Trials highlight racism–Black Lives Matter!

By Monica Moorehead

Two high-profile murder trials are taking place simultaneously in the U.S. — one in the Deep South and the other in the Midwest. Despite the obvious distance in miles, both trials have two main political themes in common: The first is the prevalence of white supremacy and the second is the Black Lives Matter struggle. These two important societal issues loom large over the individuals on trial.

The first trial involves three white men — two who had openly voiced Klan-like opinions — who are accused of fatally shooting Ahmaud Arbery, the 25-year-old son of African immigrants, on Feb. 23, 2020. Arbery was jogging in a majority white suburb of Brunswick, Georgia, when he was chased down by a pickup truck driven by Greg McMichael and his son, Travis McMichael. As Arbery tried to defend himself, he was shot three times. William Bryan, who was close by video-taping the incident, has also been charged with murder.

The McMichaels claimed that they shot an unarmed Arbery in “self-defense” because they labeled him a “burglar.” The fact is that Arbery lived just two miles away from where he tragically lost his life due to the color of his skin.

Before the videotape was made public, two prosecutors for the Brunswick Judicial Circuit and Waycross Judicial Circuit questioned the suspects and then told the police that there was no basis for arresting the three men. Why? The prosecutors claimed that the three racists had the right to make a “citizen’s arrest” of Arbery and that Arbery was a threat to them, not the other way around. And so the police did nothing. This was the beginning of a cover-up and justification of the racial profiling and murder of Arbery — killed for jogging while Black.

This changed once Bryan’s videotape of the shooting went viral in May 2020, just weeks before the videotape was released of the lynching of another Black man, George Floyd, by Minneapolis police. Protests demanding justice for Ahmaud Arbery sprang up not only in Brunswick but all over the country, led by Arbery’s family and Black Lives Matter activists. If Arbery’s death had not been linked with the Floyd protests, who knows...
Cuban president tweets thanks for ‘end the blockade’ caravans

The president of Cuba, Miguel Mario Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, re-tweeted pictures from the Oct. 31 caravans from U.S. cities in solidarity to end the blockade of Cuba. The English translation reads: “The images going through the social networks today with the expressions of solidarity towards Cuba are moving. From many cities in the world bridges of love are being built that reach our brave and beloved island. Remove the blockade is a worldwide outcry. Thank you all.”

Son comovedoras las imágenes que recorren hoy las redes con las muestras de solidaridad hacia Cuba. Desde muchas ciudades del mundo se están tendiendo puentes de amor que llegan hasta nuestra Isla valiente y amada. El 25 de noviembre es un clamor mundial. ¡Gracias a todos!

Honour Day of Mourning — Support Workers World

Workers World honours Indigenous peoples on their commemoration of the 52nd National Day of Mourning on Nov. 25, on so-called “Thanksgiving.” On that special day, Native people pay homage to their ancestors and tell their true history as the original inhabitants of this country, while opposing European colonizers’ massive crimes against Indigenous people, including theft of their lands and foods, obliteration of their culture, and racist and genocidal massacres.

In 1976, United American Indians of New England gathered in Plymouth, Mass., site of the original “Pilgrim” invasion, and observed the first National Day of Mourning. Only Indigenous peoples spoke then, and this is still true.* Workers World has attended the Day of Mourning commemorations every year since 1981 and has reported firsthand on these events on our pages.

WW applauds Indigenous peoples in the U.S. and globally who fight oppression and lead struggles to save lands, forests and rivers from capitalist destruction. Our newspaper halls courageous Native water, land and forest protectors who lead these movements, often putting their lives on the line to confront rapacious corporations, which, in their reckless drive for profits, harm the planet.

We especially honor those who have lost their lives in these struggles, including Indigenous organizer and Lenca leader, Berta Cáceres, slain in 2016.

WW has continually supported Native peoples’ struggles on the lands, in the streets and in our newspaper. We call on our readers and supporters to support these movements and join in the commemoration of the National Day of Mourning.

