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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 challenged the ballots due to the fact that the voters don’t work at that particular store, being employed at a completely different location.

Starbucks argues that the workers are eligible to vote, because they picked up shifts at the Cheektowaga location.



Union organizers erupt into celebration Dec. 9, as victory was announced at Starbucks Workers United office, Buffalo, N.Y. PHOTO: JOSHUA BESSEX

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

Starbucks, the remaining votes left qualified will be “yes” and constitute the majority for the union — generating the second groundbreaking victory for the union.

A victory of this magnitude brought tears to the eyes of the union organizers and supporters. The campaign prevailed against what was essentially a war of threats and attrition, waged by the company against its workers. The win is a testament to the undying optimism and dedication of the worker organizers. The road to victory wasn’t easy and was marred with harassment, intimidation, lies and slander from corporate.

Solidarity against scare tactics

Starbucks corporate strategy has been to turn the workers against each other,

fill the stores with new hires and isolate them from union supporters, flood stores 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 known 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/5n8zvzbh)

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

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WORKERS WORLD editorial

Keep your filthy SCOTUS hands off our bodies!!!

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,

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Film review: Attica

Abolish racist death penalty!

Myth of prison reform

Global people’s power can free Mumia

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Justice for Fanta

Freedom for Hasein and AJ

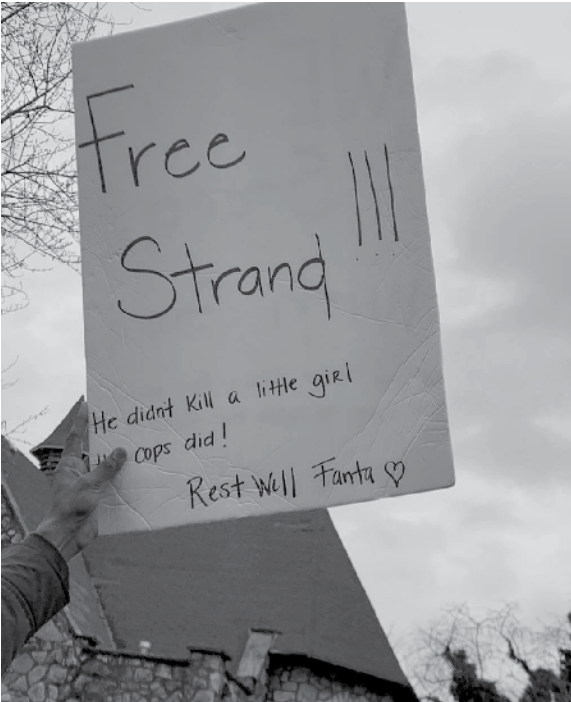
By Marie Kelly
Delaware County, Pennsylvania

A march for Fanta Bility, the 8-year-old girl murdered by Sharon Hill police in Delaware County, Pennsylvania, this summer and for teenagers, Hasein Strand and Angelo “AJ” Ford, falsely charged in her murder, brought 100 community activists and family members of Fanta Bility and Hasein Strand together Dec. 11.

The Bility family has previously stated that justice for Fanta will come when the police involved are identified and held accountable. The Bility family and the families of the falsely accused teenagers have taken a united stand on this.

The march began at Academy Park High School, where in August police shot into a crowd leaving the football stadium after a game. Police fired into a vehicle they mistakenly suspected of being involved in another incident, killing Fanta and wounding three others.

Community outrage has centered on the lack of police accountability and the



WW PHOTO: MARIE KELLY
Sign carried by Strand family member at rally Dec. 11.

trumped-up charges leveled on the two youths involved in a separate incident by Delaware County District Attorney Jack Stollsteimer. None of the officers involved who shot and killed Fanta have been identified or charged.

Under a Black Lives Matter banner, the marchers took to the streets and walked from the high school to the police station. Speakers called for DA Stollsteimer and the police to take action to allow the close-knit Philadelphia suburban community to heal.

Activists spoke of growing up in Sharon Hill and never experiencing the lack of respect and decency from law enforcement and elected officials that they are witnessing since the murder. The marchers proceeded to a main thoroughfare in Delco and shut down traffic to holiday shoppers.

Many drivers honked car horns in support. Hasein Strand’s family wore “Stand with Strand” sweatshirts. Family members, young and old, passed around a cell phone when Hasein called during the march. His mother said the call where he could hear the crowd chanting would be a major lift for her son. She is confident that the community pressure will go a long way to winning his freedom. □

MUNDO OBRERO

WORKERS WORLD

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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 with 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.

The WW Supporter Program was launched 44 years ago to help build this unique socialist newspaper. Since the early 1990s, the program has also supported workers.org, the website where new WW articles are posted daily, and each week’s full issue is displayed in a PDF document. The newspaper is printed and mailed out monthly. For annual donations of \$60,

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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

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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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 1,600 gallons of jet fuel had been dumped in the Red Hill well on the island of Oahu. This week petroleum contamination was detected in the Halawa Shaft, which is the largest water source for the entire island of Oahu and particularly vulnerable to contamination leaching from the Navy’s Red Hill facility.

The U.S. military has a long history of poisoning the lands that it colonizes. Since seizing control of the island of Okinawa in 1945, the U.S. has constructed 31 military bases there. It has twice deployed nuclear devices on the island — first in 1959 — 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 petrochemicals.

