

In the spirit of MLK

Organize the South!

By Dante Strobino
Virginia Beach, Virginia

On Jan. 18, the newly formed Virginia Beach City Workers Union, UE Local 111, and faith community supporters rallied before the city council demanding a real voice for safety, dignity, living wages and an end to institutional racism on the job. City workers from the Public Works, Public Utilities and Human Services departments led the action demanding collective bargaining rights.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. took his last stand supporting Memphis, Tennessee, city workers who demanded these same rights in 1968. Their 1,300-strong sanitation workers' strike was sparked by the deaths of two Black city workers, Echol Cole and Robert Walker, who had been crushed on the job by a malfunctioning truck.

As the country celebrated the King holiday, the Jan. 18 rally honored his real legacy by requesting that the Virginia Beach City Council pass a resolution in support of collective bargaining.

With a new Virginia law effective May 1, 2021, that allows workers these rights for the first time in history, workers across the state have a historic opportunity to overcome a racist Jim Crow era legacy. Five local governments across Virginia have passed similar resolutions to date.

"We have to confront this systematic racism and racial disparity that manipulates the city's decision making when it comes to social and economic equality," stated Alfred "Red" McClenny, equipment operator IV, Waste Management, Public Works. McClenny continued, "I feel collective bargaining is a step to help us bridge that racial divide."

A report by the UE Research Department from 2021 showed that compared to other cities of a similar size, in southeast Virginia Beach a sanitation operator IV, with 20 years of experience, earns \$17,327 below the market average.

In November 2021, the Virginia Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis released a report that found that nine out of 10 city employees cannot



City workers and supporters rally outside Virginia Beach City Hall, Jan. 18. WW PHOTO: CHRIS HOLLIS

afford to raise even a single child within the Virginia Beach city limits. For the last several months, hundreds of city workers quit their jobs out of frustration with the stressful work environment, low pay and lack of a real voice.

On top of that, workers are now facing ongoing dangerous working conditions with the omicron variant of COVID-19 rapidly spreading and the city doing little to nothing to protect workers.

'Right to Work' destroys labor unions

"We must guard against being fooled by false slogans such as 'Right to Work.' Its purpose is to destroy labor unions and the freedom of collective bargaining by which unions have improved wages and working conditions of everyone," said the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1961.

"Working in the Water Department is becoming completely impossible due to so many staff leaving. The city used to have eight water crews; now we are down to less than three crews to cover the whole city. We are working lots of overtime to cover all the water main breaks and keep the water running for the residents. We need a real voice on the job through a union to help retain staff and dignified working conditions," stated Terry Green, utility mechanic II, Water Distribution, Public Utilities.

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U.S. hands off Ukraine!

By ordering preparations to send 5,000 more U.S. troops to countries near the Russian border Jan. 23, President Joe Biden stepped up the risk of a war between the world's two most powerful nuclear-armed states. Once again, U.S. imperialism has threatened a new military adventure in pursuit of domination, this time with a major military power.

Workers World calls upon all anti-imperialist and anti-war forces in the United States and Western Europe to protest Washington's war threats and demand that U.S. and all NATO forces withdraw from Eastern Europe and the Baltic states — Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

During the weeks leading up to Biden's order, U.S. corporate media led off the international news with reports of impending war in Ukraine. President Joe

WORKERS WORLD
editorial

Biden has accused Russia of planning an invasion, and Britain has accused Russia of planning a coup in Kiev, Ukraine's capital, to install a Russia-friendly regime. The Russian government denies both charges.

The U.S.-based corporate media from the New York Times and NPR to Fox News accuse the Vladimir Putin government of Russia of planning aggression against Ukraine and fomenting war.

This coordinated anti-Russia campaign is aimed at justifying war preparations against Russia and to force Washington's European allies to line up behind U.S. aggression. Similar campaigns, all lies, accompanied the war buildups against the former Yugoslavia in 1999, Afghanistan in 2001, Iraq in 2003 and Libya and Syria in 2011. The propaganda campaigns are an essential part of every imperialist war.

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Police charged for Fanta Bility murder

By Marie Kelly
Delaware County, Pennsylvania

Three Sharon Hill police in Delaware County, Pennsylvania, outside Philadelphia, were charged with manslaughter Jan. 18 for killing 8-year-old Fanta Bility in August 2021. Following a grand jury investigation, officers Devon G. Smith, Sean Patrick Dolan and Brian James Devaney were also charged with involuntary manslaughter and 10 counts of reckless endangerment, after 10 witnesses testified to feeling endangered by the officers’ reckless actions.

On Jan. 20, the Sharon Hill Town Council voted 6-1 to fire all three officers.

Fanta was murdered outside the Academy Park High School, after police randomly fired over 25 shots at a moving vehicle driven by a 19-year-old woman. Police falsely claimed the car had been involved in a drive-by shooting. The driver and a passenger were injured by broken glass resulting from the bullets. Twelve seconds later, the officers began firing indiscriminately into the crowd leaving a football game, killing Fanta and wounding her sister and two others.

Community outrage over the murder was exacerbated when Delaware County District Attorney Jack Stollsteimer charged two local youths, Hasein Strand and Angelo “AJ” Ford, with first degree murder in December. The two were not on the scene when the police opened fire.

In addition to charging the three officers, prosecutors withdrew trumped-up murder charges against the teenagers, who Stollsteimer had tried to scapegoat in his brazen attempt to shield Sharon Hill police. Five Philadelphia City Council members called Stollsteimer’s handling of the case a “miscarriage of justice.”

The families of Fanta and the two youths, local community members and groups including Black Lives Matter, Delco Resists and UDTJ (which stands for the Upper Darby group’s core principles: Understanding,



Demonstrators call for police accountability in the death of Fanta Bility outside Delaware County Courthouse, Media, Pennsylvania, Jan. 13.

Devotion, Take action, Justice) have held multiple rallies, marches and press conferences calling for murder charges against Strand and Ford to be dropped and for release of the names of the officers. (workers.org/2021/12/60701/)

At a Jan. 13 rally in front of the Media Courthouse, demonstrators kept up the pressure on Stollsteimer, calling again for the names of the officers and charges to be filed against them.

In response to pressure from the community and the Bility family, the Sharon Hill Borough Council voted unanimously to conduct an internal investigation of the police department policies and its training practices. In a statement, Bruce L. Castor, the lawyer representing the Bility family, said the family “seeks answers and damages for the tragic and unnecessary death ... and the injury and trauma inflicted on others as a result of the misconduct of Sharon Hill Police officers.”

The developments of Jan. 18 are a critical step in the right direction, but activists and the Sharon Hill community will continue to speak out and hold elected officials’ feet to the fire until justice for Fanta is fully achieved. □

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. □

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

National Office
147 W. 24th St., 2nd floor
New York, NY 10011
212.627.2994
wwp@workers.org

Atlanta
PO Box 18123
Atlanta, GA 30316
404.627.0185
atlanta@workers.org

Austin
austin@workers.org

Bay Area
P.O. Box 22947
Oakland, CA 94609
510.394.2207
bayarea@workers.org

Boston
284 Amory St.
Boston, MA 02130
617.522.6626
boston@workers.org

Buffalo, N.Y.
335 Richmond Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14222
716.883.2534
buffalo@workers.org

Central Gulf Coast
(Alabama, Florida, Mississippi)
centralgulfcoast@workers.org

Cleveland
cleveland@workers.org

Durham, N.C.
919.322.9970
durham@workers.org

Houston
P.O. Box 3454
Houston, TX 77253-3454
713.503.2633
houston@workers.org

Minnesota
minnesota@workers.org

Philadelphia
P.O. Box 34249
Philadelphia, PA 19101
610.931.2615
phila@workers.org

Portland, Ore.
portland@workers.org

Salt Lake City
801.750.0248
slc@workers.org

San Antonio
sanantonio@workers.org

West Virginia
WestVirginia@workers.org

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Workers World
147 W. 24th St., 2nd Fl.
New York, NY 10011
Phone: 212.627.2994
E-mail: ww@workers.org
Web: www.workers.org

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Editors: John Catalinotto, Martha Grevatt, Deirdre Griswold, Monica Moorehead, Betsey Piette, Minnie Bruce Pratt

Web Editors: ABear, Harvey Markowitz, Janet Mayes
Tear Down the Walls! Editors: Mirinda Crissman, Ted Kelly

Production & Design Editors: Gery Armsby, Mirinda Crissman, Ted Kelly, Sasha Mazumder, Scott Williams

Copyediting and Proofreading: Paddy Colligan, S. Hedgecoke

Contributing Editors: LeiLani Dowell, G. Dunkel, K. Durkin, Sara Flounders, Teresa Gutierrez, Joshua Hanks, Makasi Motema, Gloria Rubac

Mundo Obrero: Teresa Gutierrez, Carlos Vargas
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49 years after Roe v. Wade: Fight for reproductive justice!

By Kathy Durkin

The right to obtain safe, legal abortions is in grave danger. On the 49th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling allowing access to the procedure in the case of Roe v. Wade, on Jan. 22, 1973, this fundamental human right is being challenged as never before. This landmark ruling, the result of a strong, arduous mass movement, may be overturned by the top court in late spring.

Reactionary forces in the U.S. have schemed to overturn the right to legal abortion since the day SCOTUS first issued the decision. In state legislatures and courts and by extralegal violence, the right wing has actively sought to end this essential part of comprehensive health care. It flies in the face of the rights everyone should have — both to bodily autonomy and to make their own medical decisions free of obstacles, coercion or punishment.

SCOTUS was packed with ultraright justices by former President Donald Trump, acting on behalf of ruling-class conservatives. The right wingers on the high court have given every indication that their goal is to overturn the precedent-setting Roe decision and create what is termed a “post-Roe U.S.”

This would send pregnant people seeking to end unintended pregnancies back to dangerous back-alley and self-abortions. It would be a huge medical and legal setback for millions of people and create more difficulties especially for women with low incomes, Black, Latinx, Indigenous, im/migrants, disabled people, rural residents, and individuals with various gender identities who can become pregnant.

Overturning legal abortions would engender more desperation, oppression and repression. Several states plan to follow the Texas law's example, while 26 states are ready to ban abortions if Roe is nullified. This entire anti-abortion campaign in the states and on the federal level, up to and including the conservatives on the top court, reeks of misogyny and white supremacy.

This assault is part of the ruling-class offensive against voting and other rights of Black and other people of color. It is demonstrated in other aggressive legislation and SCOTUS rulings hostile to people of color, im/migrants, workers, labor unions and LGBTQ2S+ individuals, while upholding the rights of corporations, banks and the superwealthy.

The near-total abortion ban, S.B. 8,

implemented in Texas Sept. 1 with no exceptions for rape or incest victims/survivors — even children, has sent hundreds if not thousands across borders to access safe abortions. Allies, including pro-choice organizations and donors,



PHOTO CREDIT: SISTER SONG

Demonstrators in Jackson, Mississippi, on Dec. 1, 2021, call for the Supreme Court to maintain the right to access legal abortions.

are helping them do so. Networks have sprung up in Texas and around the South. Those with money are traveling to the East and West coasts.

On Dec. 1, the Dobbs v. Jackson Womens' Health Organization case was argued before SCOTUS. Here, the state of Mississippi seeks not only to impose a 15-week ban on abortions, but is asking the top court to throw out the Roe decision and ban abortions altogether.

The top court has supported the Texas six-week abortion ban and its extralegal vigilante bounty scheme aimed at those who “aid or abet” abortion seekers against the several legal challenges by reproductive health clinics. On Jan. 20, six conservative justices referred the clinic operators' case back to the notoriously reactionary Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals and not to the pro-choice Federal Judge Robert Pitman.

Activists have demonstrated outside of SCOTUS and in Austin, Texas; Jackson, Mississippi; and around the country demanding that legal abortion remain in place, a view shared by the majority of U.S. residents. It is a human right and a medical necessity.