Your help is needed!

The WW Supporter Program was founded 44 years ago to help build this socialist newspaper. Since the early 1990s, it has supported Workers World, our website where new WW articles are posted daily, and each week’s full issue is displayed in a PDF document. The newspaper is printed and mailed out monthly.

For annual donations or Vol. 520 or 530 members, receive a year’s subscription, letters about timely issues and gift subscriptions. Supporters can receive the book, “What road to socialism?” (Notify us.) Or read it at workers.org/books.

Write and mail monthly or annual checks to Workers World, 147 W. 24th St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10011. (Include your name and address.) Or donate at workers.org.

*More history and information, read “National Day of Mourning: The truth about the Pilgrims’ invasion and 400+ years of genocide that followed” in the Nov. 28, 2019 issue of WW newspaper at workers.org

Join us in the fight for socialism!

Workers World Party is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a multinational, multigenerational and multigendered organization that not only aims to abolish capitalism, but to build a socialist society because it’s the only way forward!

Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the never-ending quest for ever-greater profits. Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, attacks on im/migrants, misogyny, LGBTIQ+ oppression and mistreatment of people with disabilities. It means joblessness, increasing homelessness and imprisonment and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism.

The U.S. is the richest country in the world, yet no one has a guaranteed right to shelter, food, water, health care, education or anything else — unless they can pay for it. Wages are lower than ever, and youth are saddled with seemingly insurmountable student debt, if they even make it to college. Black, Brown and Indigenous youth and trans people are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis.

The ruthless class rule seeking to wipe out decades of gains and benefits won by hard-fought struggles by people’s movements. The super-rich and their political representatives have intensified their attacks on the multinational, multigender and multigenerational working class. It is time to point the blame at — and challenge the — capitalist system.

WWF fights for socialism because the working class produces all wealth in society, and this wealth should remain in their hands, not be stolen in the form of capitalist profits. The wealth workers create should be socially owned and its distribution planned to satisfy and guarantee basic human needs.

Since 1959, Workers World Party has been out in the streets defending the workers and oppressed here and worldwide. If you’re interested in Marxism, socialism and fighting for a socialist future, please contact a WWP branch near you.

If you are interested in joining Workers World Party contact: 212.627.2994

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

“Quality green housing that is kept at a high standard.”

By Hadley Willow

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.

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 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 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.

The Peace Bridge Apartment tenants' 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.

Black people blocked from jury duty

The jury selection that has taken place. The city of Brunswick is 35% 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-white people of color and half-white. The city is 20% African American.

The jury trial, Judge Timothy Walmsley, who is white, allowed defense attorneys to get away with obvi- ous bias against prospective Black jurors but did not block any. 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 a juror.

The jury trial was 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 jury — and jurors in almost every state — reflects this racist bias in a systematic manner, who happen to exchange videotapes on tactics to effectively exclude Black jurors.

Stephen Bright, a lawyer who has argued death penalty cases before, says that “we still allow the exclusion of people in a grossly disproportionate way.”

Benjamin Crump, a prominent Black lawyer who rep- resents 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.”

When a community struggles together, this familiarity transforms into solidarity.

Black Lives Matter!

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

In another example, Circuit Judge Bruce Schroeder stated in an Oct. 26-pretrial hearing that those who Rittenhouse killed and wounded could not be characterized as “protesters,” “rioters” or “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 stated that Rittenhouse is the only one by name is 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, systemic issues that are disconnected from bourgeois profit motive and controlled by working-class people. Each struggle we take up is a short-term invest ment in the immediate rights of our class and a long-term investment in the power and strength of our ability to organize.
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, was a turning point in her life. She plunged from innovation 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.”

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

Colvin was a devout young Jehovah’s Witness at 16, and she had been thinking over these lessons when a white rider boarded. No seats were available in front of her and other Black riders. She was radicized at 13, when a 15-year-old schoolmate, Jeremiah Reeves, got arrested, and she was radicalized at 14, when a 16-year-old schoolmate, Jeremiah Reeves, got arrested, and her 18-year-old sister, Serina Reeves, was tried and found innocent of raping a white woman. In 1953 a trial tilted with the racist fraud and lies of segregation, she was ultimately sentenced to death.

