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COVID, health crisis

Release Mumia now!

By Betsey Piette  
Philadelphia

Word has come that Pennsylvania political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal has tested positive for COVID-19. Supporters learned of the diagnosis March 3, as they were gathered in front of the office of Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner to call for Abu-Jamal’s release and that of all incarcerated people over 50, who are vulnerable to premature death from COVID-19 and other illnesses.

Johanna Fernandez, with the Campaign to Bring Mumia Home, received word from Abu-Jamal’s medical attorney Robert Boyle confirming a diagnosis all had feared. Abu-Jamal, who had been hospitalized to remove excessive fluid from his lungs, was also diagnosed with congestive heart disease.

Fernandez described speaking with Abu-Jamal on Feb. 26, noticing his speech was altered. “He reported having labored breathing and feeling a weight he



Johanna Fernandez speaks outside the Philadelphia DA’s office, March 3. WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

described as ‘having a little elephant on my chest.’ Mumia rarely complains about his health. We immediately mobilized to put pressure on the prison system to test him for COVID-19.”

Initially SCI Mahanoy officials said Abu-Jamal’s COVID-19 tests were negative. His supporters, however, aware of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections’ historic neglect of serious health conditions for Mumia and other incarcerated people, posted an alert calling on prison officials to seek additional health treatment. It appears that this international pressure campaign made a difference.

Fernandez reported that 66-year-old Abu-Jamal has severe liver damage, because in the past the PA DOC had delayed treatment for his hepatitis C. “Prisons in the U.S. are a death trap. U.S. prisons have resisted decarceration under COVID-19, yet countries around the world, including Iran and Italy, have had mass release of prisoners.

“There were over 500,000 unnecessary deaths in the U.S. because of COVID-19. Who are we as a society — willing to allow elderly people, disproportionately Black and Latinx, to die prematurely and unnecessarily because of the vindictiveness of the criminal justice system?”

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Workers are not robots

Racism, high-tech speedup and the Amazon union drive

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

A historic organizing drive is underway in Bessemer, Ala., at the Amazon BHM1 warehouse. Almost 6,000 majority-Black workers — almost half women — are deciding whether to unionize with the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU). Voting is continuing until March 29.

If the workers succeed, they will form the first-ever union inside Amazon in the U.S. — a huge victory against the international capitalist behemoth.

According to BAmazonUnion.org, workers are fighting for “dignity and respect” along with safer working conditions. Theirs is both a civil rights and a

labor struggle. They are part of the proud history of the Bessemer-Birmingham area’s Black community, from the independent, interracial unionism of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers in the 1930s and 40s to the 1963 Children’s March against racist segregation.

Amazon’s system is entrenched in racism, as revealed Feb. 26 by Vox/Recode. Review of internal data and interviews with workers and diversity managers showed that Black Amazon employees are underrepresented in decision teams, promoted less frequently and assessed more harshly than non-Black peers. (tinyurl.com/kjuvs9k6)

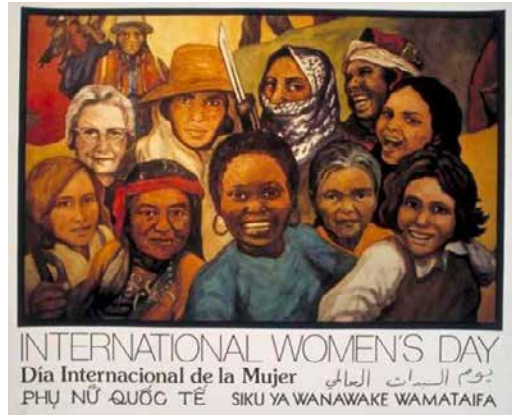
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## Bosses retaliate against Hunts Point workers

Business retaliation against union organizing is nothing new. Weak laws and minimal fines embolden corporations like Amazon to hire strikebreaking law firms to intimidate workers into voting down attempts to unionize their workplace. Workers who strike or successfully organize face the threat of losing their jobs.

Teamsters Local 202 reports that at least 26 union members from Hunts Point Produce Market in New York City have been laid off since work resumed following the strike for a \$1 an hour pay increase. These essential workers continued to work 12-hour shifts throughout the pandemic. Hunts Point Market is a vital link in the food distribution system for this country.

Proving that the layoffs are retaliatory is difficult and labor laws don't go far enough to protect workers' organizing efforts. (tinyurl.com/87776sh8)

## Workers with disabilities fight in Cincinnati

Visually impaired and blind workers, who are two-thirds of the workforce at a factory run by the Cincinnati Association of the Blind and Visually Impaired, have petitioned management to address unfair labor and safety concerns. After the factory reopened following a pandemic-related shutdown, management failed to follow seniority rehiring rules. The complaint states several blind workers have been unfairly targeted and not reinstated.



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

Other workers were brought back and forced to work at different jobs for less pay. The company also removed safety barriers that had protected disabled workers from areas where heavy machinery is used. Dave Perry, a visually impaired member of Teamster Local 100 and factory worker, referenced Teamster organizers of the 1930s who preferred a short, page-long union contract. He said, “the bosses clearly seem to have more difficulty sticking to even that length of a contract without us making them do it.” (The Militant, March 8)

## Teachers union ties to Women’s History

Prior to the industrial revolution, teaching was a job for men. There was no public education system, and teaching was nothing like the profession it is today. Industrialization provided more work opportunities, and men moved on to better and higher paying jobs and away from teaching. Young women were tapped to become teachers to fill the gap, because of the expanding population in the late 19th century and the development of the public school system.

Patriarchy still defined the field. Women were paid less than their male counterparts and were forced to leave their positions when they married. Men were the administrators of the public school system. Women responded to this exploitation by demanding better conditions and equal pay. The Chicago Teachers Federation was formed in 1897 by teachers Catherine Coggin and Margaret Haley. It grew into what is today the American Federation of Teachers, one of the most powerful unions in the country. By the 1940s, the AFT was collectively bargaining with school boards.

Today, AFT and other teacher union locals in major cities across the country are fighting for the safety of their members. They are defying mayors and board of education officials by refusing to return to in-person classrooms until it is safe for both teachers and their students. They continue the legacy of the women who defied the patriarchal norms of the 19th and 20th centuries. (tinyurl.com/rmh957nw) □

## Join us in the fight for socialism!

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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# One year after her death

# Remembering Breonna Taylor

By Monica Moorehead

At first, few people knew of the heinous crime carried out by three white Louisville, Ky., police officers responsible for the murder of a 26-year-old African American emergency medical technician, Breonna Taylor, on March 13, 2020.

Taylor was shot multiple times while laying in her bed, when the police attempted to conduct a “no-knock” warrant for a phony drug bust at Taylor’s house. None of the police, including the one who fired the bullets that took Taylor’s life, were arrested or indicted for murder — not even manslaughter — by a Kentucky grand jury last September for this despicable act.

Taylor lost her life exactly two months and two weeks before a 46-year-old Black man, George Floyd, was publicly lynched by a white cop who applied pressure on his neck for almost nine minutes, until he lost consciousness and died for the entire world to see.

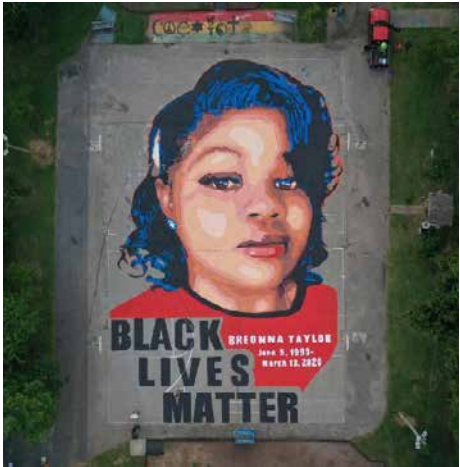
Millions of people inside the U.S. and worldwide organized daily rebellions and protests, including burning down a police station in Minneapolis to express their outrage over the systemic racism, especially the police terror that runs rampant in Black and Brown communities.

It was in the summer of 2020 during the upsurge in protests that activists outside the Louisville community learned about Taylor’s death, which then became

a main focal case for the Black Lives Matter movement around the country. National Basketball Association players, both women and men, wore warm-up T-shirts and sneakers with portraits of Breonna Taylor, demanding justice during their playoffs. NBA coaches wore similar shirts featuring her name.

Tennis champion, Naomi Osaka, wore a different mask for every match she played during the U.S. Open. Each mask included the name of someone who lost their lives like Taylor to help bring awareness that Black and Brown women are also victims of racist police violence.

It is important to use the occasion of Women’s History Month to keep in the forefront of the struggle names of Black



Breonna Taylor was honored with a 7,000-square-foot mural in Annapolis, Md.

and other women of color who bear the brunt of systemic racism and gender oppression of all forms, not only in the past but in the present. Breonna Taylor — #SayHerName. □

# Free Khalida Jarrar!

By Susan Abulhawa

*The author of this essay is a Palestinian writer, whose latest novel is “Against the Loveless World,” Atria, 2020.*

In advance of International Women’s Day on March 8, Israel sentenced one of Palestine’s most prominent women to two years in prison, in a military court wherein no evidence could be presented against her except her affiliation with an outlawed political organization.

Khalida Jarrar, a senior leader in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a Marxist-Leninist

organization, was arrested in her home in October 2019. Israel has imprisoned her since then without charge or trial, under their “administrative detention” protocols, which are reserved only for Palestinians, part of a legal apartheid system in which multiple tiers of law apply to citizens based on their religion and location.

Administrative detention allows Israel to imprison whomever it wants for three-to six-month periods, which can be renewed indefinitely. Detainees do not have a right to know the accusations or evidence leveled against them, nor can they appeal.

Israel has repeatedly imprisoned Jarrar through this apartheid system. In fact,

when she was arrested in October 2019, she had only been out of administrative detention for nine months. Prior to that, she was jailed without charge or trial for 20 months.

Women in Israeli prisons often report persistent humiliation and sexual abuse, typically by female Israeli guards, as well as other physical and psychological abuse and neglect.

The latest arrest comes just as Palestinians are preparing for



Khalida Jarrar, senior leader in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

long-awaited national elections, which have not taken place since 2006.

Prisoner rights organization Addameer reports at least 440 Palestinians have been detained since January, of whom 140 are children; 37 are women; and 9 are elected legislative members, bringing the total number of political prisoners to 4,500.

Without a hint of irony, Israel has criticized Saudi Arabia’s arrest of women political activists. □

# Depletion of fertile soil

# Could it trigger a bigger U.S. food crisis?

by Ted Kelly

U.S. farmland in the Midwest has lost over one-third of the soil necessary to sustain crop production, according to scientists at University of Massachusetts, Amherst. The study concluded that fertile soil has been destroyed — not as a result of natural wind and water erosion, but by a century of overplowing. (tinyurl.com/wps8c99c)

Topsoil is the “black, organic, [carbon and mineral] rich soil that’s really good for growing crops,” said Evan Thaler, Ph.D. student at UMass. Topsoil accumulates over centuries and is teeming with microorganisms.

