

## Workers of the world demand

# MAKE AMAZON PAY!

By Tony Murphy and John Catalinotto

Strikes, protests and militant job actions marked the global day of actions Nov. 26, targeting the megamonopoly and superprofiteer Amazon in 20 countries.

The day after the U.S.'s Thursday holiday in November — known as “Black Friday,” because it recognizes a profitable outcome for retailers, putting them “in the black” — is now a “tradition” in all capitalist countries. Their ruling class treats human beings as expendable, as merely spending consumers and production workers.

Demands focused on Amazon's harsh exploitation of workers and their bodies; the company's environmental crimes and nonpayment of taxes were also targeted. A major demand is “Make Amazon pay.”

Worldwide, nearly 50 organizations have signed on to a list of “common demands,” published by the Make Amazon Pay coalition, which include:

1. raising warehouse workers' pay and adding hazard pay and peak time increments
2. halting worker “surveillance” and strict productivity targets



Chris Smalls, president of Amazon Labor Union, speaks at New York City rally, Nov. 26, organized by Workers Assembly Against Racism.

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

3. extending sick leave and improving COVID-19 tracking and reporting
4. ending casual employment status and “union-busting” activities
5. paying taxes without using loopholes or tax havens.

In Britain, the environmental activists of the organization Extinction Rebellion demonstrated before a series of Amazon warehouses. In Italy and Mexico, workers walked off the job. Protests took place in Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, France,

Germany, South Africa, the Netherlands and other countries.

Amazon is known for being the biggest online retailer, but it produces some of what it sells, allowing Amazon's owners to exploit another layer of workers, those manufacturing, rather than transporting, commodities.

Protests were scheduled by unionized garment workers in **Bangladesh** in two cities, **Dhaka** and **Chittagong**. In **Cambodia**, garment workers who had worked at a factory that closed in March 2020 called a rally to demand \$3.6 million in severance pay.

### Logistics workers in the U.S. . . .

In **New York**, the Workers' Assembly Against Racism (WAAR) held an assembly at 5th Avenue and 26th Street in front of Amazon boss Jeff Bezos' \$119-million residence. The assembly focused on the campaign to win union recognition for Amazon's U.S. workforce.

It featured a solidarity march by Staten Island Amazon warehouse workers — led by Amazon Labor Union leader Chris Smalls — to Starbucks founder Howard Schultz's \$40-million penthouse. Schultz

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## Fight to end racism forever

### WORKERS WORLD editorial

Some people have proclaimed “The system works!” about two recent court decisions against crimes by white supremacists. On Nov. 23 a Virginia jury lowered the boom with \$23 million in fines on white-supremacist groups that organized the 2017 Charlottesville “Unite the Right” riot, which left one anti-racist protester, Heather Heyer, dead. In Brunswick, Georgia, on Nov. 24 a jury found three white racists guilty on almost every count in the murder of Amaud Arbery, who was Black.

These decisions are welcome and represent a moment of victory by progressive forces against racist violence. Undoubtedly the outpouring of millions in protest after the 2020 murder of George Floyd by cops resulted in heightened public understanding that

racism continues to kill in the U.S.

But note that both of these decisions were levied against actions by white supremacists that were not state-authorized. Punished were vigilante actions by groups of white people steeped in racist ideology, acting as an armed group, without the explicit blessing of the capitalist state.

Conviction and punishments were won with the argument that these acts of white supremacy were “illegal” — that is, not directly authorized or approved by state power or law under the current U.S. system.

But racism is practiced unendingly,

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## 52<sup>nd</sup> annual National Day of Mourning

By K. James

On November 25, United American Indians of New England and their supporters gathered on Cole's Hill in Plymouth, Massachusetts, to observe the 52nd annual National Day of Mourning, founded in 1970 by Aquinnah Wampanoag tribal member Wamsutta Frank James.

Throughout the years, NDOM has aimed to raise awareness about Indigenous issues and confront settler lies, particularly the Thanksgiving myth. Despite the pandemic, over 1,500 people were in attendance, and thousands attended virtually via a livestream. ([youtu.be/IrXXA2SaiAs?t=885](https://youtu.be/IrXXA2SaiAs?t=885))

The day began with a prayer ceremony and political speeches on Cole's Hill. Following this, the crowd marched through the streets of Plymouth and rallied at

Plymouth Rock, where more speeches were given. The day ended with a final rally in Post Office Square, followed by prerecorded content. More coverage will follow in future WW issues. □



WW PHOTO: SUMMER TACCETTA

Plymouth, Massachusetts, Nov. 25.

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# Global supply chain crisis

# Capitalism, militarism and infrastructure

By Betsey Piette

Multiple issues confront the U.S. capitalist economy during the continuing COVID-19 pandemic. Of major impact is the global supply chain crisis which has exposed long-existing problems within the capitalist system.

During the last 40 years, corporations have maximized profits through globalization — moving production abroad for the lowest wages. Now Big Business is coming up against big problems in moving goods produced abroad into and through the U.S., where workers are increasingly unwilling to labor under unsafe conditions for insubstantial pay.

Maritime workers are refusing to spend months confined on cargo ships with limited safety precautions and unable to visit their families. There is a shortage of transport workers willing to drive trucks for low pay, long hours and under unsafe conditions to move goods from ports. The trucking industry faces an annual 90% plus turnover.

Underlying the situation is a decades-long reluctance of capitalist politicians to fund domestic infrastructure improvements necessary to keep up with the demands of global production.

Meanwhile, wars abroad have been funded eagerly. According to Costs of War, over one-half of the federal government's total assets—buildings, aircraft, ships, vehicles, computers and weapons—benefit the military. The Pentagon's total assets increased in value from \$1.1 trillion in 2000 to \$1.8 trillion in 2019. (tinyurl.com/yae7zwjm)

Military spending is currently 3.4% of the U.S. GDP, while combined federal, state and local spending on infrastructure is 2.3%. In comparison, China's infrastructure spending was 10 times higher than the U.S. in 2018. (tinyurl.com/25jf6fu4)

### War and infrastructure spending

Historically the U.S. government has prioritized improvements in supply-chain infrastructure, when those



The I-40 bridge, which carries 60,000 vehicles daily over the Mississippi River, was closed for three months in 2021 because of failing infrastructure.

benefited the U.S. military. The Civil War significantly increased the use of railroads. In January 1862, President Abraham Lincoln gave the U.S. Military Railroad, established by the U.S. War Department, the authority to seize control of the railroads for military use. The USMRR restricted its authority to Southern rail lines captured during the war, giving the North a strategic military advantage over the South.

Construction on the first transcontinental railroad began soon after the war and was completed in May 1869. The expanded rail system played a significant role in the westward expansion of U.S. imperialism, including the theft and occupation of Indigenous lands and the genocide of Indigenous peoples, as well as the near-annihilation of the native bison, or buffalo species.

