Struggle from 1970 to now

National Day of Mourning

By K. James

What are the United States’ foundational myths? Who created them, and who do they erase and harm?

For the past 51 years, United American Indians of New England (UAINE) and supporters have gathered on so-called Thanksgiving Day in Plymouth, Massachusetts, to ask these questions, confront settler mythologies and commemorate a National Day of Mourning for the Indigenous people murdered by settler colonialism and imperialism worldwide.

The National Day of Mourning protest was founded by Wamsutta Frank James, an Aquinnah Wampanoag tribal member. In 1970, Wamsutta had been invited by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to give a speech at a banquet commemorating the 350th anniversary of the arrival of the Pilgrims. The organizers of the banquet imagined that Wamsutta would give an appreciative and complimentary speech, singing the praises of the American settler-colonial project and thanking the Pilgrims for bringing “civilization” to the Wampanoag. However, the speech that Wamsutta wrote, which was based on historical fact instead of the hollow fiction portrayed in the Thanksgiving myth, was a far cry from complimentary.

The pride and power of Wamsutta Frank James

In his speech, Wamsutta not only named atrocities committed by the Pilgrims, but also reflected upon the fate of the Wampanoag at the hands of settlers. The speech contained a powerful message of Native American pride. “Our spirit refuses to die,” wrote Wamsutta. “Yesterday we walked the woodland paths and sandy trails. Today we must walk the macadam highways and roads. We are uniting. … We stand tall and proud; and before too many moons pass, we’ll right the wrongs we have allowed to happen to us.”

When state officials saw an advance copy of Wamsutta’s speech, they refused to allow him to deliver it, saying that the speech was too “inflammatory.” The speech contained a revolutionary spirit, clearly inspired by the fledgling “Red Power Movement,” which demanded equal rights and self-determination for Native Americans. This without a doubt frightened the state officials, whose minds were likely drawn to the 1969 Occupation of Alcatraz, a 19-month-long protest involving Native Americans and supporters taking over the abandoned federal penitentiary on Alcatraz Island in California. The Occupation of Alcatraz was the first intertribal protest that garnered national attention, and it had struck fear into the hearts of the ruling class, because it was becoming clear that Native Americans, like African Americans and other oppressed peoples, were saying “no more.”

The National Day of Mourning protest was circulated among Native people nationwide, read, “What do we have to be thankful for? The United American Indians of New England have declared Thanksgiving Day to be a National Day of Mourning for Native Americans.”

First National Day of Mourning

Members of the American Indian Movement (AIM), such as Russell Means and Dennis Banks, as well as Native people from all over the country, traveled to Plymouth, Massachusetts, for the very first National Day of Mourning. On Nov. 27, 1970, a crowd of around 200 Native Americans and supporters gathered on Cole’s Hill in Plymouth. Native American leaders made speeches about the deplorable conditions Native Americans faced, the genocidal actions of the United States government and the devastation caused by the Pilgrims. The group next went down to the waterfront, where they buried Plymouth Rock in sand and painted it red. A small group of protesters made their way to the Mayflower II, a replica of the original Mayflower, and

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Honor Day of Mourning—Support Workers World

Workers World honors 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 exposing European colonialists’ mass crimes against Indigenous people, including theft of their lands and foods, obliteration of their culture, and racism, oppression and genocide.

In 1970, 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 people spoke then, and this is still true.*

Workers World has attended the Day of Mourning commemorations every year since 1981 and has reported first-hand 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. 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.org, the website where new WW articles are posted daily, and each week’s full issue is displayed in a pdf document. The newspaper is printed and mailed out monthly.

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*For 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, 1999 issue of WW newspaper at workers.org.

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Workers Party is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a multinational, multigenerational and multigendered organization that not only aims to abolish capitalism, but to build a socialist society because it’s the only way forward! Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the neverending quest for ever-greater profits.

Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, attacks on immigrants, misogyny, LGBTIQ+ oppression and mistreatment of people with disabilities. It means joblessness, increasing homelessness and impotence 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.

Brown, Black and Indigenous youth and trans people are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis. The ruthless ruling class today seeks to wipe out decades of gains and benefits won by hard-fought struggles by people’s movements. The super-rich and their political representatives have intensified their attacks on the multinational, multigender and multigenerational working class. It is time to point the blame at — and challenge — the capitalist system.

WW 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 organizer or supporter in your area.

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

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Independent pride, power and protest

Logistics for National Day of Mourning

The 52nd National Day of Mourning, commemorated by Indigenous peoples and their allies, will be held Thursday, Nov. 25, on the so-called “Thanksgiving” holiday, at Cole’s Hill in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Cole’s Hill is above the city’s historic waterfront district. It will begin at 12 noon sharp.

This year’s event will be dedicated to the memory of Wamsutta Frank James, the son of Wamsutta Wamsutta and protestors liberated the bones of a 16-year-old Wampanoag girl from the Pilgrim Hall Museum. Wamsutta and protesters liberated the bones of a 16-year-old Wampanoag girl from the Pilgrim Hall Museum. Wamsutta and protesters liberated the bones of a 16-year-old Wampanoag girl from the Pilgrim Hall Museum. Wamsutta and protesters liberated the bones of a 16-year-old Wampanoag girl from the Pilgrim Hall Museum. Wamsutta and protesters liberated the bones of a 16-year-old Wampanoag girl from the Pilgrim Hall Museum. Wamsutta and protesters liberated the bones of a 16-year-old Wampanoag girl from the Pilgrim Hall Museum.

The protesters then made their way to a “re-creation” of the first Thanksgiving dinner, where they flipped over tables saying that they “would not eat the white man’s food.”

One AIM leader would later say of the first National Day of Mourning that it “is a day American Indians won’t forget. We went to Plymouth for a purpose: to mourn since the landing of the Pilgrims the repression of the American Indian; and to indict the hypocrisy of a system which glorifies that repression. We fulfilled that purpose and gained a spirit of unity that spread across the land.” (Rusnell Means Recounts NDOM, 1971.)