The healthy and fertile soil was effectively managed and stewarded by Indigenous peoples of the region for centuries, if not millennia. But after a few hundred years of hyperexploitation, first by European colonial settlers and later big agribusiness, a third of all the topsoil across Illinois, Iowa, Indiana and Minnesota is now gone according to a study reported in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. (tinyurl.com/3yxy4v9d) This figure is much higher than has been reported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Lead researcher Thaler said, “I think the USDA is dramatically underestimating the amount of loss.” (NPR)

This assessment is corroborated by a 2006 study from Cornell University which found fertile soil is disappearing faster than it’s being replaced, stating: “Each year about 10 million hectares of cropland are lost due to soil erosion, thus reducing the cropland available for food production. The loss of cropland

is a serious problem because the World Health Organization reports that more than 3.7 billion people are malnourished in the world. Overall soil is being lost from land areas 10 to 40 times faster than the rate of soil renewal imperiling future human food security and environmental quality.” (tinyurl.com/cpav2xj9) [One hectare is the equivalent of 100 acres.]

This follows a global trend that has caused a drastic reduction in fertile farmland due to capitalist overdevelopment. Almost all food production — 99.7%, according to the Cornell study — depends on healthy topsoil. But half of it has been destroyed in the last 150 years according to the World Wildlife Federation. (tinyurl.com/pxkcx37b)

An impending food crisis is not the only issue at stake. Low-nutrient soil produces low-nutrient crops. Food today simply does not have as many vitamins and minerals as it did a few decades ago.

Another study, conducted by the

University of Texas at Austin, found “‘reliable declines’ in the amount of protein, calcium, phosphorus, iron, riboflavin (vitamin B2) and vitamin C” in dozens of fruits and vegetables since 1950. (tinyurl.com/3nhwhzza)

Corporate genetic modification of plant species, like corn, is aimed at making more profitable — not healthier — produce. “Efforts to breed new varieties of crops that provide greater yield, pest resistance and climate adaptability have allowed crops to grow bigger and more rapidly, but their ability to manufacture or uptake nutrients has not kept pace with their rapid growth,” the UT study claimed.

**Cuba shows the way**

There is a model, however, for soil replenishment and food production that could point to a way forward that would avoid famine and nutritional starvation. And it comes, unsurprisingly, from the socialist world.

The “Special Period” in the history of revolutionary Cuba refers to the great upheaval immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which socialist states around the world had depended on for economic support.

In 1993, the Cuban Communist Party formed agricultural cooperatives to manage hundreds of state-owned farms. The goal was to increase domestic food production, while providing jobs and housing to Cuban workers, and to rely less on imported chemical pesticides and other synthetic farming techniques.

“The land redistribution program has been supported by solid research-extension systems that have played key roles in the expansion of organic and urban agriculture, and the massive artisanal production and deployment of biological inputs for soil and pest management,” writes Miguel Altieri, one of the founders of the Cuban Association of Organic Agriculture. (Monthly Review, “The Paradox of Cuban Agriculture,” Jan. 1, 2012)

Even more impressive is the growth of food production on urban farms, or organopónicos. “Cuba’s achievements in urban agriculture are truly remarkable — there are 383,000 urban farms, covering 50,000 hectares of otherwise unused land and producing more than 1.5 million tons of vegetables ... using no synthetic chemicals. ... Urban farms supply 70% or more of all the fresh vegetables consumed in cities such as Havana and Villa Clara.”

Capitalism is at a dead-end by every conceivable metric. Socialist societies point the way forward to providing healthy, nutritious foods for all without a profit motive. □



Organic urban farm in Havana, Cuba.



# Rally demands: ‘Prison profiteers out of California!’

Judy Greenspan  
San Francisco

March 7 — Streets and sidewalks around 111 Taylor Street, a semi-lock-down halfway house run by the for-profit GEO Group, shook today with resounding chants: “What’s the call? Free Malik, and free them all!” Over 200 protesters carrying brightly colored banners took over the streets to demand Malik Washington be released from custody and allowed to go home.

Washington is a formerly incarcerated federal prisoner held at Taylor, and he is also the new editor-in-chief of the San Francisco Bay View National Black Newspaper. He recently broke the silence around GEO’s mishandling of a COVID outbreak at the lock-up. For exercising his First Amendment rights as a Black journalist, he is threatened with immediate return to federal prison.

When GEO officials realized Washington was communicating with people outside the Taylor facility, they placed him in house arrest in his room and confiscated his phone. Public pressure eventually won him a return to work. Only recently was his phone returned. (Workers World, Jan. 19)

Today’s rally showed the depth and breadth of support in the Bay Area for

Washington and his strong opposition to GEO. Speakers included Nube Brown, managing editor of the SF Bay View; Matt Haney, San Francisco Supervisor for District 6; Sandy Valenciano of Immigrant Legal Resource Center/ Dignity Not Detention; Jeremy Miller with Poor Magazine; Pierre Laboissiere of the Haiti Action Committee; and Susan Stryker, trans activist and historian.

Stryker pointed to the first floor of the Taylor facility and said, “That used to be

Group’s occupation of this building.” (the Guardian, June 21, 2019)

In August 1966, three years before the Stonewall Rebellion, drag queens, trans women and sex workers rose up and fought the police in this downtown Tenderloin neighborhood in the Compton’s Cafeteria Riot. Victor Silverman and Stryker documented this history in “Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton’s Cafeteria.” (imdb.com/title/tt0464189/)

Stryker added, “We are here today to support Malik. ... We think it is an obscenity that this historic site of trans resistance to police repression, and to the carceral system, is occupied for profit by a group like GEO.”

Jeremy Miller said, “We are here today, because Malik was standing up for the people,” ending with the chant, “Free Malik, but that’s not all! Keep on pushing! Free them all!”

A letter of support from San Francisco District Attorney, Chesa Boudin, was read: “It is deeply concerning when people like Malik Washington, who are devoted to truth telling, are targeted precisely for trying to ensure that critical information is made public. We must ensure that the truth be told to protect the vulnerable.”

Editor Nube Brown, who is also a leader of California Prison Focus, urged

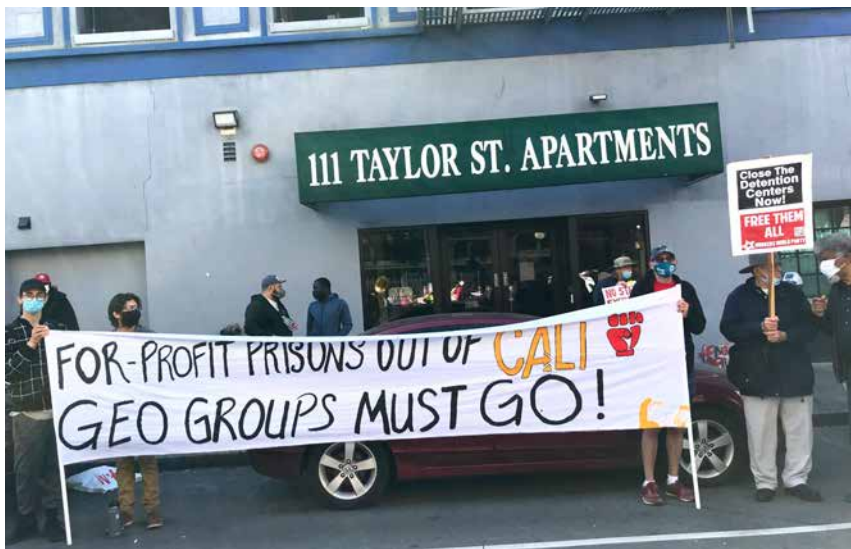
that the fight continue for Washington, and for the closure of companies like GEO. She asked everyone to virtually pack the courtroom for Washington at the March 10 hearing on his case. To give support, go to [linktr.ee/freemalik](https://linktr.ee/freemalik).

## Prisons for profit

Malik Washington filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons Feb. 1 to oppose the gag rule placed on him by the BOP. The activist journalist was the first person to expose GEO’s cover-up of COVID. The company’s mishandling of the virus has become public knowledge and the subject of a short video produced by the San Francisco Public Defender’s Office, “111 Taylor (During a Pandemic).” ([wearedefender.com/111-taylor](https://wearedefender.com/111-taylor))

GEO Group is one of the largest managers of private prisons in the U.S., and it controls a number of ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) detention centers. Multiple lawsuits have been filed against the company for inhumane treatment. ICE prisoners have organized hunger strikes and other actions to protest dangerous conditions faced in its facilities during the pandemic.

Though President Biden issued an executive order that the federal government will stop using private prisons, that order did not include privately held ICE detention centers like those run by GEO. (US News and World Report, Jan. 26) At the rally many speakers from immigrant rights groups exposed the atrocities suffered by incarcerated migrants in GEO-run ICE detention centers. □



Demonstrators in front of Taylor Street facility, March 7. WW PHOTO: JUDY GREENSPAN

Compton’s Cafeteria. It was where [trans] people used to come at night to get out of the cold ... to show that they survived their night. The cops would come in and harass them repeatedly. Then one night [the people] stood up and pushed back and made history. Just like we are making history and pushing back against GEO

# Jailhouse Lawyers Speak: ‘Shut ‘em down!’

*Jailhouse Lawyers Speak is a collective of radical incarcerated activists. In a March 1 press release, they have called for national demonstrations to shut down jails, prisons and ICE detention centers on Aug. 21 and Sept. 9 (#shutemdown2021). These dates were selected to commemorate the 50th anniversaries of the assassination of imprisoned Black revolutionary George Jackson and the Attica prison uprising.*

*In a March 1 press release, JLS announced “In the spirit of Abolition, let’s shut ‘em down!” a call that the Prisoners Solidarity Committee of Workers World Party proudly endorses:*

Since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, incarcerated people across the U.S. have been holding long and spontaneous demonstrations to respond to COVID-19 in the prisons. With at least 300,000 and possibly as many as 800,000 people in prison infected by COVID, prisoners have demanded basic human rights protections.

These demonstrations have been largely ignored by the public as incarcerated people and supporters have demanded COVID safety precautions be enacted in prisons. In a number of states, these COVID demonstrations have turned into widespread and hard-fought successful court battles to accomplish release of some prisoners.

North Carolina is set to release approximately 3,000 prisoners during the next six months due to a COVID lawsuit settlement.

Even with releases and policy changes won, the U.S. cannot make up for the

hundreds of thousands who have become ill or the thousands killed by COVID.

Incarcerated people know that every time a prison official comes to work, our lives are in jeopardy because they may be infected. The same is true regarding prisoner deaths: We attribute every death to prison officials infecting the prison population.

Take a moment to think on how over capacity U.S. prisons and jails are. People are stacked on top of each other.

Lives could have been saved if the U.S. was on the path of Abolition. We must struggle harder to close prisons and jails and to free people from the grips of prison slavery. This is stated while recognizing we must develop effective strategies to have the billions of taxpayer dollars used to grow the prison-industrial slave complex (PISC) redirected to the communities.

Without going into recent political presidential acrobatics, we do want to acknowledge we feel a stronger need than ever to make it known that the struggles of people in prison will not be pushed to the back burner or lost in the muddy water of trying to make people feel good about their party politics.

In the spirit of Abolition, on the historical dates of Aug. 21 and Sept. 9, 2021, organizers must highlight prisoners’ historic struggles and the current political struggles to dismantle the prison-industrial slave complex.

