

In honor of Dr. King

Actions support Amazon workers

By Martha Grevatt

Amazon, which bought Whole Foods in 2017, is the second-largest employer in the U.S. and has made record profits during the pandemic, with global net revenue in 2020 of \$386 billion.

Across the country, the movement to back Amazon workers in their righteous, growing fights for safety and union rights continues to pick up steam. Solidarity actions took place Jan. 12, the birthday of hated Amazon boss Jeff Bezos, and on Jan. 15, the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who fought racism and organized for worker justice.

All the actions drew widespread support from passing motorists and pedestrians, as well as some Whole Foods store customers. They were called and joined by Support Amazon Workers Network, local Amazon worker solidarity groups and numerous labor leaders, community activists, environmentalists, anti-racists and youth. Workers World Party endorsed the actions.

‘Crappy birthday to you’

In **New York City** Jan. 12, protesters delivered Bezos — richest man in the world and union-buster-in-chief — a five-foot-long un-birthday card at Amazon’s city headquarters. On Manhattan’s 34th Street — during the year’s coldest week and as COVID-19 cases filled local hospitals — a crowd blocked the entrance to Amazon’s bookstore to demand the company recognize the unions being organized around the country by its workers.

The gathering was led by members of Workers Assembly Against Racism,



Outside Whole Foods, Jamaica Plain, Boston, January 15

PHOTO: COALITION OF BLACK TRADE UNIONISTS—BOSTON

Amazon workers, leaders from the successful Columbia student workers strike, activists with the Laundry Workers Center, Workers World Party and others. That morning, New Yorkers woke up to WBAI radio host King Downing singing “Crappy Birthday to You,” as he interviewed Amazon Labor Union leader Chris Smalls.

As supporters of the **Atlanta** Amazon Workers Solidarity Network approached the Midtown Whole Foods, they were met by the store manager and a security guard. Within their rights to distribute leaflets on the public sidewalk and hold signs supporting the right of workers to organize a union, they engaged customers and passersby.

Drivers at the busy intersection took the leaflet with the headline, “Amazon, Stop Union Busting.” While stopped at

a light, one man gave a donation to the campaign.

**Cleveland** activists demonstrated outside Whole Foods, singing “Bad birthday to you; bad birthday to you; you’re a union buster; bad birthday to you.” One of the participants was a Starbucks worker organizer. Workers United, seeking union recognition at a downtown Cleveland Starbucks, filed with the National Labor Relations Board Jan. 10.

In **San Francisco**, Bezos’ birthday was “celebrated” with a loud and angry protest outside a proposed new massive Amazon warehouse located in the South of Market neighborhood. Amazon recently purchased an entire square block in this city, in an area zoned for low-cost housing, to build a large warehouse. This building will not only threaten union organizing but has the potential to wipe

out small retailers in the area.

Organized by the United Front Committee for a Labor Party, the protest demanded, “End slave labor and union busting by Bezos.”

Actions honor Dr. King Jan. 15

Braving a -6°F wind chill and threats of arrest by a police squad, community, labor and student activists picketed outside a Whole Foods in **Boston’s** Jamaica Plain neighborhood Jan. 15. The Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, Team Solidarity-the Voice of United School Bus Workers, United American Indians of New England, Pride at Work Eastern Massachusetts, Democratic Socialists of America-Boston, Workers World Party and ACT UP-Boston put out the call. Leaders from local unions were joined by

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WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

TEAR DOWN THE WALLS

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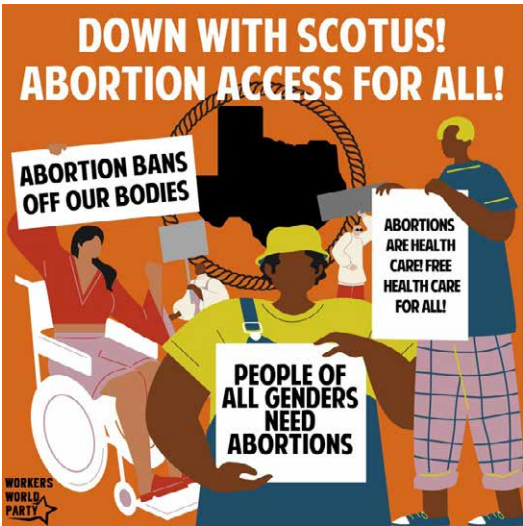


# The struggle for reproductive justice is a struggle against capitalism

## A 10-point fightback program

*The Women and Gender Oppressed Caucus of Workers World Party issued the following statement and program on the 49th anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision. Email the caucus at [women-gender-wwp@workers.org](mailto:women-gender-wwp@workers.org)*

As a result of a hard-fought mass movement, the U.S. Supreme Court issued the landmark ruling in Roe v. Wade on Jan. 22, 1973, legalizing the right to access safe, legal abortions. Now this right is severely endangered by the ultraright seeking to overturn it. Already, Texas implemented a near ban on abortion with no exceptions for rape or incest victims, even children. Other states seek to copy this law, and 22 are set to overturn legal abortion if Roe is overturned. It is women and gender-oppressed people, Black, Latinx, Indigenous, im/migrants, low-income, young,



LGBTQ2S+ and disabled people over decades.

The struggle to preserve legal abortions is but one part

*Continued on page 3*

## To a socialist future — Build Workers World

Workers World newspaper’s articles and editorials analyze major global and U.S. developments, always with an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist perspective. Our pages report on people’s movements here and abroad to not only inform our readers but to promote those struggles and show solidarity with them. WW aims to advance the struggle for socialism.

The WW Supporter Program was launched 44 years ago to help build this unique socialist newspaper. Since the early 1990s, the program has also supported workers.org, the website where new WW articles are posted daily, and each week’s full issue is displayed in a PDF document. The newspaper is printed and mailed out monthly.

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WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

Amazon workers solidarity picketline in NYC, Jan. 12.

## 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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# Fires expose housing crisis

By Betsey Piette  
Philadelphia

On Jan. 5, 12 people, including nine children in an extended family, died in a row house fire in Philadelphia’s Fairmount neighborhood. All the victims were Black. Four days later on Jan. 9, a fire in a Bronx high-rise in New York City claimed 17 lives, including eight children. The complex housed a large community of Black and Brown residents, including West African migrants from Gambia. In both cities, the fires were the deadliest in decades.

Coincidence? Not!  
The poverty rate in Philadelphia, a majority Black and Brown city, is 25.7%, highest among the 10 largest U.S. cities. One of the most densely populated U.S. counties, the Bronx has a comparable poverty rate and also a people-of-color majority.

Between 1999 and 2021, the federal government’s failure to provide safe housing has led to residential fires killing Black people at more than twice the rate of white people.

Cuts in federal and state funding for affordable housing have drastically reduced availability over the past two decades. This is not by accident. In 1999, President Bill Clinton signed the Faircloth Amendment to the 1937 United States Housing Act, making it illegal for the federal government to build or fund more public housing units than existed on Oct. 1, 1999.

Since 1999, the U.S. population has grown by around 51 million. The inflation-adjusted median cost of buying a home has risen by 36.83%. At the same time there is a \$70 billion backlog in funding to maintain and repair existing public housing. (National Nurse-led Care Consortium, [tinyurl.com/46ew9nyh](https://tinyurl.com/46ew9nyh))

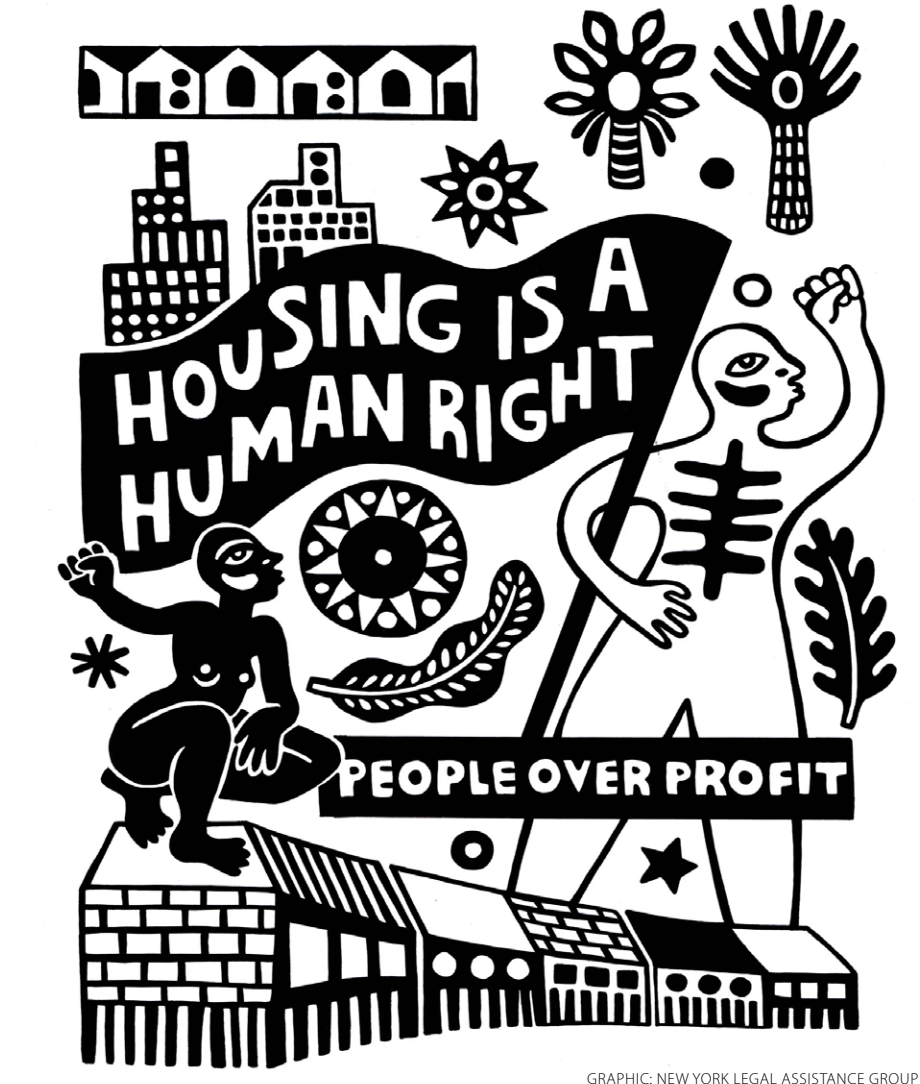
In the 1930s, massive workers’ protests against evictions forced the federal government to respond by establishing the Housing Act, which built millions of new homes. However, most of those publicly funded houses were constructed in predominantly white neighborhoods. Decades later, a majority of public housing residents are Black and Latinx, including immigrants. Single parent households with children comprise over 30%. People with disabilities make up 35%.

Two years before Clinton abandoned public housing, a 1997 study by the Federal Emergency Management Agency reported that overcrowding in housing would invariably lead to more fire deaths. The study commented: “One way low-income families deal with the lack of affordable housing is by doubling up in homes with extended family members or friends. By increasing the number of people in a given household, the number of potential victims of a fire also rises. This is especially true for households with very young or very old household members, who may be unable to escape flames or smoke on their own.”

### The Philadelphia fire

In Philadelphia, the 12 McDonald family members who died, and two others who escaped, were living in an apartment managed by the Philadelphia Housing Authority. Under PHA codes, maximum occupant residency for the unit was eight. In 2011, PHA moved the McDonald family out of their previous home when the family grew to six people — two more than structure code allowed. In 2016, the PHA learned the family had again outgrown the apartment occupancy code, but this time the PHA did nothing. Without consulting the family, PHA put them on a waiting list that had been closed to new applicants since 2013.

Their apartment included the upper



GRAPHIC: NEW YORK LEGAL ASSISTANCE GROUP

two floors of a three-story row house built in 1879. There were no fire escapes or sprinklers. A single stairway provided egress to exits on the building’s first floor.

Members of the family occupying the first floor who escaped the fire reported being awoken by screams from above, not smoke detector alarms. While the PHA claimed to have inspected the smoke detectors in May 2021, fire inspectors found no working units in the structure.

