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 iconic Art Museum of Philadelphia.

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.

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. And the people have resisted 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. Escorting 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.

Scaregiving 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

Continued on page 4
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 GABRIELLA 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 Philippines, 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 Filipino 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 Sept. 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 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 country, with OC to GABRIELLA.
2. Protest on social media using the hashtags: #JunkVFA #JusticeForJenniferLaude #DefendFilipinoWomen. Tag @gabrielaphils and @gabriela.usa.
3. In the U.S., support the Philippine Human Rights Act.
4. Join upcoming actions on Sept. 21 as we mark the anniversary of martial law in the Philippines.
5. Join upcoming actions on Sept. 21 as we mark the anniversary of martial law in the Philippines.

Follow GABRIELLA Filipinas and GABRIELLA USA on social media. Facebook: @gabrielle.alliance, @gabriela.usa. Instagram: @gabrielaphils, @gabriela.usa. 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 multi-national, multi-generational and multi-organized formation that not only aims to abolish capitalism, but to build a socialist society because it’s the only way forward! Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the never-ending quest for ever-greater profits.

Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, attacks on immigrants, misogyny, LGBTQ+ 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—as long as 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, multi-generational 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.

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

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

Workers World (ISSN-1070-4205) is published weekly except the last week of December by WW Publishers, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl., New York, NY 10011. Copyright © 2020 Workers World. Verbatim copying and distribution of articles is permitted in any medium without royalty provided this notice is preserved.

Workers World (ISSN: 1070-4205) is published weekly except the last week of December by WW Publishers, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl., New York, NY 10011. Phone: 212.627.2994 E-mail: ww@workers.org

En Español: HOY, EL MUNDO OBERO: GABRIELLA

Mundo Obero 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

Join us in the fight

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

Justice for Jennifer Laude! Justice for all victims of U.S. military aggression

Mundo Obero 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

Back issues and individual articles are available online. A searchable archive is available on the Web at www.workers.org.

A headline digest is available via e-mail subscription.
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 on the streets of 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 Singleton 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 public.

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. 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. Officers had begun 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 weeks prior to the murder of Prude by Minneapolis police. Members of Workers World Party’s Buffalo branch — only an hour away — had been on the front lines of Rochester protests, showing solidarity in their 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 to the police. Some 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 large industrial complex, has been popularly understood as the foundations of policing as an institution, rather than a few “had apples” or inadequate leadership of RPD.

A list of demands compiled by Free the People Rochester, 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 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 ceasing rent and refinancing 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 peoples across the world struggling for national liberation. We echo the call for defunding and abolishing the police, rent cancellation and dismantling the prison system.

— Report by Victor Enrique

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

Demonstrators demand firing of police

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 strip. The atmosphere was tense, stories of the firing of over a dozen cops with histories of police brutality and called for 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 resigned 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 “had 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 Rochester, 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 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 ceasing rent and refinancing funds from RPD to provide needed housing.

Other demands that are 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 peoples across the world struggling for national liberation. We echo the call for defunding and abolishing the police, rent cancellation and dismantling the prison system.

— Report by Victor Enrique

Demonstrators meet with brutality

Every day, the people of Rochester are posting new first-hand images of their injuries to the police. Some 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 large industrial complex, has been popularly understood as the foundations of policing as an institution, rather than a few “had apples” or inadequate leadership of RPD.

A list of demands compiled by Free the People Rochester, 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 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 ceasing rent and refinancing funds from RPD to provide needed housing.

Other demands that are 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 peoples across the world struggling for national liberation. We echo the call for defunding and abolishing the police, rent cancellation and dismantling the prison system.

— Report by Victor Enrique

Demonstrators demand firing of police

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 strip. The atmosphere was tense, stories of 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, branded 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 4A (covering eastern New York, New England and Puerto Rico), Fight for $15, International Coalition of Black Trade Unions, as well as 18 locals of teachers 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 ath-letes 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 billion-naire 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 jus-tice 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!’

Continued from page 1

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 resi-dents. “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 aban-doned 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 going to stop them from taking it from all of us, 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 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 there. There’s veter-ans that fought in the wars. What about them? What about the families? What about the pregnant women? What about all of us? We want to be seen, too! … 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!”

“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!”