Jailhouse Lawyers Speak is calling for mass outside demonstrations. Specific locations: ICE, jails, prisons and higher learning institutions. With regards to higher learning institutions, we are

pointing towards learning institutions with connections to prison labor.

A few states may already have specific ongoing campaigns that directly speak to decarceration or closing down a prison or jail. Efforts should be made to network to boost those campaigns on these dates at the recommended locations.

With everyone working across the U.S. on the same days, this would magnify our struggle for humanity and highlight

specific state-related campaigns. These Shut ‘em Down demonstrations should serve as a wake-up call to every person in the U.S. that the current jailing path does not work. It’s time to end it!

In the days leading up to the Shut ‘em Down demonstrations, we will post locations of planned Abolition demonstrations and endorsements of these events on our website: [iamweubuntu.com/shutemdown](https://iamweubuntu.com/shutemdown). □

**8.21.2021 + 9.9.2021**  
**NATIONAL SHUT 'EM DOWN DEMONSTRATIONS**  
**PROTEST IN THE SPIRIT OF ABOLITION!**  
Come together and protest in the spirit of abolition at your local jail, prison or ICE on August 21, 2021 & September 9, 2021  
To be added to endorsement list contact: [outthemud.jls@protonmail.com](mailto:outthemud.jls@protonmail.com)  
Media contact: [media@incarceratedworkers.org](mailto:media@incarceratedworkers.org)





# Mental health effects of COVID lockdown in prison: Interview from inside SCI Albion

**Part 2**

By Joe Piette

*This Part 2 of a telephone interview with Demetrius Grant, imprisoned at SCI Albion near Erie, Pa., was conducted by Joe Piette for Workers World newspaper on Feb. 16.*

**Workers World:** What conditions are especially aggravating under COVID-19 restrictions?

**Demetrius Grant:** The isolation. Perpetual isolation is deadly. People are locked up in cells with no interrelationships, not knowing when it will end. It just drives you crazy.

**WW:** And there's no person-to-person contact with your relatives anymore?

**DJ:** None. You can't hug your loved ones. Officials are now trying to limit contact to eight or nine cohorts, so you only come in contact with seven other guys you may not even know or like. But you can't come into contact with your friends, who are on the block with you a couple of cells down. You're not even allowed to stand at their cell doors to talk to them. It's maddening!

**WW:** What about phone calls and video conference calls?

**DJ:** Don't get me wrong. Talking on the phone with family or friends is okay, but there is nothing like human contact.

**WW:** When COVID-19 started, you were allowed free video conferencing and free phone calls. Is that not happening anymore?

**DJ:** No. They gave you free emails, and they brought video games to us, which we shared cell-to-cell for 24-hour use. They would give you free cable, special meals and snacks every now and then. They had games and puzzles on the TVs from the Activities Department. Maybe some people could make some money because they weren't working anymore, but they stopped all that.



Demetrius Grant

**WW:** They stopped all that, but COVID-19 has not stopped, and the restrictions are still going strong.

## Specter of no-contact visits

**DJ:** Exactly. COVID-19 is still going even stronger! They are telling us to expect this lockdown to continue. Captain Skinner told us contact visits are not coming back. So if you're spending the rest of your life in prison, and there's the prospect that you can't hug your mother or loved ones ever again, can you imagine how that plays on someone's mind?

You're trying to deal day-to-day, to better yourself and get into programs, but now you can't get into any educational programs or attend any religious services. If you want to work on your legal case to give yourself some hope to get out of jail, that's gone. You are in an endless cycle of hopelessness. If you could accumulate funds from working during incarceration at decent wages, you would have a nest egg when you get out, which would be a big help to start a new life. But they don't give you that opportunity.

**WW:** People on the outside have to learn all this. We have to expose these conditions.

**DJ:** The conditions are horrible. People think there are COVID-19 restrictions on the outside, but it's nothing like those in here. They have been getting away with this since last March. They started out slow, so we wouldn't rebel. They tried to make it tolerable, but as time went on they just implemented some really draconian stuff.

## Build a campaign against lockdowns!

And the DOC knows this. They're going to keep on doing it until the fire is lit under them to stop doing what they're doing. It has to be a national campaign, not just in Pennsylvania. I wouldn't be surprised if all these DOCs have gotten together and collaborated and come up with the approach to use COVID-19 as a means to keep these control lockdowns in place. This is despite

their knowing how this situation affects people's mental and physical health!

A lot of these prisoners are not going to be locked up in prison for the rest of their lives. They're going to go home, but the psychological and physical damage of what they've had to endure is something society will have to deal with. It's not just a jail issue, but it's society's problem. A guy or woman who is mentally and physically damaged can't work. They will be a strain on the system, because they need medical and mental health care.

**WW:** Instead of having someone spend time behind bars, giving them skills and training and helping them to get better, they're doing the opposite and harming the person.

**DJ:** When the person gets out, their chances of being successful are slim-to-none. Guys who were in bad shape before COVID-19 are worse now. The public says that's just the jailhouse situation, and officials have to deal with it. But no — it will be a neighborhood problem.

One of my buddies left last week. He was snapping at the slightest reason. He wasn't always like that, but by locking him in a cell and not letting him speak to anyone, with no one addressing his problems and concerns — means he's been marginalized. They're being radicalized in a different way, and then some come home and harm someone. Then what?

## Empathetic treatment needed

**WW:** We don't want that. We need compassionate treatment — not only on the inside, but afterwards when they return to society.

**DJ:** It's just a matter of piecing it together. I have to play hardball with these mental health people, because they only understand if you go after their license, their livelihood. Otherwise, we're just complaining, and they're just saying things like they really don't care.

I try to keep myself mentally and physically sound, because I've found myself teetering on the edge. They have guards nitpicking. I ask: Why are you nitpicking? We're in a bad situation already. Why are you constantly trying to create a situation

that doesn't have to be there? What is your endgame?

It's an abuse of power. When you abuse people needlessly, it causes a worse situation. I don't want to be here, but I'm thankful that I have the spirit of my mother to stand up for what's right. As long as I'm alive, I'm going to do that.

**WW:** Your voice can play an important role. What would you say to other incarcerated people who read this interview? What would your message be to them?

**DJ:** Together we can get things done. My message would be: Don't give up hope, because if you give up hope that means you've given up on yourself. You have to find something outside of yourself to keep hopeful — to see a family member, to talk to a friend, to reach out. Instead of looking at the dire situation that I'm in, I try to look at other people's problems, and I try to help them out. That way I'm helping myself. So they have to try to look beyond their own hopelessness and look at other people to get the strength to go on.

## Unity and solidarity are key!

**WW:** So solidarity is the answer — and not just for people behind the bars, but in society in general?

**DJ:** Unity and solidarity! That's what I preach to these younger guys. We must come together. We must stay strong regardless of our petty differences. Whatever the situation is, we're all in the same circumstances. We suffer the same things. The only way we're going to deal with this is if we stick together. Some people think this way. Some do not.

I choose to speak to the people who think that way. I show others by example what I do, and I encourage them. There are people on the street who want to help, but we have to help ourselves. We are fighting a battle, but it's harder to battle alone. Either people will succumb to the situation, or together we'll overcome it.

Even though I have my moments, I overcome the situation because I have a sense of purpose: That is to help others. I realize by helping others, I help myself.

One's actions speak louder than anything one says. □

# International solidarity in fight to free Palestinian students

By Mirinda Crissman

Over 320 organizations have signed onto the international Palestinian Students Solidarity Campaign to free Palestinian Students. Hundreds of university and high school students are routinely abducted, jailed or detained indefinitely on political grounds for courageously speaking out against Israel's brutal occupation and theft of land in Palestine.

They are held in horrid and torturous conditions and put through courts which have a 99% conviction rate against Palestinians, who fight for their self determination and right to live.

The organizations in support of these political-prisoner students are specifically calling for the boycott of, divestment from and sanctions against Israel, including Israeli academic institutions. They call for the end of all military and economic aid, military transactions, joint projects and direct funding to the occupying regime of Israel.

The solidarity movement is challenging programs that aim to justify or normalize Israeli occupation, which essentially criminalizes the work of student organizing. The movement is organizing direct links of solidarity with Palestinian students and their movement, so that they will not be isolated from their global community of support. ([freepalestinianstudents.org](http://freepalestinianstudents.org))

Whether it's fighting the capitalist-imposed isolation of prisons, jails and detention centers in the U.S. or Israeli-imposed isolation of imprisonment — international solidarity is the best remedy to break down those barriers. As people are increasingly coming to criticize brutal settler-colonial regimes like Israel and their settler-colonial allies like the U.S. and Canada, they are coming to understand how our enemies use similar tactics against us.

Whether those oppressive tactics include criminalizing criticism, surveillance or isolation

from other anti-racist, anti-colonial struggles — it is powerful to see growing international fightback.

Taking the lead from these courageous Palestinian students, over 300 active divestment campaigns on U.S. campuses and a growing number of community groups and unions, including the University of California Student Worker Union and International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10, have shown their solidarity. International fightback is inspired by the Palestinian student resistance, and it will not stop until they are

free and have the right to determine the conditions of their own lives.

Israel detains these colonized students with aid from countries like the U.S., with its own long history of repression against anti-racist and anti-colonial movements. The International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network states: "Since the late 1960s, U.S.-based Zionist institutions have collaborated in attacks on movements for justice, because they have seen their interests as aligned with those of the U.S. state. Zionist institutions have played a prominent role in supporting the U.S. government's campaigns to undermine and discredit radical Black, Chicano and Indigenous people's movements." ([tinyurl.com/7y8dfswy](https://tinyurl.com/7y8dfswy))

Daring to imagine and fight for a world free from destructive colonization, apartheid and occupation — we will not stop in our fight to free Palestinian students and to free all political prisoners! □

## FREEDOM FOR PALESTINIAN STUDENTS!

Hundreds of Palestinian university and high school students are jailed by the Israeli occupation. Their organizations are banned and their activities repressed. Palestinian students need freedom and solidarity!

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN: [FREEPALESTINIANSTUDENTS.ORG](http://FREEPALESTINIANSTUDENTS.ORG)



# Mass pressure stops Amazon censorship

By Sara Flounders

Stopping Amazon censorship is news. Good news.

The Amazon corporate conglomerate is notorious for using its power to surveil and control every minute of workers’ lives, to dominate labor rates, control local governments and demand huge tax rebates. Its management threatens to close facilities if its demands remain unmet.

Amazon is arrogantly determined to decide what information we hear, what discussions we have, what books we read.

As big as it is, Amazon is afraid. Right now its management fears its U.S. workforce is organizing. It fears challenges to its censorship and control. And it has retreated before one challenge to its power to censor.

In question is Amazon’s attempt to ban the book, “Capitalism on a Ventilator,” a book of essays by prominent anti-imperialists, as investigative journalist Max Blumenthal tweeted March 3. Blumenthal added, “The book surveyed the role of capitalism in exacerbating the pandemic and contrasted China’s effective response with the U.S. failure — too much for Amazon, apparently.”

The tweet linked to a Nov. 2 article on workers.org, titled: “Amazon bans book exposing U.S. COVID chaos — a commentary.” Blumenthal’s tweet was retweeted 1,480 times.