### The Bronx fire

Although the Bronx fire was not in a public housing authority-managed

building, it was in a federally subsidized housing complex, one of many owned by for-profit investors. Relying on several government incentive programs, a trio of investment firms including Camber Property Group, Belveron Partners and LIHC Investment Group purchased the 19-story Bronx tower in 2019 for \$166 million. These investment companies, collectively holding assets worth billions of dollars, rank among the 20 biggest owners of affordable housing in the U.S.

Fire inspectors blamed a faulty space heater for the fire. However, most victims died from inhaling dense smoke that filled

the complex’s exit stairways after two interior apartment doors failed to automatically close and contain the smoke.

While smoke detectors went off during the fire, tenants reported that smoke alarms rang so frequently, many residents came to ignore them. The building was not equipped with sprinklers or fire escapes. Residents had repeatedly complained about the lack of adequate heat, faulty safety doors and other code violations including mice, roaches and lead paint. Some of the survivors of the fire have filed a \$1 billion lawsuit against landlords for code violations that caused the fire.

Yet in December 2021, the New York Housing Conference, a housing policy organization, named Camber owner Rick Gropper “Developer of the Year.” And Gropper serves on New York Mayor Eric Adams’ transition team for housing issues.

### Housing crisis is a working-class issue

Workers in the U.S. are experiencing the worst housing crisis since the 1930s. Even before the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic, housing was increasingly unaffordable. In 2021, the National Low Income Housing Coalition found that nowhere in the U.S. was someone working a minimum-wage job able to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment.

Housing costs take up an ever-growing percentage of family income, forcing workers to choose between paying rent or feeding their families. Rising rents, a resumption of evictions and job losses due to the pandemic, coupled with rampant gentrification, have created a widening gap between need and supply. The NLIHC estimates there are only 34 housing units for every 100 low-income households.

Millions of workers are not safely housed under capitalism. You can’t be safe in a place that doesn’t provide heat in the winter. Working-class and oppressed people demand a right to safe and affordable housing. □

## The struggle for reproductive justice is a struggle against capitalism A 10-point fightback program

*Continued from page 2*

of the overall fight for reproductive justice, which maintains that people should make decisions about their lives without state repression or employer discrimination. It means freedom from racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism and anti-worker and anti-im/migrant ideas and policies. But these reactionary ideologies are embedded within the capitalist system and promoted by the capitalist class to divide the workers.

It is crucial that the struggle for reproductive justice be aimed at the capitalist system, the root cause of all oppressions, exploitation and inequality. It is the bosses who deny workers COVID-19 sick days and sick pay. It is the capitalist class which opposes workers’ rights to safe working conditions and to organize, including at Amazon.

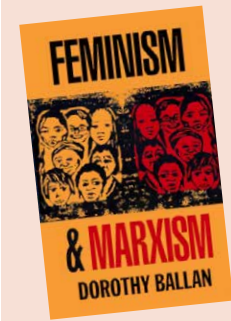
The corporate bosses’ aim is to keep their megaprofits rolling in, no matter whom they exploit or repress or how badly they destroy the planet. The superrich fear that the multinational, multigender working class and their allies will organize and mount an independent, united struggle — not relying on the Democratic Party — which will ultimately aim at capitalism itself. But this is exactly what is needed to win reproductive justice and a

lot more. In fact, getting rid of capitalism altogether and fighting for a socialist system is the way to win permanent reproductive justice.

### 10-point program for reproductive justice

1. Free, safe, legal abortion on demand for women, people of all oppressed genders who can become pregnant and survivors of rape and incest.
2. Defend Roe v. Wade. Repeal the Hyde Amendment which denies Medicaid funds for abortion.
3. Free, universal health care is a human right from birth to death. End racist, homophobic, transphobic, misogynist, anti-immigrant exclusions from quality health care.
4. The right to have children and raise them in healthy circumstances: subsidized childcare; nutritious food; funding of SNAP and WIC programs; child tax credits; paid parental leave; affordable, healthy housing; safe jobs at a livable wage with accommodations for pregnancy and disability; prevention of infant and child mortality; a clean environment; and ending police violence. Defend the Indian Child Welfare Act.

5. Stop ALL racist, genocidal sterilization!
6. Access to free, safe contraception and reproductive health education.
7. Free, accessible adoption and foster care systems for prospective parents of all genders. Defund agencies that discriminate based on nationality, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability and age.
8. No reproductive coercion, abuse or neglect of people of color, the incarcerated, the disabled, sex workers and those of oppressed genders.
9. The right to participate equally in every aspect of life without fear of violence or sexual assault.
10. Down with misogyny, white supremacy, patriarchy, all forms of bigotry and the capitalist profit-driven medical industrial complex! □



### Feminism & Marxism

By Dorothy Ballan

A Marxist analysis of the role of women through history, and an account of gains in socialist societies that point to socialist revolution as the only road to full emancipation of women.

Read it online at:  
[workers.org/book/feminism-marxism](https://workers.org/book/feminism-marxism)



# Solitary confinement on death row— a death before dying



WW COMMENTARY

By Gloria Rubac

“It is inhumane, and by its design it is driving men insane. Solitary confinement makes the criminal justice system the criminal.”

These words were testimony presented to the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee’s hearing on solitary confinement June 19, 2012, by death row exoneree #138, Anthony C. Graves. ([tinyurl.com/5cs4s59y](https://tinyurl.com/5cs4s59y)) Graves spent 18.5 years wrongfully incarcerated in Texas, most of them on death row. Like all those on death row in Texas, Graves was housed in solitary confinement.

“Death-sentenced prisoners in 12 states are automatically placed in indefinite solitary confinement, based solely on their death sentence. These prisoners spend between 21 and 24 [hours] per day in their cells, with very limited meaningful human contact. There is no possibility in any of these states for death-sentenced prisoners to have their placement reviewed, to be placed in a less restrictive custody level.” (Merel Pointier, “Cruel but not unusual: The automatic use of indefinite solitary confinement on Death Row,” Texas Journal on Civil Liberties & Civil Rights, Fall 2020)

## Cruel and unusual punishment

Solitary confinement is considered cruel and unusual by international standards. The United Nations adopted rules for the treatment of prisoners in 1955; the U.N. General Assembly adopted revised rules in 2015, now known as the Mandela Rules. These rules forbid torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment

or treatment. Specifically prohibited is prolonged solitary confinement without human contact for more than 15 consecutive days.

There is strong international consensus against the indefinite use of solitary, but this does not exist in the U.S. The American Correctional Association doesn’t reject the use of solitary. However, the Department of Justice rejects the prolonged use of solitary without specific penological purpose, saying prisoners should be housed in “safe and humane conditions.”

Independent international and domestic reports suggest that the U.S. is an outlier in its use of prolonged solitary confinement. In 2014, the American Civil Liberties Union published a report about the dangerous overuse of solitary in the U.S. Amnesty International found that the U.S. “stands virtually alone in the world in incarcerating thousands of prisoners in long-term or indefinite solitary confinement.”

There can be violations of the U.S. Constitution in the use of indefinite or prolonged use of solitary confinement.

The Eighth Amendment forbids cruel and unusual punishment. Due process and equal protection are guaranteed under the 14th Amendment.

Recently there have been challenges to the use of prolonged solitary in eight states — Arizona, Florida, Louisiana, Kansas, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Virginia. In Virginia the federal court did rule in favor of the prisoners. In six states legal challenges have resulted in significant changes to confinement conditions, including more out-of-cell time and more human contact. In Florida, the death row prisoners and the prison

administration are still in mediation.

While the facts about solitary can be laid out geographically and in statistics, the real crime of indefinite solitary for those on death row is the inhumanity, the loss of sanity, the terror of mental illness.

## A prisoner reveals the nightmare of solitary

In his testimony two years after he was released and exonerated, Anthony Graves said: “No one can begin to imagine the psychological effects isolation has on another human being. I was subjected to sleep deprivation. I would hear the clanging of metal doors throughout the night, an officer walking the runs and shining his flashlight in your eyes or an inmate kicking and screaming, because he’s losing his mind. Guys become paranoid, schizophrenic and can’t sleep because they are hearing voices. I was there when guys would attempt suicide by cutting themselves, trying to tie a sheet around their neck or overdosing on their medication. Then there were the guys that actually committed suicide.

“I will have to live with these vivid memories for the rest of my life. I would watch guys come to prison totally sane; and in three years they don’t live in the real world anymore. I know a guy who would sit in the middle of the floor, rip his sheet up, wrap it around himself and light it on fire. Another guy would go out in the recreation yard, get naked, lie down and urinate all over himself. He would take his feces and smear it all over his face as though he was in military combat. This same man was executed. On the gurney, he was babbling incoherently to the officers: ‘I demand that you release me, soldier, this is your captain speaking.’

“These were the words coming out of a man’s mouth, who was driven insane by the prison conditions, as the poison was being pumped into his arms. He was ruled competent to be executed.

“I knew guys who dropped their appeals, not because they gave up hope on their legal claims but because of the intolerable conditions. I was able to visit another inmate before he was executed. I went there to lift his spirits, and he ended up telling me that he was ready to go and that I was the one who was going to have to keep dealing with this madness. He would rather die than continue existing under such inhumane conditions.

## ‘Never the same person again’

“Solitary confinement does one thing, it breaks a man’s will to live, and he ends up deteriorating. He’s never the same person again. Then his mother comes to see her son sitting behind plexiglass, whom she hasn’t been able to touch in years, and she has to watch as her child deteriorates right in front of her eyes. This madness has a ripple effect. It doesn’t just affect the inmate; it also affects his family, his children, his siblings and most importantly his mother.

“I have been free for almost two years, and I still cry at night, because no one out here can relate to what I have gone through. I battle with feelings of loneliness. I’ve tried therapy, but it didn’t work. The therapist was crying more than me. She couldn’t believe that our system was putting men through this sort of inhumane treatment.

“I haven’t had a good night’s sleep since my release. My mind and body are having a hard time making the adjustment. I have mood swings that cause emotional breakdowns. Solitary confinement makes our criminal justice system the criminal.

“It is inhumane, and by its design it is driving men insane. I am living amongst millions of people in the world today, but most of the time I feel alone. I cry at night because of this feeling. I just want to stop feeling this way, but I haven’t been able to.” □



# Rikers prisoners strike against unsafe, unsanitary and inhumane conditions

By Judy Greenspan

In a desperate move in the midst of a raging COVID-19 infection, 200 prisoners at Rikers Island, New York City’s jail complex, went on a hunger strike Jan. 8. Citing dangerous and unsafe living conditions exacerbated by an unending COVID-19 quarantine, prisoners, all of whom are pretrial detainees, are refusing to eat any food provided by the Department of Corrections. (New York Times, Jan. 11)

Eyes on You, an organization of formerly incarcerated people, family members and medical workers is actively supporting the hunger strike. One of its formerly incarcerated members, William Malik Clanton, is hunger striking in solidarity with the people inside.

COVID-19 rates have recently skyrocketed at Rikers, and over 370 prisoners have tested positive. Additionally, less than one-half of the jail population has been fully vaccinated for the virus.

Rikers prisoners have given media interviews since they began the hunger strike. One prisoner, Nelson Pinero, said that his sleep is often disturbed by mice and water bugs crawling over him. Prisoners complain that they have not been allowed outside of their cells for weeks.

Jail officials admit that staffing shortages due the COVID-19 pandemic have created an unsafe environment inside the jail, which houses over 5,400 pretrial prisoners.

Charges of inhumane and unsafe conditions are nothing new for the Rikers Island jail complex. Human rights and legal organizations such as the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, the New York Civil Liberties Union and Legal Services have documented life-threatening conditions for years. Family members and prison abolitionists have tirelessly engaged in campaigns to close Rikers Island.

In March 2021, legal advocates delivered a scathing statement protesting overcrowding at Rikers and documenting the inability of the jail to provide social distancing and adequate PPE for its incarcerated population. The attorneys were responding to a Board of Corrections report about three COVID-19 deaths and the continuing horrendous conditions inside the jail.

Last month, a Supreme Court judge in Manhattan ordered the release of a prisoner who had been forced to participate in a “Fight Night” at Rikers Island. Prison guards have been allowing some prisoners to set up planned fights at the prison.