The U.S. military used the island of Vieques as a military testing ground for over 60 years, causing cancer rates to skyrocket among the population at a rate higher than all other municipalities in Puerto Rico. An estimated 16.5 million tons of experimental munitions were deployed on the island, which has a population of fewer than 10,000, and cleanup operations are expected to last until at least 2025. If 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 Aiea wells would be indefinitely shut down, to protect southern Oahu’s drinking water from further contamination. He explained that the precious water it contained was now toxic, as a result of the U.S. Navy’s decision to store “180 million gallons of diesel and jet fuel a hundred feet above our drinking-water aquifer.”

“It is time for action now,” he said, straining with emotion. “We cannot wait any longer. The water resource is precious; it’s irreplaceable; it’s pure. There is no substitute for pure water. And our lives depend upon it.” (youtu.be/O_2nXR3D8Eg)

The U.S. Navy quietly shut down the Red Hill shaft Nov. 28 and has since confirmed the leaks have displaced at least 700 people, though this figure 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 roughly 4 to 10 times below the Hawaii Department of Health Environmental Action Level (EAL). The Navy had a separate test that confirmed vapors, which is another indication of petroleum hydrocarbons.” (tinyurl.com/yckwdh9a)

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 biochemical warfare on colonized people, agribusiness engages in these highly destructive practices to maximize what it can extract 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 30 federal environmental laws. Inspectors 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. (tinyurl.com/2p8v6kb3)

President Joe Biden’s Department of Justice has ordered the corporation to pay a paltry \$12 million in fines. WW reported in March, upon the confirmation of Biden’s agriculture secretary



Polluted waters on island of Oahu

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 \$80 million in damages to California residents who have developed cancer from exposure to glyphosate-based herbicides in the company’s Roundup weed spray.” (tinyurl.com/2p8w2yed)

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 now being led by the Anishinaabe people.

Military violence and occupation; exploitation and destruction of stolen land for profit; the targeted displacement, poisoning and murder of oppressed nations — these are all monstrous heads on the hydra of imperialism. □

Why Cuba has no anti-vaccine movement

By Marc Vandepitte and Toon Danhieux

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 ultrarightist groups to mobilize sections of the population behind unscientific theories that harm public health. This article, published in dewereldmorgen.be in early December, lightly edited and updated Dec. 13, examines this phenomenon by comparing the experience of Belgium — part of the imperialist world — with that of socialist Cuba, both countries with about 11 million+ population. Translation: John Catalinotto.

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 to accept the government’s arguments.

To win acceptance would require at least listening to the fears and concerns of the unvaccinated. But there are other factors at play as well. A 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 mistakes. With each new wave of the coronavirus, the response remains too slow.

Although experts have been sounding the alarm for years, the Belgian government was unprepared for a pandemic. At first they said masks were useless, because

there were none in stock, due to a lack of adequate management. Then, suddenly, masks became mandatory.

In September 2021, as the numbers of infected grew, Belgium relaxed restrictions. At the same moment, with fewer cases, the Netherlands tightened the rules. Go figure.

In Belgium, when something needs changing, seven health ministers have to agree on it. Governors and mayors simultaneously adopted stricter or more lenient rules, while party presidents polished their image at the expense of public health. One day the Flemish minister-president asks for more flexible rules for choirs and music groups. The next day he calls for stricter rules.

When this mistrust finds its way to the streets and social media, it hands the far-right a slam dunk, allowing the rightist movement to show empathy with people whose discontent is legitimate to succeed in drawing them into its wake.

The extreme right’s goal, of course, is not to demand more democracy for the voiceless. History teaches us that the far-right seeks only to hasten the emergence of an authoritarian regime that will leave these people completely out in the cold. It will protect the dominance of the richest 1% people and take their exploitation of everything and everyone to the extreme.

In any case, the approach to the coronavirus crisis in Belgium was and still is a hot mess. But in fact, the popular distrust runs much deeper than that. During the last major crisis, the banking crisis of 2008, it

was also the ordinary people who suffered.

The banks that speculated with the people’s money were not prosecuted. They were even rescued when faced with collapse. And it was ordinary people who paid the bill. No more is needed to raise suspicions about the government’s management of the COVID-19 crisis.

And Cuba?

Starting January 2020, almost two months before the Belgian government finally woke up, the Cuban government was rolling out a national plan to fight the coronavirus. The government launched massive, popular information campaigns in neighborhoods and on television. Cuban authorities issued consistent directives with no contradictions; there was no need to get seven health ministers to agree, no debates about the obligation to wear a mask.

The government took responsibility and did everything possible to nip the virus in the bud. Instead of making facile promises about so-called sacrosanct freedoms, instead of relaxing measures too quickly for electoral reasons or because of a lack of political courage, it took energetic initiatives.

Some examples: Tourism, the main source of income, but also of contamination, was immediately put on hold. The 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

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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 Oglala Lakota), youth leader of United American Indians of New England (UAINE), 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 mythologies and speak truth to power.”

