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!

To cut into our sick and vacation time is very frustrating, and it put that seed in everyone’s brain. The partners [at the downtown store] really 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.

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What is Black excellence?

Black History Month is a time when Black excellence is celebrated, a time when achievements 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 stink, but it was given more height 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 image 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 plaque 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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Oakland workers, teachers

‘Stop the Port land grab and racist school closings’

By Dave Welsh
Oakland, California

A crowd of Oakland longshore work- ers 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 threat- ened with closure. The main organizer of the rally was Local 10 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union.

Trent Willis, imme- diate-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.

“By the way, we want material 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 complicit. 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 blow, you’ve got to show up. It’s hard to beat the sys- tem 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 need. What just happened in the Port is the grab for the legacies of trailblazing Black women like Fannie Lou Hamer.”

The theme at the rally was Local 10, IWWU, at Oakland rally, Feb. 17.

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 the leaders of trailblazing Black women like Fannie Lou Hamer.”

“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 neoco- lonialist military was allowed in to aid the battle against the Islamic State or al-Qaida affiliates in Mali. Those

Trent Willis recalled a popular 1960s song, ‘Waiting for the world to change’ and said: ‘We’re not waiting. 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 has agreed to withdraw from Mali and its 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 13,000-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.

‘Just what happened in the Tessit region is an exam- ple 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.

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Workers World newspaper commemorates Black History Month because white supremacy pervades life under capitalism and 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 against 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 institution- alized, systemic white supremacy. A case in point is our continuing coverage of the movements to free political prisoners—like Mumia Abu-Jamal, Rachell 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.

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Dred Scott to Daunte Wright: same repression, same fight

By Jim McMahan

In the Civil War’s closing days, Union Army forces finally defeated the Confederate Army on Atlanta in the fall of 1864. An economic cisalpine of the racist system of slavery, almost half the city was destroyed by combat and disease.

In November, a week after the reelection of 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 plains and wrapped around tree trunks. Special Field Order 15 issued on Jan. 16, 1865, declared all land in the Confederacy was turned over to the freed people of African descent.

This became the basis for Sherman’s March to the Sea. It was the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Act, the abolition of slavery, and the beginning of access to democratic rights for all Black people in the U.S. When the army came to Savannah, Georgia, in mid-December, the Confederacy had another four months to live before Robert E. Lee’s surrender in Virginia.

The heroic struggle of Black workers fighting to oust the Confederacy and to end slavery was generalized in the groundbreaking work by W.E.B. Du Bois, “Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880.” 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, and 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 from the hands of white land owners. The order stated that “each family shall have no more than 40 acres of tillable ground … until Congress shall regulate its 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.

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Republicans. It must be framed in the historical context, while the Democratic Party comes off as “liberal” and look like a matter of racist Republican Party policies— or racist class maneuvers? Shelby County v. Holder.

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 suppression of voting rights—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 foothold 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 continued dominance of a Republican Party that will 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 bourgeoisie party of racist reaction, in contrast to the Democratic Party with its minimal, toothless gestures toward “democracy.”

The recent SCOTUS decision must be seen in this context. Its significance is not just about limiting the political freedoms accorded to Black people in general, within a bourgeois capitalist democracy like the U.S. 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 that formally emancipated 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.

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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 Feb. 16 afternoon leading chants and talking to Amazon workers outside a facility in East Durham. “Jeff Bezos you can’t hide! We can see your greedy side,” she chanted along with other Amazon workers gathered in a local 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.

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 Kaysi Taylor, associate at Amazon RDU5 Sort Center in Durham and member of the Carolina Amazonians United for Solidarity and Equitable Allocation of Workers (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 workers; water department and other workers in every corner of the state. Thousands of workers wore stickers to work that said “Yes We Will,” “Pay N-95” 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 partnered with local members of the Southern Workers Assembly to demand 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 gavанаized nurses to organize into the National Nurses United.

“At Mission Hospital far too many colleagues of mine have been out sick with COVID-19,” stated Claire Siegel, Registered Nurse. “JCAH’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.

Dan of the from the hospital, Albert Mayhew, 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 our bus drivers supplied with masks that are the least effective in protecting against COVID-19,” said Mayhew. 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 plywood 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,” ONN. “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 Murdock Developmental Center, and steward of UE Local 150.

“With our 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 Goldboro chapter.

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

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!”

#SafeJobsSaveLives

Members of the National Domestic Workers Union advocating for safer standards.

