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Mobilizing worker power

AMAZON UNION NOW

By Martha Grevatt

The fight to unionize the second-biggest U.S. employer took a big step forward at the Teamsters' (IBT) union convention last week. On June 24, the 1,600+ delegates, representing more than 500 locals, voted overwhelmingly in favor of a Special Resolution: "Building Worker Power at Amazon."

In it the union charges: "Amazon exploits its employees, contractors and employees of contractors via: wage theft, fraudulent classification, intense production quotas, dehumanizing work environments, unsafe workplaces and production standards, low wages, high turnover, no voice on the job, lack of job security and outsourced jobs." (teamster.org)

High turnover is an understatement. The rate is over 150% annually; after a few weeks many workers quit, even though the job pays double the federal minimum wage. Amazon has been willing to accept not having a steady, long-term workforce — it keeps worker demands in check, and it's harder for unions to organize a transient labor pool. But now the company is losing employees so fast that Amazon worries about running out of exploitable workers. (Insider, June 15)

Harlem, New York, March 20. WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

More on Amazon, page 7.

All the conditions driving workers to leave are what motivated the union drive in Bessemer, Ala. On April 9 the National Labor Relations Board announced the results of a union representation election there. The Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union lost the vote by a 2-1 margin.

But organizers had a forward-looking perspective. "I know the outcome is not what a lot of people wanted to hear," said RWDSU organizer Michael "Big Mike" Foster, at a press conference April 9. "But I believe this is the foundation for something great ... by no means is this the end." (The Verge, April 10)

The Teamsters' resolution demonstrates the truth in Foster's words.

The resolution concludes: "Therefore be it resolved, the IBT Convention recognizes the existential threat of Amazon to our members and commits all levels of the union to unite with core platforms of member engagement, worker and community engagement, antitrust enforcement and policy reform, and global solidarity;

"Be it further resolved, the commitment to the Amazon Project requires a unified approach and regional partnerships with Local Unions, Joint Councils and the International to deal with Amazon's geographic impact on our industries;

"Finally be it resolved, that building worker power at Amazon and helping those workers achieve a union contract is a top priority for the Teamsters Union, and the Union commits to fully fund and support the Amazon

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PHOTO: CHAD HIPOLITO

During a May ceremony honoring children whose graves were discovered at Kamloops Residential School, Nipawi Kakinoosit of the Sucker Creek First Nations sings the A.I.M. (American Indian Movement) song at British Columbia's provincial legislature.

Reparations! Bring Indigenous children home!

WORKERS WORLD *editorial*

There is no greater proof of genocide than the systematic theft and killing of the children of a people.

The governments of the U.S. and Canada stand criminally indicted of genocide after the renewed revelation in late May of the deaths of thousands of Indigenous children at state-run, state-authorized "boarding" and residential schools.

Though events are still unfolding, the total of recently identified graves in the U.S. and Canada stands currently at over 1,300. But even Canada's 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission concluded that at least 3,200 children died at the residential schools during their operation from the late 1880s through the 1990s. (caid.ca/TRCFinVol42015.pdf)

In the 21st century, spokespeople for the colonizing countries keep expressing surprised "sorrow" at the news of the dead children. But First Nations and Indigenous peoples know that genocide

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Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!
Build a Workers World!

The U.S. has the highest percentage of its population in prisons —more than any other country in the world and disproportionately people of color. That's not even counting detention centers for im/migrants who flee their homes to escape U.S. imperialist aggression and impoverishment. Here, they are brutally mistreated, detained and families are separated.

Don't let Fourth of July fireworks distract you from the streets and from formulating ways to dismantle the deadly, systemic oppression of Black, Brown and Indigenous people. Don't let the hype mask the inequality, injustice and inadequate health care that are responsible for the disproportionate number of deaths of people of color from COVID-19.

What would really show solidarity with the already vibrant Black Lives Matter movement? Raising the struggle to "Free Mumia Abu-Jamal" so it becomes a worldwide cry. The very reason why Mumia is in jail is that he used his voice and his pen to expose racism, especially the role of police terror in Philadelphia. Then the system framed him, denied him a fair trial and attempted to kill him.

Those who understand how this racist, classist, capitalist system works were in the streets over the last four decades to save Mumia's life and promote his message. Workers World was there, demanding his freedom from the get-go. **Mumia has been a longtime reader of WW, noting that it is the best coverage he read on the 1985 bombing of MOVE.**

Now the Prisoners Solidarity Committee of Workers World Party is supporting the internationalist call to Free Mumia. Mumia's case personifies everything wrong with the world's largest center of incarcerated workers: the U.S.

Your donations count!

We know you read WW for news free from corporate lies and geared to working and oppressed people. **We need you to help us do our job.** Join the WW Supporter Program, founded 44 years ago, to keep the newspaper and the workers.org website strong.

Articles are posted daily at workers.org. During the pandemic the weekly newspaper has only been printed and mailed out once a month. We will print and mail it more frequently when it is safe to do so.

For a donation of at least $75 a year — or $100, $300 or more, members receive a year's subscription, a regular letter about timely issues and one, two or three (respectively) free subscriptions for friends. Members can also receive our book, "What road to socialism?" (Notify us, or read it free at *workers.org/books*.)

Write checks, either monthly or once a year, to Workers World and mail them, with your name and address, to 147 W. 24th St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10011. Or sign up to donate online at workers.org.

We're grateful for your help in building Workers World!

All out for Mumia July 3 in Philadelphia.

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MUNDO OBRERO
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Join us in the fight for socialism!

Workers World Party is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a 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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‘Running on fire’ to Pride!

During LGBTQ+ Pride weekend, Sha’Carri Richardson blazed to victory in the 100-meter dash in the U.S. Olympic Track and Field Team Trials in Eugene, Ore. On June 26, the 21-year-old track star flashed past other runners with a time of 10.86 seconds — just over one second behind the top time of legendary sprinter Usain Bolt — who tops out at a foot taller than Richardson!

Richardson’s time in an earlier 2021 meet made her the sixth-fastest woman ever to run the distance in competition. Her social media posts have included a rainbow emoji and message about celebrating Pride month. After becoming an Olympian, she credited her girlfriend with choosing her vibrant orange hair color so that she seemed to be “running on fire” to victory.

— Report by Minnie Bruce Pratt

High school valedictorian defies anti-LGBTQ+ censorship

By Betsey Piette

Wearing a graduation cap with rainbow colors and a militant fist, Bryce Dershem, valedictorian at Eastern Regional High School in Voorhees, N.J., began his June 17 commencement speech: “After I came out as queer freshman year, I felt so alone. I didn’t know who to turn to for support.” Voorhees is only 20 miles from Philadelphia, where there is a vibrant LGBTQ+ community.

A video by Dershem’s father captured what happened next: Principal Robert Tull cuts off Dershem’s microphone, grabs his speech from the podium and crushes the pages. (tinyurl.com/ync2bvh7)

In the background, people are heard demanding “Let him speak!” According to the June 25 Philadelphia Inquirer, Tull then pointed to Derhsem’s preapproved speech, authorized by school administrators, and ordered: “You read this, or nothing else.”

That speech had no references to Dershem’s sexuality or mental health issues.

Having an inkling that he might be censored, Dershem had memorized his original seven-minute speech. When the sound was restored, he continued, “As I was saying,” to the cheers of his classmates and their parents in the audience of 2,000.

He continued to speak about his experience coming out, the ensuing mental health challenges and suicidal thoughts, and expressed support for other LGBTQ+ students and those suffering from mental health issues.

“I am a fighter, and today I’m a survivor. Part of our identity, our year, our struggle, is 2021,” Dershem said, referring to the COVID-19 crisis that impacted his graduating class. “We’re still here though. We adapted to something we never thought possible.”

His powerful message to other students was: “You are not alone in your fight. With the belief of those around you, you never have to suffer in silence. If you have struggled or will struggle, I believe you, and I hope you will believe others too.”

As he left the stage to audience cheers, Dershem wrapped a rainbow flag around his graduation gown, in repeated defiance of school administrators who forbid him to do so.

Bryce Dershem displays his graduation cap.

Dershem told the Inquirer he had attempted to work with administrators to deliver a speech that would address his personal experiences while offering a hopeful and inclusive message. Shortly before graduation he was told to remove all references to “queerness” and mental health issues.

In what seems like reverse discrimination, school administrators told him any reference to LGBTQ+ issues would “exclude other people.” Dershem responded, “I don’t think it is exclusionary to say that one is queer.”

This young courageous valedictorian suggests that school officials can learn something from his stand. “Even though my family, my friends and so many amazing Eastern faculty believed in me, I needed to accept the unapologetic version of myself ... for myself,” he said, regarding his fight to come to terms with his identity. “We all do.” (tinyurl.com/5uack5ps) ☐

WW COMMENTARY

Out in the NFL

Carl Nassib's impact

By Martha Grevatt

It only took 100 years.

The National Football League, founded Sept. 17, 1920, at last has its first openly gay active player. On June 21 Las Vegas Raiders defensive end Carl Nassib announced on Instagram: “Just wanted to take a quick moment to say that I'm gay. I’ve been meaning to do this for a while now, but I finally feel comfortable enough to get it off my chest.” He also stated he was donating $100,000 to the Trevor Project, a suicide prevention organization focused on LGBTQ+ youth.

Nassib’s courageous decision follows the example of Michael Sam, an African American player who told ESPN in 2014 that “I am an openly proud gay man,” before being drafted by the St. Louis (now Los Angeles) Rams. Sam played not one game in the regular season and retired the following season, citing mental health concerns. Sam immediately supported Nassib, saying “LGBTQ+ people are more likely to commit suicide than heterosexuals. I hope and pray people will take note to this. Thank you again Carl and look forward to seeing you play on the field.” (CNN, June 22)

Before Sam, gay NFL players only went public with their sexuality after they retired; the first, in 1975, was former San Francisco 49ers running back David Kopay.

Jason Collins, the first NBA player to come out in 2013, said he was “very proud” of Nassib and “incredibly happy for him.” Collins was the first openly gay athlete in any of the four major U.S. professional sports leagues. (CNN, June 22)

Raiders quarterback Derek Carr has expressed solidarity with Nassib, as have Nassib’s other teammates and his coach, Don Gruden. Supporters also include sports legends like quarterback Warren Moon and baseball and football All-Star Bo Jackson.