Mourning, indicting and protesting the repression of Native peoples

Every year since the first protest in 1970, protesters have gathered on Cole’s Hill to observe a National Day of Mourning. At the 1972 National Day of Mourning, a young woman was attacked by the police for wearing an upside-down American flag draped over her shoulders. At the 1974 National Day of Mourning, a young woman named Wamsutta and protesters liberated the bones of a 16-year-old Wampanoag girl from the Pilgrim Hall Museum. Wamsutta and protesters liberated the bones of a 16-year-old Wampanoag girl from the Pilgrim Hall Museum.

Mourning organizers and protesters were attacked and brutalized by the Plymouth police, who arrested 23 protesters. The resulting trial and settlement led to the formation of two plagues, one that marked the origin and purpose of the National Day of Mourning, the other a community called Metacomet (King Philip), who led resistance against English settlers in 1675.

The settlement also ensured that charges were dropped against a local Amazon warehouse, protected the right to march without a permit each National Day of Mourning.

Moonanum James

Protesters will gather on Cole’s Hill on Nov. 25 this year and will continue to do so into the future. As Moonanum James, son of Wamsutta Frank James and the late co-leader of UAINE, said to the crowd at the 2019 National Day of Mourning: “We will continue to gather on this hill till corporations, and the U.S. military stop polluting the Earth. Until we dismantle the brutal apparatus of mass incarceration. We will not stop. The oppression of our Two-Spirit siblings is a thing of the past. When the homeless have homes. When children are no longer taken from their parents and locked in cages. When the Palestinians reclaim the homeland and the autonomy Israel has denied them for the past 70 years.”

When no person goes hungry or is left to die, because they have little or no access to quality health care. When insulin is free. When we have centered on skyrocketing costs of health care. We will take back this day. We will take back this hill. We will take back this day. We will take back this hill. We will take back this day. We will take back this hill. We will take back this day.
The following are excerpts from testimony given at the Oct. 23-25 “Spirits of Mandela” international tribunal held in New York City. The U.S. was found guilty of six counts of human rights violations, including mass incarceration and in particular, how it treats political prisoners and prisoners of war. These excerpts include opening remarks and answers to questions asked by tribunal examiners.

**Sharonne Salaam:** In 1980, I was just 21 years old. I was an aspiring teacher. I was searching for, Assata Shakur being one of them. Abdullah al-Shabazz, James Mira, rows and columns of political prisoners.

**Jalil Muntaqim:** The police and the prosecutor said we gotta get somebody. We were targeted to be removed from the community. So the face is the community. The community is the face of mass incarceration, and it brings upon us.

**Saleem Holbrook:** We were able to transcend all the punishments that they put on us. Puerto Rico's independence movement was started in 1898, when the U.S. invaded Puerto Rico.

**Jalil Muntaqim:** One of the things that I entered the first penitentiary, and the time I spent in those penitentiaries was always awful. But little by little, I was able to transcend all the punishments that they threw at me. And I walked out of the United States and into Puerto Rico. And for the independence of Puerto Rico, I have not given up.
New film on Attica uprising

A fight for human rights

By Monica Moorehead

The Prisoners Solidarity Committee of Workers World Party will be sponsoring a free zoom showing Dec. 10 of the new documentary, "Attica," directed by Stanley Nelson and Traci A. Curry, which premiered on Showtime. One of the surviving participants of the rebellion and a member of the Young Lords, Che Nieves, who was interviewed for the documentary, will be leading a Q&A session.

The discussion will connect the legacy of Attica with the ongoing struggle to free political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, falsely arrested 40 years ago on Dec. 9 in Philadelphia for killing a white police officer.

The zoom showing is scheduled for Dec. 10 because both the Attica rebellion and Mumia's struggle have connections with the United Nations General Assembly's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Dec. 10, 1948, which has come to be known as Human Rights Day.

The Declaration proclaims "the inalienable rights which everyone is entitled to as a human being—regardless of race, color, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. It has been translated into 500 languages, more than any other document worldwide."

Every year, the U.N. projects a theme for HRD. The theme for 2022 will be "Equality" as it relates to Article 1 of the Declaration, which states, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."

Even the U.N. acknowledges that what was declared almost 75 years ago is far from meeting today's goal. In fact, the majority of the world will not be born free as long as poverty, inequality, racism, misogyny, gender oppression, militarism and other class divisions exist due to an economic system that prioritizes profits, not human needs—capitalism.

Back in 1951, a prominent group of mainly Black activists presented a petition to the U.N. entitled "We Charge Genocide: The Crime of Government Against the Negro People" to bring international attention to lynchings, Jim Crow and other forms of racist discrimination suffered by people of African descent.

This group presented facts using articles from the UDHR and other U.N. declarations. And just this past October, a panel of international jurists found the U.S. guilty of six major counts of human rights violations against Black, Latinx and Indigenous peoples during a "Spirit of [Nelson] Mandela" tribunal, with the rallying cry of "We still charge genocide." (Read at workers.org/2021/11/09/585/)

"Attica means fight back" This past Sept. 9-13 was the 50th anniversary of the largest prison rebellion in U.S. history, the Attica uprising in upstate New York. To repress this rebellion, Governor Nelson Rockefeller's state troopers and local police slaughtered more than 30 unarmed prisoners and 10 prison employees, with hundreds more prisoners tortured.

These incarcerated human beings—Black, Latinx and white—were demanding their rights as stated under the UDHR. The legacy of Attica remains 50 years later as a powerful reminder of the universal struggle to break once and for all the chains of all forms of capitalist exploitation by all workers united by any means necessary.

Che Nieves told WW, "We made a commitment on September 9, 1971, and said that Attica means 'Fight Back.' And we fought back for human decency and human rights. That fight is still going on. We want all prisoners to be free and all prisons destroyed."

Free Leonard Peltier!

