Young workers lead the way

The union makes us strong!

Starbucks organizing drive erupts

By Arjae Red
Buffalo, N.Y.

The spark that started in this city last August, when Starbucks workers announced their intent to unionize, has turned into a wildfire of righteous working-class ambition, with new locations across the country filing for union elections.

Stores in Mesa, Arizona; Boston; Seattle; Knoxville, Tennessee; Chicago; and Bloomfield, Colorado, have joined the fight, widening the scope of the struggle across the country. Victories in the first three stores that voted to unionize, two of the first three stores that voted in Buffalo (the second is still being contested in court) demonstrated that organizing a company with as much money and control as Starbucks is a fight that can be won.

This tidal wave of new union petitions being filed comes at a time when COVID-19, especially cases caused by the omicron variant, is tearing through the United States with record-breaking infection rates. Starbucks locations in Buffalo, and no doubt other cities, are facing a spike in infections. Starbucks has flooded the district with new hires in an attempt to dilute a union vote that took place Dec. 9 for three stores in Buffalo. Now these new hires are facing the recent wave of infections head-on, with no health insurance or paid sick leave time.

Many of Starbucks’ benefits do not kick in on day one, leaving many workers without the resources and medical care they need. In addition, workers confirmed to have been exposed to COVID-19 for extended periods of time, while vaccinated and asymptomatic, are not being offered paid isolation time to get tested. This leaves many workers feeling unsafe on the job, having already seen baristas who are fully vaccinated test positive for COVID-19.

Starbucks management asserts that its policy is in line with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines. However, in a country with over three-quarters of a million people already killed by the disease, it should be obvious that the CDC guidelines have been decidedly insufficient up to this point.

This public health catastrophe, combined with the deteriorating capitalist economy and rising cost of living, has left workers with little choice other than to organize for their own collective interests. What is a nightmare scenario for workers is the perfect storm to ignite a militant revival of the labor movement.

‘Amazon, recognize the union now!’

By Tony Murphy
New York City

Steps away from Broadway shows shut down by spiking COVID-19 numbers in New York City, a crowd of more than 80 people gathered in Times Square Dec. 22 to demand Amazon recognize the union being organized by the Amazon Labor Union at the company’s Staten Island warehouse, as well as unions organizing in other locations nationally.

Surrounded by labor unionists, striking Columbia University student workers and many other supporters of the ALU, Amazon workers spoke out about the grueling “peak season” work requirements, sexual harassment and unsafe superspreader conditions fueling the union drive, led by former Amazon worker Chris Smalls.

The rally, co-organized by ALU and Workers Assembly Against Racism (WAAR), completed a consequential day for both the workers’ struggle and the Amazon union fight. That morning dozens of workers organized by Amazonians United Chicagoland walked off the job in two locations, Cicero, Illinois, and Gage Park in Chicago, citing punishing hours and unsafe COVID-19 conditions. Then in New York City, workers with the ALU refiled their petition for a union election with the National Labor Relations Board and conducted a targeted walkout at the Staten Island warehouse.

Only hours before the Times Square rally, news broke that in late November, two workers at Amazon’s warehouse in Bessemer, Alabama, had died within six hours of each other during their shifts. At least one of them was told to keep working or he’d lose his job, even though he said he needed to go home. Evidently Amazon has been trying to cover up the fact that at least six workers at the Alabama warehouse have died in the last year.

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Chick Kaufman: an anchor

By Sara Flounders

Few people have done as much as Chuck Kaufman over so many years. He was an anchor in our movement.

In the more than 30 years that I knew Chuck, what I most valued was that he always worked for the ways he could help. No negativity, cynicism or backbiting. Chuck didn’t write big manifestos or give ultimatums. He helped on simple work plans. He fit very diverse, complicated people into tasks, where they would succeed.

Chuck excelled in projects that built revolutionary enthusiasm — like picking coffee, one bean at a time — hot, backbreaking, yet at the end of the day, measurable.

Working with Chuck in Washington, D.C., or when he came through New York, or at many conferences and events or visiting in Arizona, when he moved Alliance for Global Justice, and especially during these past two years in numerous zoom calls, he was a stabilizing force.

Chuck was a key part of the #SanctionsKill Campaign for the past two years; and despite traveling cross-country in his van, visiting family or in medical treatment, he was on most of the zoom calls, every two weeks. Each time he took on at least one task — helping write a report, writing a book — he made good suggestions on next steps.

Chuck’s early work focused on Nicaragua under full U.S. attack. But it kept expanding — to other countries targeted by U.S. imperialism; it included support for projects and participation in delegations to Cuba, Venezuela, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, then to China. At the same time, he was part of the militant border actions to defend migrants, always in solidarity with Palestine and in defense of the Black Lives Matter movement. He kept the big picture in the forefront, linking struggles, linking countries, linking people.

Chuck really went out of his way to help political activists whose projects were facing hard times. He threw out a lifetime to many campaigns and was truly nonsectarian.

Building solidarity doesn’t happen naturally in this vicariously competitive capitalist country. It takes conscious, focused discipline and a big heart.

Chuck just kept moving things forward. We will miss you, Chuck.

Chuck Kaufman ¡Presente!

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, multigendered and multigenerational 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 never-ending quest for ever-greater profits.

Capitalism means war and austerity and racism and repression, attacks on immigrants, misogyny, LGBTQ+ 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 gassed down by cops and bigots on a regular basis.

The ruthless ruling class today seeks to wipe out the organized working class worldwide. If you’re interested in Marxism, socialism and fighting for a socialist future, please contact a WWP branch near you.