The Women and Gender Oppressed Caucus of Workers World Party has issued a statement and 10-point program explaining reproductive justice, and why the fight for it must be aimed at capitalism by an independent movement, free of politicians. (tinyurl.com/yck4ts6d)

Fight back! Organize! Demonstrate! Rally! Boycott! Take the streets! Occupy! □

By Sue Davis

In tribute to Workers World's late comrade Sue Davis, the newspaper is reprinting excerpts of an article written by her to commemorate Roe v. Wade on Jan. 28, 2020. For decades, she wrote in these pages about the fight for reproductive justice, a movement in which she was a dedicated fighter. (tinyurl.com/4jwea9mf)

The 47th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the Supreme Court decision that legalized women's right to choose abortion, was Jan. 22. While religious anti-abortion forces have been trying to overturn it ever since, the threat has never been greater — especially with woman-hater, racist, anti-LGBTQ2S+ Trump in control of the state.

Trump took a bold step on Jan. 24 by being the first acting president to address the so-called “March for Life” in Washington, D.C. The reactionary, white-supremacist march has been organized by the Catholic Church-backed, misnamed “Right to Life” for the last 46 years and since 2017 reinforced by white evangelicals.

“Unborn children have never had a stronger defender in the White House,” Trump stated. Contrast that with his administration's plan to reduce funding for food stamps, which means up to 5.3 million people, including thousands of children, could be cut from the program.

The Guardian stated: “[J]ust as long as [Trump] cracks down on women's reproductive rights [evangelicals will] continue to support him.” And 80% of white evangelical voters helped crown King Trump in 2016.

Refuting Trump, Alexis McGill Johnson, then-acting president and CEO of the Planned Parenthood Action Fund, said: “[W]e'll be standing with the nearly 80% of Americans who support abortion access. We'll never stop fighting for all the people in this country who need access to sexual and reproductive health care, including abortion.”

Right-wing attacks

Meanwhile the blatantly patriarchal Trump administration is using state power to attack women and other gender-oppressed people.

Anti-abortion state legislators introduced a record number of near-total abortion bans and other restrictive legislation in 2019. Emoldened by Trump's braggadocio, they are continuing to introduce bans this year, even in states where there is a strong pro-choice majority.

But what cannot be quantified are the effects of Trump's Department of Health and Human Services, stacked with anti-abortion, misogynist bigots who issue and promote anti-reproductive health care rulings, like “conscience clauses” and the “domestic gag rule.” The latter was designed to reduce access to reproductive health care, particularly abortion, by exercising state power over some of the most in-need, vulnerable people in this country: the 4 million low-income women and gender-oppressed people enrolled in Title X.

The primary target of these changes was Planned Parenthood, the largest private provider of comprehensive reproductive health services, serving about

40% of more than 1.5 million women and gender-oppressed people who need contraception, testing for cancers, treatment for sexually transmitted infections and abortions. Planned Parenthood [defied] the Trump-Pence assault by opting out of Title X on Aug. 19, 2019.

How many clinics have been forced out of Title X, denying convenient, timely, affordable access to abortion and other medical services? How many patients are unable to find licensed health centers that address their needs, excluding abortion? How many patients can't afford to travel for reproductive care?

Reproductive justice now!

While anti-abortion politicians and activists cite blatant misinformation and outright lies to promote their views, Guttmacher [Institute] refutes them: (1) Safe, legal abortion is common and at its lowest rate since Roe in 1973; (2) State restrictions are not driving the recent decline in abortion — it's due to more effective contraception.

Many pro-choice groups, promoting medical, legal and civil rights for women and gender-oppressed people, issued statements on Jan. 22 recognizing Roe.

Destiny Lopez, co-director of All* Above All denounced the Dec. 20, 2019, DHHS ruling mandating separate billing for abortion care. That ruling and Roe “remind us abortion rights in theory are not enough. We must also fight [for] equitable access to safe, healthy and autonomous decisions about our lives, bodies and futures [which are part of] the fight for dignity and equity.”

Andrea Miller, president of the National Institute for Reproductive Health:

“[W]e're writing a new playbook for abortion access by focusing on passing proactive laws to protect and expand access to abortion at the state level. In 2019 alone, more states passed proactive protections for abortion rights and expanded access than in any previous year.”

Voto Latino spokeswoman Sandra Sánchez defended abortion rights for people of color, low-income folks and the LGBTQ2S+ community: “[W]e're fighting to ensure that all Latinxs have access to abortion. Research shows 73% of Latinx voters want to see SCOTUS uphold the right to abortion, and 87% say they would support a loved one who received one. No politician should be able to take that away.”

Yamani Hernandez, executive director of the National Network of Abortion Funds, stated: “[H]elp end abortion stigma by sharing loving and bold messages about abortion. It's up to us to break cycles of shaming and oppression. When we envelop people having abortions in the fierce love and power that's built in community care, we bring the world one step closer to ending the harmful stigma that isolates us from each other — and our collective power.”

Kimberly Inez McGuire, executive director of youth-led Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity, was quoted in Truthout: “McGuire expressed a frustration heard and repeated over and over by activists, advocates and social justice-minded legislators. In real life, the ‘promise of Roe’ never reached those who needed it most: the poor, youth, people of color, LGBTQIA people and rural populations.” □



Demonstration outside SCOTUS on May 21, 2019.

Time for justice

Urgent need for change in Pennsylvania sentencing system

By Bryant Arroyo

The writer is currently incarcerated at Pennsylvania's SCI Coal Township.

The Families Against Mandatory Minimum (FAMM) report points out the “irrational and ineffective” sentencing laws in Pennsylvania, which send too many people to prison for far longer than necessary. Sentencing laws that severely limit pathways to relief from excessive and unending punishments make the problem even worse. Pennsylvania has thousands of aging and sick people, whose continued incarceration serves absolutely no purpose.

The state's overreliance on harsh punishments, combined with a near elimination of any meaningful mechanisms for reviewing these sentences, has contributed to a prison population that has exploded by nearly 300% since the early 1980s. Although Pennsylvania started to reduce its prison population over the last decade, the drastic increase in the number of people serving long and life without parole — LWOP — sentences continues.

Pennsylvania's punitive sentencing practices offer no discernible benefit to the public. They create significant negative consequences and only add to the

preexisting harm done to citizens. While unfairly and unnecessarily depriving people of freedom, Pennsylvania's sentencing approach wastes more taxpayers' money, separates families, exacerbates racial disparities and deprives people who have been incarcerated for their mistakes of nearly any opportunity for redemption or mercy.

FAMM has developed the Second Chance Agenda as one solution to expand opportunities for second chances. To address this crisis, Pennsylvania must reform its sentencing laws to allow for individualized and appropriate punishments and create more opportunities to review sentences and to provide incarcerated people with a path toward a second chance.

In Pennsylvania, FAMM suggests that this can be accomplished in several ways. Start with ending life without parole, and repeal the mandatory life sentence statutes for first and second degree murder. Allow opportunities for parole for people with these convictions, and make these reforms retroactive. All people can change and mature, and laws should reflect that.

Pennsylvania judges should have the discretion to impose individualized, appropriate sentences and review unjust sentences.

Allow medical and elderly release, and expand compassionate release. More than 20% of Pennsylvania's prison population is over 50, and many of these



Patricia Vickers, whose son was sentenced to life in prison when he was 17, speaks out against mandatory minimum sentences at Philadelphia rally, July 2021.

people have chronic health conditions. Maintaining such an enormous population of aging and ill people in prison is expensive, unnecessary and unjust.

Pennsylvania should create mechanisms to release people in prison based on age and or medical necessity; 70% of lifers were under age 30 at the time of their conviction, which means that

Pennsylvania taxpayers could potentially be paying to incarcerate them for 50 years or more, an extraordinary possibility.

For example, if someone enters prison at age 20, moves to a skilled or personal care (hospice) unit at age 55 and lives to be age 75, the lifetime costs to incarcerate just that one person would be approximately \$5.7 million, plus inflation, based on the estimated age at the time of the crime.

Clemency must be expanded. In Pennsylvania, clemency is the only hope for relief for people serving long or life sentences. Between 1971 and 1994, Pennsylvania commuted the life sentences of 285 people, but that number dropped by more than 90% over the following two decades. Commutations are a necessary mechanism to address injustices and support second chances, and their use should be substantially expanded.

Prisoners are encouraged to strategize, mobilize, organize, synergize and energize family members, friends, contacts, advocates, loved ones and supporters on the outside, [who] must get involved on the solutions spelled out in the Second Chance agenda. For more information, go to the FAMM websites: famm@famm.org; www.fam.org; tel: (202) 822-6700; address: FAMM, 1100 H Street NW, Ste. 1000, Washington, D.C., 20005. □

WW COMMENTARY

COVID-19 and the prison abolition movement

By Judy Greenspan

The current spike in COVID-19 infections among the incarcerated in prisons, jails and detention centers is not only alarming and life-threatening to tens of thousands of people, it is an urgent challenge for the prison abolition and prisoners' advocacy movement. We must build a movement from California to New York to demand mass releases and prison closures during this pandemic.

As someone who has worked for decades as an advocate for prisoners with HIV, hepatitis C and other life-threatening illnesses, I know that it is impossible for our incarcerated siblings to get adequate medical care inside. The prison system is the antithesis of care, and mild medical problems all too often become life-threatening to people inside. In reality in the U.S., there is a large, aging population of poor people, Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian and white, who are locked away for decades and at risk of dying from COVID-19.

At the beginning of the pandemic, a group called No Justice Under Capitalism coined the phrase “No State Execution by COVID-19” and fought for mass releases. This group organized many demonstrations at the gates of San Quentin Prison after a prisoner transfer sparked widespread COVID-19 infections at that prison. Demonstrations were held at the state capitol and the offices of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation in Sacramento. Concerned

family members and NJUC even protested outside of California Governor Gavin Newsom's suburban home.

A federal judge even ordered the depopulation of San Quentin Prison by 50%. The politicians promised mass releases. Did any of this happen? No, not in any real way. But infection rates did calm down for a period.

The omicron variant of COVID-19 has not only caused the infection rate to spike in the community, COVID-19 is currently running rampant in prisons, jails and detention centers throughout this country. The response of the jail and prison administrators is to cover it up, minimize the threat to prisoners' lives and generally to pretend that it's not a problem. But it is, and the real question is what are we going to do about it.



Rally in front of San Quentin Prison in November 2020 demanding mass releases of prisoners due to COVID-19 infections.

People who are incarcerated are incredibly vulnerable to COVID-19. Most of the incarcerated population have come from communities that have been underserved by a for-profit health care system. Many have chronic medical problems like diabetes, HCV, hypertension and respiratory illnesses that become life-threatening in

the prison setting. These medical problems combined with COVID-19 can and have been a death sentence to many behind the walls.

Racist, class nature of incarceration

Who is actually incarcerated right now? The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights just released its latest report, “The Civil Rights Implications of Cash Bail,” revealing the true nature of the incarceration system in this country. Between the years 1970 and 2015, there was a 433% increase in the number of people who were incarcerated pretrial. The number of people languishing in prisons and jails who haven't even been convicted of any crime is growing exponentially. (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Jan. 20)

In fact, pretrial detention is a guaranteed racist institution with Black and Latinx detainees receiving more severe conditions of release. And according to this report, more than 60% of the pretrial incarcerated population (in court they are called “defendants”) are there in places like Rikers Island or Santa Rita Jail because they can't afford bail! In many states, these pretrial defendants are placed in state prisons while awaiting trial. In fact, more than 5 million people are sitting in jail or prison awaiting trial.

And what about our incarcerated siblings who have already been sentenced? In a racist, sexist, transphobic legal system, how can most of the incarcerated population ever get a fair trial? Organizations like RAPP, Release Aging People in Prison, have been working

tirelessly to get elderly and immunocompromised prisoners released in New York State and around the country. “If the risk is low, let them go!” is their motto. And for most people inside, the risk is more than low — after decades inside it is time to release them all!

‘Free Them All!’

Political prisoners like Mumia Abu-Jamal, Leonard Peltier, Sundiata Acola and Dr. Mutulu Shakur have been held for decades by a racist, colonialist, criminal legal system for daring to expose and fight for the liberation of their communities. Our elderly political prisoners are at risk of dying behind the walls. All must be set free!