In later interviews, she made clear that her anger and will to resist had been building since the memory of racism, at four years old. She was radicalized at 13, when a 15-year-old schoolmate, Jeremiah Reeves, got arrested, and she was radicalized at 14, when a 16-year-old schoolmate, Jeremiah Reeves, got arrested, and her 18-year-old sister, Serina Reeves, was tried and found innocent of raping a white woman. In 1953 a trial tilted with the racist fraud and lies of segregation, she was ultimately sentenced to death.

Colvin describes her conviction as “the turning point” in her life. She plunged into political activity — attending rallies, writing letters and raising money for his freedom. She became a civil rights activist who ultimately became the secretary of the NAACP, and 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.

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

Claudette Colvin in 1952

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 single mother. Both were tried after Colvin and before Rosa Parks, for refusing to move to a segregated bus seat. Later, the Alabama Supreme Court decided as she entered into verbal combat with racist attorneys. She specifically named the sexual and racist abuse of the Black court advocate in order to act. She spoke of her determination at the moment she had been put in an adult jail cell, where she was 16 years old.

At that point, an African-American woman in the audience began to sob uncontrollably and had to leave the courtroom. Colvin said of her action: “Mine was the first cry of a new movement. Don’t be another perpetrator of violence, don’t be another.”

Gender-based violence: root causes, root cures

*By Mirinda Crissman*

Prisons, jails, and detention centers hold roughly 2.6 million people on account of their gender identity or expression. (survivedan.org, tinyurl.com/2bhkx6k9)

Violent economics, racist inequalities, queer oppressions

According to the 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, followed by their inability to move in a society 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 in structuring their outreach with the criminal punishment system.”

According to data compiled by the ACLU about 60% 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 make up approximately 25% of the total female prisoner population. (tynurl.com/nzd76q46)

Not only are Black, Latinx and Indigenous women and other gender oppressed people detained at high rates disproportionately 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, incomes 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 be subjected to violence exclusive on the basis of who they are and in turn exposed 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 across the U.S. — port create the conditions for insecurity that expose individuals to interpersonal violence in structuring their outreach with the criminal punishment system.”

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A recent study was published first February 13, 2016. The state’s gender-based violence

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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, 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 that preceded it failed.

Issue 24 creates a permanent body tasked with keeping residents safe from violent, racist cops. It supports termination of officers for “conduct (including slurs and 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 (SafeCLE), 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 change. Jones won her Ward 8 race with 86% of the vote.

Three Detroit suburbs with large Arab and Muslim communities elected their first mayors from those constituencies. Dearborn Mayor-elect Abdullah Hammond 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 acquittal 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 DFS Commissioner appointed by the mayor and eliminated language mandating minimum funding for the police. But the measure that garnered 44% of voter support in a city almost 64% white.

Under capitalism, the electoral process is not designed 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

Continued from page 4

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

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/zswamw3y)

It should be mentioned that, in addition to Joann Little’s case, the struggle and fightback in support of Yvonne Swan Wannow, 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 Bollin, 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. Bollin 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 peoples has been ongoing since colonizers first arrived on the continent.

Criminal punishment has not and will not solve 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.”

Women to investigate and offer services. Workers and the oppressed of the world unite, same struggle, same fight!

Phoe Eckfeldt and mYia X contributed to this article.

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Starbucks workers resist union-busting

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 in Battle Creek by Tony with a picket sign saying “Kellogg’s on striiike!” 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 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)

Workers World spoke with members of BCTGM Local 3-G outside the Kellogg’s plant in Battle Creek. They explained that the diminishing effect 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 workers are not picking up their pace, but two-tiered wages are still in place. Drivers at one trucking company, stating: “The company’s last, best and final offer is not addressing the issues that 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 335—in 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, which supplies Kellogg’s, explained that the drivers personally are refusing to make daily pickups and deliveries—with 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, West Virginia and 3,000 student workers at Columbia University in New York City, who have spent four years fighting for their first contract, have joined the strike upsurge. Strikervette has passed 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.”

