

United fight against racist school closures

By Judy Greenspan
Oakland, California

“This isn’t a budget fight; this is a war,” said Jessica Black, Black Sanctuary Director of the Black Organizing Project, at the night’s massive rally against school closures in downtown Oakland Feb. 4. Black, who is an organizer of Reparations for Black Students, stated further, “This is a war on Black and Brown communities. This is a war to erase Black Oakland.”

The rally was one of a weeklong series of protests against Oakland Unified School District’s plans to close primarily Black and Brown Oakland schools. A coalition of Black educators, school workers,

students, parents and community members has formed under the banner of Reparations for Black Students and is leading this massive movement to stop the racist closures.

The coalition says the proposed school closures are part of a long process of gentrification and systemic racism in Oakland. Two years ago, the Oakland School Board closed Roots International Academy, another primarily Black school in East Oakland, despite overwhelming community opposition. Anger over that closing fuels the current movement for Reparations for Black Students.

Since the OUSD announced plans to permanently close or merge 15 schools,



WW PHOTO: JUDY GREENSPAN
Protesters gather at Oakland Unified School District offices to demand justice, Feb. 4.

Stop the U.S. war machine!

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

During the week of Jan. 30 to Feb. 6., an ad hoc coalition of U.S. anti-imperialist organizations in the United States held over 70 protests against U.S. and NATO aggressive actions directed at Russia. These ranged from holding signs and banners in well-trafficked areas or on highway overpasses to days of protest Feb. 5-6 to show the breadth of opposition to a U.S. war.

The groups called the actions because the U.S., working through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, is threatening war on Russia, using the pretext that Russia is trying to invade Ukraine. The

underlying reason is, in fact, U.S. imperialism’s drive to maintain and expand its global economic and strategic hegemony.

NATO was established under U.S. direction after World War II specifically to oppose the socialist USSR in Europe and prevent worker revolutions from taking place in Western Europe. Following the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the U.S. has pushed successfully to increase the number of countries in NATO to oppose any independence from the U.S. in the area, spreading especially to some former USSR allies and Soviet republics.

Headlines in all U.S. media continue to blare the “danger” of Russian aggression

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this city’s people have erupted in protests, demonstrations, car caravans, packed school board meetings and even an ongoing hunger strike. Two Black Westlake Middle School education workers are entering the second week of their hunger strike outside the school.

Over 1,800 people packed a virtual zoom meeting of the Oakland School Board Jan. 31 to protest the planned closures. Speakers included a large group of students who all testified how important these neighborhood schools were to them and their families. Members of the Oakland Education Association (OEA), the teachers’ union, and SEIU Local 1021, which represents education workers such as attendance clerks, spoke against the

school closures, as did many Oakland parents.

Several school communities held rallies outside their schools during the virtual board meeting. School Board Director Mike Hutchinson, who has been outspoken in his opposition to the closures, attended the meeting from a spirited rally at Manzanita Elementary School.

Then on Feb. 1 and 3, car caravans organized by Oakland Not for Sale stretched for blocks, as people drove to rally in front of the homes of several Oakland School Board directors’ homes, including those of Board President Gary Yee and School Board Director Sam Davis. Only two school board directors,

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New York City, Feb. 5

WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

TEAR DOWN THE WALLS

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BLACK HISTORY is about struggle

Zimbabwe Sculpture

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Hutchinson and VanCedric Williams, are actively opposing the school closures. Students who serve as board directors are also speaking out and opposing the closures.

Also on Feb. 1, students and teachers from several schools, including Westlake, walked out and marched to the OUSD offices in downtown Oakland.

A Feb. 4 rally at Oscar Grant Plaza projected labor, student and community unity. Speaking for SEIU Local 1021, which brought a large delegation of school workers to the rally, OUSD Chapter Vice President Donneva Reid reminded the crowd, “Do you know that when they close schools, we have layoffs. SEIU is the backbone of the school district, and we are being laid-off and pushed out.” Reid added, “We are here today to tell the Board no school closures.”

The rally also showed solidarity for workers in International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 6, who have been doing recycling jobs without a contract for two years. Those workers filled the stage to express their solidarity with the Reparations campaign against school closures.

“We have your back” and “Hands off our schools” made up the strong message from Liz Ortega, Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Alameda Labor Council, representing 135,000 Alameda County workers. Keith Brown, President of the Labor Council and also OEA, challenged the school board to join the community and take the resolution to close the schools off the board’s agenda. “Listen to us, the Oakland community, the parents of Oakland, the students of Oakland, labor—listen to us!” demanded President Brown.

The Feb. 4 event ended with a short march to the OUSD offices, which have been closed since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. OUSD continues to pay an exorbitant



Keith Brown (left), President of the Labor Council and Oakland Education Association, and Liz Ortega, Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Alameda Labor Council, speak at Feb. 4 rally.

monthly rent on this building, while claiming it does not have the funding to keep community schools open.

On Saturday, Feb. 5, a community rally and walk for peace was held at Prescott Elementary School, another historically Black school slated for closure. The school closure measure would impact schools with the highest Black enrollment.

The school board will meet Tuesday, Feb. 8, to vote on the school closure measure. If this militant, united week of action is any indication, regardless of the outcome the Oakland community, led by the Reparations for Black Students campaign, will continue to fight for the schools that its students deserve.

BOP Director Black said it best when she stated: “We ain’t asking them a damn thing. This is our city. These are our communities. These are our people, and we make demands!” □

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Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, attacks on im/migrants, misogyny, LGBTQ2S+ oppression and mistreatment of people with disabilities. It means joblessness, increasing homelessness and impoverishment and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism.

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

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

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

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worldwide. If you’re interested in Marxism, socialism and fighting for a socialist future, please contact a WWP branch near you. □

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Social implications of Brian Flores’ lawsuit vs. the NFL

By Monica Moorehead

The single most popular sports event in the U.S., amateur or professional, is the annual Super Bowl, where the National Football Conference winners play the American Football Conference winners to vie for the National Football League championship. On Feb. 13, the NFC’s Los Angeles Rams and the AFC’s Cincinnati Bengals will be competing in the Super Bowl, where it is estimated that at least 100 million viewers will be watching inside the U.S. alone.

The NFL may still host this popular sports event, but undoubtedly many people will have on their minds the most recent developments, which again have tainted the game with systemic racism.

Brian Flores, the 40-year-old recently fired coach of the Miami Dolphins, interrupted all the hoopla about Super Bowl LVI when he filed an unexpected 58-page, class-action lawsuit in a New York City federal court Feb. 1. This lawsuit charges the NFL and three teams in particular, the Dolphins, New York Giants and Denver Broncos, with racial discrimination in hiring practices, mainly the gross lack of hiring of Black head coaches.

The preliminary statement of the lawsuit reads in part: “As this Class Action Complaint is filed on the first day of Black History Month, we honor the brave leaders that fought so hard to help break down the racial barriers of injustice. Martin Luther King Jr., Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, Frederick Douglass, Jackie Robinson, Mamie Till, just to name a few.

“As described in this Class Action Complaint, the NFL remains rife with racism, particularly when it comes to the hiring and retention of Black Head Coaches, Coordinators and General Managers. Rules have been implemented, promises made — but nothing has changed. In fact, the racial discrimination has only been made worse by the NFL’s disingenuous commitment to social equity.”

The NFL is 70% Black players, but as of today has only one Black head coach, Mike Tomlin of the Pittsburgh Steelers. Out of all the offensive coordinators for each team, who are singled out the most for head coaching jobs, only four are Black. Of the 32 billionaire NFL owners, all are white except for Jacksonville Jaguars owner Shahid Khan, who is Pakistani-American. It is the owners who have the final say of who gets hired and fired from any coaching or front-office position.

Flores, a person of Honduran and African descent, was fired Jan. 10 from the Dolphins after coaching two winning seasons. In the lawsuit Flores alleges that the billionaire owner of the Dolphins, Stephen Ross, tried to bribe him with \$100,000 for each game he purposely lost to gain lucrative draft picks. This maneuver, known as “tanking,” must be carried out discreetly. Teams that have the worst losing records are given the first choice to pick the most promising players from colleges and universities. Flores says his refusal to tank eventually led to his dismissal. As of Feb. 7, the Dolphins hired Mike McDaniels, whose father is Black, as the new head coach.

Flores also accuses the Giants of violating the Rooney Rule, implemented in 2003, which states that coaches of color are guaranteed to have an in-person interview for general manager or head coaching vacancies. These interviews don’t automatically lead to being hired.

Flores, who was scheduled to be

The Flores lawsuit is a legal anti-racist protest shedding light once again on the predominant white-supremacist U.S. society, coupled with the exploitative relationship between bosses and workers.

interviewed by the Giants two weeks after his firing, accidentally found out by a text message that the job had already been filled by a white coach without his knowledge.

Flores alleges that the owners of the Broncos showed up late for his 2019 interview in a “disheveled” manner and appeared to have been inebriated from drinking the night before, which Flores viewed as a slight to his being taken seriously for the job.

The response to the lawsuit was met immediately by dismissive denials from the individual teams named in the complaint, without any hint of initial willingness to look further into the allegations.

Even Roger Goodell, the NFL Commissioner, issued a Feb. 5 statement that reads in part: “We have made significant efforts to promote diversity and adopted numerous policies and programs, which have produced positive change in many areas; however we must acknowledge that particularly with respect to head coaches, the results have been unacceptable. We will reevaluate and examine all policies, guidelines and initiatives relating to diversity, equity and inclusion, including as they relate to gender. We are retaining outside experts to assist in this review and will also solicit input

from current and former players and coaches, advocates and other authorities in this area.” (sports.yahoo.com)

But this calls into question why the NFL commissioner, the top position, is filled by a white person in a league that is overwhelmingly Black.

Flores lawsuit: a legal protest

Colin Kaepernick sued the NFL owners in August 2017 for “blackballing” him from ever being a NFL quarterback, as punishment for protesting police brutality and social injustice by taking a knee before games. There is now a question of whether Flores will ever get a coaching job again.

In a Feb. 1 statement, Flores responded to that question with: “In making the decision to file the class-action complaint today, I understand that I may be risking coaching the game that I love and that has done so much for my family and me. My sincere hope is that by standing up against systemic racism in the NFL, others will join me to ensure that positive change is made for generations to come.” (ESPN)

That hope is that the lawsuit will enjoin other Black coaches, who have felt ignored and pushed aside for opportunities to be



Brian Flores

a head coach, and former Black coaches who were pressured to compromise their principles by white owners. Hue Jackson, the Black former head coach of the Cleveland Browns, spoke openly on how he felt he was incentivized to tank by his former team’s owner. Marvin Lewis, a former Bengals coach, stated that he was offered a “sham” head coaching job in 2002 with the Carolina Panthers, after they had already decided to hire John Fox, a white coach, for the job.

The Flores lawsuit is a legal anti-racist protest shedding light once again on the predominant white-supremacist U.S. society, coupled with the exploitative relationship between bosses and workers. To quote again from the lawsuit: “In certain critical ways, the NFL is racially segregated and is managed much like a plantation. Its 32 owners — none of whom are Black — profit substantially from the labor of NFL players, 70% of whom are Black.”