Nearly 90 years later, construction began on the first transcontinental highway. In 1956, during the Cold War with the Soviet Union, President Dwight D. Eisenhower

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## MUNDO OBRERO WORKERS WORLD

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## MUNDO OBRERO WORKERS WORLD

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

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

Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, attacks on im/migrants, misogyny, LGBTQ2S+ oppression and mistreatment of people with disabilities. It means joblessness, increasing homelessness and impoverishment and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism.

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

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

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

Since 1959, Workers World Party has been out in the streets defending the workers and oppressed here and

## Join us in the fight for socialism!

worldwide. If you're interested in Marxism, socialism and fighting for a socialist future, please contact a WWP branch near you. □

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# Leonard Peltier: Statement on Day of Mourning



*Leonard Peltier, a leader of the American Indian Movement, was falsely framed and convicted for the killing of two FBI agents on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota in 1975. He has spent almost 46 years in federal prisons and is in ill health. The following is a slightly edited statement he wrote and was read on his behalf for the 52nd annual National Day of Mourning on November 25, 2021, on Cole's Hill in Plymouth, Massachusetts. To find out more about the ongoing campaign to grant him clemency, go to [whoisleonardpeltier.info](mailto:whoisleonardpeltier.info). His statement can be read online at [tinyurl.com/2p82dfaw](https://tinyurl.com/2p82dfaw).*

Greetings Relatives,

Each year as November nears, I try to think back on all that has happened in my world in the past 12 months. And I know that in my world, I can only see a very small part of what is happening on the outside. For me, this year somehow seems to carry more weight than usual.

I have passed ever so slowly into the world of the elderly. I am now closer to 80 than to 70. The truth is, I never believed I would live this long. I was just past 31 years old, when I came to prison. It was almost half a century ago. My body is now the body of an old man. And it is harder to try to keep myself from being overtaken by sickness or depression or loneliness. They are constant companions here. I keep them at arm's length, and I know I cannot ever let them overtake me. If I allow that to happen, it will be the end. There is no mercy here. No compassion.

I cannot even imagine what it is like on the outside. I only hear stories and cannot believe half of what I hear.

For me, the best days here at USP Coleman 1 in Florida were the days when we could be outside in the yard and feel the sun. Even though they purposely built the walls so high that we cannot even see the treetops, the occasional bird or butterfly gives a welcome glimpse of our relatives in the natural world, but even that is very rare now.

I know COVID has cost all of us, you and me, in many ways. And I offer my condolences for all of you who have lost loved ones and friends to it.

Here inside the steel-and-concrete walls, it is no different. Constant lockdowns caused by both COVID and violence have made life here even harder than usual. I have not been allowed to paint in eighteen months, and we are almost always in some form of lockdown.

We are stuck in our cells for days at a time. It is an extremely rare day when we get to go outside to the yard.

## 'On my mind for many years'

I feel moved to try to explain something that has been on my mind for many years. I think maybe it will be helpful if I say the words out loud.

When we started to emerge from the darkness of Residential Schools, it became clear that we had to go back to try and reclaim what they robbed from us.

And what they robbed us of was the very heart of who we were. Our language, our ways and our connections back home. They wanted us, leaving those "schools," thinking like little non-Indians, who would just go along with the program and not rock the boat. Even with all the terrible damage they did to so many of us, many of us did survive them. And then we began the process of reclaiming our culture and way of life. I know that process continues to this day.

I am so deeply saddened in hearing the stories of all the children's graves they are finding at Residential Schools. I guess I was one of the lucky ones who made it home. But the death of those children is so sad and outrageous, and I am glad the world is finding out at last.

Back then, even our home at Turtle Mountain was under threat of government termination. I remember how hard my Dad, who was a World War II veteran, fought to save us.

## 'So many fights to keep our way of life alive'

Over the years we fought so many fights to keep our way of life alive and protect the natural world.

After our family was relocated to Portland, Oregon, I took part in the fishing struggles with Billy Frank and his Nisqually people at Frank's Landing. The rednecks were cutting up their nets and attacking both women and men who just wanted to continue to fish as their ancestors did.

And when they shot Hank Adams, it was a very dark

time and outraged all of us, but we stood strong to protect the Nisqually people. I will always be proud of that.

There were so many outrages back then.

When the land at Fort Lawton in Washington state fell into disuse, we went there and occupied it under old treaty law. That was also a hard time. At one point soldiers were pointing flamethrowers at us. But we held our ground and eventually they gave in. We put our good friend Bernie White Bear in charge, and he helped to build the Daybreak Star Center that is still a great asset to Indian people today. Bernie is gone now, as are so many of the others from those days.



Free Leonard Peltier!

Same thing when we took the abandoned Coast Guard Station in Milwaukee with Herb Powless. Our actions might have been unpopular at the time, but they led to a school, alcohol treatment center and employment office. The school is still thriving and is an asset to the Native community and the Milwaukee area. Herb is gone too.

So even though the price we paid was very, very high, we did make things better for our people, and we did help to turn things around.

*Even though the price we paid was very, very high, we did make things better for our people, and we did help to turn things around.*

I wonder if many people understand the events in our history and how connected they are. I was born in 1944. The massacre at Wounded Knee was in 1890. That

was just 54 years earlier, and both Geronimo and Chief Joseph died only 35 years earlier in 1909. Think about that — 35 years ago now it was 1986. Not very long ago at all.

## 'Heartened and encouraged'

I want to leave you with some positive thoughts.

Retired U.S. Attorney James Reynolds did an interview with the Huffington Post and actually apologized to me for all the wrong they did to me. I hope that is spread all over the world, and I am grateful to him. [[tinyurl.com/yckprd8f](https://tinyurl.com/yckprd8f)]

I can say that I am heartened and encouraged by the courageous water protectors, from Standing Rock to the beautiful manoomin (wild rice) lands of Northern Minnesota.

I am proud of Winona LaDuke and her people's work to protect those beautiful lands and lakes and her work to offer alternatives to fossil fuels. Using hemp could fix so many things. It is not something we can fix in a year or ten years, but it is something that all reasonable people should understand.

We cannot poison the water that sustains us. All of us. Not just Native and First Nations people, but all people. We have that in common. People should understand: We are trying to protect our homes and our natural lands. Water IS life.

And I am deeply grateful for the courage and vision of Deb Haaland, the new Secretary of the Interior. I know she went to Alcatraz this week. That is an acknowledgment that what we did was right and honorable. I was not at Alcatraz, but those of us, women and men, who stood up in those days were right. And in other parts of the country, we formed our own branches of United Indians of all tribes. So their efforts led to others joining in.

I heard that Deb Haaland said that the day has come when Indians no longer have to protest to be heard by the U.S. government. That is music to my old ears.

