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Young workers lead the way

The union makes us strong!

Starbucks organizing drive erupts

‘Amazon, recognize the union now!’

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 two of the first three stores that voted in Buffalo (the second is still being contested in court) demonstrated that organizing a union — even against a company with as much money and contempt for its workers 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,

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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



Rally in Times Square, New York City, Dec. 22. More on Amazon, 4. WW PHOTO: TONY MURPHY

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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THE WALLS



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March 30, 1952 – Dec. 28, 2021

Chuck 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 looked for concrete 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 biweekly calls, even two weeks ago. Each time he took on at least one task — helping shape a webinar, publishing a report, 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



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 big picture in the forefront, linking struggles, linking countries, linking people.

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

Building solidarity doesn't happen naturally in this viciously 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 iPresente! ☐

Join us in the fight for socialism!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Why is everything so expensive?

By Ben Carroll

The prices of all basic goods and services necessary for human survival have been going up—in some cases, way up—over the past six months or so.

The November 2021 Consumer Price Index, which tracks annual and monthly increases in prices, rose by 6.8% this year—the highest jump in nearly 40 years. (tinyurl.com/2p9a2tnp) The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that over the same period of time, real average hourly wages of workers in this country have fallen by nearly 2%. (tinyurl.com/bdxmf562)

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 cost of housing 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 40%. There is no major city 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 has set 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 down the standard of living for 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 been on life support, propped up for the past decade by the central banks funneling unprecedented infusions of money to the commercial banks 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 printed \$3.5 trillion (!) in new money—nearly three times the amount the central bank had created since its founding 95 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 bank in 2018 tried to begin raising interest rates and scaling back its printing of new money—known as “quantitative easing”—capital revolted. This sent stocks sharply lower 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 coffers of the banks and large financial institutions. (politico.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 debt” 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 around 20% was stored in other fixed assets or means of production. This phenomenon is driving wild speculation in real estate, raising the cost of renting or owning a home and intensifying the familiar scenes of gentrification across the U.S. and the globe. (tinyurl.com/bdf24hmy)

Since 2010, the stock market has doubled in value, during a period of time characterized by permanent unemployment and underemployment, the rise of the so-called gig economy, austerity measures and more suffering imposed on the working class and the oppressed. The superrich have seen their wealth balloon during this period, intensifying the antagonisms between labor and capital and bringing the contradictions inherent in the capitalist system into sharper relief.

At the same time, the number of so-called “zombie companies”—those which hold substantial amounts of debt relative to profit and are thus barely able (or are altogether unable) to pay off their debt—has continued to rise. According to a Bloomberg News report published Dec. 28, 2021, more than 650 of the country's 3,000 largest corporations are considered zombie companies—nearly 22%, or one in every five.

The proliferation of these zombie companies has been driven in large part by the Federal Reserve's policy of making money extremely cheap for banks and large corporations to borrow. Which brings us back to the question at hand: What's driving inflation?

For the owners of these companies and financial institutions—the capitalist class—some inflation is a desirable thing. After all, the name of the game for the bosses is expanding profits and beating out rival firms; and higher prices increase profits or otherwise offset any rise in costs of raw materials needed for

production, etc. That is what is in play now. Faced with access to easy money to borrow and invest, coupled with higher costs for raw materials based on the various supply chain issues impacting the global economy, bosses are raising prices to protect and, in many cases, grow their profits.

This access to easy money has given corporations the ability to automate production to a higher degree, investing in robots and other technology that enable each worker to produce more commodities. Indeed, the productivity of labor has increased substantially over the past several decades, while the real wages of workers have stayed relatively flat or, in many cases, fallen.

But a curious thing happens as labor becomes more and more productive. Under capitalism, it is the exploitation of labor (or labor power) that creates value. There is a general tendency, then, for the value of commodities to decline over time as the supply of those goods rises, based on less human labor being needed to produce them.

The argument by many mainstream economists and CEOs—that growing demands from workers for higher wages, especially among the lowest-paid workers, is driving or at least contributing to inflation—is categorically false. Karl Marx disproved this theory in his groundbreaking work “Value, Price and Profit,” noting that “a struggle for a rise of wages follows only in the track of previous changes and is the necessary offspring of previous changes in the amount of production ... in one word, as reactions of labor against the previous action of capital. ... A general rise in the rate of wages would result in a fall of the general rate of profit but not affect the prices of commodities.”

Out-of-control inflation, however, can become undesirable for the capitalist class. It can lead to ballooning costs of raw materials—and even more dangerous, to the tightening of monetary policy, making access to borrowed money more expensive. This is an especially dangerous scenario for the zombie companies. If this were to happen, which is what the Federal Reserve and other central banks are currently considering, it could usher in a wave of defaults and bankruptcies, triggering another

financial crisis and an economic decline that would affect the global economy. It would be managed by trying to extract even more concessions from the working class and the oppressed.

Class struggle decisive

It is the preferred policy of the federal government and central banks to use various monetary policy tools at their disposal to control rampant inflation. But it wasn't always this way.

After the end of World War II, the United States experienced a similar period of high inflation. At that time, there was a militant and growing workers' movement in the streets, fighting for various social reforms, building unions, conducting strikes and more.

Rather than utilize monetary policy tools to deal with inflation, the federal government enacted price controls. In the early 1970s, similar measures were again implemented to deal with rising inflation.

But starting in the late 1970s, roughly coinciding with capital's renewed offensive against labor, there was a shift toward the monetary policy route as the ruling class's preferred method to deal with inflation, and that has been the case ever since. The Federal Reserve at that time raised interest rates through the roof, exacerbating a punishing recession in the economy.

Things are different now, both in terms of subjective factors like the level of worker organization and consciousness, as well as objective factors regarding development in the global capitalist economy.

It's too early to say where inflationary trends will head and with what method the federal government and central banks will choose to respond. The newly combative attitude of workers, forced to stay on the job throughout the pandemic, exposing themselves and their families to the risk of COVID-19 while earning small change compared to the billions raked in by the companies they work for, will play a decisive role going forward.

This growing workers' movement could raise demands for a price freeze, higher wages, an end to evictions, free health care, an end to the war on migrant workers, and other pro-worker initiatives to address the increasingly dire conditions facing our class and the most oppressed.