Workers World Party has long held the position that U.S. prisons are concentration camps for the poor and must be abolished. Some people may find that too unrealistic or too harsh. But abolition must be our uncompromising starting point. Protecting our incarcerated class from COVID-19 gives us that opening to push our abolitionist demands.

The capitalist system will not readily open its prisons, and it will not willingly provide lifesaving care for those inside. As we build and strengthen our movement for prison abolition (and prison means all forms of incarceration), we must not squabble about what is realistic. We must not compromise the survival of our incarcerated siblings. We must really mean “Free Them All.”

COVID-19 has given us that starting conversation but the real work is yet to be done. The time is now to build that movement to demand real prison closures and mass releases, and to work harder than ever to bring down this rotten capitalist system. The survival of our class depends on it. □



WW COMMENTARY

Beyond COVID-19: Striking for the future

by Minnie Bruce Pratt

Jan. 25 — We are beginning Year Three of the COVID-19 pandemic. As of this writing, almost 900,000 people have died in the U.S., and over 7 million people have been infected. (worldometer.com)

These figures, based on official reporting data, are almost surely an undercount. There will have been cases unreported in the most vulnerable populations and deaths from illness and conditions left untreated because of the crisis.

Cases are still mounting. Soon a million people will be officially dead in the U.S. In Onondaga County, New York — where I live most of the year — the number of people in intensive care with the virus during the Jan. 18 week was the highest since a year ago; about half of these had been vaccinated. For the first 18 days of the month, the county confirmed 23,839 cases, nearly four times as many COVID-19 cases as in the same 2021 time period.

In TV late night chatter, “Things are getting better” or in my local newspaper: “Schools closed for in-person learning will reopen.” The message is “Business as usual.” The unspoken message about the pandemic is “Let it rip!”

President Joe Biden’s touted offer of free test kits, “four per household,” has no relation to reality. What about people who are houseless or in the process of being evicted since pandemic eviction protections are gone? How long will four tests last in a family with more than four people or more than four jobs to stay safe in coming and going?

Any motion to stop — or even slow down — COVID-19 in the U.S. has been blocked by powerful forces at the state

and national levels — forces that take no responsibility for how people are struggling just to stay alive.

Why does the U.S. lead the world in COVID-19 deaths?

The U.S. so-called “democracy” is built on the capitalist system. That system is based on the principle: “Make profits, and to hell with the people.”

The main sacrifice on the altar of profit? The workers who create the wealth

accumulated by drug companies like Pfizer, investment funds like BlackRock, lords of distribution like Jeff Bezos of Amazon.

The U.S. funds an imperialist top-to-bottom, international to small-town military system with trillions of dollars. But the U.S. has no top-to-bottom comprehensive health care for the people — only a system that guarantees profit for corporate “health care” companies.

With the pandemic entry into this chaotic system, workplaces became a shambles of illness and death, especially health care facilities and nursing homes. Everywhere, the most vulnerable people were the most at risk — people of color, poor people, disabled people — the higher percentage of those dying confirms this dire fact.

Striking for safe working conditions — and more

When the pandemic began, workers did not wait for corporate management or the then-Trump administration to keep them safe. Instead, workers took matters

because management did not stock soap for them to wash their hands. General Electric workers in Massachusetts walked off the job demanding its factories retool to make direly needed ventilators.

Walkouts and strikes against pandemic work and living circumstances continued and accelerated. Besides workplace actions, there have been rent strikes, tuition strikes, strikes by prisoners about health and work conditions. On International Workers Day, May 1, 2020, essential workers at Amazon, Instacart, Target, Walmart and Whole Foods held a national strike over lack of safety precautions, hazard pay and benefits.

And of course there have been thousands of actions by gym workers, spa workers, health care workers, nurses and doctors — many unrecorded.

These actions coincided in May 2020 with the murder of George Floyd Jr., an African American man, by Minneapolis police. Within a week, protests led by Black Lives Matter surged throughout the U.S. Workers and oppressed people of all nationalities and genders joined together in protesting against racism. The turnout was estimated to be as many as 26 million people, making the protests the largest demonstration of anti-racist solidarity in U.S. history. (New York Times, July 30, 2020)

Solidarity leads the way

With this surge of solidarity, workers and oppressed people continued to lead the way during the pandemic. Job place actions became Striketember, then Striketober, then new strikes and actions somewhere in the U.S. almost every day in every month.

Rank-and-file workers in traditional unions are demanding more aggressive organizing. Low-wage, short-term workers are on the march, led by a new generation who say in tweets: “I’m making \$7 an hour with no health care. I have nothing to lose!” As the Communist Manifesto says: “You have nothing to lose but your chains!”

Workers are turning to each other for support and to fight the exploitative system that dominates life in the U.S. They are fighting for the right to health and safety — at work and throughout their lives.

And this moment is not simply about

“defeating COVID-19.” This is a turning-point moment when the health crisis has ripped away capitalist camouflage and exposed that this system is not “the best.” In fact, weighed on the scales of health, the U.S. capitalist system is “the worst.”

Now is the time to fight immediately, for conditions where workers and oppressed people have health care as a human right, have jobs under safe working conditions, can stay home with their children with full pay if they need to, can have a job they can come back to safely when they are ready.

Toward a socialist future

And we need more! We need to deepen political solidarity with and among workers to widen our view of what is possible in the future. We can bring forward the truth that supporting the most oppressed among us strengthens all of us and gives a wider view of what we can win. We can affirm that solidarity between workers is won by working-class actions, by fighting racism, anti-woman, anti-LGBTQ2S+ bigotry, and bias against disabled people and immigrants.

Already mass sentiment is that health care is not only a basic necessity, but a basic human right. Medicare for All is the simple and reasonable proposition — if the U.S. government can provide health care for people over 65, it can provide health care for everyone in the country. Funds could be made readily available by cutting the Pentagon budget and taxing the 1%. Why hasn’t that happened? It’s not profitable!

The ruling class has revealed itself incapable of dealing with the pandemic crisis. We, as working-class and oppressed people, have seized the day and are organizing to meet our needs. With a continuing mass surge of solidarity — no matter what happens with any election — it is possible to win our demand: “People before profits; health care is a right!”

And we can use this moment to push further, to make demands that may seem distant now. In the struggle for those goals, cracks open in the capitalist system, and we can make a way through, toward a better, socialist future.

Workers World/Mundo Obrero has featured hundreds of articles on worker resistance since the beginning of the pandemic. Search for these articles at workers.org/tag/covid.



WW PHOTO: SARA FLOUNDERS

Protest on International Working Women's Day in New York City demands an end to sanctions and comprehensive support for workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, March 8, 2020.

into their own hands and rose up to fight for safe working conditions at their jobs.

A few of many examples from only one month: In March 2020, Detroit, Michigan, and Birmingham, Alabama, bus drivers went on strike for safety issues like masks and cleaning buses. Workers at the Purdue poultry processing plant in Kathleen, Georgia, struck over working conditions and hazard pay. McDonald’s workers in San Jose, California, struck

Santa Rita prisoners conduct hunger strike

By Judy Greenspan
Oakland, California

In what has been a continuing struggle by Alameda county prisoners for decent food and sanitary conditions at Santa Rita Jail in Dublin, California, two dozen prisoners went on hunger strike Jan. 7. They refused to eat prison-prepared food, which they say is inedible and often contains rodent droppings.

In a video call with KTVU FOX News, James Mallett, one of the current hunger strikers, complained that the food continues to be inedible, overcooked, tasteless and consisting primarily of boiled beans.

Additionally, the hunger strikers are protesting high commissary prices for food and other items. Several striking prisoners state they are only drinking water and Gatorade during this protest.

In many jails and prisons, prisoners who are able to receive outside funds from family members purchase their food

from the prison commissary or store to supplement or substitute for the inedible prison food. But inflated commissary prices have made it impossible for Santa Rita prisoners to have access to any edible food.

Reports to the media reveal that in a recent hike in commissary prices, a bag of potato chips went from \$1.39 to \$1.69. The price of coffee spiraled from \$4 to \$6.75 a package. Price increases make this food inaccessible to the Santa Rita prison population.

Alameda County Jail commissary prices are much higher than the prices at the San Francisco Jail. In 2018 the Santa Rita jail vendor, Trinity Services, agreed to deposit 40% of all its revenue into the coffers of the Alameda County Sheriffs’ office. This contract is in effect until 2023.

Santa Rita Jail has been the subject of lawsuits, prisoners’ protests and outrage by prison abolitionists for years. Due to the substandard nature of jail

food, prisoners have often gone on hunger strikes in protest. In 2019, between 500 and 700 incarcerated people in the Santa Rita Jail staged a work stoppage and hunger strike to protest unsanitary and unsafe conditions and the inedible food. (The Mercury News, Nov. 5, 2019)

Part of the Alameda County jail system, Santa Rita Jail has experienced recurring spikes of COVID-19 during the pandemic. Outside activists and attorney advocates have loudly and continuously called for mass releases of the jail population.

The prisoners are demanding that the sheriffs stop profiting from their commissary sales. They are asking the Board of Supervisors to intervene and set fair



PHOTO CREDIT: BROOKE ANDERSON PHOTOGRAPHY

Protesters outside Alameda County Sheriff's Office call for release of Santa Rita Jail inmates during COVID-19 pandemic.

prices. Eric Rivera, one of the hunger strikers, said, “I know we are in jail, but I am sure that we still deserve some rights. We should have some sense of human dignity. I just hope somebody listens.” □

Whole Foods worker: ‘Collective action can combat Amazonification’

By Hunter Buen
Portland, Oregon

Hunter Buen gave this talk Jan. 15 at a protest outside Hollywood Whole Foods in Portland, Oregon. The protest was one of several nationally coordinated actions to demand an end to Amazon’s union busting.

It is imperative, now more than ever, that workers stand up for themselves and others. A wave of unprecedented labor activism has struck the United States in the last several months. This wave must be ridden into a better future for the working class. My store is but one example of corporate influence on workers and how the world’s most profitable company morphed a grocery store that once held a strong set of values.

I began working at Whole Foods in 2018. The store was vibrant in both culture and character. As a college student in need of extra funds, this was the perfect job for me. I could not have predicted how much this summer job would impact my life over the coming years. Amazon had just purchased Whole Foods Market and began to treat it as another of their corporate pet projects.

“Amazonification” is my term for the phenomenon, named after the infamous international monopoly, that describes its poisonous effect on business practices. The shift I witnessed at Whole Foods Market was unlike anything I could have speculated when I accepted the job offer.

I proudly wore a blue “Prime” apron and hat the day the acquisition took effect. We now kindly asked each customer “Do you have Amazon Prime?” and explained the many discounts and benefits available to such customers.

To begin with the innocuous: self-checkout. A staple of modern grocery infrastructure, but something that Whole Foods swore against prior to Amazon. East Coast UNITE HERE organizer Jeremy Pollard puts it best: “How many children does that machine need to feed?” Amazon’s favor for nonhuman laborers corrupted a once human-focused company.

Pay and benefits faltered significantly under Amazon’s rule. A process called “gainsharing” would distribute excess profits to employees in a show of good faith and a working example of sharing the wealth. Under new ownership, this was obviously cast aside. While base pay did rise upon Amazon’s acquisition of Whole Foods, that pay grade has yet to rise since, despite a once-in-a-lifetime crisis that has raised the cost of living for all Americans. Instead, wealth has been concentrated in the hands of one man. In the musical and satirical words of comedian Bo Burnham, “Jeffrey Bezos, you did it.”

After the murder of George Floyd in May 2020, many Whole Foods team members thought it necessary to stand in solidarity with the Black community by wearing pins reading “Black Lives Matter.” The company reprimanded and even fired those who aimed to express



WW PHOTO: LYN NEELY

Jan. 15, Portland, Oregon

this basic comradeship. Pins of a different sort — union pins — were also the center of punishment and separations. Those in support of unionization saw haphazard accusations of lengthy bathroom breaks, dress code violations or other minor infractions not based in fact. The strategy here was obvious: to force out those who disagree with Amazon politically.