Amalgamated Transit Union Local 128 members, Asheville.

Student workers, North Carolina State University, Raleigh.
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 delaying tactic," 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 1,000 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 the example of these roasteries and file for a union. Another Seattle store at 101 Broadway E is set to vote by mail starting Feb. 29.

**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 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 union's organizing committee in Memphis, Tennessee.

**Sawant called out Starbucks for racism for the second time**

On Feb. 8, 2020, Starbucks fired a leading union organizer, who later won a union election. The firing of the Memphis organizing committee, led by the Memphis 7, was a response to the company's racist policies.

The company's response to the Memphis 7 was firing, not reinstatement. In a message of solidarity, shared by the National Labor Relations Board, Starbucks workers and community members in multiple cities mobilized in solidarity with the Memphis 7, demanding they be immediately reinstated.

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 to organize the first unionized corporate-owned store 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.

"When the Memphis 7 are fired, it brings out the Starbucks work-initiated by Sawant's office under attack, what do we do?"

"We are excited to welcome our friends at the Clifton and May Lee stores into our fight!"

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

"We will be fighting for reinstatement and paybacks. 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**

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.

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. We are not scared. We are stronger together.

"We are stronger together, and every day we are one step closer to securing justice and equity in our workplaces."
Puerto Rico: Workers, yes! Colonizers, no!

This slightly edited press release was written by Gabriela Malespin and Normahiri Perea de New York Boricua Resistance Call to Action on Puerto Rico. The organizations holding the Feb. 18 rally were New York Boricua Resistance, Call to Action on Puerto Rico, Colectivo Solidaridad, Pro Libertad and Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño.

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’ pension, the end of austerity policies in the archipelago, combined with the lucrative tax breaks offered to the rich in order to attract 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.

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 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 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 economic crisis in Puerto Rico, has produced more than 20 years ago. With these laws, more Puerto Ricans will be expelled.

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 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.

Espina, 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 places around City Hall honoring historic Black leaders. At the Octavio V. Catto memorial, Workers World Party member Joe Piette described Catto’s efforts to enfirman 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 in our communities.

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!”

Day Without Immigrants’ demands ‘citizenship now!’

By Gloria Rubac

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 identify 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.

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 Espina, 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.”

Espina began his talk with a loving acknowledgment to all the parents, “Thank you. You gave so much of yourselves, your youth, to this country, so that we would 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, hand-made 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 Organization Latino 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 Aramah Melgar Jorge, who shyly spoke of how proud she was to be there with her grandmother who had sacrificed to bring her to Texas, and now are 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 and take action in pushing the Biden administration to let 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 didn’t give up on delivering meaningful change. 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 roaring “YES!”

A Day Without Immigrants’ in Houston

By Andrea, a Mexican trans woman, spoke for Organización Latino 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 inauspicious 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 typically rather benign — clowning around in class, leaving their desks — they could color their infractions 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 was not capable of knowing that what he did was wrong, citing his academic performance — despite their having a 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, 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.

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

By Martha Grevatt
Cleveland

Disabled man in jail seven months without charges

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 Commission 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 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.

“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.
U.S. lies grease a path to war

By John Catalinotto

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 Bremen Left Party member of the Bundestag, Sevim Dagdelen, said her party would reveal a new U.S. aggression in Eastern Europe, so vicious that everyone should realize a new war was underway.

Dagdelen pointed out that the starting points of the current escalation were the U.S. invasion and occupation of Afghanistan in 2001 and the U.S. aggression against Iraq in 2003. The two have been connected ever since then, she said.

In January 1999, NATO bombed Yugoslavia, including the city of Sarajevo, and killed 77 children. This was a war of aggression against a sovereign country.

The U.S. government has repeatedly said it is not at war with Russia. Dagdelen pointed out that the U.S. and its allies have committed atrocities against Russia.

The U.S. has been intimidating Russia through nuclear weapons. It has been expanding its military presence in Eastern Europe.

The U.S. has been trying to isolate Russia, economically and politically. It is arming its NATO allies to wage war on Russia.

The U.S. is playing the same despicable war game it’s always played, and we must confront the media lies.

The only “proof” Price provided was a written transcript of his press briefing. It got so intense that when these media exhausted lies with geopolitical themes, they turned 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 the competition, they attacked her Russian coach, Eteri Tutberidze, for lack of empathy. The media wanted it both ways.

In 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.