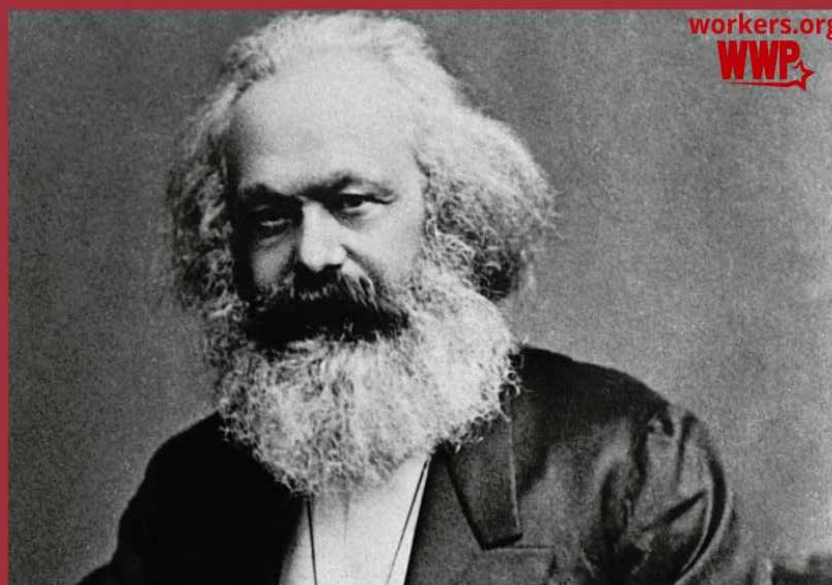
The Federal Reserve and the federal government have bent over backwards to hand out tens of trillions of dollars to the banks and large corporations. Each year, they spend upwards of \$1 trillion on the Pentagon, funding U.S. wars abroad in the interests of capital.

During the pandemic, the federal government imposed pauses on, or altogether forgave, various debts held by workers, implemented an eviction moratorium, gave stimulus payments directly to workers and took other measures to alleviate the public health crisis. Altogether, this demonstrates that the money is there to implement programs and policies that benefit the vast majority of society versus the interests of the rich. What's missing is a mobilized and militant workers' movement to fight for it.

But that is changing.

As another deep and protracted crisis of the capitalist system looms, it is imperative for the workers' movement and its most revolutionary elements to find ways to intervene. □

IS THE DEMAND FOR HIGHER WAGES DRIVING INFLATION? KARL MARX SAID NO!



Wages, Price and Profit

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1865/value-price-profit/>

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 750,000 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 used to limit 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 by talking to your co-workers in exterior nonwork areas during nonwork hours.”

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

premises 15 minutes before or after their shift. That was one of the few times they could talk to workers in the break areas. Amazon was knowingly violating the union advocates’ legal right to engage in “protected concerted activity.”

When we fight, we win

These rulings would have never been issued if Amazon workers themselves weren’t fighting back, including holding recent walkouts in New York City and Chicago against the company’s brutal working conditions. They know conditions won’t be changed without a union. The NLRB could go a lot further; for example, it could simply demand that Amazon recognize the Amazon Labor Union, whose supporters have been harassed, fired and arrested in Staten Island, New York.

But the ruling is a victory. Not only a victory, it’s a tool. Who’s going to monitor whether Amazon is violating the agreement? Unions and class-conscious organizers could organize around enforcing the ruling.

Many forces are in the mix — ALU, Amazonians United Chicagoland, the Teamsters, RWDSU and

**JANUARY 12 IS JEFF BEZOS'S BIRTHDAY,
SEND HIM A BIRTHDAY MESSAGE:**

→ **Recognize the union**
→ **Stop Union Busting**

**DAYS OF ACTION:
JAN 12 & MLK WEEKEND**

**Submit or find an action:
SupportAmazonWorkers.Org/Jan12**

**Solidarity with Amazon workers!
Stop Amazon's union busting!**

others. The more they get to know each other and build a united front of solidarity against the epitome of capitalist exploitation — Amazon — the greater the likelihood of the first union victory against this megamonopoly and the centibillionaire at its helm.

Support Amazon workers! Organize a demonstration in your area to wish Jeff Bezos an “unhappy birthday” Jan. 12 and/or honor the pro-labor legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on the King holiday weekend. For more information, to find an event in your area or to post your event go to supportamazonworkers.org.

On the picket line

WHEN WE FIGHT WE WIN!

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 an end to the abysmal working conditions in those warehouses.

For 2021, the Cornell Labor Tracker listed a total of 77 strikes and 116 labor protests in the field of education, including K-12 teachers and university workers. There were 60 strikes at health care institutions across the country. Nurses and other essential hospital personnel walked off the job because of poor staffing that increased the risk of harm to patients. Major manufacturing strikes happened at Kellogg’s, John Deere, Nabisco and Frito-Lay, where workers won better contracts, although advances against union-busting two-tier systems did not go far enough.

Teamster truckers walked off the job and demonstrated the fragility of the just-in-time supply chain model. Gig workers from GoPuff, Uber and Lyft flexed their muscles—as workers who provide essential services—to win concessions regarding safety and wages. Starbucks workers won a historic union election, and grassroots efforts to unionize the coffee chain are spreading.

At the beginning of 2021, Hunts Point Market workers in New York City went on a seven-day strike and



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

won safety concessions and their largest pay raise in decades. The year ended with United Mine Workers at Warrior Met coal mines in Brookwood, Alabama, still on strike after nine months—and with nurses at Saint Vincent Hospital in Massachusetts reaching a tentative agreement with the Tenet corporation, after 300 days on strike and 43 negotiation sessions.

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 is the coming battle at Amazon, after a National Labor Relations Board ruling mandated Amazon must inform its 750,000 U.S. employees that they have a right to organize.

According to a Bloomberg analysis, nearly 200 large union contracts, collectively covering 1.3 million workers, will expire by the end of 2022. The International Longshore and Warehouse Union represents 20,000 dock workers at 29 ports on the West Coast, and its contract with Pacific Maritime Association expires in July. The Teamsters’ Carhaul Division, representing 4,000 car haulers, will negotiate a new contract in May.

The United Steelworkers will be in negotiations representing 30,000 Marathon Petroleum workers and 5,700 workers at Goodyear Tires. Teachers

in Los Angeles, Oakland and New York City will be at the bargaining table, as will 19,000 graduate employees at the University of California and 16,000 campus workers and professors at Rutgers University in New Jersey.

Nurses at the University of Michigan Medical Center will see their contract expire this year. These 5,000 nurses have logged 900 unsafe staffing incidents and are treating more COVID-19 patients than ever. The institution made a profit in 2021, following two rounds of layoffs, which left hospital wards dangerously understaffed. Safe staffing-to-patient ratios will surely be on the table when the nurses’ contract expires in June.

The contract for nurses at Temple University Hospital in Philadelphia expires in September. That contract covers the 1,500 RNs and 800 other health care staffers in the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals. PASNAP President and Temple Hospital RN Maureen May recently told Fox29 News, “We are in crisis,” with hospitals near capacity due to the pandemic surge. Undoubtedly, the pandemic will be a major factor when PASNAP negotiates with Temple University Hospital.

Workers need to recognize their collective power. If the pandemic has one lesson, it is that the worker, not the CEO, is essential. That has been demonstrated time and time again in industry after industry. It is time to seize the moment!

Let’s resolve that 2022 will be the year we build a workers’ world. □

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.

