mutable and ever-evolving. Disability is both apparent and non-apparent. Disability is pain, struggle, abundance and joy. Disability is sociopolitical, cultural and biological. Being

visible and claiming a disabled identity brings risks as much as it brings pride.

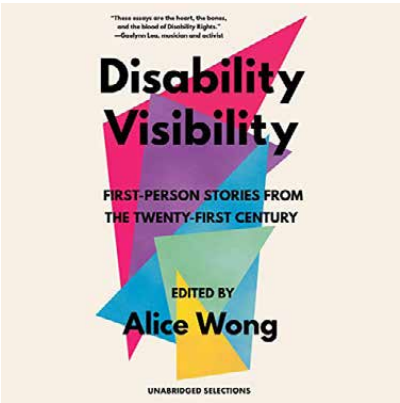
“Collectively, through our stories, our connections and our actions, disabled people will continue to confront and transform the status quo. It’s who we are.”

As Laura Hershey (1962-2010), a poet, journalist, feminist and disability rights activist, says in the book:

“Remember, you weren’t the one
Who made you ashamed,
But you are the one
Who can make you proud.”

This book is for everyone to read. We need more attention paid to making a world that accepts what each of us can give and provides what each of us needs.

Jean Bowdish is disabled and learning how large, proud and active the community of Deaf/Disabled people truly is. The language of disabilities and communities is ever evolving and changing. Deaf with a capital D represents the culture of the Deaf community. Some people use Deaf/Disabled and some use Disabled to represent everyone with any type of disability.



9/11 — a pretext for war

Look at the 9/11 commemorations for what they are: an opportunity for the U.S. ruling class to use a collective trauma to whip up jingoist and super-patriotic sentiment. The goal of this whipping up is to convince much of the population to rally around the U.S. flag and support Pentagon military intervention anywhere in the world.

In 2001, the ruling group in George W. Bush’s White House used the trauma to declare a “War on Terror” as a pretext to unleash wars of terror on the people of the world.

That’s no exaggeration. According to a 2020 study by the prestigious Watson Institute of Brown University, U.S.-backed wars since Sept. 11, 2001, have transformed a minimum of 37 million people into refugees, driving them from their homes with only their clothes, starving them and their children. The study involved Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, the Philippines, Libya,

and Syria, for which both Republican and Democratic administrations can be blamed. (tinyurl.com/y2h5uxn3)

The Bush administration’s neocons and their successors in the Democratic administration had a goal. The goal was to reconquer, for imperialist domination, parts of the world that had achieved a certain amount of sovereignty.

The existence of the Soviet Union until 1991 had defended that sovereignty from direct imperialist intervention in most cases. With that defense now removed, the Empire has been waging war to replace its yoke firmly on the backs of the world’s people.

Whether refugees from this U.S. strategy fled inside their country, fled to neighboring states or tried to make it to wealthier places in Europe or the United States, each one has a tale of human misery. Each piece of suffering was caused by imperialist strategists seeking obscene profits. And that includes the millions of

people killed in these wars.

Recall the official public details of the September 2001 attacks. The Saudi citizens in al Qaida, allegedly angry over the U.S. occupation of their country since 1990, targeted symbols of imperialist power: Wall Street financial capital, the Pentagon war machine, and — with the aborted Pennsylvania plane crash that both Trump and Biden visited — probably the U.S. Capitol.

Bush’s gang punished none of its Saudi allies. Instead, they wielded the popular trauma like a club. They first invaded Afghanistan, then invaded and occupied oil-rich Iraq. In the name of the “War on Terror,” Bush’s administration and, following it, Barack Obama’s Democratic administration intervened with weapons or fighters in the countries named in the Watson study.

Trump has followed by fronting bi-partisan threats against Iran and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

and has imposed murderous sanctions on many other peoples, including those of Cuba and Venezuela, stretching beyond all recognition the concept of “War on Terror.”