They harp 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 was ignored, 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 under-handed anti-union tactics.

The mood among workers is that there has to be an end to management intimidation and harassment. Starbucks corporate executives are 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., Nov. 4

‘Scabby the Rat’ symbolizes Kellogg’s anti-union policies.

‘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 offices of 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 dedi...
Amazon union organizing—a crowd favorite at ‘Peoplehood’

By Betsye Pfitte
Philadelphia

Nov. 6—More than 200 community activists marched through West Philadelphia today in the 21st “Peoplehood” event organized by the Spiritual Q’er group. Many participants carried or wore flags, banners, paper-mâché puppets, costumes, decorated 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 69th and Walnut streets represented many struggles, including against racial discrimination, gender oppression, food insecurity, climate catastrophe and voter suppression, and for Indigenous rights— including the Palestinian struggle against Israeli apartheid—chanting and organizing more. To the rhythm of percussion drummers, participants marched a 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 organizers at Amazon, organized by the Amazon Workers Solidarity Network. This contingent’s lead banner was carried by members of the Amazon Labor Union Women, Laborers Union, entertainers and LGBTQ+ communities. This continued the union organizing and more. To the rhythm of percussion drummers, participants marched a 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.

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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. 7 to press demands for an increase in wages. By Nov. 27 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)

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” pay on 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 Hechthild Middede,亚马逊工会组织——一个受欢迎的“人民友谊”

Amazon workers, Leipzig, Germany, Nov. 2.

Defiant miners march in Manhattan

Continued from page 6

Mine workers at the New York mine were fired up over the anti-union court action and more determined than ever to fight a corporate 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 Local 33, 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 court for allowing scabs to cross the picket line while constitutionally restraining striking miners from fighting for a contract. Some linked the Warrior Met struggles with those at Amazon.

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 Amazon or Warrior Met.”

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 wage agreements reaching the limit and the 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 Hechthild Middede, 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 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-union 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 tjunqul.com/4e4wwk4
United States tries to sabotage Nicaragua’s elections—yet again

By Nan McDurry

The following edited article first appeared in Covert Action Magazine on Nov. 3. (Read the entire article at https://bit.ly/3dYaebD.) Nan McDurry is the editor of Nicaragua News. Now working in Mexico, she lived over 30 years in Nicaragua and is currently there for the Nov. 7 elections, along with close to 20 other international observers.

On Nov. 7, thousands of Nicaraguan citizens gathered in Victories Square in Managua to celebrate that the presidential election, from the Supreme Electoral Council on the general election showed that the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) had won 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 Albo Sires, Rep. Maria Elvira Salazar and seven other members of Congress celebrated the passage of the Reinforcing Nicaragua’s Adherence to the Constitution 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 72.5% in 2016. Polls show the Sandinista Party winning with between 64% and 75% in the Nov. 7 elections, during which more than 6 million people will vote for President and Vice President, 90 National Assembly representatives and 20 Central American Parliament representatives.

The American government uses this result 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 investment in infrastructure, including modern health facilities and road networks, in the Central American region.

Since 2007, poverty has been cut in half, maternal mortality has dropped by 76%, 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 95%; electricity coverage has increased from 54% to 98% and 80% of the energy comes from renewables; in fact, Nicaragua is number three in the world in renewable energy and gender equality. Nicaragua has gone from 62nd to 3th 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. According to polls showed the Sandinistas 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) contract document was leaked Commission Independent Nicaraguan journalist, William Grisby, 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 rid of the Sandinista government 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. RAIN will contribute to the Mission’s … objective of enabling the environment for Nicaragua’s transition to democracy.”