Our people were, and many still are, suffering. Anyone of any race would do the same things to stop the sufferings of their people.

## 'Hope that I can make it home to Turtle Mountain'

I wish all of you good health and happiness in all you do. You are in my prayers, and I am grateful to all of you who have supported me or will support me going forward.

I still hold out hope that I can make it home to Turtle Mountain while I can still walk out under my own power.

I remain grateful for the gift of life.

In the Spirit of Crazy Horse,

Doksha,

Leonard Peltier ☐

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# Progressives sweep Teamsters election—time to organize!

By Martha Grevatt

In a major setback for top-down, corporate-model business unionism, Teamsters United candidate Sean O’Brien defeated Steve Vairma — the chosen successor to Teamsters President James Hoffa Jr. — by a two-to-one margin. The results were announced Nov. 18, with Fred Zuckerman, Teamsters United candidate for Secretary-Treasurer, and the entire “OZ” slate sweeping the elections for International officers.

This was the first win since 1996 by a candidate for union president backed by Teamsters for a Democratic Union. After militant, anti-corruption leader Ron Carey won reelection to a second term that year, he went on to lead the successful UPS strike a year later. The strike pushed back attempts by UPS management to expand the lower-paid, part-time workforce.

O’Brien, like the late Carey, is not a TDU member, but TDU supported the OZ slate as part of the broader Teamsters United effort. The president and the rest of the General Executive Board are directly elected by the rank and file.

A key issue in Vairma’s defeat was the way the Hoffa administration handled negotiations with UPS in 2018. A majority — 54% — of the 250,000 UPS Teamsters voted against the contract, which created a lower pay scale for newer workers and allowed UPS to subcontract more work. But, applying the union’s “two-thirds rule,” the bargaining team

was able to declare the contract ratified, because less than two-thirds of UPS members voted to reject it.

The union’s convention, held earlier this year, voted to eliminate the two-thirds rule in their constitution. A priority of the new team is reversing contract concessions at UPS when the current contract expires in 2023.

The break by the rank and file with Hoffa — who has held the reins of power since 1998 — is part of a broader trend in the working class, expressed by strikes and unionization drives. Workers want to fight, and they want and need fighting unions.

## Amazon: ‘the existential threat’

Taking on Amazon is a stated priority for O’Brien. As president of Greater Boston’s Teamsters Local 25, he has pushed City Councils in Boston and surrounding communities to pass resolutions calling on Amazon to adhere to specified labor standards; the union must be consulted before a new facility opens. “Now,” O’Brien said, “as a result of this [union] election, we’re going to be in a better position where we can use our influence to do that nationwide.” (Boston Globe, Nov. 19)

During the union drive at the Amazon warehouse in Bessemer, Alabama, O’Brien drove a truck emblazoned with the Teamsters emblem to a rally in Bessemer.



Rank-and-file Teamsters oppose 2018 contract.

In 2020 the union appointed a National Director for Amazon. At the Teamsters national convention in June, delegates passed a resolution stating it “recognizes the existential threat of Amazon to our members and commits all levels of the union to unite with core platforms of member engagement, worker and community engagement, antitrust enforcement and policy reform, and global solidarity.” (teamster.org)

One aspect of a multipronged strategy against Amazon is, according to O’Brien, winning a good contract and reversing concessions at UPS. “Our biggest selling point to potential members is showing in black and white what a union contract can do,” he said. (Labor Notes, Nov. 18)

Getting rid of two-tier at UPS, where new hires’ starting pay is currently below what Amazon workers make, would undoubtedly help win Amazon workers to unionization. But there is a crying need for representation at Amazon now, not when the UPS contract expires in 2023. Organizing Amazon has a “do-or-die” urgency for organized labor comparable to winning against General Motors in 1936-37.

Hopefully, now that the election is over, the union will immediately move forward with the commitments made in June.

Amazon workers need the Teamsters, and the Teamsters union needs Amazon workers. □

## On the picket line

By Marie Kelly



WW PHOTO: MARIE KELLY

**WW managing editor Betsey Piette distributes fliers to Black Friday shoppers in Fashion District mall in Philadelphia, Nov. 26. Fliers contained a link to Starbucks Workers United petition ([sbworkersunited.org/new-page-3](https://sbworkersunited.org/new-page-3)).**

## Union-busting industry tracker

A volunteer group of union members from across the U.S. has developed an online map of the union-busting industry. The map lists both companies and the union-busting firms they hire for thousands of dollars per day to turn workers against unions. Take a look at [laborlab.us/unionbustingtracker](https://laborlab.us/unionbustingtracker), where LaborLab pinpoints 180 instances as of Nov. 28.

Bob Funk, the founder of LaborLab.us, says, “A shocking number of young people think unions are illegal and don’t know their rights.” This tool is meant to bring attention to how companies and union-busting firms blast workers with misinformation and scare tactics, to deter them from voting yes to union representation. Amazon hired Rock Creek Consulting to undermine the 2020 union drive at its warehouse in Bessemer, Alabama, and smaller firms also engage in union-busting tactics. Funk said he was most surprised by how many hospital corporations hire union-busting firms to prevent frontline health care workers from joining a union and gaining the bargaining rights they desperately need. ([tinyurl.com/y9nza4z2](https://tinyurl.com/y9nza4z2))

## Refresco Beverage workers demand fair treatment

When workers at the Refresco Beverage Company in Wharton, New Jersey, realized how the pandemic was impacting their health and welfare on the job, they staged a walkout and demanded adequate protection and contact tracing. Emboldened by that action, the workers began a union drive and 15 months after their initial walkout, won an election, certified by the National Labor Relations Board, to be represented by the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (UE).

This was a hard-fought win. Refresco Beverage is an international company that bottles and distributes big-name products like Coca-Cola. The majority of the workers at the Wharton plant are Spanish-speaking, and the company hired a “union-avoidance” consultant, Lupe

Cruz, who specializes in bilingual anti-union tactics. The company mandated employees attend sessions, where Cruz used ethnic and linguistic differences to confuse and scare immigrant workers.

Alejandro Coriat, a Hilton Hotel worker, calls it intersectional union busting. He described how Cruz’s tactics are based on exploiting workers’ language and ethnic origin. Fortunately, the Hilton workers won their union vote anyway, as did the Refresco workers. The fight for the beverage plant workers isn’t over, however, since Refresco is appealing the NLRB decision. The employees on the union organizing committee are not discouraged and are preparing for steward elections and eventually contract negotiations. ([tinyurl.com/yckzjfx7](https://tinyurl.com/yckzjfx7))

## Burgerville workers have a union contract

As reported by Workers World in 2019, “Burgerville Workers Union, based in Vancouver, Washington, and an affiliate of the Industrial Workers of the World, struck four Burgerville stores for four days, forcing the company to return to the bargaining table. BVWU is the first-ever, fast-food workers union in the U.S. This was the second BVWU strike since 2017, when the union forced the company, through a three-day strike, to recognize it.”

