

Buffalo, N.Y.

Peace Bridge Apartments tenants resist

By Hadley Willow

Since late August, tenants at the Peace Bridge Apartments building have been organizing mounting resistance against Porter Avenue Acquisitions and Power Play Partners — real estate developers that plan to convert the building into “quality green housing that is kept at a high standard.”

In the age of late-stage capitalism these are the duplicitous words of a ruling class that exploits the environment in pursuit of profit to the detriment of our species, while simultaneously using the language of environmentalism to justify casting people out into the cold streets.

The tenants at 111 Porter Avenue more than agree that the building is in need of renovation, with frequent reports of mold, mice and roaches. But this process should take place with the current tenants as its primary focus. Instead, tenants received a non-renewal of lease notice from someone named “JP” who, according to the letter, is the new property manager.

Publicly, the company has claimed to have contacted each tenant individually. In reality, its interaction with tenants has been distant and impersonal, adding to their frustration. As Michael, a tenant for 24 years, aptly points out, “This is part of a national movement of gentrification ... to get rid of certain people and displace them.”

Many of the tenants are older, many have disabilities, and many receive rental assistance, which makes displacing them during an ongoing pandemic particularly cruel and



Tenants and organizers from Queen City Workers' Center, along with progressive Buffalo mayoral candidate India Walton, gathered for an Oct. 11 press conference in front of Peace Bridge Apartments, Buffalo, N.Y.

harmful. But for the ruling class, vulnerability means merely an easier pursuit of profit, not a cause for humane intervention.

It is well known that stress negatively impacts physical and mental health. Though the final eviction of tenants from Peace Bridge Apartments is scheduled for Nov. 30, this decision has already impacted with extreme stress the lives of many tenants.

One tenant, Randy, who had lived there for 27 years, recently died, and his family and friends blame his death on this terrible situation. According to them, he was perfectly healthy two months ago before the eviction process began. Another tenant recently had a stroke after being forced to leave. Michael has noted that it's hard to sleep and he's constantly worried.

The eviction dates ranged from 30 to 90 days, and supposedly depends on how long each tenant has lived there. But

according to tenants, this procedure has not been followed. In addition, many eviction dates were seemingly arbitrary. Some tenants suspect these dates have more to do with how diligently they had paid their rent than with seniority.

Adding to property owner duplicity, letters were sent out offering tenants \$1,000 to move out on the designated date of their eviction. But in the fine print, the letters stated that this payment would include their security deposit, an amount which the owners are already legally required to pay back.

Tenants who took this offer have not received any money, not even their security deposit, which is vital to find new housing, especially for people who live on a fixed income.

When a community struggles together

Even before this struggle, the tenants at the Peace Bridge Apartments building had formed a strong community — which has been a support in this struggle against the owning class, who would rather have workers and oppressed people stay isolated and thus more easily exploited. Tenants gathered together frequently for meals at Burger King across the street from the apartments — a tradition that still continues, now as a form of

organizing rather than a social event.

Activists at Queen City Workers Center have been working closely with tenants to hold weekly meetings at that location where people share stories and discuss ways to resist the eviction. Mary, a member of QCWC, explains, “Our approach has been two-pronged: to build public dissent, and to use the state to challenge the landlord.”

Organizers started by putting up fliers around the building to attract tenants to meetings, and tenants made an effort to speak with neighbors who were reluctant to get involved. Stories at these meetings were distributed to local news outlets, radio shows and activist organizations. The tenants' demands were distributed to the public in the form of leaflets.

The second part of the organizing approach was accomplished by reaching out to a local Section 8 provider, who put pressure on the landlord to extend the eviction dates. Assistance was also given in filing paperwork for extensions, emergency rental assistance and requests for accommodations. Organizers also contacted local officials, including Buffalo's Director of Policy Robert Mayer as well as the head of the Municipal Housing Authority.

The Peace Bridge Apartments tenant resistance highlights the importance of community involvement as a buffer against exploitation by the ruling class. Communities that interact regularly and where community members know each other by name are easier to organize. When a community struggles together, this familiarity transforms into solidarity.

Workers need our own apparatus for confronting these attacks on our class, systems of our own that are disconnected from bourgeois profit motive and controlled by working-class people. Each struggle we take up is a short-term investment in the immediate rights of our class and a long-term investment in the power and strength of our ability to organize. □

Trials highlight racism — Black Lives Matter!

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whether the three racists would ever have been arrested, much less gone to trial. Two prosecutors have since recused themselves from any involvement in the trial; they should have been charged with obstruction of justice for allowing these killers to go free.

Black people blocked from jury duty

The Arbery trial has already stirred up a controversy before the opening arguments have been given, based on jury selection that has taken place. The city of Brunswick is 55% Black, and is part of Glynn County, which is 27% Black. But only one out of the 12 jurors selected for the Arbery trial is Black, all the rest being white, including four alternates. That means the one Black person makes up eight percent of the jury — by no means an adequate representation of the local population.

The Minneapolis jury in the trial of Derek Chauvin, convicted of killing Floyd, was composed of half people of color and half white. The city is 20% African American.

In the Arbery trial, Judge Timothy Walmsley, who is white, allowed defense attorneys to get away with obvious bias against prospective Black jurors but did not block white jurors. He indicated he thought that no juror could be impartial in a case where “race” is involved; his rulings indicated that he thought no Black person could be trusted to ignore racism.

The Arbery trial is not an isolated situation when it comes to striking Black people and other people of color from criminal cases where Black people are the victims of any form of racism. A 1986 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in Batson v. Kentucky codifies that excluding jurors based on race is unconstitutional. The problem is that

there is no way to enforce this ruling.

In fact, the Arbery jury — and juries in almost every state — reflects this racist bias in a systematic manner. Prosecutors routinely exchange videotapes on tactics to effectively exclude Black jurors.

Stephen Bright, a lawyer who has argued death penalty cases before the Supreme Court, stated, “We still have all-white juries in communities all over the country, many with substantial African American populations, because of peremptory strikes. This peremptory strike issue has been debated for years, and it still allows the exclusion of people in a grossly disproportionate way.”

Benjamin Crump, a prominent Black lawyer who represents the Arbery family, states that a blatant lack of Black jurors in the trial represents “a cynical effort to help these coldblooded killers escape justice.” (Washington Post, Nov. 4)

Clear racist bias in Rittenhouse case

In August 2020, Jacob Blake, a young Black father, was shot in the back seven times in front of his children by white police in Kenosha, Wis. (Blake still remains paralyzed from the waist down.) A multinational Black Lives Matter protest took place Aug. 25 in the streets of that city located not far from Milwaukee.

At the protest, a 17-year-old white vigilante, Kyle Rittenhouse, shot and killed two unarmed anti-racist protesters, Joseph Rosenbaum and Anthony Huber, who happened to be white. Minutes before the killings, Kenosha police were caught on camera thanking an armed Rittenhouse, along with others with him, for their presence and providing them water. After the shootings, the police did not question or arrest Rittenhouse — who continued to openly carry the rifle he had killed with — and allowed him to walk free to threaten other protesters.

Rittenhouse was eventually arrested and charged with two counts of murder and one count of attempted murder of protester Gage Grosskreutz.

In another example of outrageous bias, Circuit Judge Bruce Schroeder stated in an Oct. 26 pre-trial hearing that those who Rittenhouse killed and wounded could not be characterized by prosecuting attorneys as “victims” or even “alleged victims,” but could be characterized by defense attorneys in their closing arguments as “looters,” “rioters” and “arsonists.”

This raises the question of who is really on trial, the white supremacist Rittenhouse or Rosenbaum and Huber, who will never be able to defend themselves because they are dead? The judge, who is supposed to be impartial, has clearly shown unabashedly whose side he is on before the trial has even begun.

Grosskreutz has filed a lawsuit against the city and Kenosha County stating that police deputized a “band of white nationalist vigilantes.” The complaint cited a remark from one of the police who spoke to Rittenhouse saying, “We appreciate you guys — we really do.”

The lawsuit goes on to say, “These were the words of Kenosha law enforcement officers — words of encouragement, appreciation and thanks, spoken to Kyle Rittenhouse and a band of white nationalist vigilantes on the evening of August 25, 2020.” (Washington Post, Oct. 26)

These two trials dramatically expose once again that white supremacy and racism are not secondary issues in a society split by deepening class divisions. The Black Lives Matter movement is expressed in various forms and must always be defended wherever and whenever racists threaten Black lives — whether going for an early morning run or angrily protesting injustice in the streets. □

Claudette Colvin — Catalyst for 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott



By Minnie Bruce Pratt

Claudette Colvin’s defiant action on a segregated Alabama bus in 1955 — before that of Rosa Parks — resulted in her arrest and conviction on two counts of violating Montgomery’s segregation laws and one of assaulting an officer. Though the first two convictions were overturned on appeal, the third still stands on her record.

She told the Montgomery Advertiser in 2019 that she didn’t remember attacking the police, but she remembers white officers debating her bra size and the sound of the key locking her in the cell.

Now Colvin, at 82, has returned to Alabama to live, expunge her arrest record and clear her name. On Oct. 26 she and her lawyers filed her request to a juvenile court, flanked by supporters clapping and singing anthems from the Black Civil Rights Movement. “I guess you can say that now I am no longer a juvenile delinquent,” Colvin told the crowd. (AP, Oct. 27)

The following Workers World article was first published Feb. 13, 2016.

Many people think of Rosa Parks when they celebrate the victory of the 1955-1956 Montgomery bus boycott that ended segregation in U.S. public transportation.

But before Rosa Parks, there was a 15-year-old African American, Claudette Colvin, who on March 2, 1955, refused to give up her seat on a city bus to a white rider. With her fierce and militant action, she was the first person to commit civil disobedience in the boycott struggle. As one local organizer commented at the time, Claudette “brought the revolution to Montgomery.”

Colvin was on her way to Booker T. Washington High School that morning. School studies during February had concentrated on the U.S. Constitution and she was thinking over these lessons when a white rider boarded. No seats were available in front of her and other Black riders. Jim Crow law demanded that whites never



Claudette Colvin in 1952

sit behind African-American riders.

The bus driver yelled at Colvin to move toward “the back of the bus.” She decided, “I wasn’t gonna take it anymore,” and refused. As white cops were dragging her by her arms off the bus and handcuffing her, she answered none of their questions but chanted over and over, “It’s my Constitutional right!”

She said in a 2009 Newsweek interview: “I felt like Sojourner Truth was pushing down on one shoulder and Harriet Tubman was pushing down on the other — saying, ‘Sit down girl!’”

The cops charged her with violation of the state segregation laws, disturbing the peace and “assaulting an officer” — though she had been nonresisting.

In later interviews, she made clear that her anger and will to resist had been building since her first memory of racism, at four years old. She was radicalized at 13, when a 16-year-old schoolmate, Jeremiah Reeves, was tried and falsely convicted of raping a white woman. In a 1953 trial riddled with the racist fraud and lies of segregation, he was ultimately sentenced to death.

Colvin describes his conviction as “the turning point” in her life. She plunged into political activity — attending rallies, writing letters and raising money for his defense. She became active in the NAACP, ultimately becoming the youth secretary.