Revolutionaries and people of conscience support the movement to free Leonard Peltier, a member of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa also of Lakota and Dakota heritage, who has been incarcerated by the U.S. since 1975. During the Wounded Knee occupation of 1973, Peltier, an American Indian Movement leader, was asked by traditional people at Pine Ridge, South Dakota, to support and protect the traditional people being targeted there by violence at the instigation of the FBI. After FBI agents died, Peltier was tried, sentenced to life imprisonment, and denied a new trial, despite new evidence and biased legal proceedings. Peltier is one of the most well-known Native political prisoners from the period of militant struggle in the 1970s. Free Leonard Peltier!

Seven years later

Still fighting for ‘Justice for Tamir’

By Martha Grevatt

Cleveland

Nov. 22 will mark the seventh anniversary of 12-year-old Tamir Rice’s murder by Cleveland police. Tamir’s Campaign for Justice held a "Long March for Justice for Our Beloved Tamir Rice" Nov. 9 and rallied to demand both Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Michael O’Malley, who campaigned on a pledge to bring justice for Tamir but has done absolutely nothing since winning the election in 2017.

The demonstration occurred one week after Cleveland voters passed Issue 24, a measure to hold police accountable for brutality and misconduct.

A fight for human rights

By Monica Moorehead
Huntington, W.Va.

Hospital workers hit the picket line

By Otis Grotewohl Huntington, W.Va.

After three months of contentious contract negotiations, close to 1,000 members of SEIU District 1199 WV/KY/OH Service Unit initiated a 10-day strike by walking off their jobs at Cabell-Huntington Hospital at noon Nov. 3. CHH is in Huntington, West Virginia’s largest city.

Striking members of the unit include maintenance employees, service workers, X-ray and lab technicians, custodians, cleaning staff and licensed practical nurses. Registered Nurses are also represented by SEIU District 1199, but they have a separate contract.

The contract for the Service Unit members expired Nov. 2 and the main disagreement has been over health care benefits.

Joyce Gibson, secretary-treasurer of SEIU District 1199 WV/KY/OH, publicly stated, “[The hospital] has committed multiple unfair labor practice charges and continues to harass and threaten union members. This comes after months of negotiations with the executives at CHH, who have repeatedly made it clear that they value profits over workers and patients. This conflict comes after decades of successful contract negotiations with previous hospital administrations, but clearly these executives have decided that they will be prioritizing profits over care, staffing, retention, and dignity.” (WVAX, 11/3/21).

Workers World visited the picket line and spoke with Cole Wojdacz, the union’s communications liaison. Wojdacz informed WW: “This is the first strike of Service Unit members in 23 years. Things were calm until the 2018 merger with St. Mary’s Hospital. Workers are now at risk of losing all of the benefits they worked for and were once promised.”

Cabell-Huntington Hospital support and service workers have had a steady contract and have been represented by SEIU for over 40 years. Conditions changed in 2018 when the hospital was one of many health care facilities in the area to be taken over by the for-profit corporation Mountain Health Network.

Although the corporation is not willing to negotiate a fair contract, they are rumored to be paying line-crossers much more than what they are willing to offer their own employees. Wojdacz added, “The scabs do not know what they are doing and patients are not receiving the care they need. Trash is piling up and the rooms are not being cleaned. To make matters worse, As security guards have verbally assaulted picketers and management is threatening to discipline our members inside who speak with any of the strikers.”

Nurses are not on strike but they have expressed solidarity—despite risks of retaliation from management.

Some workers on the inside have anonymously posted images on social media of overflowing garbage and unflushed toilet paper and paper-towel dispensers.

Continuation of Striketober!

SEIU 1199 District WV/KY/OH is the third union to go on strike in the region since October. Workers at Special Metals in Huntington, represented by the United Steelworkers Local 40, and members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers Local 298 in neighboring Barboursville both went on strike Oct. 1. LAMAW members at Sulzer set- tled, while close to 450 USW members at Special Metals are still out and strong. In all three instances, the bosses have defiantly rejected concessions in their bitter fight. The ongoing labor battles are especially important as the increasing rise of the far right — recently embodied by the Virginia election results — and their racist attacks on public education and teachers unions. These struggles are connected. One of the biggest union-busting outfits in the U.S, the American Legislative Exchange Council, is also a hefty donor behind the reactionary movement fueling the attack on “Critical Race Theory.”

The working class is starting to realize it has strength in numbers and what workers can accomplish when they take collective action. The next step is organizing workers to understand how their struggles fit into the larger fight against the profit-driven system and its reactionary enforcers — the very system which pushed them to the picket line.

More at SEIU District 1199 on Facebook @ seiu1199wvkyoh.
Boston bus drivers take contract struggle to the street

By Steve Gillis, Executive Board, USW Local 8751

Boston, Nov. 14 – Banging drums and chanting “No contract, no work,” hundreds of Boston school bus drivers from far-flung yards converged on their employer Transdev’s Somerville office on their morning break. With a week to go until their contract expires, Boston School Bus Drivers, Steelworkers Local 8751 drivers and their supporters blocked the street and entrance to the billion-dollar, transna- tional corporation’s headquarters for two hours in a dress rehearsal showing their intention to strike.

Darlene Lombs, secretary treasurer of the Greater Boston Labor Council, opened the “Contract Justice Now!” rally championing “the dangerous work of you essential, frontline workers during the pandemic. You have a right to better wages, benefits, retirement and respect for your service to the children of Boston.”

Lombs referenced the five deaths, including four Local 8751 members, and many COVID-19 illnesses in the school bus operation since the March 2020 lockdown. At that time union organizers delivered nearly 10,000 signatures of people against motorists running. Without it, the system will be unwise to gloat too loudly. Despite the electoral setback, it can provide a stepping stone towards ultimate victory.

Real socialism requires a fundamental breaking with the current social order; the parasitic class of bosses, bank- ist lobbies and a resentful, uncooperative class of strikers, job actions and resistance organ- ized against big capital. ☐

Boston bus drivers take contract struggle to the street

Lesson of the Buffalo, N.Y., mayoral election

By Ryan Lockwood

Buffalo, N.Y.