Nassib has the backing of his union, the NFL Players Association. NFLPA Executive Director DeMaurice Smith tweeted: “Our union supports Carl and his work with the Trevor Project is proof that he -- like our membership -- is about making his community and this world a better place not for themselves, but for others.”

While the media has focused on the experiences of gay male athletes, trailblazers in the U.S. also include lesbians like soccer start Megan Rapinoe and former WNBA player Latasha Byears, as well as trans triathlete Chris Mosier. Around the world hundreds of LGBTQ+ people in a wide range of sports are knocking down the closet doors.

But the fact that Nassib is making history now, after over a century of NFL games, reminds us that the sports-industrial complex is still a bastion of anti-LGBTQ+ hatred, along with racism, sexism and ableism. That Sam and others, most recently tennis great Naomi Osaka, have had to pull back from competing to take care of their mental health speaks volumes.

When athletes speak up, they are contributing to the struggle against bigotry in sports, which mirrors the tools implemented by all capitalist bosses to divide and conquer the working class. ☐

Jaan Laaman released after 37 years

By Ted Kelly

Radical political activist Jaan Laaman of the Ohio 7 was released from McCreary federal prison after 37 years in U.S. custody. He was arrested in 1984 and charged with "seditious conspiracy," along with other members of the United Freedom Front.

Jaan Laaman free at last! PHOTO: SONJA WILDE-DE VRIES

The UFF was originally known as the Sam Melville/Jonathan Jackson Unit, named after two revolutionary activists who were assassinated by the U.S. government. Jonathan Jackson, younger brother of George Jackson, was killed during an operation to free political prisoners on trial. Melville was a militant radical and cellmate of Laaman's at Attica and a leader of the 1971 uprising at that prison. Melville was murdered by New York State police during the Attica rebellion.

Laaman was born in a German refugee camp to Estonian parents in 1948. An ally of the Young Lords, the Black Panthers and the anti-apartheid movement before his arrest, Laaman became an activist for the rights of prisoners to have access to reading materials and higher education. A New Hampshire Supreme Court ruling, Laaman v. Warden New Hampshire State Prison, centered on the care of mentally ill prisoners. Part of the agreement involved separate therapeutic housing for prisoners with mental illness. According to Prison Legal News, "Any violation of the agreement was to be enforced via actions in the state courts." (tinyurl.com/7vm6urb8)

Laaman is the last of the Ohio 7 to be freed from prison. Tom Manning, the only other remaining member, died in prison July 29, 2019, just 14 months before his scheduled release. Upon the death of co-defendant Richard Williams in October 2011, Laaman wrote, "For me personally, I have no dearer friend or closer comrade than Richard. ... From construction sites to picket lines and yes, battle lines too, I feel proud and honored to have shared these with you, my comrade, my brother, my friend."

While at the U.S. Penitentiary in Tucson, Ariz., Laaman faced heavy censorship, repression and repeated retaliation for his political writing. He was placed in solitary confinement in 2017. (workers.org/2017/05/31476/)

In 2016, Laaman wrote that "cops are rarely charged with wrongdoing."

He continued: "These are the indisputable realities in early 21st century life in the U.S. If we look back historically, we can see even more blatant and vicious racist abuses and practices in all areas of life directed against all people of color. This began with the earliest European contact with and conquest of the Americas. Modern countries in North, Central and South America originated with genocide, land theft, enslavement of Indigenous peoples and the African slave trade.

"Decades of community activism and revolutionary organizing across the U.S. have made clear that no matter what the specifics of the struggle, unity is always necessary to sustain the effort and to win. As Mumia Abu-Jamal has famously stated, 'When we fight, we win.' The main weapon used against popular struggle is to divide us based on racism, playing to the lies of white supremacist ideology.

"Unity is our strength. Rejecting racism is necessary for unity. Racism will continue to be used against us until we expose it and reject it for the lies and fabrications that it is."

Moments after walking out of McCreary Federal Prison in Kentucky, Laaman said, "Black Lives mattered then, and Black lives matter now."

Welcome home, comrade Jaan Laaman!

Free Mumia! Free all political prisoners! ☐

How Maroon influenced me

By Jerome "Hoagie" Coffey

Jerome Coffey has been wrongly incarcerated for 28 years, currently at Pennsylvania's SCI Pine Grove. He is an exceptional pro se litigant, that is, he represents himself in legal actions. He filed and won a lawsuit against the Department of Corrections and a civil suit. In both these cases, he successfully defended himself. On June 16 Coffey was notified that the Conviction Integrity Unit of the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office will review his case.

Russell "Maroon" Shoatz is an activist, writer, founding member of the Black Unity Council, former member of the Black Panther Party, and soldier in the Black Liberation Army. Incarcerated since 1972 and now 77, Maroon is serving multiple life sentences in Pennsylvania as a U.S.-held political prisoner of war.

After escaping prison twice, in 1977 and 1980, he earned the name "Maroon" from fellow incarcerated men, a nod to Africans who fled chattel slavery and created autonomous communities throughout the Americas. Shoatz was born 78 years after the ratification of the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution.

In his first 11 years Maroon experienced Jim Crow segregation laws enabled by the U.S. Supreme Court, which in 1877 ruled that states couldn't prohibit segregation on common modes of transportation. In 1883, SCOTUS overturned parts of the 1875 Civil Rights Act that prohibited "separate but equal" facilities. Jim Crow was enforced by local, state, and federal governments — also law enforcement agencies.

I first met Maroon 20 years ago in solitary confinement under inhumane circumstances implemented by the oppressors of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections. Maroon was a source of hope and inspiration, not only for me but thousands of other young incarcerated men experiencing similar conditions.

Maroon is a walking encyclopedia and historian who taught us young men humanity and how to fight back against the evil of oppressors in solitary confinement by educating ourselves and using the legal system. Today when I look at the Black Lives Matter movement organizing to stop police brutality of killing innocent humans, I realize a half century ago Maroon confronted police brutality for the humanity of Black lives. He was motivated by a lot of the same issues — in his case it was the murder and harassment of Black people at the hands of former mayor Frank Rizzo and the Philadelphia Police Department..

Today, Maroon has stage 4 cancer and deserved to be released to his family from the jurisdiction of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections. Pennsylvania has a statute, codified as 42 Pa. C.S. 9777, which allows an incarcerated person's sentencing judge to grant compassionate release for an elderly and terminally ill person. Eleven years ago, local attorney

and ex-Boxing Commissioner George Bochetto attempted to get John DuPont out of prison under this statute, but he was not successful, and DuPont died in SCI Laurel Highlands about a year later.

Pennsylvania state lawmakers frequently talk about drafting legislation pertaining to criminal justice reform. Pennsylvania Corrections Secretary John Wetzel constantly talks about the elder population in the prison system. Maroon is an elder and in his condition he should be home with his family. Maroon influenced me to stand up and be a man and fight the injustices against all people. Thank you, Maroon. ☐

Transgender immigrant rights activists demand 'End Trans Detention!'

By Judy Greenspan

Carrying signs and three brightly painted pink coffins, transgender immigrant rights activists and their supporters marched on the White House June 23 to demand an end to Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention of transgendered and HIV+ people. The coffins symbolized the deaths of three trans women, Roxsana Hernández, Victoria Arellano and Johana "Joa" Medina Leon, who died between 2018 and now while in ICE custody or shortly thereafter. (Washington Blade, June 23)

The protest began with a commemorative service for the three women at the National City Christian Church. Trans migrant organizers read statements about the three women and conditions faced by trans, HIV+ and other at-risk migrants in detention camps.

The service was emceed by Issa Noyola, deputy director of Mijente, one of the migrant rights groups that organized this event. Noyola spoke against the injustices faced by trans migrants and played a recorded statement from Roxsana Hernández's nephew in Honduras.

After the service, trans migrant activists took to the streets and marched to the White House to bring their message to President Joe Biden. In the march were over 25 trans women recently released from ICE detention centers. The marchers blocked traffic for several minutes at 16th and H streets, N.W., near what has been renamed "Black Lives Matter" Plaza. The protesters then entered Lafayette Square for a closing rally.

Protesters left the three coffins propped on a fence in front of the White House.

Jennicet Gutiérrez of End Trans Detention Now told reporters on the steps of the National City Christian Church that trans people were tired of waiting for justice. "They want us to wait? We don't have time — we don't want to have another name added to the long list of people [who] have died in detention," she said. (Daily Beast, June 24)

Gutiérrez is an organizer with Familia: Trans Queer Liberation Movement, one of the groups that sponsored the national protest. In 2015, she interrupted President Barack Obama at an LGBTQ+ Pride event at the White House, yelling, "Release all LGBTQ [from] detention centers! President Obama, stop the torture and abuse of trans women in detention centers! President Obama, I am a trans woman. I'm tired of the abuse." Gutiérrez was interviewed on Democracy Now! the day after the June 25 protest and described some of the many cases of abuse of trans migrants by ICE. (Democracy Now!, June 24)

Pink coffins left outside White House, D.C., June 23.

The struggle of trans migrant people locked in detention has finally started receiving national attention. The June 23 protest was the culmination of several actions in cities across the U.S. demanding "No Pride in Detention! #End Trans Detention Now!" A week before the June 23 march, eight immigrant rights groups sent a letter to Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and acting ICE Director Tae Johnson demanding the U.S. government release all trans migrants and people living with HIV/AIDS from ICE detention.

Trans migrant activists are determined to continue fighting for justice until all transgender migrants and people living with HIV/AIDS are released from ICE custody. There is an ongoing petition and other information available at their website: endtransdetention.org. ☐

Seattle

Solidarity activists delay Israeli apartheid ship

By Jim McMahan

The revolutionary Palestinian resistance to Israel's invasions, war, forced annexation and mass evictions has broadened solidarity for their cause. Port blockages and waterfront unions' solidarity from Oakland, Calif., to Italy have stopped Israeli ships from carrying out trade for their U.S.-backed warfare state.

A ship from the Israeli-owned company Zim pulled into the Port of Seattle June 2. Due to the actions and vigilance of hundreds of activists led by Palestinian feminist collective Falastiniyat, the ship was delayed from docking until June 17. Falastiniyat works in close coordination with the Arab Resource and Organizing Center in San Francisco.