The fallout from this explosive lawsuit has just begun. □

Tamir Rice denied justice once again

By Martha Grevatt
Cleveland

The family of Tamir Rice recently received another piece of infuriating news. The U.S. Department of Justice refused to reopen the case against two Cleveland police officers who murdered the 12-year-old African American youth Nov. 22, 2014.

Without bothering to notify the Rice family attorneys, the department had quietly closed the case in 2020, while President Donald Trump was still in office. News reporters leaked the department’s decision, which was opposed by veteran civil rights attorneys assigned by the Justice Department to prosecute the case.

Tamir’s family and supporters were hoping, with Joe Biden now president, the case would be revisited and a grand jury investigation would be initiated. Tamir’s Campaign for Justice demonstrated in Washington, D.C., in October to demand the misnamed Justice Department reopen the case. On multiple occasions the campaign, led by Tamir’s mother Samaria Rice, submitted additional evidence against Tamir’s killer, Timothy Loehmann and Loehmann’s partner, Frank Garmback.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Kristen Clarke wrote in a Jan. 28 letter that the department would not reopen the case, because the new information would not prove a federal civil rights violation “beyond a reasonable doubt” and thus did not change the 2020 decision when “career prosecutors



Demonstration to demand the Department of Justice reopen the Tamir Rice case, Oct. 26, 2021 in Washington D.C. Tamir’s mother Samaria Rice is second from right.

determined that the federal government could not meet this high standard.”

Of the decision Samaria Rice said, “I’m devastated and disgusted by it. I have no understanding how a 12-year-old boy can’t get justice in this country. I’m at a loss for words. It’s pitiful and pathetic. It shows that the system is unfair and unjust.”

“The family is justifiably furious,” added Jonathan Abady, one of the family attorneys. “There’s no apparent recourse or relief through the Justice Department to hold these officers accountable for something that was essentially a drive-by shooting of a 12-year-old boy.” (cleveland.com, Feb. 1)

Loehmann killed Tamir just seconds after arriving at the spot where the youth was playing with a pellet gun. The Cleveland Police Patrolmen’s Association continues to maintain the murder was “justified.” County Prosecutor Timothy McGinty refused to charge the officers with any crime, and neither were fired for Tamir’s killing.

The case reveals the shameful conduct of Democratic Party politicians, from McGinty to Biden. Cleveland has not had a Republican Party mayor since 1988. Neither party can be relied on to bring justice to victims of racist police violence. □

Boston school bus drivers’ contract struggle

Labor-Indigenous solidarity spotlighted

On Jan. 20, hours before members of Boston School Bus Drivers, United Steelworkers Local 8751, were scheduled to take a strike vote, the drivers’ transnational, private employer Transdev and its City of Boston client came to the negotiating table with substantially more wages than the union was officially demanding.

But even in this unprecedented situation, the 1,000-strong Local 8751 made another pass which emphasized solidarity with the communities the union serves. Paid job training to recruit young drivers from the communities, COVID-19 protections, benefits for elder retirees and correcting racist history, in what’s known as “America’s Hometown,” were among the counterproposals dear to the largely Haitian and Cape Verdean drivers’ hearts.

While Transdev and the City have agreed for the first time to replace hated “Columbus Day” with “Indigenous Peoples Day” and delete the word “Thanksgiving” from the drivers’ paid holidays calendar, they have balked at the union’s demand to use Indigenous peoples’ experience and language for the fourth Thursday in November and recognize “National Day of Mourning.”

Below is a letter to Boston’s mayor from United American Indians of New England (UAINE) and the North American Indian Center of Boston (NAICOB) supporting the union’s demand to put its 40 years of solidarity with Indigenous nations into the contract books—and correct history from the workers’ point of view.

(Introduction by Steve Gillis, Executive Board, USW Local 8751)

Mayor Michelle Wu
City of Boston
Via email, January 30, 2022

Re: National Day of Mourning in USWA Local 8751 contract language

Dear Mayor Wu:

We write today because we understand that there has been some objection expressed on the part of the city about the request of members of Local 8751 Boston School Bus Drivers to include a reference in their new contract to National Day of Mourning. We hope to be able to give you some background about this so that any impasse can be lifted.

Local 8751 has been very supportive of Indigenous issues for decades. In the past, years prior to Boston recognizing Indigenous Peoples Day, they had sought to have Indigenous Peoples Day set out in their contract as the holiday on the second Monday in October. Even though the city had failed to recognize the day, they felt that it was important for them to go on record that they did not celebrate Columbus Day and instead honored Indigenous Peoples Day. Local 26 Harvard Cafeteria Workers had also done this in their contract at Harvard before Cambridge or the university had recognized the day.



USW Local 8751 President André François (black suit) carrying a mobile sound system at National Day of Mourning in Plymouth, Massachusetts, Nov. 24, 2016.

The same holds true with National Day of Mourning. Local 8751 is supportive of the work that we do to dispute and correct the false narrative of peaceful relations between white settlers and Indigenous peoples that is perpetuated via the Thanksgiving holiday. A National Day of Mourning on “thanksgiving Thursday” was first declared in Plymouth in 1970 by Wamsutta Frank James and other members of both of our organizations, and it continues to be honored annually more than 50 years later, with extensive media coverage and many thousands of people now honoring the day. The 1970 suppressed speech of Wamsutta Frank James is in numerous anthologies and taught in hundreds of schools.

The largely Haitian and Cape Verdean

membership of Local 8751 has endorsed and participated in the Plymouth National Day of Mourning for decades. The members’ lived experiences in their homelands and as immigrants within the U.S. are impacted by the systemic inequities of colonialism. As a result, these union members want to express their solidarity with Indigenous peoples right here in Boston where they live and work now. Around the world, there are holidays celebrating colonizers who invaded Indigenous lands, including Canada Day and Australia Day, and accompanying efforts by Indigenous peoples and allies to confront these holidays is international as well.

We have not sought to have Boston or any municipality officially declare a National Day of Mourning in lieu of Thanksgiving, and having the requested reference to the day in the Local 8751 contract does not seem to us to imply that the city is taking a position. Including the reference to the day is simply respecting the wishes of the professional union drivers who safely deliver thousands of children to schools across the city every day. We appreciate the solidarity shown by Local 8751 and ask that their desire to support Indigenous communities in their contract be accepted.

Thank you.

- Mahtowin Munro and Kisha James for UAINE
- Raquel Halsey and Jean-Luc Pierite for NAICOB

Big union win for Mexico’s GM workers

By Martha Grevatt

General Motors workers in Silao, Mexico, have made history.

They have voted in the first independent union in any Mexican GM plant, defeating the bogus company union by a wide margin. For decades, company unions allied with the former ruling party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), have colluded with auto companies to keep wages low and maximize exploitation. The highest-paid Mexican GM workers make in a 12-hour day little more than a U.S. autoworker earns per hour.

With the Feb. 3 election of the National Independent Union of Workers of the Automotive Industry (SINTTIA), the 6,500 Silao GM autoworkers will likely see their wages and benefits increase. But GM will still make huge profits from the sale of its Silverado model trucks, made in Mexico and Michigan, some of which



Brazilian unionists outside GM plant in Silao, Mexico, where workers were voting for the first independent union, Feb. 3.

fetch prices as high as \$78,000. And CEO Mary Barra will not take a cut in salary, which was over \$20 million in 2020.

The GM bosses refuse to acknowledge that Mexican autoworkers are dissatisfied with pay and conditions. GM

spokesperson David Barnas claims “Our Silao employees choose GM and elect to remain with the company for extended careers because of the positive and healthy environment that we have established as a corporate leader in Mexico.” (Detroit Free Press, Feb. 4)

The 4,100 workers who voted “Sí” for SINTTIA would disagree. They complained of stagnant wages, denial of time-off requests, and not even being allowed to go to the bathroom. The company union, affiliated with Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM), negotiated a poor contract without their input. The rank and file voted to throw out the CTM contract in August last year.

The AFL-CIO pushed for enforcement

of a workers’ rights clause in the 2020 U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement, which replaced the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). This helped secure the right to vote for the Silao workers and potentially GM, Ford and Stellantis (formerly Chrysler) workers in other Mexican plants. Members of AFL-CIO-affiliated unions, along with Canadian and Brazilian unionists, demonstrated outside the plant Feb. 3 in solidarity with the Silao GM workers. The United Auto Workers hailed the election victory.

Jesus Barroso explained, “We’re fed up. Being fed up is what’s making us take this decision. I think we have the right to give our families, our kids, a better quality of life.” (aflcio.org)

¡Sí! ¡Sí! ¡SINTTIA!

Martha Grevatt is a retired executive board member of UAW Local 869.

Portland city workers warn: ‘Don’t force a strike’

By Lyn Neeley
Portland, Oregon

Workers at Portland’s Bureau of Development Services have been working without a contract for a year and a half. On Feb. 5, they held a rally and march of over 150 workers to demand that bosses and City Council agree to provide fair wages and respectful working conditions.

The District Council of Trade Unions, a coalition of six city unions representing 1,200 city workers, says they plan to strike on Feb. 10 unless a decent contract is offered. Portland City Council refuses

to negotiate any further. Their “last-and-final offer” leaves workers with a 5% wage cut, with the rising cost of living, and threatens to take away essential worker protections.

At the rally Chris Flanary, a housing programing specialist, said the strike will stop all housing development that is vitally needed in Portland. She shared the sentiments of the workers who say they deserve respect and dignity on the job.

Rob Martineau, a water operations mechanic, maintains Portland’s 150-year-old water system. He said 20 crews provide Portlanders with life-sustaining

water; and if they go on strike, the city will be without people to do that job. Like Flanary, Martineau said the people he works with feel disregarded and devalued by city management. They come to work every day to do their job well and just want to be able to afford to live and work in the city they serve.

“We demand essential wages for essential workers!” workers chanted.



Portland city workers march for a decent contract, Feb. 5.

Pandemic exposes U.S. health care crisis

By Marie Kelly

In the book “The Great Influenza: The Deadliest Pandemic in History” by John Barry, written in 2005 about the so-called Spanish Flu of 1918, we learn that pandemic actually started in the U.S. The army barracks in the Midwest were the breeding ground for the deadly virus. World War I soldiers packed into trains, and ships quickly spread the flu around the world. U.S. politicians hid the truth in order to protect the war profiteers; but Spain raised the alarm, and that’s how that pandemic was mislabeled. (tinyurl.com/a7p4bjs6)

So far today close to 6 million people have died worldwide from COVID-19, with a disproportionate percentage being Black, Brown and Indigenous people, impacted by racial disparities endemic in health care.

In February 2021, Workers World managing editor Monica Moorehead wrote: “The need for reparations for equal health care for African Americans is being put on full, blatant display by the raging coronavirus pandemic. It is no secret that African Americans, along with other people of color, have been dying in hugely disproportionate numbers compared to white people. The killing discrepancy is especially acute in large cities like Detroit, Chicago, New York, Milwaukee and Los Angeles.

