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Victory for Starbucks Workers United!

By Arjae Red
Buffalo, N.Y.

Starbucks workers made history here Dec. 9 by winning the first union election at a corporate-owned Starbucks store in the United States. Starbucks Workers United gained a sweeping victory at the Elmwood Starbucks store with a greater than two-to-one margin (19 yes, 8 no). The win comes on the heels of more than three months of vicious union busting by Starbucks corporate management.

“Our fight isn’t over until we get a contract,” said Jaz Brisack, Starbucks worker and union organizing committee member. Brisack works at the Elmwood location.

Starbucks Workers United is also declaring victory at a second store, the Cheektowaga location, which had a strong majority but was not officially declared won, due to seven contested ballots. SWU are allowed to continue a narrow portion of pregnancy to term?

However, there were other workers who had picked up shifts there but had come from another store known by the company to have strong union support. These workers were not given ballots!

It seems clear that Starbucks only argued voting eligibility for workers who might not vote “yes” for the union. Union supporters are confident that after the NLRB disqualifies these bogus votes stacked by

In a just world, who would ever think that a known rapist would have the power to compel pregnant rape survivors, including minors, to carry their forced pregnancy to term?

But that’s exactly what happens in “the good old USA.” Supreme Court of the U.S. “Justice” Brett Kavanaugh was part of the court majority who voted to let stand the Texas anti-reproductive justice law, which makes abortion illegal after around six weeks of pregnancy, regardless of circumstances. The law allows a private individual in any state to sue anyone who seeks an abortion or helps pregnant people obtain abortions — and to collect a $10,000 bounty if they win in court.

In the recent ruling, abortion providers are allowed to continue a narrow portion of their lawsuit against S.B. 8 in federal court but cannot sue state judges and clerks or the Texas attorney general.

In practice, the ruling gives other states, with out-of-town managers trained in surveillance and disruption, and even go as far as closing entire stores for extended periods of time if they were allowed to have strong union support, such as the Walden-Anderson location in Buffalo.

In late August when the union drive was announced, corporate executives and managers from around the country swarmed Buffalo in a deliberate attempt to disrupt union organizing and create an environment of fear and hostility. Brittany Harrison, a former Starbucks manager from Mesa, Arizona, recently revealed in an interview with More Perfect Union that managers were being coached by corporate on how to disrupt union activity.

In a recording taken by Harrison at one of these anti-union briefings, corporate executives can be heard saying: “We’re a huge company. Unions would love to get a hold of us. Do you know how much money they’d make off of us?” Corporate painted union organizers in a negative light and made accusations that workers who were union supporters were “not real partners.” They even dubbed themselves “God,” by making the argument that bringing a union in as a “middle man” between workers and corporate is the equivalent of a Catholic priest coming between a worshiper and their god. (tinyurl.com/galkr7dh)

This isn’t the only bizarre reference that Starbucks executives used to attempt to discourage workers from supporting

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To a socialist future — Build Workers World

Workers World newspaper’s articles and editorials analyze major global and U.S. developments, always through an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist perspective. Our pages report on people’s movements here and abroad, to not only inform our readers but to promote those struggles and show solidarity with them. And,WW aims to advance the struggle for socialism.

Sign carried by Strand family member at rally Dec. 11.

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 to end the suffering of humanity.

Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the never-ending quest for ever-greater profits.

Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, attacks on immigrants/migrants, misogyny, LGBTQ+ oppression and mistreatment of people with disabilities. It means joblessness, increasing homelessness and impoverishment and lack of hope for the future.

No social problems can be solved under capitalism. The U.S. is the richest country in the world, yet one in every three Americans has no health insurance. One in every four has a student loan. One in five live in poverty.

Racially-motivated attacks and police violence continue to rise. Police killed 1,211 people in 2020.”

Workers World Party was an early supporter of BLM, and we continue to back its vision for a world free of racism.

We are an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party.

Since 1959, Workers World Party has been out in the streets and on the picket lines fighting for socialism.

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**Capitalism, imperialism poison Hawaiians drinking water**

By Ted Kelly

By land and by sea, Hawaiians are under attack by the U.S. empire. In just one week, two major scandals show how corporations and the military are waging a two-front ecological war to poison drinking water and farmland. On this Pacific archipelago, occupied by the U.S. military for over a century, the monstrosity of white-supremacist capitalism is on full display.

U.S. Navy officials at Pearl Harbor have been storing millions of gallons of jet fuel directly over a major aquifer (a natural body of permeable rock that holds groundwater), in this case the major source of Oahu’s drinking water. For the past decade, fuel leaks have contaminated the source of the local drinking water. In May, the U.S. Navy admitted that 1,000 gallons of jet fuel had been dumped in the Red Hill well on the island of Oahu. This same type of contamination was detected in the Halawa Shaft, which is the largest water source for the entire island of Oahu and particularly vulnerable to contamination because of its proximity to the Navy’s Red Hill facility.

The U.S. military has a long history of poisoning the lands that it colonizes. Since seizing Okinawa in 1945, the U.S. has constructed 31 military bases there. It has twice deployed nuclear warheads on the island — once in 1950 and again in 1965, apparently by accident. In 1969, there was a notorious outbreak of the deadly nerve agent sarin there. And in 2020 it was revealed that the U.S. Navy had contaminated the drinking water of over 450,000 Japanese people on Okinawa with toxic petroleum hydrocarbons.

The U.S. military used the island of Okinawa as a military testing ground for over 50 years, causing cancer rates to skyrocket among the population at a rate higher than all other municipalities in Japan. In 2019, an experimental trench was dug in Red Hill, and experiments of experimental munitions were deployed on the island, which has a population of fewer than 10,000, and cleanup operations were expected to take 18 years. But not for the militant protests by Puerto Rican liberation fighters that forced the closure of the base, the U.S. Navy would still be polluting the island to this day.

*An admission of guilt*

Chief Engineer of the Honolulu Board of Water Supply Ernie Lau announced in a Dec. 3 press conference that the island’s Halawa and Aina wells would be indefinitely shut down, to protect southern Oahu’s drinking water from further contamination. He explained that the previous test results were a result of the U.S. Navy’s decision to store “80 million gallons of diesel and jet fuel a hundred feet above our drinking-water supplies.”

“It is time for action now,” he said, straining with emotion. “We cannot wait any longer. The water resource is precious; it is irreplaceable; it’s pure. There is no substitute for pure water. And our lives depend upon it.”

The U.S. Navy quietly shut down the Red Hill shaft Nov. 28 and has since confirmed the leaks have displaced at least 80 million gallons of diesel and jet fuel. A fig leaf only accounts for the civilians and military personnel who accepted the Pentagon’s offer to put them up in hotel rooms.

In a statement, the Navy admitted, “the Red Hill sample showed petroleum hydrocarbons was roughly 4 to 10 times below the Hawaii Department of Health Environmental Assessment Level (EAL). The Navy had a separate test that confirmed vapors, which is another indication of petroleum hydrocarbons.”

Deputy Commander of the Pacific Fleet Rear Admiral Blake Converse expressed “concern” about the number of Hawaiians who have reported nausea, rashes, headaches, vomiting and diarrhea — but refused to say what that number was. Petrochemical exposure has been linked to birth defects, miscarriages, leukemia and asthma.

While the U.S. military wages ecological warfare on colonized people, agribusiness engages in these highly destructive practices to maximize profit. It can extract food from stolen land and make more profit, without any concern for the health of the humans and other living creatures on those lands.