On the evening of June 17, Seattle cops violently attacked a demonstration blocking the entrance to the terminal. The cops arrested 11 activists, which led to the ship's cargo being unloaded. But Falastiniyat activists called their Block the Boat actions a victory, because the long delay of the Zim ship probably cost them millions of dollars.

Falastiniyat/Block the Boat activists had effectively picketed and stopped the ship from being unloaded June 12 with the support of International Longshore and Warehouse Union, Local 19.

These actions caused Zim and port officials a lot of consternation and hesitation. It was well-known that the port commission and the mayor's office were being heavily pressured by the Israeli foreign ministry. But it is U.S. imperialism which controls its agent, Israel, and the Port of Seattle too.

During the two weeks of actions, the Seattle Education Association (SEA) passed a resolution June 14 to support the Palestinian call for Israeli Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions and the End the Deadly Exchange Seattle campaign. (tinyurl.com/3bw77s9x) This passed by over 90% in the Representative Assembly of the SEA made up of 5,500 teachers and staff.

The resolution calls for divestment of an Israeli regime which practices apartheid against Palestinians on their ancestral land. It also calls for an end to cooperation with Israeli police — Seattle cops have been heavily involved as partners with equally brutal Israeli cops.

Seattle protest, June 17 PHOTO: AL JAZEERA

In the last week of the port actions, a number of local elected officials came forward with a statement to support Block the Boat and demand the Zim ship leave Seattle. They expressed solidarity with the ILWU members' right not to cross a community picket line. Signers included Seattle City Council members Teresa Mosqueda, Kshama Sawant and Lisa Herbold. ☐

Emancipation Day Rhode Island

By Workers World Boston bureau

Activists from the Black community gathered in Providence, R.I., June 19, with allies to commemorate Emancipation Day, also known as Juneteenth. The diverse event was organized by Direct Action for Rights and Equality (DARE) which has long-standing roots in the community grounded in political action.

DARE has been commemorating Emancipation Day for over a decade. They are actively engaged in housing rights, prison abolitionist work and work against gentrification. One of their caucuses, Behind the Wall, is made up of formerly incarcerated people who meet regularly to discuss issues that impact them.

The day was marked with music, speakers and various tables including arts and crafts for the children. A table staffed by Workers World Party and Solidarity with the Incarcerated, RI/MA, was a big attraction with a display of revolutionary literature and newspapers.

mYia X, who helped staff the table, spoke at the rally: "Let us not be distracted by the performative actions of Biden yesterday. [Biden had signed Juneteenth as a federal holiday.] The system has always known about John Brown and the significance of the raid at Harpers Ferry. It was probably one of the impetuses that forced [President Abraham] Lincoln to sign the Emancipation Proclamation. Because Lincoln did not believe that the enslaved were equal to the white race. He said, 'I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races …'

PHOTO: DEBRA M. HARRIS

From left: Susan Mortimer, Solidarity with the Incarcerated RI/MA; John Prince, Behind the Wall; Martha Yager, DARE; mYia X, Workers World Party.

"There is this illusion that there was freedom in the North. But Rhode Island made more trips than all the 13 colonies combined on the TransAtlantic slave trade route," mYia X stressed.

According to SmallStateBigHistory.com, during the colonial period from 1751 to 1775, Rhode Island sent 514 slave ships to the coast of West Africa (the rest of the colonies sent 189). Its slave traders sent 383 slave ships transporting more than 40,000 enslaved Africans to the Americas. All other colonies combined sent 132 slave ships with less than 18,000 enslaved people. (tinyurl.com/ce68wmxc)

In addition, mYia spoke about the importance of continuing the push to free political prisoners Mumia Abu-Jamal, Mutulu Shakur, Russell Maroon Shoatz, Leonard Peltier, Sundiata Acoli, Ruchell Cinque Magee and many others. "As abolitionists, we must advance the struggle to abolish capitalism and end mass incarceration. We must continue to raise awareness to stop companies like Securus, Smart Communications and Keefe from superexploiting the families and loved ones of the incarcerated through phone calls, mail, computers and supplies," she said.

Activist and longtime member of Behind the Wall, Providence, John Prince quoted Malcolm X: "If you're not ready to die for it, put the word freedom out of your vocabulary. …" ☐

Solidarity with Socialist Cuba

WW PHOTO: BILL SACKS

Cuba solidarity activists in Harlem, N.Y., June 20.

Leading up to the annual vote in the U.N. General Assembly June 23 on Cuba's resolution to end the illegal 60-year U.S. blockade against the island, solidarity activists across the U.S. and Canada held a week of actions to pressure President Joe Biden and Congress. In New York City, a car caravan rolled through Harlem June 20, along with caravans in 18 other U.S. cities. On the day of the vote, activists gathered in solidarity across from the Cuban Mission including those from Cuba Sí, IFCO Pastors for Peace, Workers World Party, Venceremos Brigade, December 12th Movement and Socialist Workers Party. For 28 consecutive sessions, the General Assembly has voted overwhelmingly in favor of ending the blockade. This year the U.N. voted 184 to 2, with 3 abstentions. The U.S. and Israel voted no, Brazil, Colombia and Ukraine abstained.

— S. Hedgecoke

One wish for Tamir's birthday: Justice!

Cleveland police gunned down 12-year-old Tamir Rice while he was playing with a pellet gun Nov. 22, 2014. The killer cop, Timothy Loehmann, was never charged, and he was only fired in 2017 on an unrelated disciplinary issue. Loehmann's partner, Frank Garmback, was given a 10-day suspension, which was cut in half through the grievance procedure.

On June 25, which would have been Tamir's 19th birthday, Tamir's Campaign for Justice held a demonstration to demand the U.S. Department of Justice reopen its investigation into the killing. The DOJ closed the case in 2020 without even notifying Tamir's mother Samaria Rice or the family attorney Subodh Chandra.

Speakers at the rally took note of the sentencing of Derek Chauvin, who killed George Floyd, which was announced the same day. While clearly not enough, Chauvin's sentence was longer than sentences seen in previous racist, police brutality cases, notably Tamir's.

Despite pouring rain, activists took to the streets and marched to the local DOJ office, chanting "One wish: justice."

— Report and photo by Martha Grevatt

UAW referendum

An opportunity for rank-and-file activism

By Martha Grevatt

Gary Jones, former International President of the United Auto Workers, was sentenced to 28 months imprisonment June 10 for his role in an embezzlement scheme that cost rank-and-file members millions of dollars in dues money. Jones and his cohorts — including his predecessor ex-President Dennis Williams, also sentenced — treated themselves to cash, lavish accommodations, expensive food and booze and golf outings, clubs and paraphernalia. Other top officials and staff took kickbacks from vendors and even bribes from Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA, now Stellantis) in exchange for agreeing to substandard contracts.

These corruption scandals, uncovered by a federal investigation, have shamed the union leadership in the eyes of its membership and the broader labor movement. The repugnant behavior by members of the union's International Executive Board hurt organizing drives at Volkswagen and Nissan plants in the South.

Neither the U.S. federal attorneys nor the UAW International Executive Board — not to mention the companies the union negotiates with — want a revival of militant, democratic, rank-and-file driven unionism. The Jan. 29 decree between the UAW and the federal government allowed the court-appointed federal monitor, who will oversee the UAW for six years, to be recommended by the UAW. Members have compared this to the fox guarding the chicken coop.

A 1989 federal racketeering lawsuit led to a consent decree with the Teamsters union, including a provision for the rank and file to elect their international officers directly by secret ballot. But UAW members have not been given that right. Instead, they will have to vote on whether to go to a "one member, one vote" system — or continue with the system in place now, where delegates at the UAW Constitutional Convention elect the IEB.

The Administration Caucus, which has run the UAW for over 70 unbroken years, uses the convention system to ensure their handpicked candidates are elected and reelected to the IEB year after year. This keeps class collaborationist and corrupt leaders in power, at the expense of the membership.

McCarthyite roots of corruption

The Administration Caucus, also known as the Reuther Caucus, was founded by then-UAW President Walter Reuther during the anti-communist witch hunt of the late 1940s to early 1950s. Reuther was a social democrat who used his position to purge members of the Communist Party USA and the Socialist Workers Party from leadership. To eliminate leftist rivals, he took advantage of a clause in the union-busting Taft-Hartley Act, requiring union officials to sign an oath swearing they were not members of the CPUSA.

That clause was later ruled unconstitutional by federal courts, but Reuther was able to achieve total political control of the UAW IEB. This was when the Detroit Three auto companies and the union reached an agreement — designed to ensure class peace — known as the "Treaty of Detroit." Autoworkers received many gains, such as an annual "improvement factor" raise, the cost-of-living allowance (COLA), pensions and supplemental unemployment benefits (SUB pay) to augment government unemployment compensation while laid off.

But Reuther agreed to stop pushing for a shorter work week at the same weekly pay, which would keep autoworkers employed even as technological improvements reduced the hours needed to produce a vehicle.

Compared to today's UAW leaders, Reuther was a militant, a progressive and a "clean" leader, who was not known to take bribes or embezzle members' dues money. Even his brother Victor Reuther rebelled against the concessions the Administration Caucus agreed to in the 1980s and supported the reform-oriented New Directions Movement. But the 70-year-old, one-caucus rule begun under Reuther continues to disempower the rank and file.

Harvard graduate student strike, December 2019. Harvard Graduate Student Union – UAW Local 5118 passed a resolution supporting direct elections of the International Executive Board. PHOTO: KAI R. MCNAMEE

One member, one vote: an opportunity to organize

Prior to his June 30 resignation, UAW President Rory Gamble stated that the IEB would "educate" the membership on the benefits of staying with the convention election system. How the rank and file would benefit from a lack of union democracy has not been elucidated.

Since the resignation from the union by the disgraced President Jones, the IEB has instituted some measures to keep corrupt practices in check. But if the Board was really serious about mending this broken union, there would be unanimous support for direct elections. Moreover, the IEB would dissolve the irreparably dysfunctional Administration Caucus altogether.

Instead it is up to the rank and file to turn the UAW around. A grassroots union caucus, Unite All Workers for Democracy, emerged in response to the corruption scandals. Now UAWD has launched a massive organizing campaign to convince the 400,000 UAW members and 560,000 retirees to be sure to cast a ballot in the referendum for one member, one vote.