According to a recent report, Rikers guards just stand there and let the fights happen. The judge charged the prison system with “deliberate indifference” for failing to protect the prisoner who was held pretrial at Rikers. (New York Times, Jan. 12)

## Shut it down!

Rikers Island should be shut down. It is endangering the lives of incarcerated people who have not even been sentenced to prison. In October 2021, more than 23 community organizations and advocacy groups called upon the city of New York to “decarcerate” Rikers Island. (Vera Institute for Justice, Press Release)

All over the country, prisoners, rights groups and family members are calling for mass releases of elderly and immunocompromised people due to the pandemic. Rikers Island is a concentration camp for the poor, particularly Black and Latinx people facing trial, which should have been shut down long ago.

The heroic prisoner hunger strike



October 2021 protest in New York City

continues as we go to press. Eyes on You has issued a short list of demands on behalf of the striking prisoners. “Release everyone from all jails immediately. Pending release, Eyes on You demands access to any NYC jail facility of our choosing with one hour’s notice. No new admissions in 2022.”

Workers World salutes the efforts of the Rikers prisoners and their outside advocates for justice. To get involved in the campaign to support the hunger strikers, contact New York City Jericho. ([www.jerichony.org](http://www.jerichony.org)) □



## COVID-19 rages

# Nurses organize Day of Action

By Marie Kelly

Members of the largest nurses' union, National Nurses United (NNU), as well as RNs from other unions, organized A Day of Action to Protect Nurses in 11 states across the country Jan. 13. The day, which began with a candlelight vigil in front of the White House in memory of the 481 RNs and thousands of health care workers who have died from COVID-19 in the U.S.

The day supported demands the NNU is making of the Biden administration. These include a permanent Occupational Safety and Health Administration COVID-19 health care standard, continued enforcement of the Emergency Temporary Standard, until a permanent standard is issued, and strengthened Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines based on science — not on what's good for business profits.

During the livestreamed press conference, nurse panelists gave gut-wrenching accounts of unsustainable conditions in hospitals across the country. Speakers came from the New York State Nurses Association, Massachusetts Nurses Association, Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals, California Nurses Association/NNU, NNU-Minnesota, NNU-Michigan, NNU-District of Columbia and NNU-Illinois.

The nurses' testimony — urgent and at times emotional — shared a common fact: Profit-driven health care corporations have dictated the catastrophic U.S. response to the pandemic.

As the omicron variant decimates the medical system's ability to control the pandemic death toll in the U.S., the federal government has blatantly put its priority instead on saving corporate profits. The latest examples have been the easing of CDC quarantine timelines, the lapse of OSHA's emergency temporary standard for hospital workers and the Supreme Court ruling against vaccine mandates for private companies with 100 or more employees.

Member of NNU's Council of Presidents, Zenei Triunfo-Cortez, RN, spoke of the moral injury and trauma which nurses are experiencing. Nurses who have contracted the virus feel betrayed by employers and government agencies, who called them heroes at the beginning of the pandemic yet now force them back to work while ill or before they are sufficiently recovered.

Triunfo-Cortez said: "Our employers claim there is a 'nursing shortage,' and that's why they must flout optimal isolation times. But we know there are plenty of registered nurses in this country. There is only a shortage of nurses willing to work in the unsafe conditions created by hospital employers and this government's refusal to impose lifesaving standards."

At a separate livestreamed press conference at Jacobi Medical Center in the Bronx, New York City, Kelley Cabrera, a registered nurse working in the emergency room, said: "We have to make terrible choices because we don't have resources. We don't have enough people; we don't have enough equipment; we don't have staff."

Other speakers in the Bronx stressed that indigent and poor people are

disproportionately vulnerable, because the U.S. has failed to adopt universal, government-funded health care. Public hospitals in cities and rural areas do not have the resources that for-profit hospitals have. Small rural hospitals are not able to pay the high rates of "traveling nurses," who make up for staffing shortages.

In Pennsylvania, the Temple University Medical Center nurses, represented by the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals, also livestreamed a press conference. Temple, in line with new lax CDC guidelines, expects nurses to return to work five days after being sick with COVID-19 — even if they are still symptomatic. As one Temple RN put it, the forced staffing of hospital workers is putting everyone in danger.

Chicago nurses spoke out about the rapidly deteriorating conditions inside hospitals in that city during their livestreamed press conference. Scott Mechanic, RN, an emergency room nurse at the University of Chicago Medical Center, exposed corporate health care failure to improve conditions: "We don't have food-service people. We don't have supply-chain people to deliver our most critical supplies. We don't have people to repair our equipment. But every job that doesn't get done by somebody else, ends up falling to the bedside nurse. We're overwhelmed."

At the conclusion of the NNU virtual press conference, Bonnie Castillo, RN, Executive Director of NNU, called on hospitals and federal, state and local government agencies to provide protections based on science, not on business models

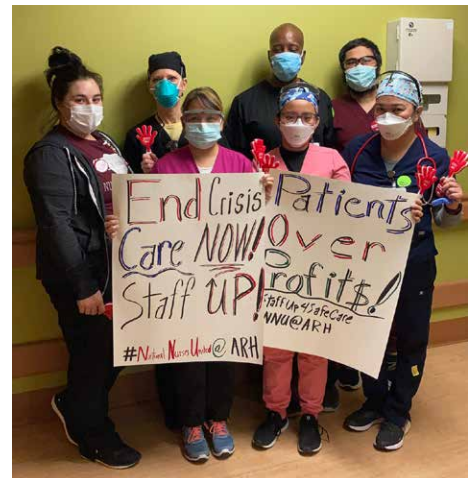


PHOTO: OTIS GROTEWOHL

**National Nurses United's Day of Action, Beckley, W.Va., Jan. 13.**

constructed to yield profits. She called on the public to follow multiple measures to stem the tide of transmission, including vaccinations and masking. She emphasized that the day has come when there may not be a nurse available to adequately care for a sick and suffering person or loved one, because health care workers are falling ill and hospitals are not staffing adequately.

The United States has the highest death toll from COVID-19 in the world. The government, governed by capitalist principles, has permitted this catastrophe. The failure to protect all the country's population during this pandemic is due to a deteriorating, discriminatory for-profit health care system that has neither the resources, structure nor principles necessary to guarantee quality health care for all.

Nurses understand this failure and will continue to fight for the fundamental right to health care.

*Marie Kelly, an RN with 45 years experience, is an at-large member of National Nurses United.*

## On the picket line

By Marie Kelly

### Art Institute of Chicago

Following a union drive in September 2020 that garnered majority support, workers at the Art Institute of Chicago museum voted overwhelmingly to form the Art Institute of Chicago Workers United. They will be represented by American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees Local 31. The School of the Art Institute of Chicago's (SAIC) 249 workers will also be represented by the union after a vote achieves the necessary majority.

AFSCME already represents 10,000 workers at 91 museums across the country and 25,000 at 275 public and private libraries, including the Chicago Public Library, the Walters Art Museum in

Baltimore, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. Workers at the Art Institute of Chicago cite a need to negotiate better wages and working conditions as the impetus to form their union. Layoffs and furloughs by the museum during the pandemic put the workers in a precarious position.

Rachel Perman, a school receptionist put it plainly: "I voted yes, because in nine years of working at SAIC my largest raise was 49 cents. We deserve equity, respect and a living wage." Ironically, the Art Institute of Chicago museum is home to the famous painting American Gothic by Grant Wood depicting hardscrabble Midwestern farmers. Wood painted the iconic masterpiece in 1930 as the U.S. was sinking deeper into the Great Depression and the labor movement was on the rise. (Chicago Tribune, Jan. 12)

### Image Comics

Comic Book Workers United has become the first union for workers in the comic book publishing industry. After

Image Comics failed to voluntarily recognize the union, workers there won the right to collectively bargain, in a 7-2 vote. CBWU is affiliated with Communications Workers of America (CWA), who assisted with the union drive and will be at the bargaining table with them. Image Comics is the industry's third largest publisher of comics and graphic novels; the Walking Dead and Spawn are two of their more lucrative series. (cbwupdx.com)

### Republic sanitation workers

Sanitation workers at Republic Services in San Diego have been on strike since Dec. 11, 2021, after the company failed to bargain in good faith in new contract negotiations. These essential workers have endured the trauma of being on the front-line of the pandemic for two years.

Republic Services is the second most profitable waste disposal company in the U.S. The Phoenix-based company had a net profit of over \$1 billion in 2020. In January, Republic board members

received \$230,000 in stock options, along with \$100,000 cash. Bill Gates is the company's largest shareholder, and his investment adviser is a Republic board member.

The Teamsters union represents more than 7,000 Republic workers nationwide. The union is currently in negotiations with Republic over contracts which expired in 2021 in seven locations: San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, Stockton and Richmond, California; Seattle; and New Orleans.

San Diego workers have had their picket line strengthened through solidarity from Seattle Republic workers. In a Jan. 12 interview with Channel 10 news, Rafael Mejia, a San Diego driver for Republic and member of Teamsters Local 542, said: "The drivers (in Seattle) respect the picket line, so they don't cross it; they honor it. They honor our picket line, and they don't go to work. We're just trying to tell the company how strong we are; just make sure they know that we are together, and regardless of what they do, they're not going to break us." □

# Danbury federal prison overrun by COVID-19 infections

By Judy Greenspan

With COVID-19 infections spiking in the outside general population, it is no wonder that it is running rampant in the prisons. Recent news out of the Federal Correctional Institution in Danbury, Connecticut (designated in the Federal Bureau of Prisons as a "women's prison"), revealed that more than half of the people incarcerated at its prison camp tested positive for COVID-19.

After testing positive at the end of December, the women, transgender and gender-nonconforming prisoners were sent back into the general population of the prison camp, where they were not

informed that they had COVID-19, nor were they put into isolation. (newstimes, Jan. 4)

It took the intervention of U.S. Senators Richard Blumenthal and Chris Murphy, and U.S. Representative Jahana Hayes, all of Connecticut, who fired off protest letters to the U.S. Attorney General, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons and the acting warden of FCI-Danbury. The elected representatives are demanding an immediate investigation into the failure of prison officials to adhere to COVID-19 isolation procedures.

In the letter, the three federal legislators stated: "These actions, if true, are shockingly reckless and contrary to BOP

and CDC guidelines regarding the isolation of individuals who test positive for COVID-19."

Unlike the outside world in this age of social media, it is often hard to find out what is happening to people behind the walls of U.S. prisons. The federal prison system is especially notorious for hiding the truth.

Unfortunately, a Congressional letter alone may not be enough to reel in the uncaring and reckless FBOP. Last year after a major COVID-19 outbreak, the Danbury federal prison was singled out by then Attorney General William Barr for large releases of prisoners to home confinement. Needless to say, very few

prisoners were released home, as has been the case around the country. And prisoners, including the medically-vulnerable and pregnant people, have continued to be exposed to COVID-19 infection. (New York Times, Feb. 27)

The Color of Change and the National Council of Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls have an online petition demanding a mass release of the medically vulnerable at FCI-Danbury. (tinyurl.com/ye2ydp9u)

Clearly the demand for the mass release of all prisoners suffering from and vulnerable to COVID-19 must be heard loud and clear throughout this inhumane and unjust criminal legal system. □



# Actions support Amazon workers



New York City, Jan. 12

WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN



Atlanta, Jan. 12

WW PHOTO: ARIELLE ROBINSON



PHOTO: LEON KUNSTENAR

San Francisco rally held at gate of future Amazon warehouse demands “Stop Scab Amazon.”



Outside Whole Foods, Cleveland, Jan. 12

WW PHOTO: SUSAN SCHNUR

Continued from page 1

young workers, artists and a spokesperson for the Young Black Panther Party.

CBTU-Boston President Jamie Wallace warmed people up with Stevie Wonder’s “Happy Birthday” refrain and by speaking about Dr. King’s leadership in the union struggles of his day. The crowd cheered for King’s 93rd birthday and chanted, “Jeff Bezos, We Say No! Union Busting’s Got To Go!”

Bitter cold weather did not stop activists from coming out in **Philadelphia**, gathering outside the Whole Foods Market at 10th and South streets.

