

Union drive widens to 100+ Starbucks

Company turns up heat against workers

‘We are stronger together’

By Arjae Red

Buffalo, New York

Starbucks Workers United has hit the milestone of 100 stores filing for a union election as of Feb. 19. Since September this explosion of worker power, unprecedented in recent years, went from three Buffalo, New York, stores to a country-wide movement. Two more stores in Cleveland just brought the count to a strong 100 across 26 states.

Following the first three Buffalo stores that voted in December, which resulted in two solid victories at the Elmwood Ave. and Genesee Street stores, three more Buffalo-area stores are up for a vote. Ballots were mailed to workers at stores in Amherst, Cheektowaga and Depew on Jan. 31, and votes must be sent in by Feb. 22. Votes will be counted on Feb. 23 at 1:00 p.m.

One of the stores, Walden/Anderson in Cheektowaga, was shut down for multiple weeks after the company became aware of widespread union support there. Starbucks claims it was closed for maintenance and that the closing was unrelated to the union drive.

With many workers losing hours and being forced to find new jobs and many new workers being brought in to replace them, it’s not very convincing when the company says it isn’t trying to quash union support.

Starbucks workers in Mesa, Arizona, were set to have their ballots counted

Feb. 16, but the NLRB impounded the ballots and delayed the vote. The delay was due to a Starbucks request for the NLRB to review its decision to allow a single store to vote, rather than multiple stores. This is the same tactic used by the company against workers in Buffalo. It’s ultimately up to the workers if they want to file and vote one store at a time, but Starbucks has been arguing to have

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Union supporters at downtown West 6th Street Starbucks--the first Cleveland store to file for a union election. Two more filed Feb. 19. More on 7.

By Martha Grevatt

Cleveland

The Starbucks union organizing is moving faster than a runaway train. A large majority of the multinational, multigenerational and multigendered workforce at two Cleveland-area stores signed cards supporting Starbucks Workers United, pushing the union drive to over 100 stores in the U.S.

Workers World interviewed Kaitlyn Swiger, who works at the West 116th store in Cleveland and Hannah Woodside at

the MayLee (Mayfield and Lee) store in Cleveland Heights.

Workers World: What inspired the workers at your store to file for union representation?

Kaitlyn Swiger: The partners [at the downtown store] really inspired us to move forward in this direction. We have friends who work there, so they were telling us about it. The partners inspired us to move forward in this direction. It’s great to see how it’s helped to unify partners from different stores, and we want to be part of that.

We heard about Buffalo through the media when it first happened. Other stores in Cleveland definitely got wind from that, and it put that seed in everyone’s brain.

Hannah Woodside: We love our jobs, and we love working for Starbucks; but we no longer feel like we are being paid a fair or livable wage. We have been ignored or shrugged off by the company too many times when we bring up changes we want made, so we feel unionizing is the best way we can be heard. We stand with the other stores in the Cleveland area, as well as across the country, who have tried to unionize and we want to amplify their voices as well.

Workers want a voice

WW: What are the key issues for you and your co-workers?

HW: We cannot live off the wages we are given. And when hours are cut and we are denied pay for the hours we were supposed to work, we have been told by the company to cut into our hard-earned sick time and vacation time to pay ourselves!

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Reject the U.S. war game vs Russia

Bulletin: As of Feb. 22, Russia has recognized the two peoples’ republics in the Donbass region of eastern Ukraine, the Donetsk People’s Republic and the Lugansk People’s Republic, established in 2014. Russia has said that it will send troops to protect the two republics if they come under further Ukraine/ NATO attack. Washington and some European allies have announced economic sanctions against the two republics and/or against Russia. Working people worldwide must oppose U.S./NATO aggression and expansion, which are creating the danger of a massive war.

Read the article at www.workers.org/2022/02/61961

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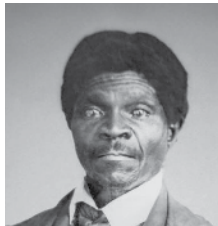
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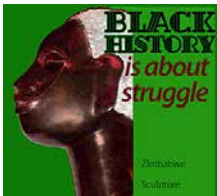


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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

What is Black excellence?

Black History Month is a time when Black excellence is celebrated, a time when accomplishments by Black Americans of note are highlighted. Never achieving anything of note, I always found the concept of Black excellence to be a foreign concept, so Black History Month wasn't high on my list. As I got older and became acquainted with the ongoing history of Black oppression, I was forced to revisit and reassess my previous beliefs about Black excellence.

Of course, my feelings about the concept still stood, but it was given more heft and depth than before. The names most brought up in February to commemorate Black excellence are along the lines of Thurgood Marshall, Michael Jordan, Ben Carson, Barack Obama and even Madam C.J. Walker.

While these names are ostensibly noteworthy people, they seem to be held up by the bourgeois-buttressed mainstream because they fit the respectable image that is becoming to capitalism. There are millions of stories of Black excellence that are unheralded that are happening every day. Just because they don't fit the myth



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Olujimi Alade in Philadelphia, May Day 2021

of "rags to riches" doesn't make them any less exceptional. A Black teenage boy arriving home safely to his family in the face of the police brutality plague is Black excellence. A Black single mother working as an Uber Eats driver finding out she was tipped \$10 for exceptional service during her delivery run is Black excellence. A Black homeless man buying a cup of coffee to warm himself up on a cold winter day is Black excellence. A dark-skinned Black woman looking in the mirror and learning to love what is staring back at her is Black excellence.

Black excellence doesn't have to occur on Wall Street or on the Supreme Court or even in the White House. It is already occurring every single day in the streets of the United States in a society that constantly devalues and dehumanizes Black lives. It is time to gain a more diverse understanding of Black excellence and learn to celebrate that in all its diversity.

Signed,
Olujimi Alade

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ON THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RACIST MURDER OF TRAYVON MARTIN
FIGHT RACISM & UNION BUSTING WITH WORKERS POWER!

- Build Solidarity with majority-Black workers at Amazon in Alabama voting for a union!
- Resist racist practices at Starbucks and Amazon!
- Say no to racist repression of workers rights!

Join us in the fight for socialism!

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

'Stop the Port land grab and racist school closings!'

By Dave Welsh
Oakland, California

A crowd of Oakland longshore workers and teachers rallied Feb. 17 at City Hall to raise two demands: "Save Our Port," which is under attack, and "Save Our Schools," many of which are threatened with closure. The main organizer of the rally was Local 10 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union.

Trent Willis, immediate-past president of Local 10, denounced the plans of John Fisher, owner of the Gap Stores and the Oakland Athletics baseball team, to build a new ballpark in West Oakland. The chosen site is Howard Terminal, part of the Port of Oakland.

"This is industrial land," said Willis, "providing jobs since the 1930s, supporting Black and Brown people. The Port is an artery that keeps Oakland and surrounding counties going. So don't be complacent: Fisher's plan to wipe out Howard Terminal is a real threat

to longshore jobs in Oakland!

"These billionaires think they can come into your city, take your land, take your jobs, while they live high on the hog on a hill somewhere," said Willis. "These decisions affect all of our families. Every generation of longshore workers has had to fight a battle. Now it's our turn to stand and fight. When it's time to throw down, you've got to show up. It's hard to beat the system if you're standing at a distance."

Linda Adams, a Local 10 member, said, "For them, this is not about the ballpark. It's about making money off prime real estate. But for us, it's about preserving jobs in the Port. We've been at this port since the 1930s. This port belongs to us! This fight is really for the kids who are coming behind us."

Jack Heyman, retired longshore worker, said the Port of Oakland "is an economic engine for northern California.

Why give it away to John Fisher and his cronies? These are good jobs we are fighting for. The Oakland mayor is in the pocket of the billionaires. This

is a defining moment for Oakland. The 'powers that be' want to gentrify, without providing the jobs people need ... without providing housing for the homeless people who are sleeping under the freeways going into the Port!"

The threat to Oakland schools

A Feb. 22 article in the Oakland Post newspaper posed this question: "How does real estate development at the Port connect to closing schools? Some political observers say an ongoing attempt to displace residents and 'whiten' Oakland has two component parts: One is the snatching of public funds and property to build luxury housing, as Fisher is doing at the Port. The other part is removing neighborhood schools attended by generations of Oakland residents and replacing them with charter schools and private schools designed to appeal to more affluent newcomers."

Adding that the stadium/real estate project "seeks to take over public land at the Port of Oakland, potentially fatally disrupting the Port's functioning," the article pointed out that Fisher is not only a baseball team owner. "He is also a charter school tycoon," sitting on the board of KIPP Schools, which has a large network of charter schools across the country. Fisher is tight with Oakland Mayor Libby



WW PHOTO: DAVE WELSH

Linda Adams of Local 10, ILWU, at Oakland rally, Feb. 17.

Schaaf, another supporter of privatized charter schools.

"I originally came from Detroit, where they've been closing public schools to bring in charter schools," said Linda Adams at the rally. "As an Oakland ILWU-strong woman who supports unions and supports our public schools, I'm not standing for any of it."

Ismael Armendariz, speaking for the Oakland Education Association, said "Privatization has taken hold, and the worst effects are on Black and Brown students, especially affecting the Black community. California is the wealthiest state. How can they allow schools to close? How can they allow the Oakland Port to be degraded?"

Trent Willis recalled a popular 1960s song, "Waiting for the world to change." "Well, we're not waiting," he said. "Don't we have a right to jobs and schools? If a union can go on strike over wages and conditions, then why not have a general strike for the jobs and schools that the people really need?" □

France agrees to withdraw from Mali

By G. Dunkel

President Emmanuel Macron of France announced that French troops will be pulling out of their bases in Gossi, Menaka and Gao, which are all in eastern Mali, near the three-border area with Niger and Burkina Faso.

He made this announcement before a summit between the European Union and the African Union, Feb. 17 in Brussels.

"We cannot remain militarily engaged alongside de facto authorities, whose strategy and hidden aims we do not share," Macron said, referring to the Mali government's contract with Russian-based companies offering Russian military advisers to provide training.

That's France's excuse for leaving. The French neocolonialist military was allowed in to aid the battle against the Islamic State or al-Qaida affiliates in Mali. Those



Local communities sent support and trucks to help move people and their belongings out of the beleaguered Tessit region.

kinds of groups have flourished in Mali and the entire region since NATO destroyed the Libyan government in 2011, which spread instability.

The French failed to stop IS and al-Qaida, even though these groups are fighting each other, as well as

the French and MINUSMA, the U.N.'s 15,000-strong peacekeeping force, and the Malian army.

The French regime has been forced to confront a militant and growing mass popular resistance to its neocolonialist presence in the whole Sahel, the region immediately south of the Sahara desert. Protests against the French presence have been growing in Burkina Faso, Niger, the Ivory Coast and Guinea, as well as Mali.