While UAWD's energy is currently focused on winning the referendum, the date of which has not yet been set, the caucus has a broad progressive program. Planks include strengthening the strike fund, an end to tiered wages and "temporary" worker classifications, global solidarity, no plant closings, a shorter work week with no cut in pay, and opposition to "racism, sexism and all forms of bigotry." (uawd.org)

In organizing for direct elections, union militants can be holding conversations on all these issues, along with the need to abandon business unionism and return to the anti-capitalist orientation of the union's left-wing founders.

This will impact the whole labor movement for the better.

Martha Grevatt retired after working 31 years for FCA and served on the Executive Boards of UAW Locals 122 and 869.

'Sleep-in' challenges Georgia benefit cuts

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta

Unemployed workers pitched tents in front of the Georgia Department of Labor June 24 in downtown Atlanta in preparation for spending the night. The action was intended to symbolize the loss of housing and other necessities of life experienced by untold numbers of workers in the state, where unemployment benefits have been delayed for months. All Georgia DOL offices have been closed and barricaded since the pandemic began in March of 2020.

To make matters even more dire, tens of thousands of Georgians will be deprived of $300 of weekly federal unemployment funds as of June 26. The decision by Governor Brian Kemp and DOL Secretary Mark Butler is widely understood to be their way to force workers to take low-wage jobs in the hotel, restaurant and other service fields. The Chamber of Commerce and other business leaders have loudly complained that the additional money made it too easy for workers to stay home. Georgia's unemployment benefits range from $147 to $365 a week, and Georgia's vaccination rate is among the country's lowest.

PHOTO: ATLANTA-N. GEORGIA LABOR COUNCIL

The sleep-in generated a lot of media coverage. The organizations that sponsored it — Georgia Unemployment Issues, the Atlanta-N. Georgia Labor Council, New Georgia Project and others — vow to continue the fight. ☐

Jumaane Williams speaking. WW PHOTO:: G. DUNKEL

Increase funding for CUNY

By G. Dunkel

The CUNY Rising Alliance, the City University of New York Student Senate and the Professional Staff Congress held a militant, spirited rally in front of New York's City Hall June 24. The de Blasio administration wants to cut $67 million from the city's contribution to CUNY.

But as speakers Andrea Vásquez, executive vice president of the PSC; James Davis, president of the PSC; and Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, a CUNY alum, pointed out, the city is flush right now with federal COVID-19 relief funds. CUNY has urgent needs that must be addressed.

As a result of the pandemic disruptions, some students are desperate for mental health counseling and academic advising, which this city funding would provide.

Many students need remediation services and childcare, tutoring and CUNY Service Corps benefits. Some face food insecurity. It is hard to learn when you're hungry.

There was general agreement among the speakers and people attending that public higher education should be free. ☐

Alabama coal miners take on Wall Street

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

A delegation of striking Alabama coal miners marched on Wall Street June 22 to protest the crushing grip of big business on their lives. The miners — chanting "No contract, no coal!" and "Warrior Met Coal ain't got no soul! — picketed the offices of BlackRock Fund Advisors, State Street Global Advisors and Renaissance Technologies, investment firms that back the coal company.

The 1,100 members of United Mine Workers, Local 2245 in Brookwood, Ala., have been on strike against Warrior Met Coal, Inc. since April 1. The company produces coal in high demand for steel production in Asia, Europe and South America. BlackRock Fund is Warrior Met's largest stockholder, providing a capitalist structure that pays corporate executives millions, while miners struggle to survive black lung and murderously dangerous equipment.

The miners are striking in an attempt to gain safe working conditions, adequate health insurance and a wage increase promised five years ago when they took drastic cuts to save the company from bankruptcy. The UMW says contract negotiations are stalled because of pressure from the big investment firms.

Alabama coal miners picket megacapitalist BlackRock Fund in New York City, June 22.

This is the first coal strike to hit Alabama in 40 years. But the area has been a UMW stronghold since 1890, independent labor reporter Kim Kelly told Democracy Now! "Throughout the UMW tenure there, it has been historically one of the most interracial, racially integrated locals in the country. ... In Brookwood, in the Warrior Met mines, I think the workforce is about 20% Black. And obviously there are women; there are multiple genders involved. It's not just a bunch of white guys in hard hats, which is the general media image of coal miners. But that's not who they are. That's not what they look like. And these folks are working together." (Democracy Now!, June 22)

The Brookwood mines are in central Alabama, about 30 minutes from Bessemer, Ala., near Birmingham. Thousands of Amazon warehouse workers there were in a fierce but ultimately losing battle to unionize earlier this year. Kelly added: "That part of Alabama, the labor movement has very deep roots, and it intertwines very closely with the Civil Rights Movement and the struggle for Black liberation. This is a much bigger story than just a few people [who] are upset about a contract. There's a lot of history here."

Back at home, strikers are on the picket line in 12-hour shifts, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There have been three separate incidents when cars were driven into workers who were picketing.

In New York City, the miners were joined by Sara Nelson, international president of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA and a member of the national AFL-CIO Executive Council, and Stuart Appelbaum, president of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union. Brookwood miners supported the RWDSU in its attempt to organize Bessemer Amazon warehouse workers.

For more coverage on the Alabama coal miners struggle, see Workers World, April 2, April 20 and June 2. (All three articles accessible from workers.org/tag/alabama) Hometown Action of Alabama is mobilizing material support for the strikers at tinyurl.com/djrvajnk.

Lawsuit exposes unsafe conditions at Amazon

By Lyn Neeley

Two of Portland's delivery companies announced June 23 they will stop working for Amazon because of unsafe working conditions. The companies, Last Mile Delivery and Triton Transportation, are suing Amazon for increasing the pressure on drivers by making arbitrary and unreasonable demands and firing drivers who work for the contractors without notice.

Last Mile Delivery co-owner Tracy Bloemer told workers, "Amazon has been nickel-and-diming us so bad, that if we don't make change we can no longer offer the support and incentives that thus far we have been able to provide." She said workers are getting paid less while being expected to deliver more. Drivers average 200 deliveries a day. Some make more than 250 stops, which is two minutes per package, based on an eight-hour shift. (tinyurl.com/yggxnqzp)

Together Triton and Last Mile employ about 155 drivers with an average of 22,000 deliveries in the Portland area.

Abhorrent conditions are causing large turnover among drivers working for Amazon contract companies. Drivers complain that to save time they are often forced to skip meals, breaks and bathroom stops, urinating in bottles to save time. They are forced to deliver packages by their promised delivery date and can't go home until all packages are delivered.

The actions of the contract companies mean drivers are without work indefinitely while they go through the litigation process with Amazon. Bloemer offered workers no promises for the future.

Over the last six years Amazon has developed a gigantic national delivery network, with thousands of vans running seven days a week delivering nearly 5 million packages weekly. Amazon has created at least 200 "independent" delivery companies with the goal of managing deliveries to speed up the process and squeeze costs down.

Buzzfeed published a national survey of safety violations by Amazon's delivery companies titled "Amazon's Next-Day Delivery Has Brought Chaos and Carnage to America's Streets — but the World's Biggest Retailer Has a System to Escape the Blame." Buzzfeed found public documents showing hundreds of accidents involving Amazon drivers in the past five years. There have been at least six fatalities and many serious injuries reported just in states with public records. Many more go unreported or cannot be linked to the company. (tinyurl.com/75k9v7sa)

Amazon lies about safety

Amazon says it spends tens of millions of dollars on safety; yet drivers are given little training, and company vans are often run down with balding tires, cracked or missing side-view mirrors or doors that don't shut properly. Some trucks have no rearview window or backup camera. Drivers, given too many packages to fit in cargo, often pile parcels so high in the cab that they can't see out the windows.

Amazon claims they are helping new entrepreneurs build small delivery businesses without controlling their

companies or labor force. However, many without start-up funds take advantage of Amazon's preferred program to lease vans from Amazon, purchase insurance and let Amazon manage their payroll.

Amazon can deny any responsibility for working conditions, such as labor law violations, failing to pay overtime, denying workers breaks, discrimination, sexual harassment and other forms of mistreatment.

In the last six years, Amazon's profits have skyrocketed. At the end of April, Amazon announced first-quarter earnings that its capital expenditures grew 80% over the preceding 12 months. Last summer they bought 20,000 vans from Mercedes-Benz to be leased to their delivery companies around the country.

In March 2017, Detroit Amazon delivery drivers employed by Silverstar voted to join the Teamsters. They were fighting for overtime pay, safe working conditions and elimination of the punishing work hours.

Two months later, one of the labor leaders was fired by the company. The manager said on record, "I was told to write you up for anything because you joined the union." Silverstar settled out of court, paying a $15,696 settlement. Silverstar shut down a few months after the firing and relocated, putting dozens of drivers out of work. Amazon has since developed workshops and held meetings at many locations on how companies can prevent unionization.

In 2018, Samuel Cabelus was killed by an Amazon delivery driver. A year later his mother Winnie Cabelus posted an article on Facebook called Amazon Deliveries. "This is about shitty driving, yes," she said, "But this is about low-paid, inexperienced and untrained delivery drivers operating gigantic vans they don't know how to drive, under enormous pressure to deliver quickly. This is profit-driven, corporate greed behavior without consideration for anyone else's humanity." ☐

AMAZON UNION NOW

Continued from page 1

Project, to supply all resources necessary and to ultimately create a special Amazon Division to aid Amazon workers and defend and protect the standards in our industries from the existential threat that is Amazon."

In August, 2020, the Teamsters appointed Randy Korgan, Secretary-Treasurer of Local 1932 in San Bernardino, Calif., as National Amazon Director. Rather than rely strictly on the NLRB election process, the IBT "aims to bring the company to the bargaining table by orchestrating strikes, boycotts, protests and other actions." (New York Times, June 22) So if a majority of workers at a facility sign union authorization cards, the Teamsters might bypass the NLRB and call a strike to demand union recognition.

This is all tremendous news. In this classic "labor vs. capital" scenario, every member of the global working class has "skin in the game."

Organizing on many fronts

In addition to the Teamsters' initiative, serious efforts are underway by the independent Amazon Labor Union to organize the Staten Island, N.Y., facility. Worker anger has been high since Amazon fired Process Assistant Chris Smalls last year for organizing a walkout over lack of COVID safety. Large numbers of workers have signed cards authorizing the ALU to represent them.