Just days after the shutdown of Oahu’s Halawa well, the agricultural industry giant Monsanto pleaded guilty to violating environmental laws in Hawaii. Inspector found that Monsanto had been illegally deploying banned ammonia-based pesticides on cornfields on Maui, and storing the banned pesticides on Moloka‘i and Maui. (tynyurl.com/zp8wgyed)

President Joe Biden’s Department of the Interior has ordered the corporation to pay a paltry $12 million in fines. WW reported in March, upon the confirmation of Biden’s agriculture secretary Tom Vilsack, that during his previous tenure as FDA head, Vilsack “removed genetically modified organism labeling standards and expedited the process for approving GMO products developed by chemical corporations like Monsanto. In 2019, Monsanto was ordered to pay $800 million in damages to California residents who have developed cancer from exposure to glyphosate-based herbicides in the company’s Roundup weed spray.”

A report by Public Citizen shows that in less than one year, the Biden administration has sold more oil drilling contracts on federal lands than his predecessor, Donald J. Trump, approved in the first three years of his tenure. The Bureau of Land Management is now approving an average of 333 drilling leases a month on federally protected land. Like the Lakota struggle at Standing Rock, the opposition to a new cross-border pipeline from Alberta, Canada, to Superior, Wisconsin, is being led by the Anishinaabe people.

Military violence and occupation; exploitation and destruction of stolen land; and corporate control of water — all are part of the U.S. military’s management of the COVID-19 crisis.

Why Cuba has no anti-vaccine movement

By Marc Vandepitte and Toon Danhiex

In the imperialist countries, honest skepticism about government handling of the COVID-19 crisis and the profit-driven decisions of pharmaceutical companies have allowed rightist and ultralightist groups to mobilize sections of the population behind uncritical theories that harm public health. This article, published in dawedermorgen.be in early December, lightly edited and updated Dec. 13, examines this phenomenon by comparing the experience of Belgium — part of the imperialist hydra of imperialism — with that of socialist Cuba, both countries with about 11 million+ populations.

Translation: John Calabrocco

Larger and larger sections of the European population have been openly expressing their distrust of their governments’ handling of the coronavirus crisis. In response, the mainstream political establishment has panicked and reacted in a paternalistic and repressive manner by imposing vaccinations on everyone and limiting freedom of movement. This approach has failed to convince skeptics of government’s argument.

To win acceptance would require at least listening to the fears and concerns of the unvaccinated. But there are other more effective factors at play. A fair comparison with Cuba’s experience illustrates the problems.

*Mistrust of the government*

Many unvaccinated people doubt — and with reason — the competence and/ or good faith of governments that now want to vaccinate them as quickly as possible. We can understand these doubts. Since March 2020, European countries and even individual regions in Belgium have been improvising their response to COVID-19. Their approach to the pandemic suffers from a lack of consistency and logic. Countries, even those with similar infection rates, have taken very different measures.

The Belgian government won the gold medal of improvisation, waiting until mid-March 2020 before taking action — six weeks too late. Had they acted earlier, the rate of COVID-19 spread would have been much slower, and thousands of deaths could have been avoided.

They still haven’t learned from their mistake. In July 2021, the government imposed a mask obligation to wear a mask applied to children from the age of six. When it became clear that schools were also major sources of contamination, home schooling was
52nd National Day of Mourning

By K. James

On Nov. 25, 1,300 Indigenous people and their supporters gathered on Cole’s Hill in Plymouth, Massachusetts, to observe the 52nd annual National Day of Mourning.

Kisha James (Aquinnah Wampanoag and Ogul Lakota), youth leader of United American Indians of New England (UAIUNE), opened the rally: “Once again on the fourth Thursday in November, United American Indians of New England and our supporters are gathered on this hill to observe a National Day of Mourning for the Indigenous people murdered by settler colonialism and imperialism worldwide. Today marks the 52nd time we have gathered here to mourn our ancestors, confront settler mythology and speak truth to power.”

James proceeded to deconstruct the Thanksgiving myth, pointing out that the first official day of thanksgiving was proclaimed in 1673 to celebrate the massacre of hundreds of Pequots at the hands of the settlers. James concluded by saying: “We will not stop until the oppression of our Two-Spirit siblings is a thing of the past. … When children are no longer taken from their parents and locked in cages. When the Palestinians reclaim the homeland and the autonomy of Israel has denied them for the past 70 years. When no person goes hungry or is left to die because they have little or no access to quality health care. When insulin is free. When union busting is a thing of the past. Until then, the struggle will continue.”

Melissa Harding-Ferretti, chair of the Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe, offered a prayer in Wampanoag and welcomed the crowd to the tribe’s territory in Plymouth.

Mahtowin Munro (Ogul Lakota), co-leader of UAIUNE, spoke about the devastation caused by residential schools and Indian boarding schools: “I hear a lot of people talk about reconciliation. Reconciliation is when you try to repair an existing relationship. … I don’t feel like we have ever had enough of a good relationship with settlers to think that something that has been so ugly can be reconciled or repaired. For example, can the damage done to indigenous schools ever be repaired?”

Munro continued, “Hundreds of these schools were run for decades by governments and missionaries that made it their mission to ‘kill the Indian to save the child.’ … all too often abusing or killing the child in the process. Thousands of the children died at these institutions. … In Canada, some of the school grounds have been searched this year, and the remains of more than 7,000 children have been found. More than 7,000 children buried in unmarked graves! How can that be reconciled? Here in the U.S., the Interior Department has now said that they are going to try to find out how many children lie in graves at the boarding schools. Every child they find, and every child whose remains have already been found, needs to be brought home to their families and tribal communities. We cannot rest until this happens. Bring the children home!”

“Even with all the terrible damage they did to so many of us, many of us did survive them. … 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 out alive. But the death of those children is so sad and outrageous, and I am glad the world is finding out at last.”

Ina Mettlix Inaruik (Taino) emphasized the importance of unity in her speech.

The crowd marched through the streets of Plymouth before gathering around Plymouth Rock where further speeches were held. Samantha Malthais (Aquinnah Wampanoag) spoke about her work with Survival International and the #MayflowersKill campaign. June Sapiel (Penobscot) spoke about some of the issues facing indigenous communities in Louisiana.

The crowd then marched to Post Office Square, the site where Wampanoag leader Metacom’s head was displayed on a pike in the 17th century. Rebecca Ledgepole (Chippewa-Cree Tribe) spoke about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, and Jean Luce-Pierette (Tunica Biloxi) closed the program by expressing her hope that in future years everyone would be celebrating the death of settler colonialism rather than mourning the deaths of Indigenous people.

NYC opens first safe consumption sites

By Princess Harmony

With fatal and nonfatal drug overdoses dramatically rising during the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. needs a new strategy for countering this menace. In a number of cities, steps are underway to counteract this horrid loss of life. One is the foundation of safe consumption sites — places where addicted people can safely use drugs.

The first effort to open a safe consumption site in the U.S. was in Philadelphia. Unfortunately, the effort known as Safehouse was delayed, if not completely defeated, by politicians opposing harm reduction. San Francisco, Seattle and cities in Massachusetts are going forward with plans to open safe consumption sites. Rhode Island authorized a two-year pilot program.

However, recently New York City successfully opened two safe consumption sites. With one opening in East Harlem and another in Washington Heights, the city took a giant step in the fight against opioids and overdoses.