“According to Uché Blackstock, an emergency physician and founder and chief executive of Advancing Health Equity, and Oni Blackstock, a primary care and HIV physician and founder and executive director of Health Justice, African Americans are dying from the pandemic at the rate of 1 in 735 people, compared to whites at a rate of 1 in 1,030.” (workers.org/2021/02/54328)

The U.S. has the highest casualty rate in the world from COVID-19, yet Dr. Rochelle Walensky, head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reassures us that the “good news” is that only disabled, immunocompromised and elderly people are dying. Is the CDC implying they are expendable? This is another demonstration of a top official exposing the callous nature of our government under capitalism.

The labeling of COVID-19 as the China or Wuhan virus by the ruling class, specifically the former president, unleashed anti-Asian sentiment and attacks. San Francisco reported 60 victims of anti-Asian hate crimes in 2021, up from just nine in 2020. Ahn Le, a Vietnamese victim



Nurses at Pennsylvania hospital strike over unsafe conditions in November 2020.

of an attack, is suing the San Francisco District Attorney for refusing to file hate crime charges. (tinyurl.com/ycy2trtx)

When the pandemic began, the government’s response was denial, and that spawned the far-right anti-vaccination movement. The country still struggles against far-right misinformation and propaganda that hinders containment of the virus and divides our class.

Now hazard pay, paid leave and sick time, rent moratoriums for essential workers like grocery clerks, teachers and delivery drivers are curtailed or gone. We need a strong labor movement to push for these measures to be reinstated. Government agencies like the CDC and Occupational Safety and Health Administration lost credibility when they cut corners on safety guidelines to protect corporations’ profit margins.

Forced to choose between health or income

Workers were told to “work sick” or risk losing their jobs and becoming another member of our class forced into poverty by the societal elite that prioritizes a healthy economy over a healthy worker. Teachers’ unions, for example in Chicago, have staged protests and sick-outs to demand better protective measures to allow safe in-person learning or a return to remote classes. Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot, in tense bargaining sessions with the Chicago Teachers Union, threatened to penalize any absent teacher before reaching a compromise.

Prison release measures that were promised failed to materialize. The

incarcerated have suffered gross medical neglect and the torture of constant lockdowns, in addition to the already brutal treatment within the carceral state including medical experimentation without consent.

Four men incarcerated in Arkansas were given ivermectin to treat COVID-19 without their consent. Ivermectin is a drug for treating parasitic infections and is not sanctioned by the Food and Drug Administration as an effective treatment for COVID-19. The men suffered serious gastrointestinal side effects from the drug and have filed a lawsuit against the sheriff, medical provider and the prison.

For-profit pharmaceutical companies in the West hampered the worldwide distribution of lifesaving vaccines, citing patent rights that prohibited other countries from manufacturing their own supplies. Meanwhile Cuba and China continue to aid poorer areas around the globe, sending medical teams and supplies.

Cuba has vaccinated 90% of their population and has plans to distribute 200 million doses of vaccine to poorer countries, despite living under severe U.S.-imposed economic sanctions. Both Cuba and China have the socioeconomic structures in place that allow their governments and populations to cooperate in mitigating the spread of the virus.

U.S. health care debacle

In contrast the fragmented underfunded public health services in the U.S. have been exposed to be almost nonexistent — never establishing a proper contact-tracing system and mishandling the

vaccine rollout to the point of being a debacle. There needs to be an overthrow of the health care insurance industry and the establishment of universal free health care for all, guaranteeing health as a human right.

Hospitals must adequately staff workers caring for the sick, so those workers can give the best possible care without the strain of working beyond their physical, emotional and mental capacity. Nurses’ unions have been the most militant advocates for safer conditions for their patients and for universal health care.

Health care workers unions like National Nurses United are organizing thousands of health care workers to challenge these attempts by the ruling class to oppress us. Nurses across the country held a day of action Jan. 13 to shine a spotlight on the dire conditions they are working under in U.S. hospitals and laying the blame on health care and pharmaceutical profiteers. These profiteers are giving millions to groups lobbying elected officials to vote down any legislation that would guarantee health care for all, something the majority of their constituents support.

The COVID-19 pandemic will end, and hindsight will allow a detailed view of the lasting effects and how society was changed. Undoubtedly we are both individually and collectively wounded by our experience, and we need healing.

However, now is the time to be active in campaigns against for-profit health care and to advocate for nurses in their fight for safe patient-to-nurse staffing ratios.

Nursing is still a predominantly female profession. Nurses experience misogyny and the oppression of patriarchy in the workplace. They combat stereotypes that depict them as the helpmates of male doctors having no voice. The truth — and the pandemic proved this to anyone with eyes to see — is that nurses are the essential workers there 24/7 when you are sick or dying.

Only dire circumstances force a nurse to leave the bedside to walk a picket line, yet that is where we are today. Like the sign on the picket line says “if we are out here, something is very wrong in there.” We should be supporting nurses and engaging them in our battle against capitalism and imperialism. They are the most trusted profession and can be powerful allies in building a workers’ world.

Marie Kelly is a Registered Nurse and an at-large member of National Nurses United.

Honor Black History Month! Support WW!

Workers World newspaper commemorates Black History Month because white supremacy pervades life under capitalism. Every struggle — from fighting for living-wage jobs to ending police terror, from winning affordable housing to defending the basic right to vote — is rooted in the centuries-long battle to end this country’s horrific history of racism. We are still dealing with the legacy of enslavement — that heinous, violence-driven form of superexploitation that reemerged into new forms with the demise of Black Reconstruction.

That’s why every month, not just February, this newspaper chronicles the struggles of peoples of African descent and their allies to eradicate institutionalized, systemic white supremacy. A case in point is our continuing coverage of the movements to free political prisoners — like Mumia Abu-Jamal, Ruchell Magee, Dr. Mutulu Shakur and Imam Jamil Al-Amin — and to honor the legacies of trailblazing Black women such as Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks and Fannie Lou Hamer.

WW bases our weekly coverage of the Black struggle here and in the African diaspora on breaking imperialist chains

and the principles of self-determination and sovereignty. Oppressed nationalities have the right to fight to end all forms of inequality and injustice and white supremacy — by any means necessary.

Your help is needed!

If you appreciate our coverage, it’s time to join the Workers World Supporter Program or renew your membership. The program was established 45 years ago so readers could help WW publish anti-racist, working-class truth and build campaigns needed to fight for revolutionary change leading to socialism.

Since the early 1990s, the fund has helped sponsor the workers.org website. Throughout the pandemic when fewer print issues have been published due to staff health concerns, new articles have been posted daily, and the PDF of



WW PHOTOS: MONICA MOOREHEAD

Ferguson, Missouri, 2014.

the weekly newspaper has been posted at workers.org. Not one online issue has been skipped throughout this nearly two-year health crisis.

For a donation of \$60 a year or \$120 or \$300, you receive a subscription to WW newspaper and one, two or three free subscriptions for friends, depending on donation, and updates. A free download of the “What Road to Socialism?” book, published in 2020, is available at workers.org/books. Or notify us if you want a paper book.

Write checks (either monthly or annually) to Workers World and mail them, with your name and address, to Workers

World, 147 W. 24th St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10011. Put “Supporter Program” in the memo line. Or donate online at workers.org/donate.

We are grateful for your help in building Workers World!

‘The prisons are the crime!’ Honor the Angola 3

The following slightly edited WW editorial first appeared on workers.org Feb. 24, 2016, with the headline “Tear down the walls!” A main focus of the editorial was the release of Albert Woodfox from Louisiana State Penitentiary, aka Angola Prison. Woodfox along with Robert King and Herman Wallace were known as the Angola 3 and were held in solitary confinement for decades. King and Wallace were released in 2001 and 2013 respectively. Wallace died three days after his release from liver cancer. In honor of Black History Month and the heroic resistance of the Angola 3 and all those behind the walls, WW is reprinting this commentary.

At last. After 43 years and 10 months banished to a 6-by-9-foot cell by Louisiana prison authorities, Albert Woodfox was released — on Feb. 19, his 69th birthday. Woodfox’s bravery, strength and integrity inspired his many supporters worldwide.

The Angola 3 — Woodfox, Robert King and Herman Wallace, all African Americans — were exiled to solitary confinement for decades for protesting racial oppression inside the hellhole known as Angola prison. Their case and that of African American journalist and political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, also isolated for decades, among others, put a global spotlight on U.S. prisons’ use of this heinous practice and other torturous treatment of prisoners.

Woodfox describes the horrors of prolonged isolation, causing some prisoners to be catatonic, scream or self-mutilate. At times, he suffered from claustrophobia and panic attacks. But Woodfox avidly read newspapers, watched television news and

thought about politics. He says prisoners who could not read or write suffered even more, as they had no mental diversions.

“Solitary confinement is the most torturous experience a human being can be put through in prison. It’s punishment without ending. It is evil. We have to stop this,” Woodfox told the Guardian newspaper on Feb. 20, 2016. Woodfox vows to direct all his efforts to “ending the barbarous use of solitary confinement.”



Herman Wallace, Albert Woodfox and Robert King

The U.S. has the highest incarceration rate in the world, with 2.3 million prisoners. Some 80,000 are held in solitary confinement. This racist criminal (in)justice system disproportionately jails African Americans and Latinos/as, who together make up the majority of inmates and are more likely to be banished for years in isolation.

Not only must solitary confinement be ended, but the entire rotten prison system needs to be uprooted. Decades ago a founder and late chairperson of Workers

World Party, Sam Marcy, called prisons “concentration camps for the poor.” The poorest and most oppressed people make up the vast majority of those behind bars, victims of both capitalist exploitation of the working class and the added-on national oppression that comes from this country’s racist history of slavery and imperialist expansion.

Marcy’s understanding of the state was based on Marxism. The repressive apparatus, including prisons, has been erected to protect capitalist property and ensure that the wealthy can continue to squeeze ever greater profits out of the labor of the working class. The state’s role is also to suppress struggle and resistance. The greater the gap between rich and poor, the more workers and oppressed people end up in prison.

To rebel is justified

WWP set up the Prisoners Solidarity Committee some 45 years ago in solidarity with prisoners rising up against their horrific conditions. During the heroic Attica uprising in 1971, which New York officials brutally repressed, prisoners invited the PSC to come to the prison and tell their story to the world.

This newspaper has supported many prisoners’ struggles and rebellions in print and on picket lines throughout our history. This is a cornerstone of our political program. WW has backed the Angola 3, Mumia Abu-Jamal, Native prisoner Leonard Peltier, the Move 9, the Cuban 5, Oscar López Rivera, Lynne Stewart, Russell

Maroon Shoatz and hundreds of other political prisoners over the years.

WW hailed the courageous hunger strikers in California’s correctional facilities. Hundreds of prisoners at Pelican Bay State Prison led the first action in July 2011. They sought humane treatment and an end to solitary confinement and other “intense torture.”

Quickly, more than 6,000 inmates at 11 prisons joined them. Despite repressive policies meant to stop just such resistance and collective action, the will to resist prevailed. Two summers later, 30,000 prisoners in isolation and general population throughout the state’s penal system joined two hunger strikes.

This newspaper’s editorial page wrote on Sept. 7, 2011, after the first hunger strike: “Prisoners are among the most exploited and repressed workers. As the global capitalist economic crisis worsens and jobs disappear, the jail and prison population inside the U.S. will swell with even larger numbers of desperate, oppressed workers. In the interest of building the broadest class solidarity, the progressive movement must support the demands and tactics of prisoners, who are an integral sector of the working class.”