What just happened in the Tessit region is an example showing the instability of parts of Mali. Islamic State forces attacked some local Tessit villages Feb. 8-10; they destroyed schools, a clinic, water tower and some homes. They killed about 40 people and ordered the rest to leave. A few days later, al-Qaida forces came through, accused people of supporting IS and killed more people.

The local communities sent trucks to help the people in the area move their belongings to safer areas. □

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.

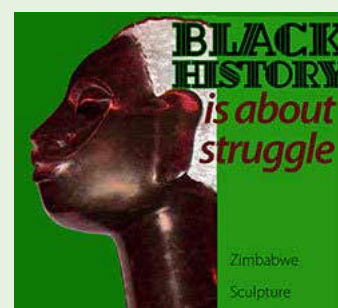
Since the early 1990s, the fund has helped sponsor the workers.org website. Throughout the pandemic when fewer print issues have been published due to staff health concerns, new articles have been posted daily, and the PDF of the weekly newspaper has been posted at workers.org. Not one online issue has been skipped throughout this two-year health crisis.

For a donation of \$60 a year or \$120 or \$300, you receive a subscription to WW

newspaper and one, two or three free subscriptions for friends, depending on donation, and updates. A free download of the "What Road to Socialism?" book, published in 2020, is available at workers.org/books. Or notify us if you want a paper book.

Write checks (either monthly or annually) to Workers World and mail them, with your name and address, to Workers World, 147 W. 24th St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10011. Put "Supporter Program" in the memo line. Or donate online at workers.org/donate.

We are grateful for your help in building Workers World! □



WW COMMENTARY

Dred Scott to Daunte Wright: same repression, same fight

By Monica Moorehead

“There was police brutality, and there was atrocity, and the press was just as atrocious as the police. Because they helped the police cover it up by propagating a false image across the country.” These words weren’t spoken today but almost 60 years ago by Malcolm X.

The great Black Nationalist leader was assassinated on Feb. 21, 1965, an act orchestrated by the U.S. government. Malcolm X connected the right to self-defense to the revolutionary liberation of Black people from the yoke of capitalism and imperialism.

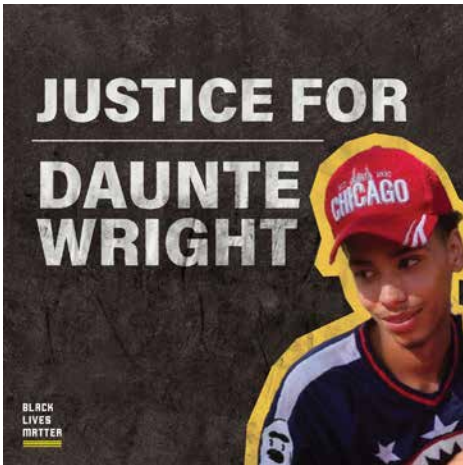
One can still apply the wisdom of Malcolm X to today’s developments, when it comes to the systemic racist violence Black people suffer as an oppressed nation, especially the police war against Black and Brown youth.

Out of the countless instances of this reality is the case of Daunte Wright. Last April 11, Wright, a 20-year-old Black father of one child, was fatally shot during a traffic stop by a white police officer, Kim Potter, in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota. This happened not far from where George Floyd was lynched in May 2020 by police officer Derek Chauvin.

The flimsy excuse given for Potter stopping Wright was that his air freshener was blocking his rearview mirror. Potter ended up killing Wright and claimed she thought she was reaching for her Taser, not her gun.

The real “crime” of why Daunte Wright ended up dead was that he was driving while Black.

To add insult to injury, on Feb. 18 Potter was sentenced to a mere two-year prison term for her first- and second-degree manslaughter convictions. Under



Minnesota law, Potter could serve only 16 months in prison, two-thirds of her sentence, and be granted almost two months credit for time served in custody.

Judge Regina M. Chu had the gall to urge “empathy” for Potter. Katie Wright, Daunte’s mother, in response to the sentence, stated, “Today, the justice system murdered him all over again.” (Washington Post, Feb. 18) Protests were held on the day of the outrageous sentencing in Brooklyn Center and throughout the country, demanding justice for Daunte Wright.

Historical connections

The fact that the life of someone like Daunte Wright was treated with such callousness by the police, the judge and the courts is not a new or isolated situation, considering all the forms of inequality under class society based on the “haves” and “have nots” and the oppressor versus the oppressed.

At the height of the economic dominance of enslavement in the U.S., Black people were legally viewed as three-fifths of a human being and treated no

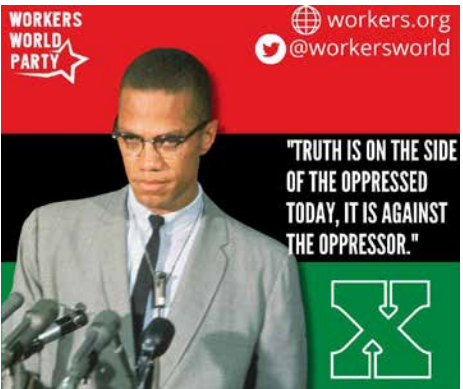
differently, or even worse, than any animal. Their ability to work and their entire being were owned and superexploited by their owners.

This relationship was codified by the highest court in the country, the U.S. Supreme Court, in a historic 1857 landmark decision, when the enslaved Dred Scott decided to sue for his freedom after his enslaver died while they were on a visit to the free state of Illinois in 1847.

After losing court decisions through various legal state and federal appeals, Scott took his case to SCOTUS. But Scott never had a chance of winning, considering that out of the nine justices, seven were appointed by pro-slavery presidents from the South; and of these, five were from slaveholding families.

Chief Justice Roger B. Taney — a staunch supporter of slavery — wrote the “majority opinion” for the court. The decision stated that because Scott was Black, he was not a citizen and therefore had no right to sue. Therefore, Scott and his family remained enslaved.

The same decision also declared the Missouri Compromise of 1820 unconstitutional. This was legislation which had restricted slavery in certain U.S. territories.



In other words enslavement was given a legal right to expand beyond the Southern states. It was the repeal of the Compromise that prompted the great abolitionist fighter John Brown to lead a militant struggle to stop the encroachment of slavery into Kansas in the late 1850s, in a forerunner to the Civil War.

Assisting the reactionary, pro-slavery SCOTUS in carrying out its decision were slave patrols, the forerunners of the repressive police today who harass, maim and kill oppressed peoples, mostly with impunity. The slave patrols were white bounty hunters, who were paid handsomely to hunt down the “property” of plantation owners and bring back, dead or alive, the human beings who dared to escape bondage.

The heinous form of repression through enslavement may have changed over the centuries, depending on evolving social systems. But the essence of oppression has not changed under class divisions that only sharpen and deepen suffering.

Abolitionists like Harriet Tubman, John Brown and Frederick Douglass demanded an end to enslavement through various methods. Black freedom fighters, like Malcolm X, Assata Shakur and the Black Panther Party during the 1960s, demanded liberation from neocolonialism and imperialism by any means necessary.

In light of the fatal shootings of Daunte Wright, Tamir Rice, Breonna Taylor, Rekia Boyd, Eleanor Bumpers and thousands more over the decades, the demand to “Abolish the Police” must become a clarion call to bring about real social justice and serve as an important bridge to abolishing capitalism. □

The 1864-65 ‘March to the Sea’ for reparations

By Jim McMahan

In the Civil War’s closing days, Union Army forces finally defeated the Confederate hold on Atlanta in the fall of 1864. An economic citadel of the racist system of slavery, almost half the city was burned by federal troops.

In November, a week after the reelection of President Abraham Lincoln and under a cloud of smoke, the Union Army departed for what became the historic “March to the Sea.” Led by General William Sherman, troops headed 285 miles through the plantations of the slavery to reach the sea at Savannah, Georgia.

This was an Emancipation March of 60,000 troops, many of them Black troops, along with an almost equal number of emancipated Black people and refugees of war.

This great throng was out to destroy enslavement. They marched over a front between 25 and 60 miles wide, through some of the wealthiest and most productive plantations in the country.

The land had been stolen by European and then American settler colonists from the Southeast Indigenous nations, through centuries of forced displacement and genocide. By the late 18th century, the white owning class that arose there bought and sold Black people and became fabulously wealthy by profits from the unwaged labor of enslaved people. They had the Southeast Native nations forcibly removed to the West in the Trail of Tears in the 1830s.

The mass of humanity moved toward the sea at a pace of 15 miles a day. With no supply line, they had to live off the land. The property of the enslavers was taken

for their survival. The marchers feasted on crops and livestock — food denied to them during enslavement. The rail lines used to transport the crops and cotton cultivated with their forced labor were torn up. Steel ties were thrown on bonfires, heated up and wrapped around tree trunks.

This awesome amount of destruction amounted to the “trampling out the vintage, where the grapes of wrath are stored” — a line from the 1862 “Battle Hymn of the Republic.” Sherman’s March to the Sea was made to break the back of racist enslavers’ power both economically and politically — an absolute necessity for Emancipation and the establishment of the beginning of access to democratic rights for all Black people in the U.S.

When the army came to Savannah in mid-December, the Confederacy had another four months to live before Robert E. Lee’s surrender in Virginia.

According to the Freedman and Southern Society Project, 20 Black men, most of them formerly enslaved, met on Jan. 12, 1865, to discuss the economic future of 4 million freed people.

Before General Sherman and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, their spokesperson Garrison Frazier stated, “The way we can best take care of ourselves is to have land and turn it and till it by our own labor ... and we can soon maintain ourselves and have something to spare.” (www.freedmen.umd.edu/savmtg.htm)

This discussion with the Black community became the basis for Sherman’s Special Field Order 15 issued on Jan. 16, 1865. The Field Order stated that the land on the coastline stretching from Charleston, South Carolina, down the Georgia coast to Jacksonville, Florida, including the Sea Islands and the mainland 30 miles in from the coast, was to be turned over to the freed people of African descent.

The total amounted to 400,000 acres confiscated during the war from white land owners. The order stated that “each family shall have no more than 40 acres of tillable ground ... until Congress shall regulate their title.”

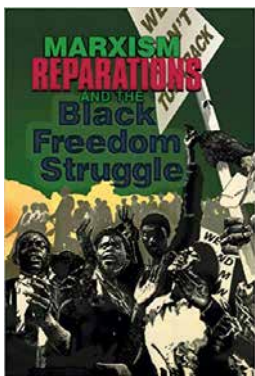
This order was enacted, and soon some of the richest planter land was settled by newly freed Black people. This opened the possibility that a transformation of society even more radical than the end of enslavement could be at hand.