The organizations New York Harm Reduction Educators and Washington Heights Corner Project — soon to merge into a single group known as OnPoint NYC — control the sites.

What will these sites actually do? First, they will act as Narcan distribution sites, where the opioid overdose-reversing drug Narcan (naloxone) will be used to reverse any overdoses that take place near or at the facility. Second, they will act as syringe-exchange sites where people can get clean needles, reducing the chance of acquiring hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), while using.

Injection facilities reduce overdose deaths

It’s not just harm reductionists who are fighting for safe consumption sites. The American Medical Association supports the opening of such sites, despite its prohibition stance. They said: “Studies from other countries have shown that supervised injection facilities reduce the number of overdose deaths, reduce transmission of infectious disease and increase the number of individuals initiating treatment for substance-use disorders, without increasing drug trafficking or crime in the areas where the facilities are located.”

Overdose deaths in the U.S. rose to 100,000 this year, up 10% from 2020, with COVID-19’s mental health impact largely blamed for the rise. In NYC, over 2,000 people died of drug overdoses in 2020, the highest toll since overdoses were first tracked there. In OnPoint-run facilities, people were saved from overdose deaths.

Unfortunately, in prohibitionist U.S., safe consumption facilities are often treated like crack houses and shooting galleries. The crack house statute codified in federal law makes it a felony to “open, lease, rent, use or maintain a place for the purpose of manufacturing, distributing or using any controlled substance.” This statute could declare safe houses the same as crack houses, a coneyota Aronson (Bulbancha Collective) spoke about the devastation Hurricane Ida has caused tribal communities in Louisiana.

Crack houses are dark and dreary places, where nobody cares about anyone; and if you overdose, you will likely die. Safe consumption sites serve as the opposite: The staff cares about the lives of people using them; they wish to see addicts and other drug users survive and thrive. President Joe Biden’s Justice Department hasn’t commented on whether or not they’ll make a move against these sites.

One more roadblock against the sites are NIMBY’s [not in my back yard], who believe that safe consumption sites in their neighborhood create blight and endanger children. They attack drug treatment programs in their neighborhoods, claiming — in true NIMBY fashion — that if the sites were not in their neighborhoods, they would support them. But one can’t pick and choose where these sites should go, because they need to be in areas where drugs are most often used and abused.

The working class faces a deadly overdose epidemic with waves of people suffering from the disease of addiction. We must support safe consumption sites and other methods of harm reduction. We call on all fighting members of our class to support this.
Victory for Starbucks Workers United!

Continued from page 1

the union. Former CEO Howard Schultz made a big appearance in Buffalo during the company disinformation campaign. In a revealing interview, he said the company of Starbucks “shared” with its employees in the same way that Jewish Holocaust victims helped each other. This comment left workers feeling disturbed and deeply offended.

Starbucks union-busting campaign

Brittany Harrison was diagnosed with cancer in October. After Starbucks refused to offer her paid leave, she was left with no other option than to quit, and she told the company she would be finishing her last two weeks. The company then promptly informed her that they were terminating her early due to an “open investigation” of her work behavior—for which no further explanation was provided.

It was clear that the company retaliated against Harrison for coming forward with the reality of Starbucks workers’ conditions and conversations about union busting. A fundraiser in solidarity has been set up for Harrison by members of the SWU organizing committee.

After news of Starbucks’ treatment of Brittany went public, workers in her Arizona store reached out to Buffalo organizers and decided to file for a union themselves. The Mesa store is the first beyond Buffalo to join what will inevitably become a countrywide movement of Starbucks workers fighting for their right to organize.

When we fight, we win

The victories in Buffalo prove to Starbucks workers and workers of all industries that when you organize and fight for your collective class interests, you have the power to win.

All the untold millions of dollars Starbucks has spent, attempting to break the union, will be money well spent building its image as the “most progressive” company.

Starbucks union-busting campaign has shown workers and customers alike that behind all the virtue-signaling and charity, Starbucks is as bad as Amazon or Walmart when it comes to repressing workers’ rights to organize. Many workers who are union supporters in Starbucks have children and have experienced the ways in which the company abuses and mistreats parents, creating an environment that is not conducive for or accommodating to their needs.

Starbucks positioned itself as a strongly pro-LGBTQ+ company and also embraced the “Black Lives Matter” slogan—after facing backlash for repudiating workers for wearing shirts with the slogan. DeJoy’s public relations campaign, about marketing to appeal to their young target audience, rather than a genuine commitment to supporting oppressed people.

From a class perspective, we understand that Black and LGBTQ+ workers are some of the most oppressed groupings within the working class. A company that fights tooth and nail to stop workers from organizing can never be pro-Black or pro-LGBTQ+.

A union—a tool of asserting class power Workers and oppressed people never get justice handed down to them from the capitalists. Justice will have to be won through class struggle. The union victory in Buffalo shows that real progress can be made. A union—a tool of asserting class power—is the first step for workers in Starbucks.

The implications of this struggle are far wider than just a good contract for baristas here in Buffalo. Young people facing economic turmoil are now unflinchingly armed with newfound class consciousness. This victory is a milestone signifying a revival of a labor movement that has long been dormant in the U.S.—a victory which will inspire workers of all industries to organize.

A victory for workers at Starbucks is a victory for the entire working class, in the sense that the defeat of this behemoth of a corporation shows the vulnerability of the capitalists—the inability of the largest coffee chain in the world to successfully crush a union drive.

This opens the door for endless pos-
sibilities for the labor movement. If the struggle of Starbucks workers can be linked to struggles of other workers, like the ones organizing Amazon, as well as struggles against national oppression, gender oppression and imperialism, the potential for real qualitative change in the face of capitalist annihilation is hopeful.

The author is a contributor to Workers World newspaper and a union commit-
tee organizer with Starbucks Workers United in Buffalo.

Kellogg’s workers to stay on str-r-r-ike!

After the contract votes were tallied, Kellogg’s announced plans to hire per-
manent replacement workers, giving them the jobs held by strikers. This is a common strikebreaking tactic, designed to break workers’ resistance.

President Joe Biden has criticized Kellogg’s for threatening workers with permanent replacement. The Protecting the Right to Organize Act, which Biden claims to support, has a clause that bans the tactic. The president could issue an executive order to make the PRO Act law, but so far he has refused to do so.

News has gone viral about young social media activists who flooded Kellogg’s employees’ site with phony job applic-
ations, crashng the website. Creativity, solidarity and determination can beat capitalist greed.

Portland demands: Dump DeJoy

By Lyn Neely

Portland, Oregon’s Communities and Postal Workers United held a press conference and rally Dec. 8 to “Purge the Postmaster General Louis DeJoy.” Protests denounced DeJoy’s 10-year plan “Delivering for America.” Speakers pointed out that two months into his plan had shown disastrous results for the postal service and the country. It has increased worker turnover, hiked prices and led to mail delays, cuts and closures of mail facilities and privat-
ization efforts. (cwpunited.com)

With 600,000 workers, the postal service is the country’s largest employer of women and veter-
ans; the USPS is the largest, most diverse, unionized workforce in the country. It’s a service, not a private business, that delivers medicines, bills, payments, checks, legal documents, parcels and advertising. DeJoy is asking workers to do more and more with less and less. People most impacted by his attacks are seniors, veterans, low-income and rural communi-
ties and small businesses.

Rally speakers included: Oregon State Representatives Rob Nosse, Barbara Smith-Warner, Dacia Grabe and postal union officials. The president of the Oregon State AFL-CIO, Graham Trainor said the union movement is an important way “to check corporate greed. We need to finish the job and dump DeJoy.”