WW’s slogan “Tear down the walls!” was the right one during the Attica rebellion, and it is the right slogan now — with “the new Jim Crow” mass incarceration, warehousing of the jobless, provision of cheap/slave labor for corporations and continuing abuse of prisoners.

We join Albert Woodfox’s call to “End solitary confinement in U.S. prisons!” and say: The prisons are the crime! Tear down the walls! □



The death penalty in 2022

By Gloria Rubac

The new year began with Oklahoma legally lynching a severely mentally ill African American named Donald Grant. Killing someone with mental illness has outraged people worldwide. Plus, the three drugs used in his lethal injection on Jan. 27 are being challenged as unconstitutional in a lawsuit pending in federal court.

He became the state’s 43rd victim since 1977. Oklahoma County leads all U.S. counties with execution outside of Texas, which has executed 572 people. On the same day as Grant’s murder, Matthew Reeves was executed in Alabama.

The next scheduled execution is of Gilbert Postelle on Feb. 17 in Oklahoma County.

On International Working Women’s Day, March 8, Michael “Spider” Gonzales is set to be killed in Texas. He is a long-time friend of this reporter; and according to his attorneys Gonzales is innocent. They are still filing motions to stop the execution.

In a cruel twist, when Gonzales went to Odessa, Texas, for a motions hearing on Sept. 1, his birthday, the judge denied the two motions and gave him an execution date without looking up from his cellphone.

Thirteen more executions are set for this year — five in Texas, four in Ohio, two in Tennessee, and one each in Missouri and Oklahoma. A strange thing is that Ohio has seven set for 2023, six for 2024 and five for 2025. But even stranger is that Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine announced in December 2020 that lethal injection was no longer to be used and that legislators

had to decide on another method of capital punishment. That has not been done.

The case drawing headlines now, with petitions, rallies, press conferences and national zoom meetings, is that of Melissa Lucio from Harlingen, Texas. Lucio, who is Latinx, is one of six women on death row in Texas and is innocent.

‘My mom is innocent’

According to the Innocence Project, “Melissa Lucio is facing execution on April 27 for the murder of her 2-year-old daughter Mariah — a crime that never occurred. Mariah died two days after accidentally falling down a steep flight of stairs, and Melissa has maintained her innocence on death row for more than 14 years.”

On Feb. 5 activists along with Melissa’s family set up a booth at the First Saturday Jackson Street Market in Harlingen, Texas, and got out literature, T-shirts and yard signs for Melissa. They held signs and banners and spoke to hundreds and hundreds of people. Then on Feb. 6 a rally for Melissa was held in a local park, where every single flyer was distributed, and over 1,000 people learned about Melissa’s case and were asked to watch the film, “The State of Texas vs. Melissa.”

Her son John Lucio said in a press release announcing the Sunday rally, “Cameron County District Attorney Luis Saenz told our friends ‘No’ in a private meeting last week, saying he had to follow the decision of the jury in the case. But what did that jury hear? And what would

they say now, after there is a completely new understanding of the forensic evidence by experts? My sister Mariah was not murdered, and my mom is innocent. We have no choice but to take this case to the court of public opinion.”

The family and activists are urging the public to watch the documentary film that uses forensic experts to explain why no murder occurred. “The State of Texas vs. Melissa” is currently streaming on Hulu and Amazon Prime.

French-American filmmaker Sabrina Van Tassell spoke at the Texas Annual



Family members of Texas death row prisoners, Houston, Feb. 5.

March and Rally to Abolish the Death Penalty in December and told the crowd, “The more I investigated Melissa’s case, the more I realized that there had been extremely little news coverage or awareness about her case. I knew I had to make a film that would expose people to the truth.”

Lucio’s life and her wrongful conviction are difficult to learn about. She was raped for many years, beginning at age six, by an uncle and stepfather. She married at 16 to escape her home life but married Guadalupe Lucio who also abused her and left her after her fifth child. The abuse continued with her next partner, with whom she had seven more children including Mariah.

According to the Cornell Law School Center on the Death Penalty Worldwide, Melissa’s family sunk very deep into poverty, sometimes winding up homeless. The Center stated, “By the time she was 35, struggling with abuse, mental illness, addiction and poverty, Melissa had given birth to 12 children and suffered multiple miscarriages.”

More on Lucio’s life and her legal conviction can be found at tinyurl.com/um5t6ckw.

Trauma leads to coerced confession

The notoriously racist Texas Rangers played a huge role in Lucio being convicted and waiting for execution. She was aggressively and relentlessly questioned for over five hours by Ranger Victor Escalon on the same day her daughter died, as she was grieving. After this battering interrogation, she finally broke down and told Escalon what he wanted to hear so the questioning would stop. She told him, “I guess I did it. I’m responsible.” (Death Penalty Information Center)

During Lucio’s trial, Escalon testified that Lucio’s slumped posture, her passivity and her lack of eye contact with him told him “right then and there that she did it.”

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Stop the U.S. war machine!

Continued from page 1

in the area. Yet which country has projected its military abroad? According to PONARS Eurasia, an independent academic research network, the Pentagon operates over 700 military facilities outside its borders, while Russia has fewer than 20, as of September 2021.

The Biden administration has flown \$200 million worth of weapons and other “lethal aid” to Ukraine and has 8,500 U.S. troops on standby to enter that country. The U.S. wields NATO to threaten or wage war against Russia, in clear violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. This current escalation of aggression threatens a new, possibly nuclear, world war. (See “U.S. — Hands Off Ukraine!” Workers World, Jan. 27)



New York City

WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

Here are reports from some of the actions, most of them held Feb. 5:

In **New York City** over 100 activists braved bitter cold to rally on the north end of Times Square on the famous “red steps.” Over 15 different organizations collaborated on this protest, all with speakers at the rally. These included the International Action Center, Vets for Peace, Call to Action on Puerto Rico, CODEPINK, Workers Assembly Against Racism, Black Alliance for Peace, Workers World Party, ANSWER Coalition, the Green Party and Socialist Action. While the groups represented different political perspectives, there was an air of cooperation. Their message, which they brought to a virtual rally earlier in the day, was focused on stopping any plans of the U.S. government for a new war. (tinyurl.com/mr42suds)

Philadelphia activists gathered at the federal building to raise their objections to another U.S. war. After holding signs visible to passing cars and handing out flyers to passersby, participants marched around the nearby Liberty Bell. Brandywine Peace Community organized this event locally.

Despite freezing temperatures and a blustery wind, some 30 determined antiwar

activists assembled at a busy intersection in **Atlanta**. Their signs and banners called out objections to incessant war propaganda coming from the Biden administration and big business media. Protesters labeled NATO a tool of U.S. rule and demanded money for jobs, housing, health care, education, not war; supported union contracts for workers, not military contracts; and demanded U.S. out of Eastern Europe. The message was clear: Not another imperialist war! Initiated by the International Action Center, the action was sponsored by other local groups including the ANSWER Coalition, Black Alliance for Peace, Georgia Peace and Justice Coalition and Workers World Party.

In **San Antonio**, people gathered at the gate of Fort Sam Houston to demand “No U.S. war!” The fort is part of the giant Joint Base San Antonio, together with Lackland Air Force Base and Randolph



Atlanta

WW PHOTO: ARIELLE ROBINSON



Philadelphia

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Air Force Base. Many of the speakers were former military members, who gave very moving accounts about their experiences that led them to become antiwar activists. Several organizations including About Face, the National Nurses Organizing Committee of Texas/National Nurses, the Party for Socialism and Liberation, Vets for Peace and Workers World Party participated.

In **Portland, Oregon**, the local Workers World Party branch hosted a rally against U.S./NATO warmongering at the Cesar Chavez/Hawthorne intersection, a thriving hub for working-class Portlanders. WWP organizers were joined by the International League for People’s Struggle, the Portland Central American Solidarity Committee, and Students United for Palestinian Equal Rights from Portland State University. After an hour’s outpouring of support from the community, the rally joined forces with CODEPINK, Democratic Socialists of America, Extinction Rebellion and Veterans for Peace to protest outside the federal building.

The **Salem, Oregon**, community gathered outside the State Capitol to demonstrate against U.S. aggression and imperialism.

The Feb. 6 event, jointly planned by Socialist Action, the Student Solidarity Union of Willamette University, Youth Against Empire of the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC) and Workers World Party-Portland, also saw strong turnout from Salem DSA and both SEIU and unorganized workers. Demonstrators marched



San Antonio. Speaking, Judy Lerma, National Nurses United.



WW PHOTOS: TERESA GUTIERREZ

downtown and received a warm welcome of honks and cheers along the way. Those attending have made plans to continue these actions and political education under the name “Salem Against War.”

In the **San Francisco Bay Area**, California, over 75 people rallied outside the Grand Lake Theater in **Oakland** to demand “No War Against Russia! Fund Schools & COVID Relief Not War!” The demonstration drew the attention of hundreds of people at the busy intersection by the Farmers’ Market. Speakers were united in demanding that the Biden Administration stop all war plans and withdraw all troops and other military aid from Ukraine and nearby European countries. Rhonda Ramiro of BAYAN challenged the crowd to dismantle the U.S. war machine from Ukraine to the Philippines. Bill Balderston of the Oakland Education Association spoke on the injustice of closing Oakland schools while spending millions for war.

The Oakland rally was sponsored by the United National Antiwar Coalition and the International Action Center, as well as the ANSWER Coalition, Black Alliance for Peace, CODEPINK and other antiwar and progressive organizations. Co-chairs were Jeff Mackler of UNAC and Judy Greenspan of the IAC, who emphasized the antiwar movement should not call for negotiations but for the total U.S./NATO withdrawal from the region and an end to all moves toward war. A smaller rally was held later in **Berkeley** at Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Park, sponsored by

CODEPINK, where people marched and leafletted against U.S./NATO war threats.

Over 700 people registered for a **Feb. 6 webinar** sponsored by UNAC, which featured antiwar activists from Russia, Ukraine and the U.S. (youtube.com/watch?v=8IFzExFoo4s)

Contributors to this article were calvin deutschbein, Sara Flounders, Judy Greenspan, Teresa Gutierrez, Dianne Mathiowetz, Danny O’Brien and Joe Piette.



Oakland, California

WW PHOTO: JUDY GREENSPAN



Oakland, California

WW PHOTO: JUDY GREENSPAN

The death penalty in 2022

Continued from page 6

The defense was denied their right to have legal experts testify that Lucio’s response to the interrogation was a symptom of traumatic abuse. Her bowed head and sagging shoulders, her face showing no expression and her finally giving in to the Ranger were, according to the CLSC, “exactly what science predicts from a woman who had endured a lifetime of abuse by men.”

Coerced confessions are a leading cause of wrongful convictions, especially among mothers wrongly accused of killing their children. During the trial she was stopped from giving evidence of why she falsely confessed.

The Cameron County District Attorney had no physical evidence against Lucio but used her false confession. He likely felt his “win” would help his reelection, but today he is in federal prison for 14 years for bribery and extortion.

‘The system is flawed’

The Nation Registry of Exonerations has recorded almost 3,000 exonerations in the U.S. since 1989. Of these, 119 are women. Almost half were exonerated of crimes with child victims, and 63% of female exonerees were convicted of crimes that never occurred.