Speakers represented Workers World Party, Black Alliance for Peace and Philadelphia Food Not Bombs Solidarity. A Jeff Bezos puppet, a sign depicting a defecating Bezos and the main banner were courtesy of Spiral Q. More than one worker stopped to talk about their experiences working at Amazon or Whole Foods.

Drawing widespread support from passing motorists, Houston activists carried signs blasting centibillionaire Bezos outside a Whole Foods Market. Despite the unusually cold temperatures and 40 mph winds, which kept some supporters away, the messages were dramatically well-received. One person got out of their car and told protesters how much he appreciated the demonstration.

**Houston** cops, in marked and unmarked cars, came to protect Whole Foods from the truth: Union busting is disgusting! In this so-called “right-to-work” state, working-class people realize how much better their lives and their jobs would be if they had a union contract. A Jeff Bezos piñata was the star of the day!

**Portland** Amazon workers, Whole Foods workers and community supporters rallied in front of a Whole Foods store. They were greeted by raised fists from a heavy stream of traffic along the crowded four-lane highway.

Speakers described how Whole Foods and Amazon workers are regularly forced to violate social-distancing policies to complete their work and have to supply their own personal protective equipment — with COVID-19 testing no longer being made available. These essential workers say they have little-to-no control over their work schedules and are being forced to compensate for continual understaffing.

Demonstrations took place in other cities, including **Harrisonburg, Virginia**.

## Struggle wrests partial victory from NLRB

On Jan. 11 the NLRB announced dates for a new union representation election at Amazon’s Bessemer, Alabama, warehouse — allowing the majority-Black workforce a do-over of the election in 2021, when a lopsided majority of ballots went against representation by the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union. The ballots will be mailed to workers beginning Feb. 4, to be returned to the NLRB before March 28, when the counting will begin. The second election was ordered by the Board after hearing weeks of worker testimony documenting widespread illegal union busting by Amazon.

However, the NLRB ruling fell short of what the RWDSU thought was necessary to prevent a repeat of last year’s setback. Amazon will still be allowed to have a mailbox on company premises, maintaining an atmosphere of surveillance and intimidation.

“We are deeply concerned that the decision fails to adequately prevent Amazon from continuing its objectionable behavior in a new election,” the RWDSU said in a Jan. 11 statement. “We proposed to the NLRB a number of remedies that could have made the process fairer to workers, which were not taken up in the Notice of Election issued today.” (rwdsu.info)

The remedy should have been simply to award

immediate union recognition and compel the Amazon bosses to negotiate, as the boss-controlled election process allows companies time and legal cover to conduct union busting. Unions will have to develop strategies that go outside the NLRB, if Amazon and all unorganized workers are going to have a voice on the job.

Judy Greenspan, Lyn Neeley, Dianne Mathiowetz, Tony Murphy, Betsey Piette, Gloria Rubac and Maureen Skehan contributed to this article.



Houston, Jan. 15

PHOTO: GRACE CRISSMAN



Philadelphia, Jan. 15

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE



Portland, Oregon, Jan. 15

WW PHOTO: LYN NEELEY



# Students and teachers fight for safe schools

By Judy Greenspan and Minnie Bruce Pratt

In the struggle over public schools, the question is what will win out — churning out workers for the profit system or safety for the people?

On the West Coast, angered by the Oakland Unified School District's inability to tackle the rapidly spreading COVID-19 crisis in the city's public schools, teachers and students have conducted well-attended protests. Students organized a sick-out on Jan. 13; teachers held a similar protest Jan. 7. Both protests effectively shut down classes in 10-12 schools, while other schools had very low student attendance. Students have announced a student strike for Jan. 18. Teachers in many Oakland schools will hold a sick-out in support of the strike.

According to rank-and-file teachers, OUSD has been dragging its feet on providing basic safety measures and personal protective equipment, such as KN95 masks, since the fall 2021 surge in pandemic infections. The Safety Bargaining Team of the Oakland Education Association has made repeated attempts to sit down with OUSD to bargain for these measures. When OUSD failed to respond, the team disbanded in protest.

Rank-and-file teachers and students, particularly in the secondary schools, then stepped up to organize sick-outs and other protests.

A petition signed by more than 1,200 Oakland students vehemently protested the increased COVID-19 cases at school, lack of access to the recommended N95 masks, no designated space for people to eat safely, no access to weekly testing and no safe-seating arrangement of classroom desks. Protesting students gave the district a week to remedy these serious safety violations.

In response, OUSD unevenly rolled out KN95 masks at some schools and set up a few outdoor spaces where students can eat. However, OUSD is refusing to consider weekly access to testing at its schools. There is no social distancing in most classrooms.

Many rank-and-file teachers and students are pushing for a return to distance learning, at least until the omicron variant surge diminishes in Oakland. The infection rate in Oakland, particularly in the west and east areas of the city, has outpaced that in other areas of Alameda County.

By the weekend of Jan. 15, OUSD and OEA had reached a tentative agreement about some of the safety measures. It remains to be seen if this agreement will be approved by the OEA



Students hold the demands of Chicago's Radical Youth Alliance at a rally outside Chicago Public School headquarters, Jan. 14.

PHOTO: JIM VONDRUSKA

Representative Council or supported by students planning the Jan. 18 strike.

## School struggles surge, students organize

In recent weeks, teachers and student-workers at universities have won big victories for better wages and safer workplaces. On the East Coast after 10 weeks on a dynamic picket line, the 3,000 members of Student Workers of Columbia-United Auto Workers Local 2110 claimed victory against elite education behemoth Columbia University. On the West Coast, the 17,000 members of Student Researchers United-UAW won union recognition across the entire University of California system. (Workers World, Jan. 12)

In secondary education, members of the tightly organized and militant Chicago Teachers Union walked out for a week over unsafe conditions for teachers and students due to the pandemic, facing down the city's hostile

mayor, Lori Lightfoot. ("Profit plague feeds omicron surge," Workers World, Jan. 13)

In response to the omicron variant surge in the schools and Chicago Public Schools' obstruction of teachers' attempt to intervene, high school students organized to act through Chi-RADS — Chicago Public School's Radical Youth Alliance — a group of largely queer Black and Brown youth from a range of high schools and neighborhoods.

Prioritizing people's lives over money, Chi-RADS participants write that they "believe in the re-imagining of our education" and want to ensure that "is not just the condition of what learning should look like in the eyes of American capitalists." (Full statement and demands at [tinyurl.com/yckvefht](https://tinyurl.com/yckvefht) and [tinyurl.com/2p9fkc3j](https://tinyurl.com/2p9fkc3j).)

Demands include centering marginalized students in all discussions related to COVID-19 safety plans, a public apology of city officials for negative statements about the Chicago Teachers Union, COVID-19 relief stipends, funding of mutual aid projects, ensuring one full-time therapist for every 30 students and implementation of basic safety measures including N95 masks, rapid antigen tests and an efficient contact-tracing system.

Chicago students joined a week of countrywide protests Jan. 14. Marching through the streets toward the CPS administrative offices, students yelled: "Si se puede," "Yes, we can" and "No more oppression, change is now in session!" ([tinyurl.com/yckpzdqn](https://tinyurl.com/yckpzdqn))

Thousands of students from more than 20 schools in New York City walked out of class Jan. 11 to protest COVID-19 surge conditions and demand a temporary school shutdown with an online option. A viral video showed hundreds streaming out of Brooklyn Technical High School, a large and prestigious public school.

In Boston, more than 7,500 people signed a petition calling for remote learning options and more safety protocols. Hundreds of students at public schools walked out Jan. 14 in a protest organized by the Boston Student Advisory Council.

More student walkouts and protests have been reported during the week of Jan. 10, including in Washington state, Wisconsin, Missouri, Maryland and elsewhere.

Judy Greenspan is an Oakland teacher, an active member of the Oakland Education Association and chair of the OEA Substitute Teacher Caucus. Minnie Bruce Pratt was an adjunct and short-term contract teacher at the university level for 45 years.



PHOTO: DON SHRUBSHELL

In Columbia, Missouri, 120 students walked out of Hickman High School to protest the school board's decision to cancel the mask mandate for city schools.

# Starbucks union push comes to Ohio

By Martha Grevatt  
Cleveland

Early in the morning of Jan. 10, another group of Starbucks workers — called "partners" — filed for a union representation election with the National Labor Relations Board. A solid majority of the 20 employees at the West 6th store in downtown Cleveland signed cards to be represented by Workers United.

This is the first store in Ohio to seek unionization, joining the union drive that began with two successful elections in Buffalo and has spread to multiple cities across the U.S.

"We were keeping up with what's going on in Buffalo," morning shift supervisor Maddie VanHook told Workers World. "If they can do it, why can't we?" Shift supervisors have additional responsibilities, such as opening the store and monitoring inventory, but they do not hire, fire or issue discipline. They are hourly workers and eligible for union membership.

VanHook identified three key issues motivating partners to sign union cards. "A big part is the COVID mess" — workers want clear, safe guidelines. As the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations keep changing, the

situation "leaves us wondering as service workers, what's safest."

A second issue is the five-day training period, which both trainers and trainees believe is too short. There is a great deal a new hire needs to learn, from Starbucks "philosophy" to all the recipes for the different drinks.

Pay and benefits, while better than some in the industry, are still inadequate and leave "partners struggling to make rent and pay bills." They want better health insurance with mental health coverage and insist Starbucks live up to its claim of being in the forefront of providing good pay and benefits.

The potential bargaining unit is a diverse but tight-knit group, with a majority of women and ranging in age from 18 to 60+. Many were hired in summer 2021, but a few have worked at the store on and off for as long as seven years.

## Solidarity 'blows up'

It took less than a week for union supporters to get 16 of the 20 workers to sign union authorization cards. They are now waiting to see if Starbucks will

voluntarily recognize Workers United based on a "card check," showing overwhelming support for the union, or deny recognition, forcing an NLRB election. The latter has been the company's pattern so far.

"Workers United is proud to stand with Cleveland Starbucks partners, as they attempt to win a real seat at the table, safety on the job and economic justice," said Mark Milko, Ohio state director for the Chicago and Midwest Regional Joint Board of Workers United, in a Jan. 10 press release, "Their fight is our fight, and

we've got their backs."

Support has been "overwhelming in the best way" according to VanHook. People are coming into the store, voicing support and asking to take pictures with pro-union partners. Solidarity from unions, such as the North Shore Federation of Labor and a utility workers union, "has also been very cool. . . . We didn't expect it to blow up so fast." There has already been widespread media coverage.

Clevelanders can show solidarity by coming in the store and ordering their coffee "union strong." Inside and outside the city, supporters can call the company to express their opinions and "be ready to support us if things spiral" — i.e. if union-busting escalates. Some big Starbucks bosses are expected to visit the store in the near future to try to change workers' minds through one-on-one conversations. Their success is doubtful.

Will the Cleveland Starbucks workers have to strike down-the-road for a good first contract? Maybe. As VanHook put it, "We're preparing for the worst but hoping for the best." □



WW PHOTO: SUSAN SCHNUR

Outside Cleveland Whole Foods on Jeff Bezos' birthday Jan. 12. Starbucks union organizer Maddie VanHook second from left.



# Hawaiians, U.S. military dependents protest Navy fuel pollution

By Anne Kealohapau'ole

Jan. 9 — Protesters angered by the water crisis persevere at rallies at the Hawai'i Department of Health, the State Capitol in Honolulu and in front of the headquarters of the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, all on the island of O'ahu.

Native Hawaiians, local community members, military families and local government agencies are struggling to hold the U.S. Navy accountable for the water pollution at Kapūkaki, also known as Red Hill.

Local Hawaiians are coming together en masse to protest the desecration of the land and destruction of essential resources. The O'ahu Water Protectors held a “die-in” at the capitol building on Dec. 10.

On Dec. 12, honoring the winter solstice, a coalition of Hawaiian organizations known as Ka'ohewai built a ko'a altar to the Hawaiian gods Kāne and Kanaloa at the U.S. Pacific Fleet's headquarters and consecrated the ko'a with hula, prayers and blowing the pū, or conch shell.