By 1955, she had “formed a mission” for herself: She would become a lawyer and fight for her freedom and that of her people — like Harriet Tubman. She was also ready for action that March morning.

Civil Rights organizers, including Parks, had been advancing moderate demands to white Montgomery authorities to alleviate the racist verbal and physical assaults on Black bus riders.

Then Colvin’s arrest angered the entire Black community and made a boycott seem possible.

But movement lawyers and organizers were afraid they couldn’t win a boycott lawsuit with Colvin as its public face. There was intense pressure under violent segregation to maneuver using the “respectability politics” being challenged in the current era by the Black Lives Matter movement.

Colvin was a proudly defiant teenager. Her background was thoroughly working class — her parents were a domestic worker and a gardener — rather than professional. The white judge in her case cleverly distorted her public image by dropping all charges except for “assaulting a police officer.” So organizers turned from Colvin to Rosa Parks as the test case of civil disobedience.

A turn towards activism

Colvin continued to find her path to action and defiance. On a personal level, she anticipated the “Black Is Beautiful” movement by refusing to straighten her hair “to try to look white.”



Claudette Colvin in 2005, still defiant

In political work, Colvin’s history-making action was finally acknowledged when she became one of four plaintiffs in the

legal suit *Browder v. Gayle*, attempting to end segregation in public transport. Other plaintiffs included Amelia Browder, a college-educated seamstress, and Mary Louise Smith, a teenager also arrested, after Colvin and before Rosa Parks, for refusing to move to a segregated bus seat.

Colvin’s testimony in federal court was decisive as she entered into verbal combat with racist attorneys. She specifically named the sexual and racist abuse of Black girls as part of her motivation to act. She spoke of her determination at the moment she had been put in an adult jail cell and heard the key turn in the lock.

At that point, an African-American woman in the audience began to sob uncontrollably and had to leave the courtroom.

One of the lawyers for the plaintiffs said later, “If there was a star witness in the boycott case, it had to be Claudette Colvin.”

The three federal judges took 10 minutes to decide, 2-1, in favor of Colvin and the other plaintiffs, that segregation in U.S. public transport was unconstitutional — a 1956 ruling upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court, in a decision as momentous as *Brown v. Board of Education*.

By the time of the court case, Colvin had become a single mother. Despite the historic court victory, she was a felon under the law, having been found guilty of the false charge of assaulting a cop. Known throughout town as “the girl who got arrested,” she was unable to get steady work in Montgomery, as violent white-supremacist threats, murders and bombings continued.

Colvin finally moved north to New York City, finding work there as a nurse’s aide until she retired. In a 2005 interview, she said of her action: “Mine was the first cry for justice, and a loud one. I knew then and I know now that, when it comes to justice, there is no easy way to get it. You have to take a stand and say, ‘This is not right.’ And I did.”

Background information and quotes in this article are from Phillip Hoose’s book, “Claudette Colvin” (2009).

Gender-based violence: root causes, root cures

By Mirinda Crissman

Prisons, jails, and detention centers hold many survivors of violence, and these brutal institutions themselves reproduce that violence. One of the many ways they do so can be understood through the lens of people being criminalized simply for defending themselves against gender-based violence.

Under international law, gender-based violence (GBV) includes: (1) any violence perpetrated against a person or groups of people on account of their gender identity or sexuality; (2) violence that is disproportionately inflicted against such groups; (3) acts of sexual violence. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty, and harm inflicted in public or in private. Both private and state actors can inflict gender-based violence. GBV also includes economic abuse. (survivedandpunishedny.org, tinyurl.com/2bhkx6k9)

Violent economics, racist inequalities, queer oppressions

According to “Mass Release Now: New York State’s Obligation to Deliver

Reparations for Criminalized Survivors”: “Despite the abundance of evidence confirming that economic precarity increases the risk of GBV, there is pervasive neglect of low-income survivors’ heightened material needs. Survivors in Black, Latinx, Indigenous and other communities of color tend to face even greater material needs, following centuries of U.S. policies that furthered the displacement, exploitation and economic disinvestment of these populations.”... The report continues: “Poverty, exclusion, and inadequate systems of support create the conditions for insecurity that expose individuals to interpersonal violence and set in motion their contact with the criminal punishment system.” (tinyurl.com/2bhkx6k9)

According to data compiled by the ACLU, about 67% of women in prison in the U.S. are women of color. Black women’s incarceration rates for all crimes increased by 800% since 1986, compared to an increase of 400% for women of all nationalities. In Montana, Indigenous peoples are 6% of the population but Indigenous women constitute approximately 25% of the total female prisoner population. (tinyurl.com/n2d6746j)

Not only are Black, Latinx and Indigenous women and other gender oppressed people detained at high rates disproportionate to their share of the population in prisons, jails, and migrant detention centers, but their oppressions also interlock with other oppressions based on sexual orientation, disability, income and more.

People who find themselves at the intersection of multiple oppressions face increased vulnerability to the criminal punishment system. The LGBTQ2S+ community is particularly vulnerable because they are more likely to become subjected to a cycle of exclusion and poverty which in turn exposes them to the risk of violence. For example, among Black transgender people, nearly half (47%) have been incarcerated at some point. (National Center for Transgender Equality, 2012)

The state’s gender-based violence

Individuals are not the only perpetrators of gender-based violence. Recently 70 women and transgender people being held at Rikers Island jail in New York City signed a petition condemning the plan of Gov. Kathy Hochul and Mayor Bill de Blasio to

transfer them to Bedford Hills Correctional Facility or Taconic Correctional Facility. (Bronxdefenders.org, Oct. 18, 2021) Rikers — like many jails, prisons, and detention centers — is experiencing an acute public health and human rights crisis during the pandemic. Rikers, like many city jails, is overcrowded, unsanitary and filled with thousands being detained pretrial.

The petition decried the transfers to far off state prisons as a so-called solution to the overcrowding and made the connection between state and interpersonal violence. “How does making female detainees more isolated and less able to meet with counsel, court advocates, and visitors address the emergency? ... If you’re going to declare an emergency, we insist that the government shoulder the burden, not the women who are already subjected to lengthy detention.” (Bronxdefenders.org, Oct. 18, tinyurl.com/3rjbm3h2)

In the handwritten petition another person said: “A tolerable solution is to negotiate release conditions, not to further bury chronic violations of due process. Don’t be another perpetrator of domestic violence — silencing us, hiding

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Midwest elections and the struggle against cops, racism

By Martha Grevatt
Cleveland

Cleveland voters made history Nov. 2 when they approved Issue 24, which creates a permanent community review board to oversee police conduct. Nearly 60% voted in favor citywide, with larger percentages on Cleveland’s East Side, the historic base of the African American community.

In 2015, a federal Department of Justice investigation into police misconduct, particularly excessive use of lethal and nonlethal force, resulted in a consent decree mandating a set of reforms. However, the consent decree expired in 2020 and the current Community Police Commission is not a permanent body.

Issue 24 creates a permanent body tasked with keeping residents safe from violent, racist cops. It supports termination of officers for “conduct (including slurs or other language) that is racist, sexist, anti-LGBTQ+, anti-immigrant, national-origin-based, or that is otherwise bigoted and used in the course and scope of employment, and/or is considered a matter of public concern.” The grassroots campaign, organized by Citizens for a Safer Cleveland (SaferCLE), was led by Black women who lost loved ones to police brutality.

Mayoral candidate Kevin Kelley ran a racist campaign against the progressive ballot measure, with a television ad featuring a group of white voters chanting “No on Issue 24.” Kelley’s African American opponent Justin Bibb, who supported the issue and signed a pledge not to accept an endorsement from the Cleveland Police Patrolmen’s Association, defeated Kelley with 63% of the vote.

Michael Polensek, longtime incumbent City Council member in Ward 8, ran a hostile campaign against his first-time challenger and Black Lives Matter Cleveland organizer Aisia Jones — along with candidates outside his ward — denouncing their “progressive agenda” of “defunding the police” in letters to voters. He based these allegations on the candidates’ support of Issue 24.

Council member Polensek attacked Jones for being a renter in a recently redrawn ward where a majority of residents are renters. He even publicized Jones’ street address, threatening the safety of herself, her spouse and her two young sons. Polensek, in office since 1977, was

charged with anti-Semitism for suggesting that Ward 12 candidate Rebecca Maurer, a progressive attorney who is Jewish, was pulling the strings in all of the progressive Council campaigns.

Vastly outspent and lacking name recognition, Jones lost this election. But she told Workers World, “I ran a solid grassroots campaign focused on issues and solutions. My campaign was truly people-powered; I started a movement in Ward 8.

“I felt like a winner when I realized Issue 24 passed. I worked a lot behind the scenes on that. I’m so honored to have openly supported the work of the families represented with SaferCLE. Cleveland is one of the few cities that has police accountability! I’m proud of that; for me, as an activist, that’s a major victory! The work continues.”

Maurer, also a first time candidate, narrowly won her election.

Anti-racist ballot measures in Detroit, Minneapolis

Four out of five Detroit voters approved Proposal R to create a Reparations Task Force to address the harm inflicted on city residents by systemic racism. Although Proposal R does not have a funding mechanism, the task force can recommend programs, such as for housing and economic development, to rectify the damage done by centuries of oppression. About 77% of Detroit residents are Black.

This continues the efforts of Detroit’s late Rep. John Conyers, who for years brought the just demand for reparations to the halls of Congress. Cities which have adopted similar measures include Asheville, N.C.; Evanston, Ill.; St. Paul, Minn., and Providence, R.I.

Three Detroit suburbs with large Arab and Muslim communities elected their first mayors from those constituencies. Dearborn Mayor-elect Abdullah Hammoud and Dearborn Heights Mayor-elect Bill Bazzi are Lebanese; Hamtramck Mayor-elect Amer Ghalib is Yemeni. This follows the historic election of Rep. Rashida Tlaib, the first Palestinian and one of the first

two Muslim women to be elected to Congress. Other suburbs elected Black, Asian and Latinx candidates for mayor and City Council for the first time.

In Minneapolis, where the police lynching of George Floyd took place May 25, 2020, the language in Question 2 was stronger than Cleveland’s Issue 24. Had it passed it would have replaced the Minneapolis Police Department with a Department of Public Safety under the direction of a DPS Commissioner appointed by the mayor and eliminated language mandating minimum funding for the police. But the measure still garnered 44% of voter support in a city almost 64% white.

Under capitalism, the electoral process is not designed



Citizens for a Safer Cleveland delivers ballot petitions for a permanent police review board, June 16 as Angela Kirkman, whose son Angelo Miller was killed by Cleveland cops, speaks outside City Hall.

to bring about fundamental and meaningful change, but elections are an instrument in the struggle and a barometer of mass sentiment. These election results in the Rust Belt follow the 2020 Black Lives Matter upsurge and they occur as the working class is exercising its power at the point of production. They are a harbinger of things to come.

Martha Grevatt is a resident of Cleveland Ward 8.