Nov. 14 — Under normal circumstances, Buffalo’s mayoral election would have been little more than the 16-year incumbent Democrat Byron W. Brown’s coronation ceremony. But India Walton, who declared herself a socialist, interrupted the well-re- hearsed proceedings with a stunning June victory over the incumbent mayor. Walton’s near 1,000-strong work- force are predominantly immigrants from Haiti and Cape Verde. They took up President François’ call with repeated chants of “Free Transdev!”

François congratulated mayor-elect Wu on his victory but added: “We call on the city of Boston to do the right thing and avert the predicted strike.”

François called for negotiation with various sectors of the Greater Boston Labor Council, pledged his bu-ilding union’s solidarity. Martinez condemned “Uber’s campaign to turn all professional drivers into contractors without worker rights. We won’t cross the lines!”

Myles Calver, Business Manager of the fighting Verison Workers International Electrical Workers (IBEW) 2222, recalled decades of strike solidarity with Local 8751. He challenged: “Whatever backup your great local needs, IBEW 2222 will be there!”

Union vein b Asterisk city’s distress

Steve Kirschbaum, Local 8751 vice president, helped found the union during syx’s street battles against racist, para- military forces, who violently attacked buses carrying Black and Brown children to segregated white neighborhoods.

Walton referenced the city government’s disrespect and negligence in siding with Transdev. “When Transdev, then veela, first came to town in 2013, their first act was to fire the union’s leader- ship and frame us up in court with charges that could lead to 30 years in prison. We beat them back then with our solidarity and determination to shut them down.”

“The city of Boston continues to give Transdev a sweetheart deal of total cost pass-through. The city has a very short time to intervene to avoid catastrophe.”

On Nov. 2, in a landslide against an opponent whose racist program included more cops and attacks on students’ rights to transportation, Wu became the first woman and person of color ever popularly elected to mayor in the 400-year history of this hometown of U.S. settler colonialism.

Wu’s campaign included the program of housing and health care, not jails, for homeless people who use drugs. It also supported the Black Lives Matter move- ment’s demand to fund social services with money from bloated police budgets. Wu reflected the progressive mood of Boston’s now majority communities of color.

The Steelworkers’ contract expires, coincid- ing with the inauguration of Mayor Wu’s office. The usual January swearing in was unexpectedly pushed forward to Nov. 16. As strike signs are being printed, Local 8751 has found itself in round-the-clock negotiations with various sectors of Boston’s ruling class based on Local 8751’s strike preparations, which have received front-page coverage. Whatever develop- ments the next days’ struggles bring, this union’s ranks proved in their first test of strength that Buffalo can do it. It’s a better world is to join the national wave of strikes, job actions and resistance organ- ized against big capital.
On Nov. 9, Canadian and U.S. represen-
tatives held a press conference in Managua, Nicaragua, on what they saw on election day, Nov. 7. Over 165 international representatives and 67 journalists from 27 countries visited over 900 election centers throughout the country.


They reported that the election was free and fair and clearly represented the desires of the Nicaraguan people. They addressed several aspects of the democratic process including the process to form political parties, free speech and honest ballots and votes were secured.

While the Biden administration has labeled the election a "sham," the delegations' observations contradict these accusations. They observed an election that was efficient, transparent, with widespread turnout and participation of six opposition parties, including two that last headed the government.

They traveled to five departments and two autonomous regions: Bilwi, Bluefields, Chinandega, Montale, Granada, Leon, Pearl Lagoon and Managua. They visited over 30 different voting centers and interviewed voters and poll watchers representing different political parties.

They noted that the turnout was high in all areas, especially in the morning, and yet the lines moved very quickly. In one of the busiest times and places, it took about eight minutes from arrival through electronic check-in and checking of picture ID, to a second check of ID at the designated polling place, sign-in on paper, voting by secret ballot and finally having their thumb inked. Nicaragua inks each voter's thumb, among many other checks to prevent duplicate voting.

Voters praise Sandinista government

A group of 11 people visited Bilwi on the Caribbean coast. Voters told them of the way the government saved lives during the two category 4 and 5 hurricanes last year. The government quickly restored power, helped restore and rebuild homes. The schools where the voting took place were in good condition, some buildings newly rebuilt.

Before the FSLN government they had one kilometer [0.62 miles] of paved road. Now they have 500 kilometers of paved road; and when another 70 kilometers are completed, it will be possible to drive all the way to Managua. The incumbent FSLN party received its highest percentage vote in this region, an amazing 86.7%.

Joji Higginbotham from Oklahoma spoke about the profound contrast between the status of sovereign Indigenous peoples in his home state and those in Nicaragua’s autonomous regions, where over 30% of the landmass once held by Nicaragua has been ceded back to the Afrodescendientes [Afro-descendant] and other Indigenous communities, and their autonomy is respected.

The results of the election reflect the intentions of the Nicaraguan people, the international witnesses reported. The process was extremely secure, much more secure than in the U.S. There is absolutely no way anyone could alter ballots or miscount them, because every ballot box is secured at all times under the watch of several people from different political parties.

The results reported by the government are highly verifiable, as votes on paper ballots in every voting center can be followed through the counting and tabulation with a secure chain of custody through each level of government—voting center, municipal, regional and national.

The group demanded that the U.S. and Canadian governments recognize the results of the democratic elections in Nicaragua and end economic sanctions.
Marxist-Leninist revolutionary

Thomas Sankara – un conquered

By Devin Cole

First part of the author’s appreciation of the role of assassinated African political leader Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso.

In April 2021 a military court in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, finally indicted Blaise Compaoré in the murder of revolutionary Marxist-Leninist and former Burkina president Thomas Sankara. Sankara established a revolutionary government in Burkina Faso in August 1983.

