

Rehire Memphis Starbucks 7

By Arjae Red

Bulletin: Protests were held around the U.S. Feb. 15 in solidarity with the Memphis 7.

Seven Starbucks workers at the Poplar and Highland Starbucks in Memphis, Tennessee, were fired Feb. 8 in the most vicious and blatant act of union busting by the company so far. These firings accounted for approximately 35% of the total workforce in the store, according to the press statement released by Starbucks Workers United. Among those fired was the entire union Organizing Committee, comprised of mostly Black and Brown workers.

“I was fired by Starbucks today for ‘policies’ that I’ve never heard of before and that I’ve never been written up about before. This is a clear attempt by Starbucks to retaliate against those of us who are leading the union effort at our store and scare other partners,” said Nikki Taylor, a shift supervisor and union organizer at the store.

Workers were fired for a series of minor offenses, some of which were alleged violations of policies workers were unaware of and hadn’t been trained on. Many of the violations, such as going behind the counter or entering the back of the store when they’re off the clock, are policies that have been regularly unenforced and are now being selectively enforced by the company to bring the hammer down on



Protesters, union organizers picket outside Memphis, Tennessee, Poplar-Highland Starbucks store to protest mass firing Feb. 9.

the union organizers.

One fact that cannot be ignored is the vile racist character of this particular instance of union busting. Starbucks has used a wide variety of tactics to intimidate and silence union supporters across the country, yet a mass firing such as this has

not been used up to this point. When this Memphis store filed for a union, it did so on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. In the letter to CEO Kevin Johnson, the Organizing Committee wrote: “Please, in memory of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., do not bring your so-called ‘pro-partner’ anti-union

campaign to Memphis.”

Despite this plea, Starbucks made no hesitation to terminate this entire Organizing Committee.

Firings for minor offenses unprecedented


Former Starbucks manager for nine and a half years Amy Holden, who managed the Poplar and Highland location, told More Perfect Union: “We do not move straight to termination for anything that is not considered egregious, such as stealing and harassment . . . the majority of policy violation moves to corrective action and assumes positive intent and help that [worker] correct their action rather than moving straight to termination. It’s very rare that we move straight to termination for some sort of policy violation.”

The reality is that the violations cited by the company for the firings are things that many Starbucks workers across the country have done, or do on a regular basis, without suffering termination. Starbucks representative Reggie Borges said about the firings: “These egregious actions and blatant violations cannot be ignored.” It’s obvious that the difference here, the real “egregious” unforgivable act, in the eyes of Starbucks, is that these workers dared to file for a union election.

What about the egregious acts of union busting and countless blatant violations of labor law committed by Starbucks around the country since the union drive

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WORKERS POWER DAY




Trayvon Martin
02/05/95 - 02/26/12

IN SOLIDARITY WITH
STARBUCKS + amazon
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Abolition, not reform
Caravan targets jails
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Oscar nod for ‘Attica’

Black History Month 6-7

Trayvon sparked a movement
HBCUs under attack
Black heroes of Flint Sit-down



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Groups unite to oppose new U.S. war

By Philadelphia WW Bureau

The antiwar rally opposing the U.S./NATO war drive against Russia brought together a broad spectrum of participants, even before the official rally started at Love Park in Center City Philadelphia Feb. 12.

As Indigenous performers Kalpulli Kamaxtle Xiuhcōatl practiced drumming as the rally gathered, members of Philadelphia’s Black Cowboys rode their horses across the plaza, keeping beat with the drummers. People in the plaza, taking Valentine’s Day photos at the LOVE statue, drifted over to ask what was happening. When the drummers opened the rally, passersby stopped to watch and get flyers.

Noticeably absent was anyone counterprotesting or speaking in support of the war. Even the Black police officer assigned to ask “who’s in charge” spent time explaining why he was against another U.S. war.

Roughly 50 people who planned to participate turned out, but dozens more stopped by to hear speakers and engage in conversation. Signs throughout the rally spoke to key issues on everyone’s minds, calling for fighting racism; funding human needs including health care, housing



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE
Protesters gather at Love Park in Philadelphia, Feb. 12.



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE
Indigenous Kalpulli Kamaxtle Xiuhcōatl opened antiwar rally, Philadelphia, Feb. 12.

and education; supporting workers’ union rights but not another war.

The rally was organized by a coalition of groups including Black Alliance for Peace, the Green Party of Philadelphia, International Action Center Phila, Workers World Party Phila., Party for Socialism and Liberation Phila. and Socialist Resurgence.

The rally was chaired by Betsey Piette with the International Action Center. Fermin Morales with Philadelphia Boricua spoke about the history of U.S. militarism and its particular impact on his native island Puerto Rico, where the U.S. Navy tested weapons for decades on the smaller island of Vieques until residents organized to kick them out.

Scott Williams from WWP led off his talk with chants. He described how U.S. corporate media through constant propaganda whips up sentiment for wars, while the U.S. and NATO install missiles and conduct “war games” at the Russian border. Williams called for funding for peoples’ needs not war.

Vietnam war veteran Joe Piette read a letter he sent to the Philadelphia Inquirer regarding their overt support for a war against Russia. “Similar campaigns, all lies, accompanied the war buildups against the former Yugoslavia in 1999, Afghanistan in 2001, Iraq in 2003 and Libya and Syria in 2011. Propaganda campaigns are an essential part of every imperialist war, as I learned when I was drafted in 1966 and sent to Vietnam.

“Every one of those wars left those countries in ruins and the people mourning thousands if not millions of deaths. The only winners were Lockheed Martin, Textron, Honeywell, United Technologies and other corporate profiteers.”

Maria Serna, an organizer for the Feb. 14 Day Without Immigrants, called for people to turn up at the plaza again on Monday to support immigrant rights for citizenship.

Other speakers included Chris Robinson with the Green Party Philadelphia, Ibrahim Shabaz from PSL, John Kirkland from SR, David Gibson from Peace Action and Eric Barr from the Communist Party-USA. □

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

Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the neverending quest for ever-greater profits.

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

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

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

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

Since 1959, Workers World Party has been out in the streets defending the workers and oppressed here and

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

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Education workers fight for justice

By Hadley Willow

Education workers are adding to a recent surge of worker organizing across the country and around the world, a surge that is energizing the solidarity of the working class. This surge is reminding the capitalists that they are dependent on the labor of workers and that decent wages and safe working environments are not a privilege but a right.

The ability of educational institutions to function depends on the skilled work of K-12 teachers, higher education teachers, teaching assistants, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, custodians and many others, who are rightfully demanding that they be fairly compensated for their indispensable work.

Student Workers of Columbia, United Auto Workers Local 2110 members voted Jan. 28 to accept a new contract with Columbia University, following a long and arduous 10-week strike that began Nov. 3, 2021. This was a resounding win for the union, which secured a 6% retroactive wage increase, an expansion of union

membership to include teaching assistants and research assistants, the right of workers to involve third-party arbitration in the case of sexual assault or discrimination, as well as many other changes essential to their demands.

At the end of January, student workers at Ohio State University, many of whom work in the dining hall, gathered to demand higher wages. Jobs like these, which are essential to campus life, are usually performed by the poorest and most oppressed members of the campus community. These jobs often provide less compensation than those with off-campus employers. Because they can't afford to live on campus, some students spend their time commuting, which disproportionately affects their academic performance compared to their peers.

Teachers in Puerto Rico have been walking off the job this week and joining thousands of public sector workers in the capital of San Juan to protest low wages. Much of the unrest comes after a teacher, Pablo Mas Oquendo, died in a car crash, presumably

from exhaustion on the way home from his job as a security guard, one of three jobs he needed to support himself.

Struggling for more than economic demands

In solidarity with their Indigenous membership, Boston School Bus Drivers, Steelworkers Local 8751 rejected an agreement last week with Transdev and the city of Boston, which actually offered them a higher wage increase than they were asking for, but which denied acknowledgement to National Day of Mourning in place of the Thanksgiving holiday. The offer was brought to the table just hours before the union planned to vote on a strike. This is an indicator of the leverage workers have in this current historical period, and it highlights the power of worker organizing to influence social and political conditions even beyond the workplace, setting precedents for society as a whole.

To this point, education workers have been influencing public policy regarding COVID-19

protocols as well. In order to avoid a strike by teachers in Oakland, the Oakland Unified School District reached an agreement Jan. 24 with the Oakland Education Association to improve COVID-19 safety procedures and testing practices.

Workers in the U.S. are being brutally confronted by the failure of electoral politics to improve their working conditions and standard of living, to address climate change, to contain an epidemic, to prepare for natural disasters and to end racism. They are reawakening, realizing their own agency and responsibility as workers to change their conditions.

The U.S. is controlled by corporate interests; and so long as corporations think they have unlimited power, they will control politics. Conversely, as workers seize our own power and fully realize the strength we have in numbers and necessity, we can begin to build a world that is designed and maintained for us — not the capitalist ruling class. □

Oakland, Calif., teachers prepare to strike

By Judy Greenspan

Elected teacher representatives of the Representative Council of the Oakland Education Association (OEA) voted Feb. 7 to conduct a strike vote if the Oakland Unified School District Board of Directors approved any of its proposed school closures. In the early hours of Feb. 9, after more than nine hours of debate and testimony from the Oakland, California, community, the school board approved the closure or merger of 11 schools serving predominantly Black and Brown students. Only two elected Board Directors, Mike Hutchinson and VanCedric Williams, opposed the resolution.

While the board reduced the number of affected schools from 16 to 11, the move did little to stop the continuing protests and anger from teachers, parents, students and their supporters. Westlake Middle School was removed from the list of schools to

be merged, in a late-night amendment at the Feb. 8 school board meeting. However, two educators at Westlake, Moses Omolade and Maurice Andre Sanchez, are continuing their hunger strike until all the school closures and mergers are taken off the table.

Protests against this latest attack on Black and Brown schools in Oakland have continued. Teachers boycotted their scheduled professional development meetings for the second week in a row Feb. 9.

The next day a large community rally was held at Brookfield Community Park. Then on Feb. 11, chanting “Black Lives Matter,” hundreds of students walked out of Oakland Tech, one of the city’s high schools, and marched to the OUSD offices in downtown Oakland. Students left messages outside the empty district office and chalked the message “Protect Black Schools” in the street.

Oakland teachers could go on strike as early as March 4 if the

membership of OEA approves the strike action. Teachers are reaching out to other educator unions and parents and students to get their support. OEA is demanding funding for Oakland’s schools from Governor Gavin Newsom.

The Oakland community will continue to organize to stop the school closures and mergers. As Director Hutchinson told the crowd of students outside Oakland Tech, “These are our schools, our traditional neighborhood schools. Our schools have educated generations of our folks; and there is no reason ever that would make it okay to come into a community and say you no longer get to have your school.”

Judy Greenspan is an Oakland teacher, an active member of the Oakland Education Association and chair of the OEA Substitute Teacher Caucus.