James Talib-Dean houseless encampment, July 13.

Tent homes at Benjamin Franklin Parkway and 21st Street.

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 the m— but not Camp JTD residents. “We are the ones who are willing to defend us. Because we’re not wrong. We’re the ones who are willing to defend us. Because we’re not…”

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 is a bunch of bullshit, and y’all know it.”

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 repeat-edly 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 evic-tion. 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 resi-dents: “Mayor Kenney … talk to your constituents. The individuals who are down here are individuals who 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 (#sample) on Monday 9/14 @ 11am. No Violence. No Barricades. All Solution. RSVP (regrets only).”
**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 bemoans the adversity inside injustice Soledad and reaches beyond the walls to report the truth, suffering retaliation from the author- ities. He has written three books, including “Annotated Years, Vol. 2, Soledad Un-Anthology,” and is a respected imam in the prison’s Muslim community. At the age of 37, Williams received a 50-year prison sentence for defacing hinckley 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/gjoseykly.

**Houston lab OKs execution drug**

By Gloria Rubac

Houston

Anti-death penalty activists have exposed and humili- ated 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/gjoseykly)

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 elec- tronically 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 execut- ing 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 videographing the demonstra- tion, activist Delia Perez-Meyer, said, “We have to orga- nize 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.”

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. ☑️

**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 sub- mitted this letter to Tear Down the Walls this month.

This is the third time my block has been placed in iso- lation due to the Covid virus. I am myself a Covid survi- vor. I’m not blaming anyone about my situation besides Pharaoh Trump, and the poor care of the healthcare provi- der WellPath and their Dr. Little, who is a fifth-rate doctor. He is, in my opinion, Dr. Little’s note: Dr. Paul Little and a medical staff at SCI Chester were named in a lawsuit for malpractice and misdiagnosis by a former inmate in February of this year.)

They treat me really 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 show- ers, 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 quaran- tined. I now experience post-Covid symptoms, such as shortness of breath, my bones hurt, not to men- tion fatigue at times. When I had Covid I was told I had to ride it out on my own there is no in-cell treatment. At the administra- tion makes an effort to try to have some in-cell activities. I am报表 the spread of this virus, and the precautions that need to be taken. But when you have older people with other medical condi- tions like myself, lack of exercise, and isolation, stress, and plain old boredom can exacerbate your elderly conditions.

The first lockdown was about five months ago, and this is the second 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 dis- tancing 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. ☑️
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 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 are conscious that somebody’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 work, we make it work, we make it work. 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. We work to 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 by our supervisors and the bosses. We are the world. We are the workforce.

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 works 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 won’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 it 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 have even a horror deal for 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 achieve credit 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.

So when Colin Kaepernick first took a knee four years ago to protest police brutality and systemic racism, during a game of the reactionary national anthem, he took on 32 of the world’s richest team owners. They didn’t want any players following in Kaepernick’s footsteps.

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/9y6m69g55.

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/9y6m69g55.

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 a game of the reactionary national anthem, he took on 32 of the world’s richest team owners. They didn’t want any players following 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.”

Every single million 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.

‘We as workers are powerful’

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.

We 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.

Workers, general strike, what we have to do to make the political system move for us is what we need 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. 12

Professional athlete strikes inspire other workers

By Monica Moorehead

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 20-year-old Black father of six shot seven times in the back in Kenosha, Wis., the Milwaukee Bucks missed out a business with a funeral that was so 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 – Almudena Cidreros, Phlilando Castile, George Floyd, Trayvon Martin, Elijah McClain, Tamir Rice and Breonna Taylor – while 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.
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 been 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 nationally.

A Black man, shot in the back, in my town? In a neighborhoood 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 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 Akindele 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. ☐

Campus workers fight for Black and Brown lives

By Arielle Robinson

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 vocal about calling for 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] showed 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 following none 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 closed 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, reported that when the university fired people, it was unnecessarily firing people from marginalized backgrounds — those who are suffering most already from the health and economic crisis.

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.

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 chair of the Teamsters National Black Caucus. Silvera spoke on the Sept. 10 webinar, “Workers Defend Black Lives.”