Pressure is unrelenting from locals, who plan to continue protest until the land is restored and reparations are given. On Jan. 4 they held protests outside the Hawai'i Department of Health, with several Okinawan protesters condemning the U.S. Marine Corp.'s contamination of water in Okinawa and the U.S. Air Force's contamination in Guam. (tinyurl.com/s23hyj36)

### Pentagon despoils Pacific islands

Hawai'i, Guam and Okinawa house major U.S. military bases projecting the Pentagon's destructive power across

the Pacific. These bases also despoil the environment.

On Jan. 6, the U.S. Navy announced its plan to release up to 5 million gallons of treated water back into Halawa stream. The DOH has issued no permits for releasing the water yet. So far, the flushed water from the military base has failed safety tests, with fuel contamination exceeding the allowed 200 parts per billion.

Though the Navy has temporarily suspended operations at the Red Hill storage facility, it is defying a DOH order to decommission the fuel tanks. The Navy claims the order “operates in a regulatory vacuum, unlawfully exceeding DOH's authority” and that “there is no evidence in the record showing that Facility operations pose an inherent risk of causing harm, such that merely resuming operations would automatically give rise to ‘grave risk; jeopardy; danger’ that is ‘likely to occur at any moment.’” (tinyurl.com/2p8m2n39)

But water protectors are unlikely to forget the effects of many thousands of gallons of leaked fuel that have been putting the population at risk since World War II.

In November 2021, 14,000 gallons of a water-fuel mixture leaked from a pipe in the facility's fire-suppression system. On Nov. 20, Navy crews responded and reported the leak to the Department of Health. By Nov. 28, residents in the area began reporting fuel in their tap water. On Dec. 3, the Honolulu Board of Water Supply shut down the Halawa shaft, which is O'ahu's largest water source serving Honolulu. The Halawa Shaft pulls from the same aquifer as the Navy's Red

Hill well, so the aquifer that services 20% of O'ahu's population has effectively been shut down, affecting some 93,000 people.

Families in the Red Hill area have been suffering from fuel-related illnesses for months. A leak of 1,600 gallons of jet fuel was discovered in May, and 27,000 gallons of fuel from a single tank had leaked in 2014.

A source from within the Navy “leaked” a number of emails and documents to the Honolulu Civil Beat, which reveal a cover-up of a fuel leak in 2020. Documents show that as early as January 2020, the Navy was aware of the leak at Pearl Harbor.

Because of a permit renewal hearing for the Red Hill storage facility from Feb. 1-6, 2020, the leak was kept from the public. “There are significant political concerns if this were to become an ‘active’ leak,” one Navy captain wrote, “Activist organizations will use this to advance their anti-Red Hill narrative ... at a sensitive time as the contested case hearing begins and (the) legislative season starts.” (tinyurl.com/2p8k3wxb)

The incident was reported to DOH on March 17, 2020. On June 2, 2020, a second leak was reported to DOH. Finally in June 2021, the Navy determined its fuel line at Hotel Pier was to blame for the repeated spills. Some 7,700 gallons of leaked fuel had been recovered in Pearl Harbor by July.

In all, data compiled by the Sierra Club Hawai'i determines the storage facility at Red Hill to have leaked at least 180,000 gallons of fuel since its comple-



PHOTO: KANA'I A NAKAMURA

A group of Hawaiian organizations known as Ka'ohewai celebrated the winter solstice with the Ke Ala Polohiwa A Kanaloa ceremony, in protest of water pollution by the U.S. Navy at Kapūkaki, also known as Red Hill.

tion in 1943. (tinyurl.com/4kzrbhy9, sierraclubhawaii.org/redhill)

### Military families protest too

Military families came together Dec. 1 at a town hall meeting to express their frustration and to report their illnesses from hydrocarbon toxicity. Many reported itching, rashes, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, dizziness and headache. Some were hospitalized; one family even had to euthanize their beloved dog.

At least 3,500 military families have moved to temporary housing in hotels in Waikiki, a popular O'ahu tourist destination. Some 748 civilian families have been affected, according to Navy spokesperson Lydia Robertson.

But in Waikiki, displaced families encounter challenges that many locals have been struggling with for decades: high prices for food and essential goods; and hours-long commutes to jobs across the island.

For more than 1 million people who live on the island of O'ahu, the response to the crisis at Red Hill's storage facility is a matter of life and death. For Native Hawaiians, the crisis is a sign that the 'aina (land) must be returned to its people, and Red Hill must be restored to Kapūkaki. □

# Haitian government collapsing U.S. involved in Moïse assassination?

By G. Dunkel

Conditions for most people in Haiti are dire. While the country has significant economic resources, the wages of Haitian workers are the lowest in the Western Hemisphere, the result of intense exploitation. Estimates from the U.N. are that 20% of Haitians live below the absolute poverty line of \$1.23 a day and that 4.3 million Haitians don't get enough to eat — particularly women, children and adolescents. Less than 1% of Haiti's gross domestic product is spent on health or education.

A powerful Aug. 14 earthquake in southwest Haiti followed by a tropical storm two days later killed 2,248 people and left thousands of homes, businesses and roads badly damaged. In this area, 18% of women and 12% of men are homeless, while 53% of women and 56% of men sleep next to a damaged house. (Rapid Gender Analysis in Haiti: Impacts of the 2021 Earthquake, reliefweb.int)

Conditions in Haiti are so dangerous and miserable that in May 2021 the Biden Administration extended Temporary Protective Status for Haitians already residing in the United States.

But since September 2021, Immigration and Customs Enforcement has been deporting Haitians detained trying to cross the border into Texas. Generally there is at least one planeload and sometimes as many as seven planeloads of

people sent back to Haiti every day. Meanwhile, two large boatloads of Haitians have been reported landing in the Florida Keys during the last weeks of December 2021.

The total number of ICE deportees, which certainly are a burden on Haiti's increasingly stressed economy, has not been announced but is likely to be well over 15,000 people.

### Economic catastrophe, political instability

Colonialism and imperialism have stressed Haiti's economy since 1804 — that year the enslaved people of Haiti declared the country's independence from France. The French enslavers demanded compensation for their “lost property,” a debt in the millions not paid off until 1947. The imperialist U.S. imposed its first-ever economic and diplomatic blockade on another country by sanctioning Haiti after the 1804 revolution and did not recognize Haiti as a sovereign, independent nation until 1862.

Now extreme political instability in Haiti is intensifying its economic catastrophe.

Interim Prime Minister Ariel Henry went to Gonaïves to celebrate the 218th anniversary of Haiti's independence Jan. 1. As Henry left the cathedral ceremony, his bodyguards came under sustained, heavy gunfire from an armed group and he was forced to flee.

Years of corruption and mismanagement by Haitian governments

dominated by the U.S. — with reliance on foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to provide basic services like health care, education, sanitation and emergency services during disasters — have left enormous voids in Haiti's social infrastructure.

Autonomous armed popular organizations have emerged to partially fill these voids. Sometimes these organizations are called gangs, especially by the bourgeois press in Haiti, the United States and France. A more neutral term is armed groups.

Some of these armed groups are indeed criminal, like the “400 Mawozo,” which kidnapped 17 North Americans in October 2021 and demanded a ransom of \$17 million. Anti-crime armed groups — an outgrowth of the “vigilance brigades” formed after the overthrow of U.S.-backed dictator “Papa Doc” Duvalier — do exist and confront these criminal groups, which often have close ties to the police and big bourgeois interests.

### Bombshell from bourgeois press

The New York Times dropped a Jan. 10 “bunker buster” on Interim Prime Minister Henry, who left his career as a neurosurgeon to enter politics as a leader of the Democratic Convergence Movement. The DCM was part of the U.S.-orchestrated campaign to overthrow President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004.

Henry took on his current role

Continued on page 9



French teachers on strike, Jan. 12.

# Massive education strike demands better COVID-19 response

By G. Dunkel

In France, a Jan. 13 massive strike protested ineffective government COVID-19 plans for schools. The countrywide strike was organized by unions representing teachers, other school staff, parents and students.

All French unions representing workers in education supported the call for the strike, along with student unions which represent secondary and university students. Parents and their organizations generally supported the strike. Since there is a constitutional right to strike in France — although essential public services have to be maintained — principals, directors, administrative staff and other office workers struck.

The unions estimated that 75% to 80% of secondary and higher education schools and 60% of primary schools and daycare centers were closed.

The main strike demands were the need for the government to consider faculty, staff and students when policy changes are made. Government rules have changed 19 times since the start of the pandemic in early 2021. Other demands were the need for adequate personal protective equipment, better ventilation and more consistent testing.

Many of the more militant unions want another day of action in February. □



# President Ortega's reelection shows Nicaraguan people see a bright future

By Carlos Marcos  
Managua, Nicaragua

Thousands gathered in Managua's Revolution Square to witness the inauguration of Daniel Ortega and Rosario María Murillo as Nicaragua's president and vice president, respectively, on Jan. 10. In attendance were officials and representatives from nearly 50 countries and organizations. Most notably in attendance were Presidents Miguel Díaz-Canel of Cuba and Nicolás Maduro Moros of Venezuela, as well as the President of China's National Assembly, Cao Jianming.

Notably not in attendance was any official from the U.S. Biden regime. Instead, the U.S. was represented by solidarity and peace activist, Brian Wilson; author and Professor of Human Rights, Daniel Kovalik; Executive Editor of Black Agenda Report, Margaret Kimberley; and Luci Murphy of the Claudia Jones School of Political Education. After the official proceedings and swearing in, President Ortega delivered a 30-minute speech that began with the swearing in of all the Nicaraguan people as President and defenders of the homeland and revolution.

Ortega announced that Nicaragua would be joining China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This announcement comes just one month after Nicaragua announced the end of diplomatic ties with the Republic of China (Taiwan) and the recognition and return to diplomacy with the People's Republic of China. Since Ortega's speech, it has been revealed that Nicaragua and China signed a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the BRI, making Nicaragua the latest of well over 100 nations to sign onto the global plan for economic development and cooperation.

Another important instance of international cooperation highlighted was the new agreement between Nicaragua and Honduras, regarding maritime boundaries and access to the Gulf of Fonseca. Ortega also touched on the importance of international groups like ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America) and CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) for the cooperation and integration of the region.

While China's and Nicaragua's neighbors offer Nicaragua cooperation and mutual respect, the U.S. and its European Union cronies offer threats and intimidation in the form of sanctions. Just hours before the beginning of Monday's inauguration ceremony was set to take place, Washington and Brussels announced new unilateral coercive measures (aka sanctions) against Nicaragua.

## End the sanctions, pay reparations NOW!

The new sanctions target over 100 individuals and several companies in Nicaragua. President Ortega took time to recognize one particular target of the sanctions — Brenda Rocha, the President of the Supreme Electoral Council. Rocha lost her right arm when she was just 15 years old after being wounded in an



WW PHOTO: CARLOS MARCOS  
Members of the Popular Vanguard Party of Costa Rica at the inauguration of Daniel Ortega.

attack carried out by the U.S.-backed Contras in the 1980s.

President Ortega brought to the fore the sheer hypocrisy of a country such as the U.S. to impose sanctions on another country in the name of "human rights." Where were the human rights for Brenda Rocha, when the U.S.-backed Contras killed 50,000 Nicaraguans? Where are the human rights for the Nicaraguan people, when the U.S. refuses to pay the millions of dollars in reparations owed as determined by the International Court of Justice in 1986 in the "Case concerning military and paramilitary activities in and against Nicaragua." (tinyurl.com/murbujt5)

The U.S. accuses Ortega and the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) government of "authoritarianism" for the detention of corrupt politicians and individuals involved in the 2018 coup attempt, while the same hypocritical U.S. government is incapable of containing each and every growing political crises; take for example the imprisonment of 700 Trumpites for their involvement in the Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol insurrection.

The U.S. says Nicaragua is undemocratic; while at the same time, it orchestrates coups against nations around the globe, imposes illegal sanctions and blockades on countries like Nicaragua, Cuba and Venezuela, and even goes so far as attempting to assassinate heads of state as they tried to do with President Maduro in 2018.

The resounding reelection of Daniel Ortega shows that the Nicaraguan people are resolutely behind the revolutionary government of the FSLN. While the U.S. and EU imperialists bully, attack and harass nations they perceive to be weaker, their victims turn to each other for support and cooperation.