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

For information, call 212.627.2994.

Chuck Kaufman in Honduras outside of the U.S. Palmerola Air Base in 2011. He and others were tear gassed on the two year anniversary of the U.S.-backed coup.
The prices of all basic goods and services necessary for human survival have been going up—in some cases, way up—in the last several months.

The November 2021 Consumer Price Index, which tracks annual and monthly increases in prices, rose by 6.8% that year—the highest jump in nearly 40 years. (tinyurl.com/7p2q4ztp)

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the average hourly wages of workers in this country have fallen by nearly 2%. (tinyurl.com/bdxmzj6z)

The cost of groceries rose 6.4% from a year ago, with prices of some staples like eggs and meats rising 10 to 20%. The price of gasoline jumped by a whopping 58% from November 2020, energy costs rose by just north of 33%, used cars are up by more than 30% and the price of clothes rose by 5%.

The rising price is where many workers are experiencing inflation most acutely, with rents in some U.S. cities rising by as much as 20%, 30% and even 80% over the past year or so, where a person working 40 hours a week at the federal minimum wage of $7.25 can afford a one-bedroom apartment.

This comes in the midst of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, a profound crisis of public health made far worse by the for-profit health care system in this country. It has exacerbated the deepening crisis of global capitalism, ushering in a wave of job losses, evictions and more suffering for workers and the oppressed.

The mainstream press is filled with a range of supposed explanations to diagnose why inflation is back in so rapidly in the U.S. and similar economies around the globe. But the reality is that none of these explain the root causes of what is driving these price increases and where the money is going—towards the hands of the bosses or the hands of millions of workers in this country.

So what’s really to blame for the rise in prices?

Capitalist system in crisis

Since the 2008 financial crisis, the global capitalist system has not only failed to provide adequate social safety net support, propped up for the past decade by the central banks funneling unprecedented infusions of money to the corporate and financial institutions. In the U.S., the Federal Reserve has pumped upwards of $10 trillion into the financial system and maintained very low interest rates throughout this past decade. It has ramped up this activity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

From 2008 to 2014 alone, the Federal Reserve pumped $3.5 trillion (!) in new money—nearly three times the amount the central bank had created since its founding 100 years earlier. During this entire last decade, the Fed has kept interest rates near zero for a longer period of time than ever before.

When the bosses are no longer forced to begin raising interest rates and scaling back its printing of new money—known as "quantitative easing"—capitalist revolt. This growing workers’ movement has already shown force and forced the Fed to abandon its plans and return to the regime of near-zero interest rates, thus pumping trillions of dollars into the hands of banks and large financial institutions. (politic.com, Dec. 28, 2021)

Several phenomena happened as a result. On the one hand, the amount of money hoarded by the banks and borrowed to speculate in financial markets is at a record high—upwards of $918 billion at the end of November 2021. This is more than double the nearly $400 billion in so-called "margin deficit" incurred prior to the financial crisis of 2008.

A report by the McKinsey Global Institute, published in 2021, found that just above two-thirds of global net worth was now stored in real estate, while only 7% was in cash and its most revolutionary elements to be taken up. It’s time for the vast majority of society versus the interests of the rich. What’s missing is the political will to fight for it.

The Federal Reserve and the federal government have not only spent the trillions of dollars in stimulus payments directly to workers, they have also funded a massive relief package to provide food, housing, medical care, education and more for workers and the oppressed.

But that is changing.

This growing workers’ movement cannot be stopped. See also: Workers of the World Unite.
Amazon union drive
NLRB ruling an organizing tool

By Martha Grevatt

Amazon’s vicious union busting has come under wide-spread scrutiny by the world’s working class — and even by some elements of the ruling class.

The National Labor Relations Board, created in 1935 to regulate the sharp battles between labor and capital, has ordered a new election at the Bessemer, Alabama, Amazon warehouse. In April the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union lost a representation election there by a wide margin; dozens of courageous Bessemer workers came forth and testified before the NLRB about Amazon’s campaign of fear, lies and intimidation.

The latest NLRB ruling against Amazon, issued Dec. 22, 2021, will have a more far-reaching impact than the order specific to Bessemer. The company must notify every one of the 790,000 Amazon workers in the U.S. — by email, on its A to Z employee app and with posters at every job site — that a rule limited to union organizing on its premises is no longer in effect. The posters must stay up at least 60 days.

The notices state: “We will not tell you that you cannot be on our property, or that you need to leave our property 15 minutes after the end of your shift, or threaten you with discipline or that we will call the police when you are exercising your right to engage in union or protected concerted activities.”

Pro-union workers in Chicago and New York City had filed complaints when they were barred from the picket line in May.

In Bessemer, Alabama, United Mine Workers coal miners “hold the line” and continue the strike they began in April 2021.

By Marie Kelly

What just happened?

The past year has been a brutal wake-up call for the working class. The pandemic has killed hundreds of thousands of U.S. workers so far and left many more in a very precarious financial predicament, like the 12 million workers who fell behind on their rent in 2021.

The response of the ruling class to the plight of the worker during the pandemic has ranged from ineptitude to callous disregard. Shareholders and CEOs protected their profit margins rather than the workers who risked their lives to keep the capitalist machine running.

If you were paying attention, you saw workers reach a breaking point and demand their labor leaders be more militant during contract negotiations and push for better pay and benefits. Amazon workers from Bessemer, Alabama, to Staten Island, New York, took on Jeff Bezos and his megacorporation to demand their right to organize.