"YES! SOLIDARITY FOREVER!"
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 articles like this: an article that states: “Black and Brown people are especially affected by the coronavirus.” Substitute ‘coronavirus’ with any other disease or illness and you will get the same response. But would not be calculating the effects on people of color research, the official Centers for Disease Control tally marginalized before the crisis.” (April 10)

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 exacerbat

“The racism in our systems and institutions that are driv

The oppressed in this country have experienced centu

The movement for fundamental change cannot wait until genocide reaches the commu

“pushing a ‘herd immunity’ approach to the pandemic, which would allow the virus to spread nearly unmiti

White supremacists thrilled

Does it not make sense to conclude that Donald Trump, who campaigned on a vile racist program, could
demands that will 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.”

The logic of racist capitalism is: if it is mainly people of color dying from the virus, if it is mainly warehouse 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 capitali

White workers, especially youth, are seeing for themselves that this rotten capitalist system has destroyed their
democratic and socialist education workers or bus drivers, why not let the fire spread?

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 cov

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 indus

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 cov

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 indus

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 cov

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 indus

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 cov

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 indus

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 cov

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 indus
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, provides a wide-ranging collection of 37 stories by and about people with disabilities. Some are written to be part of existing material, others are new.

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 Sandra 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 literary, journalistic, and academic works. Some are new.

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

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 on Nov. 4 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 22 stops on the #TPSJourney4JusticeII bus tour, ultimately arriving in Washington, D.C., in mid-November.

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 months are a time of unprecedented unification of the Black and Brown TPS community and their contributions as essential workers.

"We want to be legalized," Massachusetts activist Julie 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 & Education 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. "The caravan is a way to register 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 over 36,000 TPS-holders, explained to Workers World, “The COVID-19 pandemic has demon-strated 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 a legal immigration status to the people who take care of us and feed us."

The book’s epigraph is a comment by Neil Marcus, one of the first authors to advocate the development of disability culture: "Disability is not a brave struggle or ‘courage in the face of adversity.’ Disability is an art. It is 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 but to convey the lived experience of disability." Wong describes her introduction: "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 disability identity brings with it many changes 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.’"

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 3630.

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

For more information about #TPSJourney4JusticeII, visit www.tpsjourney4justice.org.
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 are still denied the right to vote to this day. The state’s Republican-controlled Legislature, under the leadership of Gov. Ron DeSantis, also a Republican, had imposed the onerous terms.

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. 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 whom were 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 the most basic human 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 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.

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, often so high they were broken into 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 ranges 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 immigrants, 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 1990, 2000 and 2016.

What Road to Socialism?

A new Workers World anthology, confronting the burning questions and key contradictions during this deadly pandemic and global capitalist meltdown.

Topics include:

- COVID-19 and the deepening crisis of capitalism
- Reform or revolution?
- The state and building for revolution
- The centrality of fighting racism
- The working class will make history
- Fighting all forms of oppression: gender, sexuality, disability, and age
- Socialism or death: socialist countries lead the way to the future
- What is socialism?

Download free ebook or PDF formats. Also available in paperback.

Visit workers.org/books to get your copy.
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, for- est workers with the Idanha-Detroit Rural Fire Protection District and evacuees faced hurricane force winds, coupled with infrastructure failures and tempera- tures hot enough to melt vehicles. Fires consumed 22,000 acres at a rate of one hour, pre- ceded miles ahead by ember storms.

The Idanha-Detroit RFPD Facebook site described the scene: “Due to Highway 22 being too hot and dangerous for both ends of the dis- trict 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 peo- ple to the docks for a ‘last stand,’ but the Forest Service was able to find an air evacuation route up to Government Camp using forest roads.” (tinyurl.com/y5sjbdh)

While Detroit-Detroit Wildfire evacuees survived, days later Oreg- on stands prepared for a ‘mass fatal- ity incident.’ In Phoenix, Ore., entire city blocks burned to the ground.

How could this have hap- pened in the United States, supposedly a world-leading economy? Because the U.S. rulin g classes prioritized 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 for the rapid- genic climate change. As annual average temperatures rose, especially in the Pacific Northwest, forests grew dryer. 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 mari- juana fields have depleted the water table and desiccated the lands now burning. Lack of rain, depleted groundwa- ter, 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 forest workers are stretched to their limits. Yet, we see nothing like the militarized workers risk their lives in prison slavery conditions, including battling wide- spread COVID-19. Airqual- ity verges on unhealthy, especially for people with respiratory disabilities, and as ever U.S. health care is racist and unaccessible.