In the aftermath of Bessemer, the Southern Workers Assembly has hosted four Southern Workers Schools and is organizing workers assemblies throughout the South to support worker self-organization at Amazon.

The RWDSU has filed a number of unfair labor practice charges with the NLRB; workers have testified to Amazon's extreme union-busting tactics. If the NLRB nullifies the representation election — which it should — Bessemer workers may again have an opportunity to vote in the union.

Even before COVID, Amazon workers waged job actions to voice a range of concerns from working conditions to climate change to the right of Muslims to have time and space to pray. Amazonians United, Amazon Employees for Climate Justice and Whole Workers have engaged in workplace struggles.

Amazon unions in Italy, Germany, France and Spain have struck the company, and a union drive is underway in Poland — where Amazon shifted work from unionized facilities in Germany.

As momentum builds, any number of unions — such as the four U.S. Postal Service unions who face the same threat to their jobs as UPS Teamsters — may attempt to organize Amazon workers.

What is absolutely paramount is that all of these unions conduct themselves in solidarity with one another. Competition between unions to represent the same groups of workers must end here and now. Otherwise labor is playing to Amazon's agenda: keeping workers divided and defeated.

The situation is much bigger than any "existential threat" to union jobs or a union standard of living — as real and ominous as that threat is. Organizing Amazon must be part of a worldwide revival of the class struggle against capitalist exploitation, linked to social justice movements of the most oppressed workers.

Building solidarity across oppressions and across borders and oceans is the way to win. ☐

Colombia's national strike in perspective

By Juan Diego García

The author is a Colombian political analyst living in Spain. The article was first published in lapluma.net. Translation by Michael Otto.

June 17 — Iván Duque, the Colombian president, has confronted the current protest movement with the same methods used by previous rulers of this Andean country, albeit with less intelligence, bringing him more defeats than victories.

It is traditional in Colombia that when confronting social and political opposition movements, the authorities typically engage in dragged out and useless negotiations (and what they agree to, they never fulfill). At the same time, the police and military, backed up by paramilitary groups, employ brutal and murderous repression in obedience to a systematic extermination plan.

Apparently, the government has no plan beyond the traditional one, resulting in an impressive plunge in support, according to various polls that measure popular opinion. Duque has had to accept the resignation of several high-ranking officials (including two ministers) and has been unable to cover up dramatic scenes exposing government repression -- leaving his crimes exposed before national and international opinion.

Of so-called Colombian democracy, only a memory remains. In spite of the official version that insists on presenting this country as "the oldest democracy on the continent," the harsh repression shows Colombia looking more like a dictatorial regime and, for many, like a colonial form of fascism.

Duque and his government are apparently betting on wearing down the protests and on the normal public exhaustion. They paint themselves as a responsible government that listens to popular outcries. All the official propaganda (repeated ad nauseam by the mass media) seeks to convince the protesters that it's futile to fight the power.

The government systematically delegitimizes mass demonstrations, even if they are peaceful. It criminalizes barricades, roadblocks and other forms of protest, and condemns the response of those who are repressed without restraint. The government's strategy boils down to offering negotiations with no perspective whatsoever and violence out of all proportion, leaving a dramatic toll of dead, disappeared, wounded and detained that is reaching an unprecedented degree not seen in decades.

After more than seven weeks of resistance, the Strike Committee announced changes in its tactics of struggle and proposed greater and more forceful actions in the immediate future. But some collectives distinct from the Committee say they will maintain their actions in spite of the enormous risk to their lives amid a scenario of a partial military occupation of the country, which the government threatens to extend to the entire national territory.

'Better to die in the struggle than live in the filth.' Cali, Colombia, May 1.

In fact, it's a military coup "Colombian style," since the legal formalities are maintained without abandoning extensive repression and without renouncing the systematic extermination of those who persist in protesting. The worst military dictatorships of the Southern Cone did the same thing, and in many respects, today it's even worse.

In such circumstances, what should be the immediate tasks to take stock of what has been won, to correct the failures, to maintain the mobilization and to anticipate the battles of the future?

Mechanisms of joint action

To begin with, there is an obvious need to effectively coordinate the different citizen voices that are part of the protest. It is a matter of creating mechanisms of joint action between the various collectives and organizations which are part of the Strike Committee to combine with the multiple expressions of popular protest in urban neighborhoods, rural peasant roads and neighborhood communes (the so-called First Line, for example).

These groups don't function with a traditional chain of command, the usual bureaucracy and formal administration of the processes (as labor unions do, for example). Their demands are legitimized through various forms of people's assemblies, in which the people exercise spontaneous and direct democracy.

In reality, this double aspect of social mobilization is not a phenomenon unique to Colombia. Nor is it new, since it appears in practically all protest movements that reach a certain size, especially when they are the result of unbearable living conditions for the majority of the population. It is a question of societies characterized by material poverty, social discrimination and very limited forms of political participation.

[The above dynamic] completely erases the legitimacy of the established order, as has just occurred in Chile, a highly regarded model of the neoliberal system, which has collapsed. Chile is preparing to replace the constitution inherited from Pinochet's military dictatorship, which is still in force.

The Chilean example is a good reference to consider because of its similarities with Colombia. [The peoples of the two Andean countries are historically linked.] Traditional forms of organization (unions and parties) coincide in the socio-political mobilization with a fresh and vigorous force of spontaneous forms committed to the common struggle.

A common program

In addition to the construction of mechanisms to coordinate the struggles, it is fundamental that the Colombian movement make advances in formulating a common program. This program would gather the diverse demands and give them due priorities, distinguishing what can be achieved immediately from what reforms are only viable in the medium and long term, always judging by the correlation of existing forces and those that might be generated.

It is also pertinent to consider that, in so many cases, the reforms sought depend on their very nature. Some can be carried out immediately, but others may require several generations with a very firm social purpose and an almost heroic commitment.

Industrializing the country is one example. To overcome its current condition as a [dependent] expendable economy -- a simple supplier of raw materials and cheap labor to metropolitan economies -- is not something that can be achieved without great sacrifices. Radically changing the economic model demands an adequate balance between spending and investment. There would also be a corollary maximum reduction of certain consumer goods, even an elimination of some, in order to generate the necessary resources.

It is also necessary to overcome the current neoliberal culture, that social Darwinism that promotes above all a fierce and uncaring individualism. This is another of the tasks that a real transformation imposes as necessary and that can only be achieved through new education and new social practices that are only slowly taking hold.

These two examples show how indispensable it is to advance in the formulation of a program of reforms that gather the majority yearnings of the population but that at the same time have a high dose of realism, that correspond in their application to the real correlation of social and political forces.

That this process might allow the movement to turn the human tide of the moment into a decisive force at the polls next year (parliamentary and presidential) must be a decision as consensual as possible, overcoming sectarianism and various weaknesses. The human tide that is seen daily defying death in the streets and in the public squares could pursue paths other than electoral ones (for example, an indefinite national strike), but only if its goals are realistic and practical and not wild adventures. For dreams, there will always be time. Those who are leading the struggle on the Front Line and within the Strike Committee are facing a great challenge. ❐

U.S., Britain, NATO threaten Russia in Black Sea

By John Catalinotto

June 27 — The Biden administration took extra steps to prove that President Joe Biden's summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin included no concessions. In both words and deeds, last week's events indicated a resumption of the Cold War — this time not against the Soviet Union but against capitalist Russia.

First, the words. Jake Sullivan, Biden's national security adviser, said on Fox News Sunday that "President Biden communicated to President Putin that there would be costs and consequences if harmful activities against the United States continue." (New York Times, June 20) Sullivan failed to provide any proof of Russia's role in "harmful activities."

Only days later, the deeds. British warships in the Black Sea sailed within two miles of the Russian coast near Crimea — where Russia bases its Black Sea Fleet. Russian patrol boats threatened to fire, and Russian planes buzzed the warships. The British claimed they were defending freedom of the seas.

In response to the British provocations, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told Russian news agencies that, "We can appeal to common sense, demand respect for international law, and if that doesn't work, we can bomb."

The Crimea pretext

Crimea was part of Russia until 1954, when Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev ceded the peninsula to the Ukrainian Socialist Republic, when Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union. At the time, the mostly symbolic transfer had no impact on the status of the naval base at Sevastopol and little on the condition of the population of Crimea, who were mainly Russian speaking.

When a right-wing coup seized Ukraine with imperialist aid in 2014, Russia, which had continued to use the naval base since the end of the Soviet Union, held and won a referendum among the Crimean population and took the peninsula back. Since then the imperialists have used Russia's seizure of Crimea as a pretext to impose sanctions and threaten Russia's military.

A 12-day Black Seas naval exercise called Sea Breeze 2021, led by the U.S. Navy, has followed the British provocation. In total, 32 countries are involved either as participants or observers. The 32 include many NATO members and U.S. client states Egypt, South Korea and the United Arab Emirates.

According to the U.S. Navy, the exercise will involve over 5,000 troops, 32 ships and 40 aircraft. This exercise has been held annually since 1997. This one is co-hosted by the Ukrainian Navy and the U.S. Navy's Sixth Fleet. (Defense News, June 21)

These military exercises are really war provocations meant to put pressure on Russia. They follow on the heels of Defender Europe 21, which rolled tens of thousands of troops and tanks toward the Russian border. ❐

WW COMMENTARY

Capitalism behind fatal building disasters

By Kathy Durkin

June 28 — Two preventable catastrophes caused by capitalist greed in housing construction occurred four years and thousands of miles apart, and in both cases the tragic loss of human life was horrendous. While Florida's building collapse is affecting a more affluent grouping in the U.S., the earlier disaster at Grenfell Tower in England impacted a lower-income community, with a majority of people of color, many of them immigrants.

They have faced racism, anti-immigrant bigotry and reactionary politicians' resistance in their quest for safety measures in housing and justice for those who died and survivors.

Both were avoidable human tragedies.

Florida building before and after collapse

Florida: 2021

It took 11 seconds for a catastrophe to occur in Surfside, Fla., near Miami. Half of the 12-story Champlain Tower South suddenly collapsed in the early hours of June 25, leaving 10 people dead and 151 missing under the rubble. Emergency rescue teams are working hard using heavy equipment, trying to find survivors.