PHOTO: CARLOS EDILL BERRÍOS POLANCO/LATINO REBELS

Puerto Rico Teachers strike against austerity

Teachers in Puerto Rico began staying off the job and protesting Feb. 4, the day of this march. The Puerto Rico Teachers Federation officially called a strike five days later. They demand a raise in their monthly salary, frozen for the past 14 years, and adequate pensions. Teachers’ pensions were drastically cut under the austerity terms of the Fiscal Control Board, imposed on Puerto Rico by the U.S. Congress in 2016. Firefighters and other workers have joined the teachers, who are also demanding the resignation of Governor Pedro Pierluisi.

— Report by Martha Grevatt



On the picket line

By Marie Kelly

Brew union strong

Baristas at five Pittsburgh-based Coffee Tree Roasters shops filed for union representation with United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1776, Dec. 22, 2021. Riley Davis, a barista at the Mt. Lebanon location said, “We feel we deserve electronic tips, guaranteed meal and rest breaks, paid sick time and open communication with management.” (tinyurl.com/2d8a36pz)

The UFCW then filed Unfair Labor Practice charges with the NLRB against Coffee Tree Roasters after barista Liam Tinker was fired the day after the election filing; Tinker had appeared in a video announcing the union campaign. “It’s not

too hard to figure out what happened here,” said Wendell Young IV, President, UFCW Local 1776. “[But] I think they picked on the wrong group to do that. This is a really well-committed, well-organized group of workers.”

REI is not ‘woke’

Workers at the Soho REI store have filed for a union election. The 116 workers are organizing with the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU). Given REI’s corporate image of being pro-worker, voluntarily recognizing the union would seem likely. Not so of course — REI is just another example, like Starbucks, of capitalists adopting a progressive public persona, when in truth they are driven to profit at the expense of exploited workers.

In a union-busting attempt, REI created a ridiculous podcast where CEO Eric Artz answered questions from Wilma Wallace, the company’s chief diversity and social impact officer — yes, that is really her title. In the podcast, the two introduce themselves by stating their pronouns and an Indigenous land acknowledgement, in a

contemptible attempt to sound “woke.” The conversation goes on to tout the company’s social justice stance and how a union would hinder communication between worker and boss.

This paternalistic approach may not fool anyone. However, union organizers must inoculate workers who may be on the fence against these tactics that are meant to confuse and scare workers. It’s important to remember that in 2016, REI workers in Seattle attempted to unionize. Workers there described wages so low that some were forced into homelessness.

Railway labor law blocks workers’ right of way

Unless you have been living under a rock, you are aware of the supply-chain fiasco exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Railroad workers have been suffering under the “essential worker” yoke, because of the adoption of just-in-time practices and cuts to their workforce. The 17,000 conductors and engineers of BNSF, a Class 1 railway, have said “enough!” The last straw came when BNSF bosses unilaterally instituted a new time-off policy that would penalize

workers for taking a day off for any reason. (tinyurl.com/mu5td6n5)

Railway workers are already on a 24/7 on-call schedule. Their response — a strike on Feb. 1 — was stymied by a judge’s Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) ruling that would hold the workers and BNSF’s two largest unions, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) and the Transportation Division of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, and Transportation (SMART-TD) in contempt of the Railway Labor Act of 1926.

The unions appealed to the secretaries of Transportation and Labor to intervene, but the Biden administration has failed to act. Rail remains one of the most heavily unionized industries in the country, and railroad workers maintain the vital supply chain. Workers of the major rail companies are understandably angry over the impact of extreme cost-cutting measures, including reducing train crews to one operator, poor COVID-19 protections, as well as long hours without like time off. They are frustrated by the slow steps of negotiations under the RLA. Contract negotiations covering 115,000 rail workers in the U.S. at major Class 1 Railways are expected to heat up in 2022. □

WW COMMENTARY

We need prison abolition, not reform

By Mirinda Crissman

Nearly 2.3 million people, who are incarcerated every day in prisons, jails and detention centers in the United States, face possible death sentences while locked up during a deadly respiratory pandemic. Despite facing inhumane and unsanitary conditions, they have shown great solidarity with one another and resistance to their brutal oppression. Since the start of the pandemic, prisons and ICE detention centers across the U.S. have reported at least 577,073 total cumulative cases among incarcerated people and 3,023 total cumulative deaths, according to the UCLA Law COVID Behind Bars Data Project.



ILLUSTRATION: LAUREN WALKER FOR TRUTHOUT

This project is sure to note that true case and mortality counts are likely higher, and may be significantly higher, than reported. This undercount is due to the data available being self-reported by carceral agencies, which may be concealing reported cases due to poor testing practices by many agencies, but the undercount is also due to the fact that many carceral agencies have stopped reporting COVID-19 data. (uclacovidbehindbars.org)

Some of the most heartening data collected on the members of our class behind bars come from projects like Perilous Chronicle, which has kept a running list with news sources detailing the uprisings, hunger strikes, escapes and other various acts of resistance available to the public.

PC has been tracking these acts of resistance by incarcerated people in the U.S. and Canada since the end of 2010. Since

the pandemic has exacerbated already dire conditions inside, the number of recorded acts of resistance has increased. (perilouschronicle.com)

In 2021 there were at least 112 recorded acts of refusal to accept death-making conditions. This is a decrease from at least 180 acts of resistance in 2020 across prisons, jails and detention centers in the U.S., which was up markedly from previous years.

Pandemic exacerbates suffering

The COVID-19 crisis behind bars has elicited a number of lackluster and dangerous responses from the various carceral agencies at the federal, state and local levels.

Isolation, already extreme while incarcerated, is made worse when the response to the rapid spread of the virus is lockdown of imprisoned people to their cells — with minimal if any access to basic hygiene like daily showers let alone basic recreation levels needed to sustain bodily health.

Many facilities suspended in-person visits with loved ones, which for many are one of the few places for human connection with their larger communities they were kidnapped from.

Quality physical health care behind bars is already hard to come by, if imprisoned people can even gain access to it. Mental health care is largely nonexistent in a setting that has often driven people to take their own lives because conditions are so brutal.

Suicides in U.S. jails and prisons rose sharply from 2000 to 2019, according to a study released in October 2021 by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. (The San Diego Union-Tribune, Oct. 7, 2021)

Various federal, state and local systems of prisons, jails, juvenile and migrant detention centers are decentralized. One thing many of those systems have in common is the spread of the virus through transfers of incarcerated people, from processing facilities and other units, made during a highly contagious pandemic, without testing and/or quarantine protocols.

Build toward revolution

Even prior to the pandemic, prisons, jails and detention centers were a public health crisis. To imprison this many

people — most of whom are historically and disproportionately oppressed in this country on the basis of race, gender, disability and class among others — is to make them vulnerable to premature death, because of the organized violence and organized abandonment by the capitalist state.

The organized violence of cops, courts and cages — on stolen Indigenous lands — and systemic hospital closures, mass houselessness and environmental racism are a handful of examples that exemplify inequality. And such structural conditions are the cause of long-term inequality on this continent since the colonizers first arrived.

Colonizers have imposed class war from their ruling positions since landing from across the Atlantic Ocean, with various means of forced and otherwise exploited labor for the profit of a few, especially enslavement. Prisons, jails and detention centers are one of the most effective tools the ruling class has to impose social control and drive wages down for the entire working class.

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From an always-present and ever-growing movement of abolitionists in Texas,



rejecting the war on migrants through Governor Greg Abbott’s Operation LoneStar, to each and every one of the 38 countries where the repressive U.S. model of prisons and policing has been exported, we are fighting for abolition like our lives depend on it. Because they do.

The U.S. empire has a violent history of institutionalizing and codifying white supremacy. Prisons in form and function are monuments to white supremacy. They are concentration camps for the poor, oppressed nationalities and dissenters.

This is exemplified in this moment of global pandemic, where the rapidly accelerating and completely preventable deaths of people inside and outside prisons are an act of genocide. This does not come as a revelation but as a call to action.

We’re not building toward reform of any of these institutions. Prisons, jails and detention centers are themselves a form of enslavement and encomiendas (the Spanish Crown’s land grants to Spaniard settler-colonizers conferring rights to tribute and forced labor from Indigenous inhabitants). Reform gives us more of what we’ve already got — structures of ceaseless violence that continue to maintain wealth accumulation for human traffickers and perpetrators of genocide.

We are building toward abolition, toward revolution. We support diversity of tactics and the right of the oppressed to self-defense and self-determination by any means. We are fighting to redirect stolen resources toward human needs like health care, housing, safe water and food and to transform the root causes of suffering and violence.

What we build together, in the wake of tearing down the walls of capitalist cages, to protect vulnerable members of our class as well as ourselves, will make all the difference.

Mirinda Crissman is co-chair of the Prisoners Solidarity Committee of Workers World Party.



Philadelphia

Protest caravan targets jails

By Joe Piette

Incarcerated people in Philadelphia’s jails — 90% awaiting trial while not convicted of any crime — are suffering from horrible jail conditions. In response, family members and community activists drove at least 50 vehicles in a Feb. 12 caravan to highlight this city’s crisis.

Organized by the Abolitionist Law Center, the Human Rights Coalition and other community activist groups, the caravan circled three times around the Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility neighborhood in Northeast Philadelphia.

The vehicles, decorated with placards and yellow ribbons, horns blaring, then snaked through many communities until finally ending their mobile protest at City Hall, two hours later.

Prisoners are not being provided enough time out of their cells to shower, get medical care or make phone calls. Some people are not let out of their cells for days at a time, a violation of constitutional protection against cruel and unusual punishment. At least 18 prisoners died in Philadelphia jails in 2021.

In January, for the second time in seven months,

the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project succeeded, through the legal system, in forcing Philadelphia to pay \$125,000 to community bail advocates, because of the inhumane and dangerous conditions. The Philadelphia Bail Fund said it plans to use the money “to free as many people as possible” from what it called “deplorable, life-threatening conditions” behind bars. (Inquirer.com, Feb. 1)

Yet people continue to be subjected to violence and are consistently being denied medical care, adequate hygiene or nutrition, access to counsel and even court dates. Since nearly everyone in jails is being denied more than an hour or two of out-of-cell time, the entire system is the equivalent of solitary confinement.

The caravan comes on the heels of many protests over the last two years against the city’s failures to protect the rights of people inside the city jail and to stop Philadelphia using the torture of solitary confinement. No one should have to be incarcerated

under such barbaric conditions.

Jails continue to harm people and fail to make our communities safer, strong reasons why jails and prisons should be abolished. □



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Rodney Reed – overturn his conviction and death sentence!

By Gloria Rubac

Rodney Reed’s birthday was Dec. 22. This was the 24th birthday and holiday season he has spent away from his children, his five brothers, his mother and his large loving family — while entombed in solitary confinement on death row in Texas.

Reed was given an indefinite stay of execution on Nov. 15, 2019, by the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, the highest criminal court in Texas. The stay came only five days before he was to be legally lynched in Huntsville, Texas.



Rodney Reed in court, 2015 WW PHOTO: GLORIA RUBAC

His case was then sent back to the trial court to determine if Reed’s claims of innocence were valid.