This broad diffusion of the truth apparently led to the authoritative Global Times of China running an article March 4 highlighting Amazon’s censorship, with the title in its English-language edition: “Amazon removes book on epidemic response, ‘deprives U.S. policymakers of self-reflection opportunity.’” (tinyurl.com/y5yty29s)

The article quoted from Max

Blumenthal’s tweet and summarized the book’s contribution: “A book that surveyed and compared the U.S.’s and China’s reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic was recently removed from Amazon, the top ecommerce platform in the U.S., a move that again revealed the U.S.’s biased attitude on the ‘freedom of speech’ it claims, observers said.”

As suggested by its title, the book compares the two countries’ different approaches toward attempting to control the pandemic. It highlights U.S. capitalist society’s lack of infrastructure for social services, in contrast to its huge spending on infrastructure for military, police and prisons.

World View Forum, the book’s publisher, had received a message from Amazon Sept. 24, the book’s scheduled debut day on the Amazon site. The message read that the book “does not comply with [Amazon’s] guideline” and delisted it from the site.

When the Global Times contacted Amazon for comment March 4, an Amazon customer service representative told them they were unclear about the delisting.

This challenging attention and the call from China’s Global Times, with 1.5 million readers in the print edition and many more online readers, changed minds at Amazon. Its management clicked a switch and the book was listed as “available” for sale.

### Book on China and COVID unblocked

When Amazon blocked “Capitalism on a Ventilator,” its publisher, World View Forum, attempted to remove the book from Amazon’s site. In a double form of censorship, Amazon kept the book listed on their site but marked as “Unavailable.” Listing it this way actively discouraged

people from looking further for the book on other distribution sites.

Although the book is now suddenly “available” for sale on Amazon, the mammoth corporation’s management has yet to contact the book’s editors, Sara Flounders and Lee Siu Hin, or the book’s publisher, World View Forum.

The book was a joint project of the International Action Center and the China U.S. Solidarity Network. The two groups were determined to get past Amazon’s censorship. To do that they spent two months in a public fund appeal and raised enough funds to print “Capitalism on a Ventilator.” They arranged distribution of the paperback through Shopify and the epub file through Kobo, releasing the book on these platforms last December.

The United States still faces the highest

number of COVID-19 infections and the largest number of deaths of any country in the world and has unrolled a chaotic, uncoordinated vaccination program. In this atmosphere, the book raises the sharp challenge: “It doesn’t have to be this way.”

The controversial anthology exposes a criminal system based on private profit. While millions faced economic ruin during this global pandemic Amazon’s major owner, Jeff Bezos’ wealth skyrocketed by \$70 billion.

*Flounders is a co-editor of “Capitalism on a Ventilator — The Impact of COVID-19 in China and the U.S.” and urges readers to purchase the paperback through Shopify at: [bit.ly/CapVentBook](https://bit.ly/CapVentBook) and the ePub through Kobo at: [bit.ly/CapVentEBook](https://bit.ly/CapVentEBook).*

## Capitalism on a Ventilator

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

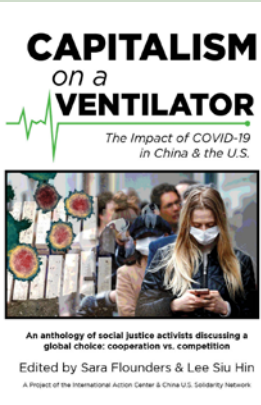
Edited by Sara Flounders and Lee Siu Hin

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

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

**Paperback from Shopify:** [bit.ly/CapVentBook](https://bit.ly/CapVentBook)

**E-book from Kobo:** [bit.ly/CapVentEBook](https://bit.ly/CapVentEBook)



# Release Mumia now!

Continued from page 1

“In the 1980s and ’90s, the U.S. mass-incarcerated Black and Latinx communities after industries abandoned working-class cities like Philadelphia. The system warehoused people they could not employ, giving them 40-years-to-life sentences often related to drug use — crimes which today are not prosecuted.

“If we say ‘Black lives matter,’ then imprisoned people — poor, Black, Latinx and victims of white supremacy and racism — must also matter.”

### Racism — a public health crisis

Calling in from California, Dr. Ricardo Alvarez, who has served as a medical consultant for Abu-Jamal, said, “Racism has been identified as a public health crisis. Prisons are the physical manifestation of racism. Not only Mumia, but all imprisoned elders are endangered by COVID-19. His treatment must be his freedom.”

Pastor Keith Collin, a prison minister for 30 years, called on DA Krasner to do the right thing and release Abu-Jamal. “You ran for office as a reformer, but now, Mr. Krasner, you are walking in the footsteps and following the same path as former District Attorneys Ed Rendell and Lynne Abraham. Trafficking in Black bodies has got to stop.”

Speaking for the Prisoners Solidarity Committee of Workers World Party, Ted Kelly stated: “Nelson Mandela taught us that you can tell the character of a country by how it treats its prisoners. Thousands of prisoners in the U.S., including over 100

in Pennsylvania, have died since COVID began — not as the result of an accident, nor the result of negligence — but from a criminal policy to keep men and women behind bars, while the deadly pandemic rips through these concentration camps of poor and working people.

“The virus is coming into prisons from the guards and staff. Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf and DOC Secretary John Wetzel have the legal ability to release thousands of prisoners to save lives.”

A statement from international activist Julia Wright was read in which she said: “Since Mumia let us know about his alarming symptoms, serious alerts

about his health have gone out internationally. Larry Krasner, John Wetzel, and Tom Wolf know it; their email boxes have been jammed full with messages pouring in from all over the country, from Germany, France, England, Spain, Africa, the Caribbean and more.

“I sent out health alerts yesterday to the U.N. Human Rights Council and the U.N. Special Rapporteur Against Racism, following my February 18th testimony for Mumia and our elderly political prisoners. A member of the Rapporteur’s staff responded to say that the state of Pennsylvania had already been under scrutiny by the U.N. Human Rights Council.”

## A message on Mumia’s health condition

*Workers World received the following message from Dr. Ricardo Alvarez, who is serving as a medical consultant for Mumia Abu-Jamal. Earlier in March Abu-Jamal tested positive for COVID-19 and was treated for congestive heart disease.*

Mumia is suffering from multiple diseases of the stress of incarceration. The only treatment for Mumia now is FREEDOM. He is precisely the high-risk category patient for complications for COVID. His age, his underlying liver damage, his hypertension and now his congestive heart failure require constant monitoring.

His heart is suffering the strain of the State’s relentless efforts to kill him. We

must not forget that Mumia has suffered for years from a serious skin condition that has never been resolved and causes great suffering. Mumia’s body is completely covered with lesions and has been worse in COVID.

Mumia can’t get access to the loving support of healers in our community, who could use different types of balms and traditional medical treatments because they are denied in the prison. Only medications that are approved by the FDA are allowed. There is only so much prison medicine can do.

Prison itself is the cause of his illness. It is what the CDC calls a “social determinant” of his health, which refers to the conditions of the built environment where people live that affect their health.

We all know these conditions — poverty, lack of access to health, poor education, and now we are appreciating that Racism is a public health crisis.

The American Public Health Association has declared Racism as a public health crisis, as have cities and counties across the nation, as well as the prestigious medical faculty at UPENN. Mumia’s condition is very serious, and prison medicine can’t provide him what he needs, even with the newest and fanciest of medicines. He needs to be freed from the conditions of State-Sanctioned murder.

FREE MUMIA. FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS. FREE ALL OUR ELDERS IN COVID PRISONS. □



# Remembrances of a warehouse order picker

By Deirdre Griswold

Think 1956. That’s 65 years ago — the year this writer dropped out of college and took a full-time job in a warehouse to get a more important education: learning what it was to be a worker.

In these intervening years, millionaires have gone on to become multimillionaires to now become centibillionaires. Many warehouse workers still barely survive on the minimum wage.

Learning about the struggles of today’s Amazon workers for better wages and working conditions brings up dusty memories of those days.

I worked as an order picker in a drug warehouse in Buffalo, N.Y. Anything that could be sold in a drugstore was kept there. It was a huge place, the ceiling way above the cold concrete floor where we filled the orders. That allowed the foremen and the superintendent to keep an eye on us from their heated offices high up at one end.

On the warehouse floor there were rows and rows of steel shelving where the merchandise — ranging from heavy cartons of gallon jugs to teeny, tiny pill bottles — was housed. In the center of this huge space was an oval moving track on which carts carried the orders. The whole area was divided into ten sections, A to J. A team of workers examined the orders for each cart and flipped down the letters of the sections where the items could be found.

This team of workers had a nice sitting



Warehouse pickers.

job. But it also required an encyclopedic knowledge of the warehouse, knowing the proper section letters for 10,000 different stocked items.

Order pickers never got to sit. We looked for carts showing our section (I still remember; ours was section H), pulled the cart off the moving track and walked through the shelving to fill our part of the order. It just so happened that I had been put in a section that had more teeny, tiny bottles in it than any other, so remembering where they were was mind-racking. I had anxiety dreams for weeks about looking for items. But my fellow workers kindly helped me out.

It wasn’t as dangerous as working in a steel mill or a chemical plant, but we had casualties — heavy carts tipping over or straining our abdominal muscles lifting heavy boxes off high shelves. Almost all the order pickers were women, and we felt it especially on days we had our period.

We wore pants, not skirts. I liked that, but the reason we were ordered not to wear skirts was so we wouldn’t accidentally knock a little bottle off a shelf. When

we went to union meetings, all the women dressed to the nines.

A bad flu epidemic started in the fall of 1957. For months, we worked our asses off trying to fill all the orders before going home. The workers started talking about how we would certainly get a Christmas bonus. (Starting pay was just a dollar an hour.) We knew the company was rolling in dough, because of the extra business due to the flu.

In all that period, we got only two hours of overtime. And there was no bonus — just a tender thank-you card from the management. It was after this insult that pilfering started. (We all knew that one of the foremen wore elastic stockings so he could stuff expensive pill bottles into them. If you looked down the rows of

shelves, you’d often see him stooped over, “adjusting” his socks. He had a buyer somewhere on the outside.)

What really enraged the workers was what occurred after a leak developed in the roof, damaging the packaging on many items. The women told management they would like to buy some of the expensive beauty items at cost, but instead the bosses had all the jars and tubes destroyed.

All this happened even in a place where we had a union. Nonunion workplaces were much worse.

The class war will continue until this rotten capitalist system is brought down. In the meantime, fight to get a union — and if you already have one, fight to make it fight! □

## MLBPA supports Amazon workers voting union “YES”

*The following statement was issued by the Major League Baseball Players Association on their Twitter feed, March 2. (tinyurl.com/sfzwz2ub) There are 1,200 members of the MLBPA, with only 7.7% African American. In late January, the National Football League Players Association — with over 2,000 members and 70% Black — released a video in solidarity with the Bessemer workers organizing efforts. The vast majority of the 5,800 Bessemer Amazon workers are Black.*

Amazon workers in Bessemer, Ala., and across America deserve a meaningful voice in determining their working conditions in a company whose value has risen to \$1.6 trillion in recent years, due in large part to a dedicated workforce that has helped it become the world’s leading retailer.