More and more countries are abandoning pro-imperialist organizations like the Organization of American States and are instead joining international groups dedicated to mutual respect, cooperation, development and sovereignty. The oppressed people and nations of the world "are no longer afraid," as President Ortega declared.

Viva Nicaragua! Viva the FSLN! Viva Comandante Daniel Ortega! Hands off Nicaragua!

*The writer is one of the U.S. delegates who attended the Ortega inauguration.*

English — a clear strategy to ensure the articles had the widest impact possible.

Many of the suspects in the assassination of President Moïse were trained by the U.S. military or have connections to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. While the Haitian authorities have opened an investigation into Moïse's murder, the U.S. has opened its own "investigation" in federal court in Florida.

Haitians are speculating on Twitter that the U.S. opened up its investigation of the assassination so the U.S. can bury its involvement. □

# U.S. delegation to Nicaragua demands 'End U.S. sanctions!'

By Arjae Red  
Managua, Nicaragua

Members of anti-imperialist organizations from around the U.S. travelled to Nicaragua during the week of Jan. 10 to observe the inauguration of President Daniel Ortega and Vice President Rosario Murillo of the party of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, FSLN).

Ortega and Murillo's landslide victory came after a failed U.S.-backed coup in 2018, when the anti-communist opposition continued the work of the Contras — the U.S.-backed counterrevolutionary groups of the 1980s — assaulting and killing police and FSLN supporters.

The failed coup attempt alerted the Nicaraguan people that it was important to support the revolutionary government and that the gains of the revolution are constantly under imperialist attack.

The U.S. delegation consisted of members of Alliance For Global Justice, Black Agenda Report, Black Alliance for Peace, Pastors for Peace, Workers World Party and other anti-imperialist activists and reporters.

Delegates from Workers World Party spent the first days of the week with the Friends of the ATC (Asociación de Trabajadores del Campo), a solidarity network of international supporters. The ATC is a federation of trade unions and agricultural cooperatives in Nicaragua, mostly composed of workers who produce coffee, bananas and palm oil.

The mission of the ATC is to coordinate issues faced by farmers and agitate for discussion related to labor rights. The organization works constantly to train new labor leaders in organizing skills and political education. Fighting for freedom of workers, upholding labor protection laws, addressing health care needs of workers and fighting for environmental justice — these issues fall within the purview of the ATC.

Every day new leaders emerge in the Nicaraguan labor movement, and the ATC is ready to assist and train them, with a focus on training women and LGBTQ+ workers.

The ATC was among the first labor organizations formed during the Sandinista Revolution and played a part in the underground struggle against the dictatorship of Anastasio "Tachito" Somoza, president for most of 1967 through 1979.

During this time, unions were illegal in Nicaragua. Farming conditions were very close to slavery, as representatives from the ATC emphasized. Assassinations and attacks on workers by the repressive regime were common. One of the first accomplishments of the Revolution was to enact agrarian reform and create co-ops and unions.

ATC speakers stressed above all that, besides fighting for better conditions, workers should not lose sight of the goal of being able to exercise control and ownership of their workplaces. With Ortega's inauguration, the labor movement must be ready to consolidate their gains and defend the Revolution.

## International worker solidarity

Workers World Party delegates had the chance to visit Casa Ben Linder, named for an engineer and supporter of the popular Sandinista Revolution

from Portland, Oregon, who was killed by the Contras in 1987.

Linder was killed along with two Nicaraguan comrades while installing electrical infrastructure for rural Nicaraguans. Since 1988, Casa Ben Linder has been a place where people visiting Nicaragua can come to affirm their solidarity with the people of Nicaragua and the Sandinista Revolution.

As the visiting delegation witnessed the Jan. 10 inauguration ceremonies, they heard President Ortega declare his elation about Nicaragua's renewed relationship with People's China: "Our Revolutions, the Chinese Revolution and the Sandinista Revolution are revolutions ... with the same path, with the same destiny, which is to end poverty."

Delegates heard this theme repeated beyond President Ortega — the Nicaraguan workers, union organizers and writers are excited about the possibilities for self determination opened up by a renewed relationship with China.

Ortega demanded reparations by the United States to the people of Nicaragua for the destruction and mass death caused by the U.S.-funded Contras. The International Court of Justice, the U.N.'s principal judicial body, has ruled the U.S. is responsible for paying these.

Ortega addressed President Joe Biden on reparations: "We are not asking for handouts; we are asking for justice!"

Ortega called for an end to the criminal blockade of Cuba by the U.S. and rallied against its ongoing sanctions on Nicaragua. The U.S. and EU actually applied new sanctions on Nicaragua on the day of the inauguration.

Delegates from the U.S. held a Jan. 12 press conference with the international media. They called for an end to sanctions and exposed the hypocrisy of the U.S. government. This writer, speaking on behalf of Workers World Party, highlighted the fact that many rights and necessities which workers and oppressed people in the U.S. are still fighting to gain, the Nicaraguan people have already won through the popular Sandinista Revolution.

These achievements include free health care, free education, unlimited paid sick leave, food self-sufficiency, the return of lands to Indigenous communities and much more.

Working-class and oppressed people in the U.S. know that Nicaragua is not the enemy. Speakers at the press conference recognized that U.S. sanctions are an act of war and demanded an immediate end to sanctions against Nicaragua and every other country so targeted by the United States.

This most recent delegation to Nicaragua is in a long tradition of solidarity with the Sandinista Revolution and will not be the last. More and more anti-imperialists from the U.S. are building relationships and connecting struggles of workers at home to workers around the world, to bring our international working class together.

The main takeaway we bring back to our comrades in the U.S. is that the class struggle is worldwide. We must affirm solidarity with the people of Nicaragua against the U.S. government and capitalist system which terrorize the people inside this country and throughout the world.

*The writer was a member of the U.S. delegation.*

# U.S. involved in Moïse assassination?

Continued from page 8

July 7, 2021, the day President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated.

The Times claimed: "New evidence suggests the man who took over from Haiti's murdered president had close links to a prime suspect in the assassination — and that the two stayed in contact even after the crime."

Le Monde, a major bourgeois newspaper in France, published a similar article on the same day. The Times made its article available in French; and Le Monde made it available in



Each week new evidence emerges that U.S. capitalist institutions mismanage society and sabotage any actions that might aid the working people — who create all of society’s wealth.

In mid-January the Supreme Court reaffirmed its historic role as servant of profiteering monopolies, a role it has played since it assumed the position of arbiter of the Constitution when the U.S. was still a slavocracy. Appointed for life, SCOTUS members answer directly to no popular institutions. SCOTUS has conserved the property of the rich, whether these rich be enslavers of humans or information technology centibillionaires.

The Supreme Court is not only a pro-property institution, it is currently dominated by ultrareactionary individuals. Its right-wing majority includes those who earn the revulsion of every worker and oppressed person in the United States with each decision they make.

With its Jan. 13 decision, SCOTUS blocked the Labor Department’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration from enforcing a mandate on large employers aimed at protecting workers from COVID-19. OSHA had previously told these big corporations they must ensure that their employees who worked together

with other workers or the public were either vaccinated or would be regularly tested.

OSHA was founded in 1970 as a concession to workers, with the stated goal of preventing fatalities, injuries and sickness on the job. It is part of the capitalist government bureaucracy. Nevertheless, OSHA provides an opening for workers, in unions or not, to resist the bosses’ neglect of safety measures in their inexorable drive to maximize profits.

While there are many dangers on the job, the current overriding danger is from the COVID-19 pandemic. U.S. corporations, following their drive to produce maximum profits for their shareholders, have rushed to bring their workforce back on the job with little-to-no consideration for their safety.

The corporations’ existence as profiteering institutions depends on their willingness to sacrifice their workers. That this choice is inevitable and legal under capitalism makes it no less of a crime against the working class. Those who make the decision should face judgment from the workers whose lives they threaten.

Neither the last administration, which sabotaged public health, nor the current one has shown competence

in combating COVID-19. By imposing a safety mandate through OSHA, however, the Biden administration attempted to pressure all the big corporations to act together to increase worker safety. Many bosses refused to sacrifice profits and sued to stop the mandate.

Regarding COVID-19, what the Supreme Court decision did was aid these owners by sabotaging OSHA’s attempt to protect worker safety. SCOTUS blocked OSHA’s ability to perform the tasks in its job description. Not only does the Jan. 13 decision aid the spread of COVID-19, it could also be extended to weaken or dismantle other OSHA directives to protect worker safety.

The message from SCOTUS to the working class in the U.S. is clear:

Either form unions that can directly impose safety requirements on the bosses and corporations, under workers control, or sacrifice your health and life.

Mobilize to eliminate the inherently anti-worker Supreme Court.

Organize in the long term to replace the capitalist system — which not only exploits workers but kills them — with a system that puts human safety before profits — socialism. □

Clyde Bellecourt: the Thunder Before the Storm

By Stephanie Tromblay

Hundreds gathered to honor the life of Clyde Bellecourt, White Earth Ojibwe, in Minneapolis, Jan. 13. Bellecourt, 85, was the last living founding member of the American Indian Movement and a lifelong civil-rights activist known worldwide. (Star Tribune, Jan. 13)

Bellecourt, whose Ojibwe name is Neegawnwaywidung, (the Thunder Before the Storm), was born and raised on the White Earth Indian Reservation. Both his parents had been kidnapped from their families and survived the boarding schools, of which he said, “it was an effort to strip us of our language, our culture and our traditional way of life.” (Indian Country Today, Jan. 12)

Bellecourt ran away from boarding school himself and was locked up for truancy at Red Wing Correctional Facility for juveniles; he later served time at St. Cloud and Stillwater state prisons for robbery. At Stillwater, he met Eddie Benton-Banai, Anishinaabe, who believed if Native people learned their history and their culture, that would build pride and take the community forward. Through their work there, many Native prisoners cut their time by half. Bellecourt left and began working as an engineer and a community activist.

During a 1968 community meeting in Minneapolis against police brutality, Bellecourt and others painted five cars red and deployed them as the first AIM patrol to monitor police activity. A movement was born!

AIM quickly spread to inspire a generation of Native activists on reservations and inner cities across the country.

“Indian people had no legal rights centers, job training centers, community clinics, Native American studies programs or Indian child welfare statutes,” Bellecourt wrote in his memoir “The Thunder Before the Storm” (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2016). “There were no Indian casinos or Indian schools, no Indian preference housing. We were prohibited from practicing our spirituality. It was illegal to be in our country. The Movement changed all that.” (Star Tribune, Oct. 21, 2016)

Bellecourt joined with Black activists in 1970 to launch the Legal Rights Center, a community-owned law firm in Minneapolis, as an alternative to the Public Defender’s Office to provide high-quality representation for Native, Black and other people of color who were unable to obtain such services.

The birth of AIM

AIM carried out a takeover of an abandoned Naval Air Station in Minneapolis in 1971 and organized a march to Washington, D.C., in 1972, called the Trail of Broken Treaties. The march, from the West Coast to Washington, D.C., demanded the U.S. honor the treaties, which are encoded as the law of the land according to the Constitution. AIM took over the Bureau of Indian Affairs building, forcing President Richard Nixon to agree to consider their demands. AIM then became a target of COINTELPRO,

along with the Black Panther Party and other organizations.

In its most well-known action, AIM organized a 71-day occupation of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1973, to protest corruption of Pine Ridge Reservation’s tribal government and charge the Bureau of Indian Affairs with injustices against Natives. The protest drew worldwide attention to Indigenous peoples’ struggles.

AIM went on to start health clinics, treatment centers, schools, a local job training center, a Native women’s shelter, and a program to retrieve Native children from foster care. Along with other programs, AIM was granted control of the Little Earth Housing Project. Bellecourt often said people who heard about AIM wanted to talk only about the high-profile uprisings of the 1970s, but he was proud of building many organizations promoting community self-sufficiency.

“We made it clear that we were the landlords and caretakers of the country, and it was the end of the month, and the rent was due, in health, education and welfare,” Bellecourt said. “They didn’t get the land for nothing.” (Star Tribune, Feb. 19, 2019)

AIM became a national rallying cry for Indigenous



Clyde Bellecourt speaks at rally in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Nov. 2, 2014.

youth, and their work with youth led to creation of specialized schools, college Native studies courses and departments that promoted pride in Native culture, ultimately a re-examination of the record of the settler-colonial history of the U.S. in tandem with the legacy of slavery.