In October 1987 Compaoré oversaw a coup d’état that resulted in the assassination of Sankara and 12 other Burkinabe officials. He proceeded to reverse Sankara’s policies and force Burkina Faso back to reliance on capitalist, colonialist entities, such as its colonizer France and the International Monetary Fund.

Compaoré is now one of 14 people being tried on a variety of charges ranging from assassination to terrorism of a corpse. Compaoré has lived in the Ivory Coast since 2014, after he fled Burkina Faso when a popular uprising forced his resignation after a 27-year rule marked by unfair, rigged elections.

Reclaiming the revolutionary work of Sankara

The steps Compaoré took to “rectify” Burkina Faso after Sankara’s assassination were supposedly done to “restore the shattered Burkinabe economy.”

When communist leaders die or are assassinated, a fierce propaganda campaign is undertaken immediately by imperialist powers, neocolonialist coup leaders and others to tarnish the reputation of the ousted leader, to delegitimize their work, to topple the revolutionary foundation on which they built and to send the masses back into the clutches of capitalism-imperialism. Such was the case of Blaise Compaoré and his long attack on Thomas Sankara.

So what were the “disastrous” policies of Thomas Sankara? Did progress or reaction triumph with his ousting?

‘A new society’

In August 1983, Thomas Sankara and members of a left-wing armed forces faction, including Blaise Compaoré, seized power from Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo, president of what was then known as Upper Volta. This came one year after Ouédraogo himself had seized power from Saye Zerbo and installed a right-wing government, which put Sankara into house arrest.

Immediately upon taking power, Sankara sought to bring about ecological, economic and social changes to the country of Upper Volta, which was quickly renamed Burkina Faso, or “Land of Incorruptible People.”

Sankara borrowed principles and structural ideas from socialist Cuba, such as the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution. In Burkina Faso, these were revolutionary cells in every workplace, village and urban neighborhood, to “organize the Voltaic [later Burkinabe] people as a whole and involve them in the revolutionary struggle.” (“Thomas Sankara Speaks: The Burkina Faso Revolution,” pp. 94-95)

Responsibilities for these groups consisted of political education of the Burkinabe masses, information against backward ideas and slanderous lies, organizing plans of action to support the revolution, upholding the line of the National Council for the Revolution (CNR) and practicing democratic centralism. This type of governing was a dramatic change from the previous feudal government of Upper Volta and ushered in what Sankara deemed “a new society.”

Women’s Liberation

An early major change undertaken by Sankara related to the role of women in Burkina Faso’s government and the revolution overall. He emphasized: “The weight of age-old traditions in our society has relegated women to the rank of beasts of burden. Women suffer doubly from the scourges of neocolonial society. First, they experience the same suffering as men. Second, they are subjected to additional suffering by men.” (“Thomas Sankara Speaks,” pp. 102)

Sankara spoke of his own outvoted role on the out of women, vowing to both change himself and plant a seed of change in every man in Burkina Faso, so that a woman would no longer be seen as biologically inferior or merely a sexual being, wife, mother or sister, but as a freedom fighter, a disciplined revolutionary and dedicated cadre.

Sankara showed that, using dialectical materialist thinking, the oppression of women is based in economic and social conditions of capitalism-imperialism, through the historical transition of different forms of society that gradually emphasized and normalized the oppression of women. “Women’s oppression,” Sankara said, “was a direct reflection of her economic oppression.” He emphasized that this truth can only be brought to consciousness through a dialectical process of understanding women’s place as an active social force in the revolution. [“Thomas Sankara Speaks,” pp. 341]

Under Sankara’s government, forced marriages and polygamy were outlawed, as was genital surgery on girls.

The Women’s Union of Burkina was founded and ensured a swift and democratic mobilization of women cadres for liberation and defense of the revolution. Women were guaranteed positions in the CNR and were encouraged to work outside the home, helping to build the Burkina Faso revolution. This move was unprecedented for its time and reversed Sankara’s place as a fighter for women’s liberation that still persists today.

10 million trees

By the 1983 revolution, Burkina Faso had been in a period of drought for over 30 years. The country is part of the southern range of the Sahel, an econotone south of the Sahara. By 1986, the desertification of the Sahel was advancing at 3 kilometers (4.3 miles) a year.

In Burkina Faso, the Burkinabe people combated this desertification with the 1987 rollout of the People’s Development Program. Under an initiative of Sankara and the CNR, people planted 10 million trees. A requirement of every family in the villages was that they must plant 100 trees per year, and 7,000 plant nurseries were created for widespread seed-planting.

When new housing and community spaces were built, these could be rented not for a price but for a promise the renter would plant the minimum number of trees in that location and tend to them as they grew. In instances of conviction for arson, one punishment was planting a certain number of trees.

Between 1987 and 1986, to reduce consumption of firewood from trees, 83,500 cookstoves were built by schoolchildren as school projects and by women in initiatives to support the revolution.

Vaccinations, water and the lives of children

Prior to the revolution, the Burkina Faso literacy rate was 12%, and school attendance of children was 6%. In two years under Sankara’s government, school attendance and the literacy rate both jumped to 22%.

Pre-revolution, upwards of 30,000 children died annually from meningitis or measles. Sankara began a massive vaccination campaign that saw 2.5 million children between nine months and 14 years old vaccinated against measles, which can cause meningitis. The lives of tens of thousands of children were saved.

With the revolution, 5,000 pharmacies were built in more than 70% of the villages. Wells were drilled, ensuring clean drinking water to every district, including 20 that had not had running water.

By 1984, one year after the revolution, infant morality had dropped from 208 per 1,000 to 145. ☐

A Sandinista’s view on autonomy

‘We became visible’

Continued from page 8

On Nov. 15, the flag of Palestine waved in front of Jersey City’s City Hall, an important first step to the recognition of the Palestinian people, said Ward D Councilperson Yusef Saleh. Saleh had suggested the flag raising to the Jersey City Cultural Affairs Department — saying it was important to recognize the Palestinian people both in Jersey City and abroad, as many are traumatized by the increased violence.