The NLRB’s ruling was a significant victory in the nationwide movement for workers’ rights. It will have an immediate impact on Amazon, which has a history of using anti-union strategies to keep workers from organizing.

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New year, new struggles

The new year begins with a pandemic surge sweeping across the U.S. and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention downgrading safety protocols, forcing more workers to stay on the job, despite the risk of spreading disease and becoming gravely ill.

For U.S. government leaders, the capitalist economy and corporate profits are the top priority, and workers are disposable in the effort to keep business in business.

How will the labor movement and union leaders respond to these attacks? It had better be with militancy and strength!

There are the coming battles at Amazon, Longshore and Warehouse Union and the Teamsters, plus the battle over safety in health care institutions across the U.S.

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Starbucks organizing drive erupts

Continued from page 1

With youth at the forefront of the fight. Despite these desperate circumstances for many, Starbucks workers are organizing and every day eroding the failure of the company to address any particular problem. Class-conscious workers push for real change

In letters sent to Starbucks CEO Kevin Johnson, members of the ALU have explained why ALU organizers have been subject to bad treatment but as a protection. The company can wield to take a more active role in shaping their community. From a socialist perspective, this development in the consciousness of the working class cannot be overstated. We are seeing workers become more collectively aware of our world-historic role as agents of change in society, the only force that can bring about a revolutionary break from capitalist exploitation.

Workers across the board are no longer content with acting as passive observers to their own exploitation. If this kind of awareness can continue to reach outside of these pockets of struggle and into other workplaces, apartments, buildings at the broader community, a classwide perspective will be reached that can arm working-class and oppressed people with the ideological tools needed to achieve liberation beyond mere pay raises and contractual benefits. In order for this class consciousness to be achieved, it is imperative that working-class organizers within the United States understand their class position not simply in terms of their own locality or country, but as part of an international working class. Companies like Starbucks, Amazon, Walmart and others are global imperialist behemoths that exploit workers at home and abroad, whether baristas, farmers or delivery drivers. But even if we take a more narrow perspective and focus on one particular workplace in the United States, we see that the conditions of the workers are tied intrinsically to the conditions of workers in other countries.

Need for global class unity

As Marxist thinker and the late chairperson and founder of Workers World Party Sam Marcy explained in his book, “High Tech, Low Pay: A Marxist Analysis of the Changing Character of the Working Class,” because of the global nature of the capitalist economy, workers within the United States are directly competing for jobs with workers of other countries. An unprecedented advance in technology has made it easier than ever to send jobs overseas, to countries where huge corporations pay only a fraction of what it costs in the United States to pay union workers with full benefits to do the same job.

This direct competition with low-wage jobs around the world in turn drives down wages for workers in the United States, limiting how much can be won through bargaining with union contracts. In other words, a labor movement in the U.S. that does not take on an international socialist perspective to match the international nature of the working class will, in the long run, shoot itself in the foot. Just as workers are always more powerful in the workplace when they unite together against their bosses, the working class of one country is more powerful when it unites with other workers across national boundaries against their shared capitalist exploitors. Developments within the labor movement in the U.S. open up new possibilities for workers on a global scale. After decades of the labor movement being gutted, workers are making a comeback. The victory in Buffalo is the first of many to come, for baristas as well as the whole working class.

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

"Amazon, recognize the union now!"

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This news comes on the heels of the recent deaths of Amazon workers in Edwardsville, Illinois, where six were killed when the Dec. 10 tornado demolished the warehouse — after management would not allow workers to leave in the face of the danger. Among the most popular of Times Square rally placards was “Stop Killing Workers!” Since the tornado, The Intercept revealed that Amazon’s profit-before-people mission means lifesaving emergency drills are frequently sacrificed for production — even though the company has plenty of time for anti-union captive-audience meetings. That same day, in response to unfair labor practice complaints, Amazon was publicly forced by the NLRB to refrain from persecuting workers attempting to organize unions at their 110 facilities in the U.S. This provides an opening for socialists and radical organizers to intervene and enforce the new rules on behalf of the workers.

Many in the corporate media have falsely pronounced the Amazon union campaign dead, because the workers had withdrawn their NLRB petition in mid-November to get more challenge-proof signatures. The Dec. 22 rally showed the Staten Island campaign is alive and kicking and the ALU is solidifying its leadership of workers in the warehouse. This undoubt edly explains why ALU organizers have been subject to constant harassment by Amazon lawyers and the New York Police Department. ALU leader Brett Daniels spoke at the rally about being handcuffed along with Smalls on trumped-up charges from the NYPD, which were later dropped.

The ALU’s growing base in the Staten Island warehouse was dramatized by the union’s intervention in a sexual harassment case there. Amazon bosses had been protecting a serial abuser but were forced to take action after the union held a series of protests demanding he be removed. Maddy, the target of the abuse, spoke at the rally and later told Workers World that while much firmer action is still needed by management, absolutely nothing would have been done without the union.

VWR leader Larry Holmes addressed the de facto union leadership at the rally and celebrated the fact that the ALU had filed its petition for a union vote. Holmes told the crowd: “You don’t need the government to tell you that you’re a union. You’re a union because you fight. You’re a union already! You’re a union because you fight. You’re a union because you’re fighting the sexism that the women workers are subjected to. You’re a union because you organize to be a voice for the workers, to fight for better conditions. You did that — not the NLRB!”