Gender-based violence: root causes, root cures

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us, abusing your power... The state’s incompetence is not our emergency.” (tinyurl.com/xc6ufm67)

Fighting back against gender violence

In what is currently known as the United States, human rights for those other than white, land-owning men have had to be won by oppressed peoples through struggle. The case of Joann Little provides an earlier example of movement powered fightback pressuring courts on stolen land to recognize the right of women and gender oppressed people to fight back against abuse.

“In August 1975, Joann Little, a 20-year-old African American woman, fled her jail cell in Beaufort, N.C., after killing the white deputy sheriff who had attempted to rape her. Little used the jailer’s ice-pick weapon against him in her desperate struggle to resist. When Little surrendered to authorities, citing self-defense, she was arrested and put on trial for murder. The historic campaign that saved Little from execution or life in prison was the first successful U.S. struggle to assert the right of African-American women to self-defense against white rapists.” (Workers World, March 9, 2006, tinyurl.com/3w8amw3y)

It should be mentioned that, in

addition to Joann Little’s case, the struggles and fightback in support of Yvonne Swan Wanrow, the New Jersey 7, the San Antonio 4, CeCe McDonald, Bresha Meadows and the MOVE 9 have had significant wins and proven mass movements as credible threats in resisting our oppressions collectively.

How profit and gender-based violence go hand in hand

Perpetuation of gender-based violence is a form of social control which has aided the accumulation of capital in the hands of a few. Vanessa Bolin, an Indigenous artist, activist, street medic and founder of the Eyes Wide Open Project, Richmond Indigenous Society, and River City Medic Collective, addressed the Carrizo Comecrudo Tribunal for Human Rights in May 2020. Bolin explained that sites of oil extraction that bring in men to work not only desecrate the land but also particularly contribute to murdered and missing Indigenous women, girls and Two Spirit relatives. She further explained that gender-based violence against Indigenous people has been ongoing since colonizers first arrived on the continent.

Criminal punishment has not and will not reduce the prevalence of gender-based violence or the economic, social and political precarity for survivors of that violence. Even the Centers for Disease Control recognizes that a guarantee of economic security “holds great potential for improving a wide range of health outcomes for

neighborhoods, communities and states and also has the potential to prevent IPV [intimate partner violence].”

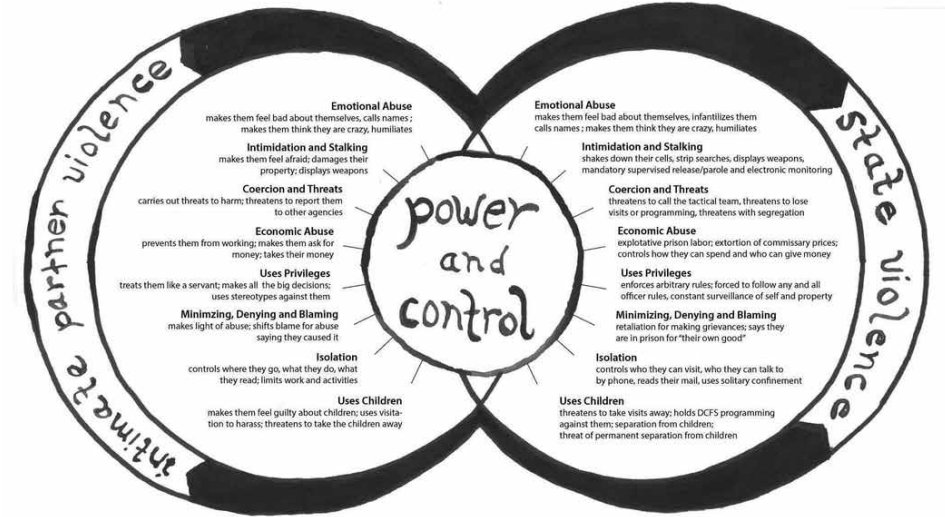
Cuba’s community support for survivors

Rather than locking up and punishing survivors of gender-based violence we can instead address root causes and take community centered approaches to alleviate suffering to truly transform current conditions.

In Cuba, through organized community bodies like the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR) and the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), “neighbors often intervene directly with abusers. According to one expert’s estimate, they do so in at least 90% of cases involving family violence. Furthermore, neighbors may bring perpetrators to FMC programs, and they frequently report abuse to family doctors, who rely on social workers to investigate and offer services. Neighbors may also involve CDR officials, or even the police, at times. However, most individuals contact authorities for the purpose of encouraging the perpetrator to enter into an informal contract whereby he agrees to obtain help and change his behavior.” (tinyurl.com/3anz7wer)

Justice is what we build with others. Workers and the oppressed of the world unite, same struggle, same fight!

Phebe Eckfeldt and mYia X contributed to this article.



Power & Control Wheel from Moms United Against Violence and Incarceration Chicago re-conceptualized by Monica Cosby.

GRAPHIC: SARAH ROSS

Buffalo, N.Y. Starbucks workers resist union-busting

By Tom Suill
Buffalo, N.Y.

Bulletin—Nov. 9: Workers at three additional Buffalo stores have filed with the National Labor Relations Board for a union election—doubling the number in the area to a total of six. At the initial three stores they will receive ballots by mail on Dec. 10, pending a NLRB decision on any last minute attempts by Starbucks to delay the vote further.



PHOTO: TITO RUIZ

These Buffalo, N.Y., Starbucks workers announced on Nov. 9 that three additional stores have filed for a union election.

Since Starbucks workers publicly announced a union drive here in October, the workers have faced relentless union busting from the company intent on crushing the union. During the last few months, workers have endured threats, harassment, intimidation, surveillance and even the closing down of stores that had union support for extended periods of time.

The company has also tried to isolate the workers as much as possible, by changing store hours outside of workers' availability, forcing people to quit or transfer, and flooding the floor with managers and corporate officials, creating an atmosphere of fear at work.

Starbucks Workers United fired back, announcing Nov. 4 that they are filing charges of unfair labor practices against the company.

Danka Dragic, a two-year employee at Starbucks, told Workers World: "We shouldn't have to wait until things get as bad as at Amazon or Walmart before we can organize a union."

The workers know that every worker deserves a union, and Starbucks—a multi-billion dollar corporation that puts a lot of effort into masking its exploitation of workers with a progressive image—has

shown that when it comes to union busting, they are no better than Amazon or Walmart.

Union supporters at three of the twenty stores in the Buffalo Starbucks district have filed for a union election, with widespread worker support in other stores. On Oct. 28 the National Labor Relations Board ruled that voting-by-mail will take place for those three stores from Nov. 10 to Dec. 8.

In response, Starbucks adapted its anti-union strategy, from captive audience meetings that instructed workers to vote no to pulling workers off the floor during their shift to scare them away from the union by one-on-one conversations. The company is adding employees from other stores to the list of eligible voters in stores that filed, in a blatant attempt to stack the vote against union supporters.

In addition to intimidation, Starbucks has tried to buy the support of workers. Since its founding in 1971, Starbucks has never given seniority pay, but has decided now to hand out that extra pay — during a mounting union drive.

Only under the pressure of organizing workers did Starbucks give in about seniority pay. This is just a small glimpse of what workers can gain by organizing together in their shared class interests.

On Nov. 6, Starbucks hosted what they call a "partner event," featuring former executive chair of the company, Howard Schultz. During this event, billionaire Schultz lectured workers about the need to be "humble."

Then barista and union organizer Gianna Reeve asked Schultz to sign the Fair Election Principles. Workers have asked the company to sign from the beginning of the union drive. Starbucks has refused, and Schultz refused again. Reeve's request was followed by applause and cheers from many other workers present, who feel that Starbucks has not allowed workers a fair say in the face of the company's underhanded anti-union tactics.

The mood among workers is that there has to be an end to management intimidation and harassment. Starbucks corporate is using every trick in the book to crush the union and grab profits over the best interests of their workers.

But Starbucks workers are persisting — and continue to inspire other food service workers and workers of all industries to unite together and organize to build power in the workplace.

Workers World Party is in dedicated solidarity with Starbucks Workers United and with workers everywhere in the fight against capitalist exploitation. □

Kellogg's workers still on 'Str-r-r-ike!'

By Martha Grevatt
Battle Creek, Mich.

Tony the Tiger's famous line — "Kellogg's Frosted Flakes, they're "grrr-eat" has been reworked. Lawn signs supporting the strike of 1,400 Kellogg's workers show an angry Tony with a picket sign saying "Kellogg's on strrr-ike!"

The members of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers (BCTGM) in Michigan, Nebraska, Pennsylvania and Tennessee are now in their second month on strike. On Nov. 4, union negotiators announced they had turned down the company's latest offer, stating: "The company's last, best and final offer does not achieve what our members are asking for: a predictable pathway to fully vested, fully benefitted employment for all employees with no concessions." Kellogg's has threatened to cut hundreds of jobs and move work to Mexico. (BCTGM.org)

Workers World spoke with members of BCTGM Local 3-G outside the Kellogg's plant in Battle Creek. They explained that the main goal of the strike is not higher wages but an end to the divisive, unequal two-tier pay scale that pays lower seniority workers less for the exact same work

performed by those with higher seniority. Their strike signs call for "equal pay and benefits" and accuse Kellogg's of putting "profits over people."

The strike has been effective; not one union member has crossed the picket line. Supervisors and temporary agency employees working on the line have not been able to run production. Truckers leaving the plant tell strikers their loads are empty. Unsafe conditions created by the bosses' inexperience have led to five injuries so far.

The Tony the Tiger statue outside the plant was dwarfed by a huge inflatable "Scabby the Rat" symbolizing Kellogg's greed. Over the years Scabby has made his presence known at union pickets across the country. This Scabby was provided by Laborers' International Union of North America Local 355 — an example of the widespread community and labor solidarity in this town known as "Cereal City."

With large amounts of food being donated, "We're not going hungry," a striker explained. They've received "a lot of love." Drivers at one trucking company, who know the Kellogg's workers personally, are refusing to make daily pickups and deliveries — even though they don't have a union.

While BCTGM has not called an official boycott of Kellogg's, many consumers have stopped buying "scab cereal."

Workers striking a blow at capital

The Kellogg's workers are not the only ones on strike. The 14 plants of heavy equipment manufacturer John Deere remain strikebound after workers voted down a second contract proposal Nov. 2.

They felt a number of issues were still not addressed, including pay losses they have felt due to supply chain issues outside their control. Before the frequent parts shortages there was a "KIP" bonus paid if workers met a certain quota, but now making quota is impossible and the company refuses to adjust the formula.

Like Kellogg's, John Deere does not want to end two-tier pay, in place since 1997. "Post '97" workers are organized on social media and are tired of working for less than what older workers — in some cases their parents — made several contracts ago.

Meanwhile 1,500 nurses in Huntington, W. Va., and 3,000 graduate student workers at Columbia University in New York City, who have spent four years fighting for their first contract, have joined the strike upsurge. Striketober has passed



WW PHOTO: MARTHA GREVATT

Battle Creek, Mich., Nov. 4



WW PHOTO: MARTHA GREVATT

'Scabby the Rat' symbolizes Kellogg's anti-union policies.

and Strikevember has begun — much to the dismay of the capitalist class.

