

Birthday events in Philadelphia say

Let Mumia OUT

By Marie Kelly
Philadelphia

An international coalition of groups supporting Mumia Abu-Jamal held events April 23-25 to commemorate his 67th birthday (April 24) and call for his freedom. Mumia has been unjustly incarcerated for nearly 40 years. His health has deteriorated due to the harsh conditions he has endured under an unjust carceral system. He is currently hospitalized following triple bypass surgery on April 20. (tinyurl.com/ygbcnr9g)

The People for Mumia, a virtual event April 23, kicked off the weekend. Activists, musicians, writers and youth shared why Mumia is important to their movement for social and racial justice. Speakers and performers included Mike Africa Jr., Susan Abulhawa, Angela Davis, Marc Lamont Hill, Robin D.G. Kelley, Colin Kaepernick, Tom Morello, Albert Woodfox, Erica Caines, Santiago Alvarez, Monica Moorehead and more.

On April 24, over 1,000 people gathered in Philadelphia for a rally and march. “Taking It to the Streets for Mumia” began at City Hall across from where the statue of racist Frank Rizzo was removed



March for Mumia Abu-Jamal, Center City Philadelphia, April 24.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

in 2020 due to the public outcry against his brutal legacy.

Dr. Johanna Fernandez spoke against the corrupt legal system and explained how the Philadelphia police worked “hand in glove” with the prosecution and racist judge in Mumia’s 1982 trial. Evidence has surfaced indicating the prosecution bribed a key witness.

Pam Africa gave news of Mumia’s health, after having spoken briefly with him earlier in the day. He is still hospitalized, but said he is beginning his recovery by taking some short walks. He confirmed he is shackled while in his bed. Mumia’s medical

advisor Dr. Ricardo Alvarez traveled from California to speak at the event.

Mumia’s brother, Keith Cook, traveling from North Carolina, told the gathering that they must continue to fight until his

brother is free. YahNé Ndgo, Immortal Technique and Ellect performed, and the crowd sang along to Stevie Wonder’s “Happy Birthday.” Speakers included Chairman Fred Hampton Jr. and Immortal Technique.

Susan Abulhawa connected the struggle for Black liberation with the Free Palestine movement. Her thoughts about Mumia’s character and spirit inspired: “Mumia teaches us what it is to be free in our minds. He was a Black man who was too free, and that is why they locked up his body.”

Dr. Suzanne Ross spoke about the U.N. Human Rights Commission’s support for Mumia. Events calling for Mumia’s release were held in France, Germany, Mexico, French Guiana, Britain

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Stay in the streets —

Abolish the police!



Protests continue, West Philadelphia, April 25.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

We — along with anti-racist activists everywhere — applauded the guilty verdicts April 20 against the racist, white, killer cop Derek Chauvin, who wantonly lynched George Floyd May 25, 2020. The racially mixed jury declared Chauvin guilty of second-degree manslaughter, second-degree unintentional murder and third-degree murder (exhibiting a depraved mind).

Three other cops, who stood by as Chauvin knelt on Floyd’s neck and body until he died, should be found guilty on

the most stringent charges possible in their upcoming trials.

One thing is perfectly clear: This trial and the legal verdict alone cannot halt police terror. From the trial’s opening March 29 to the verdict’s announcement April 21, cops slaughtered at least 64 people in the U.S. — an average of two people a day. (New York Times, April 22)

More than half of those killed were people of color, mostly Black and Latinx — numbers shockingly greater than their

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BOOK REVIEW

“The Great Road: The Life and Times of Chu Teh”

By Susan Schnur (she/her)

For a fiction reader, a non-fiction book can be a bit of a slog. But this book, still unfinished when the author died in 1950 and first published in 1956, was fascinating. Recommended to me by one of Workers World Party’s leading comrades, “The Life and Times of Chu Teh” by Agnes Smedley was exciting to me because it gave me real insight into the Chinese Revolution.

General Zhu De (contemporary spelling) was a close associate of Mao Zedong and the Supreme Commander of the New People’s Army (Red Army). He was a military and political leader in the People’s Republic of China until his death in 1976.

It took an incredible struggle by the Chinese people to overthrow the old feudal order. The book is a timeline of the Chinese struggle against imperialism and profiteers, using the vehicle of General Zhu’s life. And what a life it was!

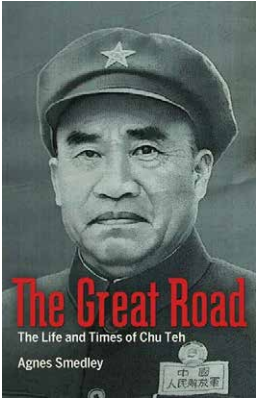
There is much in the book about the Long March. The revolutionary army, led by the Communist Party, was able to put theory into practice in the liberated territories of the north. No more taxes on the poor, no confiscation of

crops from the poorest peasant farmers, schools for everyone including adults, the Red Army working hand in hand with the peasants to increase food production, and participatory democracy in every village, town and city. Political education was stressed which encouraged principled behavior by Communist leaders and the rank and file.

Fast forward to 2020 when COVID burst onto the world scene. The health of the people of China came before the profits of multinational investors. COVID infection has been contained. China today is still a dictatorship of the proletariat — a workers’ state — thanks to the mighty Chinese Revolution of 1949.

The book is a long read, but stick with it. It’s worth it!

For more information on socialist vs. capitalist countries in response to COVID, see “Vaccines highlight differences between capitalism and socialism” at workers.org.



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COVID-19 has exposed everything wrong with capitalism in the U.S.:

- ★ No national system provides free health care for all. Inadequate access to care, including vaccines, for Black, Latinx, Indigenous, im/migrant and poor communities, results in their high rates of COVID-caused illness and death.
- ★ No provisions to support workers and their families with childcare, housing or other necessities.
- ★ No guaranteed jobs or livable income. The pandemic downturn hurt millions of workers; nearly 24 million are still jobless, furloughed or have experienced wage and hour cuts.*
- ★ No mandatory paid sick time or benefits for essential workers.
- ★ Lack of sufficient nutritious food; hunger is widespread.
- ★ Institutionalized racism, sexism, anti-im/migrant, anti-LGBTQ2S+ bigotry, ableism. Police brutality continues unabated.
- ★ Incarcerated people are kept in prisons where COVID-19 is rampant.
- ★ Class system rigged in favor of the 1%. Billionaires’ wealth increased by \$1.3 trillion since the pandemic began.
- ★ Congress allocated \$740 billion for the Pentagon, while government programs providing for human needs are insufficient or nonexistent.

Workers World provides the theoretical and organizational ammunition needed to crush this inhumane system

and create one that supports the working class and all oppressed people: socialism. The need for that becomes clearer every day during this devastating pandemic, when everyone has been called upon to show solidarity and form a united front.

Please consider putting your money where it will really help achieve that goal.

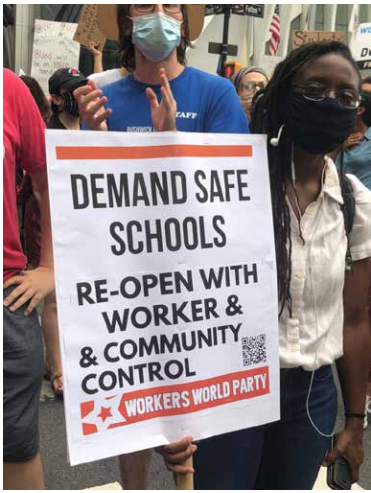
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We are grateful for your help in building Workers World!

*Economic Policy Institute, March 2021



WW PHOTO: TONI ARENSTEIN

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WORKERS WORLD
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HB1: Jim Crow 2.0—an interview with Jamil Davis

By Devin Cole

House Bill 1, a bill criminalizing protest in the state of Florida beyond measures that already exist, passed its final Senate committee April 15. It was signed into law April 19 by fascistic Gov. Ron DeSantis, who proposed the bill in September 2020 as a response to the Black Lives Matter uprisings during the summer. This bill makes protesting a felony punishable with up to 15 years in prison, strips away voting rights, protects Confederate statues, denies protesters bail and protects anyone who does bodily harm to protesters, including killing them. HB1 also puts a blanket ban on defunding the police in any way, shape or form across the state.

There is no question that this fascistic bill will disproportionately target Black and Brown organizers, who have led the ongoing struggles against capitalism-imperialism and white supremacy across Florida over the last several years. One of those leaders is Jamil Davis, lead organizer for the Florida chapter of Black Voters Matter. He is a Hip-Hop artist and producer under the name Jamal Steele.

Workers World interviewed Davis April 19.

Workers World: You and others have referred to this bill continuously as Jim Crow 2.0. Can you elaborate on how this bill not only harkens back to the days of Jim Crow, but how it also ties into the prison-industrial complex of today to create a new system of Jim Crow laws?

Jamil Davis: With the bill being interpreted by the arresting officer, it's left to their discretion. We are then

left with a bill that has language in it that places us in a place where Black people will be limited in how we can assemble in public. Getting enough people arrested, charged and convicted under these new penalties will create more felons under Florida's criminal justice system, which not only places more bodies in correctional facilities but eliminates more people from being able to vote. This is a law that will disproportionately affect more Black people because our direct actions and events intimidate the current power structure more, because we use our actions as a tactic to achieve our freedom.

WW: Ron DeSantis and others, including the co-sponsors of the bill, have said that this bill will prevent an incident similar to the one at the U.S. Capitol Jan. 6. What is your response to this?

JD: The Capitol insurrection was performed by right-wing reactionaries who are either tools used by the current power structure or individuals that control the current power structure. It's these very people who create this type of legislation and have the same folk that were side by side with them to enforce it in a way that will favor their tantrum — more than organized displays of civil disobedience used to achieve Black Liberation, because that would equal a shift in their power.

WW: The bill has now passed the House and the Senate, largely on party lines. Many organizers and revolutionaries are feeling deterred and defeated right now. Where do we go from here?

JD: This bill will be tied up in litigation soon, but until then we continue to organize and use public assembly knowing the consequences. We will win. We should not



Jamil Davis next to bust of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

allow intimidation and fear to prevent us from achieving liberation. This is only a setback, not a fatality.

Devin Cole is a transgender Marxist organizer and writer. They are the president of Strive (Socialist Trans Initiative), a transgender advocacy organization in northwest Florida, and a member of the Workers World Party — Central Gulf Coast (Alabama, Florida, and Mississippi) branch.

U.N. experts: 'Shackling of aged inmate, Mumia Abu-Jamal, is deplorable'

The following statement was released April 20 from the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commission concerning the practice by the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections of shackling of political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal during his recent and current periods of hospitalization. Read the statement at tinyurl.com/c7smdu24.