Holmes’ remarks captured the spirit of the action’s main demand that Amazon recognize the union now and negotiate directly with the workers. This would bypass the long NLRB-supervised process which hobs use to lie to and intimidate workers. Starbucks Workers United in the 2021 Labor Day Parade, Buffalo, N.Y.

Other rallies at the other included Transit Workers Union Local 100 leader Charles Jenkx, a longtime leader in the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists; Edward Yoo with Communications Workers of America Local 1180; a delegation from the Coalition of Labor Union Women; and a contingent of six striking Columbia University stu dent workers, members of UAW Local 2110. And there was a rousing performance by Reverend Billy and the Stop Shopping Choir!

Labor activity is taking on momentum everywhere in the U.S. In the wake of the Edwardsville tragedy, workers at six Amazon warehouses in the New York City and Washington D.C. metro areas, organized by Amazonians United, pulled together petitions and job actions demanding workers be able keep their cell phones while on the job. And following the Starbucks Workers United victory in winning union elections in Buffalo, new worker campaigns at the coffee giant have been announced in Boston and Seattle.

"Starbucks Workers United in Buffalo."
Unvaccinated staff spread COVID-19 in California prisons

By Judy Greenspan
Oakland, California

California state prisoners are experiencing a dangerous surge in COVID-19 infections, fueled largely by the omicron variant and the refusal of prison guards and contracted staff to be vaccinated, according to family members and prisoners’ rights attorneys. Gov. Gavin Newsom, who refused to order mass releases during the first surge of COVID-19 in the state prisons, has taken a position against ordering mandatory vaccinations for prison staff. The lives of tens of thousands of prisoners are at risk right now.

Workers World was recently contacted by family members concerned about the rising COVID-19 infections at the California Medical Facility at Vacaville, which incarcerates perhaps the largest elderly and medically at-risk population of transgender and gender-nonconforming prisoners in the state.

Approximately one-quarter of CMF prisoners are incarcerated medical providers, are private contractors, and only 37% have been vaccinated. California Department of Corrections prison staff, including guards, generally trail prison staff vaccination rates by about 20%. (L.A. Times, Dec. 31, 2021)

A recent legal brief filed by the Prison Law Office and other attorneys in the class action lawsuit, Plata v. Newsom, documents the disparity between the vaccination rates of prisoners, guards and contracted prison staff especially at CMF and the California Health Care Facility in Stockton. (Joint Case Management Conference Statement, Dec. 16, 2021)

The prisoners’ attorneys expose the fact that prison staff who are not vaccinated are also refusing to get tested regularly. Not surprisingly, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has not been forthcoming with accurate information about staff vaccinations or testing. In fact, nearly one-third of CMF prison staff has not been complying with court-ordered, twice weekly testing requirements.

Meanwhile, CDCR has reported 400 new infections, a number that has doubled over the last week. Attorneys, family members and prisoner advocates are deeply concerned that low vaccination rates among CDCR employees are causing this new wave of dangerous COVID-19 infections in California prisons.

Second COVID-19 crisis

“The second crisis is here, and the thing that we feared with delta is now happening with omicron,” said Olivia Campbell, who has a loved one at CMF. “The numbers during the past three days have gone up to over 400 active cases. It’s not like anything has changed.”

Campbell has been trying to get prison administrators to impose social control and drive wages down; concern for the safety of these highly vulnerable prisoners is mounting.

Attorneys, family members and prison guards and contracts have in common the spread of the highly contagious omicron variant. Several hospital staff are locked down; concern for the safety of these highly vulnerable prisoners is mounting.

CMF has a long history of activism and involvement stemming back from the early days of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Prisoners with HIV/AIDS and transgender prisoners. While the unit no longer exists, CMF now has the only prison hospital in the state.

Last year before there was a vaccine, frequent transfers of prisoners fueled the spread of COVID-19 in California prisons. The infection rate at San Quentin State Prison in the Bay Area was so high that a federal judge ordered that the prison population be reduced by 50%. Prison abolition groups organized frequent large and militant demonstrations and other actions outside the prison, demanding the immediate release of thousands of elderly and immunocompromised prisoners.

There were no mass releases, but due to prisoner access to vaccines, the pandemic slowed down for a bit in the prisons. However, there is every indication that this is about to change. The biggest outbreak now is at Wasco State Prison, one of the state’s reception centers. Due to the rising infection rate there, Wasco has been closed to new prison admissions.

The second surge of COVID-19 in the prisons will need a new resurgence of activism by outside organizations. Campbell is hoping that the movement to support the lives of people inside the walls will return. “The outrage should not peter out but should become louder given what’s happening now.”

We need prison abolition, not reform

By Mirinda Crissman

Nearly 2.3 million people, who are incarcerated every day in prisons, jails and detention centers in the United States, are kept in facilities while locked up during a deadly respiratory pandemic. Despite facing inhumane treatment while locked up during a deadly respiratory pandemic, nearly 2.3 million people, who are incarcerated every day in prisons, jails and detention centers in the United States, face possible death sentences while locked up during a deadly respiratory pandemic. Despite facing inhumane treatment while locked up during a deadly respiratory pandemic, nearly 2.3 million people, who are incarcerated every day in prisons, jails and detention centers in the United States, face possible death sentences.

The COVID-19 crisis behind bars has elicited a number of lackluster and dangerous responses from the various carceral agencies at the federal, state and local levels. Isolation, already extreme while incarcerated, is made worse when the response to the rapid spread of the virus is lockdown of imprisoned people to their cells— with minimal if any access to basic hygiene like daily showers to let alone basic recreation levels needed to sustain bodily health.