James proceeded to deconstruct the Thanksgiving myth, pointing out that the first official day of thanksgiving was proclaimed in 1637 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 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 (Oglala Lakota), co-leader of UAINE, 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 by residential schools ever actually 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

‘United American Indians of New England and our supporters gathered are gathered on this hill to observe a National Day of Mourning for the Indigenous people murdered by settler colonialism and imperialism worldwide.’



WW PHOTO: SUMMER TACCETTA

National Day of Mourning observed Nov. 25, Plymouth, Massachusetts.

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!”

Rosalba Solis (Mexico) and Jennifer Bencosme (Arawak) brought a message from the Council of Mayan Elders. Chali Inaru Dones (Taino) read a brief introduction to long-standing political prisoner Leonard Peltier’s case, written by Thalia Cashimuel. Herbert Waters IV (Wampanoag) read the annual National Day of Mourning statement from Leonard Peltier, an American Indian Movement leader who has been imprisoned since 1976. (whoisleonardpeltier.info)

Peltier’s remarks were in part: “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. ... 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.”

Ina Metztl Inaru’nikia (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 heard. 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 her people. Ayeta Aronson (Bulbancha Collective) spoke about the devastation Hurricane Ida has caused tribal communities in Louisiana.

The crowd then marched to Post Office Square, the site where Wampanoag leader Metacomb’s head was displayed on a pike in the 17th century. Rebecca Lodgepole (Chippewa-Cree Tribe) spoke about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, and Jean Luc-Pierite (Tunica Biloxi) closed the program by expressing his 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 horrible 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 prohibitionist stance. They said: “Studies from other countries have shown that supervised injection facilities reduce the number of overdose deaths, reduce transmission rates 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 30% 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 comparison that is emotionally and intellectually bankrupt.

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 NIMBYs [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. □



Demonstrators call for safe injection sites in March 2019, in New York.

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 shockingly insensitive comment, 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 punishment

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 recording of Starbucks corporate 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 up the Starbucks Workers United, wasn’t enough to stop the persistent unionization efforts. In many ways the company’s aggressive tactics have laid bare the true face of Starbucks, undoing the years it has

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 charities, 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 comfortable 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 reprimanding workers for wearing shirts with the slogan. But theirs is a 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 LGBTQ2S+ 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-LGBTQ2S+.

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



First union win at Starbucks in the U.S.

coffee chain in the world to successfully crush a union drive.

This opens the door for endless possibilities 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 committee organizer with Starbucks Workers United in Buffalo.

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

By Martha Grevatt

On strike since Oct. 5, 1,400 Kellogg’s workers have overwhelmingly rejected management’s second contract offer and are still walking the picket line. They are fighting to save their jobs and to get rid of two tier, an unequal and divisive pay system that punishes primarily younger, lower-seniority workers. The strike by the Bakery, Confectionary, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Union affects plants in Michigan, Nebraska, Pennsylvania and Tennessee.

The contract offer, voted down Dec. 5, included 3% raises but maintained two tier and did not address job security concerns. At the current rate of 7% inflation, a



Striking Kellogg’s workers, Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

paltry 3% increase is essentially a pay cut.

In Battle Creek, Michigan, where Kellogg’s is headquartered, no union member has crossed the picket line. Production has suffered, as the company tried to run the plants with supervisors and temporary workers.

After the contract votes were tallied, Kellogg’s announced plans to hire permanent 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 employment site with phony job applications, crashing the website. Creativity, solidarity and determination can beat capitalist greed. □

Portland demands: Dump DeJoy

By Lyn Neeley

Portland, Oregon’s Communities and Postal Workers United held a press conference and rally Dec. 8 to “Purge the Postmaster General Louis DeJoy.” Protesters 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 privatization schemes. (cpwunited.com)

With 600,000 workers, the postal service is one of the largest employers of women and veterans; 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 communities 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.” □



WW PHOTO: LYN NEELEY

On the picket line

By Marie Kelly

Yes Virginia, there is a labor movement

Workers in Virginia flexed their organizing 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 down for six days a week. People are very tired,” said Willie Brown, a Colonial Williamsburg hospitality worker. “We need time to stay at home with our families,” said Agatatha Hilt, a Colonial Williamsburg housekeeper.

Public schoolteachers victory

Elsewhere in Virginia, Richmond public schoolteachers won the right to collective 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 bargaining for public sector workers including school teachers for 44 years. Teachers and parents of students said the ban was contributing to burnout among teachers and causing Virginia to lose quality educators. Pressure from these groups caused the Virginia General Assembly to lift the ban last May. □

‘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 can’t 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 50 years later, life at Attica, life at Auburn, life at Comstock 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, misusing 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. That’s reform.

In prison terms, you know what it is? You remember when Brother Malcolm X talked about the house n**** and the field n****? Those are the house n***** in those prisons. 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 system-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 over there. They’re probably in Africa, doing the same thing. They come to places like New York, and they become prison guards. What’s that mean? They’re still killers. They’re still criminals. But now they got a badge and a gun, so that makes them more powerful.

Just to prove the point, prisons still remain the same.

We know what prison reform is all about. Spare me the bullshit. There’s no such thing as prison reform; it is a myth that is shoveled to the public with the intention of utilizing their ignorance to create more prisons.