— Report and photo by Sara Flounders
Long live the Cuban Revolution!

When on Jan. 8, 1959, a triumphant Fidel Castro entered Havana, he called on Cuban revolutionaries to “settle down to the peaceful aims of the Revolution.” He spoke with a white dove on his shoulder, a symbol associated with Fidel throughout his long life.

But the U.S. empire, with its southernmost point a mere 90 miles from the socialist island nation, has never allowed Cuba to know peace. The U.S.-sponsored invasion of Cuba in 1961 at Playa Girón (the Bay of Pigs) suffered a resounding defeat, but President John F. Kennedy imposed an economic blockade in 1962.

This act of economic warfare remains in place to this day and has actually been tightened by Congress on more than one occasion. Cubans continue to suffer from the effects of the blockade through shortages of food, medicine, medical supplies, construction materials and much more. While Cuban medical science is very advanced, including the development of Cuba’s own COVID vaccines, the blockade has hampered by a shortage of syringes.

U.S. economic warfare has been combined with numerous terrorist acts by Miami-based counterrevolutionaries and a long history of assassination attempts on Fidel.

It is in this context that the so-called “protests” taking place Nov. 15 in Cuba must be seen. They are a frontal attack from U.S. imperialism, which has spent the past six decades creating the very shortages the “protesters” claim to be “protesting.” Paid agents have manipulated social media to foment and mobilize resentment arising from the shortages.

As Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel correctly pointed out, “U.S. diplomatic officials meet frequently with leaders of the counterrevolution, job and community service providers, guidance, encouragement, and logistical and financial support.” (Reuters, Oct. 25)

These agents have the full backing of the U.S. capitalist media and its stooges in bogus “advocacy” groups such as Human Rights Watch.

Nevertheless, the Cuban government and mass organizations, such as the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, the Federation of Cuban Women and the Confederation of Cuban Workers, have reached out to people who have grievances in an effort to involve people in problem solving.

U.S. policy: no peace for Cuba

Either President Biden or Congress could end the blockade with the stroke of a pen and allow Cuba to pursue its “peaceful aims”—food, housing, jobs, education and medical care for Cuban citizens—a socialist economy—without interference. But the blockade has always had bipartisan support, despite decades of repeated calls by the U.N. General Assembly to end this violation of human rights. This is because Cuba’s model is in sharp contrast to the neoliberal model, which imperialism has imposed on much of Latin America: ruthless exploitation, debt servitude and brutal political repression.

The Cuban government has the right to use any means necessary, including force or legal charges, to defend its sovereignty from this latest imperialist attack.

Since Workers World Party’s founding in 1959, the same year as the triumph of Cuba’s Revolution, we have defended this shining socialist example from imperialist subterfuge, economic warfare and outright lies.

Today we join with others in denouncing the U.S. orchestrated demonstrations in Cuba and in confronting reactionary threats to the Cuban Mission to the U.N. in New York City.

We again proclaim: U.S. hands off Cuba! Long live the Cuban Revolution!

People show solidarity with socialist Cuba at Mission to U.N., Nov. 15, New York City.

No Trans Liberation without Socialism—No Socialism without Trans Liberation!

By The LGBTQ+ Caucus of Workers World Party

The LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer+) Caucus of Workers World Party condemns the ongoing murders of transgender, Two-Spirit and gender-varient people. We reaffirm our solidarity with transgender, Two-Spirit and gender-varient people, as well as our dedication to bring about the total annihilation of capitalism, imperialism and the vicious oppression these systems generate, including transphobia and transmisogyny.

The world the systems seek is evident: The most common killers of transgender people in the U.S. in a year have already been recorded as of Nov. 4. To date in 2021: 43 transgender people have been murdered, with the majority of those killed being Black or Latinx trans women. These deaths continue a horrifying pattern that stretches back many years, and which must be stopped.

Only through the eradication of capitalism, which breeds racism as well as transmisogyny and transphobia, can we end these devastating losses. Transgender liberation built on socialism—the theory laid out by our late WWP comrade Leslie Feinberg—can be realized and maintained. There can be free and accessible housing, health care, education and support systems centered around trans people, based on the recognition of the infinite spectrum of sex and gender within the human species.

As we build, we must continue organizing our communities to be safe places for trans people to live and flourish. Fostering a safe place for trans people to thrive allows trans people to fully develop the revolutionary action needed to take down this rotten system.

No Trans Liberation without Socialism and No Socialism without Trans Liberation!

Remembering...

Tyianna Alexander, 28
Samuel Edmund Damían Valenti
Bianca “Muffin” Banks, 30
Dominique Jackson, 29
Fifty Bandit, 21
Alexis Brown, 24
Chyna Carroll, 24
Jeffrey “JJ” Bright, 16
Jasmine Cannady, 22
Jenna Franks, 34
Aldiden Evans, 24
Diamond Kyree Sanders, 23
Rayanna Pardo, 26
Jaida Peterson, 29
Dominique Lucious, 26
Remy Fennell, 28
Tiara Banks, 24
Jahaira DeAlto Balenciaga, 42
Natalia Smüt, 24
Iris Santos, 22
Tiffany Thomas, 38
Keri Washington, 49
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Whispering Wind Bear Spirit, 41
Sophie Vásquez, 36
Danika Danny Henson, 31
Serenity Hollis, 24
Poe Black, 21
Ollie Taylor, 17
Tierramarie Lewis, 36
E.J. Boykin, 23
Tasha Abbot, 20
Shai Vanderpump, 23
Miss CoCo, 44
Pooh Johnson, 25
Zeolla Rose Martin, 20
Disaya Monaco, 27
Brian Hamilton Ulmer, 35
Koi Lapri Karter, 21
Mel Groves, 25
Royal Poetic Starr, 26
Jessi Hart, 42
Jo Acker, 26
Rikkey Outsumoro, 39
Marquisha Lawrence, 28
Presente!

Short biographies are online at tinyurl.com/natatx3z.