Starbucks organizing drive erupts

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with youth at the forefront of the fight. Despite these desperate circumstances for many, Starbucks workers are unionizing and not simply as a result of 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 informing him of new stores joining the fight, Starbucks workers made it clear that the unionization efforts are not in response to any specific policies at Starbucks but are actually part of a larger vision to make their worksites and communities a better place. This shows that workers are beginning to see unions not just as a tool to react against bad treatment but as a proactive tool they 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.

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, apartment buildings and 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.

ation 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 zoom in on one particular work-

place 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



PHOTO: STARBUCKS WORKERS UNITED

Starbucks Workers United in the 2021 Labor Day Parade, Buffalo, N.Y.

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 strictly through bargaining with union contracts. In other words, a labor movement in the U.S. that does not take on an internationalist 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 boss, the working class of one country is more powerful when it unites with other workers across national boundaries against their shared capitalist exploiters.

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 committee 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 keep their phones for emergency weather alerts nor allow them to leave in the face of the danger.

Among the most popular of Times Square rally placards was “Amazon Crime: 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 unions and radical organizers to intervene and enforce the new rules on behalf of the workers.

Many in the corporate media have falsely pronounced the Staten Island 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 undoubtedly 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.

WAAR 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

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 bosses use to lie to and intimidate workers.



WW PHOTO: TONY MURPHY

Striking Columbia University graduate students support Amazon union drive, New York City, Dec. 22.

Others at the rally included Transit Workers Union Local 100 leader Charles Jenkins, a longtime leader in the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists; Edward Yood with Communications Workers of America Local 1180; a delegation from the Coalition of Labor Union Women; and a contingent of six striking Columbia University student 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. □

Unvaccinated staff spread COVID-19 in California prisons

By Judy Greenspan
Oakland, California

California state prisoners are experiencing a dangerous surge of COVID-19 infections, fueled 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 men, transgender and gender-nonconforming prisoners in the state.

Approximately one-quarter of CMF prison staff, including many medical providers, are private contractors, and only 37% have been vaccinated. California Department of Corrections prison staff, including guards, generally trail prisoner 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*,



WW PHOTO: JUDY GREENSPAN
Prisoners' rights activists demonstrate in front of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Sacramento.

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 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 alert state legislators and others about this crisis.

Campbell is particularly concerned about the outbreak of COVID-19 in the prison hospitals. She noted: "CMF holds the oldest, the most disabled and medically vulnerable prisoners in the state. The safety of these people is being flagrantly violated."

CMF just announced that it was canceling all visiting due to the spread of the highly contagious omicron variant. Several of the housing units are on lockdown; 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. This prison had a segregated unit housing prisoners with HIV/AIDS and transgender prisoners. While the unit no longer exists, CMF now has the only prison hospice 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." □

WW COMMENTARY

We need prison abolition, not reform

By Mirinda Crissman

Nearly 2.3 million people, who are incarcerated every day in prisons, jails and detention centers in the United States, face possible death sentences while locked up during a deadly respiratory pandemic. Despite facing inhumane and unsanitary conditions, they have shown great solidarity with one another and resistance to their brutal oppression.

Since the start of the pandemic, prisons and ICE detention centers across the U.S. have reported at least 460,918 total cumulative cases among incarcerated people and 2,933 total cumulative deaths, according to the UCLA Law COVID Behind Bars Data Project.

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

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

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

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

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

Pandemic exacerbates suffering

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

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

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

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

Suicides in U.S. jails and prisons rose sharply from 2000 to 2019, according to

a study released in October 2021 by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. (The San Diego Union-Tribune, Oct. 7, 2021)

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

Build toward abolition

Even prior to the pandemic, prisons, jails and detention centers were a public health crisis. To imprison this many people — most of whom are historically and disproportionately oppressed in this country on the basis of race, gender, disability and class among others — is to make them vulnerable to premature death, because of the organized violence and organized abandonment by the capitalist state.

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

Colonizers have imposed class war from their ruling positions since landing from across the Atlantic Ocean, with various means of forced and otherwise exploited labor for the profit of a few,



ILLUSTRATION: LAUREN WALKER FOR TRUTHOUT

especially enslavement. Prisons, jails and detention centers are one of the most effective tools the ruling class has to impose social control and drive wages down for the entire working class.

From an always-present and ever-growing movement of abolitionists in Texas, rejecting the war on migrants through Governor Greg Abbott's Operation LoneStar, to each and every one of the 38 countries where the repressive U.S. model of prisons and policing has been exported, we are fighting for abolition like our lives depend on it. Because they do.

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

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Charges army with killing migrants

Polish soldier deserts

By John Catalinotto

Polish soldier Emil Czecko, 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, Czecko said he fled because Polish troops had shot and killed some of the migrants. He said he opposed this policy.

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

The migrants fly 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.

Czecko'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 represses opponents and persecutes anyone who defends communism. New statues have been erected of historic Polish fascist officers.

Czecko speaks out

The following quote is of excerpts from a report of Czecko's interview on BelTa TV, published Dec. 17 in the English section of the Belarus news agency eng.belta.by. During the interview, Emil Czecko was asked how those people [migrants] behaved before the execution, whether they 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 wounded. Emil Czecko 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



Polish soldier Emil Czecko tells of shooting migrants at border with Belarus.

he was caught drunk driving 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.

As BelTA reported, the Polish serviceman said during the interview that at some point, cars with border guards began to arrive at his place of service and take his fellow soldiers with them. Emil Czecko and another serviceman were taken first. On the way, they were offered a drink.

When they got there, they saw several people. "One of them asked another border guard whether he should reload the weapon. And when we asked what for, they told us to reload our weapons and pointed their guns at our heads to force us to shoot. We were drunk while patrolling the border for the first time. We caught some man who was by himself, took him to the forest, dug a hole and right in front of our eyes, the border guards shot him in the head," Czecko said.

According to Emil Czecko, volunteers and migrants were among those who were killed by Polish border guards. He said he witnessed at least two situations when Polish border guards shot a volunteer for asking them where they were taking refugees to. "There was not a single case when the migrants we brought were not killed. We would always kill them."

Catalinotto is the author of "Turn the Guns Around: Mutinies, Soldier Revolts and Revolutions" about rank-and-file GI opposition to the U.S. role in Vietnam. We do not know at present if there is widespread opposition among Polish soldiers in carrying out punitive duties against civilians.

An appreciation

Betty White's anti-racist act

By Monica Moorehead

There have been many accolades showered on the trailblazing and multiple Emmy-winning comedian 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 21-year-old Black dancer, Arthur Duncan, 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 2018 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



Arthur Duncan, in 1954, and holding hands with Betty White in 2017.