If the Kellogg's strikers, represented by a small union with 65,000 members countrywide, are able to get rid of two-tier pay, it will be a huge victory with ramifications for the whole labor movement.

Which side are you on? We're on the workers' side! □

'We Are One' Defiant miners march in Manhattan

By Mary Owen
New York City

Chanting "We are one!" striking Alabama coal miners — who'd come by busloads to town — rallied and marched here Nov. 4. Joined by supporters, they protested outside the midtown offices of the BlackRock investment firm, the biggest shareholder in the miners' employer, Warrior Met Coal. Several miners were arrested for blocking traffic in front of BlackRock, including United Mine Workers International President Cecil E. Roberts.

As reported in previous Workers World articles, the 1,100 Brookwood, Ala., miners have been on strike since April 1 for

better working conditions, pay and benefits. These members of United Mine Workers (UMWA) Locals 2245, 2368 and 2397 say the big hedge funds that provide financial backing to Warrior Met are blocking progress toward a fair contract. The coal company is "the leading dedicated U.S.-based producer and exporter of high quality metallurgical ('met') coal for the global steel industry." (Business Wire, Feb. 24)

In 2016, the unionized miners agreed to bone-deep cuts in wages, health benefits and other issues in order to save the parent coal company from bankruptcy. Warrior Met promised to reverse the cuts as it returned to solvency.

The company just reported its best quarter since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a net income of \$38.4 million for the 2021 third quarter. It has reversed a 2020 net loss of \$14.4 million — and yet still refuses to bargain in good faith with the miners. Warrior Met's best offer so far included a union-breaking clause to allow the company to refuse to rehire union strike leaders and to favor scab workers as replacements. (al.com, Nov. 2)

The Manhattan protest came after Warrior Met found an Alabama judge



Alabama miners march against Wall Street, New York City, Nov. 1.

WW PHOTO: MARY OWEN

willing to issue a restraining order on Oct. 27 prohibiting picketing or any other activity by any union members — or by any family members or supporters — within 300 yards of its 12 Tuscaloosa County, Ala., locations.

Continued on page 7

Amazon union organizing — a crowd favorite at ‘Peoplehood’

By **Betsey Piette**
Philadelphia

Nov. 6 — More than 200 community activists marched through West Philadelphia today in the 21st “Peoplehood” event organized by Spiral Q theater group. Many participants carried or wore flags, banners, papier-mâché puppets, costumes, child-sized cardboard houses and even a cardboard mailbox, in pageantry focused on uplifting the many struggles of global working and oppressed communities.

The “Peoplehood Parade” is a celebration allowing participants to express creativity and community concerns while taking to the streets to celebrate Philadelphia’s diversity. Participants who gathered at the historic Paul Robeson House at 50th and Walnut streets represented many struggles, including against racism, gender oppression, food insecurity, climate catastrophe and voter suppression, and for Indigenous rights — including the Palestinian struggle against Israeli apartheid — housing, union organizing and more. To the rhythm of percussion drummers, participants marched a



Amazon Labor Union members participating in ‘Peoplehood Parade’, Philadelphia, Nov. 6.

mile and a half through diverse neighborhoods to Clark Park at 45th and Chester streets. Community residents turned out along the route to welcome the parade.

Amazon Labor Union

Workers World Party marched with a contingent in support of union organizing at Amazon, organized by the Philadelphia Workers Solidarity Network. This contingent’s lead banner was carried by members of the Amazon Labor Union who have been organizing at the company’s Staten Island, N.Y., warehouses.

Over the last six months, the ALU has successfully built a workers’ committee, signed up more than 2,000 workers

in support of a union, and filed Oct. 25 with the National Labor Relations Board to hold an election, which could come as early as mid-November.

Amazon whistleblower-turned-union-organizer Chris Smalls, who lost his job for calling out unsafe conditions at a warehouse during the COVID-19 pandemic, participated in today’s march.

The Amazon contingent drew considerable attention with its 10-foot-tall puppet of the company’s former CEO, centi-billionaire Jeff Bezos. Another graphic painted on wood featured an image of Bezos defecating while saying “Only the best compensation for my employees!! I’m full of it.”

Wobbling Amazon boxes, stacked 12-feet high, were threaded on PVC pipes and carried by march participants. Highlighting the unsafe, precarious conditions Amazon workers face every day, the boxes held signs calling for support for the right of Amazon workers to unionize.

Rising above the waters

Philadelphia’s Spiral Q was founded in 1996 as a street performance troupe that promoted social and political change through giant puppetry reflecting community issues. The Q stands for queer. Early actions centered around HIV/AIDS activism and LGBTQ+ communities.

Since 2000, Spiral Q has organized “Peoplehood” as an annual parade to lift up the work of Philadelphia’s diverse communities. Centered in West Philadelphia, Spiral Q worked with some 100 diverse community organizations before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Spiral Q co-directors Jennifer Turnbull and Liza Goodell, along with numerous volunteers, worked with each participating group to decide the focus their contingent could take and how to best reflect that through their creative art.

This year’s “Peoplehood” was achieved despite a severe setback. In early September, remnants of Hurricane Ida flooded a warehouse housing Spiral Q’s massive collection of giant papier-mâché puppets and other materials. Between 65-70% of more than 2,000 artifacts were destroyed or damaged beyond repair, along with supplies, computers and other equipment.

The general theme of today’s event was “rising above the waters” — an acknowledgement of the recovery from the flood damage and the resiliency of community struggles. During the week leading up to “Peoplehood,” volunteers rushed to construct the final “float” of the parade — a large wooden boat, still advancing. □

Union strikes Amazon in Germany

By **John Catalinotto**

Nov. 7 — Some 2,500 Amazon workers went out on strike in Germany for one to three days starting Nov. 1 to press demands for an increase in wages. By Nov. 2 seven of Amazon’s 17 warehouses — or “fulfillment centers” as Amazon management calls them — were affected by the strike. The workers are members of Verdi, the country’s second largest trade union.

Orhan Akman, Verdi’s national group leader for the retail and mail-order sector, said: “It is unacceptable that a multinational corporation worth billions earns itself silly and yet refuses to give employees the wage increases that other industry companies pay.” (Junge Welt, Nov. 2)

The strike against Amazon in Germany, like a similar strike in Italy last spring, demonstrates the international character of the class struggle with the mega-company. In the U.S. the Amazon workforce has been attempting to unionize and has an active union election underway at the facility in Staten Island, N.Y.

In Germany contracts for wages have been set by bargaining by industry. The Verdi service workers union says that Amazon should be counted as being in the retail industry and pay more than the current amount

offered to its workers. Amazon management claims the company is part of the logistics industry, and that the 12 euros (about \$14) per hour they offer is correct.

Of course it is self-serving for Amazon to define themselves as part of logistics, since the prevailing wages, set by agreement, are lower there than in retail. Germany is second only to the United States in the amount of sale income for Amazon.

For the last eight years, Verdi has held job actions at Amazon, concentrating on the period near the December holidays, when the company is busiest. These actions are expected again this year.

Verdi demands that Amazon “immediately” pass on to Amazon employees the pay increases from the collective wage agreements reached in the retail and mail order sector in recent weeks.

The arrogant attitude of the company, which claims its pay is excellent, is exactly what infuriates the thousands of workers, said Ronny Streich, the Verdi union secretary in Leipzig, in an interview with Junge Welt. “We have a stable activist group here and a workforce that has become more willing to strike in recent years. ... We can’t go any lower” in worker demands.

Streich’s Verdi colleague Mechthild Middeke,



Amazon workers, Leipzig, Germany, Nov. 2.

responsible for two locations in Bad Hersfeld, told Junge Welt, “Our permanent conflict with Amazon has a symbolic character for the entire industry.”

And not just in Germany. □

Amazon Labor Union forges ahead

Only two weeks after Amazon Labor Union workers filed with the National Labor Relations Board on Oct. 25 to hold an election at the company’s Staten Island warehouses, signs of support are visible throughout the New York City metro area. These large banner drops are seen daily by thousands of people traveling the Staten Island Expressway. The ALU organizing is taking place as the historic effort to form a union at Amazon’s Bessemer, Ala., warehouse is being revived. Activists are making sure the crucial Staten Island drive will not suffer political isolation due to the relative remoteness of the borough’s location. Pro-worker activists have also plastered the subway with QR code stickers linking to the petition demanding union rights for Amazon workers.

— Report by **Tony Murphy**



Sign the petition at tinyurl.com/4he4wkh4

Defiant miners march in Manhattan

Continued from page 6

Mine workers at the New York march were fired up over the anti-union court action and more determined than ever to bring the coal profiteer back to the bargaining table.

The New York City Central Labor Council, whose affiliates represent over 1 million workers, helped publicize the event. Support delegations came from the Coalition of Labor Union Women, Laborers Union, entertainment-media union SAG-AFTRA, Association of Flight Attendants (AFA), Communications Workers, UNITE HERE hotel workers, National Writers Union, Workers Assembly Against Racism and others. Miners also traveled from Ohio and Pennsylvania to be there.

Rally speakers lambasted Warrior Met and the Alabama courts, sheriffs and governor for allowing scabs to cross the picket line while unconstitutionally restraining striking miners from fighting for a contract. Some linked the Warrior Met fight with other worker struggles.

Leonard Aguilar, secretary-treasurer of the Texas AFL-CIO, said, “I’m from the South, so I’m here to support my brothers and sisters from the South — whether at Nabisco or Kellogg’s or the mine workers.”

UNITE HERE Local 35 President Bob Proto,

representing maintenance and service workers at Yale University, said, “We’re here to tell private equity firms like BlackRock that the days of being ‘private’ are over. We’ll shine a light on your profits and follow the money. We’re in this fight all the way, it will escalate, and you will feel it.”

AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler sent a message pledging the national federation’s support: “We will not let the police or the courts or the governor bend the law against union rights.”

AFA President Sara Nelson said, “Past mine worker struggles made sure we even have a labor movement. If you are thinking, ‘Isn’t it strange that flight attendants would be here supporting the miners,’ well that’s union-buster talk. Because whether you work 2,000 feet underground or 30,000 feet in the air, it’s unions that make sure our air is safe to breathe.”

“Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. talked about the right to protest for what is right,” said UMW President Roberts. “The injunction says we can’t picket or talk or even gather near Warrior Met. But we need freedom of speech, freedom of assembly — and we need to drive the scabs back into the hole they crawled out of and get back to the table to negotiate.” □

United States tries to sabotage Nicaragua’s elections — yet again

By Nan McCurdy

The following edited article first appeared in *Covert Action Magazine* on Nov. 3. (Read the entire article at tinyurl.com/5482rum7.) Nan McCurdy is the editor of *NicaNotes*. Now working in Mexico, she lived over 30 years in Nicaragua and is currently there for the Nov. 7 elections, along with close to 200 other international observers.

On Nov. 7, thousands of Nicaraguan citizens gathered in Victories Square in Managua to celebrate that the preliminary report from the Supreme Electoral Council on the general election showed that the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) had obtained 74.99 percent of the valid votes in the electoral process. (Telesur, Nov. 8) More details to follow.