Sonya Chavez told Sunday’s rally that “Melissa’s my sister. I know she is innocent. I believe that if people knew the truth, they would agree with me.”

Delia Perez Meyer, who has an innocent brother on Texas death row, went to Harlingen for the weekend events. She said at the rally: “This system is so flawed. There’s tampering of evidence; there’s withholding of evidence; there’s collusion. A lot of terrible things go on in death row cases. Executions are wrong and archaic. It doesn’t matter if a person is innocent or guilty, no one should be executed.”

Other death row families helped campaign over the weekend: Sylvia Garza whose son, Robert, was executed in 2013; Terri Been, whose brother Jeff Wood was convicted under Texas’ Law of Parties and never killed anyone; and Lydia Garza, whose son is also on death row convicted under the Law of Parties.

On Feb. 7 over 30,000 petition signatures will be given to the DA in Brownsville.

In Houston, members of the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement decided at their February meeting to participate in a campaign to send Valentine’s Day cards to the DA and write a note asking him to watch the film and to drop the execution date if there’s any doubt. He can be contacted at: Cameron County DA Luis Saenz, 1100 East Monroe Street, Brownsville, TX, 78520; Phone: 956-544-0830; Fax: 956-544-0801; and on Twitter: tinyurl.com/yfzcd4fc.

Sign petitions at: tinyurl.com/47euj4zp.



Portland, Oregon

WW PHOTO: LYN NEELEY



Salem, Oregon

PHOTO: SALEM AGAINST WAR

#LandBack

Indigenous peoples regain redwoods forest lands

By Minnie Bruce Pratt
on unceded land of the Onondaga Nation,
Haudenosaunee Confederacy

The growing LandBack movement by Indigenous nations won another significant victory Feb. 1, when more than 500 acres of the “Lost Coast” in California was transferred to the InterTribal Sinkyone Wilderness Council. (sinkyone.org)

The council is a “nonprofit consortium of 10 federally recognized Northern California Tribal Nations with cultural connections to the lands and waters of traditional Sinkyone, Cahto and neighboring Tribal territories.” The majority of members are Bands of the Pomo Indians. The Save the Redwoods League (STRL) worked with the consortium to finance and complete the transfer.

This area in northern California is home to endangered old-growth redwood trees, the tallest trees on Earth. That forest has now been renamed Tc’ih-Léh-Dûñ (Fish Run Place) in the Sinkyone language, to recognize Indigenous peoples who lived cooperatively in the region before being attacked and forced out by European and U.S. settlers. During colonization and then capitalist exploitation of the area, 95% of Pacific Coast redwood forests were logged and destroyed. (savetheredwoods.org)

Priscilla Hunter, chairwoman of the Sinkyone Council, said it’s fitting they will be caretakers of land where her people were removed or forced to flee before the forest was stripped for profit. “It’s a real blessing,” said Hunter, of the Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians. “It’s like a healing for our ancestors. This [land] was given to us to protect.” (CBS Sacramento, Jan. 25)

STRL president Sam Hodder said the group’s goal was to increase the range of land managed by Native communities, returning that to Indigenous knowledge and practices, such as prescribed fire: “These communities have been stewarding these lands across thousands of years. It was the exclusion of that stewardship that’s gotten us into the mess that we’re in.” (CBS Sacramento, Jan. 22)

PG&E fires linked to forest devastation

One environmental “mess” Hodder references is the dangerous fire conditions created by destruction of forest by megapower company Pacific Gas and Electric.

The same day the Tc’ih-Léh-Dûñ preservation was announced, PG&E was scheduled to exit five years of criminal probation. Its capitalist crime? A 2010 explosion triggered by its natural gas lines, which blew up a San Bruno neighborhood and killed eight people.

PG&E has refused to bury its dangerous lines that spark fires. Instead, the company has destroyed many



PHOTO: SAVE THE REDWOODS LEAGUE

Tc’ih-Léh-Dûñ (Fish Run Place) on the ‘Lost Coast’ of northern California.

large and old trees that could ignite on contact with the lines. This has further degraded the environment.

Since 2010 the company has been linked to more than 30 massive fires, destruction of over 23,000 homes and businesses, the direct deaths of more than 175 people and subsequent uncounted health emergencies of more people. The 2018 Camp Fire, California’s deadliest and most destructive, killed 85 people and displaced 90% of the people in the town of Paradise, destroying that and most of three other towns. (“The inferno industry and PG&E,” Workers World, Jan. 22)

Most of the Tc’ih-Léh-Dûñ area was bought by the STRL in 2020 from PG&E. The land is habitat for the federally endangered northern spotted owl and other endangered species, and the utility company sought a cover for its environmental crimes against people and the Earth.

LandBack movement accelerates

The Tc’ih-Léh-Dûñ transfer marks a step in the growing LandBack movement to return Indigenous homelands to the descendants of those who had lived there for millennia before European settlers arrived and seized the land.

The current #LandBack movement began in 2018, advanced by Aaron Tailfeathers, a member of the Kainai Tribe of the Blackfoot Confederacy of Canada. In 2020, spurred by protests at Mount Rushmore — a sacred Native site mutilated by the faces of U.S. presidents — the Indigenous organization NDN Collective drafted the LandBack Manifesto: “The Reclamation of Everything Stolen from the Original Peoples.” This covers land, language, ceremony, food,

education, health, governance, medicine and kinship. (landback.org/manifesto)

The LandBack demand is direct: “Give us the land back.” Getting the land back is an issue of both economics and sovereignty. Land gives Indigenous peoples a basis for self-governance and physical survival, a way to protect the environment and access clean water, cultivate language and traditions, hunt, fish or engage in farming, create well-paying jobs, build schools and sustainable housing and expand their lives as they choose to do.

The LandBack movement has achieved substantial victories in a short time, including the 2020 U.S. Supreme Court McGirt decision that reestablished certain rights of sovereignty associated with 19 million acres of land under governance of the Five Tribes in Eastern Oklahoma — the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek and Seminole Nations.

More than a hundred years of struggle culminated on Oct. 8, 2021, in LandBack to Tribal Nations in the state now called Utah. By presidential executive order, after a recent battle during three administrations, the Bears Ears National Monument was returned as ancestral homeland to the nations that all refer to the area by the same name — Hoon’Naqvut (Hopi), Shash Jaa’ (Navajo), Kwiyaqatu Nukavachi (Ute) and Ansh An Lashokdiwe (Zuni) — Bears Ears. (sacredland.org)

Now Tc’ih-Léh-Dûñ — where the Eel River runs between steep hills of old- and second-growth redwoods — has returned to its peoples. Now — toward another #LandBack victory!

More on the Bears Ears struggle in articles by Stephanie Tromblay, Workers World, Sept. 12, 2019, and Dec. 19, 2017.



PHOTO: WILLI WHITE/NDN COLLECTIVE

LandBack protest in the Black Hills of South Dakota, where racist sculptures of U.S. presidents deface sacred Tunkasila Sakpe Paha (Six Grandfathers Mountain).

Puerto Rican organizations rally against crypto colonizers

This article was based on a leaflet issued by the New York City organizing coalition of Puerto Rican and anti-imperialist groups sponsoring the Jan. 28 rally.

A coalition of Puerto Rican and global anti-imperialist groups rallied Jan. 28 at the New York City Housing Authority. They demanded Mayor Eric Adams’ immediate rejection of Act 60 tax benefits for investors buying up land and housing in Puerto Rico. The rally highlighted Adams’ close relationship with Act 60 recipient, poster boy and crypto billionaire Brock Pierce.

Act 60 tax incentives have existed in Puerto Rico since 2012, being formerly known as Act 20/22. But the rise of crypto currency — as well as the ongoing debt crisis on the island — has made Puerto Rico extremely attractive to wealthy foreign investors. These are eager to reap the benefits of the Act 60 tax exemptions and turn Puerto Rico into a crypto hub.

Act 60 provides millions of dollars in tax exemptions to certain investors and businesses. These tax exemptions are not available to longtime residents on the island.

Economists have indicated that the incentives fail to provide meaningful economic growth in Puerto Rico. Instead, measures such as Act 60 rapidly accelerate gentrification and displacement of locals on the island.

Journalist Bianca Graulau recently showed that Act 60 tax beneficiaries have

purchased affordable residences that were later converted to luxury rentals, evicting longtime residents. (Los Angeles Times, Jan. 22)

A key figure in crypto currency manipulation in Puerto Rico is billionaire Pierce, who has gone on a buying spree of Puerto Rican land. He has purchased a 150-room ocean-front hotel on the island of Vieques and bought up historical buildings in Old San Juan.

Mayor Adams is particularly close to Pierce, despite the latter’s reputation as a crypto colonizer on the island. Adams flew to the Democratic Party-sponsored SOMOS conference on Pierce’s private jet. A political action committee supporting Adams’ mayoral bid received a \$100,000 donation from Pierce.

Adams himself converted his most recent paycheck to crypto currency and says he plans to turn New York City

into a “bitcoin hub.”

New York Boricua Resistance spokesperson Gabriela Malespin noted: “Crypto billionaires like Brock Pierce are intent on buying up Puerto Rican lands and displacing Puerto Ricans from the archipelago at an alarming rate. Despite working-class Puerto Ricans making their feelings known about these Act 60 colonizers multiple times, they refuse to leave and are intent on turning the island into a ‘Puerto Rico without Puerto Ricans.’

“Adams’ close relationship to Pierce — as mayor of a city with one of the highest concentrations of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. — is ample proof that Adams is no friend to the working class and certainly no friend to the Puerto Rican community in New York City.”

Colectiva Solidaridad spokesperson Cyn Rodriguez highlighted how Puerto Ricans, both in the diaspora and on the archipelago, are ready and mobilized against the tide of Act 60 beneficiaries: “While the Puerto Rican government is intent on selling the island to the highest bidder, we recognize that the stakes are too high. We’re going to lose Puerto Rico if we don’t repeal these Act 60 tax benefits.

“It is time for Puerto Rican anti-imperialist organizations (both on the island and in the diaspora) to mount an aggressive campaign to repeal the tax benefits, return lands to the Puerto Rican people and fight for the independence of Puerto Rico!” □



New York City, Jan. 28.

A revolutionary salute to the Lao People’s Democratic Republic

By Devin Cole

December 2, 2021, was the 46th anniversary of the end of the Laotian Civil War. Not only did the Royal Lao Government, in power from 1947 to 1975, fall that day, but also the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, a socialist nation with a Marxist-Leninist government, was established and remains in power to this day.

The revolutionary resistance was led by Pathet Lao (“Lao Nation”), also known as the Lao People’s Liberation Army. This was a Communist organization and movement that gained thousands of followers between 1950 and 1975, when Pathet Lao dissolved after their victory over the Lao monarchists.

Since 1975, Laos has been recovering and redeveloping from the wounds of the onslaught by U.S. imperialism; the effects of scorched-earth warfare are still felt. Despite this, Laos has not only prospered through revolutionary solidarity with neighboring socialist countries China and Vietnam, it has been defended by millions of Laotian people and the 300,000-strong Lao People’s Revolutionary Party.