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

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

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

Various federal, state and local systems of prisons, jails, juvenile detention and immigration detention bars are a handful of examples that exemplify institutionalizing and codifying white supremacy, exportation, we are fighting for abolition like always present and ever-growing movement of abolitionists in Texas, rejecting the war on migrants through Governor Greg Abbott’s Operation Lone Star, and in 38 states where the repressive U.S. model of prisons and policing has been exported, we are fighting for abolition like ours is dependent on it. Because they do.

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We need prison abolition, not reform
Charges army with killing migrants
Polish soldier deserters

By John Catalinotto

Polish soldier Emil Czeczko, who was serving on the border under orders to prevent migrants from crossing from Belarus into Poland, fled through a barbed wire fence on Dec. 17 and appealed for asylum in Belarus. In a television interview, Czeczko said he fled because Polish soldiers had shot and killed some of the migrants. He said he opposed this policy.

Czeczko said that special border troops forced him and other regular Polish soldiers to take part in the executions. He also told BeTa TV that two Polish volunteers, civilians who had come to aid the migrants, were killed when they tried to intervene. (tinyurl.com/29zmk7kz)

The migrants fled to Minsk, Belarus, mainly from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Yemen, in an attempt to migrate to the European Union because their families cannot survive at home. Scenes of Polish troops setting up barbed wire and firing water cannons to stop them were broadcast on television worldwide starting in mid-November.

Czeczko’s accusation that Polish forces used lethal force against the migrants sparked demands from Belarusian and Russian government representatives for an international investigation by the United Nations or human rights organizations related to his charges. They accused the Polish government of refusing to answer questions about the border incidents.

U.S.- and NATO-led or supported wars in the migrants’ origin countries have created an unlivable situation for millions of people. U.S.-imposed sanctions continue to squeeze the economies of these countries.

The EU has erected barriers to migrants trying to survive. Hundreds of migrants die each year attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea when their overloaded boats sink. Others die crossing borders.

Poland is a NATO member, beholden to U.S. and EU imperialism, and serving them by obstructing migration and providing military bases that threaten Belarus and Russia. Poland’s reactionary government hates and persecutes anyone who defends communism.

New statues have been erected of historic Polish fascist officers.

Czeczko speaks out

The following quote is of excerpts from a report of Czeczko’s interview on BeTa TV, published Dec. 17 in the English section of the Belarus news agency eng.belta.

“By. During the interview, Emil Czeczko was asked about the threat of war cited by migrants in his charges. They behaved before the execution, whether we said anything at that moment. ‘I am sorry, I do not want to talk about it. Some were crying; others were screaming. Some were just standing straight,’ he replied.

Another question related to whether they had to ‘finish off’ the women and children. Emil Czeczko said, ‘I heard that there were people who had to be finished off. And what else could be done, should they have been buried alive? They said: finish them off!’

Commenting on the information that he was caught driving drunk some time ago, the Polish serviceman said with sarcasm: ‘Right, I fled through the barbed wire, because my license was taken away. A great story! Well, yes, an ordinary drunkard...as I have said, soldiers were given a huge amount of alcohol every time they were forced to take part in it. And then they said I was driving under the influence of alcohol.”

U.S.- and NATO-led or supported wars in the migrants’ origin countries have created an unlivable situation for millions of people. U.S.-led sanctions continue to squeeze the economies of these countries.

An appreciation

Betty White’s anti-racist act

By Monica Moorehead

There have been many accolades showered on the trailblazing and multiple Emmy-winning comedic Betty White, who died in her sleep Dec. 31, just shy of her 100th birthday Jan. 17. For one, she was one of the first women who starred in her own sitcom TV show, “Life With Elizabeth” from 1953-1955. She was so popular that she produced and starred in her own variety show at the same time.

Little known until now was the fact that she promoted, on her variety show, a 22-year-old Montgomery Bus Boycott, Arthur McCough, not just once but several times. Not only did he dance but was also interviewed by White before and after his performances.

This was an unprecedented action since Black performers were rarely seen on TV, unless in racist stereotypical and degrading roles.

White’s variety show appeared in 1954, an historic year for the pre-Civil Rights Movement, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on the Brown v. Board of Education case, outlawing segregated schools. Two years later in 1956, the legendary jazz pianist and singer, Nat King Cole, became the first Black man in history to host a nationally televised variety show.

The 2019 documentary, “Betty White: First Lady of Television” recounts a time when a number of CBS affiliates in the Deep South threatened to ban the showing of White’s show if Duncan continued to be featured on it. Not only did she refuse to take him off her show, but she actually gave him even more airtime.

She stated, “They were going to take our show off the air if we didn’t get rid of Arthur, because he was Black. I’m sorry, but you know, he stays. Live with it.” (betheim.com) CBS executives caved in to the racists, canceling her show after just 14 episodes.

Duncan, now in his late 80s, commented, “The first TV show I had ever been on, and I credit Betty White for really getting me started in show business, in television.” (Washington Post, Dec. 31)

Not known for being a Civil Rights activist, White’s personal anti-racist stance—before the 1955 horrific lynching of Emmett Till and the heroic Montgomery Bus Boycott took place—should be admired and appreciated along with her unique, comedic genius, now and by future generations. This is another reason why Betty White will always remain a beloved “Golden Girl.””