Due to COVID-19, the evidentiary hearing was repeatedly postponed but was finally held in July 2021 in Bastrop County, where Reed had been convicted. Numerous new witnesses and overwhelming evidence of Reed’s innocence were presented during the two-week hearing, contradicting much of the State’s evidence in Reed’s original trial.

But the presiding judge, J.D. Langley, adopted nearly verbatim the State’s proposed order in Reed’s case, which included several obvious factual misrepresentations.

The Innocence Project in New York, representing Reed, filed a “Memorandum and Objections to Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law” with the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals on Feb. 1. “Because the judge abandoned his duty to be a neutral, independent fact finder, the CCA should reject the trial court’s copy-and-pasted order,” the Innocence Project declared in a strongly worded press release.

The statement continued: “The trial court judge overseeing Rodney Reed’s July 2021 evidentiary hearing abdicated his role as an unbiased, deliberative, inde-

pendent fact finder and rubber-stamped the State’s proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law. . . .

“The judge’s cut-and-pasted order shows that he failed in his duty to carefully and independently assess the credibility of 47 witnesses. Having adopted the State’s proposed order wholesale, the court found all 20+ witnesses on Mr. Reed’s behalf to be not credible and found all 20+ witnesses on the State’s behalf to be credible.”

Evidence of Reed’s innocence

Jane Pucher, senior staff attorney at the Innocence Project and one of Mr. Reed’s attorneys, said: “The abdication

of the judge’s duty cannot be tolerated, especially when an innocent man’s life is at stake. The CCA entrusted Judge Langley with making impartial findings and independent assessments of witnesses’ credibility, supported by the evidence. That did not happen.” (innocenceproject.org)

Rodney Reed, an African American man, was convicted by an all-white jury in 1998 of killing a white woman, Stacey Stites, with whom he was having an affair. She was found murdered; and for almost a year, the primary suspect was her fiancé, Jimmy Fennell, a cop with a history of violently abusing women. Fennell recently finished doing 10 years in prison for the kidnapping and rape of a woman he had stopped for a traffic violation.

The only evidence connecting Reed to Stites was from their being together during a date the night before she disappeared.

More supporting facts

The Innocence Project alerts people to these facts in the case of Rodney Reed:

1. The murder weapon, a belt, was never tested for DNA.
2. The State’s forensic experts have admitted to errors in their testimonies, which led to Reed’s conviction and death sentence.
3. Renowned forensic pathologists have concluded that Reed’s guilt is medically and scientifically impossible.
4. Fennell’s best friend at the time of the crime, Bastrop Sheriff’s Officer Curtis Davis, has now revealed that Fennell gave an inconsistent account of where he was on the night of the murder. When asked to explain this discrepancy, Fennell declined to testify, because his answers might further incriminate him.
5. An affidavit from an insurance salesperson stated that Fennell threatened to kill Stites while applying for life insurance.
6. A confession by Fennell has come to light. On Oct. 29, 2019, Arthur Snow, a former member of the



WW PHOTO: GLORIA RUBAC
Annual March to Abolish the Death Penalty in Austin, Texas in 2011.

Aryan Brotherhood and Fennell’s prison mate, disclosed that Fennell had confessed to murdering Stites stating, “I had to kill my n*****-loving fiancée,” in a conversation.

7. Reed’s crime was that he, a Black man, was romantically involved with a white woman in a small conservative Texas town, where tributes to the Confederacy still sit on the grounds of the courthouse where Reed was tried.

On Dec. 17, 2020, the Innocence Project filed a request for “Grant of Application for Writ of Habeas Corpus” in trial court and with the CCA, because the district attorney at Reed’s trial illegally hid statements taken from Stites’ co-workers. These affirmed that she and Reed knew each other and were involved. At trial, the DA repeatedly stated that Reed did not know Stites. The DA also suppressed statements from Stites’ and Fennell’s neighbors about loud domestic violence arguments between Stites and Fennell.

Under the 1963 U.S. Supreme Court case Brady v. Maryland, the State had an affirmative duty to turn over all evidence favorable to Reed’s defense. Instead, the State has hidden evidence pointing to Reed’s innocence for more than two decades.

This evidence could have exonerated him from the very beginning.

Reed’s family and supporters will hold a 2:00 p.m. CST press conference March 4 outside the Texas Criminal Court of Appeals to urge the court to deny Judge Langley’s biased ruling that simply copies the position of the State.

Letters of support for Reed can be sent to Rodney Reed #999271, Polunsky Unit DR, 3872 FM 350 South, Livingston, Texas 77351. □

‘Attica’ nominated for Oscar

By Marie Kelly

In early September 1971, over 1,000 prisoners, mainly Black and Latinx, rebelled against racism, brutal treatment and horrific conditions at Attica Correctional Facility in upstate New York. Their uprising lasted for five days, until the repressive forces of the state, initiated by Gov. Nelson Rockefeller, unleashed a reign of terror against the prisoners. By the time the onslaught was over, 43 people were dead.

Renowned director Stanley Nelson and co-director Traci Curry produced a documentary feature simply entitled “Attica,” about this historic uprising and the state’s repression. It was released one month after the rebellion’s 50th anniversary. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences nominated this film for an Oscar for Best Documentary Feature. The 94th ceremony will be held March 27 at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California.

Of the documentary, Che Nieves, a survivor of the Attica rebellion, told Workers

World: “I am so glad that the Attica film was officially acknowledged and nominated for an Oscar. Much work went into making this film what it became. The film is based on what they did to us prior to, during and after the massacre on Sept 13, 1971. The truth speaks for itself.

“On behalf of all my Attica brothers then and now, I want to say that we won a battle among many to come,” stressed Nieves. “The struggle continues. Attica is all of us. Let’s not ever forget that.”

WW Managing Editor Monica Moorehead’s review said, in part: “The Attica documentary, co-directed by Stanley Nelson and Traci Curry, was released by Showtime in early November. The movie brilliantly tells the story of the most profound U.S. prison rebellion of the 20th century, with historic footage and recent interviews with surviving former Attica prisoners, members of the observer community and family members of the guards.”

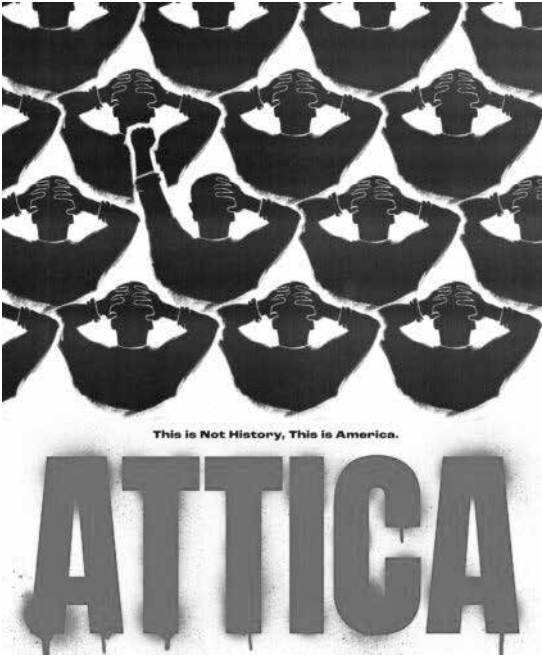
Moorehead stressed: “Some of the most inspiring segments of the documentary

showed historic footage of prisoners organizing themselves, cell block by cell block, during the four days before the state’s assault.” (tinyurl.com/2x6xefzn)

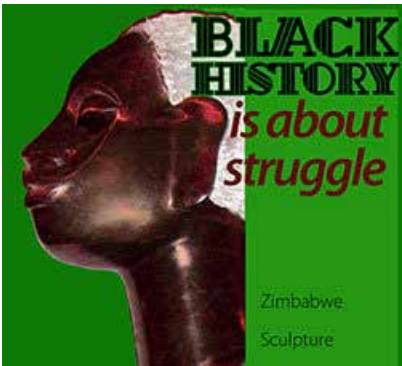
In a synopsis of the film’s reviews, the website Rotten Tomatoes gave it a score of 98% based on critics’ comments. A synopsis of them says: “Attica revisits the titular riot with intelligence, compassion and anger, presenting a version of events that honors history as much as it exemplifies the art of documentary filmmaking.” (tinyurl.com/22vtuvpc)

In his comment at IndieWire, Robert Daniels wrote, “Stanley and Curry’s ‘Attica’ is a harrowing piece of filmmaking and a fitting, powerful remembrance of those who fought for their humanity.” (tinyurl.com/3x7sz7aa)

Roxana Hadadi’s review in the Los Angeles Times notes a poignant distinction made in the film, in that it refers to Attica as an uprising and not a riot. She



says, “‘Attica’ is a jarring, engrossing and enraging reminder of how those in power will lie, humiliate, kill and cover up to retain it; and the documentary is one of the year’s best.” (tinyurl.com/mrx72xk8) □



Consciousness of race and class, knowledge of systemic oppression, police brutality and still-burning racial tensions in this country flooded the minds of the masses, planting many seeds that today have grown into many saplings, stronger now against the winds that threaten them. The dismantling of Confederate and colonial statues is an important harbinger of more resistance to come.



Labor unionists in Florida demand justice for Trayvon Martin in 2012.

An inspiration for Black Lives Matter Trayvon Martin will never be forgotten

By Danny O'Brien

Ten years ago today on Feb. 26, Trayvon Martin, an unarmed Black teenager, was murdered by an armed fascist in Sanford, Florida. The murderer, George Zimmerman, was found “not guilty” in a powerfully racist court decision, and all charges were let go.

The murder and acquittal were followed by enormous protests countrywide and were instrumental in spawning the Black Lives Matter movement from a hashtag used following news of the verdict.

On this anniversary, we honor and still mourn the loss of Trayvon Martin and the countless other people of color who have been stolen from us by the fascist and racist forces of the United States in both recent years and throughout its entire history.

Trayvon Martin was 17 at the time. He was returning home from a convenience store with candy and an iced tea at 7 p.m. in his father’s neighborhood, when an armed “neighborhood watch leader” Zimmerman began stalking him.

Zimmerman called the police to report “suspicious activity,” hung up and confronted Trayvon and shot him dead outside his father’s residence. Trayvon continues to be immensely missed by his family, his friends and his community.

He was known to be very devoted to his family, even having saved his father from a burning car when he was only nine years old. He had an affinity for sports, bikes and aviation and was described by his friends and loved ones as funny, kind-hearted and respectful.

Trayvon was too young to

be considered anything but innocent; yet, the noxious and parasitic capital media put out their time-honored narrative of racial indoctrination: the Black man who dies unexpectedly and without precedent is more at fault than the armed aggressor who killed him.

But Zimmerman is a violent and undefendable vigilante protected by the biased courts. Two months after his murder acquittal, he threatened the lives of his then-spouse and punched his father-in-law. No charges were pressed. Two years later he threw a wine bottle at his female partner and was arrested, but the charges were eventually dropped; and again, he faced no consequences.