GENEVA (April 20, 2021) — U.N. human rights experts* expressed serious concerns about the treatment and welfare of Mumia Abu-Jamal, an African-American man, who has been in jail for 40 years in Pennsylvania and is reportedly shackled to his hospital bed. Mr. Abu-Jamal had already been shackled to his bed during a four-day hospitalization in late February while being treated for heart failure.

Mr. Abu-Jamal has been denied visits from his family and access to his lawyers and spiritual advisor after being admitted to an undisclosed hospital around April 10, where he will reportedly undergo surgery. "This ongoing and continuing cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, including deliberate disregard of his dignity and inhumane conditions of confinement, is a clear violation of Mr. Abu-Jamal's most fundamental rights," the experts added. Neither his family nor lawyers have been informed of his medical condition and treatment.

"The use of shackles during his hospital stays is deplorable and causes Mr. Abu-Jamal additional and unnecessary suffering," said the experts. "International standards on the treatment of prisoners clearly stipulate that instruments of restraint are to be imposed

only when no lesser form of control would be effective to address the risks posed by unrestricted movement."

As well as a chronic heart condition, Mr. Abu-Jamal, nearing 67, suffers cirrhosis of the liver caused by hepatitis C, hypertension and a severe skin condition. In late February, he was also diagnosed with COVID-19.

"We are concerned that the medical condition of Mr. Abu-Jamal could be linked to years of medical neglect by the Department of Corrections of the state of Pennsylvania," the experts said. "This situation may also be the result of racial discrimination against people of African descent by prison and state authorities.

"We call on the authorities to take all urgent measures to protect the physical integrity, life and dignity of Mr. Abu-Jamal, in line with international human rights obligations.

"Communication and access for Mr. Abu-Jamal's family and advisors should immediately be restored with Mr. Abu-Jamal and with all relevant personnel involved in his health and conditions of confinement. The state must also immediately cease withholding information and access relevant to monitoring the status of Mr. Abu-Jamal's human rights.

"We also call on the authorities to urgently address allegations of discrimination, including racial discrimination, in the medical treatment of prisoners in Pennsylvania and to take all necessary measures to protect the physical integrity and life of all detainees, in particular older prisoners and prisoners with disabilities who seem to have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19," the experts added.

Mr. Abu-Jamal, a former activist and journalist, was charged with the murder of a police officer in 1981. He denies the charges.

The experts have written to the Government to express their concerns.

*The experts: Ms. Dominique Day (Chairperson); Mr. Ahmed Reid; Mr. Michal Balcerzak; Mr. Sabelo Gumedze; Mr. Ricardo A. Sunga III, Working Group of Experts of People of African Descent; Gerard Quinn, Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities; Ms. Tlaleng Mofokeng, Special Rapporteur on the right to physical and mental health; Claudia Mahler, Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons; Mr. Nils Melzer, Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

The Special Rapporteurs are part of what is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the U.N. Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures' experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not U.N. staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.

For more information and media requests, please contact Christina Saunders (csaunders@ohchr.org or africandescent@ohchr.org). □

MOVE denounces museum's desecration of children's remains

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

At an emotion filled press conference April 26, MOVE members strongly denounced the University of Pennsylvania Museum and Princeton University for holding the remains of family members killed in the 1985 police bombing of their home.

News that Penn Museum was in possession of the remains first aired in an opinion piece by Abdul-Aliyy Muhammad in the Philadelphia Inquirer April 21. The bones were given to UPenn forensic anthropologist Alan Mann by the Philadelphia Medical Office for analysis. Mann subsequently transferred to Princeton University, taking the bones with him.

The bones, which are the remains of Katricia (Tree) Africa, 14, and Delisha Africa, 12, were bounced back and forth between the two Ivy League institutions over decades. UPenn issued a hasty apology to MOVE just as the press conference was starting.

Janet Africa, whose daughter died in the fire, stated:



From left: Carlos Africa, Janet Africa, Pam Africa (standing), Janine Africa, Consuela Africa and Eddie Africa.

"They took their bodies, desecrated and defiled them, lied about it, and we were never told that they had the remains. They used the remains in classes called

'Adventures of Anthropology' like some amusement park ride. You can't go any lower."

Janine Africa said: "We've had our babies beat, pregnant women beat, men beat, and they put us in jail for 41 years. In 1985, Police Commissioner Gregore Sambor said the children were as much of a threat as the adults. Police shot at our children, forcing them back into the burning house.

"When we were finally released, the politicians apologized and said they are sorry. We don't trust them. They can't give us our children. Our children are gone. We don't want their apologies — we want our brother Mumia Abu-Jamal released."

Tree Africa's mother Consuela Africa was in jail during the 1985 bombing. During the press conference, she broke down in tears and had to leave for a moment. But upon returning she stated: "We just want you to see the behavior of these officials, these notable professors — they are not honorable or respectful. We are in pain, but we are not weak. We are strong people — we are revolutionaries!" □

On the picket line

WHEN WE FIGHT WE WIN!

By Marie Kelly

St. Vincent Hospital nurses’ strike enters eighth week

Because of their dedication to improving the standard of care for their patients, nurses at St. Vincent Hospital in Worcester, Mass., remain on the picket line. Their demands include a safer nurse-to-patient ratio (meaning the level of care necessary for each patient is a factor when determining nurse staffing), a pool of nurses who are trained to care for the more critically ill patients in intensive care units and a team of rapid response nurses who can be dispatched when a patient needs to be quickly stabilized during a life-threatening event.

Having nurses with critical care specialty training as well as rapid-response nurses can greatly improve survival rates of the sickest patients. Adequate staffing decreases the risk of error and improves the overall recovery rate for patients. Tenet Healthcare Corporation, which owns St. Vincent’s, is estimated to have wasted over \$35 million on replacement nurses and police details to break the strike rather than using their dollars to meet the nurses’ reasonable demands.

Reports from inside the hospital of substandard care by replacement staff are filtering through to the nurses on the picket line. The community wants their nurses back in charge of their care, and the St. Vincent nurses are committed to delivering quality care to their community. The first round of talks between the Massachusetts Nurses Union (MNU) and Tenet is set for April 26. (Framingham Source, April 18)

UAW strikes Volvo truck plant

After a frustrating month of contract negotiations, close to 3,000 United Auto Workers Local 2069 members went on strike April 17 at the Volvo Truck plant in Dublin, Va. Workers complain of concessions in the past three contracts while the company makes huge profits. UAW Secretary-Treasurer Ray Curry stated: “The UAW is disappointed that Volvo Truck has failed to present a substantial offer by the March 16 contract deadline, despite a contract extension. Our goal remains to achieve a fair tentative agreement for our members, their families and the community of Dublin, Virginia.” The UAW proposed April 26 as the date to resume contract negotiations. (Detroit Bureau, April 20)

The strikers have already won support, garnering large donations of food and drink. “We are happy to stand with you, our brothers and sisters, as you demand fair wages, retirement and other benefits from a prosperous corporation such as Volvo,” said Kristy Vance, president of the Western Virginia Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) chapter. (WDBJ, April 19)

If the strike drags on, the UAW, with \$790 million in its Strike and Defense Fund, should increase weekly strike benefits — currently \$250 per week with medical coverage.

Kroger refuses hazard pay for workers

Due to the hazards of the COVID-19 pandemic, some municipalities in southern California now mandate a higher hourly wage for workers in retail stores and pharmacies with 300 or more workers. The “hero pay” ordinance passed in Long Beach increases pay by \$4 an hour. (Press Telegram, April 26)

The Kroger grocery chain announced that, rather than comply with the ordinance, it would close two stores in Long Beach: Ralph’s and Food 4 Less. Mayor Robert Garcia would like to take action against Kroger and pointed out the company made so much in profits that it spent “nearly a billion dollars in 2020 to buy back its own stock shares.”

Kroger has previously announced closure of three grocery stores in L.A., after the Los Angeles City Council voted in February that large grocery stores must pay workers an extra \$5 an hour for about four months. (tinyurl.com/yetv85j2)

A company representative claimed the ordinances are “misguided” and that the municipalities have “overstepped” by guaranteeing that workers are compensated for continuing to provide essential services to their communities during the pandemic. (Fox Business, April 18)

The United Food and Commercial Workers condemned Kroger’s store closures.

This practice of private entities disregarding governmental measures that raise workers’ living standard is not new. In 1929, Harvard University fired 20 women custodial workers rather than comply with the Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission’s demand to pay the women an extra 2.5 cents per hour. Harvard Alumni reacted to the firings calling them “Harsh, stingy, socially insensitive and considerably short of the highest ethical standards of the time.” (The Harvard Crimson, April 29, 1974) □

Movements act to end overdoses from tainted drugs

By Princess Harmony

Ohmefentanyl, acetylfentanyl, butyrfentanyl, furanylfentanyl and carfentanil are some of the fentanyl analogues that are pervasive in the drug supply in the U.S. and Canada. These drugs are similar in structure to other, usually criminalized drugs.

It used to be that only heroin and benzodiazepines, such as Xanax, Valium, and Klonopin, were tainted with fentanyl analogues. Now they can be found in drugs like methamphetamines and cocaine, as evident in a recent spike of overdoses in Philadelphia’s restaurant industry.

In response to this, movements are starting to rise up to deal with the problem themselves. Groups like NEXT Distro — which

crosses national boundaries — provide harm-reduction supplies like fentanyl test strips, Narcan and clean needles.

Drug User Liberation Front

In Canada, the movement has gone one step further and provided tested-pure drugs to those who want them. This was necessary because thousands of people had died due to adulterated drugs.

The movement to provide unadulterated drugs is a necessity, as addiction has become one of the biggest epidemics in the U.S. and Canada. DULF members, at great personal risk, have given away the drugs, which are illegal in Canada. But the Downtown Eastside neighborhood in Vancouver, British Columbia, is the epicenter of the province’s drug epidemic.

The movement’s demands are important for activists — especially revolutionaries — to memorize, understand and spread. Here are DULF’s demands listed in a press release issued June 23, 2020. (tinyurl.com/2c2suk2c)

1. Acknowledge that British Columbia prescribers are not prescribing safer supply under British Columbia Centre on Substance Use risk mitigation guidelines to any significant extent, and amend these guidelines to include all people who use drugs, not just those at risk of COVID-19.
2. Immediately include injectable heroin and cocaine into accessible, safe-supply options and expand BC Pharmacare to cover injectable hydromorphone in addition to these options.
3. Ensure equal access to harm-reduction services and safe-supply options across British Columbia, such as supervised consumption sites and prescriptions.
4. Issue a statement from the BC College of Physicians and Surgeons supporting the BCCSU Risk Mitigation guidelines to ensure prescribers feel comfortable prescribing these options.
5. Amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to decriminalize simple possession of drugs. In the interim, demand the Province of BC follow the recommendations of the Provincial Health Officer to impose de facto decriminalization in BC by Ministerial direction, amending provincial policing policy or amending BC’s Police Act.
6. Defund the Vancouver Police Department and reallocate the funding into community-led overdose response initiatives.

spread to all regions most impacted by drug addiction, such as Philadelphia’s Kensington neighborhood. There, the DULF, buyers’ clubs and locations to acquire medical-grade diacetylmorphine (heroin), are needed.