But their intensive labor has not resulted in good news for the loved ones of the unaccounted for residents. Their losses are becoming a reality, as hope wanes for the missing.

Building residents include many people who emigrated from Latin America and their visitors. Young children, adults and seniors are missing. A Jewish community has also been impacted.

The day after the cave-in, Surfside city officials released documents written by engineers hired by the condominium association in 2018. They found "major structural damage" to the concrete slab below the pool deck and "abundant cracking and crumbling of the building's columns, beams and walls of the parking garage under the building." (New York Times, June 27)

Written recommendations for repairs were sent to condominium association officials Oct. 8, 2018. The engineers warned: "Failure to replace the [deteriorating] waterproofing in the near future will cause the extent of the concrete damage to expand exponentially." (USA Today, June 27)

Yet, the consultants' alarming report was not acted on before the disaster occurred. The estimated cost of repairs was $12 million.

A class action lawsuit has already been filed against the condominium association, alleging it was negligent and disregarded safety measures. It maintains the disaster was preventable. The legal action is seeking financial damages for all tower residents.

For years, there has been a boom in residential housing construction in Florida. And just as capital flows to where profits are greatest, it is also true that investors or realtors strive to hold down costs in order to increase earnings. In other words, much building is done on the cheap: cutting corners, using less costly materials and ignoring safety requirements.

London: 2017

June 14 was the fourth anniversary of a horrific fire that swept through Grenfell Tower in North Kensington in West London, killing 72 residents. The 24-story building housed workers and low-income families, many refugees and first- and second-generation immigrants. Those who died represented 19 nationalities, many from the Middle East and Africa.

They lived near the wealthiest area of London. This needless tragedy starkly revealed a "tale of two cities," with working-class immigrants and other people of color living right next to opulent wealth, yet residing in faulty, cheaply made and potentially dangerous buildings.

A major cause of this inferno was the use of cheaper, more combustible cladding to envelope the building. This enabled the fire to spread quickly. There was only one escape route. There were no sprinklers, no regulations requiring fire-retardant cladding, and the nearby fire service had been hit by budget cuts. Before the disaster, residents had complained regularly about the lack of fire safety measures.

According to Justice4Grenfell, which memorializes the 72 victims of the conflagration: "Despite public outcry at the time and continuous campaigning from many groups, still no one has been held accountable for the disaster at Grenfell. Firms involved were granted immunity from prosecution if they gave evidence at the inquiry. More tower block fires have occurred since then, and even today up to 11 million people may live in properties with unsafe cladding."

The organization emphasizes: "Phase 1 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry made 46 recommendations, only for Tory MPs to vote down an amendment to implement them."

Nabil Choucair, who lost six family members, said, "I fear that those responsible for the fire are going to get away with murder."

The Grenfell survivors and their allies are still fighting for justice. ☐

France

Laid-off workers take over McDonald's, feed the hungry

By G. Dunkel

Marseille is the second largest city in France. It is a very old city, founded around 500 BCE because it was a great port with an immense hinterland. It is still economically significant; after World War II, it and the surrounding Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur region, were the destination for thousands of migrants, many from North Africa.

Some of these migrants were "pied-noirs," small-time French settlers driven out of Algeria by the victory of the Algerian revolution. Some were "harkis," Algerians who fought for the French, and others were North Africans looking for work who had supported the Algerian Revolution.

Marseille is in a region of France where the right, and especially the far right whose party is the National Rally (RN), has significant political strength but not total sway. The RN came in first in the first round of regional voting June 20.

The 14th Arrondissement of Marseille had a poverty rate of 35%, even before the pandemic, and an unemployment rate higher than the rest of the city; its population is predominantly North African migrants and their descendants.

In Marseille, France, the community wants to turn a closed McDonalds into a people's restaurant.

McDonald's shut down its restaurant in this neighborhood December 2019, claiming it was unprofitable. One hundred people lost their jobs. But workers decided they would occupy the building and set up an association called the After-M (l'après M). They wanted to turn the page while keeping a reference to the past. (tinyurl.com/wvvtwmjh)

They had support from some progressive forces in Marseille city government and people who work with José Bové, a prominent French farmer activist. A number of the leaders of the After-M had ties to social welfare programs in Marseille.

When the first lockdown was imposed in France, the 14th Arrondissement was hit hard, and many families started to go hungry. But the After-M was set up and could distribute food baskets and prepare vegan burgers, veggie burgers and other prepared foods. It has handled over 100,000 requests for food since the pandemic hit.

There is a lot of effort going into giving the After-M movement a permanent place in the social welfare programs in Marseille. There is a subscription drive that has been organized to let the neighborhood participate in buying buildings from McDonald's, and the city government might be able to provide some cash.

Preliminary results in the June 27 election, taking place as this article was being written, have the RN losing by 7 or 8 percentage points to their center-right opponents. Given that the RN had won the first round of voting last week in a very fragmented race by about this percentage, losing in the second round is a sharp rebuke. ☐

Brazil protests

'Vaccine in arm, food on plate, Bolsonaro out!'

By John Catalinotto

Organizers say some three-quarters of a million people demonstrated in over 400 cities in Brazil and around the world on June 19 to demand "Vaccine in the arm, food on the plate and [President Jair] Bolsonaro out." (Brasil de Fato, June 19)

Those responsible for calling the actions included the Brazil Popular Front and People Without Fear, along with workers' organizations, Indigenous people, religious groups and others. The protests continued anti-Bolsonaro actions of May 29 that drew out people in more than 200 towns and cities in all of Brazil's 26 states.

June 19 was also the day the official death toll from COVID-19 in Brazil climbed above the half-million mark. Bolsonaro has outdone even Donald Trump in denying the danger of the pandemic. On June 18, he publicly minimized the importance of getting vaccinated. Despite Brazil's previously efficient public health system, only 40 percent of the population has received even one dose.

Former president and former political prisoner Luis Ignacio "Lula" da Silva accused Bolsonaro of genocide over his mishandling of the COVID-19 crisis. Lula is expected to run again in the 2022 presidential election. He was forbidden to participate in the 2018 election, which Bolsonaro won, but is now way ahead of Bolsonaro in opinion polls.

Despite the ever decreasing lack of popular support for Bolsonaro, who is a near-fascist, he maintains the loyal support of Brazil's police forces. They have been carrying out massacres in the favelas, the poor neighborhoods near or in the large cities where many of the poorest Brazilians live and where the majority are people of African descent. ☐

São Paulo, June 19, poster asks for Bolsonaro's imprisonment.

WORKERS WORLD
editorial

Reparations! Bring Indigenous children home!

Continued from page 1

was the official aim all along.

On May 28, when Chief Rosanne Casimir of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation confirmed at least 215 graves of Indigenous children were at the Kamloops Residential School in British Columbia, she said what the nation called "the knowing" about missing children generated the search. Her mother and grandmother had shared stories of abuses at the schools. She told the Toronto Star: "It's our history, and it's something we've always had to fight to prove." (May 28)

In the U.S. and Canada for over a hundred years, Indigenous and First Nations children were kidnapped from their families and communities into state-funded, sometimes military-run, Christian schools. They were forcibly converted to Christianity, physically beaten, sexually abused, traumatized by having their hair cut short and tortured for speaking their own languages. Thousands died from malnutrition, illness and broken hearts. Children who were still with their people lived in perpetual fear that "they will come and take you away."

The war on the children was part of overall all-out war by colonizers on Native peoples throughout the North American continent — using strategies of subjugation, segregation and assimilation that included physical genocide, land theft, exile and cultural genocide.

This war on children was unmistakably, undeniably a policy of the colonizing state. The most infamous "school" for Indigenous children in the U.S. — the Carlisle Industrial School in Pennsylvania — was established by Capt. Richard Henry Pratt, who served for 30 years as both a U.S. Army officer and the school's superintendent.

The colonizing states of North America came into existence through the genocide of Indigenous peoples. The "apologies" offered by the states now are meaningless. Note the bitter fact that the U.S. apology was a general resolution stuck into the 2010 Defense Act by Congress. It described genocide mildly as "instances of violence, maltreatment, and neglect." It was brutally clear: Nothing in the resolution "authorizes or supports any legal claims against the U.S., and the resolution does not settle any claims." (indianlaw.org/node/529)

Ongoing crimes against Indigenous peoples continue — from polluting pipelines across traditional lands to seizure of Indigenous children from mothers at birth through the ploy of declaring the mother not fit for care, along with an epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and Two Spirits.

The practices of settler-colonialist genocide by the state have never ceased; they are simply carried out differently.

And the resistance of Indigenous and First Nations people to genocide has never ceased. Ronalee Lavallee, a student at one of the Canadian schools in the 1960s and 1970s, recalls that many students who spoke Cree would spend their nights secretly teaching the language to others. (Washington Post, June 24)

Indigenous peoples are calling for reparations. They demand all the unmarked graves of the children be found and identified, the children returned to their families and nations, and reparations be paid to their families.

Above all they are demanding land reparations: Land Back! This includes regaining First Peoples' homelands; stopping environmental devastation; assuring all communities have clean water, adequate housing and health care; protecting sacred places to steward the environment on this continent; and the power to say no to projects, plans and policies that affect the people and their lands.

In a June 3 article in Indigenous Climate Action, Eriel Delanger sums up why these demands are needed: "So we can heal on the land, and begin to repair the deep wounds of disconnection from our human and non-human kin. It needs to be affirmed that we are people of the land, and that our language, our culture and our identities are connected to these places our parents and grandparents were ripped from. We need Land Back." (tinyurl.com/3u3wtjwr)

Bring them home! Land back! Reparations! ☐

WW COMMENTARY

What real justice will look like

By Monica Moorehead

Derek Chauvin, the white police officer convicted of lynching 46-year-old George Floyd May 25, 2020, was sentenced June 25 in Minneapolis, Minn., to 22 1/2 years in prison. Chauvin faced upwards of 40 years when a jury unanimously convicted him in April of second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter.

Chauvin still faces two federal charges — one for violating the civil rights of Floyd and the second indictment for hitting a 14-year-old Black youth in the head with a flashlight and kneeling on him in 2017. The three other officers involved in Floyd's murder — J. Alexander Kueng, Thomas K. Lane and Tou Thao — face similar federal charges and are scheduled to go to trial March 2022 on state charges for complicity in Floyd's killing.