Class nature of crime

Prison itself is big profit. There’s a lot of money invested in prisons. Do you know that? A lot of money. The system has to make money, by any means necessary. So they take helpless people from the streets, some of them uneducated, and they put them in prison. Then they say they’re criminals. And people in society believe that bullshit; they believe it. By no standard are the people in prison really criminals.

They are victims of a criminal system. Many of them are people who have committed some offense as a means of survival. Some of them are there for

nonviolent crimes. And some of them are there for crimes that they did not commit. They’re not criminals — they’re victims.

To speak about crime in this day and time is an excuse and justification to keep people of color isolated from their loved ones in places called jails and prisons. It is a method of justifying mass incarceration.



Che Nieves in the Attica documentary

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 based on 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.

So to resolve this problem 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 structural changes from 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 condition still remains.

So, what are we talking about here? We’re talking about doing away with prisons — all the way. We gotta do away with 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 we 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 criminal is. When we seek 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. Power to the People! Free Them All! □



Mumia’s grandson, Jamal Jr. speaking at police headquarters in Philadelphia, June 7, 2020.

Keep Mumia’s voice alive

The following remarks were delivered by Jamal Jr. during a webinar Dec. 9 to mark the 40th anniversary of the state’s illegal incarceration of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

This is not an anniversary of celebration. Today marks the 40th year of capture of my grandfather, political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. The oppressors are aware of Mumia’s power. Yes, they were well-aware of that deep-voiced man on the radio. He has a voice that makes it hard to turn down; you can’t change the station. He has a voice that makes you want to hear.

But it’s his intention that makes you want to listen. Forty years ago, the oppressors sought to silence him permanently. They sought to use a kangaroo court presided over by a known racist, Judge Albert Sabo. This racist

sentenced my grandfather, a journalist, to death.

Yeah, he was to be executed, but the people fought and held him tight. They supported him in the streets, from Philly to France and back again. And the people pulled and dragged him from the clutches of death row. It’s the people [who] claimed Mumia as their own. The people deemed Mumia’s fate was not to be executed by a corrupt state.

It’s 40 years. It’s your support, your resolve that keeps Mumia’s voice alive. The case and sentencing of Mumia is a catalyst for police violence and a criminal justice system. Like many before and so many after, my grandfather is a victim of racism in the United States — racism that they want you to ignore, racism that they don’t want to confront. The sentencing of Mumia Abu-Jamal is riddled with racism, racism that they can’t erase.

Going forward, we will all fight for

the freedom of Mumia Abu-Jamal. If you marched in the streets shouting in defense of Black Lives, you should be in the streets shouting in defense of Mumia. If you are against racism, against police brutality, against white supremacy, against police injustice, you should be for the exoneration for Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Because I guarantee you — it’s racism that keeps Mumia Abu-Jamal behind bars and away from freedom. I guarantee you that police brutality thrives off the imprisonment of Mumia Abu-Jamal. I guarantee you that white supremacists are adamant about keeping Mumia in prison.

The power of the people pulled him from death row. The love of the people keeps him sane and keeps him active and keeps him fighting for all of us. And now it’s time for the will of the people to free Mumia Abu-Jamal and all political prisoners. □

Film review

‘Attica’ explores heroic prison uprising

By Monica Moorehead

The Attica documentary, co-directed by Stanley Nelson and Traci Curry, 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.

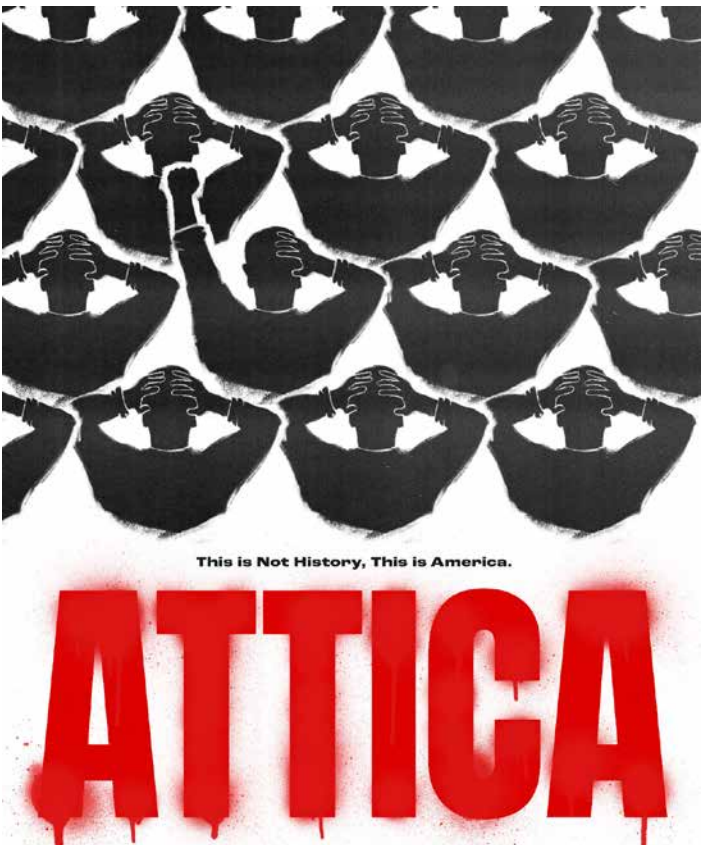
The rebellion culminated Sept. 13, when fascistic New York State Troopers fired thousands of rounds of bullets into unarmed men, already overcome with blinding tear gas, resulting in the deaths of 29 prisoners and 10 guards.