In some cases, a non- response would be better than the actions of botched law enforcement. In Butte County, Calif., the sheriff declined to issue an evacu- ation order until it was too late to warn mass casualties. Civil law enforcement is not an institution for public safety. (tinyurl.com/y3ykzkw)

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 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 centu- ries-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 pro- vide for species abundance and diversity. The Karuk have long managed the land through the application of biological and cultural practices — including controlled lighting.” (tinyurl.com/y4g2z2o)

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. “This is a huge step for Israel, which has since dis- rupted cultural fire practices with (among other injustices) fire suppression policies.” (tinyurl.com/y3ogcovq)

The United States Forest Service (USFS) entered into partnership with the Karak Tribe in 2013 and reported on the results in 2019. 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, shel- ter and relief payments to displaced evacuees, full funding of forestry workers and Indigenous land restoration — just a stroke of a pen in those in power — would save thousands of lives.

calvin deutschbein is a member of the Durham Branch of Workers World Party. In 2003, 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 larg- est 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 — refugees from Afghanistan and West Africa — who had reached Europe through Turkey. A week later, the Greek govern- ment is still claim- ing no one died in the fire, but it has acknowledged that it was indeed arson.

Conditions in the camp were ter- rible, with severe overcrowding, pools of filth, a lack of soap and water. Asylum seekers lined up for hours for food which was often spoiled. The camp grew from COVID-19 lockdown until the middle of Summer.

After the fire, the Greek government airlifted 400 unaccompanied minors to safety in Europe. About 1,000 asylum seekers are being housed on a ferry moored on Lesbos. The govern- ment 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 read- ing, “We don’t need [a] new camp ... we want freedom.”

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

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

The United States Forest Service (USFS) entered into partnership with the Karak Tribe in 2013 and reported on the results in 2019. 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, shel- ter 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 2003, 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.
Los trabajadores piden un paro laboral para las vidas negras

Por Monica Moorehead

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

La supresión de votantes es un tema del que tenemos conocimiento tanto personal como político. Naci y crecí en Alabama. Activistas blancos y negros fueron golpeados, encarcelados, golpeados con chorro de agua y linchados para asegurar que este derecho demo-crático 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 1890, cuando principalmente mujeres blancas ganaron su derecho a votar. El derecho al voto es más que tirar de una palanca cada cuatro años. Durante la Reconstrucción, los negros recién liberados, de bajos ingresos y ancianos. "Muchas de las disposiciones del proyecto de ley ata-can las medidas, como la votación dominical, el registro de votantes anticipado, la votación anticipada, que han sido utilizadas de manera abrumadora por votan-tes negros, de bajos ingresos y ancianos". Los miembros de Disability Rights Caucus de Workers World Party/Partido Mundo Obrero escribieron sobre un intento de ataque a la Ley de Accesibilidad de Votantes para Anécdotas y Discapacitados de 1984, cuando un fiscal electoral blanco de Ohio, Robert Pappas, cerró 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 96% mayoritario y uno de los siete recintos era 95% negro, sin transporte público. A menudo 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 condu-cir 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 da una lección sobre las limitaciones del voto, especialmente con el supramarina blanco Trump tratando de cerrar oficinas de correos en las comunidades primaria de color, para aplastar los derechos al voto. "Barómetro del sentimiento progresivo de las masas" Nuestra declaración de campaña eleccoral de 2016 enfatizó, cuando tantos jóvenes gravitaron hacia la cam-paña de Bernie Sanders, y mucho sigue siendo cierto cuatro años después: “Una elección capitalista puede ser un barómetro del sentimiento progresivo de las masas, ya que se que los votantes rechacen a un presidente pro-blemas o votan por un presidente con ellos. 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. Se necesita un ins-trumento de lucha. Una de las formas de semiesclavitud, códigos penales represivos, el cambio, se necesita más que un barómetro. Se necesita un ins-trumento de lucha. Una de las formas de semiesclavitud, códigos penales represivos, el cambio, se necesita más que un barómetro. Se necesita un inst-