The heroic struggle of Black working people after the Civil War is analyzed in the groundbreaking work by W.E.B. Du Bois, “Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880.” See also Monica Moorehead, “Black farmers still seek justice,” Workers World, July 18, 2002, and “Marxism, Reparations and the Black Freedom Struggle” (2007), on Black people fighting to retain freedom and land into the 21st century.

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!
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COVER GRAPHIC: SAHU BARRON

WW COMMENTARY

Fighting for voting rights and workers' rights

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

In an act of blatant racism, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a 5-4 ruling Feb. 7 that halted a lower court's order to make Alabama redraw its gerrymandered Congressional districts and set up fair representation for the state's Black voters. A federal appeals panel — made up of one Clinton-appointed judge and two Trump appointees — had upheld the lower court decision.

The SCOTUS decision paused the lower court's ruling for review at a later date — very conveniently not until after Alabama elections in May that will determine the fate of the state's Republican legislators and governor!

Out-and-out legal racism

Alabama's gerrymandered map included one majority Black district and six that are heavily white.

Voting rights advocates argued the state should have a second majority-Black district, or one close to a majority, because Alabama's population is 27% Black. The Republican legislature's map would give representation equivalent to only about 14% of the Black population. The map could have been redrawn easily with standard redistricting principles, such as keeping communities intact as much as possible.

The SCOTUS ruling is yet another bitter blow in a renewed attack on voting rights underway for the last 25 years. Reactionary state laws and judicial attacks have focused on eviscerating protections and undermining the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which was intended to ensure that state and local governments do not pass laws or policies denying U.S. citizens the equal right to vote based on race.

Passage of the Voting Rights Act was won during a time when fascist laws mandating segregation by race were still on the books and brutally enforced in many states. Denial of the right to vote to Black people was an integral tool of keeping killing injustice in place.

The Black Civil Rights Movement challenged this legalized racism and won historic victories, including the VRA, through the martyrdom of hundreds and the sacrifice of thousands of organizers and ordinary on-the-ground people.

But pushback by reactionary forces against this struggle for justice — sometimes through legislation, sometimes through white-supremacist terror — has never stopped.

In 2010 the county commissioners of Shelby County, Alabama, filed suit in federal court to declare Section 5 of the VRA unconstitutional. This section was crucial to VRA enforcement, as it required certain jurisdictions with a history of discrimination to submit for approval any proposed changes in voting procedures to the U.S. Department of Justice or to a federal district court in Washington to protect "minority voters."

In other words, Section 5 was there to hold historically racist local and state governments accountable — absolutely necessary in places where Blacks had been evicted from their homes, shot down in the streets and lynched for asserting their right to vote.

But on June 25, 2013, the Supreme Court dumped this key VRA provision in its ruling, *Shelby County v. Holder*.

Party politics — or racist class maneuvers?

Currently in Southern states like Alabama, the Republican Party is almost uniformly made up of white people, and the Democratic Party of Black people and a minority of white people who support racial justice, women's and LGBTQ2S+ issues, reform or abolition of prisons, disability justice, workers' rights or environmental issues.

As a result of this split, gerrymandering can look like a matter of racist Republican Party politics, while the Democratic Party comes off as "liberal" on the right to vote. But until the late 1960s, Democrats were the party of rabid segregationists in the South.

The battle for voting rights is not Democrats vs. Republicans. It must be framed in the historical

context of Black working people in the South — a people kidnapped to this country and enslaved, fighting for the right to actually be recognized as human, for the right to personal freedom and for the right to all the political freedoms accorded to white people in general, within a bourgeois capitalist democracy like the U.S.

The fight for voting rights

It is not a figure of speech to say the Black population freed by the Emancipation Proclamation had to "fight for democratic rights."

The Southern white slavocracy, defeated militarily, was determined not to be subdued economically. After the Civil War and the passing of the 13th Amendment

that formally emancipated all enslaved people, Southern white-majority governments of former enslaving states began to pass laws attempting to return freed people to de facto bondage. Beginning in Mississippi in 1865, these so-called "Black Codes" appeared to grant Black people certain legal rights for the first time, such as the right to marry. But in reality the Codes "were promulgated to control a newly fluid Black labor force." (Encyclopedia of Southern Culture)

Then started the reign of "White Terror" — extralegal vigilante forces organized by the slavocracy to beat back emerging social, economic and political independence of the freed Black population. This intimidation, occurring in every county, town

and village and state of the old Confederacy, included the founding of the Ku Klux Klan.

For 10 years after the end of the Civil War, there was battle after battle in the South, as the African American population and some white allies tried to liberate the land. Every act toward freedom was a struggle. One witness recounted Black people in Mississippi marching to the voting polls "after the manner of soldiers, armed with clubs and sticks, some of them with old swords and pieces of scythe blades." (James S. Allen, "Reconstruction: the Battle for Democracy 1865-1876")

Control of state legislatures, local communities and public resources depended on these smaller battles. This was true then, in the battle over the destiny of local and state government in Alabama and the South — and it is true today.

The fight for economic justice

The greatest significance in these struggles lay in the fact that the battle of African Americans for their bourgeois democratic rights (the right to vote, to testify in court, to form civil contracts such as marriage, to hold office) was completely, inextricably and openly linked to their fight for economic justice.

If they could not win redistribution of land, through outright occupation or through reparations legislation such as the "40 acres" grants proposed by abolitionists, then newly freed Black people would have no material basis for survival and no way to resist the seizure of their newly-won rights by a resurgent slavocracy.

Again, this connection between fighting for the vote

and fighting for economic justice was true then, and it is true today.

In Alabama, if the Democrats were the party of segregation, Big Steel and "Big Mule" agriculture in the 20th century, then the Republicans have become the party of voter rights suppression, anti-unionization, Big Coal and Amazon in the 21st.

The recent SCOTUS decision must be seen in this context. Its significance is not just about limiting the right to vote. The ruling is meant to ensure the continued dominance of a Republican Party that will

The battle for voting rights is not Democrats vs. Republicans. It must be framed in the historical context of Black working people in the South — a people kidnapped to this country and enslaved, fighting for the right to actually be recognized as human, for the right to personal freedom and for the right to all the political freedoms accorded to white people in general, within a bourgeois capitalist democracy like the U.S.

buttress Big Business. The ruling has wide implications for the South and the rest of the country, as the Republican Party continues to solidify its role as the bourgeois party of racist reaction, in contrast to the Democratic Party with its minimal, toothless gestures toward "democracy."

The suppression of voting right — aimed dead-on against Black voters in the South — is a clear example of how capitalist "democracy" works to keep embattled, oppressed peoples from gaining any handhold on power within this unjust system. This includes worker power.

The right to vote — for a union

It's no surprise that Alabama has been the site of two recent major defeats for Black voting rights. Control by a Republican conservative majority is necessary to ensure the state government's favor to capitalist demands and requirements for investment in the state.

According to scholar James Cobb, Big Business has flourished in the South "because of the continuing willingness of its political leaders to serve up huge subsidies and the more than ample pool of relatively cheap, overwhelmingly nonunion labor. ..." ("Globalization and the American South," 2005)

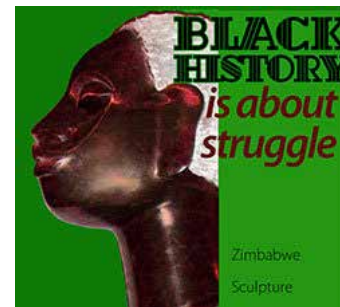
In Alabama, there are now South Korean Hyundai auto plants, as well as Japanese Toyota and Honda, German Mercedes-Benz and Canadian New Flyer assembly lines. Meanwhile in domestic production, centibillionaire Jeff Bezos has his Blue Origin company building rockets in Huntsville, a huge Amazon distribution center located in Bessemer, and is opening more mammoth warehouses soon in the state.

A nonunionized workforce is necessary to maximize capitalist exploitation. And that means keeping racism active, Black people oppressed, white and Black workers divided and union organizing at a minimum.

But the Black workers of Alabama, and of the South, have a keen memory of the history of struggle for their freedom and for their rights. For many, knowledge comes directly to them through their families' participation in the Freedom Struggle.

As Southern legislators now pass bill after bill designed to keep histories of injustice from being taught in the public school systems, Black and white coal miners have been united on strike for almost a year in Brookwood, Alabama, while a majority-Black, majority-woman workforce is organizing for a second union election at Amazon in Bessemer.

Now, in the rest of the U.S. as well as in Alabama, there has been a rising up of workers. A 21st century struggle is emerging — not in the courts or even in the streets — but in the workplace, where new rights are ready to be won. □



SCOTUS IS OK WITH ALABAMA'S CRIME SCENE VOTING MAP



PHOTO: SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE
Ella Baker, a leader of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, led a challenge to white segregationist Mississippi Democrats at the 1964 National Democratic Convention.

#SafeJobsSaveLives

North Carolina workers organize emergency rallies

By Dante Strobino
Durham, North Carolina

This slightly edited article was published as a Feb. 16 report at southernworker.org. Statements are testimony given to the writer by participants in the Southern Workers Assembly Day of Action.

Gloria Lee, a former Amazon worker, spent her Feb. 16 afternoon leading chants and talking to Amazon workers outside a delivery station in East Durham. “Jeff Bezos you can’t hide! We can see your greedy side,” she chanted along with other Amazon workers and supporters as part of a statewide day of action around COVID-19 workplace safety issues. Lee cited the recent death of an Amazon worker at the fulfillment center in Garner as one reason she felt compelled to organize the action.



Amazon workers, Durham.

PHOTO: UE150

On Feb. 16, thousands of workers in dozens of workplaces across the state participated in workplace actions to demand more safety amid COVID-19. Delta and omicron variants are continuing to surge across North Carolina and increasingly pose a terrifying workplace safety concern. Besides the Amazon worker at the Garner RDU1, a Charlotte City light-rail operator has died of COVID-19.

Employers and the North Carolina Department of Labor are not moving to implement emergency standards to keep workers safe. Labor leaders have been meeting with NCDOL Commissioner Josh Dobson. Yet, despite his public pronouncements, Dobson has done little to keep workers safe, failing to increase enforcement and implementation of Emergency Temporary Standards (ETS) to address the unique challenges of the coronavirus.

“Amazon doesn’t care about the protocols to keep us safe; they only care about their profits,” stated Kaiya Taylor, associate at Amazon RDU5 Sort Center in Durham and member of the Carolina Amazonians United for Solidarity & Empowerment (CAUSE). “If I get sick, I am most worried about getting my parents sick, who are in the age group that is most at risk.”