We reject the U.S. war game!

By Danny O’Brien

The following speech was given at a Feb. 5 antiwar demonstration in Portland, Oregon, 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 Russia had 200,000 troops ready.

In recent days Russia has made attempted moves to release its assets to stop the war. Its financial institutions are frozen, including the central bank, the National Bank of Russia.

The U.S. is trying to fan the flames of anti-Russian sentiment, but the majority of people around the world do not support the war against Russia.

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.

No U.S./NATO war

By Sara Flounders

We want living wages and union contracts, not endless wars! We want health care, education and a safety net! We want an end to the U.S. war on Ukraine.

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 stalemated stage of endless wars! We want health care, education and a safety net! We want an end to the U.S. war on Ukraine.

The U.S. is playing the same despicable war game it’s always played, and we must reject that game!
Flu Klux Klan ‘truckers’ invade Canada

By Betsy Piette

Since early February, corporate media has extensively covered the 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 Sokol, from Winnipeg, Manitoba, who brought the counterprotests to our attention during an international call of postal workers addressing the danger of post office privatization. Sokol reported that a National Day of Counter Protests was called Feb. 12, including a demonstration of over 2,000 people in Ottawa, Ontario, that outnum-

bered the “Freedom Convoy” participants 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, who was at the counterprotest, stated: “The 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.”

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, 3 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.”

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 was initially blocked by 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 blocked 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 inter-

sections. Using their hands, they were blocking rocks and eggs at trucks and even lay-

ing their bodies down in front of the trucks, the counterprotesters rerouted the right-

hand lane of traffic away from hospitals and downtown Vancouver, to close it to reverse traffic.

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 students, teachers and other public organizations.

Statement by the Communist Party of Quebec

The Communist Party of Quebec 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-sci-

entific discourse in order to funnel the anger of the working people towards other workers, particularly immi-

grants, women, Black and Indigenous People, Muslims, health care work-

ers (who’ve been attacked), teachers and other public organizations.

Racism, misogyny, violence and hate speech are commonplace in this con-

voy, which seeks to divide and con-

trol the enemy and instill the idea that the enemy is not the bosses, but working people themselves.

They don’t say a word about the cen-

tral issue of defending and expanding our public services, especially our public transportation system; or about raising wages and controlling the prices of basic neces-

sities; 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 supremacy, 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 work-

ers, the trade union movement, also on all progressive political elements to block these reactionaries by unmasking them and to oppose them by fighting for a genuine people’s recovery.

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ers, the trade union movement, also on all progressive political elements to block these reactionaries by unmasking them and to oppose them by fighting for a genuine people’s recovery.
¡Trabajadores, sí! ¡Colonizadores, no!

Por Gabriela Malespin y Normahíra 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, Colectivo Solidaridad, Pro Libertad y Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño. Abajo, el apelo.

Viernes, 18 de febrero de 2022. Este viernes 18 de febrero, una coalición de grupos antimonumentales, autoridades del sector público, la Federación de Maestros de Puerto Rico (FMPR) y el Movimiento de Trabajadores de Puerto Rico (MTRPR) exige un aumento de $4,000/mes para maestros a partir de julio, ignorando otras demandas como un aumento en las pensiones.

Esta acción fue un intento del gobierno de Puerto Rico de sofocar las protestas en curso. El Magistrado y otras organizaciones en Puerto Rico han rechazado este anuncio y han condenado a su gobierno.

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 trabajadores 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 de empresas y empresas, las cuales 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 sostienen rápidamente la gentrificación y el desplazamiento de los locales en el archipiélago.

De acuerdo a Norma Pérez, vocero de "A Call to Action on Puerto Rico" destacó que "nuestra coalición pretende mostrar lo que está pasando con nuestras familias y empresas de la Isla. Algunos fuimos desplazados por la crisis económica en Puerto Rico, y luego hace más de 20 años. Con estas leyes, las fuerzas de las fuerzas han desplazado a los residentes de la isla."

Cyn Rodríguez, vocero de Colectiva Solidaridad, destacó como los puertorriqueños tanto en la isla como en la diaspora desarrollan una campaña agresiva para derogar los beneficios contributivos, devolver tierras y bienes a los trabajadores de la clase trabajadora, aumentar la calidad de vida y mantener a Puerto Rico como un centro de negocios para la clase trabajadora, aumentar los salarios de los maestros a partir de julio, ignorando otras demandas como un aumento en las pensiones.

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