Striking Kellogg’s workers, Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

On the picket line

By Marie Kelly

Yes Virginia, there is a labor movement

Workers in Virginia flexed their organ-
izing muscle in two separate industries recently. First, hospitality workers at the tourist attraction, Colonial Williamsburg, village, held a rally in front of various sites within the complex. The majority of the workers are Black; their grievances include low wages and long hours.

After experiencing layoffs during the pandemic, the six-day work week is now mandatory. John Boardman, union leader of UNITE HERE Local 25, couldn’t help but draw the comparison between the shameful history of enslavement during colonial times with how workers now are forced to risk injury due to the long hours of physical labor.

There is also the toll the limited time off takes on the family unit. Separation from their children for long periods, due to forced overtime, puts a strain on the parent-child bond, especially critical now as children’s lives have been so disrupted by the pandemic.

“We work six days a week, every week. Every week they don’t ask us, they just put us on a six-day a week. People are very tired,” said Willie Brown, a Colonial Williamsburg hospitality worker. “We need to stay at home with our families,” said Agatatha Hilt, a Colonial Williamsburg housekeeper.

Public schoolteachers victory

Elsewhere in Virginia, Richmond pub-
lic schoolteachers won the right to collec-
tive bargaining, in a vote by the school board to accept the teachers’ proposal. Richmond became the first city in the state where teachers have won the right to bargain collectively on issues regarding wages, benefits and safety.

State law had banned collective bar-
gaining for public sector workers includ-
ing school teachers for 44 years. Teachers and students of students said the ban was contributing to burnout among teachers and causing Virginia to lose quality edu-
cators. Pressure from these groups caused the Virginia General Assembly to lift the ban last May.

Kellogg’s workers to stay on str-r-r-ike!
No such thing as prison reform

By Che Nieves

The following is Part 2 of an edited transcript of a Nov. 22 video talk given by Che Nieves, a member of the Young Lords and a survivor of the Attica Prison Rebellion in 1971.

In addition to being a freedom fighter, I am also an Attica brother. I was in Attica in 1971. I was able to see the beauty of the development of the Attica struggle. It started in chaos and turned into a well-organized, well-mobilized, well-disciplined organization.

The people took control over half of the prison, and they took hostages as well. They used the hostages as a means of negotiation. If we don’t have no hostages, you can’t negotiate. And if you can’t negotiate, you take control of the prison. That’s the bottom line. When you take control of the prison, you gotta do something in the process to maintain that control.

After five days of constant negotiation, they finally said in many ways, in many words: “Fuck you. We’re gonna come in, and we’re gonna kill you, and we’re gonna take over once and for all.” And they did. They came in. They stormed the prison. They shot up a lot of people, including the hostages. So you know they don’t give a fuck about no one, not even their own.

And you know 30 years later, life at Attica, life at Auburn, life at Cong Kawasaki Prison, life at Greenhaven Prison, life at Clinton Correctional Facility, there hasn’t been any changes whatsoever. The prisons remain the same. The only thing that has changed is more guards that have been added and more security.

This time instead of the white guards doing the bullshit, doing the dirty work, they send in Black guards and Brown guards to do the dirty work. And they call this reform? They call this reform. Ain’t that a kick in the ass, man? They call this reform.

Now you got your own people against you, torturing you, abusing you, mistreating you, and it’s okay ‘cause it’s reform.

Let’s really look at reform

Come on, what is reform? Let’s really look at it. Reform is taking something that is not worth using, but using it anyway and painting it in such a way that it appears as if it’s new. And then you display it for sale. And people may buy it, not knowing actually that it has no value.

In prison terms, you know what it is? You remember when Brother Malcolm X talked about the house n**** and the field n****. There are places called jails and prisons in those places. Those are people of color who have a white mentality. They have a white mentality. They’re Black on the outside, Brown on the outside, and white on the inside. They’re notoriety-oriented. They don’t give a fuck about you. They’re there to do a service.

They were probably out there in Afghanistan, killing people, innocent people at that. Killing mothers, fathers, children. That’s what happens in war. They’re probably in Palestine, assisting the Zionists over there killing the Palestinian people. They’re probably in Latin America, killing off a lot of our people. They’re probably in Africa, doing the same thing. They come to places like New York, and they become prison guards. They’re probably in Africa, doing the same thing. They come to places like New York, and they become prison guards.

The mass incarceration gives rise to the dialectical relationship and as result of that dialectical relationship there’s always uprisings and rebellions in prison.

We know that mass incarceration is a way of maintaining and developing further the prison industrial complex which gives life and energy to capitalism. The ideology of capitalism is dialectically bad to torture, abuse, injustice, violence and human exploitation of the poor and working class. Mass incarceration is a continuous subjugation of white supremacy.

It becomes very clear when you see it from the lens of prison confinement. As we discuss segregation which is part of prison life, we begin to see how human beings are being tortured, and killed in these places we call segregation or for some the box. We begin to see how they are used as torture chambers which are legally justified by capitalist rules and standards. This is a place where racism is law in full force. So to talk about crime and its relationship to prison is a serious discussion because it involves genocide and human lives.

A prisoner is always on the alert of the possibility of being killed. Why? Because prisoners and guards are always in conflict with each other. They have a dialectical relationship and as result of that dialectical process there’s always uprisings and rebellions in prison.

We know that the problem is what is needed is to do away with prisons and bring all our brothers, sisters and siblings home to their families where they belong. And to resolve crime we need to replace capitalism with socialism. Only then do we get rid of what is known in this society as crime.

People in prison, ‘victims of a criminal system’

When you look at the Attica demands, you find that we didn’t talk about reforms. We talked about justice and freedom. We went to the very bottom to the very top. Structural changes that went to the very root of the problem that capitalism faces.

But it appears that some people take advantage of the Attica struggle, twist it all around, and claim we were talking about prison reform. We weren’t talking about prison reform; we were talking about doing away with prisons. The demands themselves were so powerful that the system could not implement them. They never implemented them.

That’s why brothers and sisters in prison are still waging struggles, because the capitalists haven’t given an inch.

So, what are we talking about here? We’re talking about doing away with prisons. We’re talking about justice for all brothers and sisters in prisons, now. Because they serve no purpose. If you justify the existence of prisons, in the United States as an example, then you shouldn’t talk about Hitler, when they had his torture chambers, and he was killing the Jews. What are they doing here? Same thing. They just color it up a little bit, make it look different. But it’s the same bullshit, man.

So the solution to the problem is closing the prisons. And we also need to redefine in our struggle the definition of a criminal. Because many of us in prisons are not criminals. We never were. We need to know who the real criminals are. We need to see the definition of criminal, we find that the real criminals are not in prison, they’re outside.

In conclusion, let me say this. Let’s free all our prisoners. Let’s close the prisons. Free all our prisoners. Free all political prisoners. Free all freedom fighters. That’s all we want.

Attica means fight back. We need to continue fighting. Thank you for your attention to power to the People! Free Them All!
Film review

‘Attica’ explores heroic prison uprising

By Monica Moorehead

The Attica documentary, co-directed by Stacy Cochran, Nelson and Tracey Curby, was released by Showtime in early November. The two-hour film is a powerful yet painful reminder of what took place over 50 years ago, Sept. 9-13, 1971, when thousands of prisoners at the Attica Correctional Facility in upstate New York, collectively saying “enough is enough,” liberated D yard and took over two dozen white guards hostage. 