What Zimmerman represents

Finally, in an explosion of evil, Zimmerman sold the gun that he used to kill Trayvon Martin for \$250,000, branding it as an “American Firearm Icon.” From a KNTV Las Vegas TV interview, when questioned about how the family of Trayvon Martin must view this deal, George let forth pure toxicity: “Sure, I’m sorry for any parent that has lost a child . . . That being said, I also believe it’s their duty to have an internal dialogue to see what they should have done better. . . . They didn’t raise their son right.” (May 20, 2016)

Zimmerman then had the unmitigated gall to sue Martin’s family for \$100 million in 2019 for “malicious prosecution and defamation”!

Zimmerman partnered with an Islamophobic friend to sell paintings of the Confederate Battle Flag, so they could raise money to start a “Muslim-free” gun store. They were interviewed as patriots.

George Zimmerman has upheld the racist values of the United States and so has been disgustingly rewarded with legal immunity from the government. This case

demonstrates the power of the police and court system that is wielded against the people.

There was no justification conceivable outside pure, unadulterated racism that allowed this villain to walk free. In letting him go, the ruling class has shown to the people clearly what their position is and with whom they side. Fascists since Zimmerman have been comforted in knowing the racist U.S. state will only dole out an investable share of power rather than any sort of punishment. The U.S. is comforted in knowing they have a willing agent to carry out their terror and inspire others to do the same.

Since Martin’s death, the people have been rattled by countless other stories of Black and Brown people being killed by fascists, most commonly as police officers. In overwhelming instances, no serious legal action, if any, is taken against the murderers. This is wrong. It is a pattern of evil.

We remember Trayvon Martin. We remember George Floyd. We remember Breonna Taylor. We remember Elijah McClain. We remember Ahmaud Arbery. We remember Tete Gulley. We remember Amir Locke. There are literally thousands more.

Repression breeds resistance

We will not bow to the staying power of George Zimmerman and give up hope. The struggle continues, and it has grown mightier. Where the United States and its entrenched capitalist system had individual George Zimmermans on its side, the anger, size and potential power of the people grew by the millions.

Consciousness of race and class, knowledge of systemic oppression, police brutality and still-burning racial tensions in this country flooded the minds of the masses, planting many seeds that today have grown into many saplings, stronger now against the winds that threaten them. The dismantling of Confederate and colonial statues is an important harbinger of more resistance to come.

We must get angry and stay angry! Capital will not look twice at who it kills in its wake. It will even cheer on these deaths and subsume them to its benefit as fascism grows.

On this anniversary of Trayvon’s death, we mourn him deeply as a life that should never have been taken. On this anniversary of Trayvon’s death, we are reminded how ingrained racism is into the United States and all of its institutions. On this anniversary of Trayvon’s death, we marvel at the momentum and size gained in 10 years of a people’s movement such as Black Lives Matter. We must work toward a future where all of this momentum can be used to take the yoke of power from the ruling class and restore it to the people.

The writer, an anti-racist activist in Portland, Oregon, was 16 years old when Trayvon Martin was murdered.

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 elsewhere 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 the weekly newspaper has been posted at workers.org. Not one online issue has been skipped throughout this nearly



WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD
Ferguson, Missouri, August 2014

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.

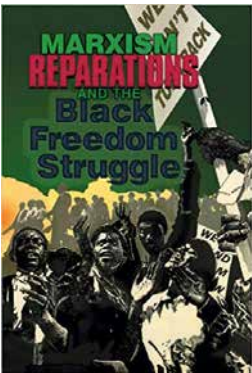
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We are grateful for your help in building Workers World!

Marxism, Reparations & the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper. Edited by Monica Moorehead.

• **Racism, National Oppression & Self-Determination** Larry Holmes
• **Black Labor from Chattel Slavery to Wage Slavery** Sam Marcy • **Black Youth: Repression & Resistance** LeiLani Dowell • **The Struggle for Socialism Is Key** Monica Moorehead • **Black & Brown Unity: A Pillar of Struggle for Human Rights & Global Justice!** Saladin Muhammad • **Harriet Tubman, Woman Warrior** Mumia Abu-Jamal ... and more! Free PDF available at workers.org/books



COVER GRAPHIC: SAHU BARRON

Black History and the ongoing struggle for liberation

By Olujimi Alade

February, as we all know, is Black History month: a time to celebrate Black Americans and their accomplishments. Corporations and the bourgeois establishments will no doubt pay lip service to the African American experience by hawking items with Black historical figures on them, likely as another way to profit off marginalized communities, which is par for the course for capitalists. While these superficial acts of solidarity the ruling class extends seem good on the surface, we must take heed and remember the struggle for Black Liberation in its entirety.

For as long as the United States of America has existed, it has inflicted the most horrific violence one can imagine on enslaved African people and their descendants. This violence by the white-supremacist ruling class kicked into high gear the moment Black Americans started posing a serious threat to the settler-colonial project.

In 1866, a pair of massacres took hold in the Black communities of Memphis, Tennessee, and New Orleans. In the former, white mobs pillaged Black neighborhoods and killed 46 Black people and savagely raped five Black women all while burning 90 homes, four churches and 12 schools. (tinyurl.com/2p8bwymt)

In New Orleans, even more carnage was inflicted, as 238 people were killed, and 46 people were wounded. Both massacres were fueled by the reactionary police forces, which perfectly highlights the dangers the so-called “men in uniform” have posed to Black people throughout the history of the United States.

The antagonistic violence against Black communities carried on into the 20th century. In 1921 a spurious rape accusation

against a teenager named Dick Rowland motivated a gang of white rioters to raid the Black neighborhood of Greenwood in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The damage the white mob left in its wake was staggering: 35 city blocks were burned, more than 800 people were injured, and as many as 300 people had died. (tinyurl.com/2s3udtck) The neighborhood of Greenwood would never be the same, as many of the survivors of that horrific day in June fled from Tulsa and away from the physical and emotional impact.

Modern-day racist terror

White-supremacist violence against Black communities continues to this very day, with several examples of terroristic acts highlighting the ongoing threat settler-colonial nationalism poses to Black Liberation. The mass shooting enacted by Dylann Roof on a Black church in Charleston, South Carolina, on June 17, 2015, that claimed the lives of nine Black Americans, was motivated by the same phantom menace that spurred the Tulsa Massacre of 1921 and the tragic murder of Emmett Till in 1955.

These two tragic events projected the racist myth that Black men posed a threat to the chastity of white women and by proxy the hegemonic masculinity of white-supremacist patriarchy. Before Roof pulled the trigger, he shouted: “You rape our women, and you’re taking over our country.” (tinyurl.com/2p8frana)

The subsequent treatment of Roof after he committed this demented act, being treated by the police to a Burger King meal like he hit a walk off home run in a little league game, stood in stark contrast to the senseless treatment the so-called “men in blue” have inflicted on innocent Black people, some of them children.

Anti-Black racist violence has also



Protest against living conditions on Howard University campus, Washington, D.C., Oct. 20, 2021

infiltrated Historically Black Colleges and Universities of higher learning. At the beginning of this year, HBCU institutions across the country have been on high alert over bomb threats. Universities such as Xavier University, Southern University and Prairie View A&M in Louisiana and even the prestigious institutions such as Spelman College and Howard University, have been on lockdown over this recent wave of bomb threats.

These threats against these institutions come on the heels of the Supreme Court reconsidering the role of affirmative action in college admission decisions. Using divide-and-conquer tactics, especially amongst Black and Asian people, white supremacists have been in the vanguard of robbing Black American youth of their opportunity to advance, not only themselves but their communities as well.

Not merely being satisfied with the courts being in their favor, they’ve resorted to outright terrorism on HBCUs

and not the hallowed halls of the Ivy League, which were built in part on the blood and sweat of enslaved African people. Not to mention the fact that all this is taking place in the middle of the rise of the omicron variant, so not only do these students have to contend with the omnipresent threat of getting infected with COVID-19 but also the possibility that their lives could be taken from them in an instant.

Despite what bourgeois institutions might tell you, Black history is not confined to a 28-day period in the middle of winter, it encompasses the entirety of U.S. history. While you might hear the nonthreatening parts of Black history this month, it is important to recognize the violence Black people had to endure and to not be oblivious to it. It is time to consider the Black struggle in its entirety, and it’s time to fight back against white-supremacist violence to clear the way for Black Liberation. □

Black heroes of Flint Sit-down Strike

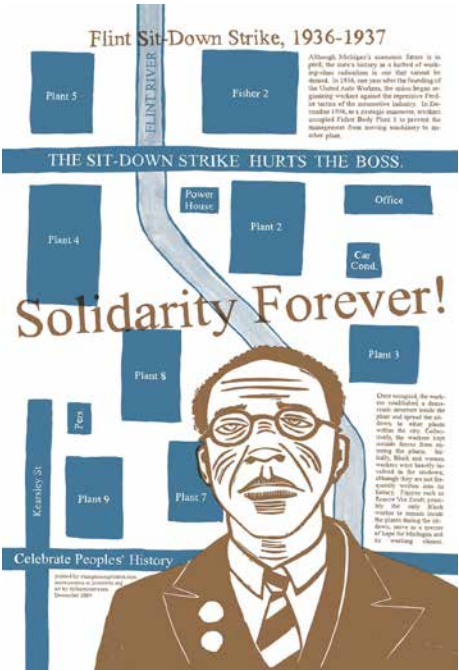
By Martha Grevatt

February 11 marked the 85th anniversary of the victory in the Flint Sit-Down Strike. While this is one of the most famous battles in U.S. labor history, too little is said about the Black workers who helped bring about this victory.

Trying to organize a union at General Motors was dangerous. GM was the force behind a union-busting KKK offshoot in Michigan known as the Black Legion—black being the color of their hooded robes. Black United Auto Workers supporters had to meet in secret by candlelight, in church basements and private homes.

According to J.D. Dotson, a Black Flint GM worker and member of the Communist Party USA, “In 1929 we started to organize in secret—five Blacks and two whites. We would go from place to place in open cars in zero weather to get a union started. We hid in basements. We couldn’t let nobody know what was going on, or they would go back in the shop and tell the boss.”

Dotson was interviewed in 1982 by Frank Hammer, former president of UAW Local 909 at the now-closed GM Powertrain plant. Dotson described the particularly oppressive conditions faced by Black GM workers: “You didn’t know from day to day whether you were going to work. When we did, we worked from six in



This graphic pays tribute to Black sit-down striker Roscoe Van Zandt.

the morning to six or seven in the evening. “You didn’t get water. They had one man who would come around with one of them old pint milk bottles, rinse it out and give you water. We could drink water with one hand, watch for the boss and keep working with the other hand. You had to eat right on the job with dust, oil and everything in the foundry. You didn’t wash your hands,

because if you did, you didn’t have a job. This was not one day—this was every day.”

During the occupation of GM in Flint, which began Dec. 30, 1936, and lasted 44 days, Dotson carried messages from inside and outside the occupied plants and between picket lines. (The full interview, originally printed in the rank-and-file caucus newsletter Straight Talk, can be read at facebook.com/straighttalkuaw909.)