Whole Foods, under Amazon’s direction, also began to sink its fingers into the gig economy. Amazon Prime Now (APN) shoppers at many locations are contracted — meaning they have no

guarantee for hours or benefits, similar to Uber and Lyft’s modus operandi.

Recently, as a replacement for increasing wages, a unique bonus incentive structure was devised. With low-pay and low-respect jobs being abandoned in record numbers in late 2021, the company prioritized retention and overtime above all else. Thus, they demanded workers stay put and put in as many hours as possible over the holidays. Leave the store, and your bonus is revoked. Work less, and your bonus will be significantly less. This, because of the pressure of housing insecurity, led several workers to work up to 70 hours a week for multiple weeks in order to stay afloat during the holiday season.

The transgressions continue, but the message here is unmistakable: Amazonification has taken over Whole Foods Market. The business now operates under an anti-worker, maximum profit model. To call myself and fellow workers “team members” is frankly a joke. On whose team are we?

Jeff Bezos earned over \$120 billion in profits over 2021, while all these fears weighed on Whole Foods and broader Amazon employees. John Mackey, CEO of Whole Foods, is retiring this year off of this incredible sale.

Admittedly, Amazon delivery drivers and warehouse workers see far worse treatment than I ever did. Even so, it could not be more obvious what all of this strife is for. Profit. The only solution to this phenomenon is union power. Collective action can combat Amazonification. □

Broken promise on MLK holiday Civil rights strike at Kaiser Hospital

By Dave Welsh
Oakland, California

Somehow, I thought they made Martin Luther King Day a paid holiday for all workers. Well, it seems Kaiser Medical Center didn’t get the word. That’s why psychologists, social workers and therapists from Kaiser’s Oakland and Richmond, California, clinics hit the bricks in a one-day strike on Jan. 17.

“It was Dr. King’s persistent determination that helped desegregate hospitals,” said therapist Sabrina Chaumette. “Kaiser talks a good game when it comes to social justice, but they don’t practice what they preach.” Kaiser said it wouldn’t begin to honor the King holiday for mental health workers until 2023.

“Kaiser pays a lot of lip service to racial justice,” she said, “but when it comes to taking action, it’s always ‘wait till next year.’” Chaumette’s schedule is so overbooked that new patients must wait four months for an appointment. Her 900-word commentary on the struggles clinicians and patients of color face at Kaiser was recently published in the San Francisco Chronicle.

Jessica Dominguez, founder and lead clinician at Kaiser’s La Clinica, said, “We are living in a time of reckoning, a time when people of color are no longer content with the status quo — because the status quo has never included people of color. Status quo is white supremacy, and it’s baked into the Kaiser system. We will not give in because mental health is a



PHOTO: NATIONAL UNION OF HEALTHCARE WORKERS

Protest outside Kaiser Oakland clinic Jan. 17.

social justice issue.”

The one-day “unfair labor practice” strike was called by the National Union of Healthcare Workers. “This strike is about honoring the legacy of Dr. King,” said Ixayanne Baez, a family therapist. “Without his work in desegregation, our clinics wouldn’t even be allowed to have Black clinicians.” (nuhw.org) □

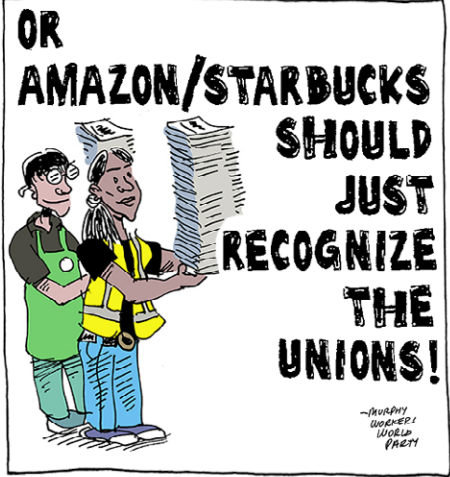
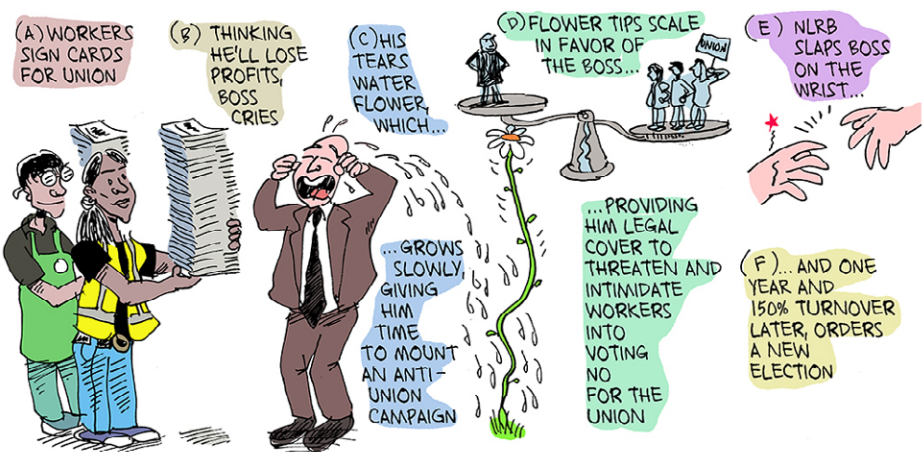


PHOTO CREDIT: SUSAN FRIED

Seattle MLK rally and march

By Jim McMahan
Seattle

Over 2,000 demonstrators participated in a multi-national march Jan. 17 at the 40th Annual Martin Luther King Day March in Seattle. The marchers, including several families, protested at the new youth jail, which will be used to imprison youth in the community. Marching for support and respect for essential retail workers, the march stopped at a QFC market (Kroger) before ending up for a rally at city hall. □



Organize the South!

Continued from page 1

“In Human Services we are currently experiencing over a quarter of our staff testing positive with COVID-19 due to the omicron variant,” stated Patricia Thebert, behavior specialist I, West Neck Intermediate Care Facility, Human Services. “The city has not done enough to keep us safe through the pandemic. When I read about Dr. King’s support for workers organizing a union to challenge unsafe work conditions in Memphis and their fight for collective bargaining over 50 years ago, I can’t help but be disappointed that we still have to fight for those same rights today.”

Solidarity from faith-based community

At the Jan. 18 rally and inside the Council meeting, several prominent local faith organizations showed up in support of the city workers’ demands. Two leading ministers from the Interdenominational Ministerial Conference, including its president Rev. Dr. James Allen, spoke in support of collective bargaining rights. Others from the Tidewater Sowers for Justice and Dismantling Racism working group, a coalition of area Catholics also participated.

“As faith leaders in our beloved city, we implore you to search long and deep in your hearts to consider the many contributions from our city employees, who have maintained our city through a devastating pandemic, as a cherished tourist destination,” stated Minister Gary



WW PHOTO: DANTE STROBINO

Alfred “Red” McClenny speaking on bullhorn.

McCollum and President of Due the Right Things.

He went on to say, “Last year’s Waste Management work stoppage highlighted for all of us the overarching concerns for city employees to have their voices heard around wages, systemic racism, benefits and working conditions. Dr. King reminded us that ‘The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of convenience and comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.’ There is now a historic opportunity to right the past injustices by allowing city workers to collectively bargain.”

Teresa Stanley, Tidewater Sowers for Justice and a parishioner at Church of the Holy Apostles and member of the City’s Human Rights Commission, remarked: “The

sin of systemic racism has resulted in a disproportionate number of the lowest-paid workers in essential public sector employment being people of color and women. It is a moral imperative that as people of faith, we stand in solidarity with those that are working to dismantle oppressive economic practices for the common good of all. We believe that the economy must serve people (all people), not the other way around. This is why we stand firm in support of collective bargaining.”

Also speaking before the city council was Devon Conley, Equipment Operator from Highways/Stormwater in Public Works. In support of the workers was Latasha Holloway from the Virginia Beach Coalition, who recently successfully won a lawsuit against the racially gerrymandered city council at-large districts.

Other speakers included George Waksmunski, UE Eastern Region President; and Hannah Borja from the Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis and Green Party member. Longtime local civil rights activist Rev. Carlos Howard, from the United Front For Justice, also spoke.

Mayor Robert Dyer refused to address the workers directly, instead choosing to read out the rules of the meeting including a note about speakers remaining “civil.” Workers vowed to return to work to sign up their co-workers for the union and return again to City Council soon to keep the fight moving forward.

The writer is a longtime organizer with UE 150.

A Jewish response to the Sydney Festival boycott

After 20 performers pulled out of the 2022 Sydney festival in Australia due to Israeli sponsorship, over 70 prominent Jewish organizations and personalities from Australia endorsed the festival’s boycott in the following open letter:

We are witnessing, and part of, a tremendous moment in Palestinian solidarity politics. In so-called Australia, a boycott of the Sydney Festival has been called by Palestinians in response to the Festival seeking out a \$20,000 donation from the Israeli Embassy. This donation is part of an Israeli program of propaganda, wherein they seek to ‘artwash’: to use art as a tool to distract from Israeli violence and oppressive treatment of Palestinians.

But, following the lead of Palestinian organisers, we know that we cannot allow this “artwashing” to work as intended. Rather than staying silent, we want to say loudly: Israeli apartheid, settler colonialism, and occupation cannot be allowed to

continue. And neither can Israel’s international program of propaganda that seeks to absolve it of any form of accountability.

We Jews are eager, honoured and humbled to stand alongside our Palestinian siblings and echo their calls. We refuse to be complicit in Israel’s actions. We stand in solidarity with Palestine and Palestinians.

Israel engages in daily violence. From the violence of the military courts, checkpoints, settlements, murders, land theft and daily harassment of Palestinian communities in the West Bank; to the siege on Gaza and airstrikes; to the attacks on Al Quds (East Jerusalem) in May 2021 (at the same time as the Sydney Festival was soliciting this funding), the destruction of Palestinian archives and cultural institutions, and the differential treatment of Palestinians and Jews throughout ‘48, the violence is ongoing, and it is gut-wrenching.

We must confront the ways in which by remaining silent or neutral on this matter

we are complicit in the enabling of this injustice.

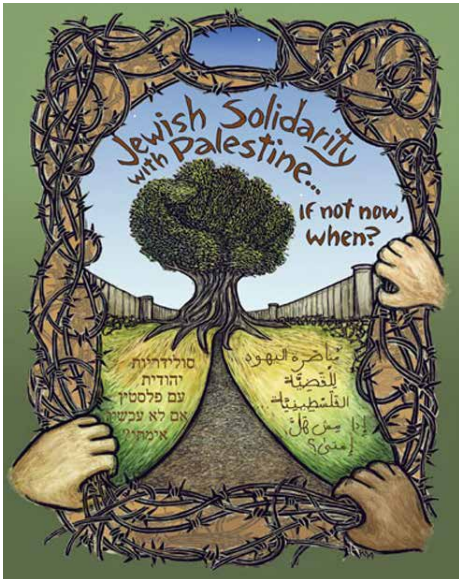
Boycotts are a nonviolent and effective tool for exposing these kinds of injustices and helping us take a stand against it. Solidarity works. Countering colonialism — wherever and whenever it occurs — works. We are dedicated to working alongside Indigenous people everywhere, to amplifying their voices and knowledge in the fight against colonialism.

From the settler colony of Australia to the settler colony of Israel and everywhere in between, we call for justice and freedom. We call on the Sydney Festival to reject this funding. We call on people everywhere to take a stand in solidarity and refuse to be part of Israel’s program of hasbara: of propaganda, deliberate lies, mistruths and obfuscations.

Instead, we can together be part of creating networks of solidarity and resistance, of radical love and care, outside of the systems that colonialism tries

to maintain. But they will always fail, because we will always find each other.

“You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it.” Pirkei Avot, 2:21. □



Theodore Roosevelt statue comes down



President Teddy Roosevelt in his role as U.S. imperialist enforcer.

By G. Dunkel

Over two long January nights — to avoid disrupting traffic and endangering pedestrians — an abhorrent statue of Theodore Roosevelt in New York City was finally dismantled Jan. 20 and taken away to storage.

The struggle to remove this presidential statue from a prominent position in the city began in the 1970s and was strengthened by recent struggles throughout the U.S. to remove Confederate statues and memorials.