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.' " (thethings.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 to come. This is another reason why Betty White will always remain a beloved "Golden Girl." □

We need prison abolition, not reform

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

We're not building toward reform of

any of these institutions. Prisons, jails and detention centers are themselves a form of enslavement and encomiendas (the Spanish Crown's land grants to Spaniard settler-colonizers conferring rights to tribute and forced labor from Indigenous inhabitants). Reform gives us more of what we've already got — structures of ceaseless violence that continue to maintain wealth accumulation for

human traffickers and perpetrators of genocide.

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

suffering and violence.

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

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

Russia’s demands challenge NATO’s threats

By Sara Flounders

Russian President Vladimir Putin at his End of the Year Press Conference, Dec. 23, 2021, speaking to 500 domestic and international journalists, 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? Are we deploying missiles near the U.S. border? No, we are not. It is the United States that has come to our home with its missiles and is already standing at our doorstep. Is it going too far to demand that no strike systems be placed near our home? 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, an ominous warning of a Russian invasion of Ukraine. President Joe Biden promised “serious consequences.”

As U.S. policy grows more reckless, the corporate media perceives threats everywhere. After Putin and Biden spoke by zoom, Putin and President Xi Jinping of China had a New Year’s exchange Dec. 15. This conversation was headlined by The Hill as “‘Allies’ China and Russia Are Ganging Up on America.”

Yet NATO expansion is in direct violation of U.S. agreements with the then-USSR, agreements that the U.S.-commanded and 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 present no threat to the Soviet Union.

Putin’s statement above summarizes the Russian government’s position leading up to scheduled Jan. 10 talks in Geneva, Switzerland, to discuss Russian demands to stop U.S./NATO expansion to its borders. Meanwhile, the U.S. corporate media reports Russia’s troops within Russia as a buildup on the border with Ukraine.

What President Putin is addressing is the further expansion of NATO through Ukraine’s absorption into an aggressive, U.S.-dominated military alliance.

NATO keeps expanding

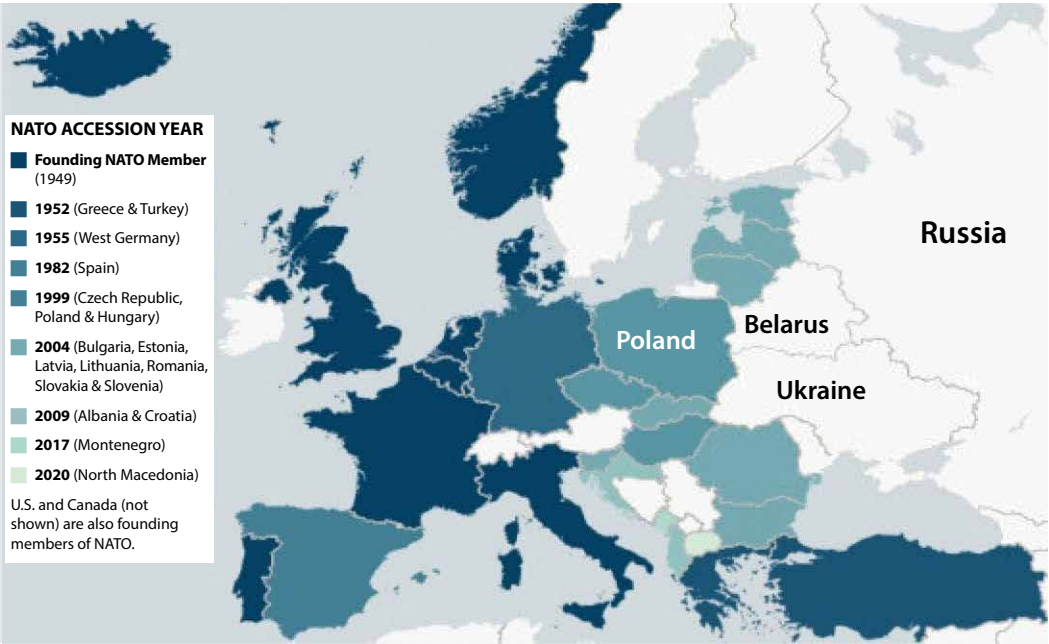
Since 1990, U.S. and West European — especially German — imperialism have shared a policy toward formerly socialist Eastern Europe: They aimed to consolidate capitalist property relations under Western economic domination. For this to succeed they began organizing the state itself, its police and military, under U.S. military command. To lock in place this transfer of property, they insisted on NATO membership for each country.

Beyond the imperialist reconquest of Eastern Europe was the effort to totally dominate and loot Russia. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the separation of former Soviet republics into small, dysfunctional “independent” countries whetted U.S. imperialist appetites.

During the years Boris Yeltsin was president of Russia, 1991-99, the corrupt bureaucrats and criminals who had seized control of the formerly nationalized industries became oligarchs. These new rulers sold entire industries for scrap metal to curry favor in the West and enrich themselves. They expected to be welcomed as equals into the imperialist bloc.

No way.

What Putin has attempted, especially in the past decade, is to stabilize and



consolidate capitalist property relations in Russia, ending the wild looting and economic chaos of the Yeltsin years. He has not sought to reestablish socialist property relations but to defend Russian nationalist interests.

Putin blocks looting

Outside Russia, the Putin government provided air cover and vital military aid to Syria that halted the imperialist attempt to overthrow the Syrian government. Russian missiles shipped to Venezuela have provided that government with some needed air cover. These steps outraged imperialist forces determined to reassert their domination of oil-rich Western Asia and to control all of South America.

What is barely mentioned in all the current reporting of a Russian threat is that the U.S. is supplying \$450 million additional funding in weapons to Ukraine. Together with U.S. aid to bring about the reactionary February 2014 coup in Kiev, Ukraine’s capital, that adds up to \$2.5 billion. There is \$60 million more in small arms, ammunition and radar systems.

Britain, NATO member and U.S. junior partner, is constructing two naval ports for the pro-imperialist Ukraine regime on that country’s Black Sea shoreline. One is in the Sea of Azov, that is, between the Russian naval base on the Crimean Peninsula and the rest of Russia. London is also lending the U.S.-installed government in Kiev \$1.6 billion to pay for an assortment of British-made naval vessels.

Western military officials are discussing deploying new technology, including nuclear-capable missiles, in Poland and Latvia and along Ukraine’s Russia-facing eastern front.

Background to Jan. 10

Russia’s position for the Jan. 10 meeting:

- NATO should cease its efforts to expand eastward into Ukraine and Georgia;
- NATO guarantees that it will not deploy missile batteries in nations bordering Russia; and
- An end to NATO military and naval exercises in nations and seas bordering Russia.

It is important to review this pledge today in the present crisis.

In 1990 then Soviet President Gorbachev was facing a social upheaval internally, following the opening of the Soviet Union to Western-funded programs and ending the leading role of the Communist Party. Seeking a deal with imperialism, Gorbachev allowed the annexation of the German Democratic Republic—which the Soviet Union had a legal right to veto.