The 9/11 attack on symbols of U.S. oppression also had human victims — a real cross section of the U.S. population who worked in the World Trade Center, including all types of essential workers who maintain buildings, serve and clean up food, as well as every type of office worker, of all beliefs and from all parts of the world, including all oppressed nationalities, gender identities, able-bodied and disabled. People who wrote then and continue to write for this newspaper worked at the WTC or near enough to share the risks and the trauma, and we mourn the victims.

These losses make us even angrier at U.S. strategists who use the anniversary to again manipulate the feelings of people here, hyping up a false national identity to build toward the next imperialist war. □

WW COMMENTARY

A new form of poll tax
Prisoners denied right to vote

By Monica Moorehead

Voter suppression in the United States is as “American as apple pie,” especially when it comes to Black, Brown and other marginalized communities. Despite the passing of the Voting Rights Act some 55 years ago, current and former prisoners convicted of a felony may lose this right forever in the state of Florida.

On Sept. 11, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit in Atlanta ruled that, to meet their “terms of sentencing,” former prisoners in Florida must pay certain “fees” and “fines” as a prerequisite to regain their right to vote. The state’s Republican-controlled Legislature, under the leadership of Gov. Ron DeSantis, also a Republican, had imposed the onerous terms.

Vice President Paul Smith of the Campaign Legal Center says that “Nobody should ever be denied their Constitutional rights because they can’t afford to pay fines and fees.” (Washington Post, Sept. 11) It is not yet clear whether this reactionary decision will be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 2018 more than one million prisoners saddled with felony records had their right to vote restored in Florida through the passage of Amendment 4 to the state’s Constitution. It was passed by an overwhelming 64 percent of the voters, the majority of them white.

The recent ruling, however, will negatively impact hundreds of thousands, including Black lives in hugely disproportionate numbers. In Florida the deadline to register to vote in the 2020 presidential elections is Oct. 5, less than a month away.

In 2016, one out of every five Black people was denied the right to vote in Florida through use of 150-year-old laws passed even before Reconstruction ended.

Voter suppression: a form of semi-slavery

The suppression of the right to vote has its roots in slavery and Jim Crow. After the U.S. Civil War, “Black Codes” were passed by former Confederate states in 1865-1866. These “Codes” denied newly freed people economic and political rights, including the right to rent, lease or own land, the right to vote, the right to education, the right to serve as jurors and the right to bear arms. These codes were the precursor to later “Jim Crow” segregation laws.

In the powerful 2014 movie, “Selma,” Oprah Winfrey portrays an elderly Black woman attempting to register to vote in Selma, Ala., in 1965, shortly before the historic Selma to Montgomery March known as “Bloody Sunday.” The racist registrar demands that Winfrey’s character answer certain questions about the state’s history in order to gain that right. These obscure questions that white registrants would never be asked were



Voting in Lower Peach Tree, Ala., in Wilcox County, on May 3, 1966, after passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

designed to “legally” fail Black applicants. Unable to answer the questions, Winfrey’s character walks away, dejected and disgusted.

This was a powerful depiction of one tactic used to deny Black people the right to vote under Jim Crow. Other tactics used to suppress the vote were laws requiring people to pass a literacy test and to pay a poll tax. During this period, many Black people, especially in the rural South, were illiterate due to unequal education and could not afford to pay a poll tax due to dire impoverishment. Even after passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, Alabama still denied Black citizens the right to vote until restrictive state laws were struck down in 1966.

As oppressive as these laws were, the most devastating laws still exist today: those that deny the right to vote to prisoners and former prisoners convicted of a felony.

Fines lead to prison sentences

These restrictive laws are in a direct line from a new form of slavery created after Emancipation in the South. Newly freed people were forced to enter “labor” contracts with former plantation owners and were legally forbidden to work for more than one “employer.” If they broke these contracts, Black people could be beaten, arrested and fined for “vagrancy,” a term defined so broadly that any Black person could be arrested at almost any time. In 1865, Florida passed “Black Codes” targeting freed Black people with absurd charges, including assault on a white woman and “disobedience.”

The fines for such trumped-up charges were exorbitant, meant to be unpayable and to turn arrests into long prison sentences. The imprisoned Black people then became cheap “convict labor” hired out to plantation owners for minimal wages — that were paid not to them but to the state.