Roosevelt’s statue had greeted tens of millions of visitors to the American Museum of Natural History ever since being unveiled in 1940. The statue was first conceived in 1925, as a memorial to the 26th president of the United States and 33rd governor of New York. Roosevelt was also head of the New York City police force, a warrior in the Spanish American War that confirmed the United States as a rising imperialist power and a firm proponent of eugenics and white supremacy.

The deeply derogatory statue elevated Roosevelt on horseback far above a Native

American man and a person of African descent. As Holland Carter, a New York Times critic, put it, “No matter how you gloss it, it is quite literally an emblem of white-man-on-top.” (Jan. 12, 2018)

Roosevelt, member of New York’s old-money ruling class, was a strong proponent of the discredited pseudoscience of eugenics, adopted into U.S. law and policy as a mechanism of “birth control” to limit childbearing in people deemed “undesirable” by the capitalist power structure of the early 20th century U.S.

In a 1913 letter, Roosevelt clearly supported forced sterilization, a brutal tool of eugenicists, saying: “Society has no business to permit degenerates to reproduce their kind.” Roosevelt did not specify there the criteria for whom he considered a “degenerate” — but the practice of eugenics clearly targeted people of color, immigrants, disabled people, poor people and anyone categorized as undesirable under a white-supremacist, ableist, homophobic world view.

When Roosevelt became president in September 1901, after William McKinley

was assassinated, he immediately began strengthening U.S. imperialism. According to Workers World Party founder Vince Copeland in his “Market Elections,” Roosevelt’s aggressive steps included “enforcing the new gunboat policy, enlarging the navy, intervening against the Boxer Rebellion in China, carrying out the bloody counterrevolution in the Philippines, consolidating U.S. gains in Cuba and Puerto Rico and plotting a phony revolution in Colombia that broke off Panama and gave it to the U.S. to build the canal.”

The domestic reforms for which Roosevelt is usually lauded, such as creating a system of national parks, were mainly aimed at promoting domestic stability to avoid any opposition to U.S. foreign adventures. Yet the national parks themselves were created by forcefully removing their original inhabitants; for example, 26 Indigenous communities lived on the sacred lands that were stolen to create Yellowstone National Park. (tinyurl.com/2r9ybabd) And the Miwok community continues to fight to return to Ahwahnee Valley, Yosemite Valley. □

The ‘next Cuba’ will not be colonized

By Pedro Jorge Velázquez

The following, lightly edited article first appeared in Resumen Latinoamericano—English Jan. 18, 2022.

There are failures that I guess you get a taste for, or how can it be possible for the defeated to regenerate into new forms of failure? Are they guided by that feeling that someday it will work out, after trying so hard?

Out of this thinking was born ‘Cuba Próxima,’ heir to the failure of ‘Cuba Posible,’ a project that Roberto Veiga founded during the rise of Obamaism to try, once again, to colonize the project of nationhood that is being built in Cuba contrary to all forms of imperial domination.

The image of failure is already painted on the face of this new organization paid for by the endless flow of dollars from the U.S. government, which dresses in the garb of “NGO,” and which quietly waited for the Biden era to arrive to show its teeth through the possible new rapprochement that did not happen, as the current president has only followed the agenda of his predecessor.

They were born supporting the “heroic” Yunior Garcia, who left for Europe as soon as he had the opportunity to drink the “honey of capitalism,” which he reveres, after creating a whole campaign where he appeared as the “messiah.”

Moreover, like all puppet organizations, they quickly anchored themselves

to foreign names: the never-ending cycle of counterrevolution. Here they are once again trying to enslave us through the lords and ladies who, from their lofty balconies in the first world, pretend to override the will of the people.

Peter Hakim, president emeritus and senior member of the Inter-American Dialogue, a Washington-based committee that deals with Western Hemisphere affairs, is currently a member of the International Advisory Council of Cuba Próxima, along with other personalities. Does this sound familiar? Puppet governments? Any coincidence is not pure coincidence.

They claim to have as their first objective “the ideal of a plural and democratic Republic in Cuba, far from any kind of authoritarianism.” Although on their part they want, authoritatively, to implant that neocolonial Republic over the democratic one voted for through the Cuban ballot box, where this project of nation that we are building today was elected. This is how their parade works.

They also declare themselves to be lovers of destabilization and violence, as they announce that ‘Cuba Próxima’ “is marked by the milestones of July 11 and Nov. 15.” They used these two coup attempts as an entrance to the economic and health crisis caused in Cuba, among other things, by a world pandemic and an economic blockade imposed precisely by those who finance ‘Cuba Próxima.’

How well it is seen that none of them experienced in the flesh what July 11 was,

nor do they know that nothing of what they were looking for happened here on Nov. 15. What did happen was a celebration of joy for peace by the people!

‘Cuba Próxima’ will be — as they declare — “for the formation of a prosperous, free, industrious, generous, democratic country.” In other words, they do not recognize that Cuba is any of these things, not even that we are a laborious people, who have worked with humility for the Revolution, and that is our foundation. For them to work and create a new formation, it must strangely be connected to serving the empire.

Now, to border even more on the ridiculous, they have created a “shadow government.” Yes, exactly, in the style of Juan Guaidó [in Venezuela], with the difference that in this case, there are several self-appointments included: Roberto Veiga, president; Carlos Cabrera, vice president; Alexei Padilla, coordinator of communication; Massiel Rubio, of culture ... and a long list of investitures; but, believe it or not, it works in their imaginations, because based on it they can charge and conspire against Cuban socialism and social equality.

The right wing has declared itself and is showing its true identity. They will no longer be able to dress up as leftists who spent a long time making the tale of the good pipe, with their lectures about inequality that they have never put into



practice, nor have they fought for it to be reduced. Yet now they end up grouping themselves with those who have always wanted to repeal our most precious and fundamental conquests. Now they have joined the empire’s hegemonic plan to destroy them.

“We have perhaps been too long installed in the denunciation and diagnosis, but Cubans need to know how we opponents would govern,” this is how they have presented this self-proclaimed government, where there is only one thing in common: the ambition for power, the hypnotic ego that ignores the collective sacrifice we make as a people to seek a deepening of the socialist rule of law, for which they have not contributed one iota; and yet, they seek its definitive destruction.

Once again, the essence of those who love and build make us see what they are not, what they do not want and what they will not fight for. ‘Cuba Próxima’ is not the Cuba I want. It is not the Cuba we have fought for. The next Cuba will surely be difficult; but one thing for sure, it will not be colonized. □

International Migrant Alliance report from the Texas/Mexico border

By Gloria Rubac

Last December a five-person delegation from the International Migrant Alliance-USA (IMA) traveled to Texas to work with the South Texas Human Rights Center (STHRC), based in Falfurrias, Texas, 60 miles north of the Mexican border. On Jan. 22 the delegation reported virtually on their trip.

While in Texas, the IMA representatives — from Washington state and Oregon — did concrete solidarity work in Falfurrias, McAllen and Brownsville. Members of the delegation were primarily immigrants or from immigrant families. And the report was simultaneously interpreted into Spanish and Tagalog.

In Falfurrias they helped refill “water stations” — big blue barrels with gallon containers of drinking

water — along paths which migrant workers take through ranchlands to avoid the Border Patrol checkpoint on Texas Highway 81 that runs through Falfurrias and Brooks County.

The South Texas Human Rights Center was founded in 2013 to help migrants get through the huge but largely unpopulated



PHOTO: IMA-USA

IMA-USA delegation at the border wall, December 2021.

Brooks County, without becoming dehydrated and disoriented. They have formed working relationships with ranchers, who allow them to place water stations on their land. Even the largely conservative ranchers do not care to find dead bodies and human remains on their property. The STHRC also has a hotline that helps loved ones locate missing family members, who have disappeared in this area, and their remains.

Several speakers reported that borders do not stop people from entering the U.S., but the borders and walls create lethal conditions for workers fleeing violence and joblessness in their homes. The STHRC realizes that water is a human right and that migrants need water to survive.

In the other two border cities, they worked alongside

organizations providing food and other necessities to migrants.

The IMA was founded in 2008 in Hong Kong as the first global alliance of grassroots migrants, refugees and displaced peoples. They have over 170 member organizations in more than 30 countries, with chapters in the U.S., Canada, Europe, Asia Pacific, Africa and Latin America.

IMA-USA was formed in 2011 in New York City and is now active from coast to coast. In the report, several speakers stressed that it is U.S. imperialism that is forcing migration by intervening in so many countries, destabilizing them and allowing violence to terrorize the inhabitants. U.S. imperialism creates conditions in which migrants have no choice but to leave their homelands and face deadly conditions along the U.S./Mexico border.

Information on supporting IMA-USA can be found at www.ima-usa.org. □

Thousands sign petition supporting Julian Assange release

The following is a press release from the United National Antiwar Coalition:

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Led by the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC), more than 26 antiwar groups and 2,500 individual peace and justice advocates have cosponsored a statement (tinyurl.com/2p9fb4es) calling for the immediate release of publisher Julian Assange and commending him for his contributions toward global peace.

Assange is currently fighting extradition to the United States after the Trump administration indicted him on unprecedented Espionage Act charges. His indictment marked the first time in U.S. history that a journalist has been charged for publishing truthful information.

Since being removed from Ecuador’s

London embassy after a new Ecuadorian administration bowed to U.S. pressure to withdraw his asylum, Assange has been held for more than 1,000 days in Belmarsh Prison while his extradition case is being heard through U.K. courts. A decision from the British High Court on whether to hear an appeal is expected in the coming days.

Among the statement’s signers is Alice Walker, Nobel Prize-winning author of “The Color Purple” and longtime peace activist. Walker, a cochair of the Assange Defense Committee, emphasized the importance of Assange’s commitment to showing the public the horrors of war.

“We owe it to Julian to fight for his freedom, because he fought for peace for the rest of us,” Walker said. “He fought for justice by exposing how the United

States conducted horrific wars of conquest in Iraq and Afghanistan. Millions died in these wars, mostly civilians. Assange believed that knowledge of U.S. war crimes belonged to us, the people, to decide for ourselves what should happen in our name. And now it’s time for us to fight for him.”

Remarking on the ignominious 1,000-day milestone, Nathan Fuller, Director of the Courage Foundation and Assange Defense, expressed disappointment over the Biden administration’s unjust continuation of Trump’s controversial prosecution.

“While the Biden administration is confronting U.S. adversaries over their press-freedom shortcomings, it should address its own hypocrisy,” Fuller said. “Locking up Julian Assange for exposing

the truth about U.S. wars is an insult to all those struggling for peace and human rights.” □



COMMENTARY People who use drugs demand harm-reduction strategies

By AEzra El, Devin Cole and Princess Harmony

Roughly five-and-a-half minutes. Statistically speaking, that's the interval between every life lost in the United States to a fatal overdose.

In the past several years, we have seen a radical increase in the rate of overdose deaths in the United States. A particularly potent opioid has contributed to this increase immensely. Fentanyl and its analogs are easily manufactured and do not require a far-away poppy field. They are easily transported and can be domestically produced and, from a supplier's standpoint, are much more affordable than heroin. Compared to other opioids, they are shorter acting and exceedingly potent. These factors make them ideal for those trafficking in the illicit substance trade.

Their reach isn't limited to opioids, however. Fentanyls have made their way into cocaine and amphetamine supplies and have been found pressed into clandestinely manufactured pills. People consuming these products have no real way of knowing the potency of the product, and sometimes the nature of the product, prior to consumption; and though harm reductionists, PWUD (people who use drugs) and PWUD advocates have employed test strips that check for the presence of fentanyl, the battle is very much an uphill one. And the death toll is rising. Beyond this, a litany of other admixtures, some poisonous, some psychoactive, have brought with them a compounded risk of potential harm.

So, what is to be done? We know from history that the carceral system and bourgeois law and order will provide no support in this matter. There is no way to beat, jail, put on trial or kill our way out of this. In fact, the legacy of prohibition (and capitalism, more broadly) have unarguably informed the crisis in which we presently find ourselves.