The rebellion culminated Sept. 13, when fascist New York State Troopers fired thousands of rounds of bullets into unarmed men, already overcome with blinding tear gas, resulting in the deaths of 29 prisoners and 10 guards. These men — African American, Puerto Rican, Indigenous and poor white — came together in unity out of desperation to tell the world they wanted to be treated like human beings.

The movie brilliantly tells the story of the most profound U.S. prison rebellion of the 20th century, with historic footage and rare interviews with surviving former Attica prisoners, members of the observer committee and family members of the guards. 

Cie Nieves, Daniel Sheppard, Al Victory and James Asbury are just a few of the Attica brothers who shared their reflections. They described the unspeakable, horrific conditions they faced daily that led to the prison takeover — one roll of toilet paper per month, one shower a week, rotten food, lack of medical care and random prison rapes by racist guards, often resulting in permanent injuries and even death. Sudden put, the Attica Rebellion was all about survival in a hellhole.

A main spark for the Rebellion was the assassination of George Jackson, an imprisoned leader of the Black Panther Party in Soledad Prison in California. The most politicized Attica prisoners admired the Marxist writings of Jackson, who was murdered Aug. 21, 1971. The Attica prisoners wore black armbands and refused to eat in honor of Jackson, putting prison officials on high alert that a catastrophism event was in the making.

Some of the most inspiring segments of the documentary showed historic footage of prisoners organizing themselves, cell block by cell block, during the four days before the state’s assault. They dug latrines to dispose of human waste, provided food, security, medical care and slept in tents under the most difficult conditions. As Larry Holmes once stated, the Attica Rebellion was a modern day “Paris Commune of 1871.”

Footage showed the prisoners sharing their demands with an observer committee of their choosing, which included lawyers, activists and news broadcasters allowed to bring in cameras. Elliott M. “L.D.” Barkley, the most recognizable leader of the rebellion, was shown reading the demands of the prisoners, including him saying that Attica was “the sound before the fury of the most oppressed.” Singled out after the massacre, Barkley was brutally executed.

Out of over 25 demands made, one that was nonnegotiable for the prisoners was complete amnesty and no retaliation for those who participated in the rebellion.

When one of the prison guards died, New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller and “law-and-order” President Richard Nixon gave the go-ahead for state troopers to carry out the savage massacre, shouting the N word repeatedly as they were shooting.

The movie showed the graphic carnage of dead bodies riddled with bullets, the survivors forced to crawl in filthy latrines, and Black and Brown naked men being paraded in the prison yard, as if being prepared for a slave auction. State troopers were shown shouting “white power” outside the prison with horrific glee.

While the surviving Attica prisoners and the guards’ families receive was of dollars in monetary compensation, many years after the massacre, none of the state troopers, nor Rockefeller and Nixon, were ever legally brought to justice for their crimes against humanity.

“Attica” exposes human rights violations in the U.S. and that as mass incarceration grows, more Atticas are inevitable.

Activists ‘march’ to abolish death penalty

By Workers World Houston bureau

Houston, Texas

Two days close to her execution, spoke. She was in prison for 39 years and has been home almost three, adjusting to living on her own in newfound freedom. She told of having her friends executed, including Frances Newton, legally lynched by Texas in September 2003.

Other speakers were Delia Perez-Meyer and Nadine Sontoyo, activists with loved ones on death row in Texas. The event included cultural elements like the upbeat music of the FreeRadicals, as well as beautiful vocals from 6-year-old Marilyn Santoyo, who had met many of the abolitionists while singing outside the Huntsville death house during execution protests. Sister Mama Sonya — a Houston native and resident of Harris County, where record numbers of death sentences have been issued — delivered powerful poetry in opposition to the legal lynchings.

The event featured a report on the defense of Melissa Lucio, whose appeals have been exhausted and who will likely be getting an execution date at any moment. Adrienne Larimer, a clinical teaching fellow in the Cornell Center on the Death Penalty Worldwide, is defending Lucio by presenting her case before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

Larimer will argue that Lucio is innocent of the crime she is charged with, that she faced horrendous gender-based violence as a child bride and that she endured ongoing abuse thereafter in her life. These circumstances led to her wrongful incarceration for what was an accidental death, when her 2-year-old daughter fell down stairs.

As the Nov. 5, 2020, Workers World reported: “From the notoriously racist Texas Rangers, to the agressive and demeaning Harlingen police detectives, to the career-climbing court-appointed attorney, to the incompetent medical examiner, to the district attorney now in federal prison, to the trial judge — not one single person cared that Melissa was innocent or tried to find out what really happened to her child.”

French-American film director and journalist, Sabrina Van Tassel, who directed “The State of Texas vs. Melissa,” spoke to the particular horrors of the active harm done to Lucio by the unjust capital punishment system.

The group organizing the annual Texas abolition event is composed of majority women and gender-oppressed people stretching across multiple continents. Even from within the “belly of the beast,” these abolitionists remain dedicated to fighting the racist, sexist, anti-poorn and aboleth death-making apparatus. Abolish the death penalty!
For 40 years, activists globally continue to demand: Free Mumia Now!

By Joe Piette

Human rights and community activists in six countries held online and in-person events to mark the date 40 years ago when award-winning Philadelphia journalist, radio personality and Black Panther Party veteran was nearly killed and unjustly charged with a crime he did not commit.

Mumia Abu-Jamal was arrested, convicted and unjustly imprisoned on Dec. 9, 1981, and subsequently convicted as the result of judicial, police and prose-cutural misconduct for allegedly killing a Philadelphia policeman. Supporters worldwide assert that Abu-Jamal was framed and is innocent, and they continue to fight for his release even after four decades.

In Philadelphia, a rally and march of around 200 people gathered at the statue of abolitionist Octavius V. Catto outside City Hall on Dec. 11, where Gabe Bryant with the Campaign to Bring Mumia home opened the event, and Warrior woman Mama Pam welcomed the crowd. Laila Boutros, with Samidoun Palestinian Prisoners Solidarity Network NY/NJ, and Jacky Hortaut, co-coordinator of the French Free Mumia Collective, also spoke.

The march that followed circled City Hall to the Christmas Village shopping area near Love Park, where demonstrators blocked traffic, as longtime Mumia supporter Suzanne Ross, Rev. Keith Collins with Generation Impact Ministries, and Deandra Price with Black Ministries, and Jacky Hortaut, co-coordinator of the French Free Mumia Collective, also spoke.

The final stop was at the Criminal Justice Center at 13th and Filbert, where a commentary from Mumia was played. Betsey Piette from Workers World gave a commentary from Mumia was played. A statement from the Freedom an update on the legal case while urging Betsey Piette from Workers World gave a commentary from Mumia was played. A statement from the Freedom an update on the legal case while urging

Frederick Douglass, who not only produced by Prison Radio on the 40th anniversary of Abu-Jamal’s imprisonment.

Question: What do you call a judge who takes money from one side of a case? Answer: In Philadelphia you call him “your honor.” Here I speak of the late, notorious Judge Albert Sabo, who not only returned more death sentences than any other judge in Pennsylvania but was also a life member of the Fraternal Order of Police, or the POP.

Sabo, my trial and posttrial judge, was so openly biased that a local newspaper carried a brilliant, bright yellow banner headline saying: “Sabo must go.” But Sabo was just one of many.