Members of the Southern Workers Assembly took action behind a unified set of demands. Those participating included Amazon workers; meat-packers; mental health workers; nurses; bus drivers; education workers; sanitation, water department and other workers in every corner of the state. Thousands of workers wore stickers to work that said: “Hazard Pay Now!” and “Safe Jobs Save Lives.” Others rallied in front of their workplaces.

Workers organizing, from Asheville in the west ...

At Mission Hospital in Asheville, nurses participated in a lunchtime press conference, demanding Dobson extend the ETS and do

timely, thorough investigations into safety complaints, as well as set safe-staffing ratios. The hospital was bought out by a national chain, Healthcare Corporation of America, a few years ago, which galvanized nurses to organize into the National Nurses United union.

“At Mission Hospital far too many colleagues of mine have been out sick with COVID-19,” stated Claire Siegel, Registered Nurse. “HCA’s failure to comply with state health and safety laws, the locking up and hiding of personal protective equipment (PPE) and their unsafe staffing have all contributed to a work environment where catching COVID-19 is a constant concern for the nurses. I’m proud to be active in my union advocating for safer standards.”

The union filed a series of complaints with the state Occupational Safety and Health Administration. There have been various violations of the ETS, including forced reuse of PPE.

Down the street from the hospital, Albert Maybin, president of the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 128 representing city bus drivers, led a rally in Pack Square, supported by the Western N.C. Workers Assembly. “Local management in Asheville is continuing to spend money keeping the public and the bus drivers supplied with

masks that are the least effective in protecting against COVID-19,” said Maybin. He continued, “They spent \$0.00 for N-95 masks, which are proven to be most effective. And, YES, we do deserve hazard pay!!”

... to Fayetteville in the east ...

On the other side of the state, in Fayetteville, out in front of Valley Proteins meat-rendering facility, workers set up a union outreach tent and distributed flyers to workers entering the plant. Workers have been building the Valley Protein Blue Collar Workers Organizing Committee, an affiliate of United Electrical Workers Local 150, for almost two years.

Most recently, workers rallied after the tragic death of two of their co-workers in a meat pit, after being exposed to high levels of hydrogen sulfide gas. Union members have documented that no PPE or oxygen monitors were present at the

time of the accident. NCDOL is still in an ongoing investigation, nearly four months after the deaths.

“The COVID-19 situation was not taken seriously at all by Valley Protein; it was swept under the rug until three of the management caught COVID-19,” revealed Raw Driver, a member of UE Local 150 organizing committee at Valley Proteins Inc. “They put plexiglass up in the office, where you talk to management. They were able to go home and get paid time off. When the plant workers and drivers tested positive, they couldn’t go home. If they stayed home, they weren’t paid and got written up.”

... into the heart of the state ...

Workers at state mental health facilities of the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services—including Central Regional Hospital in Butner, Caswell Center in Kinston, Longleaf Center in Wilson, and O’Berry Center and Cherry Hospital in Goldsboro—participated in the action by wearing stickers on the job and hosting small lunchtime rallies.

These workers belong to the N.C. Public Service Workers Union, UE Local 150, which has been in an ongoing campaign for “safe staffing.” That was a response to 2,300 out of the state’s 11,000 direct care positions being vacant. “COVID-19 has been very hard on us at CRN. We have lost a ton of staff because it’s too stressful,” lamented Debra Hartman, RN. Hartman continued, “Now we get mandated to work on our days off, especially weekends, due to short staffing. We need safe staffing and hazard pay to retain staff.”

“Management doesn’t want us to know information to be safe. They are not telling us anything. They don’t even want to give us hazard pay. So many workers are quitting, and we are changing to 12-hour shifts just to cover the evening shift,” disclosed Phyllis Jones, who is a youth program education assistant at Murdoch Developmental Center, and steward of UE150 in Butner.

“My issue with COVID-19 is that many health care workers are having to work long hours and in areas they know nothing about. Workers are sick and tired of doing this day in and day out for over two years and not getting compensated. This is why we need hazard pay now!” demanded William Young, a cook at Cherry Hospital, where he serves as president of the UE Local 150 Goldsboro chapter.

... including the state’s capital and biggest cities

In the capital city of Raleigh, graduate workers at N.C. State University rallied in front

of Chancellor Randy Woodson’s office demanding resumption of online classes, as well as other safety measures.

Alex Wall, a lab technician in Biological Sciences. and a leader in the UE 150 organizing committee, emphasized, “It’s so frustrating that after nearly two years of this, the administrators’ response is to tell us to ‘grin and bear it,’ while they work from home and don’t actually risk exposure to come to work.”

UE Local 150 members who are municipal workers in the City of Charlotte and manufacturing workers at Cummins Diesel Engine Plant in Rocky Mount participated heavily in the sticker day action. Members of the National Domestic Workers Alliance-We Dream in Black wore stickers in Charlotte and Durham.

Members of NC Raise Up – Fight for \$15 joined in the day’s events. “Our safety is one of the reasons we are striking,” emphasized Nina Bailey, Bojangles worker and member of Fight for \$15 & a Union, in Burnsville.

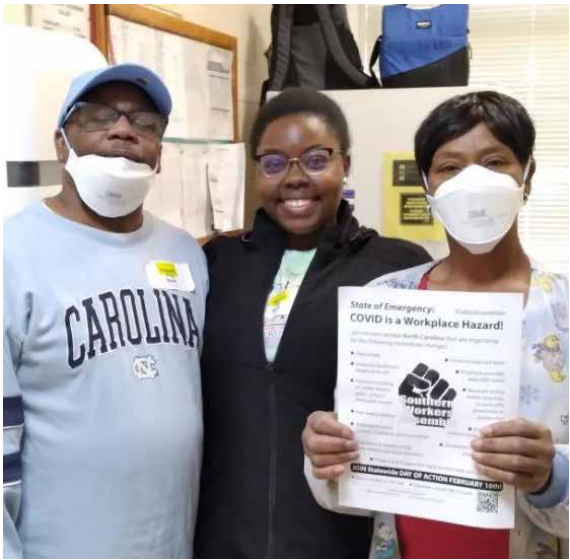


PHOTO: UE150

Mental health workers, Caswell Center, Kinston.

In Durham, William Simpson, a housekeeper and member of Fight for \$15 & a Union, pointed out: “Our lives are the ones that are on the line. We regularly have to go into those contact rooms. Our employers refuse to give us hazard pay or take our well-being into consideration.”

The workers are uniting in these demands: “That our bosses and the government grant the following: hazard pay: universal paid sick leave; universal health care and Medicare for all; employer-provided daily N95 masks; required masking on public transit, public schools and public events; required testing before returning to work after quarantine or positive test; free weekly testing; employers to enforce social distancing; enforced and timely contact tracing and communication; sanitation of workstations and work vehicles; employers to share testing rate and work locations weekly.”

These North Carolina workers say: “Protect and expand the right to form and join a union!” □



Valley Protein workers, Fayetteville.

PHOTO: UE150



Amalgamated Transit Union Local 128 members, Asheville.

PHOTO: UE150



Student workers, North Carolina State University, Raleigh.

PHOTO: UE150

Union drive widens to 100+ Starbucks

Company turns up heat against workers

Continued from page 1

multiple stores vote so they can dilute the results.

The National Labor Relations Board has already ruled in favor of the union in Buffalo on this issue, but Starbucks continues to bring it up as a delay tactic. “This is just a delayed victory,” said Buffalo Starbucks worker Michelle Eisen, who traveled to Mesa for the vote count. “They’re winning ballots, and we just need to be able to count them.”

Starbucks Roasteries in New York City and Seattle have also filed for a union. These massive stores, each with nearly 100 employees made up of food service and retail workers, are sort of a pet project of former Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz. He once referred to them as a “metaphor for the whole company.”

We can only hope Howard’s words are true and that all the company’s stores follow in the footsteps of these roasters and file for a union. Another Seattle store at 101 Broadway E is set to vote by mail starting Feb. 25.

Starbucks turns up heat against workers

In spite of the massive growth of a union campaign that shows no signs of slowing down, Starbucks has intensified its crackdown against union supporters across the country.

On Feb. 8, Starbucks carried out a racist mass-firing by terminating the entire organizing committee in Memphis, Tennessee, many of whom were Black and Brown workers. This came not long after the workers filed for a union, asking in a letter to the company: “Please, in memory of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., do not bring your so-called ‘pro-partner’ anti-union campaign to Memphis.”

Protesters have gathered outside the Memphis store, demanding an end to the union-busting campaign. Dr. King was assassinated while in Memphis to support a historic sanitation strike by unionized Black workers.

On Feb. 15, workers and community members in multiple cities mobilized in solidarity

with the Memphis 7, demanding they be immediately rehired.

As of this writing Feb. 20, Starbucks has fired Cassie Fleischer, a leading union organizer and worker at the Elmwood Avenue location in Buffalo. Fleischer helped that store become the first unionized corporate-owned Starbucks in the country. She is on the bargaining committee for the first contract at the Elmwood store, and she helped to organize a January strike, when Elmwood workers walked out over unsafe COVID-19 conditions.

Starbucks has cut the hours of many workers, especially since the union campaigns began, and Cassie Fleischer is one of millions of workers who doesn’t get enough regularly scheduled hours to make ends meet with only one job. Naturally she had to find a second job, as she described in a public Facebook post. When Fleischer changed her availability at Starbucks to accommodate her new job, the company told her that her only choices were to open her hours back up, or: “There was nowhere to go from here besides termination.”

Starbucks has built its entire hiring model on its part-time positions, catering to people with limited availability and bragging about flexible scheduling. It just doesn’t add up that Cassie Fleischer — a worker of five years — would be terminated for limited availability, except for the fact that she is such a passionate and powerful union supporter.

Fleischer says in her FB posts: “This further proves that we need a union in our stores. Starbucks is making a big mistake, and I will be spending this newfound time supporting my partners through the union in any way I can. ... I will be fighting for reinstatement at Starbucks. Charges have been filed. I will not be taking this situation

lightly. This is just the beginning!”

Workers World Party remains in solidarity with Cassie Fleischer, the Memphis 7 and every worker facing corporate repression and fighting to organize.

‘We are stronger together’

Continued from page 1

This is not acceptable. Some of us rely on working enough hours each week to qualify for student loans. Others have families they need to take care of. It is cruel for Starbucks to take and take our labor and ask us for every ounce of energy we have as employees and to not fairly pay us. When the company keeps seeing billions of dollars in profits, we have to ask ourselves who is being paid that money? Because it isn’t us.

Starbucks has not done enough to protect us from COVID-19. We worry every day that we will spread it to our loved ones at home, because of how exposed we are at work. We demand better policies to protect us as partners and the customers who come in the store. There is no mask mandate for customers. This is NOT acceptable.