First, we must acknowledge that the use of mind-altering substances is part of the human condition and perhaps even a part of sentience. From social and sacred uses in human history to members of the



Science March, Boston, March 2017.

WW PHOTO: STEVE KIRSCHBAUM

animal kingdom finding ways to achieve intoxication, drugs are part of our shared experience of consciousness and are here to stay. This should not be a point of distress either; substance consumption whether purely recreational, reverent or responsive can be done safely.

From a practical standpoint, drug use is an extremely common method for coping with day-to-day stressors, be it coffee to prepare oneself for the day ahead, nicotine to pace it out or alcohol to momentarily soften the experience of the pain and neglect inflicted by an existence predicated on wage slavery. These are so common that they are overlooked; but often people dealing with unmet mental health needs, lack of access to pain management and trauma (whatever the source, be it generational or individual) turn to these and other substances to make it through life.

Harm reduction saves lives

For a percentage of people, though statistically a small percentage compared to the total number of consumers, there exists another potentially difficult outcome: problematic relationships. Problematic relationships to substances, often called "addictions," seem to manifest in situations where an individual's needs are not being met.

Not exclusive to substances, individuals may develop problematic relationships to various behaviors and/or consumables

(such as gambling, gaming, pornography, food). Though many people who experience this phenomenon break free from more chaotic patterns of consumption, either through self-direction or the passage of time, others — often deprived of the very resources necessary to navigate a change of pace — meet with great difficulty.

Society must rally for these individuals. We must recognize that drugs are meeting the needs of PWUDs that society has failed to address. We need an entirely separate approach — one that rejects the misguided individualism that paints these individuals out to be broken or sick and instead acknowledges that this crisis is the product of a profoundly sick and broken society.

We must struggle toward common-sense drug policy, decriminalizing the use of substances and making stigma-free education available. In doing so, we could shift the funds that currently go to beating down these individuals, who are experimenting at least and at most coping, and instead fund social programs and treatment for when things get out of hand. With this pivot alone, we would be doing humanity a great service.

We need to collectively demystify and demand immediate and widespread utilization of harm-reduction strategies.

Supervised consumption spaces provide a necessary safe environment for

those who would otherwise consume illicit substances in public bathrooms or alleyways. They provide a point of contact between PWUDs and professionals who care about their safety and can offer them resources if they'd like, but at the bare minimum, can ensure that the hit they take there will not lead to their death.

Needle exchanges should be further funded to prevent the spread of blood-borne pathogens and give PWUDs access to the tools to keep themselves healthy while consuming.

Safe supply as well as expanded access to medication-assisted treatment will allow individuals to choose a regulated, pharmaceutical alternative to illicit substances, while they address the conditions that informed their problematic use.

Greatest threat to life: capitalism

We must make science-backed treatment available for free and on demand. Capitalist profiteering has created a \$35 billion per year treatment-industrial complex, out of the same methods one could find in a church basement. A spirituality- and abstinence-based recovery program is not the right answer for every PWUD. Other methods must be made readily available.

Free housing for all must become a priority, along with universal health care and full employment. The commodification of basic human needs must become a thing of the past.

And beyond all these things, we must recognize that where there is poverty, where there is systemic injustice, patriarchal violence, racism, homophobia, transphobia, colonialism and endless war, at the expense of those abroad and at home, there will be trauma; and where there is trauma, problematic relationships to substances and behaviors alike will manifest. If we want change — real, meaningful change — our goals must be no shorter than a complete societal shift, with a caveat of "preserve life by any means necessary" in the immediate.

Opioid overdoses and problematic relationships to substances are a symptom. The epidemic, capitalism, is ultimately the greatest threat to life. □

Workers to Postal Board of Governors: Dump DeJoy!

By Joe Piette

The Postal Board of Governors gathered in Washington, D.C., Jan. 12, in a hastily called meeting to announce the election of their new chairperson, Roman Martinez IV. Also gathered there, but outside the United States Postal Service Headquarters on L'Enfant Plaza, were postal workers, "protect the vote" activists and Ben Franklin himself, representing millions of postal customers and workers who want the BOG to fire Postmaster Louis DeJoy.

Debby Szeredy, national Executive Vice-President of the American Postal Workers Union, explained to the crowd she was there to oppose the "surprise meeting" convened to choose a Trump-appointed BOG member as chairperson. She pointed out it was taking place before President Joe Biden's two new appointees, former head of the General Services Administration Dan Tangherlini and Derek Kan, former deputy director of the

Office of Management and Budget, were approved by the Senate. (Video of the rally: youtu.be/mXf8s4n4N7g)

By law, DeJoy can only be removed by majority vote of the Board of Governors, most of whom were appointed by the Trump Administration. President Biden replaced two BOG members in 2021.

Even though Biden's two additional Governors (one Democrat and one Republican) will not change the balance on the nine-member board, the current board members took no chances and placed their pro-DeJoy member in a

leadership position for the next year without their vote.

Retired New York City postal worker Dennis O'Neil, who chaired the rally, said in the USPS "leadership has been catastrophic during the pandemic." Nevertheless, DeJoy, appointed by Trump in May 2020, has been able to withstand heavy criticism for his mishandling of the mail delivery crisis during the pandemic in 2020. Since then, O'Neil said DeJoy has made things even worse with "step one of his 10-year plan — changing the delivery standards."

Time to dump DeJoy

O'Neil said, "When they brag about their leadership and their on-time deliveries, which is a lie, we need to hold them accountable."

Postal executives claim DeJoy's 10-year plan is already improving performance, that more mail is being "delivered on time against the USPS service standard." But those statements are misleading. DeJoy's current up-to-five-day delivery standards, instituted last Oct. 1, are slower when compared to last year's three-day

delivery standard. In effect, O'Neil said, "they've lowered the goal posts."

In 1989, 56% of first-class mail was delivered overnight, 85% within two days. After DeJoy's recent changes, only 7% of letters are delivered overnight, 28% within two days. As Amazon, UPS and other delivery services decreased delivery times through high tech and building more local distribution centers, the leadership of the Postal Service computerized mail processing; but by simultaneously closing down processing plants through consolidation, they've slowed down actual delivery times. (tinyurl.com/2s48554y)

Ben Franklin was appointed Postmaster General in 1775. If the Postal Service is to continue delivering mail in the 21st century, it will require many more postal workers joining the fight to keep it. Together with postal service supporters, we can put a halt to privatization and keep the USPS a public service instead of a profit-making corporation that will just make the billionaire class richer.

Joe Piette began as a postal clerk, became a letter carrier and retired in 2011 after 30 years in the USPS.



"Ben Franklin," played by Barry Stevens, calls on the Board of Governors to remove Postmaster DeJoy at a rally outside their Jan. 12 meeting in Washington, D.C.

Solution to global inequality is socialism

Around the globe, billions of people are suffering incredible losses resulting from capitalism’s inability and refusal to seriously address the COVID-19 pandemic.

Millions have lost lives or loved ones. Families are houseless. Workers have been forced to choose between risking their health at minimum wage jobs and feeding their families, with inflation steadily driving up the costs of food and other basic necessities.

The burden has been heaviest on the Global South, on people of color, on people with disabilities, on gig economy workers and on women, many who were forced to leave their jobs for lack of child-care and other essential support.

Yet for 10 white men, the pandemic has brought windfall profits of epic proportions. Their collective wealth has more than doubled during the COVID-19 pandemic, growing to \$1.5 trillion. While inequality, exacerbated by the pandemic, results in the deaths of at least 21,000 people globally each day—roughly one person every four seconds—these ultra-billionaires now grow collectively richer by \$1.2 billion with each passing day.

These statistics were released in a report by Oxfam International in early January. “Billionaires have had a terrific pandemic,” stated Oxfam International’s executive director Gabriela Bucher. “Central banks pumped trillions of dollars into financial markets to save the economy, yet much of that has ended up lining the pockets of billionaires riding a stock market boom.”

According to Oxfam — and we fully concur: “An economic system that allows a handful of individuals to amass such vast fortunes, while billions go hungry and without proper medical care during a pandemic, is an overt act of economic violence aimed at huge swaths of humanity.”

Where we differ from Oxfam is in the solution.

Oxfam calls for a “wealth tax” as a way to redistribute wealth. While there is nothing wrong with this, it doesn’t address the systemic problem. The superbillionaires will do what they

always do — pass the costs of higher taxes on to consumers through price increases and to workers through decreased wages and benefits.

The wealth of these ten CEOs — Jeff Bezos (Amazon), Elon Musk (Tesla), Bill Gates (Microsoft), Larry Page (Google), Sergey Brin (Google), Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook), Steve Ballmer (Microsoft), Warren Buffet (Berkshire Hathaway), Larry Ellison (Oracle) and French businessman Bernard Arnault — wasn’t based on their tax avoidance — although it contributed.

The real source of their wealth stems from their superexploitation of the collective labor of their workers. It is highly unlikely that Jeff Bezos ever hoisted a heavy box in one of his Amazon warehouses in competition with a robot. Or that Elon Musk ever worked on a Tesla assembly line. Yet they have both grown superrich exploiting the labor of the workers who do these jobs.

Take back the wealth we’ve produced!

Wealth redistribution only comes from organized workers taking back the wealth they collectively created — wealth stolen from them by the bosses. While a wealth tax should stay on the table, President Joe Biden signing an executive order to pass the Protecting the Right to Organize Act would go a lot further in addressing income inequality.

The solution needed right now is broad and intense support for unionizing efforts by workers at Amazon, Starbucks and many other corporations — large and small.

Workers need to demand free health care; cancellation of student loan debt; a universal, global, livable minimum wage; the guaranteed right to unionize; and much more. Workers World Party supports the fights for all these traditional demands.

But to truly address income inequality, our fight must be for socialism, under which the means of production are collectively owned by workers and oppressed — where these über-wealthy CEOs would actually have to do an honest day’s work for once in their lives. □

U.S. hands off Ukraine!

Continued from page 1

Whatever decisions have already been made by the Pentagon, the CIA and the rest of the U.S. foreign policy establishment, the level of danger is high enough that all anti-imperialist and anti-war forces in the U.S. and Europe should be on high alert to protest this latest war drive.

Washington and its allies are responsible for provoking the crisis over Ukraine and putting the people of the world in danger once again. As they have shown since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, they have created the Ukraine crisis by provoking Russia at every opportunity with the long-term goal of crushing Russian sovereignty and converting the former Soviet Union into a collection of weak neocolonies supplying raw materials and exploitable labor to world imperialism.

In 1990 Soviet leaders allowed West Germany to annex the German Democratic Republic without interference from the Red Army. Then-U.S. Secretary of State James Baker promised Mikhail Gorbachev and others that the NATO military alliance would stay in place and not move an inch eastward. The Warsaw Pact — an alliance of the Soviet republics with Eastern European nations — was then dissolved.

NATO should have been dissolved

NATO too should have been dissolved. Instead, the U.S. adapted NATO, which it dominated, into an instrument of military intervention in Eastern Europe, the Balkans and even in Africa and throughout Central and Western Asia.

Since 1990 NATO has nearly doubled its membership from 16 members to 30 in 2021. The new members are former Warsaw Pact members and former Soviet Republics; and NATO has put Ukraine and Georgia, states bordering Russia, on its wish list as future members.

NATO already has bases within a short striking distance of Russia. Italy, a founding NATO member, has supersonic, nuclear-capable F-35 bombers within a half hour of Moscow.

The Russian government interpreted these U.S. moves as an existential threat.



PHOTO: GLEB GARANICH

Gas from Russia piped through Ukraine to Europe is in competition with U.S. natural gas capitalist interests.

Russian President Putin said, “You’re on our doorstep. We didn’t come to you.” Putin was correct. He proposed that NATO withdraw from all the countries near Russia and that there be no place in NATO for Ukraine.

The current Ukraine regime took power with a coup early in 2014. The second Obama administration funded and supported Ukrainian, anti-Russian nationalist forces, including neo-Nazis, which established a new regime. This anti-Russian state immediately attacked the Russian-origin minority living in Ukraine, mostly in that country’s eastern provinces.