“He had a very strong voice and presence,” said Kate Beane, leading Dakota historian and educator and director of the Minnesota Museum of American Art. “He fought so hard for Native American education, and his legacy is that young Native Americans can feel prideful for who they are as Indigenous students.” (Star Tribune, Jan. 11)

Bellecourt lived the AIM leadership saying of “anytime, anyplace, anywhere,” from organizing against the racist slur name of the Washington NFL team (finally dropped in 2020), to supporting the water protectors and land defenders against the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock or Enbridge Line 3 in Hubbard County — Bellecourt was there.

*Tromblay’s heritage is Huron nonstatus and mixed Southeast nations undocumented.*

An open letter

Why we demand justice for Jason Walker

*This open letter was written on Jan. 14 after a Justice March for Jason Walker, who was murdered by a Cumberland County, North Carolina, Sheriff’s deputy Jan. 8.*

Today was a memorable day led by a coalition of social activist organizations in Fayetteville, North Carolina. It was a day of social unity standing against the injustice of Jason Walker and Black/Brown people killed by the police in the community.

The event started with a gathering at the Cumberland County courthouse where the families of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Jason Walker all spoke out against the system murdering Black/Brown people. The Walker family spoke on unity in the community and how Black people need to stick together.

After the families spoke out, the community of organizers and activists took to the streets of downtown Fayetteville. The community marched from the courthouse toward City Council and the police station, which were several blocks from our starting location. The Black Panther Party chapters of Charlotte, Fayetteville and other surrounding areas supplied security for the rally. The only police presence throughout the whole event was the drones that flew overhead as we marched.

The community marched four times

around the historical slave trade market house before heading down Hay Street toward the City Hall building.

The event was well organized with marshals and medics. There was not a police car in sight as the rally stopped and held up traffic, chanting, “Whose streets? Our streets!” along with other social justice chants.

As we marched toward the City Council and Fayetteville police station, more activists and civilians joined the peaceful march. Once the rally headed back to the courthouse for the conclusion of this portion of the Justice March, everyone took a knee (for all Black people murdered by the system) in the middle of a secured intersection, shutting down all traffic.

Once we arrived back to the courthouse, family and friends gave their reflections on who Mr. Jason Walker was to them. Walker’s cousin spoke and said that Jason had a revolutionary consciousness about the Black and Brown struggle in Amerikkka. Others that knew him said that he would do a lot of selfless service for members in his close-knit community and that Jason was a kindhearted person who loved people.

After the families spoke, we all released balloons in the air in [respect of the] life of Jason Walker.

After the march, the families of George

Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Jason Walker met all the social activists at Smith Park, where everyone broke bread and socialized with one another. I was able to give condolences to the Walkers on behalf of myself and Black Workers for Justice. The event lasted for a little over four hours. We also had Sister Kass Ottley, a well-seasoned social activist against injustice and a United Electrical Workers (UE) project organizer from Charlotte come down to help lead the chants in the march in solidarity.

As I reflect on the events of today’s Justice March for Jason Walker, I see the need for the whole community to stand together in solidarity at all times, not just in the time of crisis. There is power in community once it is activated in solidarity.

When there is no justice, there can be no peace. We must hold this racist system of local, state and federal government accountable by any means necessary. We refuse to continue to be sheep for the slaughter.

In the words of our fallen comrade Huey P. Newton: “You can jail the revolutionary, but you cannot jail the revolution.”

In solidarity,  
Brother Chris Hollis

*Chris Hollis is a member of the Durham branch of Workers World Party.*



# Alicia Jrapko ¡presente!

*The following statement was sent out by Resumen LatinoAmericano and the Third World, an anti-imperialist publication based in Latin America on Jan. 12. Graciela Ramirez, editor of Cuba En Resumen, and Gerardo Hernández, one of the Cuban 5, signed the statement which has been lightly edited by WW.*

Dear comrades and friends,  
With deep sorrow and on behalf of her family, we announce that our dear colleague, sister and friend Alicia Jrapko passed away last evening after fighting a cruel illness for more than two years. In spite of the hard treatment, she never stopped working as much as she could. Alicia regretted not being able to continue contributing, loving and living with the energy that always characterized her.

Alicia was a great Argentine revolutionary, the daughter of workers who at a very young age took up the struggles of a generation that dreamed of building an Argentina with social justice for the people. Alicia once said in an interview, “. . . in Latin America a great admiration was forged for Cuba, for Fidel, Raúl, Che and so many other revolutionaries. In Argentina we wanted the same thing, but it was not achieved, and a great part of my generation lost their best children.”

Alicia was born on Jan. 1, 1953, in Merlo, Buenos Aires province, grew up and was educated in Córdoba, where she studied journalism. Argentina’s military dictatorship imposed in 1976 unleashed a fierce repression against all popular militants. Thirty thousand were detained-disappeared, among them many of Alicia’s classmates. She was unable to finish her degree; and with the clothes she was wearing, in the same year ’76, she had to go into exile.

Each of Alicia’s three children bear the middle names of her disappeared comrades: Gabriela Emma, Eileen Mabel and Juan Alberto.

For several years she lived in exile in Mexico, then settled in the United States, the most difficult country, and at the same time the most necessary to support the causes of Latin America and fight against imperialism . . . it was difficult for her to understand the aggression, the lies and the attacks against Cuba by the media and the government.

### Solidarity with Cuban Revolution and the Cuban Five

Alicia became committed to the struggles of U.S. workers and starting in the early 1990s to Cuba solidarity work through IFCO-Pastors for Peace, where she worked closely with Rev. Lucius Walker as his West Coast coordinator and helped organize and recruit African American and Latino students to attend the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) for free to become doctors in their communities.

Her solidarity work brought her closer to Cuba every day; she became a spokesperson for many caravans of Pastors traveling thousands of miles through the U.S. to counter the lies of the U.S. government against the revolutionary island while collecting humanitarian aid as a symbol of solidarity with the Cuban people.

Alicia stated, “We knew that the humanitarian aid we were taking to Cuba was symbolic, but we wanted to show that the U.S. government could not block solidarity between peoples. And we wanted to show that Cuba was not alone. The experience of traveling to Cuba on Pastors for Peace caravans changed my life forever and brought me closer to Cuba and its people.”

In 2000 Alicia was in the forefront of the battle for the return of Elián González

to his father in Cuba, but her pivotal work can be found in the struggle to free the Cuban 5 political prisoners, unjustly incarcerated for monitoring the activity of terrorists in the U.S. against Cuba.

Alicia assumed with determination and incomparable courage the leadership of the International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban Five in the United States and managed to get trade unionists, religious leaders, congressional representatives, jurists, intellectuals, actors and artists to join the campaign for the release of Cuban anti-terrorist fighters Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, Ramón Labañino Salazar, Antonio Guerrero Rodríguez, Fernando González Llort and René González Sehwerert.

From 2002 until his release in 2014, regardless of the risks and the enormous distances, together with her partner in struggle and dreams, Bill Hackwell, she visited Gerardo Hernández more than 100 times in two maximum security federal penitentiaries and was the constant and affectionate supporter of family visits.

Alicia’s enormous work and political commitment transcended before the Cuban people who conferred upon her several distinctions, among them the Felix Elmuza Medal awarded by the Union of Journalists of Cuba, the Shield of the City of Holguín and the Medal of Friendship awarded by the Council of State of the Republic of Cuba through the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), for her immense work during the long years of struggle for the freedom of the Five.

### A dedicated internationalist

Pages would not be enough to describe the enormous work that this courageous woman carried out with extraordinary

modesty, simplicity, dignity and fidelity, with all her energies placed at the service of human betterment throughout her precious life.

Alicia’s work focused on Latin America including the defense of the Bolivarian Revolution of Venezuela, and she was also a visible presence in the antiwar movement to end the U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Since 2011 Alicia has been a co-chair of the National Network on Cuba (NNOC). She was the coordinator of the International Committee for Peace, Justice and Dignity for the Peoples in the U.S. and founder and co-editor of Resumen LatinoAmericano in English.

She created the U.S. chapter of the Network in Defense of Humanity and was a member of its General Secretariat. In her last project, despite being ill, Alicia was the co-chair of the Nobel Committee for Cuba’s Henry Reeve medical brigade, in one more effort in her tireless fight against the criminal blockade of Cuba.

Her name, Alicia, is the essence of truth. That truth was carried as a banner by our dear Ali throughout her life, the truth of the people against injustice, the truth, honesty, dignity and modesty of true revolutionaries, capable of giving their all, without any other personal ambition or motive. Alicia’s style of leadership pulled people to her and the struggle, always with her big smile and sincerity, earning her the respect of all.

She honored us with her friendship and affection, with her enormous courage. And she leaves us all in this infinite sadness, but she also leaves us with her example of how to live a life of struggle, nobility, dignity and hope.

All our love goes to Gabriela, Eileen and Juanito, her beloved children; her life



WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

**Alicia Jrapko speaks at a rally demanding the freedom of the Cuban Five, June 1, 2013, in Washington, D.C.**

partner Bill Hackwell; her six grandchildren, the youngest Che Simón, born this Jan. 5, whom she could not see or hold in her arms but was able to listen to an audio of his cry for the future with a big smile; to her dear brother in Argentina; family, friends and colleagues in the United States.

We will never forget you, soul mate, dearest sister and mother.

Hasta Siempre Ali Querida!  
You will always be present!  
Until Victory Always!

*Gerardo Hernández Nordelo and Graciela Ramírez  
Jan. 12, 2022, from Havana.*

## Necesitamos la abolición de las prisiones

*Continúa de la página 12*

rejas ya es difícil de conseguir, si es que las personas encarceladas pueden acceder a ella. La atención a la salud mental es en gran medida inexistente en un entorno que a menudo ha llevado a las personas a quitarse la vida porque las condiciones son muy brutales.

Los suicidios en las cárceles y prisiones de Estados Unidos aumentaron considerablemente entre 2000 y 2019, según un estudio publicado en octubre de 2021 por la Oficina de Estadísticas de Justicia. (The San Diego Union-Tribune, 7 de octubre de 2021)

Varios sistemas federales, estatales y locales de prisiones, cárceles, centros de detención de menores y migrantes están descentralizados. Una cosa que muchos de esos sistemas tienen en común es la propagación del virus a través de los traslados de personas encarceladas, desde instalaciones de procesamiento y otras unidades, realizados durante una pandemia altamente contagiosa, sin pruebas y/o protocolos de cuarentena.

### Construir hacia la revolución

Incluso antes de la pandemia, las prisiones, cárceles y centros de detención eran una crisis de salud pública. Encarcelar a tantas personas -la mayoría de las cuales están histórica y desproporcionadamente oprimidas en este país por motivos de raza, género, discapacidad y clase, entre otros- es hacerlas vulnerables a una muerte prematura, debido a la violencia organizada y al abandono organizado por el estado capitalista.

La violencia organizada de los policías, los tribunales y las jaulas -en tierras indígenas robadas- y el cierre sistemático de hospitales, la falta de vivienda en masa y el racismo medioambiental son algunos ejemplos que ejemplifican la desigualdad. Y estas condiciones estructurales son la causa de la desigualdad a largo plazo en este continente desde que llegaron los colonizadores.

Los colonizadores han impuesto la guerra de clases desde sus posiciones dominantes desde el desembarco del otro lado del Océano Atlántico, con diversos medios de trabajo forzado y explotado para el beneficio de unos pocos, especialmente la esclavitud. Las prisiones, las cárceles y los centros de detención son una de las herramientas más eficaces que tiene la clase dominante para imponer el control social y hacer bajar los salarios de toda la clase trabajadora.

Desde un movimiento de abolicionistas siempre presente y en constante crecimiento en Texas, que rechaza la guerra contra los migrantes a través de la Operación Lonestar del gobernador Greg Abbott, hasta todos y cada uno de los 38 países a los que se ha exportado el modelo represivo de prisiones y policía de Estados Unidos, estamos luchando por la abolición como si nuestras vidas dependieran de ello. Porque así es.