The point is, why isn’t it against simple due process for a judge to take donations to do anybody’s bidding — because judges write the rules, period. In trials, they choose lawyers, jurors, decide which witnesses to appear and which won’t. The courtroom is their fiefdom.

If anyone denies this, just look at the Kyle Rittenhouse case. The accused was treated as if he was the judge’s grandson. When was the last time you saw a judge outlaw the word “victim?” The court dropped charges as if he was dropping dimes on a street corner dice game. This ain’t about a judge or a case; it’s about a system. Let’s change the damn system! ☑️
Brutal lynching of Priyantha Kumara

By Tania Siddiqi

Sialkot, Pakistan — Last week a mob tortured and then lit Priyantha Kumara on fire. Kumara, a Sri Lankan, was a factory manager in Pakistan and was murdered outside of the factory in which he worked. In the aftermath of this horrific lynching, mob participants informed media outlets that they were compelled to murder Kumara because he had engaged in blasphemous behavior.

Kumara’s alleged “crime” was removing propaganda in support of Tehreek-e-Labbaik-Pakistan (TLP), an ultra-right political party in Pakistan, from the factory’s building.

The brutal lynching of Kumara is not an isolated incident. Instead, it is a part of a much larger and systemic campaign that seeks to vilify and harm minority communities in Pakistan.

Initially, blasphemy laws were enacted during British colonial rule. After the Partition of India in 1947, the newly formed government of Pakistan chose to incorporate blasphemy laws into its constitution. In 1974, Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s government enacted a comprehensive anti-blasphemy law that declared the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community as non-Muslim.

Between 1980 and 1986, the fascist ruler General Zia-ul-Haq “further strengthened the laws, adding five new clauses to the Islamic and criminalizing offenses such as defiling the Holy Quran, insulting Islam’s Prophet or using ‘derogatory’ language against certain religious figures.” (Al Jazeera, Sept. 21, 2020)

Intensifying blasphemy laws has led to a rise in right-wing groups that aim to eliminate minority communities. TLP was formed in 2015, and one of its primary objectives is to ensure that blasphemy laws remain in place. This group has engaged in horrendously violent acts against people who they believe are engaging in blasphemous behavior.

In 2018 after spending eight years on death row, Asia Bibi, a Pakistani Christian woman, was acquitted of her blasphemy conviction. TLP members asserted that regardless of the supreme court’s decision, their members would kill her. (The Guardian, Jan. 29, 2019) After her acquittal, Asia Bibi’s lawyer suggested she leave the country immediately, because he was unsure whether she would be alive by the end of the night. Although TLP was outlawed in 2020, Pakistan’s current dominant political party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) lifted the ban in November. (People’s Dispatch, Nov. 7) In an article for “Dawn,” Umar Javed, a professor at Lahore University of Management Sciences, stated that PTI is willing to support ideologues, because TLP “is tied to the same supposed heartland that provides the greatest numbers and legitimacy to the state.” (Dawn, Nov. 1) If the PTI turns on TLP, it would be catastrophic for its political party.

PTI’s commitment to stopping TLP’s interests is evident in their responses to the lynching of Priyantha Kumara. In his official statement, Prime Minister Imran Khan characterized the torture and killing of Kumara as a “vigilante attack.” (Imran Khan, Twitter, Dec. 3) His message suggests that the mob’s actions were lawful, but the law was enforced by people who did not have authority to do so. Lynching people for allegedly blasphemy conduct is legal, but only if it is carried out by the state.

Pervaiz Khattak, the Minister of Defense and a member of PTI, stated that mob participants simply acted out of religious passion and immaturity, which is connected to their youth. In other words, he claims that their actions are commonplace and understandable. (Mona Ahmad, Twitter, Dec. 5)

It is clear that fascism in Pakistan mirrors fascism in the United States. The same justifications used by white supremacists to encourage and explain away white-supremacist terror is the same reasoning used to rationalize the brutal murder of minorities in Pakistan.

Workers around the world must unite to build a workers’ world! ☐

U.S. sanctions create misery and division

By G. Dunkel

Washington plans to impose sanctions on the central government in Ethiopia starting Jan. 1. The sanctions remove Ethiopia’s Special Trade Status, which enables Ethiopian goods to be sold in the U.S. free of import duty. Ethiopia’s government is involved in a civil war with forces based in Tigray that had dominated Ethiopia’s politics from the 1990s until recently.

Since much of Ethiopia’s economic growth has been in manufacturing goods for export, this sanction will devastate its economy and cost many low-wage workers their jobs, according to Ethiopia’s Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration.

While President Joe Biden’s administration claims to have an evenhanded approach to Ethiopia’s civil war, the decision to impose sanctions and other steps belie that claim. The steps increase the chances of the so-called Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) to win the battle to control Ethiopia, or failing that, to dismember the country.

The Biden administration also allowed the TPLF to spread its propaganda. It permitted Berhané Gebre-Christos, who formerly served as Ethiopia’s foreign minister, speaking for the TPLF Nov. 9, to announce the formation of a coalition of nine political groups at the National Press Club in Washington.

The second most populous country in Africa with 110 million people, Ethiopia has had a tremendous economic growth rate. From 1999 to 2019, its economy grew by an average of 9.9% a year, lifting a quarter of its people out of poverty. While the United States and oil-rich countries like Saudi Arabia put up capital, the biggest investments came from China.

Background to Ethiopia

Ethiopia has existed as a sovereign country for centuries. Its army defeated the invading Italian army at the Battle of Adwa in 1896. This victory denied Italy a major colony in Africa and kept Ethiopia intact.

There are 80 or so nationalities in Ethiopia. The Oromo and Amhara nationalities make up about 60% of Ethiopians, while the Tigrayans make up around 5%. The Tigrayan homeland is the northernmost part of Ethiopia.

At a time in the 1970s when the Workers Party of Ethiopia was attempting to run the country on socialist principles, nationalist forces in Tigray formed the TPLF and opened an armed struggle in opposition. Over 16 years of maneuvering and armed attacks, the TPLF managed to put together an alliance of reactionary militia organizations, the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which overthrew the Workers Party government in 1991. Since that time until recently, the Ethiopian government has intervened in Somalia and other East African countries, coordinating with U.S. foreign policy.

In the maneuvering that followed the overthrow, the TPLF managed to gain leadership and dominate Ethiopia’s politics for nearly 30 years. In 2018 after protests and agitation from various ethnic groups, the EPRDF selected Abiy Ahmed, an Oromo, as its leader. Soon after he was elected prime minister, Abiy removed many of the Tigrayan officials, accusing them of corruption and malfeasance. In late 2019, Abiy disbanded the EPRDF coalition government and set up the new Prosperity Party (PP). The TPLF moved against the new government and after some political maneuvering began the civil war in November 2020. The war quickly drew into the U.S. with an estimated 50,000 casualties and 3 million to 4 million refugees forced to flee the fighting.

U.S. support for the TPLF

Lawrence Freeman, a development economist who just returned to the U.S. after two weeks in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, said during a webinar that every day he was there, the U.S. Embassy sent him a text saying that Addis was in an extremely dangerous situation. Freeman emphasized that the situation in Addis was calm, with people spending time chatting in coffee shops, strolling about. He gave a number of press interviews and could get plenty of news in English.

While the U.S. has placed a few minor sanctions on the TPLF, such as denying some of its leaders a visa, the proposed sanctions on Ethiopia have a serious bite. Ethiopia is just one of the 39 countries on which the United States has imposed sanctions. These are acts of war and should be removed. ☐
Keep your filthy SCOTUS hands off our bodies!!