Gorbachev had received assurances that NATO would not expand after he withdrew all Soviet forces from Eastern Europe, and not just from Baker. U.S., Soviet, German,

British and French documents declassified on Dec. 12, 2017, and posted online at George Washington University, revealed a torrent of assurances which Western leaders gave Gorbachev and other Soviet officials, throughout the process of German unification in 1990-91. They all promised Soviet security.

These documents reveal that U.S. President George H.W. Bush, West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, CIA Director Robert Gates, French President Francois Mitterrand, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd, British Prime Minister John Major and NATO Secretary General Manfred Woerner made promises similar to Baker’s pledge of NATO expanding “not one inch.” (tinyurl.com/mr4atc3m)

The absorption of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) into the imperialist bloc, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the dissolution of the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact left NATO as a totally unopposed, aggressive military alliance. NATO first asserted its military capacity through bombing campaigns and troop deployments to carry out the breakup of the Yugoslav Socialist Federation through the 1990s.

Since then, the U.S. military has led the NATO military alliance in a series of wars, invasions, bombing campaigns and occupations, including in Iraq, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria and in subversive regime-change operations throughout Eastern Europe, Western Asia and Africa.

In every former socialist country in Eastern Europe, regime changes reinstated capitalism. It was a brutal and wrenching political and economic transformation. With Washington’s assistance, reactionary monarchists, religious clerics, former Nazi collaborators and Wall Street economists flooded into the entire region.

Hundreds of social organizations, NGOs, schools and publications received billions of dollars in U.S. funding, through USAID programs, to reorganize society on a capitalist basis. They aggressively rewrote constitutions along with banking and new ownership laws, privatized and sold off major industries, dismembered social services and looted pensions.

To consolidate and protect these brutal thefts of socialized property from potential popular resistance, the imperialists turned to the NATO military alliance. The collaborators in each capitalist-reorganized country had to join NATO, in the process borrowing to pay for U.S.-made military equipment and pledging thousands of their soldiers to fight in U.S. wars.

New right-wing governments in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic applied for and were quickly accepted into the NATO alliance in 1999. The former Soviet Republics of Estonia, Latvia,

Lithuania, all bordering Russia, were admitted to NATO in 2004, as were the right-wing governments in Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Albania and Croatia were admitted into the military alliance in 2009, Montenegro in 2017 and North Macedonia in 2020.

From 16 members in 1990, NATO grew to 30 members today.

U.S. coup in Ukraine

It was the fierce political struggle over Ukraine joining NATO that led to the aggressive U.S.-orchestrated coup in 2014. The U.S. government pumped \$5.1 billion into the country to carry out an enormous social engineering campaign and regime-change operation against the elected government.

A Dec. 13, 2013, speech by Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland to the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation, a U.S.-funded nongovernmental agency, revealed the price tag for this Ukrainian operation.

The Western media reported the coup as a democratic renewal. But the Euro-Maidan Uprising, in Kiev, was led by Right Sektor and neo-Nazi militias. After months of street protests, these forces literally overran government buildings on Feb. 22, 2014, forcing elected President Viktor Yanukovich and many of his officials to flee for their lives.

Nuland and European officials immediately declared the new regime “legitimate.”

Protesting the illegitimate overthrow of their elected president, mass movements in the more industrialized Donbass in Eastern Ukraine and in Crimea held referendums, seeking separation from this right-wing seizure of power in western Ukraine. Russian forces moved into Crimea to secure Russia’s only warm water port on the Black Sea.

This impasse has continued since 2014.

The U.S. and European Union imposed harsh sanctions on Russia for resisting NATO’s military expansion. The economic sanctions are especially focused on rupturing Russia’s ability to sell oil and gas to Germany by blocking the Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline. Tying Europe’s energy needs to fracked natural gas from the U.S. increases U.S. imperialist leverage against its EU allies, which are also capitalist competitors.

U.S. always violates agreements

The U.S. government violates treaties at will. This is imperialist diplomacy, confirmed by hundreds of broken treaties with Indigenous nations within the U.S.

Along with violating its promises regarding NATO expansion, Washington violated two publicly signed international agreements of great importance. The U.S. broke the nuclear agreement (JCPOA) signed in 2015 along with Iran and Britain, France, Germany, China and Russia and the U.N. Security Council.

Washington is now flagrantly violating the 1979 agreement recognizing the People’s Republic of China as the sole legitimate government of all China including Taiwan.

Breaking these treaties may have unforeseen consequences, causing U.S. targets to forge alliances. In his 1997 book, “The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives,” imperialist strategist Zbigniew Brzezinski warned:

“Potentially, the most dangerous scenario [for U.S. domination] would be a grand coalition of China, Russia, and perhaps Iran, an ‘antihegemonic’ coalition united not by ideology but by complementary grievances.” □

Airline CEOs dictate COVID-19 policy

By Betsey Piette

On Dec. 27, the United States reported a record-breaking number of new COVID-19 cases, with 441,278 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 an emergency standard adopted in June that had mandated protections for health care workers.

And the new CDC guidelines lack a provision for testing at the end of the isolation period. While the CDC claims the change “is motivated by science,” many workers, especially in health care and the airline industry, are calling the changes reckless and a further risk to public health.

In a Dec. 28 press release, National Nurses United noted the new CDC policy allows for an even further reduction in isolation time, “if there are staffing shortages.” The NNU “condemned the Biden administration’s latest moves to rip away protections for health care workers and the public ... right when the omicron variant is exploding across the country during a winter surge.” (tinyurl.com/2bnf4sx9)

NNU stated that “nurses emphasize that the weakened isolation guidelines are motivated by the employers wanting workers back on the clock fast, regardless of whether it’s safe — to maximize profits.” NNU President Zenei Triunfo-Cortez, RN, added: “Let’s be clear: This is about what’s good for business, not what’s good for public health.” NNU is calling a National Day of Action Jan. 13 to demand more protection for workers.

Airline CEOs requested guideline change

CDC officials claim that the change was primarily driven by worries that the increasing volume of 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



Nurses condemn Biden administration for ripping COVID-19 protection away from health care workers, Dec. 28. PHOTO: NATIONAL NURSES UNITED

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 fan attendance at 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.

Airline officials and bosses from other industries are concerned that the high rate of transmission of the omicron variant would make it impossible to keep businesses running, if guidelines for longer isolation remained in place. In New York City, a Trader Joe’s store was forced to close after half its workforce went out with COVID-19. Three subway lines in the city suspended services due to worker shortage.

In 2020, the airlines were given \$54 million in federal aid to keep employees on their payroll during the pandemic. But those company bosses laid off hundreds of thousands of workers, creating a labor shortage in the industry. The remaining workers are reluctant to agree to

extended shifts, given the industry’s disdain for their safety and health.