This is the white supremacist legacy of what it means

to be stigmatized as a “felon” today.

There is no federal law that uniformly restores the right to vote to disenfranchised people. Two states have permanently banned the right to vote to convicted people: Kentucky and Virginia. Maine and Vermont, the only two states that have no voting restrictions, also allow voting in prison. All other states have their own rules and regulations to restrict voting rights. These range from restoration upon completion of sentencing or after certain waiting periods to the currently passed Florida law demanding payment of exorbitant fines before the right to vote is regained.

Workers World Party demands that all prisoners and former prisoners, regardless of convictions, have access to the basic democratic right to vote — as well as im/migrants, documented and undocumented, youth and other disenfranchised communities. This right must be defended in order to build anti-racist and pro-worker solidarity to fight capitalist rule.

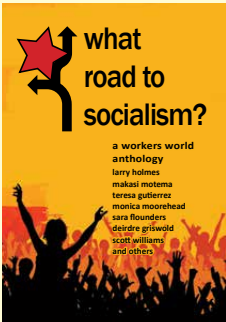
The writer is a former Workers World Party presidential candidate in 1996, 2000 and 2016.

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Capitalism sets the world on fire

By calvin deutschbein

As of Sept. 13, at least 100 wildfires are raging in ten U.S. states. The situation could not be more dire.

On Sept. 8 in western Oregon, forestry workers with the Idanha-Detroit Rural Fire Protection District and evacuees faced hurricane-force winds, coupled with infrastructure failures and temperatures hot enough to melt vehicles. Fires can easily move at 60 miles per hour, preceded miles ahead by ember storms.

The Idanha-Detroit RFPD Facebook site described the scene: “Due to Highway 22 being blocked on both ends of the district by boulders and downed burning trees, we called in the National Guard for an air evacuation, but they were unable to land due to high winds and heavy smoke.

“We had approximately 70 civilians staged at Mongold [Detroit Lake State Park, Ore.]. We were preparing to move people to the docks for a ‘last stand,’ but the Forest Service was able to find an evacuation route up to Government Camp using forest roads.” (tinyurl.com/y55jshdh)

While Idanha-Detroit evacuees survived, days later Oregon stands prepared for a “mass fatality incident.” In Phoenix, Ore., entire city blocks burned to the ground.

How could this have happened in the United States, supposedly a world-leading economy? Because the U.S. ruling class prioritizes racialized capitalism over human life.

Climate change — the bill comes due

Much of the wealth and power in the U.S. accumulated as burning fossil fuels warmed the planet and caused anthropogenic climate change. As annual average temperatures rose, especially in the Pacific Northwest, forests grew

drier. Weather patterns and ecosystems were disrupted, and fragile biomes like the temperate forests were primed for conflagration.

Land misuse has added to the impact of climate change, especially in Oregon where vineyards, livestock, and marijuana fields have depleted the water table and desiccated the lands now burning.

Lack of rain, depleted groundwater, increased lightning and strained resources for emergency management all compound to threaten the lives of the working class and the oppressed.

40% of fire responders are incarcerated workers

Wildfires are incinerating communities, and forestry workers are stretched thin. Yet, we see nothing like the militarized

After the U.S. forcibly seized its current territorial holdings as part of a centuries-long, settler colonial campaign of genocide against Indigenous peoples and cultures, it forcibly ended the application of proven and effective Indigenous techniques for fire management.

mobilizations let loose against protests for Black lives. Instead, like Hurricane Katrina or the COVID-19 pandemic, the response is to profiteer, blame and deny, rather than address the problem.

Evacuees stay in temporary shelters, as vacant homes and workplaces burn. Workers receive no financial support. In California, 4,000 incarcerated workers paid only a dollar an hour make up 40% of the fire responders. These imprisoned

workers risk their lives in prison slavery conditions, including battling widespread COVID-19. Air quality verges on unsurvivable, especially for people with respiratory disabilities, and as ever U.S. health care is racist and inaccessible.