Fast forward to 2021: Burgerville Workers Union has a tentative contract! Union organizers expect ratification before the end of 2021. BVWU represents workers at five of the 40 Burgerville locations, but the company stated it will apply the contract to all, regardless of location. Wages will increase to a minimum of \$15 an hour, and the company will institute credit-card tipping at drive-through locations. It’s estimated tipping will raise the hourly wage by \$2. Stable scheduling and vacation pay were additional gains won in the contract, with workers able to get a three-month work schedule. “That will give long-term security to workers to know how much money they’re making, what their hours are going to be, what they have to plan for if they have children,” union organizer Mark Medina said. ([tinyurl.com/2p8wws35](https://tinyurl.com/2p8wws35)) □



# MAKE AMAZON PAY!

*Continued from page 1*

has been directing a union-busting campaign against Starbucks workers in Buffalo, N.Y., who are trying to win union recognition.

Protesters carried placards of caricatures of Bezos and Schultz, with the words “Union-Buster-in-Chief” on them. They demanded that Amazon and Starbucks bosses stop union busting and immediately recognize the unions being organized by their workers.



WWW PHOTO: TONI ARENSTEIN

**Nov. 26, New York City**

It's rare that union organizing gets broad media coverage in the United States. Maybe because it was Black Friday, or maybe because people in the U.S. woke up to the news that protesters overseas had begun blocking entrances of Amazon warehouses, but much more media than usual covered the New York action.

Media included WCBS, WNBC, NY1, NY1 Noticias, Telemundo, WCBS radio, 1010WINS and Washington Week, plus international stations and RTV.

The Brooklyn-based December 12 Movement sent a strong delegation. Mahoma Lopez represented the Laundry Workers Center and Eliana Jarmillo the Street Vendors Project, with additional representation from the Communist Party of Long Island and Workers World Party.

**... and abroad**

In the Federal Republic of **Germany**, where Amazon's warehouse workers have union recognition, the United Services Union (Verdi) called for strikes. The

union reported that several thousand Amazon workers refrained from working. Verdi has been holding strikes at Amazon during the holiday season for the last eight years, demanding that workers there be paid the industry average for logistics workers, instead of Amazon's lower average wage.

Verdi leader Sylwia Lech in Augsburg says the workers are exhausted from the grueling work. Those who Amazon's managers consider too slow are called in to be grilled and asked things like, “Is anything wrong today?” and “Can we help you [work faster]?” She considered Black Friday “a horror.”

Amazon employees earn “significantly less than in other retail companies, among other things due to lower bonuses, a low Christmas bonus and longer working hours.” The company still refuses to negotiate with Verdi, “but we won't let up,” said Verdi federal trade group leader Orhan Akman. The demand is for “the recognition of the collective agreements of the retail and mail-order trade, as well as a collective agreement for good and healthy work.” (Junge Welt, Nov. 27-38)

In **France**, one of the country's top labor unions, CGT, called for Amazon workers in the country to strike. As reported in the Nov. 26 issue of L'Humanité, not everyone is happy about the big sales planned for Friday. A coalition of 70 unions and organizations including Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, Attac and Oxfam called for a strike.

The Make Amazon Pay union coalition reported a strike in **Italy**, where up to 15,000 delivery workers were prepared to strike for 24 hours. Last spring thousands of warehouse workers and drivers struck. In September, unionized warehouse workers in Italy reached their first-ever direct agreement with Amazon after staging a 24-hour work stoppage.

Warehouse, tech and delivery workers planned protests in several cities in **Britain** to demand union recognition from Amazon. Although workers there have the legal right to freely associate with unions, Amazon has refused



PHOTO: SGSF

**The Sommilito Garments Sramik Federation, headquartered in Dhaka, demonstrated in Bangladesh on Black Friday, under the slogan 'Make Amazon Pay!'**

to negotiate with any, including the 600,000-member GMB general trade union.

**Community and environment**

In **Cape Town, South Africa**, a community organization was set to protest at the construction site of what will be Amazon's African headquarters.

Black Friday actions were being organized for Canada, Poland, Slovakia,

Austria, Luxembourg, Spain, Ireland, Turkey, Australia, New Zealand and India.

In a separate protest, the Extinction Rebellion environmental group blocked the entrances to Amazon distribution centres in Britain, targeting 13 buildings, including the largest one in Dunfermline. It planned similar actions in Germany and the Netherlands. □



PHOTO: RUVAN BOSHOF

**In Cape Town, activists protest outside the location scheduled to be Amazon's headquarters in Africa.**



PHOTO: GMB

**Warehouse, tech and delivery workers of GMB Union demonstrated on Black Friday in Britain at multiple sites, teaming up with the Trades Union Congress, International Transport Workers Federation, War on Want and Labour Behind the Label, in the 'Make Amazon Pay' coalition.**



**In Buenos Aires, Argentina, a Black Friday demonstration was held at the Axion oil refinery against Amazon's services to fossil fuel corporations.**



# Fight to end racism forever

Continued from page 1

unrelentingly by U.S. state entities. The U.S. “legal system” — founded historically on the basis of white supremacy — continues every day with undeniably racist practice in disproportionate shootings, arrests, fines, convictions, unequal sentencing, denied paroles, mass incarceration and executions of people of color.

The U.S. capitalist system must cloak itself in a pretense of “fair” and “just” legality in order to maintain the fiction of “democracy.”

The acquittal of Kyle Rittenhouse exposes how state “legality” is used to maintain white supremacy. On Nov. 19 a Kenosha, Wisconsin, jury failed to convict Rittenhouse of his assault on a Black Lives Matter demonstration, where he killed two anti-racist white protesters and wounded a third. Before the attack, the Kenosha police welcomed this gun-toting white man, gave him water, thanked him and did not even arrest him after the killings. The cops clearly viewed him as “one of them” — giving their blessing to vigilantism in the service of a racist state bent on defeating protest against racism.

In the case of Ahmaud Arbery’s death, the local state structure at first implicitly endorsed his killers. Three consecutive county district attorneys either refused or delayed prosecuting the murder. (workers.org, May 12, 2020) Only a concerted campaign by Arbery’s family and supporters brought the case to trial, bolstered by the videotape of his murder. This must be seen in the context of hundreds of years of organizing by Black communities in the South against racist attacks by extralegal vigilante groups, both ad hoc or organized as the Klan.

Heroic progressive forces in the U.S. battle unendingly to try to save individual people from the death grip of a racist state. Those cases are sometimes won in fines, prison sentences, even death sentences against white supremacists — and sometimes won by the freeing of condemned people of color from prison or execution.