The U.S. government has not waited for these results. Seeing the enormous support for the FSLN and for the continued presidency of Daniel Ortega as the likely outcome, the U.S. has repeatedly asserted through corporate media and all other possible forums that the Nicaraguan election process was not “free or fair” — stating this even months before the election actually took place.

On Nov. 3, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Menendez, Republican Marco Rubio, House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee Chairman Albio Sires, Rep. Maria Elvira Salazar and seven other members of Congress celebrated the passage of the Reinforcing Nicaragua’s Adherence to Conditions for Electoral Reform (RENACER) Act, a bill that openly threatens the sovereignty of Nicaragua.

The Sandinista Party won with 62% of the vote in the 2011 elections and with 72.5% in 2016. Polls show the Sandinista Party winning with between 64% and 75% in the Nov. 7 elections, during which more than 3 million people will vote for President and Vice President, 90 National Assembly representatives and 20 Central American Parliament representatives.

The likely reason for such a majority vote for the Sandinista Party is that people want the progress their families have experienced since 2007, like universal free health care and education, to continue. Nicaragua has made the greatest investments in infrastructure, including new modern health facilities and road networks, in the Central American region.

Since 2007, poverty has been cut in half, maternal mortality has dropped by 70%, infant mortality by 61% with a 66% reduction in chronic malnutrition in children six to 12 years old. With a high percentage of small and medium-scale farmers and significant government investment in training and local food-production programs, Nicaragua has achieved 90% food sovereignty.

In the last 14 years potable water access has risen from 65% to 92%; electricity coverage has increased from 54% to 99% and 80% of the energy comes from renewables; in fact, Nicaragua is number three in the world in renewable energy. In gender equality, Nicaragua has gone from 62nd to 5th in the world; and it holds first place in the world for women’s health and survival, women’s educational attainment and women cabinet ministers.

The satisfaction of the population with public services, Nicaragua’s transparency, lack of corruption and good project execution is even recognized by international banks.

U.S. strategy in the 2021 elections is to declare the elections illegitimate even before they take place.

The U.S. has intervened in every election since Nicaragua’s first free and fair election which took place in 1984. That year, the U.S. used the Contra War and the U.S. economic blockade to twist the arm of the population. But when polls showed the Sandinista Party winning by a large margin, they told “their” candidate, Arturo Cruz, to drop out and say he was not participating because the elections were not going to be free and fair.

RAIN: a CIA regime change plan

A United States Agency for International Development (USAID) regime change document was leaked to independent Nicaraguan journalist, William Grigsby, in July of 2020 from the U.S. embassy.

RAIN, or Responsive Assistance in Nicaragua, is a Terms of Reference contract for hiring a company to oversee what it refers to as a “transition” — a word

used more than thirty times in the document. It was written in the spring of 2020 and much of the U.S. destabilization activity to try to get the Sandinistas out of power has likely been under this plan:

“The purpose of this activity is to provide rapid responsive ... assistance to create the conditions for, and support, a peaceful transition to democracy in Nicaragua [regime change]. RAIN will contribute to the Mission’s ... objective of enabling the environment for Nicaragua’s transition to democracy.”

“...[T]argeted short-term ... activities during Nicaragua’s transition that require rapid-response programming support until other funds, mechanisms and actors can be mobilized.”

“RAIN will pursue these activities against a variety of scenarios...

- Free, fair and transparent elections lead to an orderly transition [the U.S.-backed party wins].
- A sudden political transition occurs following a crisis [including a health crisis] leads to a new government [a coup d’état]
- Transition does not happen in an orderly and timely manner. In the case that a transition does not happen and the regime is able to hold onto power ... by winning fairly, then RAIN ... will relate to bridging to...longer-term activities...”

“...Any national election could yield a result accepted by Nicaraguans and the International community.” [recognition that the Sandinistas could win in free and fair elections]

‘The U.S. government has been extremely successful in terms of getting the press, in chorus, to vilify Nicaragua’s Sandinista government for being a “dictatorship.”

‘If you only read mainstream sources you would have no idea that Nicaragua is the safest, most secure and highly functional country in the region.’

“If the regime remains resilient RAIN ... will have the ability to respond ... outside of other USAID programming [covertly], to ... needs to maintain civil society on track...”

“A delayed transition may require greater emphasis on ... civil society leadership, with discreet technical assistance types of activities ...”

“In the case of a coup, RAIN [the U.S., the CIA] takes actions to show the new government is legitimate [like U.S. recognition of the new government].

In the case of a Sudden Transition [coup], RAIN will likely require more use of Rapid Response Funds, ... with attention to potential for conflict, legitimacy of new government actors and setting up the transition for success.”

Sanctions: another form of war

The U.S. first considered sanctions on Cuba in 1960 when Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Lester Mallory said that the purpose of a blockade on Cuba was to “bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of the government.”

In the 1980s, in an attempt to overthrow the revolutionary Sandinista government that had taken power in 1979, the U.S. funded counter-revolutionary forces against Nicaragua and declared an embargo on all trade with the country.

In 2018, the U.S. passed illegal unilateral coercive



PHOTO: @TELESURENGLISH

A celebration of the Sandinista National Liberation Front’s electoral victory in the Nov. 7 election.

measures [sanctions] against Nicaragua. The Nicaragua Investment Conditionality Act (Nica Act) — which passed the House of Representatives with zero opposition by a 435-0 margin — directed the executive branch to “oppose new loans or agreements with Nicaragua through the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank and the International Monetary Fund; and directs agencies to create a ‘civil society’ engagement strategy [fund and support opposition groups], among other actions.”

The Nica Act was to punish Nicaragua for not being a subservient colony; it is not based on any wrong-doing. For example, the multilateral lenders only praise Nicaragua for its transparency and efficiency in project execution, going so far as to specifically say it is not corrupt.

The Nica Act reduced multilateral loans, hurting development in Nicaragua as well as impacting health-care during the pandemic. After damage from two strong hurricanes in November 2020 and Covid-19, some of the institutions have provided loans.

A number of members of the government have been sanctioned as individuals, like Paul Oquist, Minister for National Policies, who has since passed away. Oquist was an internationally recognized expert on climate change and co-chair of the Green Climate Fund in 2018. Born in the U.S., he gave up his U.S. citizenship in the 80s in protest of the Contra War.

The U.S. RENACER Act is a form of coercion to try to get Nicaraguans to vote against the Sandinista government. Nicaraguans know what sanctions mean for their economy. RENACER would make development financing even more difficult to get and could possibly make the economy scream.

The RENACER ACT applies targeted sanctions to card-carrying Sandinista Party members, some 2.1 million people, a third of the population.

Included in the stated U.S. reasons for attacking Nicaragua with RENACER are two laws that Nicaragua passed in October 2020: the Foreign Agents Regulatory Act — similar but not as stringent as the U.S. FARA Law, and the Cybercrimes Law, also not nearly as punitive as U.S. cybercrimes laws. Astounding considering that the U.S. has the same laws!

What will the impact be on Nicaragua’s elections?

The U.S. government has been extremely successful in terms of getting the press, in chorus, to vilify Nicaragua’s Sandinista government for being a “dictatorship.”

It’s been even more successful at keeping all the good news of Nicaragua’s amazing social and economic advances out of the U.S. press. If you only read mainstream sources you would have no idea that Nicaragua is the safest, most secure and highly functional country in the region.

The government of Nicaragua reaffirmed at the United Nations General Assembly that in the Nov. 7 elections it is not the U.S. Empire that will choose but the Nicaraguan people.

During his UN speech, Foreign Minister Denis Moncada reaffirmed Nicaragua’s commitment to continue working for peace, security and tranquility of individuals, families and communities. Statistically, every aspect of life has improved under the Sandinistas and the intention to vote Sandinista has increased monthly in the polls.

It appears that U.S. sanctions, coercion, and disinformation will have little effect on how Nicaraguans vote. □

A Sandinista's view

Nicaragua's colonial history

The following is part of a presentation given by Johnny Hodgson, Sandinista National Liberation Front's Political Secretary for the Autonomous Region of the South Caribbean (RACCS), on Oct. 6 in Managua, Nicaragua, to a U.S. delegation comprised of Coleen Littlejohn, Sara Flounders, Monica Moorehead, Joav Elinevsky and Stan Smith. The transcript is slightly edited.

My idea is to tell you who we are, the people of the Caribbean coast, where we are right now and where we're trying to get. We have six different peoples, six different ethnic groups on the Caribbean coast — Miskitu, Mayangna, Rama, Garifuna, Creole, Mestizo. Originally, we had eight different groups of people living on the Caribbean coast when the Europeans first came. In 1502 we had Europeans and Africans coming to what we call the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua today. The Europeans came because they wanted to. The Africans came against their will.

Nicaragua historically has been a divided country, divided by the colonial powers. What we know as the Pacific Coast today was a Spanish colony. What we call the Caribbean coast today was a British protectorate. So due to these circumstances, the presence of the Europeans, they were curious to have an alliance between the British and the Natives, an alliance to fight against the Spanish. The Spanish were on the Pacific coast, the British on the Caribbean coast. The British made an alliance with the Natives to fight against the Spanish.

So from the very first days of colonial time on the Caribbean coast in Nicaragua, we had the Spanish teaching the Indigenous people from the Pacific coast to fight against the Indigenous from the Caribbean coast, telling them they are your enemies. And the same thing, the British on the Caribbean coast telling our Indigenous people that their enemies are the Indigenous from the Pacific. So we had this historical division and as a result of that alliance between the British and the Natives, this territory known then as the Miskitu shore and today as the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua, became a British protectorate, that's the legal status that it had. It established a monarchic

government so we began to crown kings in 1635.

Divided by colonization

This kingdom went on doing business and commercial exchange with the Europeans until 1783. In 1783, in France, they signed a treaty to try to put a stop to the war between the British and the Spanish. They called it the Paris Treaty. To try to put a stop to the war, they shared territories. So in that sharing, they decided to put our territory in the hands of the Spanish and Belize in the hands of the British. The Miskitu shore was supposed to become part of the Spanish crown.

But the British there on the Caribbean coast said, "No, we don't want anything to do with that document that was signed there. We are happy here. We are doing good here. We have everything we need here. We have all we need to repair our ships. When we throw our nets, we catch so much fish that the nets are tearing. We have enough honey to sweeten our drinks." They even mentioned, "We have all we need to satisfy our sexual appetite." Yes, they mentioned that! So they say we're not going anywhere. But the Spanish have a document saying that they are the owners of that territory, and they're claiming it. So in 1786, they had what they call the London Convention, where they ratified the Treaty of Paris, saying that this territory belongs to Spain. But they didn't only ratify it. They put the timetable establishing that if the British didn't get out of the Miskitu shore before the 10th of April of 1787, they will become subjects of the Spanish crown. They will have to obey their enemies. But even with that, the British waited until the last minute to move out. So practically they had to come and move them all out. They had to come from England to move all these British and take them to Belize.

And in rushing to get out before the deadline, a lot of the Black enslaved people were able to stay behind. And those enslaved people who stayed behind mixed with the Indigenous people and began calling themselves Creoles from 1787 until today. So we had Indigenous people and now we have a new set of people called Creole, a mixture of African and Indigenous.