In addition to offering legalized or decriminalized drugs, there must be an expansion of access to methadone and buprenorphine (Zubsolv, Suboxone, Subutex, Sublocade). Methadone can only be acquired from methadone clinics, which are hard to get into, and are overwhelmed with people needing help.

There are also groups, like NO METHADONE Holmesburg-Mayfair, which actively oppose methadone clinics being located in those Philadelphia neighborhoods.

In other countries — such as Canada, Britain, Ireland, Australia, and Portugal — methadone can be dispensed by a local pharmacy after a person’s initial use of methadone or dose increase.

No to ‘X-waiver’

Buprenorphine, which is easier to get on than methadone, has its own set of problems. This stems from the government’s deep misunderstanding of drug addiction. In order to get on buprenorphine, one needs to have a physician with an X-waiver. That allows doctors who are already permitted to prescribe narcotics to prescribe buprenorphine. Activists have long fought the X-waiver requirement, and are calling on the Biden administration to remove it, and to provide guidance on harm reduction-oriented methods of drug treatment.

The X-waiver only stigmatizes buprenorphine and does not help treat addiction. The destructive “war on drugs” has resulted in restrictions of methadone and buprenorphine. This forces patients without prescriptions to get “diverted” methadone and buprenorphine from those who have them. Instead of seeing this as a result of its rules, the Drug Enforcement Administration only cracks down harder, further spreading addiction.

The call has gone out to the movement to adopt the measures the DULF has advanced, and to recognize that decriminalization, legalization and methadone/buprenorphine diversion are valid and necessary steps to gain control of the drug epidemic. □

60 years ago The invasion that failed

By Deirdre Griswold

Sixty years ago — on April 17, 1961 — some 1,400 heavily armed right-wing exiles waded ashore at Cuba’s Bay of Pigs (Playa Girón) to initiate what they thought would be the overthrow of the revolutionary government headed by Fidel Castro.

Within hours, their invasion had failed miserably. All were either killed or captured. The survivors later confessed to having been trained and equipped for the invasion by the U.S. government.

What they and their CIA handlers had failed to notice was that the remote area where they landed had once been poor and neglected, but its people had gained enormously since the Cuban Revolution.

The local militia put up a strong and successful resistance to the CIA invasion that lasted for many hours before the national revolutionary army was able to arrive, with Fidel at its head, and take most of the invaders prisoner.

Cuba later released them to U.S. authorities in exchange for \$53 million



Cuban revolutionaries, led by Fidel, celebrate defeat of Bay of Pigs invasion.

in food and medical supplies — and the freedom of Francisco Molina.

Molina, a Cuban worker living in New York City, had been falsely accused of murder while Fidel was attending U.N. events. Instead of reporting on the strong international support for Fidel, blazing headlines in the tabloids labeled Molina, who had lost a hand in an industrial accident in the city, “The Hook.”

He was eventually freed in the prisoner exchange — and then welcomed back to Cuba as a hero.

Griswold served as executive secretary of the Committee to Free Francisco Molina.

What’s the U.S. role? Ecuador prisons rot inside



By Mirinda Crissman

“In places where inequality is the deepest, the use of prison and punishment is the greatest.” (Ruth Wilson Gilmore) Prisons do not keep people safe from violence; in fact, these institutions perpetuate violence themselves and further entrench poverty. They are tools used by those who hoard massive amounts of wealth to undercut wages and pit workers against one another. Once people are labeled “criminal,”

“thug” or perhaps even “gang member,” empathy often goes out the window because those labels were designed to sow difference and isolate members of the working class from one another and from their common enemy. On Feb. 23, in four prisons in three of Ecuador’s cities, 80 prisoners died as “violence erupted in prisons in Guayas, Azuay and Cotopaxi provinces, which hold about 70% of Ecuador’s total prison population.” (Reuters, Feb. 24) Officials blamed the violence on rival gangs and criminal enterprises vying for business. The real culprit, however, seems to be the material conditions that caused gang formations to arise in the first place, as well as overcrowding and unsanitary conditions inside prisons during a deadly pandemic. “Ecuador’s prison system, whose facilities were designed for some 27,000 people, still houses about 38,000 people.”



Tear gas rises from parts of Turi jail where a rebellion broke out in Cuenca, Ecuador, Feb. 23.

(Al-Jazeera, Feb. 24) Ecuador’s incarceration rate is much lower than that of the U.S. — which remains the world’s No. 1 jailer and has exported its prison system to at least 33 other countries (Alliance for Global Justice, afgj.org/prison-imperialism). While the U.S. hasn’t directly shaped Ecuador’s prisons, the economic policies that Washington and Wall Street dominate have had their impact. “Millions have been driven into poverty by International Monetary Fund-imposed austerity measures, before and during the COVID crisis under the Moreno-Lasso program. Youth are without work, education and a future. Some 38% of Ecuadorians live in poverty. “Rural populations suffer most, according to the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC), with poverty increasing from 68% to 71% in 2019. Under Moreno, another 1.87 million people entered poverty, with a total of 1.17 million people living in extreme poverty, out of a population of just under 18 million. Moreno imposed a total wage freeze on all workers as the income of the elites soared.” (Workers World, April 10) “The presidential candidate for the

opposition alliance Union for Hope (UNES), Andres Arauz, demanded that the president of Ecuador, Lenín Moreno, take responsibility for the consequences of prison riots occurring in the country. . . . He pointed out that Feb. 23 will go down in history as a very sad day for Ecuador that demonstrates negligence, incapacity and abandonment in all areas of public policy.” (Cuba Sí, Feb. 25) Horrible, inhumane conditions inside prisons in Ecuador provoked violence that claimed the lives of 80 people. This trauma will forever affect the families and loved ones of the dead. The conditions that precipitated such violence are similar to what people inside prisons, jails and detention centers in the U.S. face, particularly during the COVID pandemic. Prisons are part of a state power, whose role is to protect the wealth that the capitalist class has amassed by exploiting the workers whose labor produced that wealth. Abolishing the conditions that made prisons necessary means abolishing the oppressive system that creates enormous inequalities — from the U.S. to Ecuador. □

Rodney Reed supporters gearing up for hearing

By Gloria Rubac
Houston

The Reed family, neighbors, supporters and activists from Houston and Austin gathered April 17 in the historic Kerr Community Center and Park in Bastrop, Texas, for their monthly event for Rodney Reed. Reed had been set for execution in November 2019, but was granted a stay by Texas’ highest criminal court with just five days to spare. This was based on an appeal that Reed did not commit a 1996 murder and was in fact innocent. The Bastrop gathering included making signs for Reed’s upcoming July 19 evidentiary hearing, signing Mother’s Day cards for women on Texas death row and a screening of the 2019 documentary, “A Plea for Justice,” that lays out the case for Reed’s innocence.

The film shows that it was impossible for Reed to have murdered a young white woman, Stacey Stites, in Bastrop, presenting the many inconsistencies and outright lies involved in the prosecution of Reed. After the film ended, the crowd agreed Reed had been framed and sent to death row. “The cops lied, the Texas Rangers lied, the Bastrop police lied and the investigation was improperly done to cover up the killer, who was likely a cop. The time of death given during the original trial was wrong. Evidence was not properly stored or analyzed and, to this date, the murder weapon, a belt used to strangle the woman, has never been tested for DNA,” supporter Caleb Granger told Workers World. On April 22, the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals threw out a lawsuit filed by Reed’s attorneys — together with the Innocence Project of New York City — on the basis

that too much time had elapsed since the original trial. Reed’s lawyers had asked for the prosecutors to turn over the woven belt murder weapon, which has a probable residue of physical evidence because it was used with such force that it broke in two. And there was other crime scene evidence never tested for DNA. The attorneys argued that DNA testing is now routine in murder cases, and that, if the evidence was tested, it would support Reed’s claim of innocence. At the April 17 gathering, Sandra Reed told the crowd: “We as a family appreciate everybody who came out tonight to support my son. You’ve seen this film, and there are more wrongs still. We have gotten so much support for Rodney from all over the world. We are determined to get justice and we won’t stop until Rodney is home with us.” □

‘I have rights too’

By Miley Selena Fletcher

The following letter is from a transgender incarcerated worker at SCI Forest in Pennsylvania.

When I write for Workers World about the wrongs going on here and the unprofessional abuse of authority by correctional officers or staff, I am called down to a security office. I am told: “We’re only concerned about your safety.” Or they will say, “Why don’t you write us first?” even when I have written them first. When I write them, nothing is ever done — or the correctional officer or staff alike are still around you, so the individual can retaliate against you by filing false misconducts or try to intimidate you. Or as a prisoner, you are moved to another block or transferred for speaking up. I am an advocate for transgender rights and for others who cannot speak for themselves. It makes sense to me, but to the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections or institutional administrations it does not. And that is because you are interfering with their monopoly! “You are problematic; you are a chronic complainer,” etc., etc. That is how the PA DOC and administrators classify a prisoner who exposes the corruption, deceit and lies that govern the institutions. But you are telling the truth, and they fear the truth because of their lies. My being an advocate, a voice for the people, scares them. That is why you are moved to another block or transferred to another prison. They have been getting away with this for so long. They don’t want us to have a voice or a place that will print and expose them. It is the standard policy of the PA DOC and their administrators to do what they want when they want to — always remember that. Yet can’t I write and say what’s right or wrong without being called down and subjected to questions? I have rights too. □

Houston activists honor Mumia on his birthday

By Gloria Rubac
Houston

Supporters of Mumia Abu-Jamal gathered in Houston on his birthday, April 24, to demand his immediate release and the release of all political prisoners. “Mumia is a freedom fighter. He is a Panther. He is a captive of the state, because they want to kill him. It is up to all of us to fight for his freedom to get him out of that prison,” John “Bunchy” Crear told a crowd gathered at historic Emancipation Park. Crear joined the Black Panther Party as a youth, similar to Mumia, and condemned the decades of incarceration for so many Panthers, now elderly with medical issues. Crear was joined at the mic by three other Panthers: James Aaron, Yusef Omowale and Claude Frost. Aaron took over as chair of the Houston Panthers after white police officers assassinated 21-year-old Carl Hampton on July 26, 1970. Another Houston Panther, Sandra Netter, sent her greetings and solidarity with Mumia from her bed in a local hospital.