“…[Targeted 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 transfer of 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.” [recognizing 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.”

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“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 the sidelines…”

“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 Deputies Antonio Maderazo and State Deputy Manny Mari 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 measures [sanctions] against Nicaragua. The Nicaragua Investment Conditioning Act (Nica Act)—which passed the House of Representatives with zero opposition by a 459-0 margin—directed the executive branch to “oppose measures, including measures to provide continuing financing through the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank and the International Monetary Fund; and directs agencies to create a civil society/ engagement strategy [funds 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 multi-lateral lenders only praise Nicaragua for its transparency and efficiency in projects execution, going so 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 indivi- duals, 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 NaryNAL-FLSN (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional) Political Secretary for the Autonomous Region of the South Caribbean (RACCS), on Oct. 6 in Managua, Nicaragua, to a U.S. delegation comprised of Colleen Littlejohn, Sara Flandrus, Monica Moorehead, Joao 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 1639.

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 appetites.” 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 would 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.

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 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 Impostion” 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, our culture. 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 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 it to 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 resist it.” So that was 1972, and in 1979 we had the triumph of the revolution.

Next: Sandinista Revolution changed everything

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!’**

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

Indigenous nations led the massive demonstration, demanding an end to unilateral sanctions against the Sudan and to stopping retrenchment 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 seen with their hands raised high.

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 2015.

The U.S. never ratified the Kyoto Protocol, despite winning an exemption from fully reporting the U.S. military’s impact on the environment. 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 emits 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 2019, 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 Sen. Joe Manchin, who represents coal and gas industries opposing key climate measures included in the package.

**Manchin is not alone.** Many Congressional majorities are beholden to oil and gas companies. They protect entrenched corporate interests for decades that these corporations suppressed warnings from their own scientists about the damaging impact of fossil fuels on the climate. Carbon tri-oxide (CO2) emissions from fracking for natural gas have magnified the crisis.

The Guardian has reported on this appeared earlier in 2021. (tinyurl.com/vavmnajv)

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 seas levels, the very survival of island nations is possible— a systemic change to replace capitalism.

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.

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**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.

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 the Department of Justice to end their witch hunt of Alex Saab and end the illegal unilateral sanctions against another sovereign state carrying out its legitimacy 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, seeking to remove supernatural cases 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 peace-ful 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 inconsis-tent 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 representa-tive to the U.S. it has no right to deny the recognition of diplomatic status in a situation where the sending coun-try (Venezuela) and the receiving coun-try (Iran) have agreed that the diplomat (Alex Saab) is a special envoy.

The United States is obligated, 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, the United States has no 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 fundamen-tally wrong.

The United States is attempting to maintain its role of self-appointed police 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

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**Sudanese Communist Party statement**

“We oppose the coup and call on the Sudanese people to continue civil disobedience”

The following Nov. 3 press state-ment by the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Sudanese Communist Party was made available Nov. 4 on the Sudanese Communist Party. The state-ment has been lightly edited.

The coalition firmly rejected certain internationally backed initiatives that civilian groups return to calling for a total restructuring of the current authoritarian regime 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 reintegration of militants in order to form a united, professional and national army whose units are restructured and rehabilitated in accordance with a com-bat doctrine to protect the borders, the people and the Constitution — so that the people armed forces and other regular forces are under civilian command, as is the case in democratic countries.

This can only be accomplished through full endorsement 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 high impossible unless you are favored by it. For years, I had to endure, as my 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, we went on strike for 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 demobilization 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 years, 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 whistleblowed and struck against the administration’s corruption, sabotage, economic strangelongation or privatization attempts perpetrated by the government puppets administering PREPA. As a result, we managed to corrupt bipartisan governments’ sides. 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 misuse the law 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.

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 hurricane

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 — 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 without pay in our own homes, little fuel and water, and lacking tools and equipment.