Jose Leon Aviles, Executive Secretariat for Development of the Caribbean Coast and Johnny Hodgson in Managua, Oct. 6.

WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

Then 10 years after that, in 1797, the Garifunas were kicked out of Saint Vincent and came and settled here in Central America, in Roatán and, after that, to the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua. So we had the Indigenous and the African descendants living on the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua, trying to make headway. But in 1894, we pressed formally, officially, to be part of Nicaragua. But it wasn't a deal. It wasn't an agreement. It was by force of arms that the Caribbean coast, the Miskitu shore, became part of Nicaragua.

'We were invisible'

When we became part of Nicaragua, it was a tough time. We called it the "Time of Imposition" because Nicaragua began to impose authority, to impose new laws, etc. It was a real rough thing, a horrible thing for the people of the Caribbean coast that historically exercised a different level of self-government. Even though it was a British protectorate we exercised a different level of self-government, we had our own kings, our own laws, et cetera. So the territory was incorporated into Nicaragua, but not the people. Nicaragua said, "That territory is mine. Those resources are mine, they're Nicaraguan." But the people? We were never recognized as Nicaraguan. The Nicaraguan Constitution established a mono-ethnic country, a country with one language. The official language of Nicaragua is Spanish. So we were living there, but we were invisible. We weren't in the Constitution. We were excluded from everything economically and socially.

I came to Managua to study in 1972. In the 1970s, it was very difficult for someone to come from the Caribbean coast to study here. We didn't have any university on the Caribbean coast so you had to come to Managua. So that year that I came, two of us were able to come to study at the agricultural university. And

when we got a break, we used to speak Creole. Some of the guys would come and say, "Hey, you can't be talking that thing here." And I used to fight back and say, "No, I am a Nicaraguan, I have rights and I can speak my own language."

'I read the Constitution from A to Z'

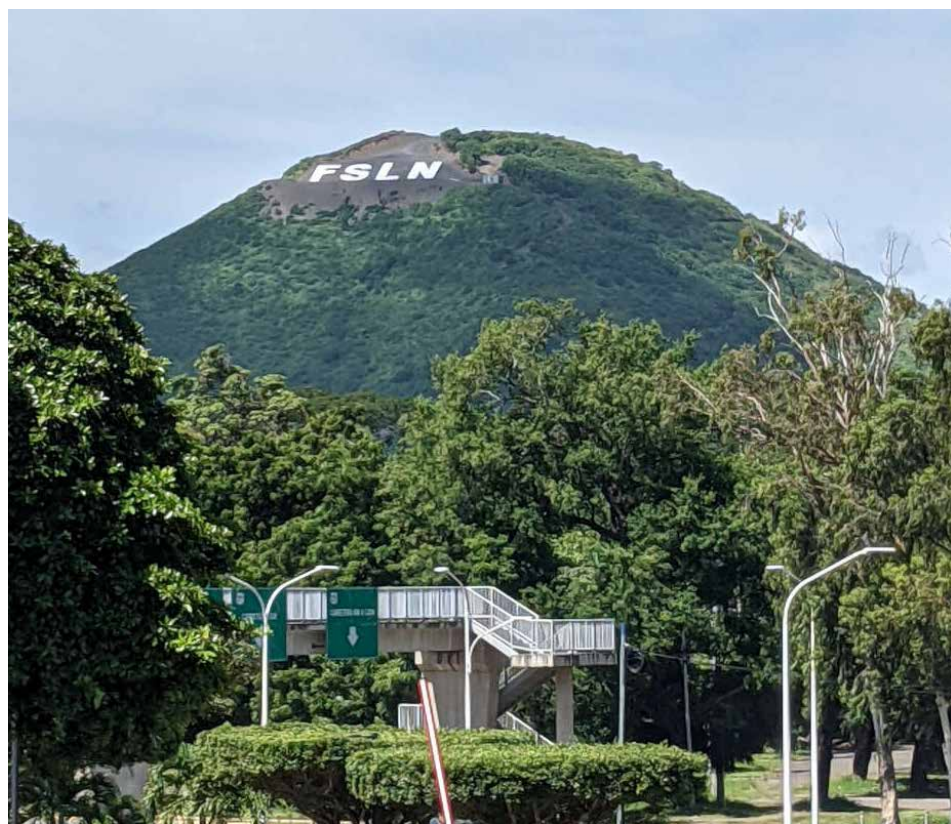
And one day one of the guys came to me and he gave me a copy of the Nicaraguan Constitution. And they told me to show him in the Constitution where it says that I am a Nicaraguan, that Black people are Nicaraguan, that Miskitu are Nicaraguan and where it says I have a right to speak "that thing."

And if I could, then he would give me a thousand córdobas. In 1972, 1,000 córdobas was plenty for a student, you know? So I made a list of what I was going to buy with 1,000 córdobas. Yeah, I was going to buy new sneakers, a new jersey, I had it made. I couldn't figure out what I was going to do with 1,000 córdobas.

So I took the Constitution and I began to read it and I read it from A to Z. And I didn't find not one word saying that I am Nicaraguan or that the language that I speak had any value or anything like this. And I thought that maybe I had read it too fast, so I went over it again. I read it two times, and when I realized that I wasn't in the Constitution, I cried.

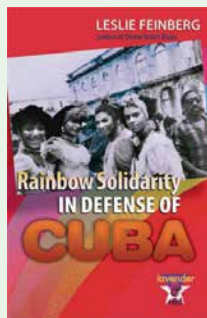
I was brought up to be tough. I was brought up in a school where they said, "Men don't cry," you know? But I cried because I couldn't believe that I had to come to the university to find out that I wasn't even in the Constitution. In Spanish, they have a phrase that translated into English says, "There is no evil that can last a hundred years, and there is nobody that can't resist it." So that was 1972, and in 1979 we had the triumph of the revolution.

Next: Sandinista Revolution changed everything



WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

The insignia of the Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (Sandinista National Liberation Front) faces the U.S. Embassy in the capital, Managua.



Rainbow Solidarity in Defense of Cuba

by Leslie Feinberg

This ground-breaking book is a compilation of 25 articles about same-sex love and sex/gender variance in Cuba's pre- and post-revolutionary history.

Available, along with complete Lavender & Red series, as free download at workers.org/books.

COP26: More ‘blah, blah, blah!’

WORKERS WORLD
editorial

Midway through the COP26 U.N. climate summit in Glasgow, Scotland, over 100,000 youth marched Nov. 5 to express consensus that the conference was set up to fail. Chants included “Cop-out” and “Do something! Now!”

Indigenous nations led the massive demonstration to protest their exclusion from COP26, whose discussions put global corporate interests front and center.

Protesters condemned world leaders for failing to act and having policy conversations without measures to back them up. Young activists say the time to act on climate change is now. Many could be retirees by the time COP26 caps on carbon emissions are achieved, if these goals are put off until 2050 or later.

The median age of government representatives in COP26 discussions was over 60. The majority are men. Most of the protesters are too young to vote. Predominantly young and female, they say COP26 is just more “blah, blah, blah!”

Some protest representatives rightly

pointed to capitalism and white supremacy as the root causes preventing decisive steps to mitigate the climate crisis.

The 26th Conference of Parties (COP26) follows 25 previous COPs with no measurable impact on greenhouse gas emissions. Around half of climate-destroying greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions were released after COP1 was held in 1995.

Time for more than talk

World leaders have talked about addressing “climate change” long before most of today’s youthful protesters were born. By and large COP gatherings have been all talk, with no substantive action, including the Kyoto Protocol in December 1997 and the Paris Agreement in December 2015.

The U.S. never ratified the Kyoto Protocol, despite winning an exemption from fully reporting the U.S. military’s impact on GHG. That military is the world’s largest institutional consumer of crude oil. The U.S. army alone emitted over 70 million metric tons of carbon

dioxide (CO2) equivalent in 2014. This figure omits emissions from hundreds of military bases, equipment and vehicles abroad.

The December 2015 Paris Accord removed the automatic exemption for excluding military emissions, leaving it to individual countries to report these. In 2017, President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from the Paris Agreement.

There is little reason to believe that any agreement coming out of COP26 will be met with better compliance. The Biden administration’s Build Back Better plan has been held up by West Virginia conservative Democrat Senator Joe Manchin who represents coal and gas industries opposing key climate measures included in that package.

Manchin is not alone. Many Congressional millionaires are beholden to oil and gas companies. They protect energy companies despite revelations for decades that these corporations suppressed warnings from their own scientists about the damaging impact of

fossil fuels on the climate. Carbon trioxide (CO3) emissions from fracking for natural gas have magnified the crisis. The Guardian’s major expose on this appeared earlier in 2021. (tinyurl.com/vzwnmjav)

Imperialist corporations in the U.S., Western Europe and Japan have produced the majority of GHG emissions, yet Indigenous peoples bear the brunt with the destruction of forest and coastal ecosystems. Facing rising sea levels, the very survival of island nations is on the line.

While the youth demonstrated, more than 20 scientists, chained together by their necks, blocked a major Glasgow bridge. Several faced arrests to dramatize their message that civil disobedience is the only option left to bring attention to the extremity of the climate crisis.

Workers World believes another option is possible—a systemic change to replace global capitalism through socialist revolution. The youth are right. The time is long past for non-binding pledges and empty promises. The time for change is now. □

Honor Alex Saab’s diplomatic immunity!

The following is based on a statement on the case of diplomatic Special Envoy Alex Saab—kidnapped by the U.S. for attempting to ameliorate the dire conditions wreaked on Bolivarian Venezuela by U.S. sanctions—and was issued Nov. 5 by the International Action Center. The statement has been lightly edited.



Caracas, Venezuela, in October.

The International Action Center, along with solidarity, human rights and social justice organizations in the U.S. and around the world, calls upon the U.S. State Department and Department of Justice to end their witch hunt of Alex Saab and end the illegal unilateral sanctions against another sovereign state carrying out its legitimate and legal right to feed its people.

On Nov. 4, Alex Saab’s U.S. counsel with the firm of Baker Hostetler, which is spearheading Saab’s claim of diplomatic immunity, filed his latest reply to the U.S. Court of Appeals, Eleventh Circuit.

The brief was submitted in response to the Department of Justice Oct. 14 filing in

which the U.S. continues to argue that it has no obligation to recognize diplomatic immunity in the case of foreign diplomats accredited to other nations, as is the case of Alex Saab.

Alex Saab is a lawfully appointed Special Envoy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. He was undertaking a peaceful humanitarian Special Mission from Venezuela to Iran when he was illegally detained by the Republic of Cape Verde on June 12, 2020, under instructions from the U.S. Saab was removed from Cape Verde by the United States on Oct. 16 even

though the legal process there was not complete. He is now imprisoned at the Federal Detention Center in Miami.

The defense brief of Alex Saab takes the position that the Department of Justice stance is completely wrong and inconsistent with U.S. case law. While the United States has an absolute right to recognize or not recognize the diplomatic status of somebody a country is sending as a representative to the U.S., it has no right to deny the recognition of diplomatic status in a situation where the sending country (Venezuela) and the receiving country (Iran) have agreed that the diplomat (Alex Saab) is a special envoy.