In some cases, a non-response would be better than the actions of local law enforcement. In Butte County, Calif., the sheriff declined to issue an evacuation order until it was too late to warn many residents. Clearly, law enforcement is not an institution for public safety. (tinyurl.com/y54kzk6v)

Idanha-Detroit evacuees were sent to Clackamas County, where deputies, rather than responding, blamed “antifa” for starting fires. (tinyurl.com/y2ebksk9) The U.S. failed state can respond to crises only by provoking violence against those most directly harmed by its own failures.

Land knowledge and land theft

While the land now burning is under the U.S. flag, it was not historically so. After the U.S. forcibly seized its current territorial holdings as part of a centuries-long, settler colonial campaign of genocide against Indigenous peoples and cultures, it forcibly ended the application of proven and effective Indigenous techniques for fire management.

The Wildland Fire Program of the Karuk Tribe states: “Prescribed burning is an ancestral cultural practice that has taken place for thousands of years to manage the landscape, to stimulate the production of resources for humans and for animals, to prevent catastrophic wildfires, and to provide for species abundance and diversity. The euro-american invasion has since disrupted cultural fire practices with (among other injustices) fire suppression policies.” (tinyurl.com/y545203t)



Deadly fires at Detroit Lake in Oregon. PHOTO: DAVID HARRIS, JR.

The United States Forest Service (USFS) entered into partnership with the Karuk Tribe in 2013 and reported on the results in 2018. In the executive summary of this program, forestry workers came to much the same radical solution as Indigenous activists: land restoration. Their report said that “in the long-run, tribes should be included in comprehensive, long-term land management plans [and] identify lands where there are tribal rights and interests in need of restoration.”

Notably the Red Salmon fire, on lands stolen from and now partially managed by the Karuk Tribe, has been vastly more contained than the nearby August Complex fires in Northern California.

Centering Indigenous knowledge and expertise, while prioritizing human lives over profits, would immediately address many of the worst problems. Food, shelter and relief payments to displaced evacuees, full funding of forestry workers and Indigenous land restoration — just a stroke of a pen for those in power — would save thousands of lives.

calvin deutschbein is a member of the Durham Branch of Workers World Party. In 2013, the neighborhood where they grew up on the slopes of Cheyenne Mountain, Colo., was burned down in an uncontrolled wildfire. deutschbein is a former forest ranger of the Eagle-Holy Cross Ranger District of White River National Forest in eastern Colorado.

Fire exposes desperate plight of refugees

By G. Dunkel

The Sept. 8 fire that burned the largest asylum camp in Europe, the Moria Reception and Identification Camp on the Greek island of Lesbos, shows how the 13,000 people there are disregarded and disrespected.

The camp was packed with people — mainly from Afghanistan, Syria and West Africa — who had reached Europe through Turkey.

A week later, the Greek government is still claiming no one died in the fire, but it has acknowledged that it was indeed arson.

Conditions in the camp were terrible, with severe overcrowding, poor sanitation and a lack of soap and water. Asylum seekers lined up for hours for food which was often spoiled. The camp is under a COVID-19 lockdown until the middle of September.

After the fire, the Greek government airlifted 400 unaccompanied minors to the Greek mainland. About 1,000 asylum seekers are being housed on a ferry moored on Lesbos. The government plans to keep all the adults there in a new tent city. Most of the people who escaped the fire have had to “sleep

rough” along roadsides and are eating catch-as-catch-can.

Refugees organized a major protest two days after the fire, when they demanded release from detention. Police fired tear gas on the refugees, who were marching down the main road carrying signs reading, “We don’t need [a] new camp ... we want freedom.”

The 850,000-strong union federation PAME — the All Workers Militant Front, founded by members of the Greek Communist Party in 1999 — issued a statement on the situation in Lesbos:

“This inhumane time bomb planted by the Greek governments exploded in the ashes of Moria. 13,000 people, women and children, stacked [up],

without health and safety measures in the midst of a pandemic. ... [As for] need for immediate help and the release of the thousands of now homeless refugees, the first reaction of the government seems to be the sending of new Riot Police forces!”