Minneapolis protest, June 25.

Floyd's family, along with many activists, felt that the sentence handed down by Hennepin County District Judge Peter A. Cahill was too lenient, considering the fact that Chauvin will be eligible for parole in less than 15 years. The time he spent in jail between his arrest last year until June 25 is counted towards his sentence.

Rev. Al Sharpton stated: "This is the longest sentence they've ever given, but this is not justice. Justice is George Floyd would be alive. Justice is if they had done sentences like this before, maybe Chauvin would have thought he would have not gotten away with it." (Washington Post, June 25)

Nothing has changed

It bears remembering that the reason why Chauvin and the other three officers complicit in Floyd's murder were indicted at all was because of Darnella Frazier, a then 17-year-old Black woman who bravely videotaped the 9 minutes and 29 seconds of Chauvin's knee on Floyd's neck as he pleaded for his mom until he stopped breathing.

After the video of the lynching was made public, mass rebellions and protests erupted not only in Minneapolis but throughout the country and around the world, especially since it took days for Chauvin to be charged and arrested. These multinational, multigender, multigenerational protests, led by the Black Lives Matter movement, impacted every aspect of society including sports and entertainment, especially throughout the summer.

The naked brutality of the police with tear gas, rubber bullets and night sticks was put on full public display during peaceful and militant protests. Confederate statues and other symbols of white supremacy from the North to the South and worldwide were brought down by protesters.

It is very rare that police officers like Chauvin are arrested, much less convicted and sentenced for killing any person, be they white or a person of color, unless sustained mass pressure from below becomes a decisive factor. Policing as a force in a society based on classes, like the U.S., is above the law. Police are mandated with the unprecedented authority to become judge, jury and executioner by a still-majority, white ruling clique of corporate billionaires.

Nothing has changed before or after the Chauvin conviction and sentencing, in terms of Black and Brown people being racially targeted by the police. Nothing has changed for the families of Tamir Rice, Michael Brown, Rekia Boyd, Sandra Bland, Breonna Taylor, Shantel Davis, Elijah McClain, Walter Wallace Jr. and countless others calling for any kind of justice, whether these deaths were videotaped or not.

As an act of solidarity, it is important to defend the right of the victims' families and oppressed communities under constant police occupation to demand that accountability be arrests, convictions and jail time for killer cops. However, it is just as important for revolutionaries and socialists to call for the abolition of not only the police and other other repressive arms like ICE, but for the abolition of capitalism, a system that puts the profits of the superrich before the needs of the people. One cannot exist without the other. ☐

Marxism, Reparations & the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper.
Edited by Monica Moorehead.

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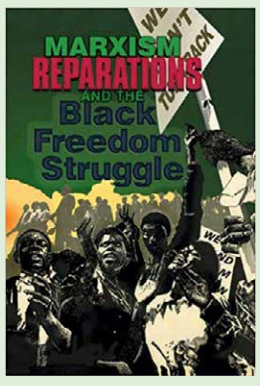

COVER GRAPHIC: SAHU BARRON

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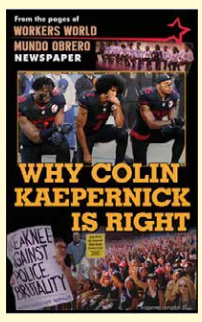

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Corporate and state terror drives forced displacement

By Tania Siddiki

Karachi — On June 6, the Sindh Action Committee organized a protest and sit-in to draw attention to the systematic and continuous violence that Bahria Town Karachi (BTK) inflicted on Indigenous peoples. Dawn reports that up to 10,000 protesters demonstrated outside of BTK's main entrance gate, condemning the real estate corporation for robbing Indigenous peoples of their ancestral land and forcing them out of their homes. (Dawn, Jun. 21) As the action progressed, chaos ensued within Bahria Town's master-planned community. BTK's entrance gate was set on fire, prompting police to unleash terror against the protesters.

Along with dispersing tear gas and shooting rubber bullets at demonstrators, law enforcement kidnapped and caged 150 protesters, including children who were present at the protest. In response to state-sanctioned terror, Karachi Bachao Tehreek (Save Karachi Movement) released a statement to shed light on the events that occurred June 6. KBT explained that the damage that took place "is nothing compared to the loss to [I]ndigenous population of goths [villages], whose land has been illegally usurped, and lives and livelihoods ruthlessly destroyed."

KBT urged those in solidarity with Indigenous people to focus on the acts of violence carried out by institutions that uphold and maintain oppressive power — the state and corporations.

Protesters denounce Bahria Town Karachi destruction of Indigenous peoples' villages.

Since Workers World newspaper last reported on land-grabbing atrocities in Karachi, Pakistan, both state and corporate entities have been working in partnership to restrict the people's resistance against forced displacement.

On June 14, the Sindh High Court ruled in favor of state and corporate violence and held that the workers' homes along the Gujjar Nala and Orangi Nala are illegal and removed all stay order protections. Now, 100,000 people — including 21,000 children — face the possibility of becoming homeless. (The News International, Jun. 14) The court's brutal decision is only one of the many blatant attacks against the people and the people's power.

One week after the court ruling, Gujjar Nala and Orangi Nala affectees organized a sit-in outside of Bilawal House. The demonstration was an act of resistance against the Sindh Government's plan to construct 30-foot-wide roads alongside the Gujjar Nala and Orangi Nala — projects that only serve capitalist endeavors and are a primary cause for demolishing homes.

Before the demonstration the state attempted to deter Gujjar Nala and Orangi Nala affectees from participating in the action. On June 21, Khurram Ali, General Secretary of Awami Workers Party-Karachi (AWP Karachi), disclosed that police raided Gujjar Nala Mutasireen Committee (GNMC)'s office at Kausar Niazi in an attempt to arrest Abid Asghar, one of the leading members of GNMC. Ali shared that police confiscated AWP Karachi's protest materials to discourage affectees from exercising people's power.

KBT reported that police were following affectees who were on their way to the protest in an attempt to prevent them from reaching the protest site. At the sit-in, police continued to terrorize the protesters by kidnapping demonstrators, stealing their banners and posters and pressuring them into going home.

In response to state-sanctioned violence, Awami Workers Party called a countrywide day of action June 28 against land grab and forced displacements — barbaric acts against the people. In observance with AWP's call to action, protests occurred in Lahore, Karachi, Hunza, Moro, Islamabad, Hyderabad, Ghotki and many other places.

In Pakistan, the political climate is brimming with potential and possibility. Across the country, workers are rejecting the state and corporate entities' efforts to further encroach on the people's right to self-determination. The state-sanctioned housing catastrophe was intended to disappear Pakistan's working class. However, workers refuse to give in to the oppressors' demands.

Moreover, the demonstrations against forced displacement show signs of a movement in the making. Workers World Party extends deep solidarity to those who continue to resist state terror and who demand dignity and housing for all workers. Say NO to Bahria Town! Housing for All! Build a workers' world! ❐

WW COMMENTARY

On defending socialism

By Olujimi Alade

June 7, 2021 was a meeting I have been looking forward to. It was the first time I was able to meet in person with comrades in over a year. Zoom meetings were nice but nothing like conversing face-to-face with your fellow revolutionaries.

The meeting went great as usual. We were discussing ways to build a workers' assembly, and the conversation turned to how to engage members of the working class and draw them over to radical thought. How do we engage with people who hold reactionary views?

Being an avid YouTube watcher, I worried about the reactionary messages and rhetoric about socialist countries gaining ground on that platform and was concerned how this could translate outside of a virtual setting. We need a way to have discourse with potential cadre who may have been led astray by such anti-communist talking points — they could prove harmful to the working-class movement.

A lot of workers — well-meaning potential cadres — fall victim to believing what they hear on mainstream media and not necessarily all from the right. Some liberal sources view socialism as a type of reform, not understanding the essence of socialism. This could leave workers open to buying into more reactionary positions.

Reactionary rhetoric can take many shapes and forms; a very common type is slandering existing efforts to build socialism, both past and present. As more and more young people are being drawn to socialism, the bourgeois ruling class has acquired a vested interest in degrading socialist countries in the Global South, in addition to the former USSR.

We need an opportunity for education, not just on what socialism is, but how it is put into practice. On how existing socialist countries and those working to build socialism challenge U.S. imperialism. We need to demystify them — humanize them, much like we have been doing about Palestine.

The more I was educated, the more my views changed.

How do we engage with people who may not understand this? Speaking from my own perspective, I had a lot of reactionary views myself — born out of ignorance. The more I was educated, the more these views changed. This holds true for most workers.

It wasn't too long ago that I believed Joseph Stalin was a ruthless dictator, not too long ago that I thought Mao Zedong was a bloodthirsty maniac who murdered millions of people. It wasn't too long ago when I believed with all my heart that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was the biggest threat to world peace and was ready to nuke the world.

Jimi Alade at Philadelphia May Day 2021 WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

As a former liberal or democrat, I've been misled by arguments not only from conservatives but by liberals and other leftists who have been misled by U.S. imperialist fabrications about socialist countries. The people who I was getting this information from weren't the usual suspects, Daily Wire or PragerU, they were from liberal centrist teachers, professors, classmates, etc. Even during my earliest days as a communist, I still had reservations about socialism working due to lingering beliefs about communist revolutionaries.

Sometimes this subterfuge is effective, and rather than pursuing true radical and revolutionary praxis, potential cadres, intimidated by conservative nonsense about socialist countries, pursue more moderate and reformist ideologies like social democracy.

When I finally listened to a podcast featuring Marxist-Leninists who thoroughly debunked many of the half-truths and fabrications about Stalin and the USSR, this played a pivotal role in turning me into a revolutionary, and it pushed me to read more about the history of the USSR. Further interactions with comrades in Workers World Party further educated me about the impact socialist movements have had and continue to have on the global proletariat.

Going forward, when sharing how we can dispel common myths about current socialist movements, I should be cognizant about highlighting my views and experiences before I arrived at Marxism-Leninism. With the Biden administration cracking down on anti-capitalists, the corporate media machine fanning the flames for war with China and with U.S. imperialist hegemony threatening the DPRK, Cuba, Bolivia, Venezuela and Peru, it is important for leftists to educate ourselves and potential cadre about the triumphs of those countries against insurmountable odds.