KS: Many other partners, our co-workers, share these feelings. There has been a time in the past when we have been told there are two empty seats at the table, the customers and the partners. We want [CEO] Kevin Johnson to give us our seat at the table; we want to really have a voice. When you see something is good or even great, you can still amplify your voice to where we can have the best workplace possible. We want the protection and empowerment that a union can provide.

WW: What was your reaction when

The author is a contributor to Workers World newspaper and a union committee organizer with Starbucks Workers United in Buffalo.

the Memphis 7 were fired?

HW: We were shocked. As a store I think we sympathized with those partners. We know the company is looking for any reason, however small, to knock down these unions, and clearly Starbucks is not above bullying and threats. We believe Starbucks fired those partners to send a message to other potential unions across the country and to scare us.

We are not scared. We are stronger together.

WW: How can we show solidarity?

KS: We’ve already had some customers that have come through and encouraged us, changed names on orders to “Union Strong.” I would love to see more of that.

I would like to say that our store is ready to go forward with this; the majority signed. We want Starbucks to hear our voice. I hope we can have the support and encouragement from our company that we deserve.

HW: You can show solidarity by frequenting our stores. Come in and have a conversation with us. Or vocalize your support over social media. Let Starbucks know that you stand with the unions. Post about it on Instagram, Twitter, etc., and tag the company.

WW: In a message of solidarity, shared in a news release issued Feb. 18 by the Chicago and Midwest Regional Joint

Board of Workers United, West 6th Street barista and Union Organizing Committee member Maddie VanHook said: “We are excited to welcome our friends at the Clifton and MayLee stores into our fight!”

“We are stronger together, and every day we are one step closer to securing justice and equity in our workplaces.” □



Rally against union busting at Starbucks HQ

By Jim McMahan
Seattle

Seattle City Councilmember Kshama Sawant called for holding actions across the country on Feb. 15 to protest Starbucks’ firing of the Memphis 7. In front of Starbucks’ national/world headquarters, 100 unionists, Starbucks workers and solidarity activists picketed and chanted, “When the Memphis 7 are under attack, what do we do? Stand Up, Fight Back!”

The demonstration was initiated by Sawant’s office and the Starbucks workers, and it brought out broad support and media coverage. Two of the fired Memphis workers flew to Seattle to represent — LaKota McGlawn and Beto Sanchez. Looking up at the huge Starbucks Tower, they detailed the many

cases of harassment and disrespect the workers were forced to endure. They said Starbucks wanted to make an example of them, but that was a big mistake.

Calling Memphis a union city, Sanchez said Starbucks’ workers looked to gain support from workers in Memphis and all across the country. Sawant described the resolution she got the Seattle City Council

to pass last week, protesting Starbucks’ union busting and calling for solidarity for Starbucks workers. Over 800 favorable emails from workers forced the Council to pass the resolution of support, 7-0.

Two Seattle Starbucks worker-organizers from the Broadway and Westlake stores spoke. The Westlake store worker called out Starbucks for racism for the

firing of the Memphis organizing committee. Workers at the Seattle Roastery — a big factory-style store — have now joined the organizing drive.

A concrete worker from Teamsters Local 174 — on strike for justice against the giant cement companies’ cartel for almost two months — brought solidarity from their struggle. A young speaker

from the Martin Luther King Jr. County Labor Council, representing 150,000 workers, spoke of the importance of organizing millennials due to the declining living standards of this generation of workers.

The rally/picket ended with a march to the nearest Starbucks store, where worker-organizers went inside with a message for local workers. □



Rally calls for rehiring of Memphis 7 outside Starbucks’ headquarters in Seattle, Feb. 15.

Puerto Rico: Workers, yes! Colonizers, no!

This slightly edited press release was written by Gabriela Malespin and Normahiram Pérez of New York Boricua Resistance and Call to Action on Puerto Rico. The organizations holding the Feb. 18 rally were New York Boricua Resistance, Call to Action on Puerto Rico, Colectiva Solidaridad, ProLibertad and Partido Independentista Puertorriqueña.

On Feb. 18, a coalition of Puerto Rican and global anti-imperialist groups will rally at Union Square, [New York City], at 5:00 p.m. in solidarity with the workers’ strikes happening in Puerto Rico.

This action calls for permanent, substantial wage increases for the working class, increases in workers’ pensions, the end of austerity policies in the archipelago and the immediate repeal of the Act 60 tax benefits for investors moving to the island.

This solidarity rally emphasizes how the United States’ imposition of austerity policies on the archipelago, combined with the lucrative tax breaks offered to the rich, have come at the expense of Puerto Rican workers.

In the last week, thousands of teachers across the archipelago have been striking to demand higher wages, improved working

conditions and better pensions. With the current base pay for teachers being \$1,750 a month, the Federación de Maestros de Puerto Rico (FMPR) is demanding an increase of \$4,000 a month.

These mass protests have resulted in colonial Gov. Pedro Pierluisi, the former lawyer for the Fiscal Oversight Control Board, making an announcement of a temporary salary increase of \$1,000 to teachers starting in July, ignoring the other demands such as an increase in pensions. This announcement was a weak attempt to quell ongoing protests from happening.

The Magisterio and other organizations in Puerto Rico have rejected this announcement and have continued their strike. At this point in time, multiple other workers are on strike, including firefighters, restaurant workers and nurses, among many others.

The economic hardship that teachers and other public sector workers are facing is in stark contrast to the lucrative tax benefits and financial gains enjoyed by



Union Square, New York City, Feb. 18.

WW PHOTO: BERNDA RYAN

Act 60 beneficiaries. Though the Act 60 tax incentives have existed in Puerto Rico since 2012 (then known as Act 20/22), the rise of cryptocurrency, as well as the ongoing debt crisis, has made the island attractive to wealthy foreign investors eager to reap the benefits of these tax exemptions and turn Puerto Rico into a crypto hub. Act 60 provides millions of dollars in tax exemptions to eligible investors and businesses.

These tax exemptions are not available to longtime residents on the island. Economists and studies have indicated that these incentives fail to provide meaningful economic growth in Puerto Rico, instead

rapidly accelerating gentrification and displacement of locals in the archipelago.

Norma Perez from Call to Action on Puerto Rico states: “Our coalition intends to show what is happening with our families on the Island. Some of us were displaced because the economic crisis in Puerto Rico started more than 20 years ago. With these laws, more Puerto Ricans will be expelled.”

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

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

Puerto Rico is not for sale! Independence for Puerto Rico! □

‘Day Without Immigrants’ demands ‘citizenship now!’

By Philadelphia WW bureau

Migrants, refugees and their supporters participated in a march and rally in Philadelphia on the national ‘Day Without Immigrants’ Feb. 14, to demand that President Joe Biden keep his campaign promises and grant them citizenship now. Despite frigid temperatures the protest, which started with around 30 people, grew to well over 100.

Some participants spoke of attending the original Day Without Immigrants in 2006 as children, when millions of migrant workers shut down businesses to show how central they were to the U.S. economy and demand legal status. Sixteen years later, they are living reminders of how many years have passed without any legislative progress in Congress.

Similar marches took place in Boston; Houston; New York City; Washington, D.C.; Columbus, Ohio; and cities in New Jersey, California, Arizona, Indiana and other states. The movement was initiated

by TikTok personality Carlos Eduardo Espina, who had participated in a 2017 Day Without Immigrants as a high school student.

In Philadelphia, home to 50,000 undocumented people, the march began in Love Park, an appropriate location for Valentines Day, where lead organizer Maria Serna welcomed everyone and explained to the press why many people were refusing to work, go to school or shop—to demand the Biden Administration pass legislation that would lead to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented people living in the U.S.

Most of the speakers gave their remarks in Spanish, so it was significant that the march stopped at two statues around City Hall honoring historic Black leaders. At the Octavius V. Catto memorial, Workers World Party member Joe Piette

described Catto’s efforts to enfranchise Black men in the 1870s, before he was assassinated for his activism on Oct 10, 1881. Piette pointed out that 150 years later, we are still fighting against racist forces who don’t want Black and Brown voters to elect people who could pass laws their communities need.

On the opposite side of City Hall, participants stopped at the statue of Harriet Tubman, where Melissa Robbins of North East Against Racism said, “Liberation,

freedom, the will to survive — that is what we Black and Brown people fight for every day. Our fight is against white supremacy. That is our fight.”

A dozen people spoke at the ending rally in front of the Municipal Services Building. Annaline Ceron Hernandez, one of the rally’s organizers, said:

“Since the pandemic, millions of undocumented immigrants have been on the front lines, working to keep people safe and healthy. Now we are here to ask for the immigration reform that Biden promised to deliver in the first 100 days of his term. We demand he keep his promise!”

Several speakers announced their intention to organize for a mass march on May 1. On that day participants expect to be in the streets in larger numbers, carrying the same signs that say: “Biden — No more empty promises! Citizenship now!” □



Protesters gathered outside Municipal Services Building, Philadelphia, Feb. 14.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

A ‘Day Without Immigrants’ in Houston

By Gloria Rubac
Houston

Valentine’s Day became a “Day Without Immigrants” around the country this year. In Houston hundreds rallied and marched Feb. 14 to tell President Joe Biden, “You better keep your promises, or we will show you the exit door.”

Organizers called for those who identified with immigrants’ rights to do no work, no school and no shopping on that day, to call attention to the important role of immigrants in all aspects of U.S. society.



WW PHOTO: GLORIA RUBAC

Korean speaker Hyunja Norman, Feb. 14.

FIEL (Immigrant Families and Students in Struggle — Familias Inmigrantes y Estudiantes en la Lucha) gathered immigrants living in Houston for a rally at Plaza Guadalupe, a march to City Hall and a rally there.

Cesar Espinosa, a leader of FIEL, told the crowd, “To the Biden administration, I say this, “Enough is enough. You have the power. If you do not deliver on your campaign promises, we will deliver — your exit ticket out of the White House.” Espinosa began his talk with a loving acknowledgement to all the parents, “Thank you. You gave so much of yourselves, your youth, to this country, so that we could have a better life.”

From infants to elders, families, friends and activists from one of the most diverse cities in the U.S. arrived with signs, banners and flags. They were from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Korea and Africa. There were rainbow LGBTQ+ flags and pastel Trans Liberation flags.

Andrea, a Mexican trans woman, spoke in Spanish for the Organización Latina de

Trans en Texas saying, “We are a Latina trans organization, and we are here with everyone; because Houston is our home, and we all deserve a better quality of life.”

A Korean delegation came with drums and signs in several languages in support of the day. Their speaker, Hyunja Norman, called for unity among all of Houston’s immigrants.

One particularly moving speaker was 12-year-old Amarah Melgarejo, who shyly spoke of how proud she was to be there with her grandmother who had sacrificed to bring her to Texas, and now they were marching together in Houston.