We need prison abolition, not reform

Continued from page 6

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

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

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

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

Mirinda Crissman is co-chair of the Prisoners Solidarity Committee of Workers World Party.
Russia, Ukraine, China challenge NATO’s imperial Agenda

By Sara Flounders

Russia’s demands challenge NATO’s threats

Russian President Vladimir Putin at his End of the Year Press Conference, Dec. 23, 2021, speaking to U.S. and European officials. In a series of international journals, he said the following:

"We have made it clear that any further movement of NATO to the East is unacceptable. Is there anything unclear about this? We are not going anywhere near the U.S. border. No, we are not. It is the United States that has the missiles and is already standing at our doorstep. Is it going too far to demand that strike systems be placed on our border? What is so unusual about this?"

This statement makes it clear who the aggressor is in the latest and continuing confrontation between Russia and U.S. imperialism. Yet the U.S. corporate media reported it as bellicose, threatening, unreasonable, and a warning of a Russian invasion of Ukraine. President Joe Biden promised "serious consequences." As U.S. policy toward the formerly ruthless, the corporate media perceives threats everywhere. After Putin and Biden spoke by zoom, Putin and Xi Jinping of China discussed Russian-U.S. relations. This conversation was headlined by The Hill as "‘Allies’ China and Russia Are Game Over on America.”

Yet NATO expansion is in direct violation of U.S. agreements with the then-USSR, that the U.S.-dominated military alliance would move "not one inch eastward." U.S. Secretary of State James Baker in 1990 pledged this to former president of the USSR Mikhail Gorbachev, promising that a reunified German state in the heart of Europe would "not be a client state of the U.S. and Western Europe, but a democratic, neutral state like Norway and Sweden." The U.S. and European Union imposed harsh sanctions on Russia for resisting NATO’s military expansion. The economic sanctions have been widely condemned in Russia and around the world. Russia has retaliated by seizing Ukrainian territory and threatening oil and gas supplies.

In every former socialist country in Eastern Europe, regime changes reinstated capitalism. It was a brutal and wrenching political and economic transformation. Together with U.S. aid to bring about the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the dissolution of the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact left the Soviet Union in 1991 and the dissolution of the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact left the U.S. and European Union imposed harsh sanctions on Russia for resisting NATO’s military expansion. The economic sanctions have been widely condemned in Russia and around the world. Russia has retaliated by seizing Ukrainian territory and threatening oil and gas supplies.

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Airline CEOs dictate COVID-19 policy

By Betsy Piette

On Dec. 27, the United States reported a record-breaking number of new COVID-19 cases, with 442,278 infections. On the same day, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued surprising new guidelines shortening the recommended time for isolation for people exposed to or infected with COVID-19 from 10 days to five (seven days for health care workers).

As the winter surge in new cases exploded across the country, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration announced it was rescinding, for a number of days, the mandatory mask requirement and social distancing it implemented to serve the bosses’ goal to force workers back to dangerous jobs.

NNU stated that “nurses emphasize that the weak isolation guidance—backed as it is by the “patriotically” getting vaccinated CEOs and the reduction in isolation time, “if there are staffing shortages,” are motivated by the employers wanting workers back on the clock fast, regardless of whether it’s safe to maximize profits.”

On Jan. 13 to demand more protection for workers.

Airline CEOs requested guideline change

The pandemic economy—sick workers can’t do their jobs

By G. Dunkel

When the media is full of reports of thousands upon thousands of airline flight cancellations; of subway lines in New York suspended, along with Broadway shows; of professional sports games including football, basketball and hockey games postponed; and of restaurants cutting workers or going under and the economic impact to both businesses and customers, the situation is clear, and the losses can be calculated.

This hasn’t reached the level of economic catastrophe it did in 2020, but it is still very serious. Especially serious because hospitals, ambulance and EMT services and fire departments in various parts of the country don’t have enough workers.

Of course, the pain, the suffering, the deaths and the rising cost of the virus, the increasing wave of the omicron infections would sideline thousands of police officers, firefighters and other essential workers needed to keep the system functioning. Yet these officials made no recommendation to cancel superspreader events like New York City’s “Ball Drop” on New Year’s Eve.

Despite daily reports of college and professional athletes sidelined by COVID-19, causing some games to be rescheduled, the CDC has never suggested that fans attend these events be limited, as it did in 2020 when the number of daily cases was considerably lower.

Confirming that the guideline change was implemented to serve the bosses’ goal to force workers back to hazardous jobs, several news outlets reported Dec. 29 that Delta Airlines CEO Ed Bastian and other company officials sent a Dec. 21 letter to the director of the CDC requesting the change. And Airlines for America, a trade group representing Delta, Southwest and United Airlines, wrote to the CDC Dec. 23 arguing in favor of the new guidelines.

Nurses condemn Biden administration for ripping COVID-19 protection away from health care workers, Dec. 28.

A New York City teacher’s view

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The pandemic economy—sick workers can’t do their jobs

Nurses condemn Biden administration for ripping COVID-19 protection away from health care workers, Dec. 28.
Dr. King’s legacy: ‘All labor has dignity’

January 17 will mark the official holiday honoring the birth of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., whose 93rd birthday is January 15. The third Monday in January has been the official King holiday for many workers since January 1986, after many years of mass pressure put on the U.S. government.

Many bourgeois pundits use this holiday to co-opt Dr. King’s historic role, mainly as the leading nonviolent symbol of the massive Civil Rights Movement, which certainly does have a relevant legacy. However, was so much more, especially where workers’ rights are concerned.