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 recent interviews with surviving former Attica prisoners, members of the observer committee and family members of the guards.

Che 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 beatings at night from racist guards, often resulting in permanent injuries and even death. Succinctly 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 cataclysmic 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 “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 received millions 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

Though virtual for a second year due to the pandemic, the 22nd Annual March and Rally to Abolish the Death Penalty on Dec. 4 in Texas kept the fighting spirit alive here in the killing capital of the U.S.

Host Mirinda Crissman, member of the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement and co-chair of the Prisoners Solidarity Committee of Workers World Party, kicked off the rally by explaining that Texas has “executed more people in the modern era than the next six U.S. states combined. That is 573 people since 1982 legally lynched by Texas. The state that has executed the second largest number of people in the modern era is Virginia, with 113 executions.”

Crissman continued: “In 2020 Virginia was the first former Confederate state to abolish the death penalty, a big deal as legal lynchings have historically been concentrated in the southern U.S. Currently, there are 23 states with no death penalty, three with governor-imposed moratoriums and 24 states that have the death penalty. Public support for capital punishment is down, thanks in great part to activists all over the world collectively fighting its inhumanity for decades.

“The death penalty evolved from the rope to the chair to the needle. On this continent, it evolved directly from Indigenous genocide and enslavement of African people on stolen Indigenous land. The death penalty persists despite not deterring crime and despite the racist legal system getting fatal verdicts wrong so often.”

The virtual rally featured the words of two women who have lived the horror of death row and survived. Sabrina Butler-Smith was a loving teenage mother when she was wrongfully convicted in the death of her 9-month-old son in Mississippi, who passed away due to a genetic condition. Later exonerated of all wrongdoing, she spent six-and-a-half years incarcerated, two of those years on death row.

Butler-Smith talked about how often the injustice system doesn’t give a fair opportunity to those who are innocent to prove their innocence. She emphasized the system traumatizes not only the person facing down execution, but their families as well.

Pam Perillo, a survivor of Texas’ death row who came

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 2005.

Other speakers were Delia Perez-Meyer and Nadine Broxton, activists with loved ones on death row in Texas. The event included cultural elements like the upbeat music of the Free Radicals, 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 aggressive 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.”



PHOTO: THE TEXAS DEATH PENALTY ABOLITION MOVEMENT
Demonstrators at the 12th annual march to abolish the death penalty in Austin, Texas in 2011.

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 was 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-poor and ableist 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 prosecutorial 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 Alliance for Peace addressed the crowd. The demonstrators then marched to 13th and Locust streets, site of the 1981 incident, where Cindy Lou and Mama Pam spoke on court complicity with the frame-up.

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 an update on the legal case while urging demonstrators to keep the struggle in the streets. A statement from the Freedom Committee for Ali Osman Köse in Vienna, Austria was read.

In **Houston**, the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement, Workers World



Philadelphia, Dec. 11.

PHOTO: UNICORN RIOT

Party, the Self-Help for African People through Education Center, and the Party for Socialism and Liberation held a rally despite cold, windy weather and a heavy police presence outside the office of progressive District Attorney Kim Ogg. Ogg is being asked to contact Philadelphia DA Larry Krasner to remind him that his Integrity Conviction Unit has exonerated 23 cases, yet Mumia Abu-Jamal is still wrongfully imprisoned after 40 years. Afterwards, participants gathered at the S.H.A.P.E. Community Center for food and discussions.

Austria: On Dec. 9, the Freedom Committee for Ali Osman Köse held a rally in front of the world-famous Vienna State Opera House, demanding freedom for political prisoners Mumia Abu-Jamal; Ali Osman Köse, held in Turkey; and Georges Ibrahim Abdallah, imprisoned in France.

Mexico: Amigos de Mumia Mexico held a rally outside the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City on Dec. 11, including delegates from the Indigenous Otomí community, who continue to occupy the building of the fraudulent National Institute for Indigenous People. Cultural presentations followed at Casa Okupa Chiapas, including an exhibit of the engravings of Indiosindios Lopez, traditional music of La Mala Mata, a performance by Salcosoma, the soul-rap of Luna Negra, dance by Argelia Guerrero, rebel rap of Guerrilla Bang Bang and poetry-dance by Eva Palma.

Events for Mumia also took place in the Mexican cities of

Oaxaca, Tepic and Nayarit on Dec. 9.

In **Germany**, Free Mumia Committees in Berlin, Heidelberg and Nuremberg organized events. In addition to on-street rallies, a webinar was held by the German Free Mumia Collective describing Mumia's current legal and health situation with readings from Mumia's book "Writing on the Wall," translated into German.

In **France**, the French Collective to Free Mumia held a rally at the Place de la Concorde in Paris Dec. 8. On Dec. 10, International Human Rights Day, Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo commemorated the 20th Anniversary of the recognition of Mumia as "Honorary Citizen of the City of Paris."

Spain: Activists held a Free Mumia protest in the Basque city of Bilbao on Dec 9.

Free them all!