In self-defense, the population of two eastern provinces in the Donbass — Lugansk and Donetsk — declared independence. Kiev sent its army against them, and this civil war persists. With the backing of 95% of the population in a referendum in Crimea, Russian forces took back the peninsula. Crimea had been part of Russia before 1963.

This week the U.S. and Britain delivered the beginning of \$2.7 billion in aid, including hundreds of millions of dollars in “lethal aid,” to Ukraine’s regime. While some right-wing Republicans — for example, Senator Tom Cotton — have accused Biden of being “soft on Putin,” both Democratic and Republican Party leaders support U.S. aggression directed at Russia, China and Iran.

Biden is also using the conflict with Russia to force Washington’s European imperialist allies to line up behind its military threat and its threat of sanctions. The U.S. promises to sell its fracked oil and gas to replace the Russian gas that Germany needs. Thus Washington’s threat of war opens up a road to profits at the expense of the environment.

While Biden promises no U.S. troops will go to Ukraine itself, the threats from this part of the world raise tensions that could erupt in nuclear war. The U.S. has proven that none of its promises can be believed.

Workers World demands U.S. hands off Ukraine, withdraw U.S. troops and weapons from Europe and put an end to the NATO alliance. □



COMMENTARY ‘Sir Sidney Poitier’

By Mumia Abu-Jamal

This commentary was recorded by Prison Radio.

For nearly a century, Sir Sidney Poitier lived and worked in the United States, an actor who consciously and intentionally sought, and refused, roles based upon the portrayal of Black people. If the rules were demeaning or offensive, he passed on them. If the roles were in line where the character could be played with dignity, he took them.

Born to parents from the Bahamas during a vacation in the U.S., Poitier, who spent years working on his father’s tomato farm on the island, came to the U.S., fell in love with the stage and experienced his first hard knock, when he was denied study at the American Negro Theater because of his heavy Bahamian accent. Poitier didn’t despair. He practiced speaking in a U.S. accent for months, reapplied

and gained acceptance to the company.

Before long the stage became the screen, where he left an indelible mark. In 1951 he made “Cry, the Beloved Country,” a British-made film set in apartheid-era South Africa. In 1958 he co-starred in “The Defiant Ones” with Tony Curtis, portraying two prison escapees fighting to survive despite being shackled together.

In 1967 he played in a series of films which addressed the racist nature of the times — as a teacher in “To Sir, with Love”; as a police detective in “In the Heat of the Night”; and as part of an interracial marriage in “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner,” at a time when such marriages were illegal in several dozen states.

Poitier won an Oscar for best actor for his performance in “Lilies of the Field,” 1964, a rare honor for a Black actor then and now. Poitier, in a 1967 interview, made the following observations: “I’ve learned that I must find positive outlets for anger,

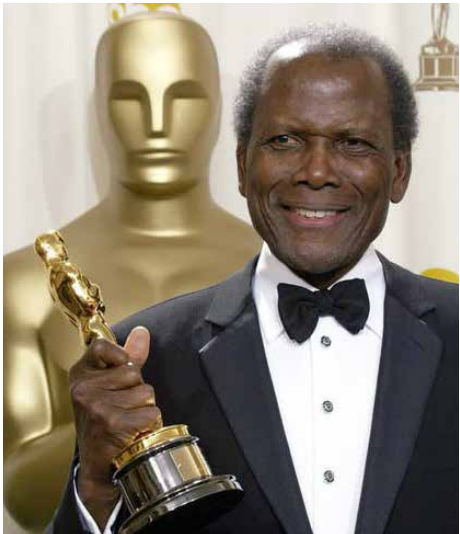
or it will destroy me. There was a certain anger; it reaches such intensity that to express it fully would require almost idle rage, self-destructive, destroy-the-world rage, and its flame burns because the world is so unjust.” Sir Sidney Poitier.

In the ’90s, Poitier played Nelson Mandela in a made-for-TV movie. Mandela was in prison when it was screened in South Africa and said it gave him hope. Mandela also saw Poitier in “In the Heat of the Night,” but what he didn’t know until he left was that the South African censors had cut out a Poitier scene of slapping up who had struck him. Sir Sidney Poitier. He both starred in, along with Harry Belafonte and Ruby Dee, and directed the western “Buck and the Preacher,” 1972, about ex-slaves fleeing the South to find freedom out west.

Poitier lived 94 summers as a man who turned rage into art. He was father to six daughters and husband to two wives — the

last, retired actress Joanna Shimkus born in Canada. Sidney Poitier lived a life of love, not fear.

This is Mumia Abu-Jamal. Thank you.



Sidney Poitier received an honorary Oscar in 2002.

Mali Massive anti-imperialist mobilizations win Pan-African solidarity

By Michael Kramer

An historic mobilization of the Malian people by the hundreds of thousands in support of the transitional government in Mali and against the severe economic sanctions and implied military threats imposed by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) created an outpouring of Pan-African solidarity throughout the continent on Jan. 14.

Mass rallies and marches occurred throughout Mali. The largest, in the capital Bamako, with a population of over 3 million, was livestreamed. Live time comments indicate it was watched throughout Africa. Other demonstrations took place in Timbuktu, Kadiolo and Bougouni.

The sanctions were announced Jan. 9 in Accra, Ghana, and include the closure of land and air borders, suspension of financial transactions and the freezing of Malian state assets in ECOWAS central and commercial banks. The sanctions were quickly backed by the U.S., France and the European Union (EU). China and Russia in turn blocked imperialist attempts to have the United Nations Security Council endorse the sanctions.

ECOWAS wants elections to be held by February 2022, while the transitional government says it needs more time to stabilize the country.

Mali is a landlocked, former French

colony, whose largest export is gold. The most populated region of the country lies in the Sahel region of Africa on the southern border of the Sahara Desert.

The 2011 U.S./NATO war on Libya resulted in the transfer of vast amounts of military weapons into the region from Libyan government stockpiles. In a complicated situation, previous Malian governments then lost control of the region to various armed groups — some with legitimate grievances and some with unknown agendas. Assistance from other countries was requested.

More than 10 years later, Mali is still occupied by thousands of foreign troops. The EU has hundreds of troops under the Swedish-led Takuba Task Force. France has thousands of troops in its Operation Barkhane. There is also the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) with around 16,000 military, police and civilian personnel. Still there is no peace and security for the Malian people in the Sahel.

Popular coup d’etat wants France out of Mali

On May 24, 2021, a new government came to power in Mali through nontraditional means — a military coup d’etat. Led by the extremely popular Colonel Assimi Goita, who is currently the President of Mali and the Chairman of the National

Committee for the Salvation of the People of Mali, it has been attempting to rally the country to take control of its own destiny. It appears to be making progress — perhaps too much for the imperialists and those who follow their lead.

The Malian people want France and the EU out of the country. The Malian Armed Forces, while small, are preparing to take control of the situation in the Sahel. When Russian military trainers were brought in to replace French advisors, alarm bells went off in the imperialist camp. Sanctions soon followed, fronted by ECOWAS.

The day after sanctions were announced, neighboring Guinea in an act of solidarity stated that it would refuse to apply the ECOWAS sanctions. Speaking on behalf of the Guinean government, Lt. Colonel Aminata Diallo stated, “Our air, land and sea frontiers stay open conforming to our Pan-African vision.” (youtu.be/ztYixk_N46E)

On Jan. 22 an International Day in Solidarity with Mali was called with actions in Bamako, Mali; Brazzaville, Congo; Cotonou, Benin; Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo; Abidjan, Ivory Coast; Conakry, Guinea; Niamey, Niger; and Cayenne, French Guiana; Washington, D.C.; New York City; Berlin; Brussels;



Mass rally at Independence Square in Bamako, Mali’s capital, on Jan. 14.

Paris; London; Milan; and Barcelona. A mobilization in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, was banned by the government.

Watching the Jan. 14 livestream from Bamako was incredibly inspiring. Well-known Malian political activist Adama Ben Diarra, wearing his trademark cap with a Cuban flag and the image of Che Guevara, began his keynote speech leading chants by tens of thousands at Independence Square: “Down with imperialism!” “Down with France!” Down with colonialism!” and “Down with racism!”

And Interim Prime Minister Choguel Kokalla Maiga addressed the crowd speaking for the government and observed, “All of Africa is watching Mali today. To some extent, the fate of Africa is being played out in Mali today.” (AFP Jan.15, 2022) □

Community rallies for Cuban doctor kidnapped in Haiti

By G. Dunkel

Jan. 23 — Dr. Daymara Pérez is a Cuban doctor who has worked in Haiti since 2019, currently at the Notre Dame Hospital in Petit-Goâve, south of Port-au-Prince. Ten days ago she was on a public bus traveling through the Martissant neighborhood, on the southern edge of Port-au-Prince, when the bus was stopped by an armed group that grabbed her off the bus.

The kidnappers demanded a ransom of \$1 million, which was negotiated down to \$100,000, of which \$10,000 was evidently paid. The Cuban government, through its Embassy in Haiti, confirmed that Dr. Pérez was released the morning of Jan. 23, in good health.

Dr. Pérez initially came to Haiti as part of the Henry Reeve Medical Brigade, composed of almost 400 Cuban medical workers, which has been providing support in Haiti for 22 years. Brigade members have concentrated their efforts mostly in remote, impoverished rural communities, where they supply a very significant amount of medical care and public health information.

According to Vant Bêf, a local web news service, people from Petit-Goâve took to the streets, demanding freedom for

Dr. Pérez. They set up a barricade of burning tires and large rocks. On National Route 2 they blocked the road with a large semitrailer. In particular, young people from the “Bò Lopital” base condemned the kidnapping and expressed solidarity with Cuban doctors who provide assistance to the Haitian people.

As protesters also denounced the high price of food, banks and stores pulled down their security gates, and mass transit stopped running. Protesters warned: “Crime cannot reign in our country. If Pérez is not freed, we will intensify our demonstration.” (tinyurl.com/2p9xumxs)

Some U.S. press reported that Cuba was pulling a large number of doctors out of Haiti because of the security situation. Dr. Lauré Adrien, General Director of Haiti Ministry of Public Health and Population, denied these reports, saying that only 28 Cuban doctors — some going on vacation, some having finished their tour — were on a charter flight from Port-au-Prince to Havana. □



Haitians demand the release of Dr. Daymara Pérez of Cuba’s Henry Reeve Medical Brigade, Petit Goâve, Jan. 20.

Chinese translation of ‘Capitalism on a Ventilator’

By Martha Grevatt

We have very exciting news! The Chinese translation of “Capitalism on a Ventilator — The Impact of COVID-19 in China & the U.S.” — originally published in 2020 by World View Forum as a joint project of the International Action Center and China-U.S. Solidarity Network — is out and being discussed in China.

Contemporary China Publishers, the publisher of the Chinese translation, has planned a big rollout. We’ve received word that, based on high recommendations, hundreds of bookstores and online sellers are interested in carrying the Chinese translation of the book.

“Capitalism on a Ventilator” was co-edited by Sara Flounders, Workers World contributing editor and co-coordinator of the International Action Center, and Lee Siu Hin, director of the China-U.S. Solidarity Network, who has been involved in the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance.

The anthology contrasts the effective Chinese response to COVID-19 with the disastrous response here in the U.S. and pushes back against the racist anti-China campaign in the media. The book was a tremendous challenge, involving months of effort to gather the contents of the anthology and then to find printers, online publishers and distributors for the book, which was censored by Amazon.

Workers World writers, who followed the impact of COVID-19 from its beginning in the U.S., drew comparisons to China’s handling of the pandemic and raised demands and concrete struggles as the virus spread; their articles are quite prominent in the book. Other chapters are by well-recognized left and anti-imperialist voices: Mumia Abu-Jamal, Lee Siu Hin, Margaret Kimberley, Vijay Prashad, Ngo Thanh Nhan, Ajamu Baraka, Danny Haiphong, Max Blumenthal, Kevin Zeese and Margaret Flowers.

Many of the chapters were first posted on workers.org and IACenter.org.