The United States is obliged, as a matter of U.S. and international law, to give full diplomatic inviolability to Alex Saab under the 1961 Vienna Convention, to which it is a party.

In other words, would the United States have any right to recognize an envoy who has been sent by the government of France to the government of Germany, or

not? Obviously not. It would be absurd to suggest otherwise.

Saab’s filed motion explains that the United States has always taken the view of recognition of diplomatic immunity of third-party countries, going back more than a century. The U.S. has asserted this view of immunity not only in regard to U.S. diplomats, but also third-party diplomats. The recent brief on his behalf described specific cases where this issue has arisen and draws the conclusion that the Department of Justice position is fundamentally wrong.

The United States is attempting to maintain its role of self-appointed policeman of the world. This policy has the potential to backfire against the U.S., as well as having consequences for the free movement of its own diplomats and political agents, or even its own journalists and human rights activists.

More information: IACenter.org, iacenter@iacenter.org, #FreeAlexSaab

Sudanese Communist Party statement ‘We oppose the coup and call on the Sudanese people to continue civil disobedience’

The following Nov. 3 press statement by the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Sudanese Communist Party was made available Nov. 4 on Twitter by @Communist_SD. The statement has been lightly edited.

The coalition to which the SCP belongs announced national strikes and civil disobedience to take place Nov. 7-8 under the slogan “No negotiations, no compromise, no power-sharing,” and promised mass protests until a civilian government leads with full civilian rule. The coalition firmly rejected certain internationally backed initiatives that civilian groups return to power-sharing with the military that committed the Oct. 25 coup.

The Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party has followed the developments in the political scene and praises the valor and courage that led to millions marching in the capital and other cities in Sudan and across the world on Oct. 30. We believe in

retribution for the righteous martyrs and the necessity of bringing those responsible for crimes to justice. We also wish the wounded and injured a speedy recovery and demand the release of all detainees.

The Oct. 30 demonstrations raised the bar for mass demands beyond opposing the coup to calling for a total restructuring of the state by establishing a democratic civilian government.

The crisis manifested in the Oct. 25 coup shed light on the fragility of the relation between the civil and military sides of the transitional authority. ... These struggles, the most recent of which is the current coup, seek to block and hinder the rise of the mass movement and the glorious December Revolution.

Now all initiatives and local and foreign reconciliation committees are focused on ... presenting structural and formal proposals (a Sovereignty Council composed of such-and-such, a Security and Defense Council composed of such-and-such ... etc.)

The truth is that all of these initiatives

and committees revolve around recycling the same military and civilian transition [forces], ignoring the actual change that the people seek.

Success of these scenarios will prolong and exacerbate the state of tension caused by the coup, and will not present a national project that addresses the underlying causes of the Sudanese crisis.

In the Sudanese Communist Party, we oppose the coup and call on the Sudanese people to continue civil disobedience supported by strikes and all forms of escalation and resistance to push against the coup to find a national democratic alternative with a new political vision, and a democratic constitutional declaration that addresses the key issues, such as dissolving all militias and reforming military institutions.

[There must be] demobilization and reintegration of militants in order to



PHOTO: MAHMOUD HIJAJ

Protests mobilized in Khartoum, Sudan’s capital, Nov. 4.

form a united, professional and national army whose units are restructured and rehabilitated in accordance with a combat doctrine to protect the borders, the people and the Constitution — so that the people’s armed forces and other regular forces are under civilian command, as is the case in democratic countries.

This can only be accomplished through full civil authority that embodies the Sudanese revolution.

Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Sudanese Communist Party
November 3, 2021 □

Puerto Rico

A union worker's perspective — before and after Hurricane María

By Walberto Rolón

I began lineman training in 1989 — a chance that for many of Puerto Rico's youth is nigh impossible unless you are favored by some political faction. [Puerto Rico's main union for electrical workers is UTIER, the Unión de Trabajadores de la Industria Eléctrica y Riego (Electrical Industry and Irrigation Workers Union).]

Before Hurricane María, there was Hugo

In September 1989, in the middle of our training, me and my fellow students faced the aftermath of Hurricane Hugo. We lost many co-workers in the line of duty, but with the help of all the UTIER workers we managed to rebuild the island's electric power grid in record time. Our local newspaper, *El Nuevo Día*, categorized us as the heroes of the moment.

Then, after being hit by Hurricane George in 1998, when we lost eight co-workers in the line of duty, we managed to fully reestablish the power grid within three months, again thanks to the commitment and sacrifice of our UTIER and other PREPA (Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority) workers. Our people of Puerto Rico identified with the workers of UTIER!

But the damage done to our power grid, through the lack of maintenance and lack of personnel due to yearly increasing budget-cuts, mixed with a privatizing demonization campaign against our workers, began to slowly hurt us. This happened regardless of UTIER workers' participation in many charity campaigns and our solidarity with many social struggles for justice.

'Making the truth shine'

UTIER's slogan, "Making the truth shine," started to be uncomfortable for a few government players within and outside the PREPA.

For us workers, the defense of our electric power grid to ensure access to electrical power as a human right — and not as a commodity nor merchandise to be bartered with — was a matter of honor and pride.

We won many battles in defense of our lives in our power plants. For instance, our fight against asbestos and mercury contamination paved the way for an epidemiological study, after having taken the lives of so many of our own.

This fight was so raw, that finally the occupational insurance corporation run by the Puerto Rican government had to recognize our claims and compensate hundreds of our families for damages.

We managed to legally bind our job security and stability through a collective bargaining agreement after fighting for the re-hiring of 502 unjustly laid-off co-workers, meaning our union people could no longer be laid off without proper justification.

For years, we whistleblow and struck against any attempt at administrative sabotage, economic strangulation or privatization attempts perpetrated by the government puppets administering PREPA.

UTIER was a pain in our corrupt bipartisan governments' side. They responded with further budget cuts that hampered operations and service reliability.

Budget cuts lead to 2006 Palo Seco fire

In December 2006, in the middle of collective bargaining agreement negotiations, our Palo Seco power plant caught

fire twice, due to lack of maintenance because of budget cuts.

PREPA officials immediately left the negotiation table and publicly accused our working families of sabotage. They might've pulled that off had it not been for investigations the FBI and our local fire department conducted. These clearly established that both fires were due to lack of maintenance. The public backlash forced PREPA's CEO to resign.



PHOTO: ALEJANDRO GRANADILLO

Puerto Ricans demonstrate in San Juan against the privatization of their electrical power network, June 1.

Through all our struggles, the corrupt governments of both the PNP [New Progressive Party] and PPD [Popular Democratic Party] gained a greater hold in making PREPA into a political campaign funding source.

Despite worker whistleblowing, the lack of maintenance of our electrical system worsened and the public campaign demonizing our working families was intensified. The barrage of propaganda was such that slowly our Puerto Rican people began to echo that we the workers were the villains responsible for degrading the reliability of our power grid and that privatization would finally cure all evils.

Since our resources were limited to the number of members in our small union, we could not fund a campaign that would keep up with the millions of dollars in propaganda that the government poured against us.

2012: Anti-union attacks by colonial government intensify

Of course, all of this happened after Gov. Luis Fortuño Burset and his PNP government when we struck against them in 2012. But both PNP and PPD governments act as one and the same when it comes to scamming public funding, leaving us at constant odds with both, whistleblowing their every move.

They both consorted with foreign interests in order to destroy our workers' union.

Until then, we'd won most of our legal labor disputes, but after years of slowly turning public perception against us, the corrupt colonial governments implemented their next phase. This was to change the labor protection laws. In other words, since we were beating them at their game, they changed the rules.

The corrupt government upped the ante in 2014, sponsoring a "news" program on all the local channels demonizing and attacking PREPA and particularly us, its workers. This was part of an all-out attempt to privatize PREPA, but the

government only managed to advance in creating a politically subservient energy commission.

Still they made it seem to our people that PREPA workers were an elite set against them. This act put our workers and families in danger, with mayors who were politically loyal to the parties calling out for people to attack us, escalating to the point of having two of our workers getting stabbed by disgruntled citizens.

As workers, we have had to live in tough times, particularly our customer service representatives whom the government continuously attempted to devalue. This happened even as they were suffering the brunt of the public attacks due to government and corporate press propaganda antics.

Union workers: Heroes again after double hurricanes

On Sept. 6, 2017, Hurricane Irma struck Puerto Rico leaving 75% of our island without electric power. UTIER and the rest of the PREPA workers took to the streets to restore our power grid. Fourteen days later, September 20, 2017, Hurricane María unleashed its nightmare upon our island.

Without rest from reconstructing the damage caused by Hurricane Irma, with our tarnished public image due to government propaganda, ransacked of tools and restoration equipment due to budget cuts, we workers did superhuman efforts to restore the damage from Hurricane María. And the government took the tragedy as an opportunity to finally get us out of the way and privatize PREPA.

I was serving as UTIER's Occupational Health and Safety Secretary, sitting in front of PREPA's politically appointed CEO, Ricardo Ramos, who was telling us that since the pie was big enough for everyone, we should make a private company and subcontract our work to workers with lesser benefits. We refused.

Privatization accelerates with LUMA

The government accelerated its privatization plans for PREPA. In November 2017, two months after Hurricane María's landfall, Domino High Voltage, a subsidiary company to Quanta Services, was established in Puerto Rico. Two years later, LUMA Energy, another Quanta Services subsidiary, was incorporated in order to privatize PREPA. Quanta Services had actually incorporated to do business in Puerto Rico in 2002, though

it cancelled its active corporation status in the government's failed 2014 privatization attempt of PREPA.

While the privatization attack was mounted, Puerto Rican linemen took to the streets so that we could have some form of economic justice granted to us. At the same time, we were raising the power grid in all the mountains and valleys of our island with no power in our own homes, little fuel and water, and lacking tools and equipment.

While the U.S. linemen brought in to help with the post-María reconstruction were being treated with salaries over \$100 an hour, staying in hotels with warm meals, the press only covered their efforts while obscuring our efforts and struggles.

Over \$3 billion were swallowed up by local and federal government contracting scandals during the rebuilding, with Whitefish Energy and others.

But it was our union people who actually raised the power grid and had to fix the remaining sloppy connections left behind by the overseas "help."

Puerto Rican unions need U.S. union solidarity

LUMA Energy was finally validated to privately control the island's energy system on June 1 by PREPA, aided by the U.S.-imposed colonial PROMESA (Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act) and Puerto Rico's corrupt governor, Pedro Pierluisi Urrutia, who previously worked as a lawyer to the Oversight Board.

In the final stage of creating the perfect scenario to destroy PREPA and the UTIER, these forces coerced our highly skilled workers to either give up their seniority, their collective bargaining agreement rights and their union to join LUMA, or be transferred to other agencies to perform unskilled labor. IBEW Local 222 was brought in to union bust UTIER and the other three PREPA unions: UEPI (Unión Empleados Profesionales), UPAEE (Unión de Pilotos de Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica), and those of the UITICE (Unión Insular de Trabajadores Industriales y Construcciones Eléctricas) who rejected their leadership's selling out to the IBEW.