Collective bargaining results in improved levels of pay, benefits and workplace gains that we can never achieve negotiating individually.

The MLBPA encourages you to vote “YES” and work together in a union to create better lives for yourselves, your families, your co-workers and future generations of workers. □



## Protest outside Bezos-owned Whole Foods

Demonstrators supporting union rights for workers at the Bessemer, Ala., Amazon warehouse picketed outside the South Street Whole Foods market in Philadelphia March 5. They greeted workers and shoppers with flyers, banners and chants including “Union busting is disgusting” — indicating Amazon and Whole Foods are not welcome in our city, a union town.

The protesters brought a 10-foot puppet of Amazon owner Jeff Bezos, courtesy of Spiral Q puppet theater. Speakers commented that Bezos, a centibillionaire, is spending millions of dollars to counter the union drive of workers who are simply seeking humane working conditions and benefits.

For over an hour, speakers described Bezos’ efforts to prevent workers from unionizing, including employing the multibillion dollar legal firm Morgan Lewis, headquartered in Center City, Philadelphia.

Many customers waiting to get into Whole Foods welcomed the flyers. A few commented that they would shop elsewhere, except that COVID had limited their access to other options. One woman ran up to ask for multiple flyers. Her sister, employed at an Amazon warehouse in New Jersey, was dealing with company harassment because of her disabilities.

Report by Betsey Piette,  
Photo by Joe Piette

## Workers are not robots

Continued from page 1

With Alabama’s history of enslavement of Black people, and legal segregation a living memory, it’s guaranteed that racist discrimination is present inside Amazon’s BHM1 warehouse. The warehouse opened in March 2020; by May, workers were so outraged at their treatment they sought out RWDSU, beginning the fight for union representation.

### ‘Ruthless quotas maiming employees’

As at all Amazon “fulfillment centers,” BHM1 working conditions are brutal — with speedups, arbitrary scheduling, inadequate break times, virtually no accommodation for pregnancy, disability or injury, and more. The National Council for Occupational Safety and Health has named Amazon on its list of “Dirty Dozen” employers twice. The Atlantic magazine even headlined: “Ruthless quotas at Amazon are maiming employees.” (tinyurl.com/4zneyh8c)

Amazon claims that increased robotization and surveillance of workers’ motion and location make for a “safer workplace.” Since 2012, when the retail giant bought Kiva Systems, a robotics company, Amazon has added more automation to some existing and all new warehouses, including BHM1. (tinyurl.com/arjnnxnd)

But internal records show Amazon’s deception about rising injury rates. In fact, automation has made jobs more stressful and dangerous. Reveal, a publication of The Center for Investigative Reporting, found Amazon internal data showed that worker injury rates since 2016 were often worse in Amazon’s robotic warehouses. (Reveal, Sept. 29, 2020)

Amazon is following a tradition going

back to the “reorganization” of worker jobs at Bethlehem Steel in Pennsylvania, introduced in 1898. That’s when Frederick Taylor used a stopwatch, time studies and his “Principles of Scientific Management” to “improve efficiency” and increase control over workers. Henry Ford improved on Taylorism with the introduction of the moving assembly line.

Now Bessemer workers — some of them children and grandchildren of unionized steel and mine workers — are in a struggle against the exploitation of their labor, fighting the same “speedup-and-die-for-profit” principles from the 19th century.

When Amazon workers pick, pack and stow orders in seconds and take minimal Time Off Task for a break, it gives the tech giant an edge over online competitors — generating trillions in profits.

Amazon boasts it pays workers \$15 an hour — but during the pandemic the wealth of its owner, Jeff Bezos, has increased by \$72 billion. The profits for that megacapitalist came directly out of the sweat and blood of every Amazon worker. (tinyurl.com/kpset8w)

Profit is what a company pockets after costs of labor and overhead are subtracted from sales revenue. In Marxist terms, profit is the value that workers produce, but are not paid for in wages — our unpaid labor. The lower the workers’ wages, the more profit capitalists keep for themselves.

The injustice is obvious. The Bessemer workers are rising up to take back their health, the fruit of their labor and their dignity. Join them!

March 20 is a Global Day of Solidarity with the BAmazon Union. Information at supportamazonworkers.org.



# Vaccines: China vs. Western imperialism

By Lee Siu Hin

Feb. 23 — China and Russia are among the first countries in the world to vaccinate people [against COVID-19], according to the website Our World in Data. By Dec. 15, 2020, at least 1.5 million Chinese had taken a jab. The U.S. and U.K. had also begun their vaccination campaigns in early December; by Dec. 15 they had vaccinated around half a million people.

So far, China is leading the world in the number of people who are fully vaccinated or have at least received the first jab. According to the Chinese media, as of Jan. 23, nearly 16 million had taken a jab, closely followed by the number of people vaccinated in the U.S. As of Feb. 9, China had administered 40.52 million doses and the U.S. had given 43.2 million.

It was just like a neck-to-neck race. The Chinese vaccination campaign slowed down over the Chinese New Year holiday (Feb. 11-17). By Feb. 21 some 63 million people in the U.S. had taken the shot, compared with China’s estimated 53 million. But with the holiday now over, China is expected to increase the speed and catch up again quickly.

China and the U.S. face very different situations. At the current rate, the U.S. could vaccinate its population in six months; many estimate that China, with 1.4 billion people, will take up to two years to fully vaccinate its population. However, because of its very effective anti-pandemic strategy, with its very low COVID infection rate, experts believe that, unlike the U.S., China does not need to rush for full vaccination in order to achieve the goal of “herd immunity.”

China has already won the epidemic war, and now is acting to prevent any new outbreaks of the virus.

Its first vaccination priorities, after medical workers, are workers who face the public or handle imported goods. These include logistics workers, bus drivers, hospitality workers and so on. Seniors in China are less likely to become infected with the virus, so the priority for vaccinating them comes after these public workers – unlike in the Western world, where public workers are often at the bottom of the list. That’s one of the reasons China can vaccinate its citizens at a comfortable rate and be able to allocate enough vaccines to ship to the rest of the world — and the strategy is working.

As for vaccine solidarity, China has become the world’s biggest vaccine-exporting country, especially of vaccines going to the developing countries of the Global South. It must be pointed out that while the U.S. and European countries have made much of the billions of doses of their vaccines that have been ordered, in reality “ordered” is very different from orders that have been shipped. Most Chinese orders are firm orders or orders that will be delivered soon.

### Who’s leading the global vaccine race?

As of mid-February ten COVID-19 vaccines had been approved for Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) around the world – and China leads the way, with four of them (Sinopharm/Beijing, Sinopharm/Wuhan, CanSino and Sinovac). The U.S. has one (Moderna), U.S.-Germany have one (Pfizer/BioNTech), the U.K.-Sweden have one (Oxford/AstraZeneca), Russia has two (Sputnik V, EpiVacCorona), and India has one (Covaxin).

According to Our World in Data, as of Feb. 21 about 98 countries/regions were

ordering the vaccines. The overwhelming majority (approximately 85 countries/regions) ordered Western-made vaccines (Oxford/AstraZeneca, Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna, Johnson&Johnson). Approximately 16 countries were ordering Chinese vaccines (Sinopharm/Beijing, Sinopharm/Wuhan, Sinovac) while nine countries were ordering a Russian vaccine (Sputnik V).

However, “ordered” doesn’t mean they have received the vaccines, or even will receive them soon. At the Feb. 19 United

*How wealthy nations stockpile life-saving vaccines while poor countries and poor people within these countries are ignored. How Western countries criticize China, despite China’s success in containing the virus and providing vaccines to the world.*

Nations meeting on COVID-19 vaccines, UN Secretary General António Guterres sharply criticized the “wildly uneven and unfair” distribution of COVID vaccines, in which only ten countries in the world, notably the U.S., Canada and eight western European countries, have taken 75 percent of all vaccine doses, while 130 other countries have received not a single dose.

### Imperialism and vaccine apartheid

Wealthy nations are hoarding most vaccines and denying them to poor nations. It is the U.S./U.K against Europe, rich people against poor people, white against people of color — a racist vaccine pyramid where wealthy Western whites are at the top of the food chain and the non-white poor, developing countries are always at the bottom.

So far very few Western-made vaccines have been delivered to the Global South. The terms “vaccine imperialism” and “distribution racism” are based on rich countries buying up most Western-made vaccines — far more than they need, leaving very few for developing countries.

For fair global vaccine distribution, the World Health Organization (WHO), along with the Global Vaccine Alliance (GAVI) and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), created COVAX. It hopes to deliver more than two billion doses of the vaccines to people in 190 countries in less than a year. In particular, it wants to ensure 92 poorer countries will receive access to vaccines at the same time as 98 wealthier countries.

COVAX has raised \$6 billion, with an additional \$2 billion needed for 2021. So who’s funding COVAX and which countries might benefit most from the deal? From the birth of COVAX, it has been working closely with Western countries and their pharmaceutical companies, helping them to quickly dominate the global vaccine market. The U.K. (\$734 million) and the U.S. (\$4 billion) are some of the biggest donors for COVAX; these countries got their vaccines approved from the beginning, such as the U.K.’s Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID vaccine, which helped them become the world’s biggest vaccine providers.

But big orders don’t mean they’re able to fulfill orders quickly. Just like a used car salesperson, they only push hard for more orders, cutting the competition out (in this case, Chinese and Russian vaccines) in order to control the market,

but they are not concerned with how to deliver their products or the quality of them. With a billion doses ordered, the first batch of Western vaccines is only guaranteed for the Western world. The rest of the world, sorry! They’ll need to wait months, even a year before receiving their products.

Besides the ongoing vaccine wars between the U.K. and the EU over Oxford/AstraZeneca supplies, hardly any vaccines have been sent to other countries.

According to research by Duke



University’s Global Health Innovation Center, as of Jan. 19 high-income countries had ordered nearly 4.2 billion doses, while lower-middle and low-income countries have ordered less than 700 million. One can argue a country should preorder at least 1-2 year supplies, but many wealthy nations have preordered far more vaccine than they will need. For example:

- The European Union with a population of 450 million has ordered 1.85 billion doses, enough for everyone to be vaccinated four times.
- The United States with a population of 331 million has ordered 1.21 billion doses, also enough for everyone to be vaccinated four times.
- Australia, population of 25.5 million, has ordered 115 million doses, enough for everyone to be vaccinated 4.5 times.
- An extreme example is Canada, with a population of 37.7 million people. Canada has ordered 362 million doses, a whopping big number enabling everyone to be vaccinated nine times!

By comparison, the vaccine “have-nots” of the Global South are in a dire situation:

- El Salvador, with 6.5 million people, has ordered 2 million doses, only enough to vaccinate one out of every three people.
- The African Union, with 1.32 billion people, has ordered 270 million doses; just enough to vaccinate one out of every five people, or 20 percent of the population.
- Iraq, with a population of 40 million, has ordered 1.5 million doses, sadly only enough for 4 percent of the Iraqi population to get a jab.

Why are Western countries overbuying vaccines? Some activists suggest they’re running a vaccine market monopoly scheme — where they control the market, so they control the price. As with the futures trading market, they can sell their “excess” vaccines to poor countries for political ransom or a higher price.