According to Wang Weiguang, Standing Committee Member of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference National Committee, Director of the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission, Former President and former Party

Secretary of Academic Department, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences: “The book, written by dozens of scholars from the United States and other countries, describes with realistic strokes the ‘grief’ and ‘pain’ of the American people under the impact of the new coronial pneumonia. It deeply analyzes and criticizes the capitalist system’s ability and efficiency to deal with sudden public health [crises] and exposes the most hypocritical, reactionary and backward side of the most developed capitalist countries in the world.”

Jiang Hui, Vice President of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Member of Party Group, Director of Contemporary China Research Institute, Dean of Marxist Studies states: “In the strong contrast between China and the United States in the fight against SARS, the book uncovers the hypocritical side of the world’s most developed capitalist countries, sounds the ‘alarm bell’ of the ineffectiveness of capitalist governance and enlightens the public to explore a new way of thinking.”

Co-editor Flounders adds to these evaluations: “We could not have imagined how disastrous the virus impact would be in the U.S. and in other developed capitalist countries. As Marxists we did know that in a country totally dominated by a handful of billionaires, their interests in profiting from testing, vaccines, production of personal protective equipment and from the theft of our labor would overwhelm people’s need for free health care for all. Then the deaths tripled after the book came into print.

“To see the enthusiasm in China for this book is encouraging. China followed a scientific, people-oriented approach that prioritized the health and safety of the whole population. This gives us, as Marxists, a real-time comparison in the difference socialism makes in handling a new phenomenon.” □



Un año después del ataque fascista: El capital y el Capitolio

6 de enero de 2021. Esta fecha está grabada en nuestra psique colectiva como el día en que una turba violenta, supremacista blanca y misógina — instigada por el entonces presidente y todavía fanático en jefe Donald Trump — invadió el edificio del Capitolio de Estados Unidos en un intento de anular los resultados de las elecciones presidenciales del 3 de noviembre de 2020.

Este acto descarado se llevó a cabo con el respaldo de 147 senadores y representantes. Aquellos en el ala de Trump del Partido Republicano, una vez considerados “extremistas” o “elementos marginales”, ahora dictan la política de ese partido. Los tipos de Liz Cheney son demonizados como traidores por aferrarse a lo que una vez fue la “corriente principal” del conservadurismo.

El ala fascista de la clase dominante, y los descontentos de la clase media utilizados como carne de cañón, retrocedieron tras el 6 de enero de 2021.

Los financiadores corporativos, avergonzados, pronto cortaron las donaciones a los políticos ultraderechistas. “Hay algunos miembros [del Congreso] que, por sus acciones, habrán perdido el apoyo de la Cámara de Comercio de Estados Unidos. Y punto. Alto total, dijo Neil Bradley, vicepresidente ejecutivo y director de políticas del consorcio de grandes empresas. (tinyurl.com/5xh432nu)

Pero esto no duró mucho. En dos meses, la Cámara dio marcha atrás, abriendo la espita financiera a los mismos legisladores que votaron en contra de aceptar la elección del presidente Joe

Biden. Boeing, Pfizer, General Motors, Ford Motor Company, AT&T y UPS y más de 700 empresas más dieron cerca de 18 millones de dólares para reelegir a 143 de estos políticos en el último año. Los grupos comerciales, incluida la Cámara, donaron 7,67 millones de dólares a grupos políticos afiliados a los legisladores que votaron para anular la elección y a sus PAC, y las empresas que se habían comprometido a suspender las donaciones han dado desde entonces casi 2,4 millones de dólares a sus campañas y comités de acción política.

Trent Perrotto, portavoz del contratista de defensa Lockheed Martin, explicó la práctica de su empresa de poner los beneficios por encima de los principios: “Nuestro programa de PAC para empleados sigue observando los principios de larga data de compromiso político no partidista en apoyo de nuestros intereses comerciales”. La empresa dio 145.000 dólares a 72 miembros del “caucus de la sedición”. (New York Times, 6 de enero)

Al parecer, los “intereses comerciales” de más de 700 grandes empresas les dirigen a congraciarse con los elementos más viles y afines al Klan de la sociedad.

Fascismo, democracia y capitalismo

¿Por qué es legal que las empresas financien a estos insurrectos ultraderechistas? El viejo adagio dice que “la posesión es nueve décimos de la ley”. Tal vez no sea exactamente eso desde el punto de vista matemático. Pero la clase poseedora tiene el poder de gastar “su dinero” — en realidad la plusvalía creada por la clase

trabajadora — como le parezca.

La clase capitalista y el Estado siempre han mantenido una relación con la derecha fascista, desde el KKK hasta los Proud Boys. Como escribió el miembro fundador del partido Workers World/ Partido Mundo Obrero y difunto presidente Sam Marcy en “El Klan y el Gobierno” en 1983, “Incluso en los llamados mejores tiempos, el gobierno capitalista no sólo tolera a las organizaciones terroristas como el Klan, sino que una vez que la lucha de clases de los trabajadores y el pueblo oprimido adquiere el carácter de un auténtico levantamiento de masas, el gobierno capitalista es más propenso que nunca a alentar y promover a gente como el Klan y otros medios de represión.”

El apoyo de una parte de la clase dominante a Marjorie Taylor Greene, Josh Hawley y sus afines no se produce en el vacío. El auge de Black Lives Matter de 2020 y la ola de huelgas de los últimos meses han sacudido su confianza. A algunos de ellos les preocupa si una administración demócrata puede contener la lucha de clases dentro de canales pacíficos, legales y no amenazantes.

El capitalismo es un sistema inherentemente violento de explotación global. Esta es una verdad fundamental, incluso bajo una democracia parlamentaria como la que existe en los Estados Unidos imperialistas, Europa Occidental o Japón. Toda la historia de Estados Unidos es una historia de brutal supremacía blanca, desde el robo de las tierras indígenas hasta la esclavización de los africanos y los linchamientos de George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tamir Rice e innumerables otros. Esto es cierto independientemente de

Los United Auto Workers hacen una huelga en Ford para que se reconozca el sindicato, 1941. Henry Ford se alió abiertamente con Hitler. Hoy, Ford financia a candidatos ultraderechistas para cargos políticos.



quién sea elegido para el cargo y de cuál sea su estrategia para proteger el sistema de beneficios: más represión o más concesiones a la clase trabajadora. Sólo hay que ver cómo los políticos liberales y los medios de comunicación se deshacen en elogios hacia Liz Cheney, una militarista que está a favor de recortar los programas de asistencia alimenticia para canalizar aún más dólares al Pentágono.

El fascismo, históricamente, representa la aniquilación de cualquier expresión organizada del poder de la clase trabajadora y de los oprimidos, en primer lugar los sindicatos. El peligro es una característica inherente al dominio de la clase capitalista. No se puede confiar en los demócratas, en deuda con la clase dominante, para derrotarlo.

Pero la clase obrera puede derrotar al fascismo. Algunos activistas abogan ahora por un “frente unido contra el fascismo”. En noviembre de 2020, cuando parecía posible que Trump no dejara la Casa Blanca al terminar su mandato, surgieron llamamientos a una huelga general para “defender la democracia.”

La lucha de clases es la mejor medicina para el veneno de los matones de MAGA. En última instancia, se necesitará una revolución de la clase obrera que derroque el dominio capitalista por completo para acabar con la amenaza fascista de una vez por todas.

Sí, iotro mundo es posible!

‘El Klan y el Gobierno: ¿Enemigos o aliados?’ de Sam Marcy está disponible en inglés en descarga gratuita en PDF en workers.org/books.

OSHA, SCOTUS y COVID-19

Cada semana surgen nuevas evidencias de que las instituciones capitalistas estadounidenses gestionan mal la sociedad y sabotean cualquier acción que pueda ayudar al pueblo trabajador, que es quien crea toda la riqueza de la sociedad.

A mediados de enero, el Tribunal Supremo reafirmó su papel histórico como servidor de los monopolios especuladores, un papel que ha desempeñado desde que asumió la posición de árbitro de la Constitución cuando Estados Unidos era todavía una esclavocracia. Nombrados de por vida, los miembros del SCOTUS no responden directamente a ninguna institución popular. El SCOTUS ha conservado la propiedad de los ricos, ya sean éstos esclavizadores de seres humanos o centibillonarios de la tecnología de la información.

El Tribunal Supremo no sólo es una institución pro-propiedad, sino que actualmente está dominado por individuos ultrarreaccionarios. Su mayoría de derechas incluye a quienes se ganan la repulsa de todos los trabajadores y oprimidos de Estados Unidos con cada decisión que toman.

Con su decisión del 13 de enero, el

SCOTUS impidió que la Administración de Seguridad y Salud Ocupacional del Departamento de Trabajo aplicara un mandato a los grandes empleadores destinado a proteger a los trabajadores del COVID-19. La OSHA había dicho previamente a estas grandes empresas que debían garantizar que sus empleados que trabajaban junto a otros trabajadores o al público estaban vacunados o se sometían a pruebas periódicas.

La OSHA se fundó en 1970 como una concesión a los trabajadores, con el objetivo declarado de evitar muertes, lesiones y enfermedades en el trabajo. Forma parte de la burocracia gubernamental capitalista. Sin embargo, la OSHA ofrece una oportunidad a los trabajadores, sindicalizados o no, de resistirse a la negligencia de los empresarios en cuanto a las medidas de seguridad en su inexorable afán por maximizar los beneficios.

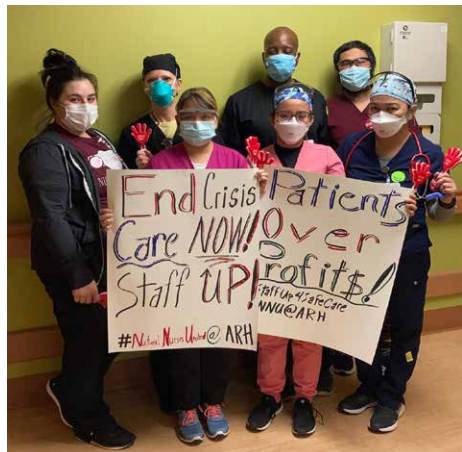
Aunque hay muchos peligros en el trabajo, el peligro actual más importante es el de la pandemia del COVID-19. Las empresas estadounidenses, en su afán por producir los máximos beneficios para sus accionistas, se han apresurado a reincorporar a sus trabajadores al trabajo sin

apenas tener en cuenta su seguridad.

La existencia de las corporaciones como instituciones lucrativas depende de su voluntad de sacrificar a sus trabajadores. El hecho de que esta elección sea inevitable y legal en el capitalismo no la convierte en un crimen menor contra la clase trabajadora. Los que toman la decisión deben enfrentarse al juicio de los trabajadores cuyas vidas amenazan.

Ni la última administración, que sabotó la salud pública, ni la actual han mostrado competencia en la lucha contra el COVID-19. Sin embargo, al imponer un mandato de seguridad a través de la OSHA, la administración Biden intentó presionar a todas las grandes corporaciones para que actuaran juntas para aumentar la seguridad de los trabajadores. Muchos jefes se negaron a sacrificar los beneficios y demandaron para detener el mandato.

En cuanto a la COVID-19, lo que hizo la decisión del Tribunal Supremo fue ayudar a estos propietarios sabotando el intento de la OSHA de proteger la seguridad de los trabajadores. El SCOTUS bloqueó la capacidad de la OSHA para realizar las tareas que le corresponden. La decisión del 13 de enero no sólo ayuda a la propagación de la COVID-19, sino que también podría extenderse para debilitar o dismantelar



MO/WW FOTO: OTIS GROTEWOHL

Enfermeras Nacionales Unidas

otras directivas de la OSHA para proteger la seguridad de los trabajadores.

El mensaje del SCOTUS a la clase trabajadora de EEUU es claro:

O forman sindicatos que puedan imponer directamente requisitos de seguridad a los empresarios y corporaciones, bajo el control de los trabajadores, o sacrifican su salud y vida.

Movilízate para eliminar el Tribunal Supremo inherentemente antiobrero.

Organízate a largo plazo para sustituir el sistema capitalista -que no sólo explota a los trabajadores sino que los mata- por un sistema que anteponga la seguridad humana a los beneficios: el socialismo. □