China establishes its first clinic for transgender youth

By Devin Cole

The Children’s Hospital of Fudan University, located in Shanghai, has announced the establishment of a health clinic to safely manage and maintain the health and gender-variant people, as well as our dedication to bring about the total annihilation of capitalism, imperialism and the vicious oppression these systems generate, including transphobia and transmisogyny.

This is similar to Cuba’s revolutionary health care system, in which all services for transgender people are free and guaranteed, paid for by the government.

Meanwhile, in the U.S. —

While the U.S. continues its red-baiting smear attacks against Cuba’s economic growth and prosperity, its transgender community continues to suffer. Thousands are unable to either afford to start HRT or to continue.

Privatized health care boasted as “superior” guarantees that mental health care or physical health care of any kind is a constant uphill battle for transgender people. Over 45 trans people have been outright murdered in the U.S. in 2021 alone, with an unaccounted death toll from medical neglect or hostility. (Human Rights Campaign, Nov. 9) State lawmakers continue to try to pass — or have actually passed — legislation that ban trans youth from receiving treatment.

Now more than ever, the working-class LGBTQ+ movement in the U.S. can look to example China sets and push for similar, humane treatment here in the U.S.

This brings the hope that trans liberation on every front can be fully recognized through an ongoing socialist revolution.

Devin Cole is president of Strike Socialist Trans Initiative, a transgender advocacy organization in northwest Florida, and a member of the Workers World Party—Central Gulf Coast (Alabama, Florida and Mississippi) branch.
Politicians protect fossil fuel industry

By G. Dunkel

Although French President Emmanuel Macron has announced that his government is winding down its intervention in Mali, French involvement is still funding an active policy of raids and assassinations. Mali’s people are resisting.

The United States is supplying France with intelligence and logistical support and has announced it is intensifying its sanctions against Mali. APRICOM, the U.S. military command for Africa, has had training missions in Mali for years. The U.N. has a stabilization force of 14,000 in Mali, called MINUSMA. This is a major military asset given that Mali only has 22 million people.

The Economic Community of West African States has also announced it is intensifying its economic sanctions, because Mali will not call for elections during the next six months, defying what ECOWAS has demanded. This is a very serious sanction since ECOWAS countries border much of Mali.

There are reactionary armed bands operating in western Sahel – Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger – all former French colonies – especially in the area where all three countries touch. Each armed band claims allegiance to God and to Islamic thought. They attack civilians, the armies of each country and French and U.S. special forces, and sometimes each other.

There are also groups of smugglers – of drugs and cigarettes – and remnants of movements seeking the independence of northern and eastern Mali.

There were two significant demonstrations in Mali during the last weeks of October. The first one, Oct. 25 in Gao, was especially significant because Gao, the last port in Mali on the Niger River, is in the area of Mali where for months there have been multiple armed attacks. Still the Mj-Rally of Patriotic Forces was able to gather a peaceful march from the Monument of Martyrs to the office of the regional executive. Alassane Guïyte, the chairperson of the Mj Youth, at the rally expressed his movement’s support for the policies of the Independent National Convention to establish and reconstitute a sovereign Mali. Guïyte raised some local problems ranging from the supply of water and electricity to the state of roads linking Gao, which is in the eastern part of Mali, to other towns.

Brigade General Moussa Traoré, the regional executive, welcomed the march, saluted its patriotism and said he would pass along their concerns. Another demonstration took place in Bamako five days later. Tens of thousands of people came out on the streets Oct. 30 at the call of the movement Verité (the dignified man) Standing on the Ramparts and M. Ousmane Ag Mohamedoune, vice president of the Collective for the Reestablishment of Mali and member of the ruling National Transitional Council (CNT), spoke: “This is an essential step in the restoration and affirmation of the national sovereignty of our country, Mali. ... We say to the interferences of the international community, in particular the interference of France through its policy of dependence, its policy of colonization and contempt.” He also told ECOWAS to stop acting as an echo chamber for French politicians.

At the end of Mohamedoune’s speech, the crowd chanted in support of the military officers who are running the transitional government: “Down with France! Down with French imperialism! Down with RFI (Radio France International)! France, out! French army, out! Long live Russia!” (malianu.net, Nov. 1)

Mali’s government is trying to hire Russian military technicians. The French foreign and defense ministers just held a meeting Nov. 13 with their counterparts in Mali, confirming that the Russians that send Russian troops to Mali was unacceptable to France.

COP26 Youth demand change, politicians protect fossil fuel industry

By Betsy Piette

Two weeks of high-profile negotiations, against a background of climate catastrophes, ended Nov. 13 with little to show for the 26th “Conference of the Parties.” Proposals included that “countries agree to accelerate the phasing out of coal and subsidies for fossil fuels — a potential first acknowledgment of fossil fuels’ central role in the climate crisis in a U.N. agreement.” However, the final agreements failed to establish concrete ways to make this happen.

“Climate activists held a “funeral for COP26” in Glasgow, Scotland, on Nov. 13. These youth, whose presence was felt outside and within COP26, expressed outrage that over 500 fossil fuel companies, each with a delegate count from any single country, were allowed to attend COP26. They delivered a strong message via social media: They will engage in widespread civil disobedience and do whatever else it takes to hold world leaders accountable.

U.S. politicians keep door open for fossil fuel use

The unfolding climate catastrophe should propel not just the youth but everyone to act. Yet many U.S. politicians have no intention of curbing greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs). As COP26 was winding down, these politicians were opening up new markets for fossil fuels and furthering extractivism in the melting Arctic.

Across the U.S., over 70 million buildings currently rely on fossil fuels for heating and cooking. Combined, they generate 13% of GHG emissions. Rachel Golden, with the Sierra Club’s Clean Buildings Campaign explained the incentive behind gas industry lobbying: “It is important to understand that the gas industry’s main revenue source from delivering gas to end users is to homes and buildings.” Golden noted that homes and buildings account for 44% of gas industry revenue in Pennsylvania, higher than the U.S. average of 87%. (BCTV.org, June 14)

Preemptive legislation prohibits progress

Over the last two years, proposals passed in 20 U.S. states heading off local efforts to curb GHG emissions. Lobbyists from the American Gas Association and other energy trade groups funded these efforts.