I have no doubt that, even with all the legal work in place, it will take years to have justice in the courts. And in the meantime LUMA will be able to do whatever it wishes in Puerto Rico.

We have no other choice but to take to the streets and revolutionize our people.

A better world is possible, but it will most definitely be decided in the streets instead of the courts.

Boricuas present in every part of the world should demonstrate and denounce how their island relatives are being robbed of their human right to have access to life-sustaining electric power, to their land and to peaceful life. This must be denounced!

Walberto Rolón Narvaéz of Naranjito, Puerto Rico, has served as the Secretary of Occupational Health and Safety of UTIER. His account was made available to Workers World by U.S. organizer and electrical worker Fermín Morales. For more, see Workers World articles, Feb. 12, 2020, "Report from Puerto Rico: PROMESA and earthquakes," and Oct. 20, 2021, "Protests demand: 'Luma, out!'"



Filadelfia, 12 de julio de 2020

MO FOTO: JOE PIETTE

Biden se somete a la capital

El gobierno de Joe Biden, habiendo prometido un elefante, está entregando un ratón.

Hasta ahora el proyecto de ley “Reconstruir mejor” (Build Back Better) de Biden es sólo palabrería, y lo que promete disminuye día a día. Desaparecen más rápidamente los programas que podrían haber ayudado a la clase trabajadora y a los sectores más pobres de la población.

Para entender esta evolución, primero hay que ver cómo funciona habitualmente el capitalismo estadounidense. En primer lugar, el aparato estatal capitalista — el ejército, la policía, los tribunales, las prisiones, los medios de comunicación corporativos— protege la propiedad y los intereses del 0,01% de los superricos, independientemente de quién dirija la Casa Blanca o el Congreso. Además, los multimillonarios controlan el gobierno a través de los dos principales partidos capitalistas, los republicanos y los demócratas.

¿Significa esto que los dos partidos son idénticos? No.

El ahora Partido Republicano trumpista, además de ser el partido de, por y para los superricos, se ha convertido en el principal partido de la supremacía blanca, la xenofobia y la misoginia. Moviliza todas las formas de fanatismo. Esto hace que los republicanos de Trump sean especialmente peligrosos para la solidaridad de la clase trabajadora.

El Partido Demócrata tiene una membresía multinacional y más apoyo de los miembros oprimidos de la clase obrera. Sin embargo, al igual que los republicanos,

promueve los intereses imperialistas en todo el mundo, haciendo la guerra para imponerlos. Defiende e impone el dominio del capital dentro de Estados Unidos.

El Partido Demócrata a veces propone políticas que reducen las desigualdades e injusticias. Teme una explosión social.

Sin embargo, la dirección demócrata rara vez lucha por estas posiciones cuando se enfrenta a la decidida obstrucción de la clase dominante. Sólo consigue programas sociales cuando la lucha de masas acompaña al programa legislativo.

Los principales ejemplos fueron el New Deal de Franklin Roosevelt en la década de 1930 — acompañado de la sindicalización de la clase obrera industrial estadounidense—. La Gran Sociedad de Lyndon Johnson aumentó estas concesiones — bajo la presión del Movimiento de Liberación Negra a finales de los años 60.

Crisis, confrontación, sumisión

La crisis bancaria e inmobiliaria de 2008-09, la desigualdad de ingresos rampante, la actual crisis climática y la pandemia de COVID han puesto de manifiesto la fragilidad e inestabilidad del sistema capitalista en Estados Unidos, el centro más poderoso de ese sistema.

Se suponía que el proyecto de ley original Build Back Better (Reconstruir mejor) se haría cargo de estos enormes problemas reconstruyendo la infraestructura, proporcionando puestos de trabajo junto con beneficios sociales y aumentando los impuestos a los superricos — un poco.

La construcción de la “infraestructura dura” — autopistas, puentes, ferrocarriles,

redes de agua, etc.— ayuda al sistema capitalista. Incluso los republicanos parecen apoyar esta parte del programa, pero sin aumentar los impuestos a los ricos.

Los beneficios sociales, llamados “infraestructura blanda” — educación, cuidado de los niños, atención sanitaria, medio ambiente— también ayudan al capitalismo amortiguando el conflicto de clases y desarrollando la mano de obra. Pero los grandes capitalistas y sus representantes políticos odian hacer cualquier concesión a la clase trabajadora, especialmente a sus miembros más pobres y oprimidos.



La gente exige un programa completo.

De lo propuesto originalmente, Biden ya ha cedido puntos: Atrás quedan las matrículas gratuitas de los colegios comunitarios, la ampliación de Medicare, las bajas familiares y por enfermedad remuneradas, los nuevos fondos para la vivienda y el preescolar y el cuidado de los niños, los subsidios para la atención sanitaria y la ampliación de Medicaid y los impuestos a los ricos. Todos estos son programas populares que ayudarían a todas las personas de la clase trabajadora

y que corrigen las desigualdades a las que se enfrentan desproporcionadamente las mujeres y las personas negras, latinas, indígenas, LGBTQ2S+, oprimidas por su género y discapacitadas.

Los republicanos están unidos en la obstrucción de programas que benefician al 90% de la población. Estos programas serían ampliamente populares... si los líderes demócratas se movilizaran por ellos.

A los republicanos se unen dos senadores demócratas, Joe Manchin y Kyrsten Sinema, que apoyan sin pudor a las grandes empresas. Estos dos sirven de pretexto para que Biden y la dirección demócrata cedan, sin lucha, todos los puntos que hicieron popular su programa entre la clase trabajadora.

Los demócratas hacen esto a pesar de que se arriesgan a perder el programa y a perder las elecciones ante los trumpistas.

Aunque cualquier movilización de masas que luche por la “infraestructura blanda” más progresista es una lucha que merece la pena, sacamos las siguientes conclusiones:

La clase obrera debe movilizarse y luchar de forma independiente por sus intereses sin depender en absoluto de la dirección del Partido Demócrata.

Cualquier programa progresista debe servir a los intereses de los más oprimidos, ya que ayuda a toda la clase obrera, uniendo a toda la clase en la lucha.

Ejemplos recientes de tales movilizaciones efectivas y necesarias son el movimiento Black Lives Matter de 2020 y el movimiento huelguístico que está cobrando fuerza, junto con la organización de los trabajadores en sus lugares de trabajo y la expansión de la sindicalización de todos los sectores de la clase.

¡Apoya estos movimientos! □

Es hora de enterrar el ‘chuzo’

El béisbol -que durante mucho tiempo se ha promocionado como el “pasatiempo nacional de Estados Unidos”— acaba de dar a millones de personas de todo el mundo una mirada horrorosa al crudo racismo colonial de los colonos sobre el que se funda Estados Unidos.

Este año los “Braves” de Atlanta, campeones de la Liga Nacional, jugaron contra los Astros de Houston, campeones de la Liga Americana, en la “Serie Mundial”. Y qué arrogancia chovinista hay en ese nombre: sólo pueden competir equipos de béisbol estadounidenses, con una excepción canadiense!

Esto hace aún más repugnante el hecho de que durante cada partido de la serie jugado en Atlanta, el resto del mundo ha visto a miles de aficionados mayoritariamente blancos degradar a los indígenas rugiendo un cantar de guerra indígena, mientras hacían un “tomahawk chop” doblando los brazos al unísono.

El “chop” ha sido un pilar para estos aficionados al béisbol de Atlanta desde 1991, cuando el equipo llegó por primera vez a los playoffs nacionales. Ahora, el movimiento de masas estadounidense contra el racismo ha ejercido tanta presión que los principales equipos deportivos profesionales, como el equipo de fútbol americano de Washington y los Guardianes de

Cleveland, han tenido que deshacerse de nombres, mascotas, parafernalia y caricaturas racistas que se burlan de la cultura y la vida indígena.

Pero el equipo de Atlanta se ha atrincherado y ha decidido a continuar con su tradición racista. De hecho, los jugadores siguen vistiendo uniformes con el logotipo del tomahawk.

Cuando se le preguntó por el racismo del equipo de Atlanta al comienzo de esta “Serie Mundial”, el Comisionado de las

Grandes Ligas de Béisbol, Rob Manfred, negó rotundamente que hubiera un problema, poniendo como excusa que “algunos” grupos indígenas no tenían problemas con el equipo.

El Congreso Nacional de Indios Americanos rebatió inmediatamente que las mascotas y los rituales de los nativos americanos, como el hacha, “no tienen cabida en la sociedad estadounidense.” La profesora de psicología de la Universidad de Michigan, Stephanie Fryberg, subrayó que este tipo de comportamiento racista permite que “la gente juegue con la identidad de otro grupo” sin tener en cuenta las consecuencias deshumanizadoras y mortales. (Washington Post, 28 de octubre)

Aaron Payment, secretario del Congreso Nacional de Indios Americanos, señaló que los aficionados asisten a los partidos de los Braves con la cara roja y tocados, y los

aficionados contrarios gritan insultos violentos basados en estereotipos ofensivos.

Parte de una historia de genocidio

La violencia supremacista blanca puede ir más allá del momento, reforzando decisiones políticas racistas y reaccionarias como la decisión de la era Trump de entregar tierras indígenas protegidas a la explotación de empresas energéticas.

La propia Georgia -así como otros estados del sur profundo y del suroeste— se construyó originalmente en tierras indígenas robadas para establecer plantaciones para cultivar algodón, arroz y añil y construir una economía basada en el trabajo realizado por pueblos africanos secuestrados y esclavizados.

Con la Ley de Traslado de Indios de 1830, el gobierno estadounidense -reforzado por las milicias locales de colonos blancos fundadas para “luchar contra los indios”— expulsó por la fuerza a más de 60.000 miembros de las naciones Cherokee, Muscogee (Creek), Seminole, Chickasaw y Choctaw de sus tierras ancestrales en lo que hoy es el sur de Estados Unidos. Miles de personas murieron por exposición, hambre y enfermedad durante el traslado que llegó a conocerse como el “Camino de las Lágrimas”.

Pero los indígenas se defendieron. El levantamiento de la Nación Creek en la década de 1830 fue una defensa militante de las tierras comunales y de la cultura



Un aficionado al deporte dice ‘El chuzo es racista’ al primer partido de las Series Mundiales en el Minute Maid Park de Houston, el 26 de octubre.

del pueblo contra la economía basada en la esclavitud.

El recuerdo de esa resistencia es un reproche abrasador para todos los blancos que se entregan a la burla que supone el “chop and chant” de Atlanta.

Los pueblos indígenas siguen resistiendo. Es un recordatorio y un llamamiento para que todos luchemos de nuevo contra la explotación supremacista blanca.

Ya es hora de que se rindan cuentas de los crímenes de guerra cometidos por Estados Unidos contra los pueblos indígenas, de que se paguen las reparaciones, la soberanía y el respeto a los pueblos cuyas vidas, tierras y culturas han sido tan vilmente arrebatadas, atacadas y explotadas. El fin del comportamiento vil en un partido de béisbol y la abolición de los nombres y las mascotas racistas de los equipos es sólo el comienzo del cambio profundo que exige la justicia. □

WORKERS WORLD
MUNDO OBRERO
editorial

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