Sara Nelson, International President of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, responded to the new CDC guidelines with the following statement: “We said we wanted to hear from medical professionals on the best guidance for quarantine, not from corporate America advocating for a shortened period due to staffing shortages.

“The CDC gave a medical explanation about why the agency has decided to reduce the quarantine requirements from 10 to five days, but the fact that it aligns with the number of days pushed by corporate America is less than reassuring. ... If any business pressures a worker to return to work before they feel better, we will make clear it is an unsafe work environment, which will cause a much greater disruption than any ‘staffing shortages.’

“We cannot allow pandemic fatigue to lead to decisions that extend the life of the pandemic or put policies on the backs of workers. ... After more than 800,000 funerals, millions suffering effects of long COVID, our hospitals so full people can’t get the medical treatment they need and frontline workers facing violent attacks simply for working to keep everyone safe, can we finally take this pandemic seriously and do what needs to be done to end it?” (tinyurl.com/88dzy3zn)

Corporate media like the New York Times advocate letting go of testing and shifting away from publishing daily COVID-19 numbers — seemingly a conclusion that the virus is uncontrollable, so “just get used to it.”

Too much testing for COVID-19 has never been the problem. The fault lies with for-profit health care under capitalism. Access to testing has been limited from Day One of the pandemic in the U.S., along with failure to provide adequate personal protective equipment for staff and patients. A corporate-controlled media that hides and distorts facts about the coronavirus has made matters worse.

Over the past week in which U.S. daily cases averaged over 400,000, in China the daily average was 191 new cases and in Cuba 267.

COVID-19 has always been controllable. It’s the for-profit system of capitalism that’s out of control. □

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.



New York City teachers protest the reopening of schools in August 2020 under unsafe conditions during the COVID pandemic.

Of course, the pain, the suffering, the deaths and long-term impairment of the workers involved are generally disregarded. The bourgeois politicians and their public health advisers, in managing the response to these problems, firmly insist that the generally available vaccines along with widespread testing will control this pandemic and allow the economy to recover and overcome the labor shortages that afflict their profit-driven system.

President Joe Biden’s speech Dec. 22 reflected his administration’s belief that COVID-19 is here to stay; it can be managed by “patriotically” getting vaccines, and the disruptions caused by

social distancing and shutdowns aren’t necessary.

Biden’s ‘test-to-stay’ for schools

According to the CDC, as of Dec. 9 more than 7.1 million COVID-19 infections of children have been reported. (tinyurl.com/2bbt6brd)

One major issue Biden raised was his administration’s adoption of “test-to-stay,” which would allow kids who have been exposed to COVID-19 to come back to school, as long as they test negative. As he put it, “We can keep our K through 12 schools open, and that’s exactly what we should be doing.”

A number of school districts like Atlanta; Yonkers, New York; and Newark, New Jersey, as well as smaller districts in northern New Jersey; Prince Georges County, Maryland; Illinois; Connecticut; and New Mexico have gone to either all remote or hybrid instruction. The situation throughout the country is extremely fluid.

Eric Adams, the new mayor of New York City, has reaffirmed his predecessor’s decision to keep the largest school district in the country, with 1 million students, open for in-person learning. But serious issues with

testing in the New York City school system have been raised.

At MS 839 in Brooklyn, according to the Dec. 27 Gothamist, 70% of the school was in partial quarantine, and there were nine confirmed cases. When the administration found out that the teachers were planning a sick-out day, they put the school on remote. Some teachers believed that students should only be allowed to return in person with a negative PCR test.

Many members of the United Federation of Teachers, which represents about 84,000 teachers and staff in the New York Department of Education, think their lives and health are at risk from COVID-19. On the television station NY1, Dec. 22, President Michael Mulgrew of the UFT said the testing system is “broken.” Only 180,000 students out of 1 million have agreed to be tested. No testing was done in roughly 180 schools in the two weeks before the holiday break.

A New York City teacher’s view

A teacher at a large Manhattan high school, who interacts with the testing system frequently, told Workers World: “Last year testing was required of all students who came into school buildings. The students were randomly tested which sounds good. But COVID-19 isn’t a choice of drugs; it is a pandemic. So there was some amount of testing of all students

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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 ring of truth. His 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 march, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, led by A. Philip Randolph. The labor signs demanded civil rights, jobs and equality.

Five years later, just a few months before his assassination April 4, 1968, Dr. King came out in support of the 1,300-strong 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/ycknw2b8)



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at a march with striking Memphis sanitation workers, March 28, 1968.

Dr. King’s goal of building toward the Poor People’s March in the summer of 1968 was to merge the civil rights and economic rights struggles, especially for low-paid workers like the sanitation workers, as well as the unemployed.

King’s unifying call that “all labor has dignity” is today being carried forth, especially by young workers exploited by the likes of the global behemoths Starbucks and Amazon. These workers are leading the way for all workers classwide, demanding better working conditions, pay and benefits through union organizing, traditional like the Teamsters and nontraditional like the Amazon Labor Union.

This is the true meaning of the legacy of Dr. King, who remained a fighter on the front lines for all forms of social justice until the end, when bullets tragically cut short his life. □

WW COMMENTARY

A tribute to Archbishop Desmond Tutu, friend of Palestine

By Susan Abulhawa

Our beloved global elder, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, became an ancestor on December 26, passing peacefully amongst his family the day after Christmas at the age of 90. A Nobel Laureate, moral giant and practitioner of radical love, Tutu was integral to the liberation of South Africa from the racist clutches of the minority white apartheid rule. And his moral authority has been foundational to international solidarity with the Palestinian struggle.

Baba Desmond Tutu is one of the last of that generation of South African warriors who bequeathed to their people a new nation without a “color bar,” passbooks and other trinkets of apartheid’s systematic racism.

When Nelson Mandela became the first elected Black president of South Africa in 1994, he selected Desmond Tutu to lead the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a novel national program that attempted to heal the deep trauma that had been inflicted on nonwhite South Africans. He traveled from one town to the next,



Desmond Tutu in the town of Beit Hanun in northern Gaza Strip, May 28, 2008.

listening day in and day out to gut-wrenching testimonies from survivors as well as perpetrators. At times, Tutu himself crumbled into tears under the weight of stories of such inhumanity. He hoped the TRC would be the requisite catharsis before forgiveness, but instead it was criticized ferociously from all sides.

Survivors relived their pain without restorative justice, while perpetrators were pardoned; and the real masterminds of apartheid were never confronted. Nonetheless, the TRC was the first of its kind in the world, a way — imperfect though it was — to address the grave injustices without further bloodshed.

Defended Palestine, deplored war

Ultimately, that was his legacy. He refused to look away from or deny oppression, and he never shied away from confronting oppressors. But he sought to arrive at justice without further sacrifice from the oppressed.

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 South Africans 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 beseeched George Bush to turn away from more death and destruction. 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.