Besides vaccine nationalism, there is also vaccine blockade, where Western economies prevent countries without U.S. dollars or bank wire transfer power from buying vaccines. This has become the new imperialist weapon against other

countries.

Illegal U.S. sanctions against Iran have prevented the Iranians from purchasing life-saving PPE, medical equipment and now vaccines, because they do not have access to U.S. dollars (the common currency for international trade) or international wire transfer service. Basically, international wire transfer needs a SWIFT code, which is controlled by the U.S.

Israel has much-hyped that it fully vaccinated its citizens in a very short time, but in Palestine, across the nearby apartheid wall, people are not getting life-saving vaccines.

### Vaccine community distribution racism in the U.S.

As of mid-February, the U.S. has been administering approximately 1.5 million doses of vaccine daily, yet vaccine distribution inequality is very much in evidence in the inner-city communities of poor people of color. It can be traced back to the historical roots of racism and economic oppression.

In Los Angeles County in mid-February, for example, according to L.A. County data, the rate of vaccination among white and Asian residents continues to be significantly higher than among Black/African American and Latino/Latinx residents:

- Black/African Americans are 9 percent of the 16-and-older county population, but they have received only 5.2 percent of the vaccinations to date.
- Latinx residents are 46 percent of the 16-and-older county population but represent only 23 percent of those vaccinated.

The main reason for this discrepancy is that the poor communities continue to lack convenient access to vaccination facilities, which is not the case in affluent white communities.

It’s the same dire situation in Chicago. Non-white Chicagoans, who make up a majority of COVID-19 cases, have faced enormous difficulties in signing up for vaccine appointments because of technology barriers and “pharmacy deserts.” According to the Guardian newspaper:

“Despite Black people only accounting for 30% of Chicago’s population, Black Chicagoans make up 60% of all COVID-19 cases. And lack of hospitals, prominence of food deserts, and other inequalities has turned COVID-19 into an even more lethal health crisis for these communities. But even during Chicago’s Phase 1A, when only healthcare workers and long-term care facility residents and staff were eligible for vaccination, the majority of those vaccinated were from more affluent areas such as downtown and the North Side. ...”

Furthermore, the Tuskegee experiment, a notorious example of historical economic and medical inequality, has meant that many African Americans remain hesitant about the new COVID-19 vaccine.

According to an October 2020 report published by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), only 29 percent of African Americans in the state said they would “definitely” or “probably” get a COVID-19 vaccine. The low confidence among this racial group stands in stark contrast to the 54 percent of Latinos, 60 percent of whites and 70 percent of Asian Californians who said they would definitely or probably get a vaccine. (On a positive note, African Americans’ attitude toward vaccination has slowly improved over the past few months since the vaccine campaign has been underway.)

With historical distrust from the community and inadequate access to

*Continued on page 9*



# Israel’s denial of vaccines to Palestinians = genocide

By Betsey Piette

Matthias Kennes is a registered nurse who works with Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) COVID-19 response in Hebron, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. He wrote on Feb. 22: “The internationally acclaimed COVID-19 vaccination success of Israel has a dark side: the consequences of which are being felt cruelly in the West Bank Palestinian territory where I work and the blockaded Gaza Strip where my MSF colleagues work.” (tinyurl.com/y7tcyjxx)

As of the date of Kennes’ statement, Israel had administered the first vaccine dose to nearly 4.2 million people, some 50% of Israel’s population, and had given first and second doses to 2.8 million people, about 30% of its population. This includes 450,000 Israelis living in illegal settlements in the West Bank.

According to Kennes, about 35,000 doses of Sputnik V and Moderna vaccines have been made available to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. There aren’t even enough doses in the West Bank for health care workers, the elderly and people with serious medical conditions. Kennes says a person is “over 60 times more likely to have a vaccination in Israel than in Palestine.”

Article 56 of the Fourth Geneva Convention requires Israel, as the



COVID-19 awareness mural in Palestine.

PHOTO: ARAB NEWS

occupying power in the Palestinian territories, to provide medical supplies, including preventative measures, to stop the spread of contagious epidemics. The Zionist state is overtly violating this protocol.

On March 6, one week after COGAT, which is Israel’s military branch that oversees the Palestinian territories, agreed to vaccinate 100,000 workers, officials announced they were postponing the vaccinations until further notice. They were intended for Palestinian residents

of the West Bank who work inside the Zionist state. Due to this callous decision, these unvaccinated workers are prohibited from entering Israel to go to their workplaces. (Al Jazeera, March 6)

### Israel sabotages health care

Israel has blocked delivery of Russian Sputnik V vaccines, which were designated for prisoners in Gaza. Five million Palestinians live in the West Bank and Gaza. Israel’s denial of lifesaving vaccines to the vast majority will result in

countless deaths. Currently, new COVID infections and death counts are on the rise in Palestine. (Worldometer, March 8)

Even before the pandemic, health care was scarce in occupied Palestinian areas. Palestinians living in the West Bank must obtain travel permits to enter Israel for medical care, but they are frequently turned down. And the Israeli military bars Gaza’s Palestinian residents from leaving for any reason.

According to the Borgon Project’s website, 300,000 Palestinians lack access to adequate health care in the West Bank. To treat their residents, Gaza and the West Bank together have only 375 ICU beds and 295 ventilators. Further, Israel has denied construction permits needed to build medical facilities in Gaza.

Not only is the Israeli state denying vaccines to Palestinians, its forces are deliberately sabotaging testing and treatment programs for them. Israeli forces destroyed a Palestinian COVID testing center in April of last year. Testing was halted in June due to lack of test kits. A month later, Israeli forces destroyed a quarantine facility in the West Bank.

All supporters of the Palestinian people and all who oppose Israel’s denial of life-saving health care to this besieged people must raise their voices in a loud outcry!

*Kathy Durkin contributed to this article.*

# Vaccines: China vs. Western imperialism

Continued from page 8

vaccination sites, the inner-city communities of the poor and people of color will definitely be losers in the vaccine fight.

### China global vaccine solidarity

While China was not on the initial COVAX vaccine list, it has sent and/or donated millions of vaccine doses around the world—especially to the Global South.

According to Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, by mid-February China had donated vaccines to 53 developing countries, including Somalia, Iraq, South Sudan and Palestine. It has also exported vaccines to 22 countries. In addition, it launched research and development cooperation projects with more than ten countries. Also at the WHO’s request, China will contribute 10 million doses of vaccines to COVAX.

As of Feb. 14, according to China Global Times, at least 40 countries had ordered or donated at least 561 million doses of Chinese vaccines; some of the main buyers include Peru (38 million), Mexico (35 million), Indonesia (122.8 million), Philippines (25 million doses with an additional 0.6 million donation), Turkey (50 million), Brazil (120 million) and Chile (60 million). Other buyers include Colombia, Uruguay, Myanmar, Malaysia, Thailand and Laos -- and Morocco, Egypt, Seychelles, Zimbabwe, Senegal and Equatorial Guinea in Africa.

In Europe, Serbia received Chinese vaccines, making that country the second most vaccinated in Europe, following the U.K. Hungary became the first EU member state to receive Chinese vaccines (which are not yet EU-approved for use).

China’s vaccine success across the world shows the true meaning of global solidarity. Not surprisingly, the Western countries are responding with nonsense skepticism and jealous rage. They are spreading unfounded rumors about Chinese vaccine safety (just as the U.S. did last year, when it spread the so-called

“Wuhan military lab leaked virus” hoax).

However, for the past two months a dozen global leaders have taken the Chinese jab in front of cameras to show their support for Chinese vaccines, including:

- Seychelles President Wavel Ramkalawan
- Turkish President Tayyip Erdoğan
- Indonesian President Joko Widodo
- Sheik Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Prime Minister of United Arab Emirates (UAE)
- Equatorial Guinea President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo
- Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić
- Jordanian Prime Minister Bisher Al-Khasawneh
- Chilean President Sebastián Piñera

and many other global leaders and top government officials.

Why? In addition to many countries resisting Western vaccine imperialism, experts say Chinese vaccines are better suited for the Global South. Chinese vaccines cost less and have easier logistical requirements, considering that Pfizer’s mRNA vaccine needs ultra-cold freezers, a technology and cost which many developing countries cannot afford.

Western countries’ vaccine racism, imperialism and mismanagement have caused massive and chaotic vaccine development and distribution drama and a vaccination logistics mess.

While pushing unfounded claims about Chinese vaccine safety, Western mainstream media have mentioned little about the deaths of 23 elderly Norwegians after they took the Pfizer vaccine.

Nor are the media reporting critical scientific analyses. As of Feb. 12, with approximately 43 million people vaccinated, there have been nearly 16,000 cases of adverse effects (or 3 out of 10,000) reported after receiving the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines. There have been 929 deaths in the U.S. of people who have taken the vaccines, some of which could possibly be attributed to the vaccines. Whatever their reasons, the silence of the Western media and the corporate science community leaves a lot of room for right-wing anti-Vaxxer movements to use the data to support their wild vaccine conspiracy theories.

### So, what should we do?

Progressive activists from anti-racist, community, peace and social justice movements around the world are

increasingly critical of the giant corporate pharmaceutical companies in Western countries for engaging in racism and vaccine imperialism against communities of color within their countries and poor countries across the globe.

Many are calling for a broad-based vaccine justice campaign to hold wealthy Western nations and their transnational pharmaceutical companies accountable and for inviting communities, countries from the Global South, and China to actively participate in coming up with a solution. DIVIDED WE FALL, UNITED WE WIN! Together we build global solidarity for faster, more affordable and more equitable distribution of vaccines to all communities and around the world.

*Lee Siu Hin is a national coordinator of the National Immigrant Solidarity Network; the China-U.S. Solidarity Network (CUSN); and e-Medical Alliance, a network of academia and community activists for both countries committed to grassroots dialogue. Lee can be reached at ActivistWeb@gmail.com and is currently launching a community-based global vaccine justice campaign.*

## Buffalo Activists chant: ‘No war on Syria or Iran!’

Despite frigid temperatures, determined activists here in Buffalo came out late Monday afternoon March 1 at a busy intersection with demands aimed at the Biden administration: U.S. Out of the Middle East! Stop Bombing Syria! U.S. Out of Iraq and Syria and Yemen! No War on Syria or Iran!

The action was called by Workers World Party-Buffalo branch and supported by several organizations including the Western New York Peace Center. Many passing cars honked in agreement with the banner and signs.

— Report and photo by Ezra Echo





International Working Women’s Day 2021

The true Amazons of the working class

Today the name Amazon is synonymous with capitalist greed and exploitation. Outside Amazon facilities and Whole Foods stores across the country, activists are chanting: “What’s disgusting? Union busting!” Their words are directed at Jeff Bezos, owner of the Seattle-based company and supermarket chain, who is the richest person in the world.

When Amazon first started out, the obscenely wealthy company co-opted a name that refers to women and gender-oppressed warriors of the ancient world. Said to be skilled archers, horse riders and fighters, the Amazons were depicted on pottery fighting soldiers of the Greek state.