In her Philadelphia speech, Laila Boutros, coordinator of Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network NY/NJ, quoted Ahmad Sa'adat, the imprisoned general secretary of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine:

"Whether the name is Mumia Abu-Jamal, Walid Daqqa or Georges Ibrahim Abdallah, political prisoners behind bars can and must be a priority for our movements. These names illustrate the continuity of struggle against our collective enemy — their legacies of organizing that reach back to the anti-colonial liberation movements of the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, to today. Political prisoners are not simply individuals; they are leaders of struggle and organizing."

People at all these events protested Mumia's continued imprisonment, and they celebrated his 40 years of resistance behind bars as a leader in the struggle for Black liberation and human freedom. Free Mumia NOW!

Gloria Rubac and Betsey Piette contributed to this article.



Bilbao, Spain, Dec. 9.



Mexico City, Dec. 11.



Houston, Dec. 11.

PHOTO: SHAPE

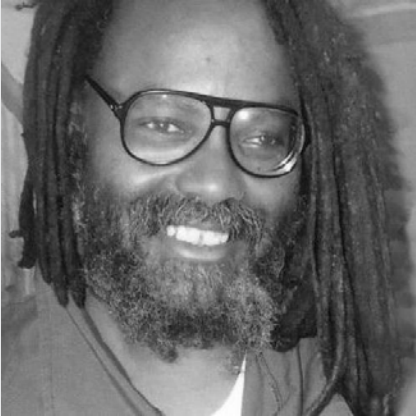
Sabo's donations

By Mumia Abu-Jamal

This commentary was 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 FOP.

Sabo, my trial and posttrial judge, was so openly biased that a local newspaper carried a brilliant, bright yellow banner headline saying: "Sabo must



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! □

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 witness 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

Pakistan

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 ultraright 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 constitutional amendment 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 all specific to Islam 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



Priyantha Kumara

PHOTO: EU TODAY

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,” Umair Javed, a professor at Lahore University of Management Sciences, stated that PTI is willing to give in to TLP’s ideologies, 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 serving 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 murder 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 blasphemous conduct is legal, but only if it is carried out by the state.

Pervez 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 — build a workers’ world! □

Ethiopia

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 Ethiopian 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 this country.

The Biden administration also allowed the TPLF to spread its propaganda. It permitted Berhane 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 9.3% 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 together 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 officeholders, 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 back to Tigray and after some political maneuvering began the civil war in November 2020. The war quickly grew intense, 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 and he should leave. They even offered a loan to buy the air ticket. (The webinar was sponsored by the Ethiopian American Civic Council and the Sanctions Kill Coalition.)

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 other states 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 that 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 these and other decisions have been made and carried out that are so contrary to 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 those who have appointed them.” To win, the fight for reproductive justice has to target the ruling class, which holds the real reins of power even while acting under the cover of “democracy.” Patriarchal 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 youth, could be a tipping 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 politician 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 down!” 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! ☐

WW COMMENTARY

Tornadoes wreak havoc, Amazon makes matters worse

By John Catalinotto

By Monday morning, Dec. 13, everyone 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 governmental assistance for rescue and relief of the people of those areas. Details of the destruction are available in much of the corporate media. One can make a strong argument that the climate crisis, caused by wanton pillage of the environment by the capitalist system, led to the superviolent storm. The ruling class knows this very well, but — as the recent Glasgow climate summit displayed — their pursuit of profits prevents them from taking necessary steps to halt or even lessen expected future damage. This weekend’s disaster is a sign of what that failure of capitalism means.

Amazon’s wanton capitalism

This article focuses on the deaths that took place at an Amazon delivery center in southern Illinois. More than any other one entity, Amazon stands for wanton capitalist expansion and the drive for monopoly and superprofits to the detriment of the working class and much of humanity. The demands raised here against this corporation should be read as just the beginning of what is needed to prevent damage from climate-crisis catastrophes harming the 99%. The working class gains nothing from the capitalist system of exploitation. The superprofits of Amazon, which have made its key shareholder a centibillionaire, are based on the exploitation of more than a million workers in the U.S. alone and tens of thousands more worldwide. Amazon profits would go far if spent in defending



Union organizing at the Amazon warehouse in Bessemer, Alabama, has been ongoing since 2019 and is now heading toward a “Union Yes!” revote. See workers.org ongoing coverage.

the safety and well-being of those workers, with a ripple effect to other workers and oppressed people. Amazon avoids liability, increases exploitation This holiday season, when capitalist advertising pushes everyone to buy, buy, buy, the Illinois Amazon center was working at full capacity Dec. 10 to get everything sold and deliver the packages. After the catastrophe, the Edwardsville authorities were unable to report how many workers were on Amazon premises when the tornado knocked the building down. The reason: Only seven of the workers there were permanent Amazon employees. An article in The New York Times, Dec. 12, clarified, “The more than 250,000 drivers ... who fuel Amazon’s delivery network do not work directly for the company but instead are employed by over 3,000 contractor companies.” This strategy of using contractor companies is no accident. It’s management’s direct attack on the working class. It allows Amazon to use the labor of workers