Fanci Dee took the mic to say, “I’m here today because last summer after George Floyd’s murder, I was kidnapped by the police, along with hundreds of other protesters. Ever since then, I have been thinking about why this fight is so important to me. George Floyd should be alive. Daunte Wright should be alive. We need to abolish the police, to abolish prisons, to abolish the death penalty. We are stronger together, and we can create a world without police and prisons where people can thrive and live and be happy.” Minister Abdul Haleem Muhammad with the Nation of Islam said, “When I think of Mumia, I think of Shaka Sankofa. I think of Clarence Brandley. We don’t know if we could survive being innocent and being on death row. Mumia was a Panther, and you had to be bold to be a Panther. I think about the Panthers. They were not about guns. They were about feeding the children, educating the children, giving health care to the elders in the community. Our unity is more powerful than an atomic bomb, so we must unite to free Mumia now!” Several poems were spoken by Brown Beret Johnny Torres, a Chicano wordsmith treasured by all Houston activists.



Houston, April 24.

PHOTO: PSL

Syracuse, N.Y. ‘Black Athletes Lives Matter!’

By Minnie Bruce Pratt
Syracuse, N.Y.

Hundreds of Syracuse University students marched through snow during a Black Athletes Lives Matter (BALM) action against police brutality April 21. The march had been planned for months by student-athlete organizations, but coincidentally took place the day after cop Derek Chauvin’s conviction for the murder of George Floyd.

The multinational and multigendered crowd of students marched by teams from Skytop South Campus to Coyne Field for a rally. Then each speaker-organizer led conversations with each of the different groups and teams, sharing thoughts and experiences. According to participants, athletes were there representing all the university’s teams. Going by the most

recent data from College Factual, SU — an NCAA Division 1 school competes in 17 sports. (tinyurl.com/up5zw)

Speakers emphasized the need to stay focused and continue resistance. Syracuse junior rower Grace Asch said of Chauvin’s guilty verdict: “As we celebrate this moment in history, make sure to remember it is just that. A moment. One verdict, as we’ve seen in the past, makes no promise to the future. Let’s not confuse accountability for justice.” (tinyurl.com/8n4zrez4)

Chris Elmore, an African American senior on the football team, testified that he has experienced police brutality since a young age and knows any traffic stop now could mean death. Two of his cousins were killed by police.

Track and field athlete Eunice Boateng stressed: “We want to see something

different happen, not just within this country, but all around the world. [We’re] finally using our voice and pushing and letting people know what kind of power we hold.”

The student-athlete event continues years of protest at SU against racist, sexist and anti-disability policies at the school. Current organizing began in 2014 when the coalition group, THE General Body, occupied SU’s administration building for three weeks.

Anti-racist action is happening throughout the Central New York area. One hundred West Genesee High School students walked out of class April 23 to protest other students who posted a mocking “George Floyd challenge” on social media. Outraged

students demanded the school administration expel students involved in the racist posts. □



Syracuse University students march in a Black Athletes Lives Matter action, April 21.

Buffalo, N.Y. ‘No good cops in a racist system’

By Anneliese Bienko
Buffalo, N.Y.

Buffalo’s first anti-police demonstration of the year was held April 16. The action, called by Workers World Party, drew activists from across the left to demand police abolition and stand in solidarity with Minneapolis in the wake of Daunte Wright’s murder. Speakers addressed the police brutality and violence that has wreaked havoc for Black and Brown communities across the U.S.

A strong anti-capitalist message was pushed, highlighting how the police exist to protect property, not people. Protesters discussed how, comparable to many cities across the country, Buffalo police are 69.3% white while policing a 47% white city, and most of these officers reside in



Buffalo, N.Y., on April 16.

PHOTO: CARMEN PAUL

neighboring suburbs, not the communities they occupy.

People shouted “abolish the police” and

“no good cops in a racist system,” letting the public know that it is past time for reforms, and the whole system needs to

be dismantled.

The group marched down Niagara Street through a predominantly working-class neighborhood with many community mental health centers and substance use services. This is important because those with mental illnesses make up a quarter of the people killed by police since 2015. In Buffalo in September 2020 Willie Henley, a man struggling with mental illness, was shot during a mental health crisis call and was charged with a felony for trying to defend himself with a bat as police surrounded him. These stories are repeated across the country.

Buffalo is planning to hold more demonstrations like this, demanding abolition and fighting against all forms of police violence. □

WAAR on Chauvin verdicts ‘We’ll accept nothing less than police abolition’

The following statement was issued on April 20 by the Workers Assembly Against Racism, based in New York City.

One killer cop in jail does nothing to address the violence and trauma that materially fills the experience of Black, Brown, and working people at the hands of our bloated, militarized police force.

Derek Chauvin is a tool of white supremacy, along with policing and incarceration as a whole. Although we’re witnessing this tool’s public “punishment,” we cannot accept these court proceedings as the theatrical interpretation of “justice” that the state so fervently desires.

Chauvin’s conviction for a murder caught on camera isn’t proof that the justice system works nor is it proof that cops and policing protect us. We know this. With the most recent police murders of both 13-year-old Adam Toledo in Chicago and 20-year-old Daunte Wright near the same Minneapolis neighborhood where Chauvin ended Floyd’s life — we know this.

One bad man locked away where we can no longer see him will not deliver abundant funding to currently terrorized communities; it

will not deliver loving psychological care to children and adults traumatized by these cultural norms. And it certainly won’t exhumate the irretrievable loss of life rendered not only by killer cops, but by the justice system they uphold that deliberately criminalizes the effects of poverty and thrives on separating living people from their communities via gratuitous and systemic incarceration.

If this guilty conviction were true justice, Minneapolis would not have deployed thousands of National Guard to protect property and brutalize people tonight. Even if this guilty conviction were true justice, George Floyd is not here to witness it. Guilty conviction or not, we keep fighting and we’ll accept nothing less than police abolition. □



April 20 protest, New York City

WW PHOTO: NATHANIEL CHASE

Let Mumia OUT

Continued from page 1

and the Netherlands, and in several U.S. cities April 24.

A powerful moment came when Janine Africa, Janet Africa, Sekou Odinga, Jihad Abdul-Mumit and Kazi Toure, five liberated political prisoners, stood together on the stage. The group has spent a combined over 150 years behind bars.

The rally moved into the streets for a spirited march from City Hall to the Art Museum, carrying banners and signs and shutting down traffic along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway.

The march stopped at the site of last year’s houseless encampment, calling attention to the city’s inability to provide basic services to the most vulnerable. Fired by Amazon for speaking up for workers rights, Chris Smalls, with the Congress of Essential Workers, called for support of Amazon workers’ organizing. The rally continued on the Art Museum steps.

Larry Holmes spoke about how Frank Rizzo, “the most racist police chief,” waged war on the Black Panthers, MOVE and the entire Black community in Philadelphia. Janine Africa warned that we must not let the police kill Mumia like they killed the incarcerated MOVE family members Phil Africa and Merle Africa. Delbert Africa was freed, but succumbed only six months after his release to illness caused by inadequate health care during his incarceration.

Performers included Dominique London and the Universal African Dance and Drum Ensemble. Basiymah Muhammad Bey from the United Negro Improvement Association also spoke.

Traveling from Boston mYia X raised the memory of Winnie Mandela and Shaka Sankofa and borrowed from the words of Ella Baker, saying “We who believe in freedom, cannot rest until we bring Mumia home.”

Jamal Hart, Mumia’s grandson, called on the younger members in the crowd to take up the fight to free Mumia. Calling for his grandfather to spend his next birthday surrounded by his family and friends, he chanted: “No more birthdays in prison.”

The coalition sponsored events in West Philadelphia April 25 honoring Walter Wallace Jr., murdered by Philadelphia police six months ago, and Russell Maroon Shoatz, imprisoned since 1972 and suffering from stage 4 cancer. Members of Shoatz’s and Wallace’s families participated in the event that kicked off a community cleanup at the Maroon Garden, followed by a march to Malcolm X Park for a speakout.

Food Not Bombs Solidarity provided snacks and water for the events on both days.

Visit Mobilization4Mumia.com or LetMumiaOut.com for more information on Mumia’s health, endorsers or upcoming events. □

Say her name! Ma'Khia Bryant!

By Martha Grevatt

People in Columbus, Ohio have been in the streets nearly every day since the police murder of 16-year-old Ma'Khia Bryant April 22. She was shot four times by Columbus Police Department Officer Nicholas Reardon, who is white, in the same hour when millions awaited the guilty verdict for Derek Chauvin in the lynching of George Floyd.

Protests and vigils erupted in the neighborhood where Ma'Khia was shot and outside City Hall, police headquarters and the State House.

This was the 64th fatal police shooting



Ma'Khia Bryant

in the U.S. since Chauvin's trial began March 29 and the fourth in Columbus since December 23, when CPD killed Black Lives Matter activist Andre Hill.

Police in Ohio's capital are among the most racist and trigger-happy in the country, having killed 44 people, including several children, since 2013 — more than Cleveland, Cincinnati or even Los Angeles.

While African Americans are 29% of the population in Columbus, they are 55% of those victimized by CPD's "use-of-force." (Columbus Dispatch, April 22)

The capitalist media has put a "blame the victim" spin on Ma'Khia's killing based on police body cam footage showing her apparently lunging at two other young women with a knife. The message is that Officer Reardon was "legally justified," because other lives were allegedly in jeopardy. These foregone conclusions were made with zero consideration as to what might have provoked Ma'Khia or if she was acting in self-defense.

Many in the community are raising questions. Why did the cop fire four shots, not one, into Ma'Khia? Why didn't he shoot to maim, not to kill? Why didn't he use a Taser instead of a gun? Footage shows neighbors questioning police as to why they killed a child.

Black Liberation Movement Central Ohio, in a call for an April 23 "Justice for our baby" rally, asserted: "Ma'Khia

Bryant was a CHILD, a minor, a baby girl. She fought for her life against adult women who came to her home to assault her. Even though Ohio is now a Stand Your Ground state, and she was legally within her rights to defend herself without duty to retreat, law enforcement showed up and murdered her within seconds instead of trying to de-escalate the situation or break up the fight." (Black Liberation Movement Central Ohio)

Officer Reardon is on paid leave; as of yet, no discipline is being pursued, and no legal charges have been filed.