COMMENTARY Archbishop Desmond Tutu



His spirit reflected a giant

By Mumia Abu-Jamal

This commentary, recorded by Prison Radio, aired on Democracy Now Dec. 28. Archbishop Tutu visited Mumia Abu-Jamal in 2007, when he was still on death row.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, 1931-2021. Almost a century ago, a little African boy was born to a small family in a small town where gold mining was the chief industry. The town was Klerksdorp, in what was then called the Transvaal.

Father was a teacher, and a young boy wanted to follow in his father’s footsteps. But the politics of white supremacy, known by the term “apartheid,” prevented him from making that choice. That policy, developed by the National Party after it won election in 1948, passed a law called the Bantu Education Act of 1953, legalizing racial segregation in schools. That state decision

forced Desmond Mpilo Tutu to change from teacher to preacher.

A new history was written. Desmond Tutu studied, graduated and was ordained an Anglican priest — and again, a steady climb in the church hierarchy, being named its archbishop in 1986, the Archbishop of Cape Town.

As the anti-apartheid movement swelled in South Africa, so, too, did repression by the state. And with most militants from the African National Congress, or ANC, driven into exile, the archbishop stepped into the breach, presiding over funeral after funeral and giving voice to the Black oppressed majority of the nation. He played a pivotal role in speaking out against the racist system of government and suffered arrest and attacks by police, tear gas at protests.

Throughout it all, he stayed true to his religious beliefs, a committed Christian who saw all life as valuable. He preached for peace and reconciliation. He preached, too, for justice. He spoke out firmly against violence, whether by the government or the freedom movement.

And as the profile of the little priest grew, so did his

concerns for justice and freedom, even beyond the borders of South Africa. The archbishop, lovingly called “The Arch” by his friends and family, called the government violence, repression and separation against the Palestinian people a new form of apartheid. He called for freedom for the Puerto Rican people from the United States government. He critiqued the suffering and state violence against the Muslim minority in Myanmar.

And the little priest even visited a man on death row, where he wondered why a man had to be shackled in a little room divided by a glass window where the door was closed, shut, locked and didn’t even have door handles. The Arch was quiet, serious, a ray of spiritual light in dark places and a joy to meet.

When apartheid fell in the ’90s and South Africa became reborn as a democracy, Archbishop Tutu heightened his critique of the new Black government, which he said was getting rich as the people got poorer and poorer.

He was short, yes, but his spirit reflected a giant. His passage on this planet was a message of love for the world’s oppressed, no matter where they were. He struggled for change with his prophetic voice, his sweet humor, his deep love and a boundless sense of compassion. Desmond Mpilo Tutu, born October 7, 1931, returned to his fathers after 90 summers, an example of love, not fear. □

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 Bolsheviks Must Win,” when she stated: “Only the victory of [revolutionary] democracy can ensure women equality.” (archive.org/stream/Kollontai/Kollontai_djvu.txt)

These words are applicable to other struggles, such as the struggle against racism — and especially to queer and transgender struggles.

After World War II ended in 1945, by 1947 the U.S. government had opened a campaign to rid its State Department of all LGBTQ+ people and suspected communists. In the eyes of reactionaries, these two groups were one, based on the idea that queer people were uniquely susceptible to communist propaganda. The government developed security guidelines that removed many from their jobs and positions of responsibility. The groups targeted were LGBTQ+ people, communist and socialist sympathizers, as well as alcoholics and others deemed “dangerous” and a threat to U.S. government and society.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the U.S. government began a witch hunt against queer people and communists. On Feb. 9, 1950, at a speech in West Virginia, Senator Joseph McCarthy waved his infamous list of 205 “known” communists in the U.S. government, dubbed “enemies within.” Other members of Congress took up the mission of harming LGBTQ+ people: Senators Styles Bridges (R), Kenneth Wherry (R) and Clyde Hoey (D). They were all responsible for whipping up the anti-queer frenzy. Hundreds of people were harmed by them and their crusade.

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



The Compton's Cafeteria rebellion, San Francisco, 1966.

working class in California.

An unfortunate fact, however, was that LGBTQ+ people were not accepted in the CPUSA at the time, following a 1934 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 what are now known as anti-trans laws which had been in place under the tsarist regime.

This unfortunate line didn't stop queer communist organizing in the U.S. Five gay men — Harry Hay, Rudi Gernreich, Dale Jennings, Bob Hull and Chuck Rowland — oversaw weekly meetings in Hay's home. Hay, Hull and Rowland were all members 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 stated goals were to unify gay people, educate society and to get socially aware gay people into leadership in their community. In the service of that mission, they created questionnaires to study the impact of bigotry on their community. In many instances, it was the first time queer people, in this case gay men, had ever been asked about their experiences.

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 timeless and important contributions by saying he would always be a friend of the people.

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 were 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 accepting by seeing that LGBTQ+ people are “just like” heterosexuals.

These two early gay-rights groups explicitly rejected gender-nonconformity by dissuading 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. □

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.

“Furthermore only kids whose parents consented would be tested. These narrow requirements limited the amount of COVID-19 infections detected. In my school no COVID-19 has been detected from our testing. I feel limiting the amount detected was most likely the purpose of the system they established.

“With 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 suggests that this is intrusive, rather than 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 not

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 like the restaurants of the city. This oversight is purposeful, as providing food is necessary but making them safe seems impossible.”

The basic problem with keeping the schools open — in-person learning for many reasons is the best way to teach — is that testing has to be coordinated with treatment and prevention. The omicron variant is so infectious that it can induce

infections even in boosted vaccinated individuals. There are different types of tests, each with their own limitations and restrictions, each potentially providing different information.

The governor and the president and their officials can order 5 million, half a billion, any number of tests, but then these tests have to go to people, be distributed. People have to be instructed on how to use them, how to report the results. The teachers and the Parent Teachers Associations need to be involved in any decision-making around how schools respond to COVID-19. □

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WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN



La revolución entró en La Habana, 1959. Fidel Castro a la izquierda, Che Guevara tercero por la izquierda.

Que la Corte Suprema no se meta con nosotras

En un mundo justo, ¿quién podría pensar que un conocido violador tendría el poder de obligar a las supervivientes de una violación, incluidas las menores, a llevar a término su embarazo forzado?

Pero eso es exactamente lo que ocurre en “los buenos y viejos Estados Unidos”. El “juez” del Tribunal Supremo de Estados Unidos, Brett Kavanaugh, formó parte de la mayoría del tribunal que votó a favor de dejar en pie la ley de Texas contra la justicia reproductiva, que hace ilegal el aborto después de unas seis semanas de embarazo, independientemente de las circunstancias.

La ley permite a un particular en

cualquier estado demandar a cualquiera que busque un aborto o ayude a las personas embarazadas a obtenerlo, y cobrar una recompensa de 10.000 dólares si gana en el tribunal.