One can ask: How has a nation that was practically pulverized by a nine-year bombing campaign — making it the most heavily-bombed place on Earth, with people today still dying in Laos from unexploded bombs dropped by the U.S. — managed to not only survive but continue to defend socialism and resist U.S. capitalism-imperialism?

While other socialist nations like China, DPRK and Cuba are often topics of discussion, Laos and Vietnam, among the socialist nations in the world, are not studied as thoroughly. Laos has a rich revolutionary history that demands careful attention and analysis, a history that exemplifies great resistance against the horrors of capitalism-imperialism, colonialism and monarchy.

‘A fundamental change in the destiny of our nation and society’

The 1975 victory did signal the end of the long feudal oppression of Laos. In Laos’ inaugural declaration of the National Congress of People’s Representatives, a passage reads “this victory signifies a fundamental change in the destiny of our nation and society.” (Revolution in Laos: Practice and Prospects, p. 9) A fundamental change indeed.

Laotian resistance, however, does not begin with Pathet Lao fighting the monarchy. Laos’ history of resistance against feudalism and other forms of oppression dates back over 600 years, beginning with the unification of the nation under King Tiao Fangum in 1353.

From this point on, the people of Laos fought feudal exploitation by Burmese and Siamese (Thai) landlords, along with two invasions by Burma in 1563 and 1569. Battles ensued over the centuries, all in an attempt to destabilize Laos and return it to feudal landlordism and later impose other forms of oppression and exploitation.

In the late 19th century, French colonialists invaded Laos and, from 1901 to 1937, an armed uprising was waged against both the French and Lao bourgeoisie by Ong Keo and Ong Kommandam, two Alak fighters and leaders of the Mon-Khmer tribe of south Laos, for independence from colonialism.

In 1917, the Bolshevik Revolution ushered in a new epoch of history in which communism was recognized as an attainable goal. This epoch inspired militant revolutionaries across Indochina, one of whom was Ho Chi Minh, a Vietnamese Communist. Ho Chi Minh would later lead Vietnam to revolution against U.S. imperialism; but in 1930 Ho Chi Minh was a traveler and journalist who founded the Indochinese Communist Party.

The ICP was to include Communists from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, and from here, the struggle for national democracy and socialism in Laos began to grow.

First independence, Pathet Lao and ‘The Three Princes’

World War II ended with the crushing defeat of fascist Germany and Italy, as well as militarist Japan. This defeat was doled out not by the U.S., as is popularly told by reactionary history, but by the Soviet Union’s Red Army, and it sent shockwaves throughout the world, bringing tidal waves to the Global South, where struggles for national democracy and socialism were growing rapidly. U.S. imperialism responded by inciting the Cold War.

Laos was no exception. Its revolutionary forces developed for decades and, seizing the moment of heightened national liberation struggles of the 1940s and 1950s, mobilized the masses to overthrow the Japanese militarists, who had replaced French imperialism, establishing an independent Laos on Oct. 12, 1945.

Almost immediately, French colonizers reinvaded Laos, this time with the aid of the U.S. and Britain. The imperialists enlisted Lao mercenaries in larger towns to terrorize and crush national liberation rebellions. This resulted in a neocolonialist recapture of Laos in 1949. France then joined Laos with Vietnam and Kampuchea (also known as Cambodia) to form French Indochina, controlled by a puppet government ruled by France.



In 1950 Pathet Lao was formed out of a former anti-French nationalist movement known as Lao Issara by Prince Souphanouvong, who was, coincidentally, the half-brother of two of the former Prime Ministers of Laos during its French colonialist rule: Prince Phetsarath Ratanavongsa, the first Prime Minister of Laos; and Prince Souvanna Phouma.

Souphanouvong, although from the royal family and educated in France, came to know Ho Chi Minh while studying in Vietnam and became a communist. He petitioned the Viet Minh, a national liberation coalition in Vietnam, for aid in forming a guerilla force for the liberation of Laos.

Throughout the 1950s, Pathet Lao, supported by Vietnamese communists, began liberating large sections of Laos from colonialist rule. In 1954, at the same time Vietnam defeated the French at Dien Bien Phu, Laos liberated the province of Phongsaly and most of the province of Luang Prabang, breaching the front of the French colonizers stationed there.

At this point, France was forced to sign the Geneva Agreement, which recognized the sovereignty of Laos, Vietnam and Kampuchea. Under this agreement, Laos was deemed independent and controlled by a monarchy, fronted by Sisavang Vong.

Despite this agreement, Washington accelerated its push to conquer all Indochina, which lead to the U.S. war against Vietnam and to the “Secret Wars” that culminated in a campaign of terror against the people of Laos for 20 years.

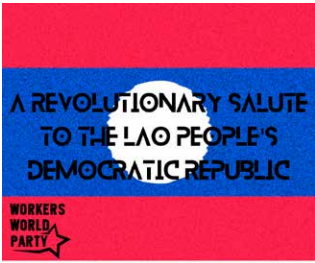
The U.S. ‘Hidden War’ against Laos

While the U.S. openly propped up an illegitimate government in southern Vietnam and waged war with the National Liberation Front and northern Vietnam, they denied their invasion and occupation of Laos and suppressed news of it.

Laos borders Vietnam on the east and allowed the Vietnamese revolutionary government to use a system of roads inside Laos to ship soldiers and military equipment to southern Vietnam to fight the U.S. Known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail, this system totaled roughly 12,000 miles of roads that made it possible for more than 2 million liberation fighters to deploy to the south.

While the trail also ran partially through Cambodia, which was just as vital to the NLF fighters, the U.S. chose to focus its secret bombing campaign primarily on Laos.

From 1964 to 1973, the U.S. carried out over 580,000 bombing missions, dropping 2 million tons of bombs on Laos. At least 50,000 people in Laos were killed in those



nine years — for a country with just 3.5 million people — or more than 1% of the population. Not all of the bombs detonated; and since 1973 (49 years ago!), 20,000 Laotian people have been killed by stepping on hidden bombs.

In 2016 then-President Barack Obama pledged \$90 million to help Laos find and disarm the millions of bombs left undetonated. Despite this,

no U.S. president, including Obama, has bothered to apologize to Laos for the U.S. military’s crimes against humanity.

Communist victory and the rise of the LPDR

In April 1975 the NLF drove the U.S. out of Vietnam, crushing its puppet government in the south and establishing a socialist nation. This victory pushed the U.S. out of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. In December 1975, after months of Communist-led uprisings centered around the capital Vientiane, what little infrastructure of the Laotian monarchy remained fell apart completely, leading to a victory of Pathet Lao. Souphanouvong was named President, and Kaysone Phomvihane as Prime Minister.

At this point, Pathet Lao reorganized itself and became the ruling party of Laos, the Lao People’s Revolutionary Party, which still governs the country today.

The Lao People’s Democratic Republic was proclaimed in December 1975 and immediately underwent a process of restructuring. Production and land were nationalized, and collectivization was implemented.

Restructuring was a challenge for Laos at first, partially because very little industry even existed in Laos that could be used as a base for productive forces, and partially because the ground was still saturated with undetonated bombs that made agriculture extremely dangerous (as of 2022, 30% of land in Laos still remains unsafe, which still obstructs economic expansion).

Despite these conditions, Laos has cut the poverty of its residents in half and nationalized health care and education. Laos’ smaller population means there is room for rapid expansion of hydroelectric facilities and dams, which provide clean, safe electricity.

Laos contains more hydropower potential than most countries and is projected to become a hydropower giant by 2025, being able to export up to 14,600 MW (megawatts) of power to neighboring countries, or 14.6 billion watts of electricity.

Over the last three decades, Laos has shifted away from agricultural collectivization into industrial work; rubber production is heavily centralized in Laos. Unlike in the U.S., where industrial workers are exploited for their labor, often without union representation, the industrial workers of Laos are well-represented by unions and workers’ councils. With its nationalized health care, paid sick leave and pregnancy leave are mandatory and are ample in length and pay.

Laos and COVID-19

An April 27, 2020, Workers World article offered an early analysis of Laos’ incredible handling of COVID-19, with just 19 people in the entire country being infected and no deaths. Laos, upon seeing the spread of COVID-19 across the world, immediately put the entire country on a lockdown, closing schools and border checkpoints and freezing all travel to and from the country.

How is Laos faring almost two years later? According to the World Health Organization, significantly better than the U.S. Laos has unfortunately seen 553 deaths from COVID-19, with the total infection count being 135,000. The Laotian death rate from COVID-19 is less than 3% of the shockingly high death rate experienced in the U.S.

In Laos, market relations were, similar to China, expanded following the collapse of the USSR. This allowed a capitalist class to still exist in Laos, albeit small and heavily regulated and controlled by the government.

Laos has continued to prosper in its quest towards communism. They celebrate 46 years of socialist triumph and look forward to many, many more celebrations.

Workers World Party joins them in this celebration.

Salute to the Lao People’s Democratic Republic! □

No-knock terror, again

Abolish the police!

No one knocked on the door of the apartment where Amir Locke was sleeping before Minneapolis police entered, using a key, at 6:48 a.m. Feb. 2. They murdered the 22-year-old Black man, nine seconds later.

Locke, who police killed while carrying out a search warrant, was wrapped in a blanket and sleeping on a couch. SWAT officers kicked the couch over, waking up Locke who allegedly displayed a gun. Police officer Mark Hanneman immediately shot him.

Repeating the official police line, Minneapolis media labeled Locke a “suspect.” Only later did police admit that Locke was not named in their warrants. Locke had a license for his gun but was given no chance to survive his encounter with police.

Locke’s murder has generated protests, including a nighttime car caravan through the streets of Minneapolis Feb. 4 and a turnout of thousands of protesters over the weekend. Black Lives Matter activists disrupted and took over the press conference where Mayor Jacob Frey and Interim Police Chief Amelia Huffman tried to justify the shooting.

At 5 a.m. Jan. 10, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police, serving a search warrant for someone else, forcibly entered the apartment of 19-year-old Isaiah Tyree Williams, firing 23 shots and killing the Black youth within seconds. After the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department realized Williams was not who the cops were looking for, they immediately began demonizing him, listing charges he would have faced had he used his weapon to protect himself against their armed break-in.

Both shootings are all too reminiscent of the murder of Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old Black woman, by Louisville, Kentucky, police on March 13, 2020. In all these cases, controversial “no-knock” search warrants, which had identified other people as target suspects, provided cover for white police officers to break into residences of Black individuals, late at night or early in the morning, and execute people of color without trial.



Minneapolis protest car caravan, Feb. 5.

Taylor, an emergency room technician, was asleep when Louisville police used a battering ram to enter her apartment shortly after midnight. After breaking down her door, police fired multiple shots, striking Taylor five times. Louisville police delayed calling an ambulance and let Taylor die. Only after the fact did police acknowledge that Taylor was not the “suspect” listed on their warrant.

Brett Hankinson, one of the officers who shot Taylor, is currently on trial in Kentucky — not for killing Taylor but for three counts of wanton endangerment for firing shots into a neighboring apartment.

Chauvin conviction — no deterrent to police brutality

On April 20, 2021 Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin was convicted on three charges stemming from his May 25, 2020 murder of George Floyd and subsequently sentenced to over 22 years in prison. Three other Minneapolis police officers linked to Floyd’s murder are currently on trial.