Renewed calls to action

Some activists are calling for a federal investigation into the use of deadly force by CPD. "It's clear that after a decade of disproportionately killing Black and Brown people, that [Columbus] is not going to fix it," said activist Jasmine Ayres (NPR, April 22)

Others are looking beyond reforming the police and calling for abolition. As Ohio State University law school professor Sean Hill explains: "Both political parties have allotted funds to 'professionalize' the police since at least the 1940s,



Ma'Khia Bryant's murder protested, Columbus, Ohio.

claiming that these allotments would solve racial bias. . . . Instead, voters and politicians, alike, should confront how often policing reforms have been pursued without success and should familiarize themselves with abolition as an urgent and needed solution." (Columbus Dispatch, April 22)

Not only in Columbus but around the state and the country, the murder of Ma'Khia has sparked a renewed determination to fight police violence. Black Lives Matter Cleveland issued a statement right after the news of her death and the Floyd verdict, saying, "Ma'Khia should still be alive, just like George and the thousands of other people murdered by police. There is no rest for the work we do while fighting for Black lives." □

In light of more police killings

WW COMMENTARY

Black voices must not be silenced

By Monica Moorehead

On April 17, three days before white police officer Derek Chauvin was found guilty of two counts of murder and one count of manslaughter, Rep. Maxine Waters — a longtime California Democrat whose district includes South Central Los Angeles — spoke at a rally in Brooklyn Center, Minn. This is where 20-year-old Black man, Daunte Wright, was fatally shot by another white cop April 11 for a minor traffic violation.

Waters, who is African American, told the crowd: "We've got to stay in the streets and demand justice. We're looking for a guilty verdict, and we're looking to see if all the talk that took place and has been taking place after they saw what happened to George Floyd. If nothing does not happen, then we know that we got to not only stay in the street, but we have got to fight for justice. We got to stay on the streets. And we've got to get more active; we've got to get more confrontational. We've got to make sure that they know that we mean business." (CNN, April 19)

Chauvin's defense lawyer attempted to use Waters' comments to get Judge Peter Cahill to declare a mistrial; the judge had the audacity to declare Waters' words were grounds for an appeal of the verdict. Cahill is scheduled to decide Chauvin's prison sentence sometime in June.



LeBron James wears George Floyd practice T-shirt.

Meanwhile, the most popular player in the National Basketball Association, Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James, issued a tweet to his 49 million followers. The words: "YOU'RE NEXT #ACCOUNTABILITY" were with the photo of Nicholas Reardon, the white cop who fatally shot 16-year-old Black teenager Ma'Khia Bryant, in Columbus, Ohio. Next to Reardon's headshot was an hour-glass emoji.

James, a native of Akron, Ohio, removed the tweet the same day. While not apologizing, James went on to say in two more tweets: "ANGER does any [sic] of us any good, and that includes myself! Gathering all the facts and educating does though! My anger still is here for what happened to that lil girl. My sympathy for her family, and may justice prevail!"

"I'm so damn tired of seeing Black people killed by police. I took the tweet down. because it's being used to create more hate. This isn't about one officer. It's about the entire system, and they always use our words to create more racism. I am so desperate for more ACCOUNTABILITY."

The Huffington Post reported that six Black people, including Bryant, had been killed by the police within the 24-hour period following the Chauvin verdict. (April 25)

Prominent Black people must be heard

For not only speaking their minds, but the minds of millions of Black and other people of color and workers in general, Maxine Waters and LeBron James were attacked by extreme right-wing politicians and, in James' case, the National Fraternal Order of Police.

Republican Senators Mitch McConnell and Ted Cruz and Reps. Kevin McCarthy and Marjorie Taylor Greene accused Waters of trying to incite violence and insisted that everyone, including Chauvin, had a right to a fair trial. McCarthy has threatened to introduce a House resolution to censure Waters for "dangerous comments."

In response to James' tweet, the NFOP

characterized his message as being "disgraceful," "extremely disgraceful" and "gaslighting." (@GLNOP)

Cruz, along with Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.), attacked James, suggesting that NBA Commissioner Adam Silver should censure James. The women's and men's NBA players have been in the forefront of countering reactionary "shut up and dribble" messages by those who want athletes — especially if they are influential like James — to keep their mouths shut on social justice issues, particularly police brutality.

It is interesting that these same politicians and the FOP did not utter one word about a heinous 2017 video that resurfaced on Twitter April 22. An ex-Army Ranger, Dave Grossman, is caught during a police training saying that sex after killing someone "is the best sex," "very intense sex" and one of those "perks that come with the job." (Resist Programming @RzstProgramming)

Michigan Rep. Rashida Tlaib, a Muslim Democrat of Palestinian descent, tweeted following the killing of Wright: "Policing in our country is inherently and intentionally racist. Daunte Wright was met with aggression and violence. I am done with those who condone government-funded murder. No more policing, incarceration and militarization. It can't be reformed." (April 12)

The Detroit Chief of Police James Craig called for her resignation. Detroit anti-racist activists are demanding that Craig resign.

It is important for the movement to defend high-profile progressive voices — be they politicians, athletes or entertainers — against right-wing and even bourgeois liberal attacks. These voices are extensions



Rep. Maxine Waters speaks in front of Brooklyn Center, Minn., police station, April 17.

of besieged Black and Brown communities, who are more marginalized and vulnerable in disproportionate numbers to dehumanization by police occupation.

Solidarity against police violence — rooted in white supremacy — in the streets, workplace and schools is critical to building classwide unity in the struggle against evictions, hunger, low wages, mass incarceration and deportations. □

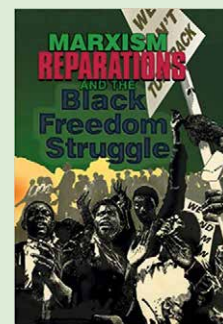
Marxism, Reparations & the Black Freedom Struggle

Edited by Monica Moorehead

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper.

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Prolonging pandemic

Imperialist countries create global vaccine apartheid

By Joshua Hanks

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic last year, the scale of inequality under capitalism has come sharply into focus.

Long before the pandemic began, inequality, racism and imperialism had threaded their way through all aspects of society, ensuring that the worst effects of disasters fall onto the most oppressed. Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and Hurricane Maria in 2017 showed that when disasters strike in places with majority Black and Latinx populations, the federal government offers little to no relief.

Early on, Black, Indigenous and Latinx communities showed much higher rates of COVID-19 cases and deaths, outpacing whiter and wealthier communities. Centuries of racism and colonialism have left oppressed communities with fewer, less well-equipped hospitals, more uninsured people and more people with underlying health conditions. Black and Brown workers make up a disproportionate share of low-wage essential workers, exposed to the virus much more than those able to work from home.

This inequality played out when former President Donald Trump, after becoming infected with the virus due to his own careless disregard for social distancing and other basic public health measures, received drugs that only a president could acquire. Pumped full of experimental drugs and cared for by the government’s top doctors, Trump’s recovery only strengthened the right wing’s assertion that the pandemic was not to be taken seriously.

With the mass vaccination rollout, inequality has again been laid bare. Along the lines of Trump’s “America First,”



PHOTO: AYMAN NOBANI/XINHUA

Director of the Office of the People's Republic of China to the State of Palestine Guo Wei (left) and Palestinian Health Minister Mai al-Kaila attend a hand-over ceremony of Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccines in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on March 29.

President Biden has worked to ensure that the U.S. takes priority over other countries. Earlier this year he invoked the Defense Priorities and Allocations System under the Defense Production Act. DPAS requires manufacturers of certain items to meet domestic orders first before fulfilling international orders. So although domestic manufacturers are technically allowed to sell to the international market, in effect they have been blocked from doing so. There are nearly 30 affected items, including reagents, nanofilters, tubing materials and other equipment needed for mass vaccination. (tinyurl.com/2u2n9ybf)

Joe Biden claims to listen to scientists and even said “science is back” April 22. Yet modeling by Northeastern University found that if the first 2 billion vaccine doses were distributed evenly worldwide, based on population size, global deaths could be reduced by 61%. But if the world’s richest 47 countries hoard vaccines, deaths would fall by only 33%. (tinyurl.com/3rpekk2j)

At a press briefing April 9, World Health

Organization Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that 87% of vaccines have gone to the wealthiest countries, while low-income countries received just 0.2%. Canada alone secured enough doses to vaccinate its entire population five times. At the end of March, none of the 180 million doses produced by the U.S. and Britain were exported. By April 15 they had exported under 4 million doses out of 257 million produced, while China exported 166 million doses and kept 196 million for domestic use, according to Axios.

Dire need for vaccines in Global South

India desperately needs critical supplies to produce and administer vaccines. On April 25, it recorded 349,691 new cases, setting a world record for daily COVID infections. It surpassed the previous record holder, the U.S., on April 22 and has recorded new records every consecutive day since. India is one of the world’s top pharmaceutical producers, yet without key imports from the U.S., it cannot produce what is needed to vaccinate its 1.3 billion people. Adar Poonawalla, CEO of the Serum Institute of India (SII), the world’s largest vaccine manufacturer, tweeted April 16: “I humbly request you [Biden] to lift the embargo of raw material exports out of the U.S., so that vaccine production can ramp up.”

Yet the SII, a privately owned conglomerate, has itself contributed to global vaccine inequality. Because it has a noncommercial license to produce the AstraZeneca vaccine, it can market its own version to poorer countries. In Uganda, SII charged \$7 per dose, whereas the European Union negotiated with AstraZeneca and secured vaccines for just \$2 per dose. (tinyurl.com/wm99wj7z)

India, along with the U.S., Australia and Japan, is part of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or “Quad,” a diplomatic and military arrangement to counter China. Yet India’s imperialist “allies” are not offering aid and solidarity in this time of crisis, instead pursuing their own self-interest. But according to the April 24 South China Morning Post, China has offered to help India with its current outbreak, despite the two countries still facing a border dispute that turned deadly just last year.

Vaccine inequality is perhaps most stark in occupied Palestine. Israel has fully vaccinated almost 60% of its population, giving it the world’s highest vaccination rate, yet the Palestinian Health Authority reported that less than 3% of Palestinians are immunized due to vaccine shortages. Even before the pandemic, around one-third of essential medicines were unavailable in Gaza. (tinyurl.com/c6z9as5k) With a population of 2 million, there are around 1,000 new COVID cases every day; in the West Bank, over 20% of COVID-19 tests come back positive. (tinyurl.com/27r68fmj) In the U.S., many states have had stricter lockdowns with a positivity rate of just 5%.

Virtually the only Palestinians who have been vaccinated are those who work in Israel and come into contact with Israeli citizens. International law holds that Israel is responsible for vaccinations in the areas it occupies, yet Israel claims that a 1993 treaty absolves it of this responsibility. While some human rights organizations have spoken out against Israel’s vaccine apartheid, there has been very little international outcry, and Israel faces zero consequences. The

Continued on page 9

Piney Point reservoir — a disaster waiting to happen

By Betsey Piette

For decades, capitalist industries have produced wastewater by-products without serious plans for how to dispose of them. Their contents are usually toxic, often radioactive and generally hazardous to surrounding communities where they are stored and to the larger environment should they be released — accidentally or otherwise.