His message should not be confined to his famous “I Have a Dream” speech, made at the Lincoln Memorial following the 1963 March on Washington of 250,000 people. Many signs were carried on that march by workers representing international unions, state federations and central labor councils, the most prominent being the United Auto Workers, a major financial backer of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, led by A. Philip Randolph. The labor signs demanded civil rights, jobs and legality.

Five years later, just a few months before his assassination April 4, 1968, Dr. King came out in support of the 1,300,000 sanitation workers’ strike in Memphis, Tennessee, sparked by the deaths of two black city workers, Echol Cole and Robert Walker, who had been crushed on the job by a malfunctioning truck.

The city of Memphis—which paid these workers slave wages of 65 cents an hour—refused to pay any compensation to their families. The majority Black striking workers not only demanded decent pay and working conditions but also full human rights by carrying the sign: “I Am A Man.”

In a speech given at a rally of 25,000 sanitation workers, their families and supporters on March 18, 1968, in Memphis, Dr. King stated: “You are demonstrating something here that needs to be demonstrated all over our country. You are demonstrating that we can stick together, and you are demonstrating that we are all tied in a single garment of destiny, and that if one black person suffers, if one black person is down, we are all down.

“You are demanding that this city will respect the dignity of labor. But let me say to you tonight, that whenever you are engaged in work that serves humanity and is for the building of humanity, it has dignity, and it has worth. One day our society must come to see this. All labor has dignity.” (tinyurl.com/ycxwnb88)

The world is remembering him, but across mainstream western media outlets, there are convenient omissions.

Few outlets have reported his uncompromising stance with Palestine. When asked to compare Israeli apartheid with that of South Africa, he responded without hesitation that Israeli occupation was “far worse” than anything Black America faced under apartheid. He was attacked mercilessly for his solidarity with Palestine. Zionists labeled him an “anti-Semite,” and today they are, along with other white supremacists, celebrating his passing.

Desmond Tutu spoke vehemently against the invasion of Iraq, pleading with governments and the masses to oppose the war. Addressing a rally of hundreds of thousands of people in New York in 2003, he bellowed George Bush into a drum and attacked his base and his deceit. He advocated passionately for the release of Mumia Abu-Jamal and for the closing of Guantanamo Bay, a torture chamber for those accused by the U.S. of terrorism.

On every issue, Desmond Tutu endeavored to be on the side of the oppressed, the weak and wretched, no matter the risk or cost to himself. He shined light into the dark corners of power; and now the world is a little dimmer without the magnificent brightness of his being.

The writer is an award-winning Palestinian novelist.
Queer people and the U.S. Communist movement, 1950-1969

By Princess Harmony

Communists the world over fight for the liberation of the working class and the oppressed. From the very start, scientific socialism has also fought for the liberation of women from sexist and misogynistic worldviews and actions, ranging from the right to equal treatment under the law to access to abortion and more.

Russian revolutionary and Marxist theoretician Alexandra Kollontai reflected on this in her 1917 speech “Why the Bolshevik Must Win,” when she stated: “Only the victory of [revolutionary] democracy can ensure women equality.” (archive.org/stream/Kollontai/

The pandemic economy – sick workers can’t do their jobs

Continued from page 9

who came into the building.

“From September 2021, the tests have been limited to unvaccinated students, and only 10% of those are tested.”

“According to the governor, the parents fill out a form to withdraw the students and consent. But no, the city is assuming the consent. There is no way that the parents consented to be tested. These narrow requirements limited the amount of COVID-19 infections detected. In my school, COVID-19 has been detected from our testing. I feel limiting the amount detected was most likely the purpose of the system established.”

“The current wave they have made two changes. They have upped the number tested to 20%, presumably of the total kids in the building, since the second change is testing vaccinated as well as unvaccinated students.”

“But even if this seems better, they still require consent, which is a major hurdle to a vigilant testing process. Consent isn’t provided only by parents, or former members of the CPUSA. The others were fellow travelers—members of the movement who were nonparty members.”

This grouping started the Mattachine Society. Its mission was to “whipping up the anti-queer frenzy.”

At the same time in the 1950s, queer liberation groups were being founded and led by “card-carrying” members of the Communist Party. The Mattachine movement was led and shaped by Harry Hay, who was a Marxist theorist, a teacher and member of the Communist Party-U.S.A and previously the Industrial Workers of the World. He worked with other comrades organizing among the working class in California. An unfortunate fact, however, was that LGBTQ+ people were not accepted in the CPUSA at the time, following a 1954 rightist decision by Joseph Stalin to deny rights to queer people in the Soviet Union. At the time Stalin was secretary-general of the Communist Party of the USSR. His position was a reversal of the Leninist policy of accepting queer people as members of the Party and of the working class.

Stalin’s position was that queer people were the end result of decadent capitalist ideology. Previously the Bolshevik government had removed all anti-gay and anti-communist sympathizers, as well as alcoholics and others deemed “dangerous” and a threat to U.S. government and society.

The basic problem with keeping the pandemic under control is the fact that testing has to be coordinated with contact tracing. Currently, contact tracing is intrusive, rather than efficient for public safety. The city also is refusing to flip the consent issue, meaning they could assume all parents consent, unless the parents fill out a form to withdraw the consent. But no, the city is assuming the parents do not consent, unless the parents fill out a form agreeing to consent.

Another issue is distancing requirements. Six feet was considered safe at the beginning of this pandemic but is no longer possible in schools. Three feet distance became the compromise, but even that was more suggestion than enforced policy. The transmission rate of this variant seems to make distance a factor, a factor not being raised at this time.