Carlos Eduardo Espina, a young immigrant who lives in nearby College Station, initiated the Day Without Immigrants on his TikTok page, where he has over 2.5 million followers. Espina makes videos in Spanish about immigration. He said in a Feb. 11 Op-Ed in the Los Angeles Times that this protest is meant to pressure Biden into prioritizing protecting immigrants: “Thousands of immigrants from across the country have said they’re going

to participate.”

Many at the Houston protest felt Biden had failed to deliver on his campaign promises regarding immigration reform. Raquel Haifa Chantres, who carried a sign directly appealing to Biden, said she won’t give up the fight until something changes. She said, “We just want to live here with dignity, real dignity.”

As the closing rally ended, there was a question asked, “Are you all ready to march on May Day?” The answer was a loud and rousing “YES!” □



WW PHOTO: GLORIA RUBAC

Andrea, a Mexican trans woman, spoke for Organización Latina de Trans en Texas, Feb. 14.

Buffalo, New York

Disabled man in jail seven months without charges

By Nigel Bouvart
Buffalo

Since July 6, 2021, Eric Lynch has been held in the Erie County Holding Center (where 32 prisoners have died since 2005) with no charges against him, spending around half that time on suicide watch. His mother, Monica Lynch, has agitated tirelessly for his release. Lynch, a 24-year-old Black man with several developmental disabilities is a victim of the byzantine bureaucracy of the U.S. mental health care system and the inhumanity of its carceral system.

Caught between the court’s refusal to release him and New York State’s Office for People With Developmental Disabilities’ (OPWDD) incapacity to place him in an inpatient facility, Lynch’s situation can only be described as Kafkaesque.

Monica Lynch is rightfully worried that her son might die in the ECHC. Her brother, Connell Burrell, died at ECHC in 2019, after lapsing into a diabetic coma due to improper care. She believes strongly that jail is not the right setting for her son and that therapy and medication will do him far more good. As long as the judge refuses to reverse her previous order demanding that Eric Lynch be transferred to an inpatient facility — one that cannot take him — Eric will languish in an infamously inhumane holding center.

Monica Lynch, a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, developed cancer in her left arm as a result of exposure to unknown toxins in the first Gulf War, resulting in an almost complete loss of mobility in that arm. Looking for means of supplementing the meager stipends she received from Social Security Disability and Veterans Administration compensation, she became a foster parent.

Monica Lynch and her then-husband took in three boys, whom they later adopted: Tylon and identical twins Eric and Bernard. Eric and Bernard had developmental disabilities from birth; they were born prematurely with fetal alcohol syndrome, and they were later diagnosed with mild intellectual disability, intermittent explosive disorder and psychotic episodes.

Eric Lynch faces harassment, discrimination

The boys benefited from an upbringing enriched by a large extended family and participation in youth sports leagues — though occasionally getting in trouble in school, especially when high pupil-to-teacher ratios meant they couldn’t get the personalized attention that they needed. Ms. Lynch moved her sons from school to school, looking for somewhere that could provide the proper level of care, sometimes public, sometimes private, sometimes homeschooling.

Although the twins’ disciplinary issues at school were



Monica Lynch protests the treatment of her disabled son at the Erie County Holding Center, Buffalo, New York.

typically rather benign — clowning around in class, leaving their desks — two incidents would color their interactions with law enforcement in years to come. While in middle school at Buffalo Traditional, a private school, Bernard found a toy gun on the street and put it in his locker at school. The school, taking this to be an indication that he knew what he was doing was wrong and finding him in violation of their zero tolerance policy, wanted to suspend him from school for a year.

Ms. Lynch withdrew Eric and Bernard from this school and, after homeschooling for a year, placed them in Buffalo Public Schools’ Burgard Vocational High. Here, Eric one day purchased a nickel bag of weed from another student, who then took it back and ran off with it and Eric’s money. Eric, distraught at having been robbed, reported the incident to teachers, not considering that this could get him in trouble. Here again, the school judged that he must have had the capacity to know that what he did was wrong, citing his academic performance — despite their having his mental health record on file.

Rather than have Eric suspended from school for a year, Ms. Lynch opted to move the twins to a different school once again, this time to Baker Victory, another private school, with a program through the OPWDD. Eric and Bernard have been OPWDD clients ever since — though they have received no services from the office, other than a subsidy of their rent.

As Eric and Bernard entered adulthood, Ms. Lynch found herself unable to provide them the care they needed, and she rented them an apartment of their own and later a house formerly occupied by their brother Tylon. In both places they were taken advantage of and harassed by neighbors, with several items being stolen from their home and some people going out of their way to cause conflicts with the brothers.

Mental health bureaucracy and jail

An incident at a convenience store resulted in Eric being charged with menacing, because he had a razor blade in his pocket when he was arrested, and started a string of arrests for Eric over petty altercations — he would be arrested almost 30 times. Their occasional psychotic episodes at their mother’s house, yelling, damaging property, caused Monica Lynch to get orders of protection against her sons, having been told that creating a paper trail about their mental issues would help get them the treatment and services they needed.

Eric was jailed last July after twice being late for an appearance ticket to see a county forensic psychologist to judge his capacity. He has no charges against him and has never committed a violent crime; but the court has judged him a flight risk, because of an incident where he was released from an inpatient facility on his own recognizance after an altercation with another patient.



GRAPHIC: JUDY KOH

OPWDD holds that staffing issues make it impossible for them to take on Eric as an inpatient. Ms. Lynch wants Eric released from ECHC into an Assisted Outpatient Program through OPWDD and has been holding a weekly vigil at the ECHC. □

‘End the war against the poor!’

By Martha Grevatt
Cleveland

The Cuyahoga County Jail Coalition, the Greater Cleveland Housing Justice Coalition and allies held a joint demonstration Feb. 20 to demand: “Stop the new jail plan! End evictions! End the war against the poor!”

They protested near the site of the NBA All Star Game to make tourists and local residents aware of Cleveland’s high rates of poverty and homelessness — while the County Council and County Executive Armond Budish plan to spend \$550 million to construct a new county jail. This money could be spent on jobs, housing, education and health care.

The Jail Coalition has launched a campaign to stop the new jail. Its recent statement reads in part:

“The county is planning to spend over \$500 million of taxpayer funds on a new jail building. A new building to



JOHN MCPHEE FOR JUSTSEEDS.ORG

warehouse our family members, friends and neighbors. This — while there are national estimates that half of jail populations are simply people awaiting trial, viewed as innocent in the eyes of the law, but separated from family and at risk of losing employment, housing and custody of their own children by a cash-bail system that punishes the poor.

“A new building with no community oversight, even after the series of tragic deaths and scandals that caused the U.S. Marshals to deem it one of the worst jails in the entire country. A new

jail would instantly become the largest mental health provider in the county, when we know you can’t get well in a cell. A new and larger building while they can’t even staff the current

building, leading to 23-hour lockdowns on a regular basis. That kind of isolation is torture.”

The coalition formed in 2018 in response to the high number of jail deaths that year. The most recent jail death occurred Jan. 16 this year. □



Cleveland, Feb. 20

WW PHOTO: MARTHA GREVATT

U.S. lies grease a path to war

The first casualty of war is truth. The famous ancient Greek playwright, Aeschylus, allegedly said this in 550 BCE. It's been repeated often, but is no longer accurate.

U.S. imperialism, its spokespeople and media have murdered truth already, before the war starts.

The invective the Biden administration directed at the Russian government and its President Vladimir Putin has been so vicious that everyone should realize a new U.S. aggression in Eastern Europe, directed against Russia, is underway.

The Biden administration invented the story; the corporate media repeated it. Word for word. For months. Few even asked questions.

Not only right-wing media, but also "liberal" CNN, MSNBC, NPR and the New York Times have been running four to six stories a day taking different angles to tell One Big Lie: Putin is about to invade

Ukraine. They even named dates for the invasion, now past due.

It got so intense that when these media exhausted lies with geopolitical themes, they spread the attack to the Winter Olympics. First they relentlessly bullied the brilliant 15-year-old Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva for allegedly "doping." Then when she lost her event, they attacked her Russian coach, Eteri Tutberidze, for lack of empathy. The media wanted it both ways.

With all the attacks on Russia, the media ran out of space to attack China, which for months had been their main target. They still managed to criticize the Chinese government for keeping everyone healthy at the Olympics, despite COVID-19. And they attacked China and Russia for being friends.

One AP reporter, Matt Lee, did ask State Department spokesperson Ned Price on Feb. 3 to provide proof that Russia was carrying out some nefarious act that Price

charged Russia with. Price chided Lee for daring to question the U.S. government. The only "proof" Price provided was a written transcript of his press briefing.

Whoever may still think the media should believe the U.S. imperialist government in a period of buildup toward war, Workers World would like to remind them:

Secretary of State Colin Powell swore to the United Nations in early 2003 that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. He swore that U.S. intelligence agencies had proof. It was a lie, as Powell later admitted. That lie served as pretext for invasion, a decade-long occupation and the destruction of Iraq and its people.

In January 1999, U.S. officials in the town of Racak, Kosovo, in Serbia, manipulated casualties of a battle between Kosovan terrorists and the Serbian Army and framed it as a "Serbian massacre" of civilians to agitate for war on Serbia. Within months NATO opened a 78-day

NATO bombing campaign of Serbia and Montenegro and eventually destroyed the Yugoslav multinational state.

In August 1964, the Lyndon Johnson government faked an attack by North Vietnamese patrol boats on U.S. destroyers. It used this lie, later exposed, to provide a pretext for the U.S. Senate's Bay of Tonkin Resolution. This allowed Johnson to escalate the war against Vietnam.

It might seem irrational for U.S. imperialism to provoke a war with Russia — the Pentagon recently lost a 20-year war with the Taliban — but the intense media demonization of Russia greases a path to war. Truth is the first casualty of the war drive.

The lessons are:
Don't trust any of the charges out of Washington.
Confront the media lies.
Stop the U.S.-NATO war against Russia over Ukraine. □

We reject the U.S. war game!

By Danny O'Brien
Portland, Oregon

The following speech was given at a Feb. 5 antiwar demonstration in Portland, one of 70 that took place around the world that weekend. Since then the crisis has continued, threatening to emerge into a global, U.S.-driven catastrophe at any moment. Endless rhetoric framing a Russian invasion as inevitable has continued, including an erroneous Bloomberg article that stayed public for 30 minutes claiming that an invasion had occurred. In recent days Russia has made attempted moves at diplomacy with the United States and even responded to pressure by withdrawing a number of their troops. The U.S. has replied to this with continued threats of a "bloody, destructive war" and "international condemnation."