El imperio estadounidense tiene una violenta historia de institucionalización y codificación de la supremacía blanca. Las prisiones, en su forma y función, son monumentos a la supremacía blanca. Son campos de concentración para los pobres, las nacionalidades oprimidas y los disidentes.

Esto se ejemplifica en este momento de pandemia global, donde las muertes aceleradas y completamente evitables de personas dentro y fuera de las prisiones son un acto de genocidio. Esto no viene como una revelación sino como una llamada a la acción.

No estamos construyendo hacia la reforma de ninguna de estas instituciones. Las prisiones, las cárceles y los centros de detención son en sí mismos una forma de esclavitud y de encomiendas (las concesiones de tierras de la Corona española a los colonos españoles que conferían derechos de tributo y trabajo forzado a los habitantes indígenas). La reforma nos da más de lo que ya tenemos: estructuras de violencia incesante que siguen manteniendo la acumulación de riqueza para los traficantes de personas y los perpetradores de genocidio.

Estamos construyendo hacia la abolición, hacia la revolución. Apoyamos la diversidad de tácticas y el derecho de los oprimidos a la autodefensa y la autodeterminación por cualquier medio. Luchamos por reorientar los recursos robados hacia las necesidades humanas, como la atención sanitaria, la vivienda, el agua potable y los alimentos, y por transformar las causas profundas del sufrimiento y la violencia.

Lo que construyamos juntos, tras derribar los muros de las jaulas capitalistas, para proteger a los miembros vulnerables de nuestra clase, así como a nosotros mismos, marcará la diferencia.

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Buffalo, N.Y.

## La campaña de sindicalización en Starbucks estalla en todo el país

Por Arjae Red

Publicado en Workers World/Mundo Obrero, Jan. 1; traducido por Tlaxcala ([tinyurl.com/5hdye6en](https://tinyurl.com/5hdye6en))

Búfalo, Nueva York - La chispa que se encendió en esta ciudad el pasado agosto, cuando lxs trabajadorxs de Starbucks anunciaron su intención de sindicalizarse, se ha convertido en una llamarada de justo anhelo de la clase trabajadora, con nuevas tiendas en todo el país pidiendo elecciones sindicales.

Tiendas en Mesa, Arizona; Boston; Seattle; Knoxville, Tennessee; Chicago; y Bloomfield, Colorado, se han unido a la lucha, ampliando su alcance por todo el país. Las victorias en dos de las tres primeras tiendas que votaron en Buffalo (la segunda aún está siendo impugnada en los tribunales) demostraron que organizar un sindicato -incluso contra una empresa con tanto dinero y desprecio por sus trabajadorxs como Starbucks- es una lucha que se puede ganar.

Esta oleada de nuevas peticiones sindicales se produce en un momento en el que la COVID-19, especialmente los casos provocados por la variante ómicron, está arrasando en USA con tasas de infección que baten récords. Las tiendas de Starbucks en Buffalo, y sin duda otras ciudades, se enfrentan a un pico de infecciones. Starbucks ha inundado el distrito con nuevas contrataciones en un intento de diluir una votación sindical que tuvo lugar el 9 de diciembre en tres tiendas en Buffalo. Ahora estxs nuevxs empleadxs se enfrentan de lleno a la reciente ola de infecciones, sin seguro médico ni tiempo de baja laboral pagado por enfermedad.

Muchas de las prestaciones de Starbucks no entran en vigor el primer día, lo que deja a muchxs trabajadorxs sin los recursos y la atención médica que necesitan. Además, a lxs trabajadorxs

que se les ha confirmado que han estado expuestxs a la COVID-19 durante largos periodos de tiempo, aunque estén vacunadxs y sean asintomáticxs, no se les ofrece un tiempo de aislamiento remunerado para hacerse las pruebas. Esto hace que muchxs trabajadorxs se sientan insegurxs en el trabajo, después de haber visto baristas totalmente vacunadxs dar positivo en las pruebas de COVID-19.

La dirección de Starbucks afirma que su política está en consonancia con las directrices de los CDC (Centros para el Control y la Prevención de Enfermedades). Sin embargo, en un país con más de tres cuartos de millón de personas ya muertas por la enfermedad, debería ser obvio que las directrices del CDC han sido decididamente insuficientes hasta este momento.

Esta catástrofe de la salud pública, combinada con el deterioro de la economía capitalista y el aumento del coste de la vida, ha dejado a lxs trabajadorxs con pocas opciones que no sean las de organizarse por sus propios intereses colectivos. Lo que es un escenario de pesadilla para lxs trabajadorxs es la tormenta perfecta para que prenda un resurgimiento militante del movimiento obrero, con lxs jóvenes al frente de la lucha. A pesar de estas circunstancias desesperadas para muchxs, lxs trabajadorxs de Starbucks se están sindicalizando y no simplemente como consecuencia del fracaso de la empresa para abordar cualquier problema particular.

### Lxs trabajadorxs con conciencia de clase presionan por un cambio real

En las cartas enviadas al director general de Starbucks, Kevin Johnson, en las que le informaban de las nuevas tiendas que se unían a la lucha, lxs trabajadorxs de Starbucks dejaron claro que los esfuerzos de sindicalización no son una respuesta a ninguna política específica de Starbucks, sino que forman parte de una visión más

amplia para hacer de sus espacios de trabajo y comunidades un lugar mejor. Esto demuestra que lxs trabajadorxs están empezando a ver los sindicatos no solo como una herramienta para reaccionar contra el mal trato, sino como una herramienta proactiva que pueden esgrimir para desempeñar un papel más activo en la configuración de su comunidad.

Desde una perspectiva socialista, no se puede exagerar esta evolución de la conciencia de la clase trabajadora. Estamos viendo cómo lxs trabajadorxs son más conscientes colectivamente de nuestro papel histórico como agentes de cambio en la sociedad, la única fuerza que puede provocar una ruptura revolucionaria con la explotación capitalista.

Lxs trabajadorxs de todo el mundo ya no se conforman con actuar como observadorxs pasivxs de su propia explotación. Si este tipo de conciencia puede seguir llegando fuera de estos focos de lucha y a otros lugares de trabajo, edificios de viviendas y la comunidad en general, se alcanzará una perspectiva de clase que puede armar a la clase trabajadora y a lxs oprimidxs con las herramientas ideológicas necesarias para lograr la liberación más allá de los meros aumentos de sueldo y beneficios contractuales.

Para lograr esta conciencia de clase, es imperativo que lxs líderes de la clase trabajadora dentro de USA entiendan su posición de clase no simplemente en términos de su propia localidad o país, sino como parte de una clase trabajadora internacional. Empresas como Starbucks, Amazon, Walmart y otras son gigantes imperialistas globales que explotan a lxs trabajadorxs en su país y en el extranjero, ya sean personal de hostelería, agricultorxs o repartidorxs. Pero incluso si adoptamos una perspectiva más estrecha y nos centramos en un lugar de trabajo concreto en USA, vemos que las condiciones de lxs trabajadorxs están intrínsecamente

ligadas a las condiciones de lxs trabajadorxs de otros países.

### Necesidad de una unidad de clase global

Como explicó el pensador marxista y difunto presidente y fundador del Partido Mundo Obrero, Sam Marcy, en su libro “High Tech, Low Pay: A Marxist Analysis of the Changing Character of the Working Class”, debido a la naturaleza global de la economía capitalista, lxs trabajadorxs de USA compiten directamente por los puestos de trabajo con lxs de otros países. Un avance tecnológico sin precedentes ha facilitado más que nunca el envío de puestos de trabajo al extranjero, a países donde las grandes empresas pagan solo una fracción de lo que cuesta en USA pagar a lxs trabajadorxs sindicalizadxs con todas las prestaciones por hacer el mismo trabajo.

Esta competencia directa con los empleos de bajos salarios en todo el mundo hace que se reduzcan a su vez los salarios de lxs trabajadorxs en USA, limitando lo que se puede ganar estrictamente a la negociación de los contratos sindicales. En otras palabras, un movimiento obrero en USA que no adopte una perspectiva internacionalista que se corresponda con la naturaleza internacional de la clase obrera se disparará a sí mismo, a largo plazo, en el pie. Al igual que lxs trabajadorxs son siempre más poderosxs en el lugar de trabajo cuando se unen contra su jefe, la clase obrera de un país es más poderosa cuando se une con otrxs trabajadorxs a través de las fronteras nacionales contra sus explotadores capitalistas comunes.

La evolución del movimiento obrero en USA abre nuevas posibilidades para lxs trabajadorxs a escala mundial. Después de décadas en las que el movimiento obrero ha sido destruido, lxs trabajadorxs están resurgiendo. La victoria en Buffalo es la primera de muchas que vendrán, tanto para lxs baristas como para toda la clase obrera. □

### COMENTARIO

## Necesitamos la abolición de las prisiones, no la reforma

Por Mirinda Crissman

Casi 2,3 millones de personas encarceladas cada día en prisiones, cárceles y centros de detención de Estados Unidos, se enfrentan a posibles condenas de muerte mientras están encerradas durante una pandemia respiratoria mortal. A pesar de enfrentarse a condiciones inhumanas e insalubres, han mostrado una gran solidaridad entre ellos y resistencia a su brutal opresión.

Desde el comienzo de la pandemia, las prisiones y los centros de detención del ICE en todo Estados Unidos han informado de al menos 460.918 casos totales acumulados entre las personas encarceladas y 2.933 muertes totales acumuladas, según el proyecto de datos Behind Bars de UCLA Law COVID.

Este proyecto se asegura de señalar que los verdaderos recuentos de casos y de mortalidad son probablemente más altos, y pueden ser significativamente más altos,

que los reportados. Este recuento insuficiente se debe a que los datos disponibles son autodeclarados por los organismos penitenciarios, que pueden estar ocultando los casos notificados debido a las malas prácticas de análisis de muchos organismos, pero el recuento insuficiente también se debe a que muchos organismos penitenciarios han dejado de notificar los datos de COVID-19. ([uclacovidbehindbars.org](https://uclacovidbehindbars.org))

Algunos de los datos más alentadores recogidos sobre los miembros de nuestra clase entre rejas proceden de proyectos como Perilous Chronicle, (PC), que ha mantenido una lista actualizada con fuentes de noticias que detallan los levantamientos, huelgas de hambre, fugas y otros diversos actos de resistencia disponibles para el público.

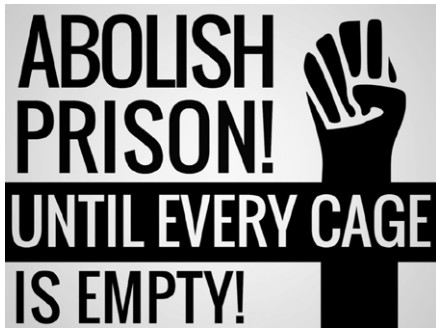
PC ha estado siguiendo estos actos de resistencia por parte de personas encarceladas en Estados Unidos y Canadá desde finales de 2010. Dado que la

pandemia ha exacerbado las ya nefastas condiciones en el interior, el número de actos de resistencia registrados ha aumentado. ([perilouschronicle.com](https://perilouschronicle.com))

En 2021 se registraron al menos 112 actos de negativa a aceptar las condiciones de muerte. Se trata de una disminución con respecto a los al menos 180 actos de resistencia registrados en 2020 en las prisiones, cárceles y centros de detención de Estados Unidos, que aumentaron notablemente con respecto a los años anteriores.

### La pandemia agrava el sufrimiento

La crisis del COVID-19 entre rejas ha suscitado una serie de respuestas deslucidas y peligrosas por parte de los distintos organismos carcelarios a nivel federal, estatal y local.



El aislamiento, ya de por sí extremo mientras se está encarcelado, se agrava cuando la respuesta a la rápida propagación del virus es el encierro de las personas encarceladas

en sus celdas, con un acceso mínimo, si es que lo hay, a la higiene básica, como las duchas diarias, por no hablar de los niveles de recreación básicos necesarios para mantener la salud corporal.

Muchas instalaciones suspendieron las visitas en persona con sus seres queridos, que para muchos son uno de los pocos lugares de conexión humana con sus comunidades más amplias de las que fueron secuestrados.

La atención médica de calidad entre

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