Continued from page 1

including Florida and Ohio, the go-ahead to pass copycat legislation. The high court had previously allowed S.B. 8 to go into effect while cases against it were being heard. The draconian Texas law has had, and will continue to have, the greatest impact on poor people and people of color — those who lack the funds and transportation to get abortions in other states. SCOTUS will rule on a Mississippi anti-abortion law next year.

The court’s ruling has wide implications. By making Roe v. Wade essentially unenforceable, it puts a whole range of pro-civil rights rulings in jeopardy. As dissenting Justice Sonia Sotomayor wrote, “By foreclosing suit against state-court officials and the state attorney general, the Court effectively invites others to refine S.B. 8’s model for nullifying federal rights.”

What should happen now? Sotomayor goes on to say, “The Court thus betrays not only the citizens of Texas but also our constitutional system of government.” In fact, it is very system that gives blatant misogynists constitutional power to lay their filthy hands on the rights and bodies of women, children and gender-oppressed people. As the late chairperson of Workers World Party, Sam Marcy, wrote in 1989, “It is this Constitution, this structure of government and of the state, that explains how and these other decisions have done their utmost to defame the opinion of the majority of the people.”

Marcy was writing on a SCOTUS ruling then against reproductive justice. He went on to explain that “the process of the concentration of power in undemocratic bodies. It comes from the concentration of the means of production in the hands of a ruling class which holds the power and distributes it in areas most conducive to them. So it’s not an accident that power should ultimately be exercised by the Supreme Court that’s most reliable to them, most conservative, responsive only to the people of those areas.

This holiday season, when capitalist values serve the capitalist class, for whom childbearing is just another service, providing the next generation of exploitable workers. To strip working-class and oppressed people of the power to decide when and if to bear children constitutes an abominable assault on basic human rights. Already young activists have been arrested demonstrating outside SCOTUS. Resistance is already taking many forms, including defying the state by forming networks to help pregnant people get the reproductive health care they need.

This struggle deserves the unequivocal support of the whole working-class movement. The denial of reproductive justice to millions of people, particularly of color, could be a breaking point in the overall class struggle. Justice can’t wait for a few members of the high court to die or retire, so some Democratic Party politicians can hopefully appoint someone else less antagonistic to women and gender-oppressed people.

Bold, militant, creative, anti-capitalist tactics are what's called for. As the slogan goes: “If we don’t get it, shut it!”

What if organized labor called a one-day general strike to reverse all the anti-choice legislation and court rulings? On May Day in 2006, migrant workers held the biggest general strike in U.S. labor history. If there can be a “Day Without Migrants,” what about a day when all women and potentially pregnant people stayed home?

The fight is now!

By John Catalinotto

Tornadoes wreak havoc, Amazon makes matters worse

By Monday morning, Dec. 13, every one with access to news media knew that a devastating series of tornadoes had hit the midsection of the U.S. Dec. 10, destroying whole communities and killing at least 88 people, including workers at an Amazon delivery center in Edwardsville, Illinois.

Most of the deaths and much of the damage was in Kentucky, including at the Mayfield candle factory where it was first feared more than 100 people had died. Some 90 missing people were later found. This writer and newspaper join with the demand for full federal and state government assistance for rescue and relief of the people of those areas.

The tactic allows Amazon to avoid liability, putting the responsibility on small companies is no accident. It’s management’s strategy to hide behind the labor of workers it employs, and give them jobs with full benefits. Anyone losing work because of a disaster, as in Edwardsville, must also be guaranteed wages.

2. Amazon must cease all obstruction of union organizing, and rehire anyone fired for participating in organizing drives, so that unionization of the Amazon workforce is facilitated.

3. If there is a warning of a approaching disaster — as existed before the tornadoes struck — Amazon must put the safety of the workers first and stop production.

Organized labor can’t be counted on to make such a decision — it would reduce profits. A worker at Edwardsville had demanded workers be allowed to keep their cell phones active to be aware of impending disaster without relying on management. Workers need their own organization, which can make the decision that workers should take shelter and stop work.

4. Amazon must build tornado shelters at worksites anywhere that can reasonably expect threat from such weather emergencies.

The Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union — in a union drive with workers at an Amazon facility in Bessemer, Alabama, since February 2020 — has criticized Amazon for keeping the Illinois site open during the emergency.

These demands are directed at Amazon’s management. Environmental organizations have already made demands on ruling-class entities in attempts to mitigate the climate crisis.

What the most recent disaster emphatically shows is that Amazon workers need a union representing the company’s more than a million workers, if these other necessary demands are to be accomplished.

The lesson of the disaster for the working class is to organize, organize, organize.

Make Jeff Bezos wish he stayed in the stratosphere.
Why Cuba has no anti-vaccine movement

Continued from page 3

introduced. School television has been a great help in this regard.
Aissa Naranjo, a doctor in Havana, explained: “Thanks to a campaign giving correct information about health risks, Cubans have understood the importance of staying at home. They know how disease is transmitted and feel responsible for their own health and that of their families and neighbors.”

Health care in Cuba is primarily preventive and highly decomposed, and it is within this neighborhood that its Polyclinics and neighborhood hospitals are located. The government has always been working on developing its vaccine against the coronavirus. By March 2021, three vaccines were being tested. Today, Cuba has five vaccines of its own design and production, including one as young as two years old.

The policy on COVID-19 is totally different in Cuba than in Belgium. This was reflected in the statistics. At the end of 2020, Cuba had 466 deaths from COVID, compared with 27,820 in Belgium for the same period.

Then the delta variant arrived, leading to a race against time. Unfortunately, Cuban vaccines were not ready until three months after the delta variant appeared. In vaccination, we were imitated at a rapid pace starting in late 2020, which significantly reduced the number of deaths caused by the delta variant, at least initially.

In Cuba, the peak of delta variant infections occurred in July 2021, causing many deaths and undermining the health care system. This precarious health situation was compounded by serious economic problems due to the economic blockade imposed by the United States, the halt in tourism and the rise in food prices. This led to great discontent among the population.

From the U.S., some forces tried, via social media, to stir up this anger and channel it into demonstrations targeting the Cuban government. These attempts ultimately failed.

As soon as the vaccination campaign was launched in Cuba, the results were spectacular. On Sept. 20, when the campaign began, there were still more than 40,000 new infections and 69 deaths per day. Today, Cuba has fewer than 80 new infections and one death per day.

Cuban children are also vaccinated against the coronavirus. As of Dec. 6, 90% of Cubans had received their first dose. This places the island second only to the United Arab Emirates in terms of vaccine rate. In other countries in Latin America has such a high vaccination cover.

In Belgium, it is at 76%.

Distrust of Big Pharma

Many unvaccinated people in Belgium find it suspicious that the government provides free vaccines. All the more so, because other medicines have become more and more expensive. Every year, health care puts more strain on patients’ pockets, but suddenly we are all “required” to get vaccinated...

What’s behind this? If you ask this question, does it make you a conspiracy theorist?

People are well aware that Big Pharma is driven only to maximize profit, mainly to protect people’s safety than it should. For example, between 1940 and 1980 (from 1940 to 1971 in the U.S.), millions of mothers-to-be took DES (diethylstilbestrol) to prevent miscarriage [which DES failed to prevent]. In the 1960s, they were prescribed Softenon (Thalidomide) for nausea during pregnancy. The use of these drugs caused thousands of babies to be born with deformities.