En la reciente sentencia, se permite a los proveedores de abortos continuar con una pequeña parte de su demanda contra la S.B. 8 (proyecto de ley 8) en un tribunal federal, pero no pueden demandar a los jueces y secretarios del estado o al fiscal general de Texas.

En la práctica, la sentencia da luz verde a otros estados, como Florida y Ohio, para que aprueben una legislación similar. El alto tribunal había permitido anteriormente que la ley S.B. 8 entrara en vigor mientras se tramitaban los casos contra ella.

La draconiana ley de Texas ha tenido, y seguirá teniendo, el mayor impacto en las personas pobres y de color, aquellas que carecen de los fondos y el transporte necesarios para abortar en otros estados.

El SCOTUS (Tribunal Supremo de Estados Unidos) se pronunciará el año que viene sobre una ley antiabortista de Misisipi.

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 los derechos civiles. 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 perfeccionar el modelo de la S.B. 8 para anular los derechos federales”.

¿Qué debería pasar ahora?

Sotomayor continúa diciendo: “El Tribunal traiciona así no sólo a los ciudadanos de Texas, sino también a nuestro sistema constitucional de gobierno”.

De hecho, es ese mismo 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 niños víctimas de incesto y de las personas oprimidas por razones de género. Como escribió Sam Marcy, el difunto presidente del partido Workers World Party/ Partido Mundo Obrero en 1989: “Es 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 proceso 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 lo distribuye 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”.

Para ganar, la lucha por la justicia reproductiva tiene que dirigirse a la clase dominante, que tiene las verdaderas riendas del poder aunque actúe al amparo de la “democracia”. Los valores patriarcales sirven a la clase capitalista, para la que la maternidad es un servicio más, que proporciona la siguiente generación de trabajadores explotables.

Despojar a la clase trabajadora y a los oprimidos del poder de decidir cuándo y si quieren tener hijos constituye un abominable ataque a los derechos humanos básicos. Ya se ha detenido a jóvenes activistas que se manifestaban ante el SCOTUS. La resistencia ya está adoptando muchas formas, como desafiar al Estado formando redes para ayudar a las personas embarazadas a obtener la atención sanitaria reproductiva que necesitan.

Esta lucha merece el apoyo inequívoco de todo el movimiento obrero.

La negación de la justicia reproductiva a millones de personas, especialmente a los jóvenes, podría ser un punto de inflexión en la lucha de clases en general. La justicia no puede esperar a que algunos miembros del alto tribunal mueran o se jubilen, para que algún político del Partido Demócrata pueda, con suerte, nombrar a otro menos antagónico hacia las mujeres y las personas oprimidas por el género.

Lo que se necesita son tácticas audaces, militantes, creativas y anticapitalistas. Como dice el eslogan: “¡Si no lo logramos, cerrémoslo!”

¿Qué pasaría si los trabajadores organizados convocaran una huelga general de un día para revertir toda la legislación y las sentencias judiciales contra el aborto? El Primero de Mayo de 2006, los trabajadores migrantes celebraron la mayor huelga general de la historia laboral de Estados Unidos.

Si puede haber un “Día sin migrantes”, ¿qué tal un día en el que todas las mujeres y las personas potencialmente embarazadas se queden en casa? □

MUNDO OBRERO editorial



Manifestación a favor del aborto ante el SCOTUS, Washington, DC, 1 de diciembre.

El asesinato y la tasa de retorno

¿En una nota a pie de página del volumen 1 de El Capital, publicado por primera vez en 1867, Karl Marx citó al T.J. Dunning, un líder obrero inglés del siglo XIX:

“Si la ganancia es adecuada, el capital se vuelve audaz. Un 10% seguro, y se lo podrá emplear dondequiera; 20%, y se pondrá impulsivo; 50%, y llegará positivamente a la temeridad; por 100% pisoteará todas las leyes humanas; 300% y no hay crimen que lo arredre, aunque corra el riesgo de que lo ahorquen.”

Hoy en día, más de 150 años de lucha de clases han mitigado los efectos del ansia de lucro capitalista. Los trabajadores tienen protecciones en los contratos sindicales y en la legislación, como el salario mínimo, las leyes de

trabajo infantil, las normas de seguridad en el lugar de trabajo y el derecho a organizarse.

Pero periódicamente, en el curso de los acontecimientos, ocurren desastres que destrozan con la fuerza de un tornado cualquier pretensión de “capitalismo solidario”. Los tornados del 10 de diciembre fueron un desastre de este tipo.

Aunque los propietarios de la fábrica de velas Mayfield Consumer Products de Mayfield (Kentucky) no

pusieron en peligro sus propias vidas, no tuvieron escrúpulos para arriesgar las de sus empleados. Al menos 15 trabajadores de la fábrica que querían volver a casa para ponerse a salvo fueron amenazados con el despido.

El tornado arrasó el edificio, matando a ocho e hiriendo gravemente a muchos más. En una demanda en la que solicitan daños compensatorios y punitivos, los abogados de los trabajadores acusan a la empresa de mostrar una “indiferencia flagrante” hacia su seguridad. (NBC News, 18 de diciembre)

La mentalidad de los propietarios de “prioridad a las ganancias” se ha traducido en bajos salarios, largas jornadas de trabajo y lo que el empleado y padre de dos hijos David Hollowell denominó condiciones de “taller de explotación”. Muchos de los trabajadores de la fábrica están

encarcelados o han estado encarcelados. Mayfield Consumer Products contrata a personas como ayuda temporal, despidiéndolas antes de que termine su periodo de prueba, para luego volver a contratarlas como nuevas personas a prueba. Se ha despedido a trabajadores por ser epilépticos, tener sobrepeso o estar embarazadas.

La compañía Mayfield fue multada anteriormente por violaciones de la seguridad en el trabajo. Los 245 trabajadores ganan entre 8 y 10 dólares la hora.

Ningún crimen es demasiado grande en la búsqueda de ganancias

La crítica de Dunning al capitalismo se dirigía a empresas de tamaño similar a Mayfield. Pero la “flagrante indiferencia” hacia los trabajadores no se limita a los pequeños “capitalistas cucaracha”. Las seis muertes en el almacén de Amazon en Edwardsville, Illinois -propiedad del centibillonario Jeff Bezos- confirman el punto enfatizado en la nota a pie de página de Marx: que los capitalistas no se detendrán ante nada para aumentar sus ganancias.

Esta es, de hecho, la causa fundamental de la catástrofe climática que ha llevado a un aumento en el número y la gravedad de los tornados, huracanes, inundaciones y otros desastres que amenazan la vida de los trabajadores.

Ya es hora de que la humanidad -a través de la lucha revolucionaria- se deshaga del sistema asesino, explotador e impulsor de ganancias llamado capitalismo. □



Primero de Mayo de 2020 frente al almacén de Amazon en Staten Island.