But it was our union people who actually raised the power grid and had to fix them on the backs of the companies 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, with the help of the U.S.-imposed colonial PROMESA (Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act) and Puerto Rico’s court-appointed Fiscal Control Board, 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 229 was brought in to union bust UTIER and the other three PREPA unions: UPEI (Unión de Pilotos de Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica), and those of the UTITE (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 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 Narváez de 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 former UTIER member, Walberto Rolón. For more, see Workers World articles, Feb. 12, 2020, “Report from Puerto Rico: PROMESA and earthquakes,” and Oct. 20, 2021, “Protests demand: ‘Luma, out!”’
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 palabra y, lo que se promete disminuye día a día. Desaparecen más programas que prometían ayudar al pueblo trabajador. Los republicanos controlan el gobierno así como el equipo de fútbol americano, y lo que prometen es que los programas que habían ayudado al pueblo trabajador, especialmente a los 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 0,1% 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 ideológicamente iguales? No. El ahora Partido Republicano trumposo, además de ser el partido de, por y para los multimillonarios, es 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 multicultural y más apo en 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 Republicano ha llevado a cabo políticas que reducen las desigualdades e injusticias. Teme una explosión social. Por eso, la otra campaña de la dirección demócrata rara vez lucha por estas posiciones cuando se enfrenta a la decisiva obstrucción de la clase dominante. Sólo consigue programas sociales cuando la fuerza 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 demográfica 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 suponen que el proyecto de ley original Build Back Better (Reconstruir mejor) haría cargo de la realidad de que, tras reconstruyendo la infraestructura, proporcionando puestos de trabajo junto con beneficios e incrementando 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 del proyecto de ley llamados "infraestructura blanda" —educación, cuidado de los niños, atención sanitaria, vivienda, y pensiones— 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.

De lo propuesto originalmente, Biden ha revertido puntos: Afiras quedan las matriculaciones gratuitas de los colegios comunitarios, la ampliación de Medicare, las vacunas gratuitas y la vida indígena. ¿Significa esto que los dos partidos son ideológicamente idénticos? No. Además, los multimillonarios controlan el gobierno. Los beneficios de Trump se han convertido en el principal partido de la suprema dirección demócrata.

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. En el Partido Republicano se ha acostumbrado a ver cómo se pagan las reparaciones, de que se paguen las reparaciones, y la vida indígena. Recons truyendo la infraestructura, proporcionando puestos de trabajo junto con beneficios e incrementando 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 del proyecto de ley llamados "infraestructura blanda" —educación, cuidado de los niños, atención sanitaria, vivienda, y pensiones— 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 propia Georgia —así como otros estados—, ha visto miles de afiliados mayoritariamente blancos degradar a los indígenas, de que se paguen las reparaciones, y la vida indígena. Miles de personas murieron por exposición a la burla que supone el "chop" de Biden. La violencia en elMinute Maid Park de Houston, el 26 de octubre.

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 que existe en los colonos del que se ha hablado. El "chop" ha sido un pilar para estos afiliados a la "Serie Mundial", de que se paguen las reparaciones, y la vida indígena. Miles de personas murieron por exposición a la burla que supone el "chop" de Biden. La violencia en elMinute Maid Park de Houston, el 26 de octubre.

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 que una arrogancia chovinista hay en ese nombre: sólo pueden competir equipos de béisbol hispanos, con una excepción canadiense! Esto hace aún más repugnante el hecho de que durante cada partido de la serie jugaron en el estadio de Atlanta, el estudio del mundo, se ha visto a miles de afiliados mayoritariamente blancos degradar a los indígenas, de que se paguen las reparaciones, y la vida indígena. Miles de personas murieron por exposición a la burla que supone el "chop" de Biden. La violencia en elMinute Maid Park de Houston, el 26 de octubre.

El recuerdo de esa resistencia es un recordatorio de que el "chop" blanco no hará menos que de que se paguen las reparaciones, y la vida indígena. Miles de personas murieron por exposición a la burla que supone el "chop" de Biden. La violencia en elMinute Maid Park de Houston, el 26 de octubre.

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