GM’s Jim Crow

At that time GM was a Jim Crow operation, only hiring African Americans for janitorial jobs or the dirtiest, hardest foundry jobs. During the sit-down strike, Roscoe Van Zandt stayed inside his plant from beginning to end. At first he kept to himself, but Socialist Party members like Kermit Johnson and Howard Foster educated white workers on the need for solidarity. There was one bed in the plant and the sit-down strikers gave it to Van Zandt—he was older than most of them.

When the strikers emerged from Chevrolet Plant Number Four victorious, they were led by Van Zandt.

Henry Clark was a lead union organizer in the Buick foundry plant, idled during the sit-down. Some of the clandestine meetings had been held in his and other African American workers’ homes; others were at Canaan Baptist Church. Clark and other

Black workers “stayed in the background, but we supported [the sit-downers] 100% ...we were right behind them and helped in any way we could.” (University of Michigan, Flint Campus, Labor History Archives, Oral History, Henry Clark)

Black workers are critical to class struggle

Clark and another Black Buick worker, Ellsworth Steen, were elected shop stewards after the strike victory. Flint is one example of many that illustrate the pivotal role played by the most oppressed workers throughout labor history.

Black workers today still face especially dangerous working conditions, evidenced by the attempted murder of a Black FedEx delivery driver, 24-year-old D’Monterrio Gibson, while on his job in Mississippi. FedEx is an entirely nonunion company.

The pay and benefit differential between unionized and nonunionized workers is greatest for Black and other workers of color. “Unionized Black workers are paid 13.7% more than their nonunionized peers,” according to a 2020 Economic Policy Institute report. But like the Black heroes of 1937, they have to contend with vicious union busting, like that directed at the Black-majority Amazon workforce in Bessemer, Alabama, or the fired Starbucks workers in Memphis, Tennessee.

The most important lesson from labor history is that solidarity wins. □

Haitian workers demand: ‘Triple the minimum wage’

By G. Dunkel

Haiti faces a crisis of government legitimacy. The only elected officials in the country at any level whose terms have not expired are 10 senators. The date for the expiration of the term of Haiti’s President Jovenel Moïse would have been Feb. 7, 2022 — but he died by assassination July 7, 2021.

The significance of that date was emphasized by stories on Haiti run Feb. 7 by the Washington Post, New York Times, BBC, as well as the Miami Herald — the U.S. bourgeois newspaper with the most extensive coverage of Haiti.

But Haitian workers have another problem they want to address. The minimum wage for workers in the export sector of the country’s economy has not been raised for three years. The commission that sets the increase, which is based on various factors, is supposed to meet three months before each fiscal year begins, but it has not convened for over three years.

The current minimum wage in Haiti is 500 gourdes for an 8-hour day, which converts to \$4.83 a day, or 60 cents an hour in U.S. currency.

Workers swing into action

Thousands of workers walked out in demonstrations Feb. 9 and 10 to demand 1,500 gourdes for an eight-hour day — \$14.49 in U.S. dollars. The two-day job action shut down the major manufacturing park of the export sector, Sanopi, in



Haitian textile workers protest on Feb. 9.

the capital city of Port-au-Prince.

A union official, Pierre Télémaque, told Haiti-Liberté that inflation had reached 26%. High inflation and a low minimum wage provide a good explanation of why 40% of Haitians don’t get enough to eat and are food insecure. (tinyurl.com/bdht7zrh)

The head of the commission which sets the minimum wage released a statement Feb. 8 saying the commission would send a request to de facto Prime Minister Ariel Henry to approve a new minimum wage. Workers have warned that if the increase

is not enough, they will continue their walkouts.

Political maneuvering

Feb. 7 was not only the anniversary of the assassination of Jovenel Moïse. On the same date in 1986, dictator Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier fled for his life in a U.S.-supplied plane out of the country. Many schools, banks and businesses closed this Feb. 7 out of fear of a social eruption.

According to CNN, the investigative judge on the assassination, Garry Orélien,

who has since resigned, said he believes that de facto Prime Minister Henry is complicit in the assassination of President Moïse, who appointed him as prime minister only two days before Moïse was killed.

“Do you think I can touch Ariel (Henry) now?” Orélien said on a recording that CNN obtained. “How can I do that? I won’t be able to give (any order to indict him); it won’t see the light of day.” (edition.cnn.com, Feb. 12)

Disentangling the role the United States has played in Haiti’s governmental crisis, in the midst of the earthquakes and hurricanes that have hit the country, is hard to do. But Haitian activists feel the U.S. has had a decisive role.

“What’s going on in Haiti is partly a result of bad U.S. foreign policies, of decades of supporting incompetent and corrupt leaders. The U.S. is still contributing to creating worse conditions right now,” said Marleine Bastien, the leader and founder of Miami’s Family Action Network Movement (Fanm), to Time Magazine. (Feb. 1)

The de facto prime minister and his opponents, under tremendous pressure from the U.S. and imperialist partners like France, are maneuvering to come up with a deal to govern the country until elections can be held.

It is inconceivable that any such deal will do anything to reduce the suffering and hardship of Haitian workers and peasants. □

What \$203 billion can buy

By Betsey Piette

Oh, the trials and tribulations of centibillionaire Jeff Bezos — what to do with \$203 billion? Go into space? Done that. Go into space a second time? Lost the thrill when Elon Musk, who took over your title as ‘the world’s richest man,’ launched his own ship.

How does a billionaire make sure they will be remembered by future generations — and not just vilified for all one’s capitalist greed? Why not buy naming rights to a building, or two?

Bezos recently donated \$200 million to the Smithsonian, the largest single gift to

the institution since it opened. The “gift” grants Bezos the right to have his name placed on different locations in the Air and Space Museum for at least 50 years. Fortunately for Bezos the Smithsonian does not insert a “morals clause” in gift agreements, so they are stuck with his name on their walls, regardless of any abhorrent behavior on his part.

In late 2021 Bezos donated \$2.7 million to the District of Columbia Public Library Foundation — again the largest contribution ever received by the foundation. In early February the D.C. Public Library’s Board of Trustees voted to name the auditorium at the Martin Luther King

Jr. library after Bezos. Community activists from For Us Not Amazon (FUNA), a Northern Virginia coalition including migrants and people of color, and Athena, a coalition of over 50 grassroots organizations quickly denounced the plan, gathering over 17,000 letters of opposition.

Their joint statement to the MLK Board of Trustees raised that Amazon represents everything Dr. King fought against. “Dr. King would have stood by Amazon workers, while Bezos has turned worker pain and wage theft into luxury trips to space, a \$500 million mega yacht and a string of mansions.” The board reversed their decision.

Shortly before stepping down as Amazon CEO, and after the company spent millions to beat back the union drive in Bessemer, Alabama, Bezos wrote a final letter to shareholders stating his commitment to make Amazon the “Earth’s Best Employer and Safest Place to Work.”

But fancy phrases and philanthropy won’t bring Bezos redemption nor make Amazon workplaces safer. Fundamental improvements in wages and working conditions will only happen when Amazon workers organize and fight to take back the billions Bezos stole from exploiting their labor. □

Rehire the Memphis Starbucks 7

Continued from page 1

kicked off in August? The fact is that while Starbucks nitpicks over policies to stack petty violations against union organizers in Memphis, the company is waging a relentless campaign against its workers across the country with no regard for the laws it may violate in the process.

Protesters gathered outside the Memphis Starbucks store where the firings took place to join a picket line Feb. 9, forcing the store to close around 12 noon and remain closed for the rest of the day as well as the next day.



Philadelphia, Feb. 15, 7 am, at Starbucks store at 9th and South streets.

Whether or not Starbucks gets away with this brazen mass firing will depend on how the workers and public respond. So far, the righteous outrage is growing as is the rapidly expanding network of stores that have filed for a union election.

Today, Feb. 10, in New York City three stores, located in Astor Place, Chelsea and Brooklyn, have filed for a union election, along with a fourth store on Long Island. The Chelsea location is a Roastery Manufacturing Store, a more significant location compared to some of the regular Starbucks cafes.

This brings the total number of Starbucks shops filing for a union to a whopping 72, as of this writing. Both the union busting by Starbucks and the wave of workers joining the fight show no signs of slowing



Boston, Feb. 15.

WW PHOTO: MAUREEN SKEHAN

down, but the real power will always be in the hands of the workers.

The ruthlessness employed in Memphis against this committee led by Black and Brown workers is characteristic of the way that capitalism as an economic system has always imposed the most suffering on Black and Brown people. Despite Starbucks’ “progressive” appearance and dishonest embrace of the slogan “Black Lives Matter,” the veneer of social justice is quickly abandoned when it comes time for the company

to stomp out worker power.

Workers World Party demands that Starbucks rehire the Memphis 7 and immediately cease its union-busting operations and recognize the union at all stores that have filed!

The author is a Workers World contributing writer and a union committee organizer with Starbucks Workers United in Buffalo.

India

Students resist rise in Islamophobia, communal violence

By Tania Siddiqi

In December 2021 a government college in India’s Karnataka province denied entry to six students attempting to enter class, because they were wearing hijab, a headscarf worn by many Muslim girls and women. School administrators alleged that wearing a headscarf was against the school’s dress code and stated that the students could not attend class until they removed their hijab.

Instead of complying with the school’s discriminatory policy, the students protested outside their classroom, asserting that they had a constitutional right to wear a hijab in school, and they would not concede to the administration’s coercive tactics.

In response to the students holding their ground, several colleges in Karnataka implemented the same discriminatory policy, and reactionary anti-hijab protests erupted on college campuses. At Government Pre-University College, RN Shetty College, Mahatma Gandhi Memorial College and other educational institutions in Karnataka, many students started wearing saffron shawls, a garment which is regularly worn by members of Hindu right-wing groups.

At Government First Grade College, Shivamogga (a city in Karnataka), college students wearing saffron shawls hoisted a saffron flag on a flagpole that is typically reserved for India’s national flag. Minister of Rural Development of Karnataka K.S. Eshwarappa commented on the incident and stated that “Hindu Dharma will prevail in the country sometime in the future. Then we’ll hoist the saffron flag at Red Fort [the site where the prime minister hoists the national flag on India’s Independence Day].” (Feb. 9, ANI Twitter)

To counter the rise of Islamophobia on college campuses, students across the country have organized actions in solidarity with those resisting the hijab ban. At IDSG College Chikkamagalur, Karnataka, Dalit students wore blue shawls and voiced their support for their classmates who wear hijab. (timesnownews.com, Feb. 8)

On Feb. 11, Students Federation of India, a student organization politically aligned to the ideology of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), issued a national call to action against the hijab ban; members organized protests in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Delhi. At the demonstration in Delhi, police attacked and arrested SFI members. At Delhi University, members of Students Islamic Organization of India, Bhagat Singh Chaatra Ekta Manch and other student groups were arrested for protesting against the hijab ban.