When we see all these hawkish news articles about Russia, we must remember that this is not the same Russia of the 20th century. This is not the Soviet Union. Russia does not have global superpower status anymore. It is a target of U.S. imperial

conquest through the vessel of NATO. We can speculate military strength through nuclear capability, but in fact the U.S. accounts for over 36% of total global military expenditure, while Russia accounts for about 4%. The Russian economy is smaller than the economies of Brazil, South Korea or Canada. So why is it a target?

It's not a question of power or ideology, it's a question of resources. Gas and oil make up 80% of Russia's exports. It has one of the world's largest petroleum industries. In the past two decades, we've seen the U.S. plunder of an entire region for oil, so these motives should seem hauntingly familiar.

It is important to remember that this is not a new conflict. This is the culmination of over 30 years of slow-burning history. In 1990 Secretary of State James Baker pledged to Mikhail Gorbachev, the former president of the USSR, that NATO would not expand "one inch eastward." When that statement was made, there were 16 member states of NATO. Today, there are 30.

Ukraine has historically been one of Russia's largest trading partners. But the

U.S. does not want any of this trade to take place. The U.S. wants Ukraine out of Russia's hands to be reabsorbed as an asset of NATO. There has been a ridiculous influx of capital from the U.S. to Ukraine, up to \$5 billion since 2014, when the U.S. heavily backed and armed groups of fascists, neo-nazis and ultranationalists to overthrow the pro-Russian government, install one aligned with U.S. interests and upset trade between Russia and Ukraine in favor of trade with the European Union.

Ukraine is just another piece on the chessboard for the United States. NATO has almost completely encircled Russia militarily over the last three decades. There were endless promises made to Russia on the eve of its birth from the ashes of the Soviet Union: a place among the capitalists in the G7, no further military expansion from NATO, the chance to not be bullied ruthlessly and endlessly by the West anymore. None of these came to fruition.

When the Soviet Union dissolved, so did their Cold War military alliance. The Warsaw Pact is gone. So why is NATO still

here? Why has it expanded and continued to pick on the corpse of its former rival?

The U.S., through NATO, has made it clear that it is targeting Russia and that it is hungry for war now. But the people don't want another war in this stale age of endless wars! We want health care, education and a safety net! We want an end to this awful pandemic and to the rampant racism in this country! We want living wages and union contracts, not military contracts, bloodshed or imperial conquest!

NATO's interests are not our own! The U.S. is playing the same despicable war game it's always played, and we must reject that game! □



WW PHOTO: LYN NEELEY

'U.S., hands off Russia!' demonstration, Portland, Feb. 5. Danny O'Brien on left.

Berlin Antiwar rally exposes Washington's lies

By John Catalinotto

Despite gale warnings, the Berlin Peace Coordination drew a thousand people to a Feb. 18 antiwar rally on the Platz des 18. März at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, under the slogans "Stop the media war-mongering and NATO aggression policy" and "Disarmament and peace with Russia." Among the participants were members of the Left Party, the German Communist Party and the Friends of Nature.

Left Party member of the Bundestag, Sevim Dagdelen, to the cheers of the crowd, exposed the government and media campaign, initiated by the United States and followed in Germany, which accuses Russia of preparing aggression. "The saying that the first casualty of war is truth," she said, "is out of date. Today, long before the war starts, the U.S. intelligence agencies knock the truth unconscious to prepare the population for war." (Junge Welt, Feb. 19, rally video)

Dagdelen referred to lies Washington used to prepare and justify wars in the past, such as Colin Powell's fabrication



PHOTO: FRIKO (PEACE COORDINATION)

Left Party representative in Bundestag, Sevim Dagdelen, at Feb. 18 antiwar rally.

in 2003 about Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction and the 1964 fake attack on U.S. destroyers in the Tonkin Gulf. She said the people must have no confidence in so-called intelligence from Washington on alleged Russian preparations for attacks.

Dagdelen pointed out that the starting points of the current escalation were the Ukrainian combat-drone attack on the Donbass in October and the New Year's speech by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, in which he declared his intention to seize the Donbass with military force. □

No U.S./NATO war



WW PHOTO: SARA FLOUNDERS

Over 100 people, joined by many others on social media, gathered Feb. 19 at Grand Central Station in New York City with an anti-NATO message opposing another imperialist war. A wide range of peace and justice organizations supported the action, including Black Alliance for Peace, Workers Assembly Against Racism (WAAR) and Workers World Party.

— Report by Sara Flounders

Flu Klux Klan ‘truckers’ invade Canada

By Betsey Piette

Since early February, corporate media has extensively covered the controversial, right-wing “Freedom Convoy” of so-called “truckers” protesting vaccine mandates in Canada. Their two-week raucous and overtly racist encampment in Ottawa was finally disbanded by the state under Canada’s Emergencies Act.

What corporate media barely covered, however, were the persistent counterdemonstrations in several major Canadian cities.

Workers World spoke with Canadian postal worker Basia Sokal, from Winnipeg, Manitoba, who brought the counterprotesters to our attention during an international call of postal workers addressing the danger of post office privatization. Sokal reported that a National Day of Counter Protests was called Feb. 12, including a demonstration of over 2,000 people in Ottawa, Ontario, that outnumbered the “Freedom Convoy” participants



Counterprotesters gathered at Manitoba Legislative Building Feb. 12 to tell Winnipeg ‘Freedom Convoy’ to ‘go home!’

five-to-one.

Demonstrating in minus 38 C (minus 36.4 F) weather, the counterprotesters carried signs that read: “Truck off,” and “Make Ottawa boring again.”

Alex Silas, with the Public Service Alliance of Canada, stated, “This convoy does not represent working-class values. Truckers are right now delivering goods all over the country. They’re not in downtown Ottawa terrorizing our community.” (Ottawa Sun, Feb. 13)

On Feb. 12 a planned protest of the “Freedom Convoy” outside Kingston City Hall, near Toronto, Ontario, was confronted by over 100 counterdemonstrators with signs saying “End White Supremacy” and “Nazis F_k Off.”

Kingston health care worker Lindsay Legere stated: “We want to make the message clear that we don’t support fascism; we don’t support racism; and we don’t support going against health mandates that protect vulnerable members of society and health care workers.” (Toronto Sun, Feb. 12)

Sokal also described the initial counterprotests that started as early as Feb. 3, with several spontaneous actions around Canada. In Ottawa an early morning counterprotest of around 30 people initially blocked a branch of the “Freedom Convoy” from joining the main occupation outside Parliament Feb. 3. By 9 a.m. they were joined by around 1,000 participants who kept up the action until late afternoon.

In Vancouver, British

Columbia, trucks from the convoy were disrupted Feb. 5 by over 200 counterprotesters and cyclists, who blocked the trucks’ westward progress at several different intersections. Using their bikes, throwing nails on the road, throwing rocks and eggs at trucks and even laying their bodies down in front of the trucks, the counterprotesters rerouted the right-wing convoy away from hospitals and downtown Vancouver, forcing it to reverse course.

Vancouver counterprotesters made it clear that if the convoy returns, they will be there too. Other anti-convoy protests took place in Edmonton and Coutts, Alberta; Winnipeg; and other Canadian cities.

Racist and fascist occupation

Referring to the “Freedom Convoy” as the “Flu Klux Klan,” Sokal raised that teachers, students and union members — including the Canadian Union of Postal Workers — across Canada were concerned about the fascist nature of the Ottawa occupation. “Their timing was interesting, because a lot of provinces had started to loosen mandates already. The Canadian trucking industry says that 90% to 95% of truckers are vaccinated. Maybe 200 truckers wanted to go to Ottawa to

protest, but when they started to get Nazi and Confederate flags showing up, they did nothing to distance themselves. They should have shut it down, but instead they welcomed them.

“Many of the participants in the occupation were not actually truckers — they were truck owners, who commissioned others to drive for them. They focused on the vaccine mandate rather than on serious issues of road safety, lack of training and fatigue that truckers face.

“Real truckers are using this opportunity to speak out about problems working through the pandemic. Canada is a huge country with limited highway washrooms, places for truckers to get meals or even spaces to park their rigs by restaurants.”

Sokal criticized the government for failing to intervene when they could clearly see what was building in early February. “If this was a Black Lives Matter encampment or Indigenous land protectors, they would have arrested people long ago. Yet because it was predominantly white men who are bored, police did little to nothing, until the Emergencies Act was put in place. There was big money, big oil behind this and a lot of right-wing influence. What happened with Trump in the U.S. on Jan. 6, 2021, spilled over to Canada.” □

Referring to the ‘Freedom Convoy’ as the ‘Flu Klux Klan,’ Sokal raised that teachers, students and union members — including the Canadian Union of Postal Workers — across Canada were concerned about the fascist nature of the Ottawa occupation.

Canadian communists denounce the right-wing ‘Convoy’

The following are edited excerpts from a Feb. 4 statement issued by the Communist Party of Canada and a Jan. 29 statement from the Communist Party of Quebec, a constituent part of the CPC with the right to set its own policies on matters relating to Quebec. Full statements are at tinyurl.com/2nsjz5rt and tinyurl.com/2zmr9737.

Translation from the French by Workers World Party comrades.

Statement by the Communist Party of Canada

The Communist Party of Canada views the “Freedom Convoy” as a public expression of the increasingly organized and assertive far right. The clear links between the organizers of the convoy and far-right networks indicate that this is not a spontaneous working-class demonstration. On the contrary, it is part of a global phenomenon: the rise and mainstreaming of the far right, which is demonstrated by the strong support (ideologically and financially) from the U.S. far right and circles close to Donald Trump and the Jan. 6 insurrection. ...

We understand the frustrations of a growing part of the population. They are justified. Since the beginning of the pandemic, both federal and provincial governments have been busy ensuring that corporate interests are placed firmly ahead of public health. The deaths we mourn from this deadly pandemic are victims of decades of privatization of our public health system. ...

However, these self-proclaimed “spokesmen of the people” [in the convoy] refuse to address these questions. They substitute a populist and anti-scientific discourse in order to funnel the

anger of the working people towards other workers, particularly immigrants, women, Black and Indigenous People, Muslims, health care workers (who’ve been attacked), teachers and other public organizations. Racism, misogyny, violence and hate speech are commonplace in this convoy, which seeks only to divide workers and instill the idea that the enemy is not the bosses, but working people themselves. ...

They don’t say a word about the central issue of defending and expanding our public services, especially our public health care system; about raising wages and controlling the prices of basic necessities; not a word about nationalizing the pharmaceutical industry to stop Big Pharma’s profiteering. ...

Communists recognize the interests behind this demonstration very well: big business and the far-right (white supremacists, fascists, fundamentalists, etc.) We know what it means when the far right organizes itself and tries to take root among the unemployed, the unorganized and the bankrupt. ...