paid even lower wages than the pittance Amazon pays permanent workers. The tactic allows Amazon to avoid liability, putting the responsibility on small capitalist contractors, who hire a large proportion of what is actually an Amazon workforce. If conditions are unsafe, workers stretched beyond their limits, drivers falling asleep at the wheel, Amazon management claims that’s not their responsibility. With the workforce divided among many subcontractors, organizing workers into a union is much more difficult — another obstacle to unionizing on top of Amazon’s other repressive union-busting tactics. And Amazon’s nonunion delivery network competes with unionized delivery companies like UPS, further attacking workers’ wages. So at the devastated distribution center, Amazon management didn’t even know who was there. Demands to hold Amazon accountable 1. Amazon must hire as permanent workers all who are in its network, who it exploits, 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 approaching disaster — as existed before the tornadoes struck — Amazon must put the safety of the workers first and stop production. Of course capitalist managers 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 or other necessary demands are to be accomplished. The lesson of the disaster for the workers is 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.

Aïssa 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 decentralized. Each neighborhood has its own polyclinic, and there is a strong bond of trust between the local population and the health workers. Since March 2020, nearly 30,000 “contact tracers” have gone door to door, including in the most remote areas of the island, checking each family to see if any of its members have been infected. University students have been mobilized to participate in the contact tracing.

In Belgium, this search has been carried out by anonymous operators from call centers, an approach which inspires little popular confidence.

Meanwhile, Cuba was working on developing its vaccines against the coronavirus. By March 2021, three vaccines were being tested. Today, Cuba has five vaccines of its own design and production, including one for children as young as two years old.

The policy on COVID-19 is totally different in Cuba than in Belgium. And this was reflected in the statistics. At the end of 2020, Cuba had 146 deaths from COVID. Belgium had nearly 20,000 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 Belgium, vaccination was implemented 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 from the age of two. As of Dec. 6, some 90% of Cubans had received their first dose. This places the island second only to the United Arab Emirates in terms of vaccination rates. No other country in Latin America has such a high vaccination coverage. 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’ budgets, but suddenly we are all “required” to get vaccinated — for free. 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 profits and cares less about 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.

Johnson & Johnson has been convicted for its role in this case. In Beerse (in the province of Antwerp), the same pharmaceutical company has been producing a

vaccine against COVID since last year.

People know that pharmaceutical 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 billions in 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 biomedical 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 months have proven that COVID vaccines are also very effective. So it’s no surprise that Cubans are not only confident, but even proud of their domestic pharmaceutical industry.

Distrust of science

In Belgium, advertising indiscriminately uses real and pseudoscience 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 dieselgate [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 statistics or its representation in articles. “There are just as many vaccinated people as there are unvaccinated people in the hospital,” we often hear.

All of this explains the attraction of obscure theories, or at least the fact that people give credence to these theories, because they think “they” are trying to make us believe something. “They” want to muzzle us with their measures, the CSE, vaccination, 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) education system and noncommercial media. Cuban television explained, even before the first case appeared on their soil, what COVID is, how the pandemic developed in the world, how to fight it and what

measures would therefore follow.

Cubans know that their scientists work for the common good. They experience this almost every year, when, for example, villages and towns in the path of hurricanes, plotted by the world’s best meteorologists, are evacuated as a precaution. They have seen HIV quickly brought under control through strong prevention measures.

They also see that the approach to dengue and zika is scientific, effective and transparent, so that these diseases have minimal casualties.

Distrust of solidarity

Effective management of the pandemic requires solidarity. The majority of the population, who personally have little to fear from the disease, must show solidarity with the (very) elderly and other vulnerable groups. Vaccination is important for everyone but also for children, in order to reduce as quickly as possible the circulation of the virus in the community, in favor of the weakest.

Most people in Belgium find this reason enough to do their bit. This also applies to the observance of sanitary measures. It is surprising that not more Belgians say: “I am healthy and strong enough; I don’t need a vaccine; the others can take care of themselves.”

Here, the whole commercial, neoliberal culture reminds people daily that 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 absolute autonomy; we are told that we must not depend on others and certainly not on “the State,” at the risk of being a parasite.

This neoliberal culture portrays the unions as protecting those who accept help from the government, who they call “profiteers.” This culture promotes streamlining the government by cutting social welfare and health care funds. Such a culture, instead of encouraging solidarity, discourages it.

And Cuba?

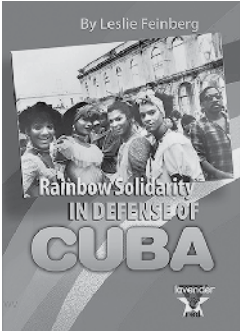
Cubans do not grow up in a spirit of competition or every person for themselves. They know from experience that only by working together can they meet the immense challenges facing their country. They are used to overcoming problems together, unfortunately now more than ever. Helping neighbors, cleaning the neighborhood 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, has sent doctors to Italy to fight against COVID.

This attitude and way of life is the fourth reason for the near absence of anti-vaccine movements in Cuba. □

Rainbow Solidarity in Defense of Cuba

by Leslie Feinberg



This ground-breaking book is a compilation of 25 articles about same-sex love and sex/gender variance in Cuba’s pre- and post-revolutionary history.
Available, along with complete Lavender & Red series, as free downloads at workers.org/books.