While there are many thousands of such hazardous sites across the U.S., it is rare that they make the news. Case in point is the reservoir on the former 676-acre Piney Point phosphate mine site near Tampa, Fla. A state of emergency was declared April 3 when the walls of the storage pool, holding water polluted with phosphate and containing radioactive materials radium and uranium, threatened to burst.

A break in one of the walls encasing the 77-acre pond was discovered April 2. Fearing that a collapse of the retention pool could rapidly release around 600 million gallons of hazardous wastewater and flood the surrounding area, Gov. Ron DeSantis ordered an evacuation of 300 nearby homes — but did not open shelters.

To relieve the pressure on the enclosure, around 215 million gallons of wastewater were pumped into Port Manatee in Tampa Bay. Residents began to return to their homes later in the week.

While a major disaster was averted, it is just a matter of time before this retention pool experiences another breach.

And environmentalists have repeatedly expressed concern about the potential impact if toxic discharge raises the level of phosphorus in the bay where the wastewater was pumped.

Piney Point’s long history of water pollution

Within a year of its founding as a plant to turn phosphate into fertilizer in 1966, owner Borden Chemical was caught illegally dumping waste into nearby bays and tainting popular fishing grounds. By 1970, pollution flowing from the plant into a creek that emptied into Bishop Harbor was linked to massive toxic algae blooms in the state’s Terra Ceia Aquatic Preserve. (Washington Post, April 6) Bishop Harbor is a marine estuary that flows into Tampa Bay.

In 1989, a 23,000-gallon leak of sulfuric acid forced hundreds of people to evacuate. In the early 1990s, local communities spent billions of dollars to clean up the contaminated bay. Yet state environmental officials frequently bent the rules to let the plant operate, despite financial instability.

The site went through a succession of owners. In 2001, then-owner Mulberry Corp. declared bankruptcy and shut off pumps that were recycling wastewater. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection received special permission from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to step in. They loaded millions of gallons of toxic waste onto barges, took them to the Gulf of Mexico and dumped the waste into the ocean.



While the company went bankrupt and the plant shut down, waste from over three decades of phosphate mining remained on the site — an environmental ticking time bomb. Spills from the site in 2003 produced another large algae bloom in Tampa Bay.

The current owner HRK Holdings bought the plant in 2006. The company, which has since filed for bankruptcy, sought aid from Florida’s Manatee County commissioners to secure permits to inject the wastewater into deep wells. Opposition from local environmentalists and farmers, concerned that phosphate injection into the aquifer would damage crops and drinking water, pressured officials to drop the plan.

Since the latest near-catastrophe, state and local officials are once again promoting the idea that injection is the “solution.” Their plan is to inject the plant’s toxic water 3,500 feet underground into the Floridan Aquifer, using a potential influx of \$200 million from President Joe Biden’s infrastructure plan to foot the bill.

This would only exacerbate the problem by introducing toxic chemicals into the aquifer, and the Floridan Aquifer

system is the primary source of drinking water for most cities in central and northern Florida and eastern and southern Georgia. Injection also increases risks of earthquake activity, like that experienced in several states where injection has been used to dispose of wastewater from hydraulic fracking for natural gas. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has linked injections into deep wells with increased earthquake activity since 1957.

Central Florida — phosphate capital of the world

The process of turning phosphate into fertilizer creates phosphoric acid — the main fertilizing component. The leftover chemical by-product phosphogypsum is radioactive. Over five tons of this waste are produced for every one ton of phosphoric acid. It is dumped into gypsum stacks, hundreds of feet tall and hundreds of acres wide. They are covered with large lagoons, containing hundreds of millions of gallons of wastewater. (tinyurl.com/s4wcasu6)

With around 27 gypsum stacks, Central Florida is known as the phosphate capital of the world. As 80% of the phosphate mined in the U.S., about 25% of the phosphate used around the world is produced in the state, the natural beauty and environment of Florida has been damaged by this industry for decades.

Piney Point is just the tip of the iceberg.

This article is the first in a series on the environmental impact of industrial waste disposal.

The limitations of Biden's climate change plan

By Jason Cohen

While on the campaign trail, Joe Biden reiterated that under his presidency, the U.S. would once again become a leader within the global community. During his few months as president, he announced the U.S. will rejoin the Paris Accord and also rejoined the World Health Organization — two acts lauded by the media but, in reality, symbolic in nature.

Many Biden supporters and liberal media commentators hope that his policy changes mean the U.S. will effectively fight to ameliorate the effects of ongoing apocalyptic climate shifts and that rejoining the WHO will enable the U.S. to work more effectively to combat the worldwide spread of COVID-19. Reality has so far shown otherwise.

Biden announced his plan to curb CO2 emissions on Earth Day and set a new target that, if followed, would “achieve a 50% to 52% reduction from 2005 levels in economy-wide net greenhouse-gas pollution in 2030.” At face value, this seems like a bold plan.

Extreme weather and sea level rises have already devastated communities around the world and sparked an increase in the growing number of climate refugees mostly being dislocated from their homelands in the Global South. With this in mind, how effective will this plan be in combating rapidly worsening climate change?

The plan relies on carbon-capture technologies and energy sources including nuclear power to enhance the power grid. It should be remembered that the U.S. imposed sanctions on Iran supposedly because it wanted to develop nuclear energy to create a sustainable energy source in the face of economic blockades, sanctions and military threats imposed primarily by Washington.

The plan emphasizes the need to update building codes and limit excess energy output from apartment buildings, yet study after study has shown that the



Climate change march September 2014, New York City.

WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

true threat to the climate comes not from the family unit but from major transnational corporations.

Biden's plan calls for building “sustainable public housing,” which may help working-class families. Meanwhile, across the country, public housing projects have been privatized by real estate barons. If affordable housing units are built, they must remain subsidized by the government and be built in communities that need them the most.

Limits of carbon capture

Biden's plan to deal with transnational corporations that profit from extractive and industrial processes states: “The United States can address carbon pollution from industrial processes by supporting carbon capture as well as new sources of hydrogen — produced from renewable energy, nuclear energy or waste — to power industrial facilities. The government can use its procurement power to support early markets for these very low- and zero-carbon industrial goods.” (whitehouse.gov)

Relying on carbon-capturing technology ignores the fact that transnational corporations profit from destroying the

environment by extracting oil and natural gas. How are carbon-capture technologies going to deal with this intrinsic contradiction?

In reality, it will allow corporations to call themselves “green” by utilizing “green technology.” This may sound good on paper, but these changes are occurring in a world in which the United States is the hegemonic power of the world capitalist-imperialist order.

As demand for green technology grows in the U.S. and worldwide, there will be a greater need for elements such as lithium. We have already seen the U.S. and the European Union support a coup against the Evo Morales government in Bolivia to steal lithium to build electric vehicles, because Indigenous-led Bolivia nationalized its lithium resources and contracted with China to develop them sustainably. Will the U.S. lead “green” imperialist military interventions to ensure cheap access to elements needed for new technologies?

The last facet of the plan has to do with ensuring environmental justice for marginalized communities. This call for environmental justice is interconnected with Biden's infrastructure plan that focuses on water supply and transportation.

At the same time Biden was announcing this plan to ensure a safer and more equal water supply, his administration was making motions to reinstate the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline — which illegally violates tribal sovereignty and federal water rights under the Constitution. DAPL passes under the Missouri River next to the Standing Rock reservation and threatens their clean waters and those of 18 million people downstream in the Mississippi River watershed.

A second part of the infrastructure plan that sounds good is upgrading the public transportation system. But will the government use the creation of a national high-speed rail network to further dispossess Indigenous peoples, small farmers and rural people from their lands?

And the U.S. is an apartheid state. We must ensure that public bus systems are expanded into Black and Brown communities, both in the cities and rural areas. To this day, whether in east Austin, Texas, or New York City, a disparity exists in the efficiency and funding of public transportation systems, which do not exist outside certain cities. Would the incoming infrastructure plan overcome this?

This settler-colonialist state operates to make the world safe for transnational capital. It will never support policies that will dramatically hurt the profit margin of the capitalist class; fossil fuel barons would rather burn the Earth than combat climate change.

It is time to break away from the blood-soaked system of capitalism and fight to build a socialist society in which the natural world, the environment is not viewed as a commodity for profiteering — a world in which the working people are in power and the health and welfare of humanity and all life in the biosphere are placed above profit margins.

S. Hedgecoke contributed to this article.

Imperialist countries create global vaccine apartheid

Continued from page 8

U.S. Congress has not sanctioned Israeli officials, and diplomatic relations remain warm under the Biden administration.

Imperialists block easier access; China shows way forward

In October 2020, India and South Africa jointly petitioned the World Trade Organization to waive patent protections on vaccines, which would allow anyone to produce the existing COVID-19 vaccines — not just Pfizer, Johnson and Johnson, Moderna and AstraZeneca. Despite the support of over 100 countries including China, the WTO decided not to waive patent enforcements after stiff opposition from the U.S., EU, Australia and Japan. Brazil, led by far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, also opposed waiving vaccine patents, despite having one of the world's highest infection and fatality rates.

Pfizer used strong-arm tactics with several South American countries seeking to ink vaccine deals. In one unnamed country, which has a confidentiality agreement with Pfizer, a vaccine deal was delayed for months due to the company's hard-line negotiations. The pharmaceutical giant demanded Brazil and other countries put up sovereign assets, such as embassy buildings and military bases, as collateral against potential lawsuits. On April 20, Pfizer finally dropped

its demand for the South African government to collateralize its sovereign assets. (tinyurl.com/3r96d4s4)

In contrast to the deliberate system of vaccine apartheid of imperialist countries, China, along with Russia and Cuba, has a different approach. China, which contained the spread of the virus within its borders a year ago without the use of vaccines, is now in a prime position to produce and export billions of vaccine doses globally. By the end of this year, it will be producing its own mRNA vaccine. China has developed its own lipid nanoparticles for the vaccine, a critical component that is only made by a handful of Western companies such as Merck.

Reuters reported April 10 that China will be able to produce 3 billion doses of its Sinovac vaccine by the end of this year and 5 billion by next year. As of April 5, the foreign ministry reported China had donated its vaccines to 80 countries and sold them to another 40. Almost half the vaccines it produced have been sent abroad — China donated 1.2 million doses to Pakistan and 200,000 doses to both Zimbabwe and the Republic of Guinea.

A week after Biden denied a request to share vaccines with Mexico, China signed a deal with the country for 22 million doses. China donated 100,000 doses to Palestine and 500,000 to Venezuela, two countries under heavy sanctions and embargoes from imperialist powers.

(tinyurl.com/vyafn8s4) “Palestine highly appreciates China's commitment to provide coronavirus vaccines as a global public good and its selfless assistance to Palestine and other developing countries with a responsible attitude and concrete measures,” said Palestinian Health Minister Mai al-Kaila March 29.