Arizona’s Republican-dominated legislature was one of the first to block localities from taking action to limit climate damage. In early 2020 they passed a law to ensure that natural gas utilities are “not subject to further regulation by a municipality.”

Several California cities have passed new building codes phasing out fossil fuel use in response to former President Donald Trump’s rollback of national climate protections. These measures are in jeopardy under this regressive legislative trend.

While President Joe Biden and other U.S. politicians were attending COP26 and giving lip service to youth activists’ demands, on Nov. 3 the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear an appeal backed by coal companies seeking to limit the Environmental Protection Agency’s power to regulate carbon emissions under the Clean Air Act.

Science denied is climate protection delayed

All these politicians’ efforts to protect the energy industry involve the denial of scientific evidence by industry CEOs, who put their profits ahead of the health of the environment and public health and safety. Scientists working for the industry warned of the environmental dangers posed by fossil fuels; yet top CEOs not only refused to act, they repeatedly lied to the public, putting out disinformation.

A 1979 Exxon study revealed that burning fossil fuels “will cause very adverse economic effects in the coming decades. ... The problem is great and urgent.” (Theguardian.com, June 30) Yet rather than act on the evidence, major oil companies buried the findings and crafted a narrative to promote the alleged benefits of their products.

For many decades, the fossil fuel industry bosses knew that the extraction and burning of fossil fuels was killing life on this planet. They knew that burning coal results in GHGs, causing 800,000 premature deaths globally each year. The major oil companies conspired to bury the findings. They promoted a counter narrative and denied the growing scientific consensus around climate science.

The energy industry is part of a global capitalist empire, which has failed to provide livable wage jobs, affordable education, housing and other means of survival. Young activists today harbor no illusions about their future under this system. Organized globally, and facing the demise of their very future, today’s young activists will not go on silent for lack of change.

Mali’s people mobilize against imperialism

By G. Dunkel

Claiming to promote “energy choice,” the Pennsylvania state legislature was working for the industry warned of the environmental and public health and safety. Scientists working for the industry warned of the environmental dangers posed by fossil fuels; yet top CEOs not only refused to act, they repeatedly lied to the public, putting out disinformation.

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La última oferta de la ron que habían rechazado del sindicato anuncia fuera de la planta de Kellogg’s en Battle con miembros del Local 3-G de la BCTGM el trabajo a México. (BCTGM.org)

Desde que los trabajadores de Starbucks anunciaron públicamente una campaña sindical aquí en octubre, los trabajadores se han enfrentado a una implacable represión sindical por parte de la empresa, que pre-tende aplanar al sindicato. Durante los últi-mos meses, los trabajadores han soportado amenazas, acoso, intimidación, vigilancia e incluso el cierre de las tiendas que contaban con el apoyo del sindicato durante largos períodos de tiempo.

La empresa también ha intentado aislar a los trabajadores todo lo posible, cambiando los horarios de las tiendas fuera de la disponibilidad de los trabajadores, obligando a la gente a renunciar o a trasladarse, e inundando la planta con gerentes y funcionarios corporativos, creando una atmósfera de miedo en el trabajo.

La Unión de Trabajadores de Starbucks contratiempos anunció el 4 de noviembre que no volvería a participar en prácticas laborales desleales contra la empresa. Desde hace dos meses, dijo a Workers World: “No deberíamos tener que espe-rar a que las cosas vayan tan mal como en Amazon o Walmart para poder organizar un sindicato”.

Los trabajadores saben que todos los trabajadores merecen un sindicato, y a los trabajadores de otras tiendas. El 28 de octubre, la Junta Nacional de Relaciones Laborales dictaminó que la huelga de los trabajadores no fue inunda-sión de trabajo y no fueron mejores que Amazon o Wal-mart.

Tres de las veinte tiendas en el distrito de Bufallo de Starbucks han presentado una peti-ción por un sindicato, con un amplio apoyo de los trabajadores en otras tiendas. El 28 de octubre, la Junta Nacional de Relaciones Laborales dictaminó que la huelga de los trabajadores no fue inundación de trabajo y no fueron mejores que Amazon o Wal-mart.

En respuesta, Starbucks adaptó su estrategia antisindical, desde reuniones con público cautivo que instruía a los trabajadores para que votaran no, hasta sacar a los trabajadores de la planta durante su turno para ahuyentarlos del sindicato mediante conversaciones individuales.

La huelga ha sido efectiva: ningún miembro del sindicato ha cruzado la línea de pite. Los supervisores y los empleados de la empresa dicen a los trabajadores que sus cargas están vacías. Las condiciones inseguras creadas por la presencia en los piquetes sindicales, por antigüedad. Esto es sólo una pequeña muestra de lo que los trabajadores pueden ganar si se organi-zan juntos en sus intereses clasi-ysts compartir.

El 6 de noviembre, Starbucks organizó lo que ellos llaman un “evento de socorro”, en el que participó el ex presidente ejecutivo de la empresa, Howard Schultz. Durante este evento, el multimil-lionario Schultz acentuó a los trabajadores sobre la necesidad de ser “humildes”.

A continuación, la barista y organizadora sindical Gina Reive pidió a Schultz que firmara los Principios de Elección Justa.

La opinión de los traba-jadores es que hay que poner fin a la intimi-dación y el acoso de la dirección. La empresa Starbucks está utilizando todos los trucos del libro para aplastar el sindicato y obtener beneficios por encima de los intereses de sus trabajadores.

Los trabajadores de Starbucks persisten y siguen inspirando a los trabajadores de otras tiendas. Las llamadas sindicales por antigüedad. Esto es sólo una pequeña muestra de lo que los trabajadores pueden ganar si se organi-zan juntos en sus intereses clasistas compartir.

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