The same Minneapolis judge who presided over Chauvin’s trial signed off on the no-knock search warrants that resulted in Locke’s death. The St. Paul,

Minnesota, Police Department had requested a knock-and-announce warrant. Yet Minneapolis police, who have the options of knock or no-knock warrants, chose the latter.

In November 2020, Frey declared a moratorium against no-knock warrants, yet the practice continued, averaging around 139 per year. Since Jan. 1 Minneapolis police requested and were granted 13 no-knock search warrants. In cities across the U.S., police are weaponizing no-knock warrants — using them to brutally murder Black and Brown people.

That Frey and Huffman allowed no-knock warrants after promising the moratorium and other reforms following Floyd’s murder exposes just how corrupt the police system is and why reforms and convictions of a few guilty cops are not enough.

Chauvin’s conviction was designed to pacify millions of BLM activists who filled the streets of cities around the world in the months following Floyd’s murder. Politicians like Frey made promises to reform and in some cases even “defund” police departments, only to have these promises evaporate since the November 2020 elections.

In the year after George Floyd’s murder, 1,068 people were killed by police — an average of three per day. This pattern did not stop with Chauvin’s conviction. The capitalist system gives white police carte blanche to shoot to kill Black and Brown people. While receiving considerable media coverage, convictions like Chauvin’s are the exception not the norm.

Showcase trials, even when they result in rare jail terms for killer cops, do nothing to fundamentally change systemic racism and a capitalist state apparatus dependent on brutality and repression. The problem is not a few bad officers — the problem is systemic racism throughout the entire U.S. criminal “justice” system — from the beat cops to racist U.S. Supreme Court judges.

The demand to “abolish the police” is all the more relevant than when it was first raised in 2020. □

What’s important for workers

Contradictions in BLS January jobs report

By G. Dunkel

The corporate media shouted loud hosannas to greet the Bureau of Labor Statistics Feb. 4 announcement that the U.S. economy had added 467,000 jobs in January. Upward revisions to previously announced job totals for December and November 2021 increased the media’s delight. Overall they concluded that the U.S. economy had proved its resilience and was overcoming the effects of the omicron variant.

The Biden administration is using these good figures in an attempt to enhance its political standing. This is a common political use of the BLS jobs report.

But, to make investment decisions, capitalists need to know exactly how many workers in all its intricately connected sectors produce the goods and services that make up their Gross Domestic Product. For over 125 years the BLS has provided this information.

Workers can use the BLS reports to find out where jobs are available, what they pay and the overall conditions of their class. Bosses need to know what workers are getting paid; workers can also use this information to find out what they should be paid.

If you look at the BLS report closely, you might notice some discordant notes. (tinyurl.com/36543uu3)

The media ignored the following warning in the executive summary of the BLS report: “6.0 million persons reported that they had been unable to work because their employer closed or lost business due to the pandemic.”

This is considerably higher than the same figure in

December, which was around 3.1 million. This 6 million figure excludes the 3.7 million workers the BLS reported as working part-time while seeking full-time work. This means nearly 10 million workers failed to find full-time work in January.

Bosses in the U.S. abuse workers by making them work shifting schedules whenever it is convenient for the company. The current labor shortages make this type of abuse more costly to the bosses. And there is another factor that has brought bosses up short: Workers are organizing.

Anecdotally, some families reported that they only had \$250 in income for the month of January and were facing evictions.

There were other irksome facts that the media, in its exuberance, ignored. The U.S. economy is still 3 million jobs below its level at the start of the pandemic in March 2020. The BLS notes: “Among those not in the labor force in January, 1.8 million persons were prevented from looking for work due to the pandemic.”

The disparities in unemployment rates among different groups, as reported by the BLS, are nothing to celebrate. The unemployment rate for Black workers is more than twice the rate for white workers.

Latinx workers had a lower unemployment rate than Black workers but higher than the rate for white workers.

The ‘Great Resignation,’ low-wage workers and unionization

Young workers — ages 20 and under — had unemployment rates about 10%. The percentage of adults aged 20 to 55 participating in the job market is around 60%, which indicates how unattractive many jobs are in the United States.

From the Washington Post to the data service FRED, created and sponsored by the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, wage increases for the lowest-paid workers in the U.S. have been tied to labor shortages, which have



confronted the hospitality and restaurant industry.

The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta has published a study tracking wage growth of the lowest paid 25% of nonsupervisory employees that takes inflation into account. It shows that this sector of workers has had a mere 5.1% wage increase after inflation over the past year. In other words their wages remain low.

The BLS has been tracking “quits,” volunteer separations from a job, since 2000. The latest data is from November 2021, when 4.5 million workers walked off their jobs.

Bosses in the U.S. abuse workers by making them work shifting schedules whenever it is convenient for the company. The current labor shortages make this type of abuse more costly to the bosses.

There is another factor that has brought bosses up short: Workers are organizing.

The recent and successful strike at King Soopers in Colorado and Wyoming included a demand for 500 new full-time openings and hefty wage increases. Recently over 60 Starbucks stores have filed for union recognition elections. Workers at three Amazon warehouses have union recognition votes scheduled.

Workers are growing more combative. □

U.S.-EU hide their role in Afghan hunger crisis

By Zach Kerner

On Jan. 24, U.S. and European Union representatives met with representatives of the Taliban in Oslo to discuss the situation in Afghanistan. The meeting’s purpose, according to the U.S. State Department, was the “urgency in addressing the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan” and the need to “help alleviate the suffering of Afghans across the country.” (state.gov, Jan. 27)

Urgent indeed. The international community has been sounding the alarm for months. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, not mincing words, recently warned the Security Council that Afghanistan is “hanging by a thread” and, in a tweet, separately described daily life as “a frozen hell for the people of Afghanistan.”

The U.S.-EU statement focuses primarily on the Taliban’s conduct, particularly charges of women’s and human rights violations. It fails to acknowledge that the ongoing crisis in Afghanistan is the direct and intended result of U.S. and EU economic sanctions.

This failure is no surprise. The imperialist ruling class — organized under the U.S./EU/NATO alliance — has no interest in solving problems of its own creation. To uphold their system of exploitation and oppression, the agents of imperialism conceal from the public their role in creating and profiting from chaos and violence. The legitimacy of bourgeois rule depends on obscuring reality.

Reveal the truth

Our task as revolutionaries is to find the truth and ruthlessly reveal it.

The truth is that the Biden administration responded to the Taliban’s taking power last August by launching an aggressive campaign of economic warfare against the Afghan state and its people, freezing the Afghan government’s assets, denying it access to international banking, blocking its receipt of foreign aid and restricting the import and export of essential goods.

By crippling the Afghan economy and keeping money out of the hands of the Taliban, the imperialists deprived the Afghan government of the revenue to provide for the basic needs of the Afghan people and to create a stable, functioning central administration.

The truth is that no U.S. law or executive order authorizes sanctions against the Afghan government. The Biden administration instead is relying on 9/11-era anti-terrorism sanctions against Taliban officials, which

were not to be used against the government of a sovereign state, de facto or otherwise.

As a former senior sanctions official in the Obama administration, Brian O’Toole, has written, these sanctions are more “powerful” now than they were when initially wielded against the Taliban in the early 2000s. (atlanticcouncil.org, Sept. 9, 2021)

Given the “increased centralization of global finance and the primacy of the U.S. dollar in cross-border transactions,” U.S. sanctions are capable of “preventing access to international financial markets, even those not involving the United States.”

The International Crisis Group, a pro-imperialist think tank, similarly observed that the U.S. sanctions that were imposed “to weaken the Taliban insurgency (which they failed to do),” are now being used to “crush Afghanistan’s public sector and choke its economy.”

The truth is that the U.S. and NATO spent the last 20 years occupying Afghanistan, killing its people with drones, installing a repressive kleptocracy that made the Taliban look good, creating a wartime economy highly dependent on foreign aid and otherwise creating the conditions for the current catastrophe.

The truth is that the decision to impose sanctions on the Taliban sent the Afghan economy into shock. The value of Afghanistan’s currency, the afghani, has dropped to record lows. Inflation and shortages have sent prices for food and basic goods soaring.

The International Monetary Fund predicts that the Afghan economy could contract by 30% for 2021-2022. As a result of the contraction, food is scarce; half the population is in poverty; unemployment rates have skyrocketed; hospitals and clinics have closed; access to medicine is limited; and salaries for doctors and teachers have gone unpaid.

Afghan people have been forced to sell their homes and household goods to survive. There have been disturbing reports about Afghans having to sell their organs or even their children to put food on the table and survive the winter. While this reality affects the whole population, the most vulnerable sectors of Afghan society are hit the hardest.

U.S. leaders knew they would provoke crisis

The truth is that this crisis was as predictable as it is devastating. The U.S. leaders and their imperialist allies adopted these measures knowing full well that they would destroy the Afghan economy and exacerbate the



humanitarian crisis.

The New York Times reported Aug. 21 that “Afghanistan is facing the heightened risk of a financial collapse after being propped up for the past two decades by foreign aid that now accounts for nearly half its legal economy” and that “the looming shock threatens to amplify a humanitarian crisis in a country that has already endured years of war.”

The Times then warned on Aug. 24: “Replacing a flood of foreign aid with sanctions threatens to cripple what is already one of the poorest countries in the world.” This is what the Biden administration meant when it repeatedly threatened to turn Afghanistan into a “pariah state.”

And yet, after the Jan. 24 meeting in Oslo, State Department spokesperson Ned Price told the press that the Biden administration was “doing everything we can to facilitate the flow of vital assistance and support to the Afghan people.”

Returning the \$9.5 billion that belongs to the Afghan state and lifting the sanctions on the Taliban more broadly are apparently off the table. Price even had the gall to call the U.S. “a humanitarian leader when it comes to Afghanistan,” more proof that those words are meaningless.

The truth is that crushing the economy and social fabric of underdeveloped nations is U.S. foreign policy 101. Afghanistan is one of roughly 40 countries (and counting) that is under attack from U.S. economic sanctions, which are but one tool Washington deploys against nations that refuse to serve the imperialist ruling class. Brute military force is another.

To get the U.S. out of Afghanistan, we need to get the U.S. out of everywhere. To do that, we need to view reality for what it is — not what the ruling-class officials and media say it is — so that the next time an imperialist mouthpiece calls the U.S. “a humanitarian leader” they convince no one. □

End the blockade of Cuba!

By Danny O’Brien
Portland, Oregon

The Portland End the Blockade of Cuba Committee met Jan. 30 at Pioneer Courthouse Square to rally in solidarity against the blockade. Workers World Party Portland branch comrades were joined by members of the Industrial Workers of the World, Democratic Socialists of America, Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Jobs with Justice and the Portland Central American Solidarity Committee. The rally included picketing seen by drivers and pedestrians and speeches.

Following speeches, the groups held a car caravan from downtown, east through Burnside, down Cesar Chavez Boulevard, west on Hawthorne Avenue and ending in Central Eastside. The Committee plans to hold demonstrations monthly on the last Sunday of the month, in differing locations throughout Portland, to help bolster Portland’s public consciousness of the draconian sanctions against Cuba and build solidarity with the international movement supporting Cuba’s well-being and right to sovereignty.