But none of these individual victories are enough to stop the unending racism that results in an act like that of Dylann Roof, who entered a church in Charleston, South Carolina, on June 17, 2015, and shot dead nine African-American people who were in Bible study.

It is not mere rhetoric to say that racism in the U.S. will

only finally be ended by a struggle to overturn capitalism and institute a socialist system created by workers and oppressed peoples.

Capitalism is based on pitting all working and oppressed people against each other — from the workplace to the courtroom — so the owning class can continue a state system that guarantees control and profits for that class.

In the U.S. racism is a fundamental tool used by the owning class to set white workers against workers of color in bloody battles.

To “do the right thing” — to honor the power, wisdom, skill and glory in other workers under this present unjust system, we must fight racism tooth and nail.

To achieve the solidarity needed to effectively oppose the bosses under this present rotten system — we must fight racism every day — most especially white workers must fight!

But as long as capitalism rules in the U.S., racism will be employed by the ruling class to pit all workers and oppressed people against each other.

If we are to end racism forever in the U.S., we must fight racism — and fight to build socialism here. □

**WORKERS WORLD**   
*editorial*

## Venezuela’s mega-elections Chavismo wins majority of states

By William Camacaro and Frederick Mills  
Caracas, Venezuela

*This slightly edited article first appeared on the Council on Hemispheric Affairs website on Nov. 22 at [tinyurl.com/2p8n6n87](https://tinyurl.com/2p8n6n87). The article was updated on Nov. 23. Translations into English are by the authors.*

On Sunday, Nov. 21, Venezuela held mega-elections, in which more than 70,000 candidates from across the political spectrum ran for 3,083 state, city and local offices, marking a resounding victory for this nation’s sovereignty and democratic institutions in the face of Washington’s illegal economic war and the ravages of the pandemic.

As this article goes to press, according to the data presented in the first bulletin of the National Electoral Council (Consejo Nacional Electoral, CNE) the governorships of 18 states have been won by the Chavista coalition of the Great Patriotic Pole (GPP)\*; three states, Zulia, Cojedes and Nueva Esparta, went to representatives of the opposition, and two states are too close to call, Apure and Barinas. These two states, in addition to Zulia, are located along Venezuela’s frontier with Colombia, a zone vulnerable to the penetration of Colombian paramilitaries and organized crime.

The participation rate in yesterday’s elections was 41.80% (8,151,793) of 21,159,846. This represents an increase of 11% over the last regional elections held in 2017, which garnered 30.47% participation. It also represents the second lowest participation rate

for regional elections in 21 years.

According to Venezuelan journalist Eugenio G. Martínez, divisions among the opposition diluted the votes of opposition candidates in several states, possibly impacting the outcome in close elections in Barinas, Lara, Mérida, Monagas and Táchira.

The participation rate and close races in several states are a wake-up call to Chavismo of the need to fortify their base; for the opposition it portends an opportunity, should they manage to forge unity in future electoral campaigns.

It appears that the U.S. has taken a back seat to these historic elections. While the State Department has been busy cultivating an already defunct and notoriously corrupt shadow government, without political relevance outside the beltway, more than 300 observers from 55 countries and major electoral observer commissions, including the Carter Center and the European Union (EU), were welcomed to Caracas to observe the electoral process. In a preliminary response to a query about the elections on Sunday, chief of the EU mission Isabel Santos said everything was proceeding “calmly.”

### The case of Alex Saab

An important backdrop to the elections is the U.S. kidnapping of Venezuelan diplomat Alex Saab on Oct. 16, charging him with conspiracy to commit money laundering. This Colombian businessman became a target of Washington’s ire, because he had the audacity to use his extensive international business contacts to circumvent illegal U.S.

sanctions to import food, fuel and medicines to Venezuela, all at great personal risk, in order to save lives.

The kidnapping of the diplomat was a blatant violation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961). It signals Washington’s commitment to continue imposing crippling sanctions. And it dealt a temporary setback to the Norway-brokered talks between the government of President Nicolás Maduro and the opposition taking place in Mexico.

Another door to negotiation remains open, however, as major opposition candidates voiced support for the electoral process as the appropriate path for settling political differences, signaling the feasibility of their coexistence with Chavismo.

### The opposition and the U.S. sanctions

Moreover, most of the opposition participated in these elections, and several prominent candidates used their newfound disdain for sanctions as a selling point for their campaigns, and for good reason. The use of such coercive measures by a foreign power as political leverage is immensely unpopular with the majority of Venezuelans. Supporting U.S. sanctions today, for a Venezuelan politician, is tantamount to political suicide.

For example, the Secretary General of Democratic Action Party, Bernabe Gutiérrez, asked people to vote, tweeting: “The era of guarimbas (violent demonstrations) is over. The time has



PHOTO: CAMILA ESCALANTE

**Venezuelans celebrate Chavismo 2021 electoral victories.**

come to say goodbye to coups, sanctions and calls for invasion. We Venezuelans have to settle our own problems.”

### Domestic terrorism

Of course, there was the ever present threat of a terrorist attack by those extremists who see coexistence between Chavismo and the opposition as the ultimate threat to their hard-line agenda to bury all vestiges of the Bolivarian revolution. Thanks to the government’s regional and municipal security plan, however, an arms cache was reportedly intercepted, and election day activities took place in an atmosphere of peace.

These elections constitute an important victory for the Venezuelan people, because despite the U.S.-imposed sanctions, the pandemic and attempts by Washington to politically isolate this Caribbean nation, the Electoral National Council, managed to pull off regional elections with the participation of a plurality of parties in an atmosphere of peace.

*\*Update November 23, 2021: The state of Apure has been won by GPP (PSUV) candidate Eduardo Piñate.*

*William Camacaro is a Senior Analyst at COHA. Frederick Mills is Deputy Director of COHA and electoral observer during this past election.*

## Popular struggle challenges Sudan ‘agreement’

By Carlos Lopes Pereira

*The author, a veteran of the liberation movement in Guinea and Cape Verde, is a regular contributor of articles on Africa to Avante, the weekly newspaper of the Portuguese Communist Party. This article was published Nov. 25. Translation: John Catalinotto.*

Sixteen-year-old Yusef Abdelhamid was shot dead by police while he was participating in a protest against the coup forces on Sunday, Nov. 21, in Omdurman, twin city of Sudan’s capital Khartoum, on the banks of the River Nile. The Sudan Doctors Committee revealed that the young man was the 41st fatal victim of repression since the Oct. 25 coup led by General Abdel

Fattah al-Burhan.

The situation is complex in Sudan, one of Africa’s largest countries by area.

Almost a month after the coup that overthrew the civilian-military transitional government, the coup generals put the ousted prime minister, Abdalla Hamdok, who had been under house arrest since the coup, back in charge of the executive.