Today’s Amazons are the working-class militants — women, nonbinary, transgender, agender, gender queer, gender fluid, gender-nonconforming, queer, Indigenous Two Spirits, and other identities of all nationalities, disabilities and ages — who have aimed the arrow of class solidarity at the richest corporations in human history.

Women, most of them Black, comprise almost half of the 5,800-person workforce trying to win a union at Amazon in Bessemer, Ala. Their struggle is inspirational to all workers!

Women — Black, Latinx, Indigenous, im/migrants and trans — are leading the movement for “\$15 and a union” and an end to sexual harassment. They have gone on strike and carried out other job actions against multibillion dollar fast-food corporations, such as McDonald’s, Wendy’s and Burger King. Nurses, teachers and other essential workers have struck for better wages and benefits and safe working conditions during the pandemic.

In India, women are leaders in the historic and prolonged farmers strike.

These struggles carry on the 110-year-old tradition of International Working Women’s Day. This special day was established in 1910 at the Second International Conference of Socialist Women in Copenhagen. Over 100 women delegates from 17 countries voted unanimously for the resolution to declare an annual

IWWD, which was introduced by German socialists Clara Zetkin and Luise Zeitz. It was intended to build worldwide solidarity and strengthen the fight against capitalism.

From the first celebration in 1911 until today, this day has honored the women and gender-oppressed warriors of the working class around the globe.

‘Capitalism creates its own gravediggers’

Capitalism remains the dominant mode of production. This system of exploitation still imposes additional burdens of imperialism, patriarchy, racism, ableism, ageism, anti-LGBTQ+ and gender oppression, xenophobia, Islamophobia and more — on the most oppressed members of the working class and the nations of the Global South.

But as Marxists have recognized for over 160 years, capitalism creates its own gravediggers. The masses of workers and oppressed people have no stake in the perpetuity of wage slavery. Women and gender-oppressed workers are

shouldering more than their share in the class struggles bursting forth throughout the world.

Zetkin wrote in 1921: “Even the most downtrodden of the downtrodden, women who have lived for centuries and millennia under the spell of age-old religious and social beliefs, rules, customs, and practices, are entering the revolutionary struggle.”

For women she stressed: “we who must surely harbor the strongest and most implacable hatred for capitalism, we must strive to combine sober assessment of the situation before us with a bold wager on the great goal of victory.” (Report on Communist Women’s Movement, July 8, 1921)

Today Bessemer is Ground Zero in the class struggle. While they may not be saying it explicitly, Black women there have begun digging the graves of Bezos and his whole greedy capitalist class.

Long live the spirit of International Working Women’s Day! □

Migrant deaths: Who’s the REAL culprit?

It didn’t have to happen. But, tragically, it did. And most likely, it may not be the last time. On March 2, 12 people were killed instantly when the SUV they traveled in was hit broadside by a tractor-trailer truck on a California highway. The accident happened on the outskirts of Holtville, about 40 miles west of the Arizona border and 12 miles from the border with Mexico.

Thirteen people died — one of the travelers succumbed later from injuries. The majority of those killed were from Mexico, while others were from Guatemala. The ages of the dead ranged from 20 to 55, with the youngest injured being 15 years old.

A SUV normally seats a maximum of seven people but this SUV carried an astounding 25 people! The main question is not how this happened but why?

News reports stated that it is not unusual for smugglers to be paid tens of thousands of dollars to transport workers — forced to leave their homelands due

to economic hardship and political repression — across the border. One of the dead was a young Guatemalan woman hoping to go to college.

But this accident is not an isolated incident. It just made the major news due to the shocking loss of life. Car accidents are reportedly commonplace at this border crossing near the Imperial Valley. This is a rich California agricultural area where thousands of migrants work for low wages, under terrible working conditions, picking lettuce, leafy greens and melons.

Many, many im/migrants continue to try to cross into the U.S., seeking survival. According to the Oct. 14 Texas Tribune, during the fiscal year of 2020 that ended Sept. 30, the notorious U.S. Border Patrol apprehended over 400,000 people at the southwest border of the U.S. and Mexico. Close to 58,000 additional Latinx people were turned away at points of entry there.

Along the Laredo, Texas, border, there was an increase in the number of

unaccompanied minors apprehended, from 2,521 in 2019 to 2,641 in 2020, a 5% jump. (tinyurl.com/k73myj9c) Thousands of migrants and their children have been detained for months in the U.S. under unsanitary, inhumane conditions. The Washington Post reports that the number of detained migrant children has tripled over the past two weeks to 3,250. (March 8, 2020)

So the tragic car accident near Holtville was not an isolated incident. As a 2018 statement by Fight for Im/migrants and Refugees Everywhere (FIRE) said: “To fight for im/migrants, we must get rid of ICE entirely. It means dismantling concentration camps for immigrants and tearing down any racist border wall. Fighting for refugees means understanding that many im/migrants are fleeing conditions at home created by the U.S. And we must understand the global character of this crisis.

“The root cause of migration in this age

is imperialism, the highest stage of capitalist development. Whether through wars and military strikes in the Middle East, far-right coups in Honduras in 2009 and Brazil in 2016, or draining countries’ wealth so they are unable to respond to natural disasters like the earthquake in Haiti, imperialism creates the conditions that im/migrants and refugees are fleeing.” (tinyurl.com/5vjetu9x)

If the wall along the U.S.-Mexico border or the racist Border Patrol that protects it did not exist, 25 people would not have made a choice to be packed into an SUV and make that dangerous journey.

No matter who occupies the White House, U.S. immigration policy will not fundamentally change as long as U.S. imperialism exists to superexploit the peoples of the world and their resources.

This murderous system took the lives of those who died on a California highway on March 2 — and is taking the lives of thousands more. Open the borders! □

The governor of Texas, Neanderthals and COVID-19

By G. Dunkel

The governor of Texas, Greg Abbott, made a surprise announcement March 2 in Lubbock, a city of 200,000 people in West Texas. All state mandates to combat the spread of COVID-19 were being lifted. Counties and municipalities cannot require basic public health policies to limit the spread of disease after March 10. They can’t require masks, social distancing, limitations on the size of gatherings or the capacities of businesses.

Abbott’s position is that individual Texans have the ability to make the choices that will limit the spread of COVID. Texas will be the largest state in the country without a mask mandate. About 30 states still have some form of a mask mandate and other restrictions.

Tate Reeves, the governor of Mississippi, made a similar announcement later in the

afternoon of March 2.

In Idaho, which has never had a mask mandate, there were a number of mask burnings March 5 and 6 throughout the state, apparently coordinated by spouses of Republican lawmakers. Children and teenagers threw masks into bonfires, crying “Liberty” and “Freedom.”

President Biden sharply criticized the actions of Abbott and Reeves the next day, calling the plans “a big mistake” which reflected “Neanderthal thinking.”

Biden mischaracterized Neanderthals, a hominid species of hunters and gatherers who became extinct around 32,000 years ago after surviving for hundreds of thousands of years. Whatever tools they developed — and theirs was indeed a tool-making culture — they used to help themselves survive. They certainly didn’t reject tools that improved chances of survival.

Engineers and doctors have irrefutably

demonstrated that wearing masks is very effective in limiting the spread of COVID. A mandate to wear one is no more a limitation on your individual freedom than being forbidden to urinate on a public sidewalk.

It’s clear reading the statements of Abbott and Reeves that a major motive in their decisions was increasing business profits — a concept totally foreign to Neanderthals. □



Sign outside store in Texas.



# Haiti protests: ‘Moïse, U.S., U.N. out!’

By G. Dunkel

Hundreds of thousands of Haitians took to the streets of Port-au-Prince Sunday, March 7, to demand the departure of President Jovenel Moïse, whose term of office has expired. The protesters raised the corruption under Moïse’s PHTK (Haitian Party of Tèt Kale), which has stolen or squandered billions of dollars of oil aid provided by Venezuela.

According to a leaflet posted online by organizers, there were at least six gathering locations for protests in Port-au-Prince. Tweets also came from other Haitian cities such as Cap-Haïtien, Jeremie and Gonaïves.

Another issue sharply raised at the protest was that the Haitian government has failed to confront the lawlessness of gangs who engage in massive kidnapping, often with the connivance of the cops. Health care workers took the lead on this because Dr. Ernst Paddy, a pediatrician, was killed



Signs at Haiti protest (left to right): No to U.S. imperialism, La Lime (U.N. Special Representative to Haiti) = corruption, and OAS + BINUM (Organization of American States + U.N. Haiti project) = corruption.

Feb. 28 in front of his hospital as he and his family were being kidnapped. A few days later a nurse was kidnapped leaving a bank

Haiti’s daily newspaper Le Novelliste is reporting that workers at the country’s second largest hospital have been

on strike for two weeks because the electricity has been shut off, so that air conditioning doesn’t work. And the operating theater is dirty and unfit to use, so that effective care is severely hampered.

Medical workers assisted a contingent of visually impaired people in getting to the protest. One of them explained why he came, “I can’t see. But I can sense that this country is not functioning correctly.”

A number of youth marchers made a point of telling videographers that they were in solidarity with the struggle of youth in Senegal, a former colony of France. Five young people died there in early March, during protests against deepening poverty and lack of job prospects for young people.

The protests emphasize that Moïse would be gone rather quickly if the U.S. stopped supporting him. So far the U.S. is only urging Moïse to hold parliamentary elections to reduce some of the pressure on him. □

# Haitian community denounces murderous coup regime

By Dave Welsh  
San Francisco

Waving Haitian flags, a crowd of 80 demonstrated Mar. 1 to mark the anniversary of the bloody U.S.-backed coup d’état in 2004 that overthrew the popular government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The beloved former president was kidnapped and flown to Africa on a U.S. military plane, beginning a seven-year period of forced exile from Haiti.

Carrying hand-lettered signs, demonstrators protested the serial massacres in working-class neighborhoods in Haiti, the arbitrary arrests, detentions of human rights defenders and the wave of kidnappings for ransom connected to the current coup regime of the dictatorial Jovenel Moïse, backed by the U.S. government.

The protest began at the library across from City Hall and marched to the Simón Bolívar statue, highlighting the historical solidarity between Haiti and all the Americas. The closing rally was at United Nations Plaza, where marchers denounced U.N. complicity and armed

support for the brutal coup regime that has been imposed on the Haitian people. Haiti was a founding member of the United Nations.

The demonstration was called by the Haiti Action Committee, with support from many community organizations. Speakers and key supporters came from Global Women’s Strike, Arab Resource and Organizing Center, Answer Coalition, Foothill College Black Student Union, San Francisco Labor Council, Task Force on the Americas, Students for Haiti Solidarity, International Committee for Peace, Justice and Dignity, Nicaragua Center for Community Action, NorCal TPS Coalition, Black Alliance for Peace, Justice Vanguard and the Prisoners Solidarity Committee of Workers World Party.

The San Francisco action is part of a month-long campaign by Haiti Action Committee and allies to increase Haiti visibility, including banner drops over freeways in Oakland, San Francisco, Berkeley and Palo Alto.