Portland, Jan. 30

Cuba has been under a devastating economic blockade since Feb. 3, 1962 as U.S.-dealt punishment for its people’s liberation. Food, medicine and other vital resources are forcibly withheld from the small island nation; and all trade with the U.S., its allies or client states is strictly forbidden. Each time it has come to a vote in the U.N., the nations of the world have voted against this blockade; but each time the United States has kept on with aggression and obstinance. □

EE.UU. fuera de los asuntos de Ucrania

Continúa de la página 12

gas fraccionado para sustituir el gas ruso que necesita Alemania. Así, la amenaza de guerra de Washington abre un camino de beneficios a costa del medio ambiente.

Aunque Biden promete que no irán tropas estadounidenses a la propia Ucrania, las amenazas de esta parte del mundo aumentan las tensiones que podrían estallar en una guerra nuclear. Estados Unidos ha demostrado que ninguna de sus promesas es creíble.

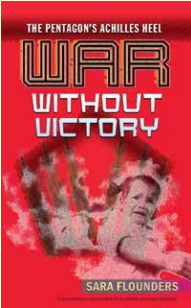
Workers World/Mundo Obrero exige que Estados Unidos saque las manos de Ucrania, retire las tropas y las armas estadounidenses de Europa y ponga fin a la alianza de la OTAN. □

WAR WITHOUT VICTORY

by Sara Flounders

“By revealing the underbelly of the empire, Flounders sheds insight on how to stand up to the imperialist war machine and, in so doing, save ourselves and humanity.”

– Miguel d’Escoto Brockmann, President, U.N. General Assembly, 2008-2009; Foreign Minister of Nicaragua’s Sandinista government.



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Trabajadores de General Motors en Silao México ganan reconocimiento por primer sindicato independiente.

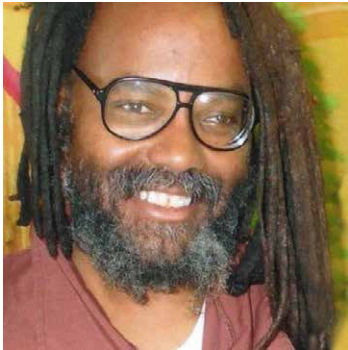
FOTO: AFL-CIO

Un Nuevo Movimiento por la Libertad ahora

Por Mumia Abu-Jamal

El gran revolucionario caribeño Frantz Fanon escribió en su ya clásica obra, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Los condenados de la tierra), el siguiente llamado a acción: “Cada generación debe, desde la relativa oscuridad, descubrir su misión, cumplirla o traicionarla en relativa opacidad. Esa misión la tenemos nosotros.”

¿Cuál misión? La de liberar a los presos y presas del Imperio estadounidense, no sólo a mí, sino a otros también; algunos los conocemos, algunos no. Hablo de compañeros como Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin, Ed Poindexter (camarada del fallecido Mondo We Langa), Sundiata Acoli,



Leonard Peltier, Dr. Mutulu Shakur, Julian Assange, Xinachtli, Rev. Joy Powell, y Daniel Hale. Son presos y presas anti-racistas y anti-imperialistas del Imperio.

Todos y cada uno de nosotros aceptaríamos ese ahora famoso primer punto del Programa de Diez Puntos del Partido Pantera Negra, escrito por dos jóvenes universitarios en octubre de 1966, Huey P. Newton y Bobby Seale: “Queremos libertad.” Esas palabras hicieron eco en los corazones de millones. Hoy en día, más de 50 años después, todavía poseen poder y resonancia. “Queremos libertad.”

Que esas palabras energicen los nuevos movimientos hoy en día y que vayan

enriqueciendo nuestras historias vivientes mientras reconectan con las luchas de libertad de nuestra juventud. Muchos de nosotros somos ancianos, pero nos alegra el surgimiento de los movimientos de libertad actuales que responden a la tortura y asesinato de George Floyd, porque las verdaderas luchas perduran de una generación a la siguiente.

Esta convocatoria viene cuando el encarcelamiento masivo ha metastatizado en un sistema que ha desangrado los presupuestos de los estados y ha resultado en enjaular a los ancianos y hasta recientemente a la población juvenil. También ha resultado en una crueldad desenfrenada que incluye a las mujeres dando a luz en grilletes y cadenas, o en la gente sometida a un régimen de aislamiento durante décadas.

Sorprendentemente, las prisiones han empeorado con el paso del tiempo; no han mejorado. Y ahora el sistema

carcelario es más grande de lo que jamás habríamos imaginado. Por eso, nos hacen falta más movimientos para cambiar las condiciones en las prisiones, no menos. Y la abolición de las prisiones tiene que estar sobre la mesa. Queremos libertad. Queremos libertad. Queremos libertad. Lo decimos todas y todos.

Gracias MUNSA. Gracias Comité Conmemorativo del Partido Pantera Negra. Gracias Comité de Acción Laboral. Gracias a todas y todos.

Con amor, no miedo, soy Mumia Abu-Jamal.

21 de enero de 2022 — (c) '22 maj
Audio grabado por Prison Radio (tinyurl.com/ypwhfjr9)

Circulación por Fatirah Litestar01@aol.com

Traducción Amigxs de Mumia en México. □

EE.UU. fuera de los asuntos de Ucrania

26 de enero. Al ordenar los preparativos para enviar 8.500 tropas estadounidenses más a los países cercanos a la frontera rusa el 23 de enero, el presidente Joe Biden aumentó el riesgo de una guerra entre los dos estados más poderosos del mundo con armas nucleares. Una vez más, el imperialismo estadounidense ha amenazado con una nueva aventura militar en busca de la dominación, esta vez con una gran potencia militar.

Workers World Party/Partido Mundo Obrero hace un llamamiento a todas las fuerzas antiimperialistas y antibélicas de Estados Unidos y Europa Occidental para que protesten contra las amenazas de guerra de Washington y exijan la retirada de Estados Unidos y de todas las fuerzas de la OTAN de Europa del Este y de los países bálticos: Lituania, Letonia y Estonia.

Durante las semanas previas a la orden de Biden, los medios de comunicación corporativos estadounidenses han encabezado sus noticias internacionales con informes sobre la inminente guerra en Ucrania. El presidente Joe Biden ha acusado a Rusia de planear una invasión, y Gran Bretaña ha acusado a Rusia de planear un golpe de estado en Kiev, la capital de Ucrania, para instalar un régimen favorable a Rusia. El gobierno ruso niega ambas acusaciones.

Los medios de comunicación corporativos con sede en Estados Unidos, desde el *New York Times* y NPR hasta Fox News, acusan al gobierno ruso de Vladimir Putin de planear una agresión contra Ucrania y de fomentar la guerra.

Esta campaña coordinada contra Rusia tiene como objetivo justificar los preparativos de guerra contra Rusia y obligar a los aliados europeos de Washington a alinearse detrás de la agresión estadounidense. Campañas similares, todas ellas

mentirosas, acompañaron los preparativos de guerra contra la antigua Yugoslavia en 1999, Afganistán en 2001, Irak en 2003 y Libia y Siria en 2011. Las campañas de propaganda son una parte esencial de toda guerra imperialista.

Cualesquiera que sean las decisiones ya tomadas por el Pentágono, la CIA y el resto de la institución de la política exterior estadounidense, el nivel de peligro es lo suficientemente alto como para que todas las fuerzas antiimperialistas y anti-guerra de Estados Unidos y Europa estén en alerta máxima para protestar contra esta última campaña bélica. Washington y sus aliados son responsables de provocar la crisis sobre Ucrania y de poner a los pueblos del mundo en peligro una vez más. Como han demostrado desde el colapso de la Unión Soviética en 1991, han creado la crisis de Ucrania provocando a Rusia en cada oportunidad con el objetivo a largo plazo de aplastar la soberanía rusa y convertir la antigua Unión Soviética en una colección de neocolonias débiles que suministran materias primas y mano de obra explotable al imperialismo mundial.

En 1990 los líderes soviéticos permitieron a Alemania Occidental anexionarse a la República Democrática Alemana sin la interferencia del Ejército Rojo. El entonces Secretario de Estado de Estados Unidos, James Baker, prometió a Mijaíl Gorbachov y a otros que la alianza militar de la OTAN se mantendría en su lugar y no se movería ni un centímetro hacia el este. El Pacto de Varsovia -una alianza de las repúblicas soviéticas con las naciones de Europa del Este- se disolvió entonces.

La OTAN debería haberse disuelto

La OTAN también debería haberse disuelto. En cambio, Estados Unidos adaptó la OTAN, que dominaba, para convertirla en un instrumento de

intervención militar en Europa del Este, los Balcanes e incluso en África y en toda Asia Central y Occidental.

Desde 1990, la OTAN casi ha duplicado su número de miembros, pasando de 16 a 30 en 2021. Los nuevos miembros son antiguos miembros del Pacto de Varsovia y antiguas repúblicas soviéticas; y la OTAN ha incluido a Ucrania y Georgia, estados fronterizos con Rusia, en su lista de deseos como futuros miembros.

La OTAN ya tiene bases a poca distancia de Rusia. Italia, miembro fundador de la OTAN, tiene bombarderos F-35 supersónicos con capacidad nuclear a menos de media hora de territorio ruso.

El gobierno ruso interpretó estos movimientos de Estados Unidos como una amenaza existencial. El presidente ruso Putin dijo: “Estáis en nuestra puerta. No hemos venido a vosotros”. Putin tenía razón. Propuso que la OTAN se retirara de todos los países cercanos a Rusia y que no hubiera lugar en la OTAN para Ucrania.

El actual régimen de Ucrania tomó el poder con un golpe de estado a principios de 2014. La segunda administración de Obama financió y apoyó a las fuerzas nacionalistas ucranianas antirrusas, incluidos los neonazis, que establecieron un nuevo régimen. Este Estado antirruso atacó inmediatamente a la minoría de origen ruso que vivía en Ucrania, sobre todo en las provincias del este del país.

En defensa propia, la población de dos provincias orientales del Donbass



FOTO: GLEB GARANICH

El gas de Rusia conducido a través de Ucrania hacia Europa compete con los intereses capitalistas del gas natural de Estados Unidos.

-Lugansk y Donetsk- declaró su independencia. Kiev envió su ejército contra ellas, y esta guerra civil persiste. Con el respaldo del 95% de la población en un referéndum en Crimea, las fuerzas rusas recuperaron la península. Crimea había formado parte de Rusia antes de 1963.

Esta semana, Estados Unidos y Gran Bretaña entregaron el inicio de 2.700 millones de dólares en ayuda, incluyendo cientos de millones de dólares en “ayuda letal”, al régimen de Ucrania. Aunque algunos republicanos de derechas -por ejemplo, el senador Tom Cotton- han acusado a Biden de ser “blando con Putin”, tanto los líderes del Partido Demócrata como los del Republicano apoyan la agresión estadounidense dirigida a Rusia, China e Irán.

Biden también está utilizando

Biden también está utilizando el conflicto con Rusia para obligar a los aliados imperialistas europeos de Washington a alinearse detrás de su amenaza militar y su amenaza de sanciones. Estados Unidos promete vender su petróleo y

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