PAME made concrete demands that the Greek government “find immediate housing, with the utilization of apartments, closed hotels and buildings that belong to the state. Abolish all laws and decisions that violate the rights of refugees and asylum seekers, as provided for

in the Geneva Convention.” (tinyurl.com/y30gcovq)

Tensions between Greece and Turkey sharpen

The plight of the refugees has been intensified because their fate is tangled up in capitalist competition by regional governments.

In the beginning of January, Greece, Cyprus and Israel signed a deal to build an underwater pipeline to carry natural gas from the eastern Mediterranean’s rapidly developing gas fields to Europe. This deal will bring billions of dollars in profits to these three countries. Cyprus is a small but very prosperous island off Turkey’s southern coast; the northern part is Turkish, the southern two-thirds Greek. It is a member of the European Union.

A few weeks ago, Turkey sent a gas exploration vessel, escorted by vessels of the Turkish navy, to the area. In response, Greece conducted naval exercises with France, with French Rafale fighter bombers flying in the same airspace as Turkish Rafales. Greece also announced a major arms purchase and the addition of 15,000 troops to its army.

At the end of July, the Communist Party of Turkey and the Communist Party of Greece issued a joint statement. The statement begins: “The people of the two



Migrant families flee burning asylum camp on island of Lesbos, Greece, Sept. 8.

countries can and must claim their right to live in peace! No to a military confrontation for the interests of the bourgeoisie and the imperialist alliances!”

It goes on to point out: “The relations between the two countries are further complicated by the competition between the bourgeois classes of Greece and Turkey to become a hub of energy and a transit center and their fierce struggle for the distribution of energy wealth in the region.”

Turkey is trying to use the huge number of refugees it has accepted — who mostly want to go on to Europe, which means passing through Greece — as a weapon against Greece.

Solidarity among the peoples of Greece, Turkey and all of Europe will defang the continent’s predatory capitalist states. □



San Juan, Puerto Rico, 2 de junio.

Los trabajadores piden un paro laboral para las vidas negras

Esta declaración de Labor for Black Lives fue emitida el 31 de agosto y firmada por más de 50 organizaciones sindicales. Entre los firmantes figuran United Electrical Workers (UE), United Auto Workers Region 9A (del este de Nueva York, Nueva Inglaterra y Puerto Rico), Fight for \$15, International Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, así como 18 locales de sindicatos de maestros, seis locales de Service Employees (SEIU), numerosos otros sindicatos estatales y locales, consejos laborales regionales y locales y otras organizaciones sindicales. También firmaron individualmente muchos elegidos responsables sindicales. La lista completa se puede encontrar en laborforblacklives.org/

Aún no se han anunciado acciones. Sin embargo, este llamamiento de una amplia agrupación de sindicatos a las masas de trabajadores organizados y no organizados para que hagan huelgas políticas contra la violencia policial y contra el terror de la supremacía blanca es un gran paso adelante.

Declaración del movimiento de trabajadores en apoyo de los paros por las vidas negras

Las acciones de la semana pasada, por parte de atletas profesionales en la NBA, WNBA, NFL, MLB, y tenis profesional son un llamado a la acción para todo el movimiento de trabajadores.

Ellos nos recuerdan que cuando hacemos paramos para retener nuestra fuerza de trabajo, tenemos el poder de interrumpir un status quo injusto. El status quo — de la policía asesinando gente negra, de nacionalistas blancos armados asesinando manifestantes, de millones de enfermos y cada día más desesperados — es claramente injusto y no puede continuar.

Como sindicatos representando millones de trabajadores a través del país, nos postramos en solidaridad con nuestros camaradas en las cortes, en los campos, y en las calles. Hacemos eco al llamado al gobierno federal y local a despojar a la policía, redistribuir la riqueza robada por la clase multimillonaria, y a invertir en lo que

nuestra gente necesita para vivir en paz, con dignidad, y abundancia: Salud universal, vivienda, programas de empleos públicos y asistencia monetaria, y condiciones laborales seguras.