Demonstrators demanded: End U.S.

and U.N. support for the dictatorship of Jovenel Moïse; end recognition of the Moïse government of Jovenel as of Feb. 7, 2021, as required by Haiti’s constitution;

stop funding of the criminal Haitian police and security forces; and stop ICE deportation of Haitians. □



Tacuma King on drums at San Francisco Haiti solidarity rally Mar. 1. PHOTO: BILL HACKWELL

# Commemorate Women’s History Month! Build Workers World!

As Marxists, we strive not just to honor history, but to make it — to promote change that puts workers and oppressed peoples first, and to recognize their leadership.

Today, Black women and their male co-workers, 85% of the workforce, are fighting for unionization at Amazon’s warehouse in Bessemer, Ala. If they win, it would be the first union drive to score a victory against this corporate behemoth in the U.S. Their struggle is inspiring workers everywhere.

Women comprise two-thirds of the 20 million workers who are paid \$10.10 per hour or less; half are women of color. The gender pay gap exists, with African American, Latinx, Indigenous and immigrant women earning the lowest salaries. It’s no wonder that they are leading the “Fight for \$15” hourly wage and a union movement!

During the pandemic, nurses and other health care workers, especially women, have organized — even gone



Jan. 20, 2018, Women’s March.

on strike — to demand adequate staffing, safe working conditions and protective equipment. Teachers and other essential workers have pressed their demands, too.

To honor women workers, the 1910 International Socialist Women’s Conference in Copenhagen declared

March 8 to be International Working Women’s Day. On that date in 1908, 15,000 women immigrant garment workers and socialists marched for better working conditions. Congress proclaimed March as Women’s History Month in 1987. People of all genders mark IWWD worldwide.

Socialists have long recognized struggle as the only way to improve women’s lives. Like the Black Lives Matter movement, started by women and LGBTQ+ activists, which boldly fights racism and police violence. Like the McDonald’s workers who led a 10-city walkout to protest sexual abuse, boosted by the #MeToo Movement.

Workers World expresses solidarity with women who are exploited on the job, those subjected to racism, misogyny, bigotry, xenophobia, homophobia and transphobia. We demand ICE release im/migrant women and children from detention, and the reunification of families. We support gender-nonconforming

and trans people, who constantly risk physical attack.

If you appreciate WW’s extensive coverage of women’s struggles, join the WW Supporter Program. During the pandemic, articles are posted daily at workers.org. One issue a month is being printed and mailed. For donations of \$75, \$100, \$300—or more, members receive a year’s subscription, a regular letter about timely issues and one, two or three free subscriptions (respectively), for friends. Supporters can receive the “What Road to Socialism?” book upon request. (Or read it at workers.org/books)

Write checks to Workers World. Mail them (monthly or annually), with your name and address, to Workers World, 147 W. 24th St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10011. (Or contribute at workers.org/donate)

We appreciate your help in building Workers World! □





Washington, D.C., 2018.

## Aumentar el salario mínimo a \$15, ¡al menos!

Un salario mínimo de \$15 por hora no puede incluirse en el proyecto de ley de ayuda COVID-19 de \$1,9 billones propuesto por los demócratas del Congreso. Así dictaminó la parlamentaria del Senado, Elizabeth McDonough, el 25 de febrero. Este funcionario no electo lo calificó de “irrelevante para la legislación presupuestaria”.

Este edicto es un golpe brutal para millones de trabajadores que luchan diario por subsistir.

Sin embargo, la Cámara de Representantes aprobó el proyecto de ley 219 a 212 el 27 de febrero con el aumento del salario mínimo intacto. Ahora pasará al Senado, pero probablemente sin el aumento de sueldo por hora, debido a la decisión del parlamentario.

Todos los republicanos en la Cámara y el Senado, más dos senadores demócratas conservadores, se oponen a este aumento salarial. Entonces, a pesar de que el Partido Demócrata tiene una mayoría en el Senado, podría no haber sido aprobado allí, incluso si estuviera incluido en el proyecto de ley de ayuda. Detrás de escena hay poderosos magnates corporativos y financistas de Wall Street que se oponen vehementemente a este aumento del salario mínimo.

Existen medios de procedimiento para eludir o anular el fallo del parlamentario, que han sido utilizados en el pasado por las administraciones demócratas

y republicanas, pero la Casa Blanca de Biden aparentemente ha decidido acatar la decisión de McDonough y no desafiarla. “Respeto la decisión del parlamentario y el proceso del Senado”, dijo la secretaria de prensa de la Casa Blanca, Jen Psaki. (CNN, 25 de febrero)

El senador Bernie Sanders y otros miembros del Congreso propusieron un

Plan B: gravar a las corporaciones que no pagan a sus trabajadores al menos \$15 por hora. Pero los principales

demócratas le dieron la espalda a esta idea, informó el Washington Post del 28 de febrero. ¡Esta falta de acción prolonga una emergencia para los trabajadores con salarios bajos!

### Desastre para millones

Dos tercios de los trabajadores informan que han estado viviendo de sueldo a sueldo desde que COVID-19 llegó a las costas de EE.UU. Casi la mitad se encontraba en esa situación incluso antes de la pandemia. Esto se debe a los salarios extremadamente bajos, combinados con los costos exorbitantes de la vivienda y otras necesidades.

Muchas familias están a un cheque de pago de la ruina económica y enfrentan una crisis todos los meses cuando vencen las facturas. Millones de trabajadores deben trabajar duro en dos o más trabajos para llegar a fin de mes y tienen que

recorrir a programas gubernamentales o despensas comunitarias de alimentos para alimentar a sus familias.

El lamentablemente inadecuado salario mínimo federal por hora de \$7,25 no ha aumentado desde 2009, mientras que el costo de vida se ha disparado. Si el salario mínimo hubiera seguido el ritmo de la inflación, ahora sería de \$12 por hora.

Un trabajador de tiempo completo que gana el salario mínimo actual no puede pagar el alquiler en la mayoría de las áreas del país.

El proyecto de ley de ayuda original habría aumentado ese salario mínimo a \$15, pero en incrementos, sin llegar a \$15 hasta 2025. Mientras tanto, muchos trabajadores están viviendo en crisis. ¡Necesitan estos fondos ahora! ¡Y más! Una tarifa de pago por hora de \$20 o \$25 realmente haría mella en las facturas de las familias.

Sin embargo, incluso el aumento propuesto beneficiaría a muchos trabajadores. El Instituto de Política Económica dice que ayudaría a 32 millones de trabajadores; Se ayudaría al 60% de los trabajadores esenciales y de primera línea. Un tercio de los afroamericanos y un cuarto de los trabajadores latinos obtendrían un aumento. Alrededor del 25% de los que ganarían son mujeres trabajadoras de

color.

Debido al racismo y al sexismo sistémicos, los trabajadores oprimidos están muy mal pagados. Las mujeres constituyen dos tercios de los 20 millones de trabajadores a los que se les paga \$10,10 dólares por hora o menos, informa el Centro Nacional de Derecho de la Mujer. La mitad son mujeres de color. La brecha

salarial de género es más amplia para las mujeres afroamericanas, latinas, indígenas e inmigrantes, que reciben los salarios más bajos.

La mayoría de las personas a las que se les paga el salario mínimo son adultos y muchos de ellos permanecen en trabajos de bajos salarios a lo largo de su vida laboral. (New York Times, 26

de febrero) Eso hace que un salario federal más alto sea una necesidad, o millones de trabajadores simplemente no pueden cubrir los crecientes costos de las necesidades de la vida.

La demanda de un aumento del salario mínimo federal es apoyada por dos tercios de la población estadounidense, especialmente los trabajadores negros, latinos, indígenas, mujeres y jóvenes. Es por eso que el lema “Lucha por \$15” resuena con tanta fuerza de costa a costa. ¡La lucha continúa! □

**Detrás de escena hay poderosos magnates corporativos y financistas de Wall Street que se oponen vehementemente a este aumento del salario mínimo.**

## Todo el mundo está mirando

“Un ataque contra uno es un ataque contra todos.” Este famoso lema laboral, popularizado por los Trabajadores Industriales del Mundo hace más de un siglo, es más significativo hoy que nunca. Pero tiene un doble significado para los trabajadores de Amazon, donde la tasa de lesiones en el lugar de trabajo es excepcionalmente alta debido al trabajo agotador y acelerado.

Su dolor es sentido por “todos”, como en el lema - la clase trabajadora y los oprimidos del mundo - que están observando con absorta atención la lucha por la representación sindical en Bessemer, Alabama.

Los trabajadores del almacén, una gran mayoría de ellos de raza negra y casi la mitad mujeres, están votando por correo en una elección supervisada por la Junta Nacional de Relaciones Laborales que se llevará a cabo del 8 de febrero al 29 de

marzo. El resultado, que podría conducir a la primera instalación sindicalizada de Amazon en los EE.UU., se anunciará después de todas las votaciones se cuenten.

Cada trabajador con conciencia de clase está apoyando al sindicato: el Sindicato de Minoristas, Mayoristas y Grandes Tiendas. Los valientes trabajadores del sur profundo, que se enfrentan al odiado doble centibillonario Jeff Bezos, están luchando por todos nosotros. Los trabajadores negros de la planta avícola de Alabama, que están representados por RWDSU, han asumido una variedad de tareas de organización.

Este es el trabajador organizado contra el capital en su expresión más cruda y verdadera. ¡Estamos inspirados!

Y con muy poca preparación avanzada, hubo más de 50 acciones el 20 de febrero, un día nacional de solidaridad convocado por la Asamblea de Trabajadores del Sur y respaldado por la Campaña Sindical de Apoyo a Alabama Amazon y otros. Estas acciones reunieron a un grupo diverso de fuerzas progresistas: líderes sindicales, activistas de Black Lives Matter, defensores de la vivienda, migrantes, socialistas jóvenes y veteranos, y trabajadores



Harlem, Nueva York, 28 de febrero. Solidaridad con lxs trabajadorxs de Amazon en Bessemer, Alabama.

FOTO: ALEXANDRA WALICKE

actuales y anteriores de Amazon, muchos de los cuales no tienen antecedentes de trabajar juntos. Un frío amargo —condiciones inusualmente frías en el sur— no podía enfriar la solidaridad.

Desde el mensaje de video publicado en enero por la Asociación de Jugadores de la NFL hasta las cartas escritas a mano enviadas por los trabajadores encarcelados, las declaraciones de apoyo representan una muestra representativa de la clase trabajadora. La unidad de clase en torno a la lucha Bessemer debe expandirse, y lo hará, aún más entre ahora y el 29 de marzo.

Esta histórica campaña sindical no se desarrolló en el vacío. El contexto para ello es el movimiento de masas que

surgió el año pasado por la justicia económica y contra el racismo. Cuando la pandemia pasó factura, los trabajadores emprendieron cientos de acciones laborales exigiendo un lugar de trabajo seguro. El resurgimiento de Black Lives Matter en respuesta al linchamiento policial de George Floyd ha sido calificado como el mayor movimiento de derechos civiles en la historia de Estados Unidos.

Bessemer es una continuación de esta tendencia radical.

Los movimientos no son lineales; tienen su reflujo y su flujo. Pero la marea de hoy está subiendo y levantando todos los barcos. Cada trabajador debe tomar un remo y ayudar a remar esta lucha de clases esencial hacia la victoria. □

### El capitalismo en un callejón sin salida



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

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