Finally, lunchrooms are not regulated and are treated by the police in the Tenderloin neighborhood—tired of being mishandled by the police in the Tenderloin neighborhood—tired of being mishandled by the police—being assumed to be the police—being assumed to be the police. They were winning until the police redoubled their efforts to crush the rebellion. While not communist-led, they were supported by revolutionaries in the area. Little did anyone know that the Compton’s Cafeteria Riot— which came and went without much notice from the rest of the country—would be a portent of revolutionary things to come.

the group to take an anti-communist stand.

Meanwhile, the left-led Mattachine Society faced intense scrutiny and red-baiting. Members joining the society were scattered across the political spectrum. Some were left-wing, but many others were to the right to the point of anti-communism. Some members wanted the group to take an anti-communist stand.

Unfortunately, Harry Hay took up a right-wing, conciliatory stand by attacking the left and equating the backwardness of the Communist Party and the outright fascist attacks by the right-wing. Eventually, the left-wing Mattachine leadership who had belonged to the Communist Party or was its allies had to resign. The organization essentially lost its revolutionary spirit and ended up damaging the movement.

In the mid-1960s the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis (a lesbian organization that was not communist-led) took a rightist position that acting according to heterosexual norms — men and women in rigid masculine and feminine clothing and activities — would make people be more acceptable by seeing that LGBTQ+ people are “just like” heterosexuals.

These two early gay-rights groups explicitly rejected gender-nonconformity by disqualifying gender-nonconforming people from expressing themselves in that way in their meetings and demonstrations. But gender-nonconforming people would find revolution in their own way soon enough.

In 1966, the Compton’s Cafeteria rebellion broke out in San Francisco. (comptonscafeteriariot.com) Trans women, queer hustlers and others — tired of being mistreated by the police in the Tenderloin neighborhood — took up cups of hot coffee and glass sugar shakers as weapons against the police. They even burnt cop cars to a crisp. They were winning until the police redoubled their efforts to crush the rebellion. While not communist-led, they were supported by revolutionaries in the area.

Little did anyone know that the Compton’s Cafeteria Riot — which came and went without much notice from the rest of the country — would be a portent of revolutionary things to come.

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Harry Hay, in a sad turn of events, had chosen to ask for his own expulsion from the CPUSA on the basis that his gayness could serve as a weakness for the Party. The leadership rejected expulsion but dropped him as a security risk. They did acknowledge his timeliness and important contributions by saying he would always be a friend of the people.

In a sad turn of events, Harry Hay, in a sad turn of events, had chosen to ask for his own expulsion from the CPUSA on the basis that his gayness could serve as a weakness for the Party. The leadership rejected expulsion but dropped him as a security risk. They did acknowledge his timeliness and important contributions by saying he would always be a friend of the people.
El asesinato y la tasa de retorno

El fallo del tribunal tiene amplias implicaciones. Al hacer que Roe v. Wade sea esencialmente inaplicable, pone en peligro toda una serie de sentencias a favor de la dignidad civil. Como escribió la jueza disidente Sonia Sotomayor, “al excluir la posibilidad de demandar a los funcionarios de los tribunales estatales y al fiscal general del estado, el Tribunal invita efectivamente a otros estados a perpetuar el modelo de la S.B. 8 para anular los derechos federales”.

¿Qué debería pasar ahora?
Sotomayor continuaba diciendo: “El Tribunal traiciona así no sólo a los ciudadanos de Texas, sino también a nuestro sistema constitucional de gobierno”. De hecho, es justo considerar el sistema el que otorga a los misóginos descarados el poder constitucional de poner sus sucias manos en los derechos y cuerpos de las mujeres, de los menores víctimas de incesto y de las personas oprimidas por razones de género. Como escribió Sam Marcy, el diputado presidente del partido Workers World Party/ Partido Mundo Obrero en 1989: “Esta Constitución, esta estructura de gobierno y del Estado, la que explica cómo se han tomado y llevado a cabo estas y otras decisiones que son tan contrarias a la opinión de la mayoría del pueblo”.

Marcy escribía sobre una sentencia del SCOTUS entonces contraria a la justicia reproductiva. Continuó explicando que “el progreso de concentración del poder en organismos no democráticos, Proviene de la concentración de los medios de producción en manos de una clase dominante que ostenta el poder y no ayuda en los ámbitos que más le favorecen. Así que no es un accidente que el poder sea ejercido en última instancia por el Tribunal Supremo más fiable para ellos, más conservador, que sólo responde a quienes los han nombrado”.

Hoy en día, más de 150 años de lucha de clases han mitigado los efectos del desastre de este tipo. La compañía Mayfield estuvo multada ante la Cámara de los Representantes de Texas en 2020, y la compañía Mayfield, como el salario mínimo, las leyes de trabajo infantil, las normas de seguridad en el trabajo de trabajo, y el derecho a organizarse. Pero periódicamente, en el curso de los acontecimientos, ocurren desastres que destruyen con la fuerza de un tornado cualquier pretensión de “capitalismo solidario”. Los desastres son el núcleo de este artículo. Aunque los propietarios de la fábrica de las que carecen de los recursos necesarios para abortar, las personas de color, aquellos que carecen de fondos y el transporte necesario para abortar en otros estados. El SCOTUS (Tribunal Supremo de Estados Unidos) se pronunció en el año que se viene sobre una ley antibastista de Misissipi. En la práctica, la sentencia da luz verde en un tribunal federal, pero no pueden demandar a los jueces y secretarios del estado al fiscal general de Texas.

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