It's too early to see what long-term impacts on geopolitics the vaccine roll-out may have, but it's certainly plausible

that countries in the developing world will reevaluate their relationships with Western corporations and governments. They may seek alternatives, and China is certainly the largest one. And China is eager to work with other countries to build modern infrastructure — from health care to transportation to energy — without the attached strings and internal interference that accompanies relationships with imperialist countries. □

Capitalism on a Ventilator

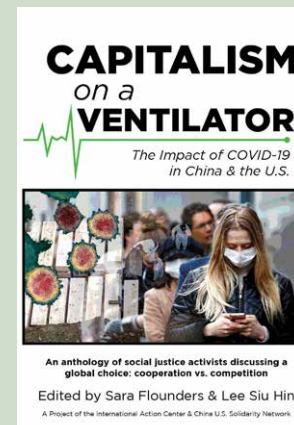
The impact of COVID-19 in China & the U.S.

“What one learns from Capitalism on a Ventilator is that the economic and human cost of the pandemic was far from inevitable. An entire section of the book is devoted to China's solidarity with the rest of the world in the fight against COVID-19. After four months of difficult struggle, China successfully contained the pandemic and immediately diverted masks, testing kits, medical personnel, ventilators and other forms of assistance to countries across Latin America, the Middle East and Africa. The U.S. received generous donations of medical equipment from China during the first wave of the pandemic. China was also the first country to declare that its COVID-19 vaccine would be a public good.”

— Danny Haiphong in a review for *Black Agenda Report*

Paperback: tinyurl.com/CapVent-print

E-book: tinyurl.com/CapVent-ebook



Smash the anti-protest laws!

In a racist ruling-class backlash to the demonstrations of millions last summer who forced a righteous verdict against killer cop Derek Chauvin, Republicans — at this point almost exclusively Republicans — have introduced 93 bills in 34 states that suppress the right to protest, supposedly protected by the First Amendment. Rightist Florida Governor Ron De Santis signed one into law. They are disguised as “anti-riot” bills. No one should be fooled by these lying words. Like the “war on terror” and the “war on drugs,” they are an attack on the oppressed. Their goal is to eliminate the masses’ right to organize, mobilize and

demonstrate a strength that has grown throughout a pandemic year. Others have pointed out that in the capitalist United States, laws defending private property — that is, the property of the capitalists and landlords — already exist. We say that anyone protesting killer cops, anyone facing mortgage foreclosure or eviction, anyone who is hungry, has been sorely provoked — should a bank get its window broken or a police precinct trashed. Previously, after the heroic struggle against the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock, some 18 states passed laws criminalizing protests disrupting building and operation of oil and gas pipelines. And

these new “anti-riot” proposals allow police to arrest and charge anyone present exercising their right to protest should one person throw even a plastic bottle. Legislatures in Oklahoma and Iowa went even further: They passed bills allowing racists — with or without badges — to use their vehicles as weapons to injure and kill demonstrators. This happened in Charlottesville, Va., August 2017, when one of the fascist scum promoting the Slaveocracy drove his car into the anti-racist demonstrators and killed Heather Heyer. We say never again! Like all repressive and pro-cop legislation, these new proposals target Black

and Brown communities. They can be easily used, however, against all workers and poor people who mobilize against capitalist bosses and cops. This means the ruling class is preparing for battles that are sure to come against evictions, hunger and seizures of homes, against mass movements to unionize workers or to win higher minimum wages or protests to demand action to stop the climate crisis or a new imperialist war. The entire working class has an interest in stopping these laws — whichever capitalist party proposes them — or fails to stop them from being passed. Smash the anti-protest laws! □

Stay in the streets — Abolish the police!

Continued from page 1

percentage of the population. Almost all 64 were under 30 years of age. They included four teenagers — like 13-year-old Adam Toledo, who Chicago police shot and killed while his hands were raised. Some had mental health crises. Sixteen-year-old Ma’Khia Bryant in Columbus, Ohio, was attempting to defend herself in a melee. Ample media coverage shows that cops managed to avoid touching a hair on the head of young racist white men who commit mass shootings. When Dylann Roof killed nine Black churchgoers in Charleston, S.C., cops gave him a bulletproof vest and a Burger King meal. When Kyle Rittenhouse fired on Black Lives Matter protesters in Kenosha, Wis., killing two anti-racists, police allowed him to walk away carrying his semiautomatic rifle. Meanwhile, people of color, young people and people with disabilities have suffered death-by-cop after a roadside flat tire emergency, for driving with temporary license plates or holding an expired driver’s license during the pandemic. Cops have killed a child playing in a park, people sleeping in their own beds, a veteran having a PTSD breakdown and people defending themselves against domestic violence.

Bowling Green State University Professor Philip Stinson, who studies civilian killings by law enforcement, said numbers on deadly police force have changed little in the decades since researchers began to track them. Only about 1.1% of officers who kill civilians are charged with murder or manslaughter, let alone convicted. (NY Times, April 22)

Not good cop versus bad cop

Stopping police brutality must go beyond weeding out individual bad apples. To bring justice for those who have lost their lives, who were maimed and traumatized in so many other ways by police violence, more is needed than the conviction of one killer cop — even though Chauvin’s conviction is virtually unprecedented in the U.S. Policing in the U.S. is all about maintaining social order, oppressing the masses of the people who are being throttled by this rotten system and who are always seeking a way to rise up. Policing includes the occupation of Black and Brown communities, all forms of racial profiling, physical and mental assaults and killings of Black and Brown bodies, especially young people. The Chauvin verdict alone will not stop this war against the people. Op-ed columns that stress legal action cannot on

their own halt police terror. Only a rising struggle against police terror — and an intensification of the campaign to abolish the police — will stop death-by-cop. A campaign to abolish the police will strengthen and move to a higher political level, as ever more activists and revolutionaries make the demand for abolition through revolutionary struggle, not simply reform. Police in a capitalist state exist only for the purpose of guarding the property and profit of megabillionaire owners and institutions, at the expense of the poor and workers of all nationalities. Lasting abolition of repressive policing will come only with the abolition of the capitalist state. The verdicts against Chauvin were one victory in eradicating police terror and white supremacy — two evils that go hand-in-hand. But the decisive factor in the unanimous verdicts began much earlier — in the streets of the U.S. and throughout the world. Unprecedented massive protests against racism, including the torching of a Minneapolis police station, began the day Floyd was murdered and continued for months. We are in solidarity with all those who will be in the streets

again — throughout the coming days and weeks — to express relief at the guilty verdict, to acknowledge its limitations and to shout their demands for justice and liberation from state oppression. We demand that not one person be arrested or assaulted by the police or National Guard for being in the streets to fight police terror — however they see fit to do this. Hands off the protesters! Mass outrage and mass protest is the only way to win true, lasting justice for George Floyd, Daunte Wright, Adam Toledo, Breonna Taylor, Sandra Bland, Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Rekia Boyd, Kindra Chapman, Elijah McClain and countless others whose lives were cut tragically short by police violence. Black and Brown Lives Matter! □



Chad’s president’s death upsets imperialists

By G. Dunkel

Idriss Déby, president of Chad, died April 19 in the Tibesti mountains, weapons in hand, as Chadian troops fought an armed convoy of his regime’s opponents from the Front for Change and Concord in Chad, which had entered the country from Libya. Déby’s loss was a major blow to French and U.S. imperialism, whose strategists regarded Chad — with Déby, its leader for three decades — as a “linchpin” in their efforts to control Western and Central Africa. Déby was a graduate of France’s military academy for officer training, as well as a pilot and a ranger. The late president’s son, Mahamat Idriss Déby, quickly set up a military council, dissolved the government and parliament and promised transparent, free and fair elections in 18 months. Testifying to the significance of Déby’s leadership, French President Emmanuel Macron spoke at his funeral: “Idriss, you were an exemplary leader and a courageous warrior, but you also knew the value of diplomacy and cooperation between peoples.” Before Macron spoke at the funeral, he met Mahamat Déby to express France’s

support for his rule, which France hopes will preserve the “stability” of Chad. (Le Monde, April 23)

U.S. policy in Africa

U.S. imperialism carries out its military policy in Africa through AFRICOM, the U.S. Africa Command, which oversees 23 U.S. bases on the continent. AFRICOM recently changed its strategic orientation from the “degradation of VEOs (violent extremist organizations, which used to be called ‘terrorist’) to their containment.” The Inspector General — a subagency of the Department of Defense — issued the report on this change in early 2020. (voanews.com, Feb. 11, 2020)

What this retreat from “degradation” to “containment” means is that organizations resisting U.S. and French imperialist penetration and control of Africa have grown so strong that U.S. strategists judge that the Pentagon is unable to destroy them outright. They aim instead to limit the impact of the resistance and prevent growth. One of AFRICOM’s bases is in N’Djamena, Chad’s capital. The major base for the French intervention forces in the Sahel — Operation Barkhane — is also there. The Sahel is a vast, arid area south of the Sahara Desert, stretching from the Atlantic

Ocean to Sudan. It includes Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, as well as Chad and Mauritania. Chadian soldiers have been a significant part of the multinational forces containing Boko Haram forces in Nigeria and resisting Islamic groups in the triangle formed by Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. They are considered to be well trained, well equipped and well led.

Instability in Chad

While Chad is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking 185th out of 187 countries in the UN’s Human Development Index, it is a major producer of oil, pumping 130,000 barrels a day. This output puts it in the top ten African producers. Other than oil, it produces cotton, cattle, livestock and gum arabic. Yet, the level of hunger in Chad is one of the highest in the world. A quarter to a third of its people go to bed hungry every night, and stunting due to malnutrition is a major problem for its youth. Lake Chad, once the second largest freshwater lake in the world, has lost 90% of its area and volume over the last 45 years, due to global warming and development. It is still a major resource, and hundreds of thousands of refugees from the instability and chaos in the Sahel live in its basin. French and U.S. imperialism have spent billions of euros and dollars in order to maintain their military domination of Africa. China has instead emphasized investing in infrastructure — including education and public services — in return for being allowed access to Africa’s mineral riches. China’s policy aims to provide wheelbarrows, while the United States and France supply gun barrels. □

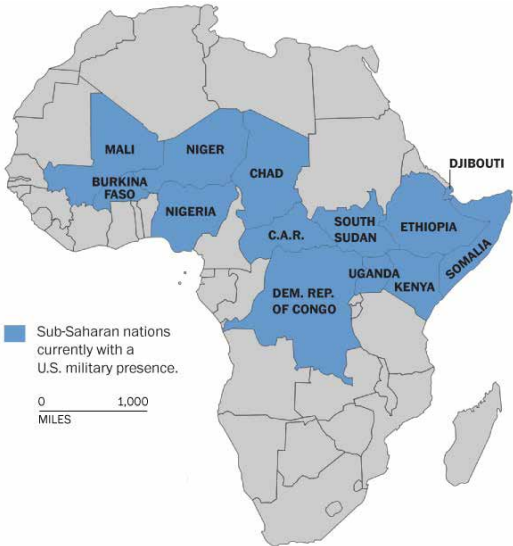




FOTO: WILLIAM CAMACARO/COHA

El autor William Camacaro, junto a Ramsey Clark en Nueva York, año 2013

Ramsey Clark: el disidente imprescindible en el centro del poder de EE.UU.