Los líderes trabajadores progresistas se plantaron del lado del movimiento de Derechos Civiles en los 1960s. Tenemos una larga historia de apoyo a los movimientos de libertad negra y no nos detendremos ahora. El movimiento trabajador y el movimiento por las vidas negras son guardianes uno del otro, y nosotros estamos preparados para hacer lo necesario para lograr justicia para nuestra gente.

Apoyamos las exigencias por justicia racial que hace eco a través de esta nación, y el llamado simultáneo por una economía más justa. Nosotros utilizaremos nuestra fuerza e influencia para asegurarnos de que una labor organizada esté del lado correcto de la historia. □

Voto, autodeterminación y cambio social

Por Monica Moorehead

A continuación se muestra una charla ligeramente editada por Monica Moorehead en el seminario web del Workers World Party el 3 de septiembre sobre “Salvar la oficina de correos del pueblo”.

La supresión de votantes es un tema del que tengo conocimiento tanto personal como político. Nací y crecí bajo segregación en Alabama. Activistas blancos y negros fueron golpeados, encarcelados, golpeados con chorros de agua y linchados para asegurar este derecho democrático básico, que se ganó durante y se perdió después de la Reconstrucción posterior a la Guerra Civil. Es un derecho que la mayoría de los blancos han tenido desde 1920, cuando principalmente mujeres blancas ganaron el derecho al voto.

Cuando se aprobó la Ley de Derechos Electorales en 1965, vi de primera mano como adolescente este derecho garantizado a mi madre a los 39 años, a su madre a los 65 y a su abuela a los 85. Esto se ganó con sangre, sudor y lágrimas y todavía es querido hoy por los más oprimidos.

A pesar del hecho de que no hay una diferencia de clase fundamental entre los candidatos de las grandes empresas, del partido capitalista a favor de la guerra, republicanos o demócratas, esto no disminuye el deber de los socialistas revolucionarios de defender cualquier derecho democrático burgués que los blancos hayan tenido el privilegio de tener, como el derecho al voto, si esperamos construir la unidad de clase para un futuro socialista.

El voto está ligado al derecho a la autodeterminación. El derecho al voto es más que tirar de una palanca cada cuatro años. Durante la Reconstrucción, los negros recién liberados pudieron, por primera vez, tener representación política en las legislaturas estatales en el sur profundo, estableciendo servicios básicos como la educación. La derrota contrarrevolucionaria de este período radical marcó el comienzo de un período de supremacía blanca en las formas de semiesclavitud, códigos penales represivos, el KKK, Jim Crow y, sí, la supresión de votantes.

La supresión de votantes afecta a millones

El impacto social de la supresión de votantes todavía se siente hoy, de muchas maneras, y no solo para los negros. Por ejemplo, en 2013 Workers World Party/ Partido Mundo Obrero, publicó un artículo de Ben Carroll sobre las restricciones al derecho al voto en Carolina del Norte, conocida por su notorio “derecho al trabajo”, es decir, el derecho a las leyes laborales no sindicalizadas para los trabajadores. Aquí hay un breve resumen de este artículo:

“El gobernador de Carolina del Norte, Pat McCrory, promulgó la ley el 12 de agosto un amplio proyecto de

ley contra los derechos al voto que ataca los derechos democráticos básicos de las personas de color, los jóvenes y otros miembros de la clase trabajadora.

“A medida que los proyectos de ley de identificación de votantes patrocinados por el Consejo Americano de Intercambio Legislativo (ALEC) avanzan en muchas legislaturas estatales, el proyecto de ley recientemente firmado en Carolina del Norte se ha ganado la distinción como la ley de supresión de votantes más severa hasta ahora aprobada en los EE.UU.

“En un golpe para los votantes jóvenes, elimina la preinscripción de los jóvenes de 16 y 17 años e invalida las identificaciones escolares como una forma válida de identificación. Además, faculta a los observadores de encuestas de vigilantes para cuestionar la elegibilidad de otros votantes.