Socialist countries and countries with socialist leaders are inspiring the working class all over the world. We need to be their best advocates and argue on their behalf. We owe it to our comrades here and around the world to do so. ❐

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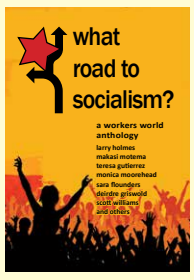

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Embajada de Israel en Ankara, Turquía, el 15 de mayo: 'Todxs unidxs por una Palestina libre.'

La resistencia palestina fuerza cambios en el régimen sionista

COMENTARIO DE WW

Por Michael Kramer

El Estado colono israelí respaldado por Estados Unidos y la OTAN se ha visto obligado a un cambio de liderazgo por la firme unidad y resistencia del pueblo palestino a su ocupación y opresión. Otro factor ha sido la explosión de la solidaridad internacional en todo el mundo alineada con su lucha anticolonial y antiapartheid.

Benjamín Netanyahu, que ocupó el cargo de 1996 a 1999 y de nuevo de 2009 a 2021, está fuera como primer ministro de larga duración. Naftali Bennett está dentro. Como todos los movimientos políticos burgueses, el sionismo tiene múltiples tendencias y facciones. Tanto Netanyahu como Bennett han vivido durante largos periodos de tiempo en Estados Unidos como adultos y son aliados. Provienen de la misma tendencia sionista de derecha, abiertamente racista y pro-apartheid, pero son líderes de sus propias facciones o partidos políticos.

Estas tendencias sólo difieren en cómo tratar la resistencia palestina a la ocupación israelí. Algunos sionistas piden expulsiones masivas de palestinos y una nueva "Nakba", en referencia a la "catástrofe" de 1948, cuando los palestinos fueron expulsados por la fuerza de sus hogares y granjas. Otros enarbolan la bandera de la socialdemocracia.

Los partidos políticos de estas facciones suelen tener su base en diferentes comunidades de la población de colonos de Israel, como las religiosas, las laicas, las de habla rusa o las mizrachi, es decir, las de herencia norteafricana e iraquí.

Sin embargo, todas las tendencias y facciones coinciden en cuestiones fundamentales: No se concederán derechos democráticos al pueblo palestino; las leyes del apartheid permanecerán intactas, y no habrá "derecho de retorno" a su patria ancestral para los millones de refugiados palestinos que se ven obligados a vivir en otros países.

"Divide y vencerás" ha sido una herramienta del imperialismo occidental contra los pueblos indígenas durante siglos, desde América del Norte hasta África Oriental y Occidental, Oriente Medio y otros lugares. Puede funcionar durante un tiempo. Esta estrategia ha fracasado en Palestina.

18 de mayo: La huelga unificada provoca una gran conmoción

La prueba está en la histórica huelga general de los trabajadores palestinos del 18 de mayo. Fue una gran derrota política para la ocupación sionista y un golpe psicológico para su población de colonos israelíes. El mensaje de esta tremenda acción fue visto y comprendido por la administración Biden, el Congreso de Estados Unidos y varias facciones del movimiento sionista.

Los cientos de miles de palestinos que se manifestaron en las calles de Haifa, Lod, Jerusalén, Ramallah, Nablus y Gaza echaron por tierra el plan israelí, respaldado por Estados Unidos, de dividir a esta población en función de su lugar de residencia, según el momento en que comenzaron las ocupaciones militares de sus tierras, ya sea en 1948 o en 1967.

Además, la gran y creciente ola de solidaridad internacional con el pueblo palestino se ha sumado a la crisis cada vez más profunda en la que se encuentra el Estado colono israelí.

Reformar la dirección sionista o reiniciar la Knesset (Parlamento) israelí no supondrá ninguna diferencia para quienes viven bajo la ocupación o para quienes se solidarizan con ellos. Todo el proyecto sionista está en una trayectoria descendente.

Los partidarios y aliados de Palestina sólo pueden esperar el día en que el pueblo palestino ponga en marcha un sistema operativo completamente nuevo en su patria.

Kramer vivió en Israel y sirvió en las Fuerzas de Defensa israelíes durante la guerra árabe-israelí de 1973. Desde hace mucho tiempo es partidario de la autodeterminación palestina.

Haití

Guerra de guerrillas y COVID-19 estallan

Por G. Dunkel

Desde principios de junio, se produjeron tiroteos entre las milicias armadas de los barrios de Puerto Príncipe, la capital de Haití, en los que a veces participaba la policía cuando se atacaban sus comisarías. Cuando se hizo evidente que algunas de estas milicias tenían más poder de fuego que los cuerpos de seguridad de los barrios ricos, se desató el pánico general. (Haïti Liberté, 2 de junio)

En ese periodo, nueve comisarías fueron atacadas, con robo de armas y la muerte de un inspector de policía haitiano. Según un informe reciente de la Red Nacional de Defensa de los Derechos Humanos, más de 30 policías han muerto en enfrentamientos desde principios de año. (Miami Herald, 15 de junio)

Hay alianzas cambiantes entre estos grupos. Algunos de ellos parecen tener vínculos con la policía, ya que tienen uniformes, chalecos antibalas, dispositivos de comunicación y armas utilizadas por la Policía Nacional de Haití. Algunos de ellos se dedican al secuestro y a otras formas de extorsión; otros están destinados principalmente a la defensa del barrio.

Gran parte de los combates se produjeron en la zona sur de Puerto Príncipe, lo que llevó a miles de familias a refugiarse en el estadio deportivo de Carrefour, al sur de la capital, por invitación del alcalde Jude Édouard Pierre. Según UNICEF, cerca de 8.500 mujeres y niños han tenido que huir de sus hogares en las últimas dos semanas, mientras que unas 600.000 personas en todo el país se han visto afectadas por los combates.

Hay otra situación que afecta a la economía haitiana. Electricidad de Haití (EDH) es el proveedor nacional de energía eléctrica con una importante instalación hidroeléctrica en Péligre, en el centro de Haití, cerca de la frontera con la República Dominicana. EDH no ha podido satisfacer las necesidades de electricidad de Haití.

Desde el 15 de junio, algunos guardias de seguridad de EDH ocupan la planta e impiden que se realicen las reparaciones necesarias. Están molestos, ya que se descubrió una estafa de corrupción desarrollada por estos guardias, que implica a empleados "fantasmas". (Alter Presse, 18 de junio)

Las familias se refugian en el centro deportivo de Carrefour.

El COVID-19 abruma a los hospitales

Hasta el 10 de junio, las autoridades de salud pública afirman que Haití ha registrado 16.662 infecciones y 358 muertes por COVID-19, en este país de 11,5 millones de habitantes. Estas cifras no revelan toda la magnitud de la crisis. Casi todos los días, los representantes de los hospitales de Puerto Príncipe afirman en la radio que sus instalaciones están llenas, que se han quedado sin oxígeno y que no tienen sitio para más pacientes, a pesar de que la mayoría tiene medios económicos.

Hasta el 19 de junio, no parece que el sistema de salud pública haitiano haya suministrado ni una sola vacuna. Los miembros de la élite que disponen de dinero, visados y previsión han volado fuera del país para vacunarse. Pero muchos otros, incluso los de la élite que carecen de estos recursos, se han contagiado del COVID y han muerto, según informan las necrológicas.

Además, los combates en Puerto Príncipe han creado obstáculos para el suministro de oxígeno a los hospitales. Un tanque sólo contiene suficiente oxígeno para cuatro horas de uso. Los tanques tienen que ser rellenados desde una instalación central.

"Como parte vital de nuestro compromiso de compartir al menos 80 millones de vacunas COVID-19 seguras y eficaces, la administración Biden se está comprometiendo activamente con los funcionarios del gobierno haitiano sobre cómo hacer llegar las vacunas a Haití lo antes posible", dijo un funcionario de la Casa Blanca al Miami Herald el 15 de junio. Pero "no se han ultimado los planes".

Dado que el gobierno de EE.UU. es propietario de todas las vacunas COVID-19 producidas en EE.UU., es poco probable que Haití reciba vacunas sin que Washington acepte la transferencia. Al parecer, los funcionarios del gobierno estadounidense dicen con arrogancia que no confían en que el sistema de salud de Haití sea capaz de distribuir las vacunas. Pero Washington podría ofrecer ayuda a Haití, el país más oprimido del hemisferio occidental.

Pero, ¿ofrecerá Estados Unidos ayuda? La larga historia de las relaciones entre Estados Unidos y Haití ilustra que el país más rico del mundo no moverá un dedo para ayudar al sistema sanitario de la nación insular.

Dado que Haití ni siquiera ha empezado a reconstruir el principal hospital público de Puerto Príncipe, destruido en el terremoto de 2010, es muy poco probable que el país pueda mejorar su sistema de salud pública lo suficiente como para satisfacer las exigencias de Estados Unidos. En particular, mientras Estados Unidos ha tomado los recursos de Haití durante décadas y ha superexplotado su fuerza de trabajo, Washington no ha proporcionado el tipo de ayuda que Haití necesita.

Sin embargo, la Cuba socialista ha proporcionado una ayuda médica y unos trabajadores sanitarios ejemplares para asistir a Haití. El ex presidente haitiano y líder popular de masas, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, será tratado de COVID en Cuba.

El control abierto y encubierto de Estados Unidos sobre Haití

En caso de que los intereses del imperialismo estadounidense se vean directamente desafiados o amenazados, se utiliza la fuerza militar. Pero dado el actual clima internacional, Estados Unidos prefiere una fuerza indirecta. Por ejemplo, después de que Estados Unidos ocupara Haití en marzo de 2004, una fuerza de la ONU llamada MINUSTA reemplazo a los soldados de Estados Unidos despues de tres meses.

Hay 150.000 haitianos viviendo en Estados Unidos que se benefician de los visados de "Estatus de Protección Temporal", que se otorgan para permitir a los ciudadanos de un país en dificultades permanecer y trabajar aquí. Mientras que la anterior administración pretendía poner fin al TPS para los haitianos, la administración Biden prorrogó estos visados durante 18 meses más el 22 de mayo.

Si Estados Unidos busca ejercer una presión más sutil sobre Haití, Washington puede ralentizar o detener las remesas o eliminar los visados TPS entre bastidores. Cualquiera de las dos tácticas es un doloroso golpe dirigido al pueblo haitiano. □