Due to widespread unrest, the Government of Karnataka closed schools Feb. 9. However, they plan to resume classes Feb. 14 for students in 10th grade or lower. On Feb. 10, the Karnataka High Court began assessing the issue of whether students can wear hijab in class.

Regardless of what the court decides, workers must understand that the recent discriminatory policies targeting Muslim students fall within the fascist Bharatiya Janata Party’s (BJP) larger campaign to eliminate Muslims and other minorities.

India’s right-wing groups call for Muslim genocide

BJP is India’s ruling party and one of the key organizations in the current Hindutva (Hindu nationalism) movement. Recently, BJP and other right-wing groups have called for an increase in youth’s participation in systematically murdering Muslim people.

A report issued in January stated: “Hindu extremists have organized 12 events over 24 months in four states [provinces], calling for the genocide of Muslims.” (Jan. 10, Article 14) In August 2021, Hindutva leader Pinky Chaudhary asserted, “No matter who comes to power, we will not allow Muslims to rise up. We are in the process of awakening our youth. We will get mullahs [Muslim religious leaders] out of graves and finish them from their roots.”

During an event held Dec. 17-19, 2021, participants called for genocide against Muslims and attacks on



PHOTO: STUDENTS’ FEDERATION OF INDIA

Students protest against hijab ban.

Christians. Attendees demanded arming Hindus and organizing an insurrection against the government if the government attempted to prevent them from engaging in ethnic cleansing. One speaker stated that “Muslims won’t be killed by swords now. You have to defeat them in technique. ... More and more kids and better weapons, only these can save you.”

As a Muslim whose family migrated during the Partition of India in 1947, growing communalism and tension in India mirrors some of my relatives’ experiences. However, coordinated action among workers across India is brimming with potential and possibility. Polarization and sectarian violence only benefits the ruling class—build a workers world! □

Workers World message to ‘The International’ Marxist magazine

Workers World newspaper congratulates Progressive Thinkers for its first year of consistent monthly publication of “The International” (Internationalmagz.com) as an openly “not unbiased” communist magazine and blog. We salute the initiators of this endeavour, Debojit Banerjee, Shuvam Banerjee, Sourav Chakraborty and Gourab Ghosh, for creating a venue for members of the global communist movement to share reports on class struggles in numerous countries — and to advance the ideological



battle for Marxist dialectics.

This is a tremendous accomplishment for these four young comrades, members of the All-India Students Federation, along with all the magazine’s writers.

Workers World newspaper is grateful that one of our managing editors has been able to be a contributing

writer to this important publication.

Together, by building a global classwide movement, we can help working-class and oppressed people achieve our historic task — the overturn of capitalist wage slavery and establishment of socialism worldwide — and usher in the next phase of human history.

In solidarity,
Martha Grevatt
Managing editor, Workers World;
contributing writer, The International

China holds first-ever carbon-neutral Olympics

By Lyn Neeley

This year’s Beijing Winter Olympics is the first in history to be carbon-neutral. This includes renewable energy in all game venues, introducing new low-carbon technologies and using transportation fueled by hydrogen, natural gas and electricity.

China completed the Zhangbei power grid station in time for the Olympics. That’s the world’s first renewable energy-based, flexible direct current (DC) power transmission system. This means, according to “China Daily,” the system has “strong controllability, fast power adjustment speed and a flexible operation mode, compared with AC and conventional DC. It is considered the “golden key” to solve the problem of large-scale consumption of new energy.” (tinyurl.com/jb24pk3t)

To save energy, China has refitted five venues from their 2018 Olympics, like the Water Cube, converted into



Solar panels on a Chinese mountainside.

a curling rink called the Ice Cube. The construction of 13 new buildings got the highest score under a Chinese green building certification system.

More Olympic green initiatives

China built a wind and solar infrastructure specifically for the Olympics. The country was already investing heavily in renewable energy toward the goal of carbon neutrality by 2060. By the end of 2020, more than 40% of China’s power generation came from renewable resources, supporting nearly one-third of the country’s electricity consumption. According to China’s National Energy Administration, the country generated more solar power than any other country globally and had triple the amount of wind power capacity as it had in 2019. (tinyurl.com/3kd8985f)

Development of two advanced transport systems for the Olympics using 100% fuel efficient vehicles — the Beijing-Zhangjiakou high-speed railway and the Beijing-Chongli highway — cut travel time between three sports competition zones, 112 miles apart, to only 47 minutes. (tinyurl.com/2p8j2smn)

To offset this construction and the air travel costs to the environment, China is planting 60 million trees: white birch, oak and ginkgo, which will reduce CO2 output by about 1.1 million tons. From 1990 to 2015, China deployed 60,000 People’s Liberation Army soldiers to reforest large areas of China the size of Ireland. Called the “Great Green Wall” program, it reduced soil erosion, pollution and desertification and absorbed carbon dioxide. NASA satellite data shows that China and India are leading the world in an increase in greening

on land. (tinyurl.com/568pbpw4)

These Olympics are the first to use natural CO2 refrigerant (also known as dry ice) to cool skating venues, instead of synthetic hydrofluorocarbon, estimating saving the release of up to 26,000 tons of carbon. (tinyurl.com/42x8ymrw)

China has been heavily criticized for creating artificial snow for sports events, a feature of most winter Olympics. However, Beijing has developed water-conserving technologies to optimize water usage. According to “Nature” magazine, the amount of water used in the Olympics is less than 10% of the water resources for the Yanqing and Zhangjiakou regions, which have more water compared with neighboring areas. China is limiting the impact of snowmaking by collecting the snow and reusing it after it melts. (tinyurl.com/3xrhpc32)

In the middle of the world pandemic, China is limiting the spread of COVID-19 at the Olympics by limiting the number of spectators. This has had the effect of saving more than 500,000 tons of CO2, which would otherwise have been generated by the travel and accommodation sectors. Western media has been highly critical of China’s zero-tolerance approach — despite the fact that China has only had 4,636 COVID-19 related deaths, while the U.S. has had over 948,000 recorded deaths as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. (worldometer.org)

Marie Sallois-Dembreville, director of Corporate and Sustainable Development at the International Olympic Committee, said that Beijing’s thorough approach of accounting for sustainability at all stages of the process is “something we will encourage for future games.” (tinyurl.com/3xrhpc32) □

Unite our class to fight COVID-19

Private industries in the imperialist countries of North America and Europe have superexploited the COVID-19 crisis. And the governments have managed it so poorly that the disaster created an opening for ultraright groups to mobilize. The so-called truckers’ revolt in Canada illustrates the danger.

In the U.S., the pro-Trump gang leaped into the opening, condemning any governments that restrict unvaccinated or unmasked people. Mishandling by capitalist regimes has divided the masses.

The federal government pushed to get vaccines made quickly, hoping this would allow rapid resumption of economic activity — that is, the continued accumulation of capitalist profits. Then it sabotaged the distribution of the vaccines.

Compounding this was the zigzag policies of the Trump and Biden administrations. The U.S. first restricted the availability of the vaccine. Later, when vaccines became available, some governments or bosses fired or threatened to fire workers who resisted vaccination. Similar zigzags occurred regarding personal protective equipment and masks. And tests were difficult to obtain and/or expensive, even in late 2021.

To unite the working class and all specially oppressed sectors of the population, revolutionary, anti-capitalist movements must raise demands that satisfy the needs of all sectors of the masses. The objective must be to build solidarity for a united struggle. Consider the following:

All workers and poor people need universal health care free of charge. Medical workers need adequate pay, ample staffing and guaranteed time off, even during the



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

pandemic. This demand should include more jobs for nurses and other caregivers. Nurses’ unions have raised this issue; we should support their strikes and struggles.

Yet all capitalist governments, even those where universal health care was available, had been reducing government health care budgets over the past three decades. When COVID-19 exploded, health care systems and workers were stretched to the edge of collapse.

Pharmaceutical monopolies profited from government funding to develop vaccines, which they then patented. They used their patent monopolies to squeeze every last dollar and euro out of the world’s population in the richer countries, and they abandoned the poorer countries.

People correctly suspect foul play by pharmaceutical

firms. Big Pharma operates to make profits, not to save lives. Saving lives is at best a fortunate side effect of their profit-making. This is the nature of the capitalist profit motive.

We must demand they release their patents, allowing others around the world to manufacture vaccines and assure worldwide distribution. This is the only way vaccines can be used to limit or eliminate a disease. Otherwise new variants continue to evolve.

Research and testing of the vaccines’ safety and effectiveness must be completely transparent — so that the population understands how vaccines reduce transmission and/or symptoms. Every business decision, pricing, distribution, etc., must be revealed to the public.

We must demand that the population be educated regarding how vaccines work. Access must be 100% free and simple, and everyone should be encouraged to participate based on solidarity. The biggest obstacle to solidarity is that capitalism is based on fierce competition.

In socialist Cuba the population cooperated with being vaccinated — once vaccines and syringes were available — out of solidarity with their fellow residents and confidence in their health care system. There was no need to use special coercive measures to make that happen.

COVID-19 has revealed a disastrous failure of the capitalist system. We must build solidarity among the working class to fight the pandemic by making demands that satisfy working-class needs — demands we can unite around and fight on.

It is a question of life and death. □

Biden, Johnson & Ukraine

Who fabricates a war, and how?

By Sergio Rodriguez Gelfenstein

The author is a Venezuelan international relations expert, who was previously Director of the International Relations of the Presidency of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, his country’s ambassador to Nicaragua and an advisor for international politics for TELESUR. Translation: United World International, edited by John Catalinotto.

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Feb. 2 — It is almost natural that countries (especially the powers that have more capability of doing so) would like to resolve their internal problems by unleashing conflicts abroad. For that, they invent attacks on their national security, exploit false national interests and make absolutist calls for national unity in defense of the threatened sovereignty and integrity.

Who can doubt that the artificial conflict between Russia and Ukraine corresponds to this logic? Especially given the continual and accelerated failure of the administrations of Joe Biden in the United States and Boris Johnson in Great Britain. Biden’s popularity is one of the lowest of any U.S. president at the end of his first year in office.

According to an article published by the Los Angeles Times on Jan. 20, which cites an Associated Press — NORC Center for Public Affairs Research survey, only 43% approve of the U.S. president’s management. In addition, just 28% want Biden to run for reelection in 2024, including only 48% of Democrats. Regarding the economy the situation for Biden is worse, as scarcely 37% evaluate the president’s management positively. It should be noted that the 2021 inflation rate was the highest in 40 years.

Nor is the popular perception of his handling of the pandemic any better, rejected by 55% of Americans. In the same way, it is considered that the government has been totally inefficient in resolving the migration problem and has not even been able to carry out its spending plan in terms of infrastructure and improvement of the economy.

Biden, Johnson failing in polls

In general, people perceived Biden as being unable to build consensus with the Republicans — which was a great promise of his campaign — and he has not succeeded in convincing some of the more conservative legislators of his own Democratic Party to support his program. In this context, citizens wonder what is the point of reelecting Biden,

whom they see as extending the crisis.