Al-Burhan proclaimed himself head of the armed forces and president of a reconfigured Sovereign Council, the highest authority until elections, scheduled for 2023. The alliance of political parties, associations and popular organizations that supported the previous cabinet, overthrown by the Oct. 25 coup, rejected the deal al-Burhan imposed on Hamdok. As many as 10 ministers of the toppled transitional

government, who had been arrested but have since been released, have resigned from their posts.

The [anti-coup] Forces of Freedom and Change consider the agreement a “betrayal.” The Association of Professionals, another of the driving forces behind the protests, has expressed its “total and complete” rejection of the pact Hamdok signed. Hamdok is an economist favored by some Sudanese sectors, Western governments and organizations such as the International Monetary Fund.

The agreement provides for the release of political prisoners and the investigation of crimes committed by security forces over the past month, with dozens of people killed and numerous wounded. Nevertheless, just as the coup officers and the reappointed head of the “government of technocrats”

were signing the agreement, police were repressing thousands of protesters with tear-gas grenades near the gates of the presidential palace in the capital. The protesters were demanding the return of civilians to power.

In December 2018 the rising price of bread sparked popular protests in Sudan against poverty and unemployment, with thousands on the streets in Khartoum and other cities. In the middle of the following year, under pressure from the demonstrations, the military ousted President Omar al-Bashir, who had been in power for 30 years.

Negotiations between democratic political organizations and the leaders of the armed forces followed, resulting in a civilian-military transitional government, overthrown a month ago and now partly restored by al-Burhan. □



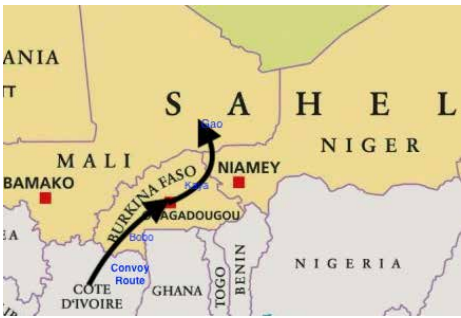
Niger, Burkina Faso

Massive protests demand French military get out

By G. Dunkel

Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger are former French colonies, where the struggle against France’s presence in the Sahel region of Africa has been most intense, with mass actions marking the last two weeks of November. Resistance in these countries takes many shapes and forms. In a series of meetings earlier this year, Washington agreed to offer strong military and financial support to French imperialism in Africa. After French President Emmanuel Macron announced a reduction of French forces in Mali to 2,000-3,000 troops, the first such meeting was held in July at the Pentagon. At that meeting, French Defense Minister Florence Parly signed an agreement with Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin that their special forces would cooperate, especially in the Sahel. A telephone meeting on Oct. 21 confirmed their “collaboration on counterterrorism in the Sahel.” The Sahel is the zone stretching across the whole African continent, between the arid Sahara desert to the north and the mixed woodland-grassland humid savannas to the south. Most of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger are in the semi-arid Sahel region. Reactionary religious-based groups, like al-Qaida and the Islamic State (ISIS), operate in all three countries, as do

remnants of local separatist movements. These groups engage in armed attacks on French (and U.S.) special forces, as well as on each other and civilian communities. In contrast, mass popular organizations held big, militant protests and strikes and offered political support to factions in their armies that oppose French imperialism. The convoy from hell The problems the French army had in moving a convoy from the Ivory Coast (Côte d’Ivoire) to Gao in Mali revealed the variety of forms the anti-imperialist struggle takes. The French had planned to make Gao its main military base in Mali. Gao is the last river port on the Niger River in Mali, before it flows into Niger. A French base in Gao would give French imperialism a commanding military position in northern Mali up to the Algerian border, including the cities of Timbuktu and Tessalit, the more populated areas of Niger to the south and the area where Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger meet, which is where the ISIS-like groups operate. Gao is isolated, without a major airport and off any road grid. The military base needs to be built with heavy equipment and supplies. French newspapers (Libération, Nov. 20, for example) have



Black line shows route taken by French Army convoy -- which sparked protests throughout Burkina Faso.

been filled with pictures and stories of French troops consolidating their position in Gao. To fortify its position, the French Army sent a convoy from the Ivory Coast, which has a sea port. Heavy loads would normally get stuck in the roads of the Sahel. The French convoy consisted of over 60 heavy-duty trucks capable of going through sand with a heavy load. The route chosen was north through the Ivory Coast, then through Burkina Faso to Niger. After Niger, the convoy would cross into Mali and head north to Gao. In the city of Bobo Dioulasso, the second largest city in Burkina Faso, university students held a demonstration at the last minute calling for the end of French bases in Burkina Faso. (burkina24.com, Nov. 16)

Every Burkina Faso community it entered met the convoy with protests blocking the roads. At Kaya, a large town northeast of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso’s capital, a crowd blocked the convoy and forced it to shelter in a fenced-off truck lot. According to reports spread widely on social media, during the rally 13-year-old Aliou Sawadogo noticed a small French drone flying over the crowd Nov. 24 and brought it down with his slingshot. Sawadogo was proclaimed No. 1 Burkinabe sniper. When the convoy passed from Burkina Faso to Niger Nov. 27, there were two big demonstrations, one in western Niger at Téra and the other in Ouagadougou. The one at Téra attracted many young students, according to the videos on France’s TV5, as well as adults, who erected barricades of burning tires and logs, tried to seize some trucks and kept the convoy from proceeding for five hours. The demonstration in Ouagadougou raised the suspicion common among Burkinabes that this convoy is bringing weapons to supply the ISIS-type groups that threaten the state’s stability. The French military has denied this charge. This all takes place while the trial of the assassins of former Burkina Faso president and liberation leader, Thomas Sankara, who was targeted by French and U.S. imperialism, is under way. □

Global supply chain crisis Capitalism, militarism and infrastructure

Continued from page 2

signed legislation to fund construction of the interstate highway system, officially known as the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. Between then and 1990, around 45,000 miles of new interstate roads were constructed as part of the interstate highway system, using \$119 billion in federal funds. (tinyurl.com/yhebjoyce) As an Army lieutenant colonel in 1919 after World War I, Eisenhower had observed the First Transcontinental Motor Convoy, a military experiment in moving troops from coast to coast in the U.S. The 3,200-mile caravan from Washington, D.C., to San Francisco confronted a patchwork system of paved and unpaved roads, aging bridges too low for trucks to pass under and mountain roads too narrow for two-way traffic. As the Allied commander in Europe during World War II, Eisenhower observed the advanced German Autobahn system, which included national highways connecting all parts of that country. The Allied armies were able to take advantage of the European highway systems to rapidly move troops, helping win the war.