In the United States, Purdue Pharma, owned by the wealthy Sackler family, still marketed the powerful painkiller OxyContin after management knew full well that it was highly addictive. Fentanyl, invented by Paul Janssen of the Belgian pharmaceutical giant of the same name (part of Johnson & Johnson), is also a highly addictive painkiller offered over the counter [in Belgium — in the U.S., it is legal by prescription only], with plenty of advertising. According to Cuba, US companies charge prices for their COVID vaccines that are far too high and are heavily subsidized by the government, but they are nevertheless allowed to pocket their profits. When these companies claim that a booster shot is necessary, it raises suspicions, even if this necessity is scientifically correct.

What about Cuba?

In Cuba, there is no private pharmaceutical industry. All vaccines against the coronavirus are manufactured by state-owned biomedicinal laboratories. The country produces 80% of all vaccines used in its vaccination campaigns. There are no outrageous prices or excessive profits involved.

As in Belgium, everyone is vaccinated from early childhood against a whole range of diseases. This is one of the main reasons for the very rapid increase in life expectancy in Cuba over the last few decades. Life expectancy in Cuba is now higher than in the United States, and infant mortality is lower. The last few years have proven that vaccines are also very effective. So it’s no surprise that Cubans are not only confident, but also satisfied with their domestic pharmaceutical industry.

Distrust of science

In Belgium, advertising indiscriminately uses real and pseudoscientific to sell anything and everything: food supplements, perfect diapers, hair growth serum, high-speed smartphones. As a result, science has lost much of its credibility with many people.

The frequent and large-scale frauds in research only increases this mistrust. A scandal such as diesgelsate [Volkswagen automobile company falsified the amount of exhaust emissions] left its mark on people’s minds.

Added to this is the fact that many people finish high school or college without understanding the statistics they encounter in the media.

There are just as many vaccinated people as there are unvaccinated people in the media, “we often hear.

All of this explains the attraction of obscure theories, or at least the fact that people give credence to these theories, even if they think they are “fools” trying to make us believe something. "They" want to muzzle us with their measures, the Cuban information, etc. "They" thus become an amalgam of politicians, experts, and the media.

And Cuba?

In Cuba, people are rarely confronted with professional advertising. They have access to science through a (quality) educational system and do better and better in life, they must work on their personal development and do better and better in life, which is a euphemism for getting rich. We are presented with an ideal of absolutism, but we are told that we must not depend on others and certainly not on “the State,” at the risk of being a parasite. This culture promotes solidarity, it creates the unions as protecting those who accept help from the government, who they call “profiteers.” This culture promotes solidarity, together, meeting and making decisions together in the workplace, etc. — this is how they live.

Solidarity runs in their veins. For decades they have been sending doctors, nurses and teachers to the four corners of the world. A small country of 11 million people, with 10 times less resources than Belgium, sends its doctors to Italy to fight against COVID.

This attitude and way of life is the foundation of anti-vaccine movements in Cuba.
Visión de un sandinista sobre la autonomía ‘Los nicomos visibles’

Por Johnny Hodgson

La revolución sandinista estableció la misión de crear una nueva nación, una nueva nacionalidad nicaragüense, un país multiétnico, multicultural y multilingüe, donde los indígenas y afrodescendientes tuvieran la posibilidad de participar en igualdad de condiciones en la construcción de esta nueva nación nicaragüense.

La conclusión de que para el bienestar de los pueblos de la Costa Caribe, lo que llamamos el buen vivir, necesitabamos autonomía. La gente de la costa caribeña tenía un estándar de vida diferente al de los habitantes del resto del país, y así que no podía participar en igualdad de condiciones al resto del país, necesitábamos autonomía. Empezamos a pensar cómo vamos a construir esa autonomía.

Las tres éticas, tres bases, tres puestos, tenemos que armar uno. Uno será la unidad nacional. Uno será el reconocimiento de los derechos históricos del pueblo. Y una será el principio constitucional. Aquí estaban las tres bases para construir esta autonomía, y así, un día, un segundo, un tercero, un cuarto, un quinto, un sexto, un séptimo. Así que empezamos a trabajar en los principios constitucionales. Tenemos que asegurarnos de que esos principios estén claros.

Uno de los principios de la Constitución establecidos en Nicaragua es el de un país multinacional. En Nicaragua hay indígenas y afrodescendientes, y estos indígenas y afrodescendientes tienen derechos. Tienen sus propias lenguas. Tienen su propia cultura. Tienen derechos a la propiedad, etc. Así que empezamos a ser visibles. Los indígenas y afrodescendientes entraron en la Constitución, y empezamos a discutir el tema de la unidad nacional y la diversidad, ese es nuestro sueño. Ese es nuestro plan.

Entonces podíamos definir nuestra autonomía como el reconocimiento y el ejercicio efectivo de los derechos históricos de los indígenas y de los afrodescendientes en el marco de la unidad nacional y de los principios constitucionales.

En 2007, los sandinistas volvieron al poder, y fue entonces cuando pudimos sentarnos en la costa caribeña de Nicaragua con el gobierno nacional y acordar cómo vamos a implementar esta autonomía. Así podíamos aprobar la ley de autonomía en 1990 que reconocía todos nuestros derechos.

En 2007, en materia de educación, todo el país tenía un 30% de analfabetismo. Pero en la costa caribeña teníamos el 58%, el doble de analfabetos. En mortalidad infantil, 86 de cada 100.000 mujeres mueren durante el parto, pero en la costa Caribe, 242 de cada 100.000, tres veces más alta que el promedio. En mortalidad infantil en el país, 35 de cada 1.000 niños murieron al nacer en todo el país; y en la costa caribeña, 49 de cada 1.000 niños.

El 75% de las personas tenían acceso al agua, donde pueden abrir el grifo y sale agua, aunque no sea las 24 horas del día y aunque no sea agua de alta calidad. En la costa caribeña sólo el 4% tenía acceso al agua. Y ese acceso era como una o dos horas al día, y el agua era salada. En el sistema de alcantarillado del país, el 31% de la gente tenía acceso al alcantarillado, y el sistema no funcionaba.

En cuanto a las carreteras pavimentadas, Nicaragua tenía 2.000 kilómetros de carreteras pavimentadas. Algunas de las carreteras eran buenas y no estaban en óptimas condiciones, pero estaban pavimentadas. Y en la costa del Caribe, que es la otra mitad del país, teníamos 140 kilómetros de carreteras pavimentadas. El 54% de las personas estaban conectadas a algún servicio de energía eléctrica, aunque sea unas horas durante el día, pero tenían esa conexión a algo. En la costa caribeña, sólo el 25% de las personas estaban conectadas quizás a un generador que funcionaba desde las 6 de la mañana hasta las 9 de la noche en la comunidad.

Comprometidos con estas cifras, porque en 2007 fuimos los primeros que implementamos la autonomía y tener una estrategia para el desarrollo humano de la costa caribeña. Estoy orgulloso de Nicaragua, esa es la idea de la autonomía. No es para dividir el país, no es para separarse del resto del país, es para construir la unidad, la diversidad, paz y reconocimiento de la diversidad, ese es nuestro sueño. Ese es nuestro plan. Eso es lo que estamos tratando de hacer en la Costa Caribe. Y estamos, con dificultad, avanzando bastante. Estamos viendo en la costa caribeña cosas que antes sólo mencioné algunas de las cosas que estábamos haciendo en la costa de la mañana hasta las 9 de la noche en la comunidad.