Boris Johnson’s situation is similar. Johnson is being questioned and debated in the midst of a deep political crisis, originating from the leak of an email in which the prime minister’s principal secretary, Martin Reynolds, invited government personnel to a party during full COVID-19 lockdown.

Thus the leader of the Labor Party, Keir Starmer, has called Johnson to resign, while polls show that 90% of Britons think he should step aside.

In this context, whoever has doubts about the true objectives involved in the development of the “Ukrainian crisis” should listen to Johnson, who, after a visit to that country, first apologized for having attended the aforementioned party and then appealed to jingoist sentiment, calling to “concentrate all efforts to confront Russia.” All this after the Scottish deputy Ian Blackford called on him to agree to be “investigated by the police for violating their own laws.” For her part, the deputy Angela Rayner, the Labor Party’s number two, said Johnson “had to go” immediately.

When another deputy accused him of “ruining the country’s reputation,” Johnson responded by saying that: “Our country’s reputation in the world is based [...] on the fact that we are able to unite allies to oppose Vladimir Putin. This is what the world is focused on right now and what I’m focused on right now,” making it clear what the real goal of his “Ukrainian affair” is.

Likewise, by clearly establishing who would die in a possible war between Russia and Ukraine, Johnson stated that: “The best we can do is inform the Russian citizens that the Ukrainians will fight to the last drop of blood.” Simply put, Johnson decided that Ukrainians must die to save him and Biden from a political debacle.

Ukrainian president contradicts Biden

Some unwary reader might think that what I am writing about the situation on the Russian-Ukrainian border is speculation. That reader should read what the Ukrainian authorities say, those in charge of reporting what is actually happening there. Last Friday, Jan. 28, the president of Ukraine, Vladimir Zelensky, warned that the impression is being created in the West that war with Russia is imminent. Ruling out that this will happen, Zelensky lamented at the same time because the terror created around the alleged war is hurting the national economy.

The Ukrainian president asked, “Are there tanks in the streets?” He himself replied that this was not the case,



but that such was the impression that had been created in countries such as the “United Kingdom, Germany, France and Lithuania,” where the media transmitted complete false news about the mobilization of the armed forces and the militarization of the cities.

Nevertheless, a situation of horror is being generated that is causing serious economic damage to the country from what he called a manifestation of frenzy, forcing him to talk with leaders of other countries to clarify that Ukraine is in need of stabilizing its economy, while what they’re doing is spreading news that indicates the opposite.

In a clear but veiled allusion to Biden and Johnson, Zelensky pointed out that: “signs are coming from respected leaders of states who openly, not even in diplomatic language, say that ‘there will be a war tomorrow.’” He pointed out that this produces panic in society, in the markets and the financial sector, stating that a very large sum of money had fled the country in recent days, deploring that “the increase in tension conceived by the media has ‘a high cost’ for the country.”

After the specter of an urgent war was raised in November, which — according to the U.S. network CNN — was even announced by Biden to Zelensky (although denied by Washington and Kiev), more recently, on Jan. 26, the U.S. Undersecretary of State herself, Wendy Sherman put a date on the Russian invasion, when she pointed out: “Everything indicates that [Russian President Putin] ‘will use military force at some point, perhaps between now and mid-February.’”

This statement unleashed the frenzy within the frenzy, as countries like the United States, Canada, Australia and Japan began to withdraw their diplomats from Kiev.

Zelensky commented that such a decision was a mistake, but with the rhetoric typical of subordinate

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Canada

A right-wing, air-horn insurrection

By Paddy Colligan and G. Dunkel

Ottawa: Even though Ottawa’s premier, Doug Ford, declared a state of emergency on Friday, Feb. 11, threatening harsh penalties, and local police were reinforced with provincial and federal officers, the cops have done little to unblock Canada’s capital. The New York Times reports that police and military veterans have been organizing logistics for the rightist protesters. Demonstrators opposed to the blockade prevented protest trucks from occupying a new neighborhood of Ottawa Feb. 13.

Windsor, Ontario/ Detroit, Michigan: The Ambassador Bridge, the major economic issue in this protest, connecting two auto-production cities, was cleared by Sunday night, Feb. 13.

Paris: Parallel demonstrations, but with few trucks, are taking place simultaneously with a hotly contested presidential campaign. Cops used tear gas and baton charges — routine police tactics in France — to keep the Champs-Élysées traffic flowing.

The trucker protest in Ottawa involving COVID-19 mandates, which began Jan. 28 in response to the Canadian government requiring all truckers crossing the U.S.-Canadian border to be fully vaccinated, has clearly morphed into an attempt to push out the current Canadian government.

Beyond the occupation of Ottawa, whose narrow streets are easy to clog, the occupation of the Ambassador Bridge linking Windsor, Ontario, to Detroit, Michigan, is a major blow to the Canadian economy and is restricting production in automobile companies in both countries. Each day \$300 million worth of goods move over this bridge, a quarter of all U.S.-Canada trade.

The Joe Biden administration urged Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to take firm measures to end this blockade, which is severely affecting the economy — particularly the auto industry, Ford, Stellantis and Toyota — located within the United States. A number of small- and medium-sized companies in Canada have already had to close for a few days or limit operations.

The truckers have completely blocked downtown Ottawa for over a week. Until a local resident got a temporary restraining order, they used their air horns, making a howling, sleep-depriving din for 18 hours or more a day; ran their diesel engines; stole food from homeless shelters; set off fireworks with abandon and attacked passersby. Most of the restaurants and small stores in downtown Ottawa have had to close for lack of customers.

The soup kitchen Shepherds of Good Hope is a few blocks from Parliament Hill and generally serves 500 to 700 meals a day. Some mandate protesters entered



Counter-protest against right-wing demonstrations, Ottawa, Ontario.

Jan. 29 and demanded food from the staff, who gave them some. As the news of free food spread, protesters kept on coming in, and arguments grew heated. After this harassment made the news, the kitchen got over 10,000 donations. (cnn.com, Jan 31)

Most protesters either own their trucks or are owners of small companies, who have also encouraged their employees to join this movement. Most workers in the trucking industry are employed by large trucking companies and do not support this anti-mandate movement.

Since Canadians trust their universal health system, the vaccination rate is high. Nationwide 84% of Canadians are vaccinated; in a few provinces, the rate is 79%; in Newfoundland it’s 95%.

Both the Teamsters, who represent about 15,000 Canadian truckers, and the Canadian Truckers Association have pointed out that well over 90% of Canadian truckers are fully vaccinated. The Teamsters have said that the demands of the Freedom Convoy don’t address the real issues truckers have: wage theft, salaries, the cost of insurance and long driving hours that pose health and safety risks.

The Teamsters issued a statement Feb. 10 about the blockade on the Ambassador Bridge. They denounced “the ongoing Freedom Convoy protest at the Canadian border that continues to hurt workers and negatively impact [the] economy. The livelihood of working Americans and Canadians in the automotive, agricultural and manufacturing sectors is threatened by this blockade.” (teamster.org, Feb. 10)

Connection to U.S. reactionaries

The so-called “Freedom Convoy” crowd sourced its attacks through a GoFundMe page, raising 10 million Canadian dollars in under two weeks. The funds kept coming until GoFundMe shut down the effort, froze the funds and then announced it would be automatically returning all non-dispersed funds, about 9 million Canadian dollars,

because of the violent and harassing behavior of the Convoy participants.

Avi Lewis, a professor at the University of British Columbia, told Chris Hayes of MSNBC Feb. 8, “There is just no way there’s that much money in Canada. So, this is an expression of far-right populism and far-right organizing that goes far beyond our borders.”

Far-right politicians in the U.S. have been eager to show their deep support for the Freedom Convoy. To Senator Ted Cruz, they are “heroes.” He released a statement that said: “They are patriots, and they are marching for your freedom and for my freedom. They are — those truck drivers, God bless them. They’re defending Canada, but they’re defending America as well.”

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton and other state attorneys general are seizing the opportunity to charge GoFundMe with deceptive trade practices for taking down the page.

Florida Governor Rick DeSantis is happy to make a buck selling “Truck Yeah” T-shirts from his campaign website. The far-right agitator Donald Trump has invited the truckers to speak out on his new social media platform, while he characterizes the centrist Trudeau as being “far-left.”

Evaluating the truckers’ protest

There are similar, copycat right-wing protests in Australia, New Zealand, France and in New York and Alaska.

A statement from the Communist Party of Québec points out: “This movement has become, in a few days, a symbol for all those who are more and more shocked by everything that is happening in our society, but who — and this should not be underestimated — are also more and more attracted to right-wing and even extreme right-wing movements.”

The statement goes on: “All this reminds us at the same time how, just because people demonstrate in the streets or on the roads and/or carry out other more direct types of actions, it is not necessarily for a good cause. Although they constantly repeat the word Freedom, most of these people are thinking above all about their own individual freedom and not about the common good.” (pcq.qc.ca, Jan. 29)

These trucker convoys, which fail to raise the key work issues of truck drivers in both countries, are being well financed by U.S. reactionary movements and getting tremendous business media attention. Meanwhile, Big Media is barely acknowledging the enormous U.S. worker resurgence underway and growing — the strike wave this past fall, massive education and health worker organizing, the unionization struggle spreading like wildfire through Starbucks, the drive to unionize Amazon, one of the biggest high tech exploiters in the world. Working-class activists can take heart from these developments and more. □

Biden, Johnson & Ukraine

Who fabricates a war, and how?

Continued from page 10

countries, he hastened to clarify that: “I have no right to say that it is a mistake of the governments of respected countries. I think it’s a mistake for us, for Ukraine.”

Inter-European contradictions

On the other hand, this situation has continued to deepen inter-European contradictions. The leaders of the Old Continent will have to find arguments to explain to their citizens why, following orders from Washington, they force them to pay for the gas they consume, a price three or four times higher than what they would have to do if they obtained it from Russia.

Such reasoning begins to make an impression on some European leaders, whose rationality does not allow them to understand that they have to “buy” in Ukraine a conflict that they do not consider their own. In this regard, the German Foreign Minister, Annalena Baerbock, stated that NATO’s expansion to the east is not on the Alliance’s agenda.

Similarly, Baerbock reiterated that Ukraine’s inclusion in NATO “is not currently on the agenda,” adding that Ukrainians want to live in peace, so it is essential to return to discussions on the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Interestingly, in that question Germany’s position coincides with Russia’s.

That same day, Jan. 28, confirming the statements of President Zelensky, Ukraine’s Defense Minister Alexei Reznikov told the Parliament that there are no

preparations for a Russian offensive against his country. He explained that “At the moment, there is no event or action of a military nature [by Moscow] that is noticeably different from what happened last spring.”

But what was Biden’s decision in this situation, in which one might expect tensions to ease and conditions for negotiation and dialogue to improve? The same day, without commenting on Zelensky’s statement or that of the Ukrainian defense minister, Biden announced that he was going to transfer more troops to Eastern Europe and the NATO countries in the short term.