‘Red Scare’ highways

The first automobiles in the U.S. were manufactured in 1899, yet the widespread use of cars was not enough to propel construction of a mammoth coast-to-coast highway system. Instead, the proposal was fueled by the “Red Scare” — the perceived threat of nuclear war after the Soviet Union developed an atomic bomb as protection against the U.S., which had used this weapon in Japan in 1945. In 1954, Eisenhower appointed West Point-trained engineer Lt. Gen. Lucius Clay to promote the highways. The “Clay Committee” pushed the multibillion-dollar

plan by generating public fear and arguing the highways were essential for emergency evacuation of large cities and quick movement of troops in the event of a nuclear attack. Vice President Richard Nixon mentioned the threat of atomic war 10 times in a 1954 speech to governors. At the time 79% of the U.S. public believed a nuclear conflict between the U.S. and the USSR was imminent. Touted as “modern marvels,” the interstate highways resulted in the forced removal of over 475,000 households to make way for construction of the system. A majority of those displaced lived in low-income urban communities with high concentrations of Black, Latinx, Indigenous and immigrant people.

Fifty years of aging and neglect

Military interests served to promote domestic infrastructure development during the rise of U.S. global imperialism, but over time military spending became a drain on resources vital for domestic programs. Nowhere is this more evident than in the current state of U.S. infrastructure. Constructed mid-20th century, the roads and bridges — deteriorating for years — rarely receive any major upgrades or reconstruction. The American Society of Civil Engineers in a “2021 Report Card for America’s Infrastructure” gave U.S. highways a C- grade. The ASCE report found 43% of public roadways in poor or mediocre condition. Over 231,000 bridges in all 50 U.S. states need repair and preservation work. On May 11, the Interstate 40 Mississippi River Bridge, one of only two Mississippi River crossings near Memphis, closed due to a crack in a major steel beam. The bridge, which carries 60,000 vehicles daily, was closed for three months, also impacting hundreds of river barges that travel under the bridge.

Since the completion of the interstate highway system, the highest one-year amount of government spending for infrastructure improvements—including both transportation and water—came in 2016 under President Barack Obama, with \$342 billion contributed by state and local governments and \$98 billion from the federal government. Compare the annual budget for the Pentagon in 2020: \$778 billion, a 4.4% increase over 2019. The U.S. population has more than doubled since the 1960s, when most of the country’s major highway infrastructure systems were designed. The country’s transportation network currently hauls over 51 million tons of freight—valued around \$52 billion—every day over a system of largely antiquated roads and bridges never built to handle that volume. At the same time, the lack of adequate public transportation has left the U.S. population more dependent on cars to get around using the same roads.

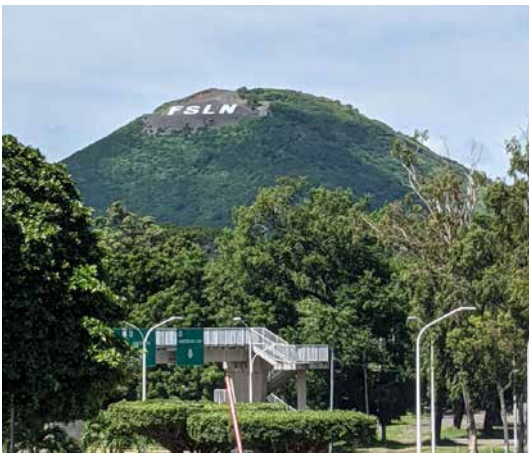
Too little too late

Concerns over inadequate infrastructure funding and the impact on the U.S. economy surfaced over 15 years ago. In 2005 the U.S. Congress created the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission to evaluate transportation conditions, which were determined insufficient to meet rising demand for trade and goods movement. In its 2008 findings, the

commission recommended “a substantial national commitment to transportation investment of at least \$225 billion annually from all sources for the next 50 years.” Accounting for inflation, today it would require spending over \$4.3 trillion to catch up to that proposed investment. This allocation never happened. In November, Congress approved President Joe Biden’s infrastructure bill that contained a meager \$1.2 trillion investment over 10 years. Only \$115 billion is designated for roads, bridges and other transportation projects; \$130 billion of the bill will go to transit systems to benefit parcel delivery industries like Amazon, FedEx and UPS—adding to the volume of vehicles using the same antiquated highway system. A legitimate question is who will pay for the critically necessary infrastructure improvements? For decades local governments have funded highway improvements through taxes and tolls that negatively impact the working class. It’s time to shift the imperialist military budget to domestic needs and to make corporations, which have reaped profits from using the public highways, pick up their share of transportation costs with back payments for all the years they never contributed. Next: Roads vs. rail

Military interests served to promote domestic infrastructure development during the rise of U.S. global imperialism, but over time military spending became a drain on resources vital for domestic programs. Nowhere is this more evident than in the current state of U.S. infrastructure.





Managua, Nicaragua

MO FOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

# Perspectiva de un sandinista

# Historia colonial de Nicaragua

Por Johnny Hodgson

Lo que sigue es parte de una presentación realizada por Johnny Hodgson, Secretario Político del Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional para la Región Autónoma del Costa Caribe Sur (RACCS), el 6 de octubre en Managua, Nicaragua, a una delegación estadounidense compuesta por Coleen Littlejohn, Sara Flounders, Monica Moorehead, Yoav Elinevsky y Stan Smith. La transcripción está ligeramente editada.

Mi idea es contarles quiénes somos, la gente de la costa del Caribe, dónde estamos ahora y a dónde queremos llegar. Tenemos seis pueblos diferentes, seis grupos étnicos diferentes en la costa caribeña — Miskitu, Mayangna, Rama, Garifuna, Criollo, Mestizo. Originalmente, teníamos ocho grupos diferentes de personas viviendo en la costa del Caribe cuando los europeos llegaron por primera vez. En 1502 llegaron europeos y africanos a lo que hoy llamamos la costa caribeña de Nicaragua. Los europeos vinieron porque quisieron. Los africanos vinieron contra su voluntad.

Nicaragua ha sido históricamente un país dividido. Dividido por las potencias coloniales. Lo que hoy conocemos como costa del Pacífico fue una colonia española. Lo que hoy llamamos costa del Caribe fue un protectorado británico. Así que debido a estas circunstancias, la presencia de los europeos, fue intrigante la alianza entre los británicos y los nativos, una alianza para luchar contra los españoles. Los españoles estaban en la costa del Pacífico, los británicos en la costa del Caribe. Los británicos hicieron una alianza con los nativos para luchar contra los españoles.

Así que desde los primeros días de la época colonial en la costa del Caribe en Nicaragua, tuvimos a los españoles enseñando a los indígenas de la costa del Pacífico a luchar contra los indígenas de la costa del Caribe, diciéndoles que eran sus enemigos. Y lo mismo, los británicos en la costa del Caribe diciéndole a nuestros indígenas que sus enemigos son los indígenas del Pacífico.