“Muchas de las disposiciones del proyecto de ley atacan las medidas, como la votación dominical, el registro el mismo día y el período de votación anticipada, que han sido utilizadas de manera abrumadora por votantes negros, de bajos ingresos y ancianos”.

Los miembros de Disability Rights Caucus of Workers World Party/Partido Mundo Obrero escribieron sobre un intento de ataque a la Ley de Accesibilidad de Votantes para Ancianos y Discapacitados de 1984, cuando una Junta Electoral del Condado de Georgia propuso cerrar siete de los nueve lugares de votación accesibles. Si bien esta propuesta fue rechazada, es importante tener en cuenta que el condado rural de Randolph en 2018 era 61% afroamericano y uno de los siete recintos era 95% negro, sin transporte público.

A millones de personas privadas de sus derechos en los EE.UU. se les ha negado el derecho al voto: los negros, los inmigrantes indocumentados también se les niega el derecho a la atención médica y las licencias de conducir para trabajar, los presos y ex presos, muchos de los cuales han perdido este derecho para siempre debido al encarcelamiento, jóvenes y otros. Se trata de millones de personas que necesitan solidaridad de clase, que no se les dé una lección sobre las limitaciones del voto, especialmente con el supremacista blanco Trump tratando de cerrar oficinas de correos en las comunidades primarias de color, para aplastar los derechos al voto.

‘Barómetro del sentimiento progresivo de las masas’

Nuestra declaración de campaña electoral de 2016 enfatizó, cuando tantos jóvenes gravitaron hacia la campaña de Bernie Sanders, y mucho sigue siendo cierto cuatro años después: “Una elección capitalista puede ser un barómetro del sentimiento progresista de las masas, ya sea que los votantes rechacen a un presidente pro-guerra o voten por una persona de color”.

Sin embargo, un barómetro no es un instrumento para

efectuar cambios; solo mide el cambio. Para que realmente suceda el cambio, se necesita más que un barómetro. Necesitas un instrumento de lucha.

Después de que los movimientos masivos de Derechos Civiles y Liberación Negra

derrotaron la segregación, los negros comenzaron a entrar en la arena electoral. Muchas veces, la mayoría de los votantes, incluidos algunos blancos y personas de color, han elegido africo-americanos para representarlos en varios cargos públicos, llegando finalmente a la presidencia de los Estados Unidos.

Este es sin duda un paso adelante desde los días de la segregación abierta en el sur y la negativa del establecimiento del norte a permitir que más de unos pocos negros simbólicamente ocuparan cargos políticos.

Más allá de las elecciones burguesas

Sin embargo, incluso en las ciudades que han tenido funcionarios electos negros, como Detroit, Baltimore, Cleveland, Flint y Newark, el racismo continúa e incluso se profundiza en la vivienda, los trabajos, los salarios, la educación, las tasas de asesinatos y encarcelamientos policiales, etc. Estas ciudades luchan solo por proporcionar los servicios más básicos, mientras que los bancos y los intereses inmobiliarios se benefician de la miseria del pueblo.

Incluso cuando se han hecho concesiones políticas a las luchas masivas por la reforma democrática, la obscena brecha entre ricos y pobres se ha ensanchado. Esa brecha también intensifica la opresión nacional, ya que los más pobres son desproporcionadamente personas de color.

Nuevos movimientos están ganando fuerza fuera de la arena electoral, especialmente el movimiento militante contra los asesinatos policiales. El Workers World Party/ Partido Mundo Obrero ve la necesidad urgente de un programa socialista revolucionario de la clase trabajadora que perdurará después de que terminen las elecciones, independientemente de quién gane el cargo. Necesitamos un movimiento no solo para reformar o suavizar el capitalismo, sino también para deshacerse de este.

El socialismo no es solo capitalismo con controles gubernamentales; es un sistema social completamente opuesto. Se basa en que la clase trabajadora tome el poder y libere los medios de producción del dominio absoluto de la propiedad capitalista, para que la vida económica pueda planificarse para satisfacer las necesidades humanas, no para beneficiar a unos pocos. □



Monica Moorehead