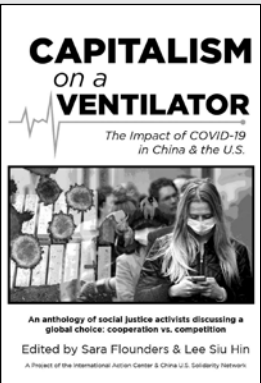
Capitalism on a Ventilator

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

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

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

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Gente celebran la victoria del Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional el 7 de diciembre.

Parte 2

Visión de un sandinista sobre la autonomía ‘Nos hicimos visibles’

Por Johnny Hodgson

La siguiente es la segunda parte de una presentación realizada por Johnny Hodgson, Secretario Político del Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional para la Región Autónoma del Caribe Sur (RACCS), el 6 de octubre en Managua, Nicaragua, ante una delegación estadounidense compuesta por Coleen Littlejohn, Sara Flounders, Monica Moorehead, Joav Elinevsky y Stan Smith. La transcripción está ligeramente editada. Lea la primera parte en workers.org/2021/11/60020/.

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.

Llegamos a la conclusión de que para el bienestar de los pueblos de la Costa Caribe, lo que llamamos el buen vivir, necesitábamos autonomía. La gente de la costa caribeña necesitaba tener un estatus autónomo. Y empezamos a pensar cómo vamos a construir esa autonomía.

Tres es un triángulo; 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. Esas fueron las tres bases para construir esta autonomía. Y así, una vez que tuvimos eso claro, pudimos empezar 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 multiétnico. En Nicaragua hay indígenas y afrodescendientes, y estos indígenas y afrodescendientes tienen derechos. Tienen sus propias lenguas. Tienen su propia cultura. Tienen derecho 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.

Todo el mundo decía que la unidad nacional es importante. Pero cuando empezamos a hablar de la unidad nacional, algunos decían que sí, pero si vamos a construir la unidad nacional, ¿por qué todos ustedes en la Costa Caribe quieren hablar su propio idioma? ¿Por qué queréis tener vuestro propio equipo? Y así llegamos al entendimiento de construir la unidad nacional a partir del reconocimiento de la diversidad.

La unidad en la diversidad significa que



FOTO: NEFTA FREEMAN

Votantes en la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua, 7 de noviembre.

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.

yo, como hombre negro, puedo participar en igualdad de condiciones con el hombre mestizo o el hombre o la mujer miskitu, pero que no tengo que dejar de ser quien soy para poder participar en igualdad de condiciones, que podría participar y preservar mi identidad y no sólo preservar mi identidad, sino crear la condición en la que podría enorgullecerme, enorgullecerme de ser criollo, de estar orgulloso de ser mestizo. Así que esas son las cosas que estábamos definiendo.

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. El reconocimiento, pero no sólo el reconocimiento. El reconocimiento y ejercicio efectivo de los derechos históricos de los pueblos indígenas y comunidades étnicas de la costa caribeña de Nicaragua en el contexto de la unidad nacional y los principios constitucionales.

Conseguimos que se aprobara la ley de autonomía en 1987 para hacer los cambios. La autonomía es la revolución en la Costa Caribe, es el instrumento para hacer la revolución, para hacer todos los cambios que tenemos que hacer en la Costa Caribe para que el pueblo tenga ese bienestar. Por eso, hace 34 años hicimos aprobar nuestra ley de autonomía. La idea era empezar a implementar esa ley de autonomía en 1990 que reconocía todos nuestros derechos.

Pero en 1990, cuando intentamos aplicar la ley de autonomía, fue cuando empezamos a enfrentarnos a la realidad. Elegimos nuestro propio gobierno, pero el gobierno nacional no estaba de acuerdo con la ley de autonomía.

Algo que me dolió mucho fue escuchar a gente del gobierno decir: ‘Es un error poner prácticamente el 50% del territorio nacional en manos de negros e indios incivilizados’. Así se referían a nosotros. Así que sabíamos que no iba a haber forma de avanzar mucho en la aplicación de esos derechos que se nos reconocían. Ni siquiera podíamos conseguir lo que llamamos un reglamento de la ley. Así que teníamos autonomía, pero la autonomía estaba en el aire. No podíamos implementarla.

Los sandinistas recuperaron el poder

En 2007, los sandinistas volvieron al gobierno, 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 pudimos aprobar lo que llamamos una “estrategia de desarrollo humano” para el bienestar de los costeños y la implementación de la autonomía. En 2007, cuando elaboramos esa estrategia, en la que todos los presentes estábamos trabajando, lo que hicimos fue establecer indicadores de dónde estábamos en 2007. Así que sólo mencionaré algunas de estas estadísticas.

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 materna, 86 de cada 100.000 mujeres mueren durante el parto, pero en la costa Caribe, 243 de cada 100.000, tres veces más mortalidad materna. 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 73% 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 en la costa caribeña, cero.

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.

Comparto estas cifras, porque en 2007 fue cuando tuvimos la posibilidad de implementar 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 verdadera unidad. Unidad, 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 soñábamos, las cosas por las que luchaban mis padres y mis abuelos. □

El capitalismo en un callejón sin salida

Fred Goldstein utiliza las leyes de la acumulación capitalista de Marx, y la tasa decreciente de ganancia, para demostrar por qué el capitalismo global ha llegado finalmente a un punto de inflexión.

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