Así que tuvimos esta división histórica y como resultado de esa alianza entre los británicos y los indígenas, este territorio conocido entonces como la costa miskitu y hoy como la costa caribeña de Nicaragua, se convirtió en un protectorado británico, ese es el estatus legal que tenía. Se estableció un gobierno monárquico por lo que se comenzó a coronar reyes en 1635.

## Dividido por la colonización

Este reino siguió haciendo negocios e intercambios comerciales con los europeos hasta 1783. En 1783, en Francia, firmaron un tratado para intentar poner fin a la guerra entre británicos



MO FOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

José León Avilés, Secretaría Ejecutiva de Desarrollo de la Costa Caribe y Johnny Hodgson. -- Managua, 6 de octubre.

y españoles. Lo llamaron el Tratado de París. Para tratar de poner fin a la guerra, compartieron territorios. Así que en ese reparto, decidieron poner nuestro territorio en manos de los españoles y Belice en manos de los británicos. La costa de Miskitu debía pasar a formar parte de la corona española.

Pero los británicos de la costa caribeña dijeron: “No, no queremos tener nada que ver con ese documento que se firmó allí. Estamos contentos aquí. Nos va bien aquí. Tenemos todo lo que necesitamos aquí. Tenemos todo lo que necesitamos para reparar nuestros barcos. Cuando lanzamos nuestras redes, cogemos tantos peces que las redes se rompen. Tenemos suficiente miel para endulzar nuestras bebidas”. Incluso mencionaron: “Tenemos todo lo que necesitamos para satisfacer nuestro apetito sexual”. ¡Sí, lo mencionaron! Así que dicen que no vamos a ninguna parte.

Pero los españoles tienen un documento que dice que son los dueños de ese territorio, y lo reclaman. Así que en 1786, tuvieron lo que llaman la Convención de Londres, donde ratificaron el Tratado de París, diciendo que este territorio pertenece a España. Pero no solo lo ratificaron. Pusieron el calendario estableciendo que si los británicos no salían de la costa de Miskitu antes del 10 de abril de 1787, se convertirían en súbditos de la corona española. Tendrían que obedecer a sus enemigos.

Pero incluso con eso, los británicos

**El Tratado de París de 1783 compartió territorios. Así que en ese reparto, decidieron poner nuestro territorio en manos de los españoles y Belice en manos de los británicos. La costa de Miskitu debía pasar a formar parte de la corona española.**

esperaron hasta el último minuto para salir. Así que prácticamente tuvieron que venir a trasladarlos a todos. Tuvieron que venir de Inglaterra para trasladar a todos estos británicos y llevarlos a Belice.

Y al apresurarse para salir antes de la fecha límite, muchos de los negros esclavizados pudieron quedarse. Y esos esclavizados que se quedaron se mezclaron con los indígenas y empezaron a llamarse criollos desde 1787 hasta hoy. Así que teníamos indígenas y ahora tenemos un nuevo grupo de personas llamado crio-

llo, una mezcla de africanos e indígenas.

Luego, 10 años después, en 1797, los garífunas fueron expulsados de San Vicente y vinieron a establecerse aquí en Centroamérica, en Roatán y, después, en la costa caribeña de Nicaragua. Así que teníamos a los indígenas y a los afrodescendientes viviendo en la costa caribeña de Nicaragua, tratando de avanzar. Pero en 1894, presionamos formalmente, oficialmente, para ser parte de Nicaragua. No fue un acuerdo. Fue por la fuerza de las armas que la costa del Caribe, la costa de Miskitu, pasó a ser parte de Nicaragua.

## Éramos invisibles

Cuando pasamos a formar parte de Nicaragua, fue una época dura. Lo llamamos “Tiempo de imposición” porque Nicaragua empezó a imponer autoridad, a imponer nuevas leyes, etc. Fue una cosa muy dura, una cosa horrible para la gente de la costa caribeña que históricamente ejercía un nivel de autogobierno diferente. A pesar de ser un protectorado británico ejercíamos un nivel de autogobierno diferente, teníamos nuestros propios reyes, nuestras propias leyes, etcétera. Así que el territorio se incorporó a Nicaragua, pero no el pueblo.

Nicaragua dijo: ‘Ese territorio es mío. Esos recursos son míos, son nicaragüenses’. ¿Pero la gente? Nunca fuimos reconocidos como nicaragüenses. La Constitución nicaragüense estableció un país monoétnico, un país con una sola lengua. El idioma oficial de Nicaragua

es el español. Así que vivíamos allí, pero éramos invisibles. No estábamos en la Constitución. Estábamos excluidos de todo, económica y socialmente.

Vine a Managua a estudiar en 1972. En los años 70, era muy difícil que alguien viniera de la costa caribeña a estudiar aquí. No teníamos ninguna universidad en la costa caribeña, así que había que venir a Managua. Así que ese año que vine, dos de nosotros pudimos venir a estudiar a la universidad agrícola. Y cuando teníamos un descanso, hablábamos en criollo. Algunos de los muchachos venían y decían: ‘Oye, tú no puedes estar hablando esa cosa aquí’. Y yo me defendía y decía: ‘No, yo soy nicaragüense, tengo derechos y puedo hablar mi idioma’.

## ‘Yo me leí la Constitución de la A a la Z’

Y un día vino uno de los muchachos y me dio un ejemplar de la Constitución de Nicaragua. Y me dijeron que le mostrara en la Constitución dónde dice que soy nicaragüense, que los negros son nicaragüenses, que los miskitos son nicaragüenses y dónde dice que tengo derecho a hablar ‘esa cosa’.

Y si pudiera, entonces me daría mil córdobas. En 1972, mil córdobas eran bastantes para un estudiante, ¿sabes? Así que hice una lista de lo que iba a comprar con mil córdobas. Sí, iba a comprar zapatillas nuevas, una camiseta nueva, me la hice. No se me ocurría qué iba a hacer con mil córdobas.

Así que tomé la Constitución y me puse a leerla y la leí de la A a la Z. Y no encontré ni una sola palabra que dijera que soy nicaragüense o que el idioma que hablo tenía algún valor o algo así. Y pensé que tal vez lo había leído demasiado rápido, así que lo volví a leer. Lo leí dos veces, y cuando me di cuenta de que no estaba en la Constitución, lloré.

Me criaron para ser duro. Me educaron en una escuela donde decían: “Los hombres no lloran”, ¿sabes? Pero lloré porque no podía creer que tuviera que venir a la universidad para descubrir que ni siquiera estaba en la Constitución. En español, tienen una frase que traducida al inglés dice: “No hay mal que dure cien años, y no hay nadie que no lo resista”. Así que eso fue en 1972, y en 1979 tuvimos el triunfo de la revolución. □