We call on the most conscious workers, the trade union movement, also on all progressive and democratic forces to block these reactionaries by unmasking them and to oppose them by fighting for a genuine people’s recovery.

Statement by the Communist Party of Quebec

The Communist Party of Quebec and its members should in no way endorse this movement. Its initiators, as well as the various political forces that have since joined it, have very skillfully taken advantage of the

widespread and growing frustration that exists in large sections of the population, both here and elsewhere in Canada, sometimes for very good reasons and sometimes for not-so-good reasons.

This movement has become, in a few days, a kind of 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. ...

All this reminds us 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.

Note that the majority of workers in the trucking industry are employed by large trucking companies and do not support this movement. Those who make up these demonstrations are either independent truckers who own their trucks or are owners of the many small companies who have also encouraged their employees to join in this movement. This was confirmed once again on Friday by a representative of the Teamsters, which represents the majority of unionized



Right-wing truck convoy blockades the streets of Ottawa, Canada’s capital, Feb. 5.

truckers in Quebec, as well as in the rest of Canada. ...

All of this demonstrates the importance of the ideas and the proposals of organizations, such as the Communist Party, which clearly offer an alternative to those ideas advocated by the right and extreme right organizations and which must become more widely known to the general public. We must not cede this ground to the right. ...

One last point: Those who continue to say that right-wing and extreme right-wing ideas are more dominant in Quebec than in English Canada should go and do their homework, because this movement started in English Canada and remains, to a very large extent, a movement that is first and foremost linked to English Canada much more than to Quebec. □



CON NUESTRA AMÉRICA
La rapiña de capitalismo

Puerto Rico

¡Trabajadores, sí! ¡Colonizadores, no!

Por Gabriela Malespin y Normahiram Pérez
New York Boricua Resistance
y Call to Action on Puerto Rico.

Las organizaciones que celebraron la concentración del 18 de febrero fueron New York Boricua Resistance, Call to Action on Puerto Rico, Colectiva Solidaridad, Prolibertad y Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño. Abajo, el apelo.

Viernes, 18 de febrero de 2022. Este viernes 18 de febrero, una coalición de grupos antiimperialistas puertorriqueños y mundiales se reunirá en Union Square a las 5:00 p. m. en solidaridad con las huelgas de trabajadores que ocurren en Puerto Rico. Esta acción exige aumentos salariales permanentes y sustanciales para la clase trabajadora, aumento de las pensiones de los trabajadores, el fin de las políticas de austeridad en el archipiélago y la derogación inmediata de los beneficios fiscales de la Ley 60 para los inversores que se mudan a la isla.

Esta manifestación de solidaridad enfatiza como la imposición de las políticas de austeridad de los Estados Unidos en el archipiélago, combinadas con las lucrativas exenciones fiscales ofrecidas a los ricos, se han producido a expensas de los trabajadores puertorriqueños.

Desde la semana pasada, miles de docentes en todo el archipiélago han estado en huelga para exigir salarios más altos, mejores condiciones de trabajo, y

mejores pensiones. Con el salario base actual para maestros de \$1,750/mes, la Federación de Maestros de Puerto Rico



San Juan de Puerto Rico, 18 de febrero

En este momento, muchos otros trabajadores están en huelga, incluidos bomberos, trabajadores de restaurantes y enfermeras, entre muchos otros.

(FMPR) exige un aumento de \$4,000/mes. Estas protestas masivas han resultado en que el gobernador colonial Pedro Pierluisi, ex abogado de la Junta de Control de Supervisión Fiscal, haya anunciado un aumento temporal de \$1,000

en el salario de los maestros a partir de julio, ignorando otras demandas como un aumento en las pensiones.

Este anuncio fue un intento débil de sofocar las protestas en curso. El Magisterio y otras organizaciones en Puerto Rico han rechazado este anuncio y han continuado con su huelga. En este momento, muchos otros trabajadores están en huelga, incluidos bomberos, trabajadores de restaurantes y enfermeras, entre muchos otros.

Las dificultades económicas que enfrentan los maestros y otros trabajadores del sector público contrastan con los lucrativos beneficios fiscales y las ganancias financieras que disfrutan los beneficiarios de la Ley 60. Aunque los incentivos fiscales de la Ley 60 han existido en Puerto Rico desde 2012 (anteriormente conocida como Ley 20/22), el auge de las criptomonedas, así como la actual crisis de la deuda, han hecho que la isla sea atractiva para los inversionistas extranjeros adinerados ansiosos por aprovechar los beneficios de estas exenciones contributivas y convertir a Puerto Rico en un centro criptográfico.

La Ley 60 proporciona millones de dólares en exenciones de impuestos a inversionistas y empresas elegibles. Estas exenciones de impuestos no están disponibles para los residentes de la isla.

Economistas y estudios han indicado que estos incentivos no brindan un crecimiento económico significativo en Puerto Rico, sino que aceleran rápidamente la gentrificación y el desplazamiento de los locales en el archipiélago.

De Acuerdo a Norma Perez, vocero de “A Call to Action on Puerto Rico” destacó que “nuestra coalition pretende mostrar lo que está pasando con nuestras familias en la Isla. Algunos fuimos desplazados porque la crisis económica en Puerto Rico comenzó hace más de 20 años. Con estas leyes, mas puertorriqueños serán expulsados”.

Cyn Rodriguez, vocero de Colectiva Solidaridad, destacó como los puertorriqueños tanto en la diáspora como en el archipiélago están listos y movilizados contra la marea de beneficiarios de la Ley 60. “Si bien el gobierno de Puerto Rico tiene la intención de vender la isla al mejor postor, reconocemos que hay mucho en juego. Vamos a perder a Puerto Rico si no derogamos estos beneficios contributivos de la Ley 60.

Es hora de que las organizaciones antiimperialistas puertorriqueñas (tanto en la isla como en la diáspora) desarrollen una campaña agresiva para derogar los beneficios contributivos, devolver tierras al pueblo puertorriqueño y luchar por la independencia de Puerto Rico!

¡PUERTO RICO NO ESTÁ EN VENTA!
¡INDEPENDENCIA PARA PUERTO RICO! □

¡La solución a la desigualdad global es el socialismo!

En todo el mundo, miles de millones de personas están sufriendo pérdidas increíbles como consecuencia de la incapacidad y la negativa del capitalismo a abordar seriamente la pandemia del COVID-19.

Millones han perdido la vida o a sus seres queridos. Las familias se han quedado sin casa. Los trabajadores se han visto obligados a elegir entre arriesgar su salud en trabajos de salario mínimo o alimentar a sus familias, con una inflación que aumenta constantemente el costo de los alimentos y otras necesidades básicas.

La carga ha sido más pesada en el Sur Global, en las personas de color, en las personas con discapacidad, en los trabajadores de la economía informal y en las mujeres, muchas de las cuales se vieron obligadas a dejar sus trabajos por falta de guarderías y otras ayudas esenciales.

Sin embargo, para 10 hombres blancos, la pandemia ha traído beneficios inesperados de proporciones épicas. Su riqueza colectiva se ha duplicado con creces durante la pandemia de COVID-19, aumentando a 1,5 billones de dólares. Mientras que la desigualdad, exacerbada por la pandemia, provoca la muerte de al menos 21.000 personas al día en todo el mundo —aproximadamente una persona cada cuatro segundos— estos ultramillonarios se enriquecen colectivamente en 1.200 millones de dólares cada día que pasa.

Estas estadísticas fueron publicadas en un informe de Oxfam Internacional a principios de enero. “Los multimillonarios han tenido una pandemia tremenda”, declaró la directora ejecutiva de Oxfam Internacional, Gabriela Bucher. “Los bancos centrales inyectaron billones [millones de millones] de dólares en los mercados financieros para salvar la economía, pero gran parte de esa cantidad ha acabado llenando los bolsillos de los multimillonarios que se han beneficiado del boom bursátil”.

Según Oxfam —y coincidimos plenamente: “Un sistema económico que permite a un puñado de individuos amasar tan vastas fortunas, mientras miles de millones pasan hambre y carecen de atención médica adecuada durante una pandemia, es un acto manifiesto de violencia económica dirigido a enormes franjas de la humanidad”.

Donde diferimos de Oxfam es en la solución.

Oxfam pide un “impuesto sobre la riqueza” como forma de redistribuirla. Aunque esto no tiene nada de malo, no aborda el problema sistémico. Los supermillonarios harán lo que siempre hacen: trasladar los costos de los impuestos más altos a los consumidores a través de aumentos de precios y a los trabajadores a través de la disminución de salarios y beneficios.

La riqueza de estos diez Presidentes Ejecutivos (CEO) — Jeff Bezos (Amazon), Elon Musk (Tesla), Bill Gates (Microsoft), Larry Page (Google), Sergey Brin (Google), Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook), Steve Ballmer (Microsoft), Warren Buffet (Berkshire Hathaway), Larry Ellison (Oracle) y el empresario francés Bernard Arnault — no se basó en su evasión fiscal, aunque contribuyó.

La verdadera fuente de su riqueza proviene de su superexplotación del trabajo colectivo de sus trabajadores. Es muy poco probable que Jeff Bezos haya levantado alguna vez una caja pesada en uno de sus almacenes de Amazon en competencia con un robot. O que Elon Musk haya trabajado alguna vez en una cadena de montaje de Tesla. Sin embargo, ambos se han hecho superricos explotando la mano de obra de los trabajadores que realizan estos trabajos.

¡Recuperar la riqueza que hemos producido!

La redistribución de la riqueza sólo se produce cuando los trabajadores organizados recuperan la riqueza que han creado colectivamente, la riqueza que

les ha robado la patronal. Aunque un impuesto sobre la riqueza debería seguir sobre la mesa, la firma por parte del presidente Joe Biden de una orden ejecutiva para aprobar la Ley de Protección del Derecho de Sindicación iría mucho más lejos a la hora de abordar la desigualdad de ingresos.

La solución que se necesita ahora mismo es un amplio e intenso apoyo a los esfuerzos de sindicalización de los trabajadores de Amazon, Starbucks y muchas otras empresas, grandes y pequeñas.

Los trabajadores tienen que exigir asistencia sanitaria gratuita; la cancelación de la deuda de los préstamos estudiantiles; un salario mínimo universal, global y digno; el derecho garantizado a la sindicalización; y mucho más. Workers World/Mundo Obrero apoya las luchas por todas estas demandas tradicionales.

Pero para abordar verdaderamente la desigualdad de ingresos, nuestra lucha debe ser por el socialismo, bajo el cual los medios de producción son de propiedad colectiva de los trabajadores y los oprimidos —donde estos CEOs super-ricos realmente tendrían que hacer un día de trabajo honesto por una vez en sus vidas. □

MUNDO OBRERO
editorial



WFTU