In parallel, the United States convened a session of the U.N. Security Council which, according to the Russian representative before that entity, Vasili Nebenzia, does not contribute to the resolution of the conflict in Ukraine but rather harms it. Nebenzia said that the open format offered by the United States is a classic example of “megaphone diplomacy,” which does not solve anything and creates more noise by transmitting the wrong message of what is happening.

Ukrainians disapprove of NATO

By the way, has anyone bothered to ask the Ukrainians what they think about joining NATO? The Ukrainian researcher Volodymyr Ishchenko, associated with the Institute of Eastern European Studies of the Free University of Berlin in an article entitled “NATO and Ukraine: let the Ukrainians decide democratically,” published on the portal sinpermiso.info, points out that in December 2007, less than 20% of Ukrainian citizens

supported their country’s joining NATO.

Although after the 2013 coup d’état and the referendum in Crimea that established its incorporation into Russia, that figure increased to around 40%, a majority of more than 60% of Ukrainian citizens still reject their entry into the aggressive war organization led by the United States.

However, in his latest article, Ishchenko clarified that “the polls no longer included the most pro-Russian Ukrainian citizens [sic] from the territories that are not under the control of the Ukrainian government: Crimea and Donbass,” which makes it impossible to compare the numbers statistically.

Thus it is clear that the “conflict” in Ukraine is a contrived invention of the United States and Great Britain, with the complicity of European elites aimed in the short term at saving Biden and Johnson from a political debacle. At the strategic level, its goal is to consolidate a U.S.-British domination and hegemony in the world, even if this leads to a new war in Europe with the usual millionfold losses of human beings and material goods that Washington and London will see from afar.

Much later, a new “Normandy landing” [like that of June 1944] will be invented that consecrates the U.S. and Britain (through Hollywood) as “defenders of humanity,” even though they do it on the corpses of millions of citizens who today are hindered from obtaining gas at low prices and later will be cannon fodder for arms dealers to take advantage of the war to increase their profits. □



Manifestantes y organizadores sindicales hacen un piquete frente a la tienda Starbucks Poplar-Highland de Memphis, Tennessee, para protestar por el despido masivo del 8 de febrero.

Starbucks despide a comité organizador y sindicato se extiende a NYC

Por Arjae Red

Siete trabajadores de Starbucks en la tienda Starbucks de Poplar y Highland en Memphis, Tennessee, fueron despedidos el 8 de febrero en el acto más despiadado y descarado de la empresa para romper el sindicato hasta ahora.

Estos despidos representan aproximadamente el 35% de la planilla total de la tienda, según el comunicado de prensa publicado por Starbucks Workers United. Entre los despedidos se encuentra todo el Comité de Organización del sindicato, compuesto en su mayoría por trabajadores negros y morenos.

“Hoy he sido despedido por Starbucks por unas ‘políticas’ de las que nunca había oído hablar y sobre las que nunca me habían escrito. Esto es un claro intento de Starbucks de tomar represalias contra los que estamos liderando el esfuerzo sindical en nuestra tienda y de asustar a otros compañeros”, dijo Nikki Taylor, supervisora de turno y organizadora sindical en la tienda.

Los trabajadores fueron despedidos por una serie de infracciones menores, algunas de las cuales eran supuestas violaciones de las políticas que los trabajadores desconocían y sobre las que no habían recibido formación. Muchas de las infracciones, como pasar por detrás del mostrador o entrar en la parte trasera de la tienda cuando están fuera de horario, son políticas que no se han aplicado regularmente y que ahora la empresa está aplicando de forma selectiva para hacer caer el martillo sobre los organizadores sindicales.

Un hecho que no se puede ignorar es el vil carácter racista de este caso concreto de represión sindical. Starbucks ha utilizado una gran variedad de tácticas para

intimidar y silenciar a los partidarios del sindicato en todo el país, pero hasta ahora no se había utilizado un despido masivo como éste.

Cuando esta tienda de Memphis solicitó la creación de un sindicato, lo hizo el día de Martin Luther King Jr. en la carta dirigida al director general Kevin Johnson, el Comité Organizador escribió: “Por favor, en memoria del Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. no traiga a Memphis su supuesta campaña antisindical ‘a favor de los socios’”.

A pesar de esta petición, Starbucks no dudó en despedir a todo el Comité Organizador.

Despidos por faltas leves sin precedentes

La ex gerente de Starbucks durante nueve años y medio, Amy Holden, que dirigía el local de Poplar y Highland, dijo a More Perfect Union: “No pasamos directamente al despido por nada que no se considere atroz, como el robo y el acoso ... la mayoría de las infracciones de la política pasan a la acción correctiva y suponen una intención positiva y ayudan a ese [trabajador] a corregir su acción en lugar de pasar directamente al despido. Es muy raro que pasemos directamente al despido por algún tipo de violación de la política”.

La realidad es que las infracciones citadas por la empresa para los despidos son cosas que muchos trabajadores de Starbucks de todo el país han hecho, o hacen habitualmente, sin sufrir un

despido. El portavoz de Starbucks, Reggie Borges, dijo sobre los despidos “Estas acciones atroces y violaciones flagrantes no pueden ser ignoradas”. Es obvio que la diferencia aquí, el verdadero acto “atroz” imperdonable, a los ojos de Starbucks, es que estos trabajadores se atrevieron a presentar una elección sindical.

¿Y qué hay de los atroces actos de desprestigio sindical y de las innumerables violaciones flagrantes de la legislación laboral cometidas por Starbucks en todo el país desde que se inició la campaña sindical en agosto? El hecho es que mientras Starbucks se preocupa por la política para apilar violaciones insignificantes contra los organizadores del sindicato en Memphis, la empresa está llevando a cabo una campaña implacable contra sus trabajadores en todo el país sin tener en cuenta las leyes que puede violar en el proceso.

Los manifestantes se reunieron frente a la tienda de Starbucks de Memphis donde se produjeron los despidos para unirse a un piquete el 9 de febrero, lo que obligó a la tienda a cerrar alrededor de las 12 del mediodía y a permanecer cerrada durante el resto del día, así como al día siguiente. Que Starbucks se salga o no con la suya en este descarado despido masivo dependerá de la respuesta de los trabajadores y del público. Hasta ahora, la justa indignación está creciendo al igual que la red de tiendas en rápida expansión que han solicitado una elección sindical.

Que Starbucks se salga o no con la suya en este descarado despido masivo dependerá de la respuesta de los trabajadores y del público.

Hoy, 10 de febrero, en la ciudad de Nueva York, tres tiendas, situadas en Astor Place, Chelsea y Brooklyn, han solicitado una elección sindical, junto con una cuarta tienda en Long Island. El local de Chelsea es una tienda de fabricación de tostadores, una ubicación más importante en comparación con algunas de las cafeterías habituales de Starbucks.

Esto eleva el número total de tiendas de Starbucks que solicitan un sindicato a 72, al momento de escribir este artículo. Tanto la represión sindical por parte de Starbucks como la oleada de trabajadores que se unen a la lucha no muestran signos de desaceleración, pero el verdadero poder siempre estará en manos de los trabajadores.

La crueldad empleada en Memphis contra este comité dirigido por trabajadores negros y morenos es característica de la forma en que el capitalismo como sistema económico siempre ha impuesto el mayor sufrimiento a los negros y morenos. A pesar de la apariencia “progresista” de Starbucks y la adopción deshonesta del eslogan “Las vidas negras importan”, la cortina de justicia social se abandona rápidamente cuando llega el momento de que la empresa pisotee el poder de los trabajadores.

Workers World Party.Partido Mundo Obrero exige que Starbucks vuelva a contratar a los 7 de Memphis y que cese inmediatamente sus operaciones de destrucción de sindicatos y reconozca al sindicato en todas las tiendas que lo han solicitado.

El autor es un escritor colaborador de Workers World Party/Partido Mundo Obrero y organizador del comité sindical de Starbucks Workers United en Buffalo.

Gran victoria sindical para los trabajadores de GM en México

Por Martha Grevatt

Los trabajadores de General Motors en Silao, México, han hecho historia.

Han logrado tener el primer sindicato independiente en cualquier planta mexicana de GM, derrotando al falso sindicato de la empresa por un amplio margen.

Durante décadas, los sindicatos de empresa aliados con el antiguo partido gobernante, el Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), se han confabulado con las empresas automovilísticas para mantener los salarios bajos y maximizar la explotación. Los trabajadores mexicanos de GM mejor pagados ganan en una jornada de 12 horas poco más de lo que gana un trabajador de la industria automovilística estadounidense por hora.

Con la elección del 3 de febrero del Sindicato Nacional Independiente de Trabajadores de la Industria Automotriz (SINTTIA), los 6.500 trabajadores de GM de Silao probablemente verán aumentados sus salarios y prestaciones. Pero GM seguirá obteniendo enormes beneficios de

la venta de sus camiones modelo Silverado, fabricados en México y Michigan, algunos de los cuales alcanzan precios de hasta \$78.000. Y la consejera delegada, Mary Barra, no se recortará el sueldo, que superaba los \$20 millones en 2020.

Los jefes de GM se niegan a reconocer que los trabajadores mexicanos de la industria automotriz están insatisfechos con el salario y las condiciones. El portavoz de GM, David Barnas, afirma que “nuestros empleados de Silao eligen a GM y optan por permanecer en la empresa durante largas carreras debido al ambiente positivo y saludable que hemos establecido como líder corporativo en México.” (Detroit Free Press, 4 de febrero)

Los 4.100 trabajadores que votaron “Sí” a SINTTIA no estarían de acuerdo. Se quejaron del estancamiento de los salarios, de la negación de las solicitudes de tiempo libre y de que ni siquiera se les permitía ir al baño. El sindicato de la empresa, afiliado a la Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos (CTM), negoció

un contrato deficiente sin su aportación. En agosto del año pasado, las bases votaron para rechazar el contrato de la CTM.

La AFL-CIO presionó para que se aplicara una cláusula de derechos de los trabajadores en el Acuerdo 2020 entre Estados Unidos, México y Canadá, que sustituyó al Tratado de Libre Comercio de América del Norte (TLCAN) de 1994. Esto ayudó a garantizar el derecho al voto de los trabajadores de Silao y, potencialmente, de los trabajadores de GM, Ford y Stellantis (antes Chrysler) en otras plantas mexicanas. Miembros de los sindicatos afiliados a la AFL-CIO, junto con sindicalistas canadienses y brasileños, se manifestaron frente a la planta el 3 de febrero en solidaridad con los trabajadores de GM de Silao. El sindicato United Auto Workers



Sindicalistas brasileños fuera de la planta de GM en Silao, México, donde los trabajadores estaban votando por el primer sindicato independiente, el 3 de febrero.

saludó la victoria electoral.

Jesús Barroso explicó: “Estamos hartos. El hartazgo es lo que nos hace tomar esta decisión. Creo que tenemos derecho a dar a nuestras familias, a nuestros hijos, una mejor calidad de vida.” (aflcio.org)

¡Sí! ¡Sí! ¡SINTTIA!

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