Por William Camacaro
Desde Nueva York

“Habrá algunos que recordarán a Ramsey Clark como un hombre marginal. Hay muchos más que lo recordarán como amigo de la justicia, los oprimidos, los explotados y el imperio de la ley. Quizás a él mismo le gustaría ser recordado simplemente como alguien que usó la ley para ayudar a otros”.

Curtis Doebbler, abogado en derecho internacional

Durante los días de asedio en la guerra del Golfo Pérsico bajo el Gobierno de George H. Bush, tuve la oportunidad de conocer en Nueva York a un extraordinario ser humano, Ramsey Clark. Eran los años de la fanfarronamente llamada “Operación Tormenta del Desierto” organizada por el Departamento de Estado y el Pentágono.

Se presentó esta figura quijotesca, admirada por todos en el escenario de un evento de protesta, un ex Fiscal General de EE. UU. que, increíblemente, se oponía al intervencionismo estadounidense en Cuba, Venezuela y Nicaragua. En esa ocasión dio un discurso detallado del conflicto que estábamos viendo en pleno desarrollo, una guerra multicolor, que nos llegaba a nuestras casas, a nuestros salones por cortesía de CNN.

No veíamos sangre, ni cadáveres, solo fuegos artificiales y juegos parecidos a los “nintendos”, donde solo se presentaban algunos daños colaterales. Fue una guerra a distancia donde el televidente se mantenía alejado del dolor y la agonía de las víctimas iraquíes.

Ramsey Clark, un luchador social desde el centro del poder

Ramsey Clark era una anomalía extraordinaria dentro del clase gobernante estadounidense. Un abogado profesional que llegó a ser Fiscal General del país, que estuvo en el centro de luchas de derechos civiles y humanos desde su alto cargo público, y que luego de dejar la cúspide del poder, abrazó causas progresistas en todo el planeta. Esto, en directa oposición a la hegemonía estadounidense y a la estrategia de sanciones unilaterales e ilegales contra países que no se alinean con la política exterior de la potencia norteamericana.

En una segunda ocasión que lo vuelvo a encontrar, yo ya sabía que él iba viajando a Irak y sería uno de los abogados

defensores de Saddam Huseín, en un juicio impuesto por el mundo occidental a casi todo el gabinete del líder iraquí, proceso judicial considerado por muchos sectores del derecho internacional como ilegal. Ramsey también era, por principios, opositor a la pena de muerte.

Tuve el atrevimiento de acercarme y preguntarle (venciendo mis temores ante la figura que estaba enfrente de mí), “¿no cree que será muy difícil para usted lograr algo en esa farsa de juicio?”. Y él me contestó: “Sería peor no hacer nada. Hay que ir a la batalla aun sabiendo que la vamos a perder. Hay que ir sabiendo que uno está del lado de la verdad y de la justicia”, y nos vimos las caras con una sonrisa.

En la cúspide del sistema judicial de EE. UU.

Ramsey sirvió a su país como el Fiscal General número 66 de los Estados Unidos, de 1967 a 1969, bajo la presidencia de Lyndon B. Johnson. Ya desde su anterior puesto como Fiscal General Adjunto fue fundamental en la redacción de algunas de las principales leyes ambientales y de derechos civiles que cualquier generación anterior o posterior haya producido. Contribuyó a la Ley de Derechos Civiles de 1964, a la Ley de Derechos Electorales de 1965 y a la legislación que más tarde inspiró la creación de la Agencia de Protección Ambiental o EPA, por sus siglas en inglés.

Después de dejar su cargo público, se postuló a la presidencia de los Estados Unidos en 1972 y para el Senado en 1974 y 1977. Era hijo del juez de la Corte Suprema y ex Fiscal General, Tom C. Clark. Ramsey también fundó el International Action Center, con la idea de construir una plataforma que luchara por la justicia social, y por un mundo más justo e igualitario.

Su activismo lo llevó a viajar a países como Vietnam, Irak, Irán, Libia, Palestina, Sudán y muchos otros lugares que estaban bajo ataque o posible agresión por parte de los Estados Unidos. Puso su vida en peligro en innumerables ocasiones.

Premiado mundialmente

Ramsey Clark se opuso a la guerra de Vietnam desde el inicio y mantuvo una posición en contra de las sanciones unilaterales y coercitivas que Estados Unidos impone a nivel global.

Ramsey fue reconocido como receptor del Premio Gandhi de la Paz (1992) y el Octavo Premio de la Organización de Naciones Unidas (ONU) sobre los derechos humanos el 10 de diciembre de 2008, en el sexto aniversario de la adopción de la Declaración Universal de Derechos Humanos. También fue honrado con el premio International Courage of Conscience (premio internacional a la valentía de conciencia), de la Fundación Peace Abbey.

Por todas estas razones Ramsey desataba grandes admiración pero a la misma vez rivalidades con el establishment que él constantemente desafiaba.

Solidario con Cuba, Nicaragua y Venezuela

En Latinoamérica llegó a estar muy involucrado en la solidaridad con Nicaragua, Cuba y Venezuela. En 1984, el gobierno sandinista demandó a Estados Unidos ante la Corte Internacional de Justicia (CIJ), principal órgano judicial de la ONU, por su apoyo a la “contra”. Pero Washington no reconoció la jurisdicción de la CIJ. El caso tuvo consecuencias políticas y jurídicas en contra de los Estados Unidos. Ramsey Clark fue asesor en ese entonces de un joven abogado que llevaba el caso, llamado Paul Reichler.

Cuando Ramsey viajaba a Nicaragua, se alojaba en casa del venerado sacerdote Miguel D’Escoto, ex presidente de la Asamblea General de la ONU. Eran muy amigos. Cuando Ramsey visitaba el país, el padre D’Escoto le organizaba tertulias con líderes latinoamericanos. Trabajaron juntos en una enorme variedad de temas por más de 40 años, incluyendo las situaciones de Cuba y Nicaragua.

Recuerdos personales: reunión con un joven Nicolás Maduro

Puedo mencionar algunos hechos personales que llegué a ver y que hablan claramente del carácter humano de Ramsey Clark. En el año 2000 llegó un joven recién electo a la nueva Asamblea Nacional de Venezuela y me pide que le organice una agenda. La primera reunión que aquel recién electo diputado de la revolución bolivariana tuvo en Nueva York fue con Ramsey Clark, en su bufete de abogado que quedaba en ese entonces en la calle 12 de Manhattan.

Aquel joven diputado llamado Nicolás Maduro estaba fascinado con la conversación que mantenía de manera muy fraternal con el ex fiscal. Esta actividad se concretó a pesar de haberme comunicado a último minuto con Ramsey. Él nos atendió y pudimos conversar un largo rato, sobre casi toda América Latina.

Solidaridad con Venezuela a base de principios de respeto a la ley

Ramsey estuvo involucrado como primera figura de la solidaridad con la Revolución Bolivariana en Venezuela en muchos momentos. Su apoyo no era ideológico sino basado en principios. No aceptaba la política ilegal de sanciones, ni el intervencionismo que violaba la soberanía de otros pueblos. Por eso no dudó en ser activo en actos de defensa y denuncia.

El 8 de noviembre de 2005 en el famoso Town Hall de Times Square, Nueva York, llevamos a cabo la actividad más grande que se haya realizado en apoyo a la revolución venezolana en los Estados Unidos llamada “Noche de solidaridad con la Venezuela Bolivariana”. El evento estuvo repleto, casa llena, y el Miami Herald a través de un periodista que estuvo allí lo reseñó: “Chávez tiene que tener mucha gente porque para llenar un lugar como este” en “pleno corazón de Manhattan, es



FOTO: WILLIAM CAMACARO/COHA

Ramsey Clark junto a Nicolás Maduro en Nueva York, año 2006

porque la revolución bolivariana debe de tener miles de seguidores”.

El sábado 23 de septiembre de 2006, el ya ministro de Asuntos Exteriores venezolano Nicolás Maduro, quien formaba parte de la delegación de Venezuela que asistía a las reuniones de la ONU, fue detenido por autoridades del aeropuerto internacional JFK durante 90 minutos cuando estaba listo para subir a un avión para regresar a su país.

En ese momento yo estaba transmitiendo en vivo por la cadena de Radio Pacífica, cuando el asistente del canciller me llama y me explica la situación. Inmediatamente decido llamar a Ramsey y le comunicó lo ocurrido y le pido que si podía ayudarnos y asistir a la misión diplomática venezolana en la ONU.

Yo dudaba que asistiera por lo tarde y lo repentino de la situación, pero ese día comprendí su compromiso y devoción por la justicia. Al llegar lo vi. Me sorprendí al verlo esperando tranquilamente, sin ser reconocido por los diplomáticos venezolanos que iban de un lado a otro.

Al llegar el entonces canciller de Venezuela Nicolás Maduro, se encontró con Ramsey y lo saludó enfrente de la misión. Roy Chaderton, quien era entonces el embajador de Venezuela en la OEA, le sirvió de traductor y los tres se apartaron y se produjo una conversación sobre qué decir y no decirle a la prensa. El actual presidente Maduro escuchaba atentamente. El ex embajador Chaderton remató diciendo: “Muy importante la sugerencia”. La opinión de Ramsey era valorada ampliamente.

En otra fecha, el 13 de septiembre de 2013, nuevamente invité a Ramsey a protestar, en esta ocasión en contra de la misión diplomática de los Estados Unidos en las Naciones Unidas, y él asistió como siempre, sin dudar. En esa protesta íbamos a entregar un documento denunciando el intervencionismo estadounidense en Venezuela. Le pedí a Ramsey que si podía ponerse un abrigo tricolor con los colores de la bandera venezolana. En el acto dijo: “Si voy a representar a Venezuela debo usar el abrigo y será un honor”.

Nosotros desde cierta distancia, pudimos ver la cara de molestia que le causaba todo aquello al primer secretario de la embajada de EE.UU. ante la ONU.

Ramsey nos acompañó en un enorme número de actividades, no solo en la

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FOTO: WILLIAM CAMACARO/COHA

El autor William Camacaro, junto a Ramsey Clark y varios activistas, en Nueva York, año 2013. Protesta contra la intervención ilegal de EE. UU. contra Venezuela